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Recommended Citation

Roewer, Rachel, "Preventing Prejudiced Psychological Practice: Social Justice Education in Undergraduate Psychology Programs" (2018). *Global Honors Theses*. 61.
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Preventing Prejudiced Psychological Practice: Social Justice Education in Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum

Rachel Roewer
Psychology
May, 2018

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Tim Lower

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors,
University of Washington, Tacoma

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Social Justice Education in Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum

Despite recent developments in the psychology of prejudice and discrimination, mental health care practitioners continue to provide services based on color-blind ideologies (Williams, 2013). In many instances, the psychologists who ascribe to color-blind methods are White, and do so with the intention of appearing as though they do not hold stereotypic racial beliefs (Williams, 2013). Researchers of prejudice and discrimination have recently uncovered that color-blind ideologies perpetuate racism by preventing the acknowledgement of intersectionality and disregarding the impact of interpersonal, organizational, and institutional discrimination on people of color (Whitley & Kite, 2016). Therapists who adopt a color-blind approach are typically lacking in effective multicultural education preparation, and have the capacity to make remarks such as, “I’m not sure we need to focus on race or culture to understand your depression” (Williams, 2013). Statements of this nature are indicative of discomfort amongst practitioners regarding the correlation between race and mental health disparities. This sense of discomfort can prevent people of color from receiving the care they need. In addition to colorblind approaches serving as a barrier to care, studies show that Black individuals are more likely to be rejected by practitioners when seeking mental-health care (Kugelmass, 2016). These studies clarify institutionalized discrimination amongst psychologists, which advances mental health disparities and perpetuates systemic oppression.

Members of marginalized groups are especially vulnerable to unjust treatment from mental health care practitioners, due to the prevalence of negative stereotypes within societal institutions. The vast majority of prejudices are rooted in White-supremacist and Eurocentric perspectives that have gained dominance as a result of colonization and globalization. Oftentimes, “clinicians lack the knowledge and training required to treat clients with socially just

methods at systemic levels” (Motulsky et al., 2014). Socially unjust behavior from clinical practitioners toward their clients can contribute to global systems of oppression that plague the lives of individuals belonging to marginalized groups, and ultimately counteract the very purpose of mental health therapy. Thus, to ensure that members of marginalized groups receive effective health care, there is a global need for ethical, culturally sensitive, and socially just mental health care practitioners.

Unfortunately, biases are formed throughout our lifespan, making them increasingly difficult to overcome with age and continued exposure to societally constructed stereotypes (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). Inadequate implementation of multicultural perspectives in psychology curriculum often exacerbates the use of color-blind therapeutic methods (Williams, 2013). This indicates that education and exposure are vital components in creating socially just mental health care practitioners. Due to the difficult and time-consuming nature of learning to inhibit prejudices, students of psychology must be exposed to social justice curriculum early on in their academic careers and throughout their training. Stereotypes cannot be inhibited overnight; therefore it is crucial that students practice the cognitive techniques to reduce prejudices as early as possible (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14).

There are multiple discrepancies associated with social justice education in psychology. First, there is a lack of global continuity regarding what social justice entails. Perhaps the most common modern definition of social justice is concerned with equality, equity, opportunity freedom (Reisch, 2002; Motulsky et al, 2014). This definition prioritizes a multicultural perspective in clinical practices and is widely utilized by psychologists across international borders (Shreiberg & Clinton, 2016; Motulsky et al, 2014; Munsey, 2011). There is also ambiguity regarding the paradoxical nature of social justice implementation in psychology

because psychological inquiry is associated with the objective sciences (Goodwin, 2013), and social justice is often considered to have a liberal bias (Campbell, et al., 2002). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that social justice education aligns with the ethical obligations of clinical psychologists, and ultimately produces culturally sensitive clinicians (Shreiberg & Clinton, 2016). To provide sufficient mental health care to a diverse client base, one must understand the importance of intersectionality, cross-cultural research, and the relationship between biases and systemic oppression. Therefore, it is ultimately beneficial for undergraduate psychology curriculum to include elements of social justice education.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the complex cognitive systems that influence personal biases, I apply principles from the psychology of prejudice and discrimination to the behaviors and ideologies of psychological researchers and clinical psychologists. Through discourse regarding the psychology of prejudice and discrimination, I will be situating my argument within sociocultural theory and evolutionary theory, with an emphasis intergroup relations theory. I utilize an eclectic approach, pulling evidence from multiple theories to emphasize the expansive body of evidence referring to the production and application of stereotypes and prejudice.

Research findings in the psychology of prejudice and discrimination are vital when attempting to understand bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. These factors contribute to interpersonal, national, and global systems of oppression that prevent marginalized peoples from receiving equitable treatment and equal opportunity. Unethical and prejudiced behavior of psychological researchers and mental health care practitioners can have detrimental impacts on the lives of marginalized individuals seeking mental health care. To demonstrate the urgency of these matters, I delve into the details of the psychology of prejudice and

discrimination and reveal the potentially negative impacts of human cognitive processes of categorization.

To clarify of the intricacies of social justice education, I explore the definitions of social justice across literature and compare the reoccurring themes to various ethical standards in psychology across cultures. I provide an assessment of social justice psychology literature and the many terms and methodologies inherent to social justice education. Moving forward, I offer suggestions as to how social justice education can be implemented and encouraged in undergraduate psychology programs. I close with an analysis of objectivity in psychology and reveal the paradoxical nature of the challenges that arise when implementing social justice methods into programs that define themselves by the scientific method. To contest the notion social justice as liberally biased I include a discussion of existential-phenomenological methods of analysis.

The following presentation and analysis of literature is situated within a social justice lens. This approach prioritizes equitable treatment of individuals and fostering of equality and fairness (Motulsky et al., 2014). Within the discipline of psychology, many argue that a social justice lens is inherent to the social sciences (Munsey, 2011). Framing the following argument within a social justice lens is a crucial element that is intended to situate multicultural values in the forefront of this inquiry. In contemplation of the importance of social justice education and how to implement these methods, I am conducting a historical analysis of societal perceptions of mental illness. In addition, I include a historical analysis of colonialism and Eurocentrism and their contributions to common prejudices that result from notions of cultural imperialism and white supremacy. To identify patterns in how social justice is defined on a global scale, I conduct

cross-cultural meta-analysis of literature planted in a social justice lens with an emphasis on multiculturalism.

Beginning in the early fifteenth century, colonization has impacted the world in a variety of ways. Between 1850 and 1945, the world faced a, “cruel period of military and political imperialism” (Pickren, 2009) During this time approximately 500 million people in African and Asian countries were colonized by Europe and the United States. The process of colonization has contributed to the construction of cultural imperialism, centralization Eurocentric world views, and denouncement and othering of the cultural ideologies of colonized people. Implicitly, and often explicitly, the main intent of imperial countries was to “diminish and even destroy the world view and ways of life of the colonized people” (Pickren, 2009). This has created an imbalance of economic power and representation in the globalized world. Due to the rise of colonial rule Whiteness and European heritage have been framed as superior traits in comparison to the traits of colonized populations. The centering of European culture through colonization impacts interpersonal, national, and global relations. These factors have shaped social norms nationally and globally. Eurocentrism is the foundation for common stereotypes, prejudiced ideologies, and discriminatory practices that continue to be globally prevalent.

The discipline of psychology is not immune to the impact of Eurocentrism. For the most part, psychological theory has been dominated by White male social scientists such as Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erickson. Though their research provides valuable information about the psychology of White males, centralizing and universalizing this data is immensely problematic. Research results should only be applied to the populations included in the example, to ensure that cultural differences are being accurately represented. The psychological sciences originated in Western society and have a past riddled with prejudiced research and clinical

practices. To counter this issue and decrease the prevalence of prejudice in the discipline of psychology, I suggest the implementation of a social justice framework in undergraduate psychology programs. These methods are intended to encourage budding psychologists to question the validity and consider impact of their biases, which have been influenced by a long history of colonization and cultural imperialism.

Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination

The psychology of prejudice and discrimination is a branch of social psychology that serves to explore the ways in which humans form stereotypic beliefs and prejudices, the implementation of prejudiced ideologies through means of discrimination, and methods to inhibit such behavior (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.37). There is an abundance of theories offered by prejudice and discrimination researchers to explain these phenomena. This analysis is primarily concerned with sociocultural theory, theories of evolution, and intergroup relations theory. Sociocultural theory is concerned with internalization of cultural norms and expectations throughout the entirety of our lives, which can foster the development of prejudiced ideologies (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.37). Evolutionary theory recognizes prejudiced ideologies as inevitable and adaptive social means for survival (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.38). Intergroup Relations Theory poses that “prejudice derives from perceptions of competitions with other groups” and is closely associated with theories of social identity (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.36). The following synopsis of literature provides a brief explanation of these theories and how they relate to social justice education and undergraduate psychology curricula.

Sociocultural Theory

When attempting to understand the formation of prejudices, findings in sociocultural theory are essential. From a sociocultural perspective, prejudices are correlated with cultural norms and attitudes (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.35). At a young age, people are exposed to cultural stereotypes and social expectations associated with factors such as age, gender, and race. This exposure continues throughout one's lifespan and is susceptible to change. Sociocultural theorists suggest that "most individuals internalize their culture's stereotypes along with other cultural norms and attitudes" (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.35). The stereotypes that are provided by a culture are "consistently linked to prejudice across time and region of the country" (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.35). Culture is crucial in this conversation, because norms and expectations associated with social roles differ around the world. Therefore, applying American cultural norms to a person from China could be counterproductive to comprehending that person's perspective and experiences. Understanding the influence of societal factors on an individual's formation of stereotypes and prejudices is imperative to discovering how individuals can inhibit the application of such stereotypes.

Intergroup Relations Theory

From the point of view of Intergroup Relations Theory, competition fuels prejudice between different social groups (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.36). For example, if two groups are fighting against each other for resources, individuals will likely favor the group that they identify with. This can contribute to the perception of one's own group as superior, and the other group as inferior. Relative deprivation theory is an intergroup relations concept that poses, "that prejudice results from the resentment people feel when they believe that their group has been deprived of some resource that another group receives" (Whitley & Kite, p.36). Thus, conflict

between groups is a result of a sense of deprivation and competition for resources. Overall, through analysis of group conflict, intergroup relations theory provides an explanation of the conditions that foster the formation of prejudices. Discovering how prejudices are formed is the first step in learning how to inhibit them.

Evolutionary Perspective

The Evolutionary Perspective in psychology arose from the notion that prejudice, and intergroup conflict are inevitable due to the human tendency to categorize stimuli for survival purposes as well as to understand the world and diminish ambiguity in interpersonal interactions (Whitley & Kite, 2016). Considering the example with which two groups are competing for resources, favoring one's own group is considered a facilitation of survival through an evolutionary lens. Evolutionary theory poses threat detection as a major component of the formation of prejudices (Cialdini et al., 2010). Threat detection is an evolutionary cognitive mechanism for survival that allows humans to determine the difference between mundane and threatening stimuli (Cialdini et al., 2010). In social settings, threat detection is not always accurate, and is often informed by common stereotypes. People apply stereotypes when attempting to detect environmental threats. This could lead to a wrongful assumption that a person who identifies with a marginalized group is a dangerous, which can lead to further discrimination and oppression of that individual.

Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

To fully comprehend the implications of prejudiced behavior amongst psychologists, operational definitions of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination should be considered. For these circumstances, stereotypes can be defined as "beliefs and opinions about the

characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of various groups” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). Stereotypes vary by individuals and across cultures, but typically there is a consensus regarding the content of stereotypical beliefs (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). Stereotypes are informed from a young age by peers, parents, media, and literature, making them immensely difficult to inhibit because they are deeply ingrained in human social development. Oftentimes, people may argue that their stereotypic beliefs may contain a “kernel of truth” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). An example of such stereotypes is the common belief that Black individuals cannot swim. While statistics may support the accuracy of this stereotype, they lead to highly unfortunate and inaccurate conclusions that Black people are less buoyant or that their bone structure prevents them from swimming well (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). The fact of the matter is that Black children adolescents are provided with less opportunity for swimming lessons, and they may struggle with discomfort and stereotype-threat associated with the widespread beliefs that they cannot swim (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.14). Clearly then, stereotypes are usually inaccurate, and any degree of accuracy is often exaggerated and taken out of context, thus perpetuating stereotypic beliefs and fostering an environment for unfounded prejudice (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.13).

Furthermore, prejudice is defined as an “attitude directed toward people because they are members of a specific social group” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.15). Oftentimes, prejudiced ideologies are informed by cultural stereotypes (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.15). Prejudiced attitudes are derived from beliefs that are likely inaccurate and can contribute to the widespread misrepresentation of marginalized groups. Prejudices are often referred to as “isms” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.25). Racism, sexism, and ageism are just a few examples of the many forms of prejudice that negatively impact the lives of marginalized individuals. These ‘isms’ are

emblematic of systemic oppression which is characterized by “exploitation, powerlessness, systemic violence, cultural imperialism, and marginalization” (Morrow & Messinger, 2006, p.45). Prejudice can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit prejudices are comprised of, “attitudes that people are aware of and can easily control (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.23). Implicit prejudices are less easy to control, due to their automatic and subconscious nature (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.23).

Discrimination is referred to as, “treating people differently from others based primarily on membership in a social group” (Whitley & Kite, p.16), and is heavily informed by prejudicial beliefs. Discrimination manifests on interpersonal, organizational, and institutional levels (Whitley & Kite, p.16-21). Discrimination is related to a Stereotyping is an often-inaccurate cognitive process of categorization, prejudice is an attitude based on stereotypical beliefs, and discrimination is a behavior that is driven by prejudices. All three of these factors contribute to systems of oppression that can be perpetuated by psychologists who are not motivated to inhibit the application of stereotypes.

Inhibition of Prejudices

Inhibiting the application of stereotypes is a difficult process that takes conscious effort and motivation (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.141). There are two cognitive steps involved in the process of stereotyping. The first step is stereotype activation and the second step is stereotype application (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.126). As people develop, they pick up on societal norms and standards that inform stereotypes. When a stereotype is activated, an individual simply recalls stereotypical information about person who identifies with a specific social group (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.128). This process occurs on a subconscious level and is practically impossible to control (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.128). Stereotype application occurs after

activation, when an individual makes a judgement about another person based on their membership to a group (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.127). Stereotype activation and application are often automatic reactions that are difficult to disrupt. Unless application is inhibited, the two-step process of stereotyping ultimately contributes to the perpetuation of prejudice and discrimination.

Research indicates that, “the more motivated people are to control prejudiced responses, the less they use stereotypes” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.142). Personal commitment is another crucial element correlated with motivation to inhibit stereotype application and control prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.142). Whether or not one is motivated to inhibit prejudices can be influenced by that person’s goals and motives (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.142). For instance, if a person is motivated by social power and self-enhancement goals, they are much less likely to be inclined to control their prejudiced ideologies (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.146). If someone is motivated by social justice and unconditional positive regard, then they are substantially more likely to be motivated to inhibit prejudices (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.142). Controlling prejudices requires repetitive cognitive effort and self-awareness. Even if one is motivated to inhibit prejudices, a lack of cognitive resources can make it more difficult to do so (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p. 142). Prejudices cannot be inhibited overnight. One must be aware of their prejudicial tendencies and motivated to regularly expend cognitive resources with the intent of preventing the application of prejudiced beliefs.

Prejudice in Psychology

The history of psychology is largely dictated by the ever-changing cultural ideologies of those in power, and the treatment of individuals with psychological abnormalities. In the Stone Age, if one was displaying abnormal behavior they would likely be subjected to trephination

(Comer, 2016, p.8). Trephination is the act of hammering holes into a person's skull with the intent to expel evil spirits from a person's brain (Comer, 2016, p.8). This approach is rooted in demonology, as is much of the early history of psychology. More recently, with the rise of asylums, mental illness became a spectacle of sorts, and continued to be regarded with negative connotation (Comer, 2016, p.9). These factors have contributed to the problematic stigmatization of mental illness. Stigma is often associated with shame and deviation from social norms (Whitley & Kite, p.393). Stigma is indicative of prejudiced ideologies and is a precursor of discriminatory behavior (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.393-439). Stigmatized individuals are victims of objectification, interpersonal discrimination, and systemic oppression. Fortunately, moral treatment has become a popular therapeutic method over the past century (Comer, 2016, p.10). Nevertheless, there is a pattern of stigmatization and unethical treatment of mentally ill individuals. Despite recent positive shifts, there is still room for progress within the discipline of psychology to foster the production of unbiased research and providing ethical mental health care.

Moreover, the fundamental attribution error is another variable that has played a role in the stigmatization of the mentally ill. Correspondence bias is the human cognitive tendency to "attribute behaviors to a person's disposition more than is justified" (Cialdini et al., 2010, p.80). The incredibly frequent occurrence of this phenomena has been named the fundamental attribution error. In short, the fundamental attribution error is indicative of a widespread tendency to attribute behavior to internal factors without any regard for environmental influence (Cialdini et al., 2010, p.80). Correspondence bias leads people to attribute their own bad grades to environmental factors such as a tough teacher, while assuming that others get bad grades due to internal variables such as lack of intelligence and motivation (Whitley & Kite, 2016).

Environmental factors such as cultural norms, oppression, and access to resources certainly have the potential to influence a person's well-being. Therefore, environmental and cultural factors are important to consider when conducting psychological research and providing clinical mental health services.

Psychological researchers and clinical psychologists are just as susceptible to these tendencies as any ordinary person, unless they are well informed and motivated to hinder the negative impacts of such cognitive processes. The prevalence of correspondence bias amongst psychologists has contributed to the disease and pathology focus in psychology. By regarding mental illness as a disease and a pathological condition, clinicians and researchers are disregarding influential societal factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. A disease and pathology focus in psychology also contributes to the stigmatization of mental illness, through means of blaming individuals for their symptomology (Comer, 2016). This perspective fails to recognize the potential psychological impacts of environmental stimuli (Comer, 2016). Therefore, disregard for environmental factors (such as society, history, race, culture, and circumstance) can prevent clinicians from recognizing important aspects of the environment that have a negative impact on their client's mental well-being.

Bias in Psychological Research and Clinical Practices

Psychological research is an excellent tool for describing, understanding, and predicting human behavior. Researchers have uncovered evidence that Native American individuals continue to be negatively impacted by historical trauma (Else-quest & Hyde, 2018, p.94). Historical trauma is described as "cumulative psychological wounding over generations resulting from massive group trauma" (Else-quest & Hyde, 2018, p.94). Research regarding historical trauma is immensely beneficial to understanding the ongoing effects of colonization on Native

American mental well-being. Psychologists can utilize this information in clinical practice to better understand and empathize with the daily struggles of their Native American clients. This research considers the long lasting psychological consequences of culture and colonization on colonized peoples. However, not all researchers consider culture, intersectionality, and the impacts of globalization when choosing a research question and method of analysis. In fact, some psychological research can perpetuate the negative influence perceptions of marginalized and stereotyped individuals.

When conducting research, one should consider the validity, credibility, and accuracy of the results, as well as the agenda and possible biased dispositions of the researcher. Research in psychology has been largely dominated by Eurocentric perspectives. There are various cultural critiques that call attention to the impacts of Eurocentric bias in psychological research. First, the concept of race “was originally devised by White colonists” and has been wrongfully regarded as a biological concept (Else-quest and Hyde, 2018, p.87). Race is an inconsistent tool for categorization. Some racial categories are characterized by skin color (Black and White), while others are related to geographic location (Asian and Pacific Islander). Therefore, race as a construction is lacking in the consistency necessary to be regarded as a valid scientific measure. The construction of race as a biological factor has been used to oppress non-white individuals for centuries, supporting the notion that Whites are a biologically superior to other races, ignoring the fact that race has been socially constructed and there is no valid biological evidence to support these claims. For example, research regarding race and intelligence has frequently been interpreted as evidence of innate differences in intelligence that are biologically associated with race; framing Black individuals as biologically less intelligent, and completely disregarding the influence of systemic racism on educational performance (Else-quest and Hyde, 2018, p.87).

Another criticism of psychological research addresses the influence of researcher interpretation bias (Else-quest and Hyde, 2018, p.88). An example of researcher interpretation bias is scientific racism. Scientific racism is defined as “the interpretation (and frequently misinterpretation) of research results to show minority groups in a negative light” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.33). Scientific racism is present when researchers interpret data with the intention of “[proving] the superiority of the dominant group to justify racist social policies by citing scientific research” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.33). Scientific racism is far less common than it used to be. Nevertheless, there is a dense history of scientific racism in psychological research that has contributed to the systemic oppression of people of color.

From a historical perspective, scientific racism has been utilized to “justify white political domination and colonial rule” (Whitley & Kite, p.33, 2018). Thus, there are global implications related to biased misinterpretation of psychological research. During World War II, National Socialists utilized the concept of “racial science” to justify “the mass murder of the mentally ill, homosexuals, and Jews” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.33). Psychological research has the potential to perpetuate the oppression of marginalized groups if misinterpreted or applied for the sake of a political agenda. Research psychology is also critiqued for centralizing men and European Americans as the norm (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.33). Focusing on White males in psychology makes it difficult to apply research to various cultures. The frequent presence of androcentric and Eurocentric bias in psychology is indicative of the social effects of globalization and hegemonic power structures on the production, interpretation, and application of research. There is an evident need for more cross-cultural research to decentralize Eurocentric bias in psychological research.

Clinical psychological practices are informed by research. Biased research can contribute to misinformed practices such as the application of color-blind ideologies. A color-blind approach to race is accompanied by the assumption that, “suggests that prejudice derives from people’s irrelevant and superficial emphasis on group categories (e.g., race), and therefore prejudice can be decreased by de-emphasizing group memberships” (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010, p.216). Though this approach may be well-intended, culturally competent researchers recognize that a color-blind ideology actually, “ignores the rich histories of less dominant groups and also does not recognize that racism still exists, which can justify inaction through denial” (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010, p.216). In a clinical setting, color-blind ideologies manifest through statements such as “I’m not sure we need to focus on race or culture to understand your depression” (Williams, 2013).

Moreover, evidence exemplifies significant racial disparities in clinical diagnosis (Schwartz & Blankenship, 2014). African American individuals are five times as likely as Euro-American individuals to be diagnosed with schizophrenia (Schwartz & Blankenship, 2014). Not to mention that simply being taken on as a client proves to be a challenge for individuals of color (Kugelmass, 2016). These factors prevent members of racially marginalized groups from receiving effective mental health care while simultaneously perpetuating the influence of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination on the systemic oppression of people of color. From a sociocultural perspective, clinicians internalize cultural norms throughout our lifespans. Therefore “clinician bias may be an unconscious process stemming from stereotypes and biases resulting in misdiagnosis” (Schwartz & Blankenship, 2014). Considering the evident racial disparities in diagnosis, clinical psychologists must keep in mind that, “assigning a mental disorder diagnosis primarily influenced by personal perceptions of or stereotypes about

consumers' ethnicity or culture risks inadvertently harming consumers psychologically or socially through misdiagnosis" (Schwartz & Blankenship, 2014).

The Humanistic Perspective

Humanistic perspectives in psychology prioritize unconditional positive regard as an essential practice for providing effective mental health care (Norcross, 2011; Comer, 2016). To provide a client with unconditional positive regard, a clinician must refrain from making negative judgements toward the people they serve. Unconditional positive regard involves a motivated conscious effort made by psychologists to recognize and reduce the influence of their personal implicit and explicit biases (such as color-blind ideologies), that may interfere with their ability to view a patient with an unconditionally positive disposition. In addition, client-centered therapy has become a popular and effective method for helping individuals achieve their wellness. Client-centered therapy gives clients control of the discourse that occurs during therapy sessions (Comer, 2016). Both of these methods serve to prevent clinical psychologists from providing biased therapeutic practices and perpetuating prejudiced ideologies in psychological practice.

Defining Social Justice

One of the global aspects of this discourse is simply operationalizing the definition of social justice. Over time and across constructed national borders, social justice has been defined subjectively. Due to this global ambiguity, concretely operationalizing the concept is a challenge. However, there are patterns in the definition of social justice that defy cultural boundaries. Most commonly, definitions of social justice are concerned with equality, equity, opportunity, and freedom (Reisch, 2002; Zhixun, 2013; Raja, 2015).

Oftentimes, the definition of social justice is misconstrued for the sake of satisfying an agenda and maintaining systems of power. For instance, during WWII, National Socialists in Germany claimed that the unjust murder of millions of people was for the sake of social justice (Koonz, 2014). During this time, many ascribed to the belief that Jewish individuals were robbing Germany of virtue and prosperity (Koonz, 2014). The use of the term social justice in this context is misplaced and contrasted by the very nature of the National Socialist Party. Evidently, the humanitarian abuses in Germany during WWII were informed by deeply embedded prejudices. The common themes that arise when analyzing global definitions of social justice do not align with the actions of National Socialists. Thus, skepticism and critical thinking are necessary when social justice is claimed as a cause, to ensure that the term is not being abused. If the circumstances have nothing to do with restoring equity, equality, freedom, and opportunity for marginalized individuals, then the cause at hand is not representative of social justice values.

Cross-cultural Ethics in Psychology

Multiple nations around the world have established ethical guidelines regarding the conduct of professionals working within the discipline of psychology. The American Psychological Association (APA) has identified five principles that apply to psychologists in America that include, beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, respect for people's rights and dignity, and justice (APA, 2016). In short, beneficence is action done for the betterment of others and nonmaleficence is the intent to avoid afflicting harm on the public through research and toward individual clients in clinical settings. The second principle, fidelity and responsibility, implies that mental health care practitioners and researchers are expected to show loyalty and support to research participants and clinical clients. Furthermore,

integrity solidifies the importance of upholding strong moral principles and protecting the integrity of those served by psychologists. Respect for people's rights and dignity is rather straightforward, asserting that psychologists must maintain unconditional respect for their clients, and continuously honor their needs.

Finally, justice as an ethical principle entails that, "psychologists recognize that fairness and justice entitle all persons to access to and benefit from the contributions of psychology and to equal quality in the processes, procedures and services being conducted by psychologists" (APA, 2016). This definition aligns with the common global themes that operationalize the concept of social justice. Ideas regarding equality, freedom, and opportunity are featured in the APA's definition of justice. In addition, justice as an ethic requires that, "psychologists exercise reasonable judgement and take precautions to ensure that their potential biases, the boundaries of their competence, and the limitations of their expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices" (APA, 2016). Considering the implicit nature of bias, psychologists must be motivated and practiced to ensure that they do not perpetuate unjust practices. Hence, there is an evident need for social justice education within the discipline that is highlighted by the ethical principles that dictate the discipline.

The Chinese Psychological Society (CPS) has ethical principles almost identical to that of the APA. Beneficence, responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect are identified as ethical principles that apply to psychologists in China (CPS, 2007). Though the wording is slightly different, each principle is defined in a similar fashion to the principles upheld by the APA (CPS, 2007; APA, 2016). These themes can be found within psychological organizations around the globe (PsySSA, 2007; APA, 2016; CPS, 2007; NIP, 2015; Leach & Harbin, 1997). This serves to show that there are global similarities in the expected conduct of psychological researchers and

mental health care practitioners. Thus, social justice as an educational tool is not confined to the U.S. and can be utilized by Universities in nations with established psychological organizations.

The Social Justice Framework

The purpose of a social justice framework is to, “actively address the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and isms, [and recognize] that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability [among others]” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Exposure to these concepts within the social justice framework is intended to be a preventative measure to motivate psychologists to inhibit application of stereotypes and prejudices. The teaching strategies emphasized to raise multicultural awareness and social justice competencies include self-reflection, the use of art, group discussion regarding marginalization and barriers, bias, and systemic oppression. These techniques have been successful in encouraging students to raise their awareness about multiculturalism, advocate for marginalized groups, and strengthen their commitment to addressing social injustices. (Motulsky et al., 2014).

A multicultural approach is ingrained in the process of analyzing historical literature through a social justice lens. Multiculturalism is used as a means to, “recognize and celebrate differences among groups of people” (Shih et al., 2013). A multicultural approach serves to uphold the prevalence of intersectionality and reduce the rate at which people resort to application of stereotyped ideologies (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.564). Intersectionality is the theory that “people belong to many social groups at once” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.24). Identifying with many social groups inevitably impacts an individual’s access to resource and overall quality of life. Thus, research should not generalize results on women without

considering race and culture. Intersectionality must be considered to prevent the false generalization of research data.

Two tools that are often utilized within a social justice framework are multicultural education and anti-bias education. Multicultural education considers the belief that, “inaccurate information about other groups, leads to intergroup anxiety and the use of stereotypes” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.295). This form of education is intended to counter false beliefs about various groups, by encouraging students to question cultural assumptions, form positive attitudes about social groups they do not personally belong to, and to create “a school culture that promotes equality” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.295-296). Multicultural education enhances multicultural competency and encourages students to recognize the impact of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

Anti-bias education is another tool that is crucial within a social justice framework. The purpose of anti-bias education is “to provide students with a heightened awareness of institutional racism [and other forms of institutional bias] and with the skills to reduce it within their sphere of influence” (Whitley & Kite, 2016, p.296). Similar to multicultural education, anti-bias education is implemented as a preventative measure to encourage students to question their biases. These aspects of a social justice framework encourage the development of empathy and motivation to identify, understand, and inhibit the impact of interpersonal and institutional prejudice and discrimination. Psychologists are expected to uphold the ethical principles in psychology and treat clients in clinical settings with unconditional positive regard. Through fostering cultural competency and bias awareness, social justice education practices help prepare psychologists to give unconditional positive regard to their clients. This, form of education

within the discipline encourages psychologists to acknowledge the widespread influence of Eurocentric bias and understand global systems of oppression.

Objectivity & Social Justice Education

The paradox between science and vocation contributes to the controversial nature of social justice education in clinical psychology. Under the assumption that psychology is a science, psychologists should uphold objectivity in their practices (Goodwin, 2013). If one is convicted in the ideologies encapsulated by social justice education, can they truly consider their approach objective? This paradox is the subject of much deliberation within the discipline, and the very notion of objectivity is widely disputed amongst psychologists. Nevertheless, evidence poses that social justice education aligns with the ethical obligations of clinical psychologists, and ultimately produces culturally sensitive clinicians.

In the early twentieth century, philosopher Max Weber gave a speech titled “Science as a Vocation.” In this speech, Weber directly addresses the paradox that arises when humans become devoted to objectivity (Weber, 1918). The word vocation implies pleasure and dedication, which interferes with one’s ability to be truly objective. Weber suggested that separating science and vocation is nearly impossible, because choosing a career in science is likely motivated by personal values (Weber, 1918). This conversation has been ongoing amongst psychologists, because the field’s widespread commitment to social justice makes the paradox as prominent as ever.

Social justice education is often stigmatized as a form of liberal bias, instilling political values within students, thus diminishing their effectiveness as objective researchers and mental health care providers (Campbell, et al., 2002). The purpose of a social justice framework is to

motivate students to inhibit their biases, including their political biases. Therefore, a problem arises when social justice is framed as liberal bias. How can a system that is meant to reduce biases simultaneously encourage liberal bias? Further, social justice themes defy constructed political and national boundaries. This is evident in the consistent association of equity, equality, freedom, and opportunity with social justice values. Regardless of the false assumption that social justice education is liberally biased, the field already upholds these principles, not for the sake of a political agenda, but for the sake of providing the world with optimal mental health care and research practices.

Psychology's Global Commitment to Social Justice

Evidence suggests that social justice is a reoccurring theme that is upheld by psychological organizations in various nations around the world. Values such as unconditional positive regard, beneficence and nonmaleficence, and respect for people's rights and dignity require social justice education to help psychologists develop cultural competency in order to achieve these ethical principles. The American Counseling Association (ACA) revised code of ethics specifically includes the value of promoting social justice (Motulsky et al., 2014). Social justice is valued within the discipline of psychology to the degree that social justice principles are deeply embedded within ethical guidelines in psychological associations around the world. Since the field has such a prominent connection to social justice advocacy, social justice education is necessary in undergraduate curriculum to teach students how to ensure that they are honoring the ethical principles that dictate psychological research and mental health care professions.

There are multiple aspects of this topic that connect it to the global framework. Stereotypes and prejudices are informed by a history of colonization and Western hegemony.

Eurocentric research practices can contribute to the production of biased research which fosters the perpetuation of stereotyping of marginalized groups. Social justice education facilitates a global framework by encouraging psychologists to step back and question research rooted in Eurocentric assumptions. This will help psychologists to utilize appropriate theories and measures when serving clients and researching various cultures. By increasing cultural competency amongst students of psychology, social justice education serves to decentralize Eurocentric Cultural domination of research and clinical practices. Social justice education ultimately encourages global collaboration and communication in research and clinical practices.

Further research is necessary to fully comprehend the many facets of implementing social justice education into undergraduate psychology curriculum. Some of the research featured in this inquiry displays the promising influence of social justice education in Brazil, as the implementation of such methods increases cultural competency and motivation to advocate for marginalized groups (Motulskey et al., 2014). Cross-cultural research at Universities in various countries would be helpful in solidifying the pool of evidence that supports the implementation of a social justice framework in undergraduate psychology curriculum.

All encompassing, many psychology programs already implement aspects of these principles because of their relevance to the discipline. For instance, at the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT), the psychology division includes elements of non-bias education and multicultural education. However, this largely goes unnamed, and is not consistently upheld by every professor. Naming this form of education as a social justice framework and encouraging all students to develop awareness about global systems of oppression is necessary to reduce the impact of prejudices within the field of psychology. By identifying these practices as social justice education, psychology programs combat the assumption that social justice is liberally

biased, while simultaneously honoring the ethical principles that dominate psychology on a global scale. Undergraduate psychology students and faculty who ascribe to social justice principles contribute to the fight against the stigmatization of mental illness and the marginalization of individuals around the globe.

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