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Social Justice and Career Development:
Progress, Problems, and Possibilities

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Abstract

Drawing on scholarship in the fields of vocational and industrial/organizational (VIO) psychology, we propose a definition of social justice and assess progress and problems in achieving it. Using a critical psychology lens, we find that the historical focus on higher-income settings and workers with relatively privileged status reflects the neoliberal underpinning implicit in most of VIO psychology. We identify five marginalizing conditions that act at macro levels to perpetuate the status quo and restrict progress toward social justice: group bias, forced movement of people, poverty, unemployment, and lack of decent work. Our review of these conditions accentuates the necessity of social justice praxis at multiple ecological levels to effect significant progress. We propose a set of recommendations for the future that highlight the importance of articulating and deconstructing context, power, and perception implicit in extant VIO endeavors. Our recommendations challenge the field to: (1) extend the scope of the locations and range of ecological levels at which VIO research and practice are carried out, (2) highlight who is and is not served and benefitted by VIO research and practice, and (3) question the underlying values and ideological assumptions of existing VIO research and practice. We call for greater critical consciousness among VIO psychologists in order to ensure the relevance and benefit of our research and practice for all workers around the globe.

Keywords: social justice, critical psychology, neoliberalism, global, critical consciousness, decent work

Highlights:

- Much VIO social justice scholarship focuses on individuals and microsystems
- A focus on structural sources of injustice and neoliberal influences is needed
- VIO social justice endeavors should address context, power, and perception
- Progress will require multilevel engagement that interrupts the status quo

Social Justice and Career Development: Progress, Problems, and Possibilities

The past fifty years have witnessed unprecedented changes in the world of work, from the rapid evolution of technology to globalization, leading to questions about the very nature of work in the future (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019a; Thompson & Dahling, 2019). These changes have affected every aspect of work life and career development, with significant implications for endeavors toward social justice. For workers in much of the world, these changes have not translated to improvement in work experiences, conditions, or future prospects. A significant proportion of workers and prospective workers around the globe do not have access to decent work or possibilities for engaging in work that meets fundamental needs for survival, connection, or self-determination (Blustein, Kenny, Di Fabio, & Guichard, 2019; ILO, 2019a). Even in the U.S., which controls a significant proportion of the world's resources and wealth, growing inequalities persist in access to employment (Thompson & Dahling, 2019).

In this article, we assess the current status of social justice in vocational and industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology¹, and offer recommendations that can help chart future progress. Our analysis of social justice research over the past 50 years highlighted the siloed nature of much existing research, and the continued replication of injustices that results from a lack of integrated thinking and a focus on individual and microsystem solutions in the context of macrosystemic problems. We therefore employed a critical psychology framing to assist with identification of potential underlying issues acting as barriers to progress. Our effort spans the disciplines of both vocational psychology and industrial/organizational psychology (hereafter referred to as VIO psychology). Recognizing historic disconnects between vocational and I/O psychology (Erdheim, Zickar & Yankelevich, 2007; Fouad & Kozlowski, 2019), we approach this task convinced that collaborative and synergistic work between these two disciplines will better serve the long-term interests of workers, organizations, and societies.

Both disciplines have contributed to the literature on social justice and career development. But efforts of both have been hampered by global grand challenges such as displacement in conjunction with war, violence, and environmental catastrophes, persistent poverty, inequality, climate change, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. These interact with globalization, the increasing precariousness of work, and the ubiquitous influence of neoliberalism. The considerable challenges of the present and those looming on the horizon warrant concerted, strategic efforts that engage the best of what VIO psychology has to offer.

To this end our paper contributes to extant research on social justice and career development in at least four key ways. One, we articulate a definition of social justice that spans both vocational and industrial/organizational psychology, thereby enabling more comprehensive consideration of progress toward social justice. Two, we model use of a critical psychology lens to critique the past, present, and future contributions to social justice, asking who is and is not served by VIO psychology, and to what degree the status quo is justified versus challenged by our work. Three, we identify marginalizing conditions that perpetuate injustice, and identify promising avenues for attending to these conditions. And four, we offer recommendations that build upon this analysis to enhance social justice in future VIO research and practice. In doing so we highlight the importance of unpacking issues of context, power and perception implicit in extant research, and draw attention to the multiple ecological levels at which social justice operates. We aim to synthesize past critiques and recommendations, provoke reflection and action, and call attention to the vast challenges before us that require multifaceted, multidisciplinary, multilevel

¹ We use the term industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology to align with the terminology of this journal, however we acknowledge that other terminology is used in other regions of the world (e.g., organizational psychology, work psychology, occupational psychology, etc.)

efforts to ensure and protect the wellbeing of our global community. Ultimately, we argue for greater critical consciousness among VIO psychologists, particularly with respect to how neoliberalism permeates common conceptualizations of our roles, obligations, and possibilities. We argue for a broader, more inclusive scope of work to achieve just and equitable experiences of work for all.

1. Social Justice Defined

We define social justice within VIO psychology contributions as comprising three elements. The first is *context-informed scholarship and practice that addresses one or more types of injustice in peoples' experience of, and/or potential to engage in, work and working*. We take an inclusive conceptualization of type of injustice, drawing on the substantial body of research into organizational justice which identifies distributive, procedural and interactional justice (see Rupp, Shapiro, Folger, Skarlicki, & Shao, 2017, for a recent review), as well as research in community psychology which identifies distributive, procedural, informational, relational, developmental, and cultural justice (see Prilleltensky, 2012).

Second, in keeping with Prilleltensky's (2012) conceptual model, we argue for the *importance of multilevel engagement with justice*, so that social justice is analyzed within and across multiple ecological levels. Distributive and procedural justice, for example, exist within and across groups, organizations and communities (e.g., allocation of resources, responsibilities, privileges and burdens, how decisions are made and who is involved in decisions that affect everyone in the group). Here we draw attention to work by MacLachlan (2014) who argues for a macropsychology, in which micro-level phenomena including inter-individual behavior can be 'understood up' to influence macro-level issues such as sustainability and poverty reduction.

Third and finally, intrinsic to our definition we assert *a preferential option for securing basic, non-renounceable human rights over the interests of market, profit, and the maintenance of privilege*. Central among these human rights is access to decent work. Implied within this assertion is the need to critically consider the influence of neoliberal ideology within VIO research and practice, and how alternative approaches to social justice in research and practice is necessary (e.g., Deutsch, 1975; Colquitt, Greenberg & Zapata-Phelan, 2005; Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1999). In combining these elements we articulate a broad, inclusive, and nuanced definition of social justice within VIO psychology from which to begin our review:

Engagement in context-informed scholarship and practice that addresses inequities in peoples' work and life experiences, analyzes injustice within and across multiple ecological levels, and asserts a preferential option for securing basic, non-renounceable human rights over the interests of market, profit, and the maintenance of privilege.

Key to our assessment of social justice contributions in VIO psychology, arising from critical psychology, are the questions of who is (and is not) served by research and practice in VIO psychology, and the degree to which such efforts challenge (or reinforce) the status quo. Invoking a framework of critical psychology assists us to deconstruct the literature on social justice and career development, in order to highlight how injustice continues to be reproduced, and how we might address its reproduction.

2. Critical Psychology Framework

Critical psychology interrogates the manner by which the social sciences justify and perpetuate the injustices of the status quo. A critical psychology lens also imagines and "annunciates" new and transformative practices that interrupt and eradicate oppression (Prilleltensky, 1997). A Latin American

application of critical psychology initially formulated by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994), liberation psychology is characterized by Burton and Gomez (2015) as, “the critical and committed (re)construction of a psychology to address the most important social problems of the oppressed, taking the perspective and history of the oppressed and the social contexts into account” (Burton & Gomez, 2015, p. 232). It is this perspective we hope to center in the present critique. We call for a re-constructed VIO psychology that is centered on the perspectives of those who are marginalized and oppressed, those for whom work is inaccessible, unsafe, precarious, absent meaning, and insufficiently compensated.

A first step to taking a critical approach is understanding how discourse shapes the way we define problems and fashion solutions to those problems. Three major discourses about career guidance (Habermas, 1971, as described by Sultana, 2018) include social efficiency (individuals must acquire the skills demanded by the marketplace in order to best meet the needs of society), developmentalist (individuals are guided to exercise agency and adaptability to yield desired career and life outcomes) and emancipatory discourse (rather than fitting individuals to the existing market, contest assumptions about market arrangements and question who is served by such arrangements). These discourses yield what Prilleltensky and Stead (2012) call the “adjust-challenge dilemma” for VIO psychology. That is, our scholarship and practices emphasize helping individuals *adjust* to the demands of the organization and the labor market and/or exercise agency to best author their careers and lives, without helping individuals to identify and *challenge* systemic injustices in the organization of the marketplace, and to pursue new arrangements that reduce or eliminate inequality (Prilleltensky & Stead, 2012). Leaving untroubled the macro-level arrangements in which workers adapt and adjust to the demands of the contemporary market constrains the relevance of career development scholarship to only a minority of workers, those with choice, privilege, and agency (Blustein, 2006).

Another example of epistemic dominance is revealed in the discourse defining “work” itself that renders invisible and inconsequential the non-market, unpaid work or ‘care work’ undertaken in the domain of the family, largely by women. Marginalization of care work reflects and perpetuates the reproduction of gender inequity, and continues despite significant changes in women’s market participation (Richardson, 2012).

Within I/O psychology, similar critiques have been raised regarding the degree to which I/O psychology contributes to ameliorating injustice when the majority of practice and research has focused at the individual level and on the needs and interests of organizations and management (Baritz, 1960; Katzell & Austin, 1992; Lefkowitz, 2008). For example, Lefkowitz (2008, 2013) has argued that in its quest for objectivity, the field has allowed economic business values to supplant human-centered considerations, and that the discipline needs to explicitly include a focus on ethics and values by embracing a scientist-practitioner-humanist model. Other scholars have critiqued how the status quo remains intact in I/O psychology, for example through the way the curriculum is developed and taught based on ethnocentric theories, without inclusion of indigenous and multi/cross-cultural knowledge (McWha, Mji, MacLachlan, & Carr, 2014).

While asserting the critical importance of dismantling oppressive systems, Sultana (2014) also warns, “To deride career guidance practitioners for doing what, at the one-to-one interactive level, can be done, is as ungracious and as perverse as putting down ambulance workers who attend to the wounded, criticizing them for not stopping the war” (p. 8). In a similar vein we affirm the importance of individual and organizational level research and practice that aims to further social justice. However, such contributions can be significantly enhanced by explicit attention to the larger systems within which people and organizations reside, and the underlying discourses and assumptions of those systems.

2.1 Neoliberalism

Centering social justice efforts in VIO psychology on those who are marginalized and oppressed requires attending to the omnipresent force of neoliberal ideology in our global society and as the basis of VIO psychology (Bal & Doci, 2018). Neoliberalism reflects an overarching belief in the market, where people exercise freedom through consumption (e.g., purchasing goods and services). Social security, health care and education are market goods for which quality is ensured by competition, removing the need for government safety nets or unions. Humans are valued in relation to their fit to the market, which is optimized by individual effort, ensuring everyone is responsible for their own situation (Hooley, Sultana, & Thompsen, 2018).

Within the workplace, the predominance of the neoliberal perspective has led to valuing concepts such as commitment, wellbeing and employment for their contributions to objective organizational success rather than for their positive impact on the individual themselves (Bal & Doci, 2018), and understanding workplace experiences only for the sake of organizational efficiency and profit (Islam & Zyphur, 2006; 2009). Neoliberalism helps explain phenomena such as the global lack of comprehensive human rights-based national policies that affirm the critical importance of non-market care work (ILO, 2018; Richardson, 2012) and negative attitudes about protecting refugees (Dutt & Kohfeldt, 2019). Neoliberalism is a key shaper of the career discourse that normalizes the production of young people who meet the demands of the labor market. Neoliberal assumptions of an open structure of opportunity and individualism are consistent with VIO psychology's longstanding focus on the behavior of White, Western, educated, affluent men who are able bodied and have choices regarding education and work (Blustein, 2013; Gelfand, Leslie & Fehr, 2008; Gloss, Carr, Reichman, Abdul-Nasiru, & Oestereich, 2017; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 1998; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). A neoliberal system benefits those with the greatest privilege, and "...wealth is often achieved at the expense of another's poverty" (Gerard, 2017, p. 410).

In the present analysis, we therefore use a critical psychology lens to focus on systems and foreground a macro-level perspective (without dismissing contributions at other levels of the ecology) because we believe that this is where VIO psychology has the greatest room for growth and contribution in future research and practice on social justice. Building on and synthesizing social justice research in VIO psychology, we identify five macro-level marginalizing conditions, linked by the golden thread of neoliberalism, that perpetuate experiences of injustice for workers and prospective workers over time.

3. Marginalizing Conditions

Fifty years ago, assumptions of the White and male standard for behavior were so pervasive that much of the published VIO research did not even report the gender or racial/ethnic composition of research participants, and the vast majority of publications were based on U.S. samples (see for example *JVB* 1(1), 1971). Within this historical context, early VIO contributions to social justice indirectly contested such assumptions by virtue of treating gender and other demographic variables as worthy of attention, and by examining career behaviors in samples other than middle class, able-bodied, college-going or college educated White men. This interrupted a status quo that invisibilized women, ethnic minority, sexual minority, working class and non-college educated workers, but at the same time, often embedded assumptions that such groups could achieve better career outcomes if they were (helped to be) more like White men.

Despite progress, most VIO research and practice has continued to be characterized by individualization, distributive justice determined by merit without attention to privilege, uncontested ideological assumptions, and a focus on samples that are WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic; Henrich, et al., 2010) and POSH (Professionals, engaged in Official work in the formal economy, Safe from institutionalized discrimination, in High-income countries; Gloss, et al., 2017).

Research attending to women's experiences in the workforce, including attention to barriers such as sexual harassment, has increased (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2017; Flores, this issue; London & Greller, 1991), but over the past fifty years, attention to the experiences of racial/ethnic minority workers and students constitutes a mere 4.3% of vocational research (Flores, Martinez, McGillen, & Milord, 2019) and between 2005 and 2015, about 11% and 22% of vocational psychology articles in primary journals focused on gender and international issues, respectively (Garriott, Faris, Frazier, Nisle, & Galluzzo, 2017).

While appreciating the contributions of scholarship addressing types of social injustice among marginalized groups, the focus on categorizing individuals into one or more groups that are subject to various types of injustice is fundamentally problematic. Such efforts frequently ignore strengths and assets, lack intersectional perspectives (Levine & Breshears, 2019; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017), and often focus on those with relative privilege within the group (e.g., research on women workers often neglects women of color [Brown & Liu, 2018] and women in low income countries [Schein, 2012]; research on immigrant workers often focuses on voluntary, high skilled workers in the knowledge economy [Cohen, Arnold, & O'Neill, 2011]). Further, such work often seeks to describe the impact and outcome of existing injustice, without addressing the cause of it. Where attempts have been made to address the cause of injustice, these causes are all too often ascribed to individuals themselves who can be the target of an intervention, or are discussed as individual-level phenomena rather than recognizing the structural conditions underpinning the injustice (Prilleltensky, 1997; Cortina, Rabelo, & Holland, 2018).

For this reason, we focus on five marginalizing conditions that emerged from our research as key structural roots of social injustice: Group bias, forced movement of people, poverty, unemployment, and lack of decent work. We identified these five conditions through an iterative process that included extensive reading across VIO psychology literatures, development of a dense list of topics relevant to issues of justice and injustice, with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized workers, and synthesis of topics into groupings that highlighted systemic and structural conditions underlying injustices. We interrogated VIO research against broader institutional agendas, such as the United Nations' (UN) Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), in order to identify gaps and cross-cutting issues.

As we discuss these marginalizing conditions we also connect with continuing signs of progress such as living wage research (Carr, Parker, Arrowsmith, & Watters, 2016), the Decent Work Agenda (DWA; Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, & Diamonti, 2016; Ferraro, Pais, dos Santos, & Moreira, 2018a; ILO, 2019b), and theoretical models that explicitly attend to systemic marginalization and oppression such as the Psychology of Working Theory (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, et al., 2019; Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016). We present evidence that VIO psychology is evolving to include more focus on the margins and new lines of research that emphasize social justice.

3.1 Group Bias

Underpinning and sustaining issues of social injustice are racism, colorism (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, & Organista, 2014), sexism, homophobia, ableism, classism, ageism, cissexism, xenophobia, transphobia, and religious intolerance. For efficiency we will refer to these issues collectively as *group bias*. This condition is the combined effect of human prejudice (attitudes that may be conscious or unconscious), stereotyping (beliefs), and discrimination (behaviors) directed toward individuals or groups on the basis of perceived membership in a social group, and functions to generate or sustain group hierarchies (Dovidio, Schellhaas, & Pearson, 2019). The nature and extent of group bias varies across contexts; e.g., people in same-sex partnerships are protected by employment laws in some national settings and considered to be breaking the law in others (Martinez, Sawyer, & Wilson, 2017). The

complex and dynamic manner by which power and privilege are imbued in concurrent social identities also produces variation in its effects.

Because group bias functions to reinforce social hierarchies, it is perpetuated unless interrupted (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Ideological beliefs such as social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, religiosity, and political ideology serve to reinforce and/or contest group bias (Dovidio et al., 2019). Group bias is a source of cultural injustice, functioning across levels of the ecology, affecting education and workplace resources, relationships, decisions, access, and opportunities, and connections between key life contexts of family, education, and workplace (Benner et al., 2018; Fernández-Esquer, Agoff, & Leal, 2017; Hughes, Watford, & Del Toro, 2016; Levine & Breshears, 2019; Marchiondo, Ran, & Cortina, 2018). The barriers and differential access to resources and opportunities resulting from group bias leads to negative outcomes that are attributed to individual or group deficits, justifying and preserving the bias.

While some bias is explicit and overt, key lines of research on implicit bias have demonstrated its operation and consequences in organizations (Jost et al., 2009) and education (Girvan, Gion, McIntosh, & Smolkowski, 2017). Important work also is being done to understand the effects of stereotype threat in organizations and education settings (Baysu, Celeste, Brown, Verschueren, & Phalet, 2016; Spencer, Logel, & Davies, 2016; Walton, Murphy, & Ryan, 2015). Noting the diversity management trend to provide unconscious bias training within organizations, Noon (2018) argued, “This is not necessarily bad if it gets people talking about discrimination, but it is yet another distraction from the embedded, structural disadvantages within organizations; disadvantages that require far more radical solutions than introspective sessions that simply nudge managers and employees, often begrudgingly, into recognizing that they are biased” (p. 206). As such, group bias interventions must address multiple levels to transform the contexts, processes, and policies that perpetuate it (Barron & Hebl, 2010; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2017; Marchiondo, Ran, & Cortina, 2018; Noon, 2018; Sue, 2008).

The study of individuals and groups in VIO psychology who experience group bias yields critical information regarding barriers and assets that can infuse research, theory development, and practice. Indeed, across the breadth of VIO psychology, attention to sexual orientation (Allan, Tebbe, Bouchard, & Duffy, 2019; Martinez, Hebl, Smith, & Sabat, 2017; Martinez, Sawyer, & Wilson, 2017), social class (Ali, 2013; Autin & Allan, 2019; Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2019), aging (Zacher, this issue), and disability status (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Graham et al., 2019; Pham & Murray, 2019) in work and career development is growing, along with attention to how people with marginalized social identities experience exclusion and discrimination in their education and work lives, such as immigrants (Cohen et al., 2011; Stebleton & Eggerth, 2012), transgender individuals (Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Ackers, 2011), and undocumented workers (Fernández-Esquer, et al., 2017). Such research may or may not serve to interrupt the status quo, depending in part on the extent to which privilege and ideology shape the questions and conceptualization of the problem, and constrict interventions and implications to the individual, intra or interpersonal level.

To further illustrate, VIO psychology research has increased focus on the diversity of education and work settings, such as focusing on women and people of color in STEM (Fouad & Santana, 2017; Garriott, Navarro, & Flores, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017). These efforts can contribute to distributive justice by enhancing opportunities for historically excluded groups. But increasing the diversity of a setting, without addressing the group bias that has maintained homogeneity, may only serve to replicate the status quo (Lavigne & Rauvola, 2018; McWhirter & Cinamon, 2020). If the curriculum or the organizational practices and norms continue as before, the incoming underrepresented students and workers are likely to be met with resentment, exclusion, and even hostility (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017; Danbold & Huo, 2017; Gelfand,

Aycan, Erez, & Leung, 2017; Patton, 2016). Fostering inclusion goes beyond diversity (Ferdman, 2014; 2017) and promotes procedural, relational, informational, and cultural justice (Prilleltensky, 2012). Attention to how oppression and power shape the education and work experiences and outcomes of those with *more* privileged identities is also critical to deconstructing notions of fairness, merit, and justice (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

Career guidance practices explicitly dedicated to promoting social justice, contesting neoliberalism (Hooley et al., 2018), and embracing emancipatory approaches (Hooley, Sultana, & Thompsen, 2019) have recently been offered. The emerging literature on emancipatory career guidance interventions offers possibilities for contesting group bias and other marginalizing conditions through VIO practice. For example, Hooley and Sultana (2016) frame strategies for responding to five manifestations of oppression (exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence) in the workplace.

Another promising development relative to group bias and consistent with emancipatory approaches is the relatively recent surge of scholarship on critical consciousness (Heberle, Rapa, & Farago, 2020), an “antidote to oppression” (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Critical consciousness refers to growing awareness of oppressions and privileges operating within peoples’ lives, developing agency, and taking action against oppression (Freire, 1970; Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016). Critical consciousness has been associated with positive vocational and educational outcomes for marginalized youth (Diemer, 2009; Diemer, et al., 2010; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Rapa et al., 2018) and women survivors of domestic violence (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006). Fostering critical consciousness of group bias interrupts a status quo of individual blame and responsibility for circumstances, directs attention to structural and systemic problems that constrain educational and work-related outcomes, and affirms agency and capacity for self-determined action to address oppression. In the Psychology of Working Theory, critical consciousness serves as a moderator of the effects of marginalization and economic constraints on work volition and career adaptability (Duffy et al., 2016).

3.2 Forced movement of people

A record number of over 70 million people were forcibly displaced in 2018 due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations, including those internally displaced (58%), refugees (37%), and asylum seekers (5%) (UN, 2019a). These numbers include over 27,000 asylum-seeking and 111,000 refugee children who are unaccompanied. While many of the world’s immigrants leave their country of origin voluntarily, for reasons including economic and educational opportunity and quality of life, increasing numbers of people around the world are forced to migrate to escape from violent conflict, oppression, starvation (Baranik, Hurst, & Eby, 2018; UN, 2016) or as victims of human trafficking (UN, 2018).

A relatively new and growing group of refugees includes those forced to leave their territory as a consequence of global climate change and/or an environmental disruption that destroys their ability to sustain a livelihood (e.g., deforestation, desertification, rising sea level). These refugees are particularly vulnerable as their protection is not covered under the UN 1951 Refugee Convention (Berchin, Valduga, Garcia, & de Andrade Guerra, 2017). Refugees and asylum-seekers make up 10% of immigrants worldwide, and this group of immigrants is far more likely to move to developing countries (82.5%) that are proximal to the countries of origin, but that do not have the market capacity or social support mechanisms to shelter, integrate, and employ large numbers of refugees (UN, 2019a).

Highly skilled voluntary immigrants employed in the knowledge economy anchor one end of the immigrant continuum, and when immigrants are addressed in the career development literature this is

typically the group of focus (Cohen, et al., 2011). Forced migrants, along with low- or un-skilled immigrant workers are at the other end (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). Irregular or undocumented migrant workers cross borders usually at great risk. Highly vulnerable, many enter their host country without authorization in order to escape violence; many are denied asylum but are fearful of returning to their country of origin (Marfleet & Blustein, 2011). Immigrants awaiting asylum hearings are not eligible for work permits in many countries, often have trauma histories, and may have been under- or unemployed in their country of origin (Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland, & O'Neill, 2011). Long term cycles of migrating for seasonal employment and returning have been affected by policy changes that make border crossing too dangerous, separating families and communities indefinitely, yet the “motor of forced migration,” neoliberal globalization (Marfleet & Blustein, 2011, p. 382), continues unabated.

Undocumented workers experience lower levels of occupational safety (Flynn, Eggerth, & Jacobson, 2015) and along with undocumented students, often experience chronic insecurity and hypervigilance (Bjorklund, 2018; Fernández-Esquer et al., 2017; Kantamneni et al., 2016). A 2018 special issue of *JVB* dedicated to refugees sheds light on their experiences of adversity and trauma, and their coping strategies, resiliency, and agency as they deal with devastating loss and change, adapt and reestablish their lives, and secure employment (Newman, Bimrose, Nielson, & Zacher, 2018). For immigrants forced to relocate due to environmental disasters associated with climate change, evidence of adverse mental health consequences has been established, but little attention has been given to their long-term education and work outcomes (Flores et al., 2019).

Bimrose and McNair (2011) critique the reliance on traditional career guidance and counseling approaches that emphasize, “personal development, choice, rationality and self-actualization” for work with immigrants. They combine developmentalist and emancipatory approaches in proposing that career interventions in a context of global migration should (a) highlight how individual identities interact with sociopolitical contexts and shape access to opportunity, (b) emphasize career adaptability as a proactive response to increasingly unstable and dynamic workplaces, and (c) expand practitioner advocacy roles to address contextual and macrosystemic issues, such as labor and immigration policies and discrimination.

Because so many critical aspects of refugee resettlement and employment are regulated by national policies, and because the number of refugees worldwide is increasing (UN, 2019), VIO psychology efforts to enhance social justice in this arena must operate at multiple levels of the ecology. One ILO-UN collaboration is focused on advancing the knowledge base on relationships between desertification, migration, and employment as well as developing policy and programmatic responses that integrate these linkages (ILO, 2019c). Marfleet and Blustein (2011) called for VIO research to establish a basis for informing changes to the national and international policies and structures that criminalize irregular migrants. Such work is essential to reducing the adverse impact of this marginalizing condition.

3.3 Poverty

Extreme poverty, currently defined as living on less than U.S. \$1.90 per day, affects 8.6% of the global population (UN, 2019b). This rate has declined from 16% in 2010, but is rising in sub-Saharan Africa (40%) and increased by 1 million people in the U.S. since 2010 (UN, 2019b). The global pandemic of COVID-19 may push another 400 million people into extreme poverty, potentially reversing a decade of improvements (Sumner, Hoy & Ortiz-Juarez, 2020). The Multidimensional Poverty Index (UN Development Programme, 2019a) assesses poverty as a function of 10 indicators in order to better illuminate the complex nature of deprivation. According to this index, 23.1% of people (in 101 countries assessed) experience poverty. These measures reveal vast differences in poverty rates within and between countries and regions.

The marginalizing condition of poverty intersects with work and income inequality through unemployment, reemployment, systemic and societal factors, and the changing nature of employment (Thompson & Dahling, 2019). Those with marginalized identities tend to be overrepresented among the poor, and face greater barriers to shifting out of poverty (Thompson & Dahling, 2019). This may, at least in part, be due to a relative lack of social capital and ability to navigate job loss (Lippmann, 2008), reinforcing the lines of advantage and disadvantage between those with power, and those without.

Poverty replicates across generations such that opportunities are constricted by virtue of the circumstances into which people are born. Those living in poverty and who experience the effects of group bias typically experience the greatest constraints of the opportunity structure. Profound variation in access to education and education quality within and across national contexts limits the extent to which education generates individual social mobility (Yaish & Anderson, 2012). There is some evidence that social mobility has decreased as income inequality has increased in the U.S. (Mitnik, Cumberworth, & Grusky, 2016) and Canada (Connolly, Haeck, & Lapierre, 2019). Other evidence indicates that immigration and industrialization contribute far more to understanding cross-national variations in social mobility (Cornia & Martorano, 2012). According to Hout (2015), the assessment of whether fairness of opportunity exists in a given society should focus not on social mobility, but on the degree to which social origins (e.g., race, birth weight, neighborhood poverty) constrain successful employment and upward mobility.

Historically, VIO psychology has been relatively silent on the topic of poverty, often focusing on its psychological outcomes (e.g., Haushofer & Fehr, 2014), or on individual-level interventions for those living in poverty (Meara, Davis, & Robinson, 1997; Heppner & O'Brien, 2005), rather than considering poverty reduction as an end goal for psychological research itself (Carr & Bandawe, 2011). Since the turn of the century, however, there has been increasing effort to critique vocational theories regarding relevance to people living in poverty, and more recommendations that expand beyond the individual to include community level and policy interventions (Ali, 2013; Blustein, 2011; Juntunen, Ali, & Pietrantonio, 2013; Sloan, 2005; Thompson & Dahling, 2019). Further, there is increasing application of theories of VIO psychology to poverty reduction, for example, examining the role of entrepreneurship in Africa (Gielnik & Frese, 2013), the intersection of psychology with behavioral economics (Anand & Lea, 2011), the role of organizational policies on employee outcomes in low-income countries (Carr, McWha, MacLachlan & Furnham, 2010), and support practices for international aid and development workers to improve aid initiatives (Foo, 2015).

Social, economic, and environmental factors that comprise the structure of opportunity have been incorporated into numerous career development and/or choice models (Astin, 1984; Krumboltz, 1994, Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; Super, 1992). For example, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) describes how the opportunity structure affords access to and shapes learning experiences, and affects the translation of interests into career goals and outcomes. In spite of its inclusion in theory, to a great extent vocational psychology has continued to give minimal attention to how the structure of opportunity, sociopolitical context, and social class influence vocational behavior (Diemer & Ali, 2009). In the words of Flores et al. (2019), "As long as the structural foundations of racial stratification and economic inequality remain intact, vocational psychology will be impeded from supporting the economic well-being of most people of color" (p. 196).

Finally, income inequality, wage stagnation, and inadequate wages make *working poverty* a reality for many workers in the world. Over 25% of workers in low to middle income countries experience extreme or moderate poverty (ILO, 2019a). Wealth is concentrated among small segments of society and grows exponentially among those with the greatest wealth (e.g., Saez & Zucman, 2016), while workers' wages have stagnated and do not provide sufficient opportunity to escape poverty (Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). Neoliberal assumptions about poverty and income inequality help sustain the reproduction of inequality, for example, income inequality is perceived to be less unjust in the context of structural and cultural ideologies attributing poverty to internal (ability, effort) characteristics (Schneider & Castillo, 2015). When income inequality is viewed as the consequence of differential effort and ability, it is not seen as a marginalizing condition but is attributed to individual and group deficits; thus exemplifying the problematic nature of viewing distributive justice through the lens of equity theory (Oltra, Brewster & Bonache, 2013).

A particularly promising area of research attending to poverty and income inequality focuses on conceptualizing and evaluating living wages. Living wages are those that make life more than just bearable but where capabilities are nurtured and enabled (Carr, Parker, Arrowsmith, & Watters, 2016). This means that living wages allow workers to not just meet their basic needs, but also attain more capabilities or freedoms and opportunities to make choices and to function in ways that they intrinsically value (Carr, Parker, Arrowsmith, Watters, & Jones, 2016). Preliminary findings suggest the potential for identifying a wage point below which workers experience workplace injustice and low life and work satisfaction (Carr et al., 2018). A psychological perspective on living wages demonstrates a concrete focus beyond allocation of resources based purely on concepts like equity, which compare workers' ratios of inputs and outputs against one another and any difference is attributed to individual characteristics, toward a recognition of quality of life as a fundamental non-renounceable right, and the responsibility of organizations to implement policies that enhance the quality of life of employees.

Most psychological research to date has focused on conceptualizing the living wage (Smith, 2015; Yao, Parker, Arrowsmith & Carr, 2017), extending work by economists who have focused on the extrinsic value of earning a living wage, to now focus on the intrinsic value of a living wage. Some research is beginning to examine contextual differences in living wages (e.g. Carr et al., 2018; Yoelao, Mohan & Sombatwattana, 2019). Future research is needed to assess the psychological impact of earning a living wage for individuals, families, and communities, as well as understand how paying a living wage impacts organizational outcomes.

3.4 Unemployment

Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global rate of unemployment (the share of the labor force that is seeking and available to work but is not employed) was 4.9%, and had decreased since the great recession (ILO, 2019a). This number masks key justice issues, such as discrepancies associated with age and gender. For example, the global percentage of youth neither employed nor in education or training was 21.2% (UN, 2019), including 30% of young women and 13% of young men (ILO, 2019a). Youth unemployment estimates ranged as high as 36% in Spain and 40% in South Africa (UN, 2019). Across age groups, women's unemployment consistently is higher than that of men, with a global estimate of 5.4% relative to men's 4.7% (ILO, 2019a). Unemployment also intersects with group bias, disproportionately affecting many ethnic minority workers and workers with disabilities. For example, in the U.S. 8% of workers with disabilities are unemployed relative to 3.7% of workers without disabilities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Further, a significant proportion of those who *are* employed work in poor quality, precarious jobs that lack benefits, stability, and sufficient pay (ILO, 2019a).

Labor markets experienced an "unprecedented scale of global disruption" in the first six months of 2020 (ILO, 2020a) due to the pandemic. Rates of unemployment grew dramatically and suddenly, with 81% of the world's workforce residing in countries with mandatory workplace closures (ILO, 2020b). The second quarter of 2020 saw a global decrease in working hours equivalent to 400 million full-time workers with 48-hour work weeks (ILO, 2020b). This has worsened disparities for poor, female, racial/ethnic minority, immigrant, and undocumented workers, especially in developing countries and for

workers in the informal economy (Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Ramsey, & Terult, 2020; Borjas & Cassidy, 2020; Fairlee, Couch, & Xu, 2020). For example, gender inequalities in the labor market are exacerbated by the pandemic because women are overrepresented in severely affected work sectors (e.g., food service, domestic workers), are overrepresented in health and social service positions with greater risk of exposure, longer working hours, and higher stress, and their greater burden of care work is multiplied by the loss of formal and informal childcare arrangements and school closures (ILO, 2020b). Even ‘best case’ scenarios exclude return to pre-pandemic employment (ILO, 2020b).

Unemployment has devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities, including adverse effects on psychological well-being and health, and economic effects that persist even after reemployment (Blustein & Guarino, 2020; Thompson & Dahling, 2019). Reemployment in a decent job helps to mitigate the adverse effects of unemployment, but is influenced by factors such as group bias, many of which are outside the control of individuals (Thompson & Dahling, 2019). Unemployment may trigger potential employers’ unconscious bias (see Melloy & Liu, 2014) and may particularly affect older workers (Wanberg, Kanfer, Hamann & Zhang, 2016). Policy development to address chronic unemployment has largely been undertaken by other social sciences, absent the contributions of VIO psychology (Blustein, Medvede, & Wan, 2012).

Re-employed workers are increasingly likely to be engaged in precarious work (Benach, Vives, Tarafa, Delclos, & Muntaner, 2016). The global rise of precarious work (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013), even among university graduates (MacDonald, 2016), occurs in conjunction with a neoliberal agenda in which aims of profit, deregulation, flexibility, and the shifting of risk from employers to employees guide policy and decision-making (Blustein et al., 2016). Precarious work augments the severity and breadth of the next marginalizing condition, and is presented in depth elsewhere (see Allan, Autin, & Wilkins-Yel, this issue).

3.5 Lack of Decent Work

Decent work is an aspirational goal that, “involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” (ILO, n.d.). A lack of decent work is a marginalizing condition that affects “a majority of the 3.3 billion people employed globally in 2018” who lacked resources, economic security, and opportunities for human development (p. 1, ILO, 2019a). In Africa, 68% of workers have insecure, low paying jobs, largely in the informal work sector. In Latin America and the Caribbean 53% of workers are in informal employment with as many as 80% in some countries (e.g., Bolivia, Guatemala). In Asia and the Pacific, nearly 70% of those employed work in the informal sector, and in Europe and Central Asia, temporary and involuntary part time work is on the rise (ILO, 2019a).

Decent work is embedded within the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). The agenda proposes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to secure human rights, dignity, and equality for all people, end poverty and violence, and protect the planet through global partnerships. This vision for the future represents a collective global effort of ‘annunciation’ that overtly prioritizes people over profit and market. Further, it acknowledges key forces that have and will continue to have devastating and inequitable effects on workers around the world: Poverty, global climate change, war, violence, and displacement. Decent work for all is encompassed in SDG 8 (*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*; UN, 2015). The Decent Work Agenda (DWA) of the ILO aims to achieve the fair and equal treatment of people in all workplaces, “through the promotion of social dialogue, extended social protection,

employment generation, and respect of fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards” (ILO, 2017, p. 9).

While many VIO researchers have studied topics such as worker wellbeing and working conditions that clearly contribute to decent work, only recently has the DWA itself become an explicit focus of study (Duffy, Blustein, Allan, Diemer, & Cinamon, 2020). A leading contribution from vocational psychology comes from Duffy et al. (2016), who define decent work as consisting of: “(a) physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g., absent of physical, mental, or emotional abuse), (b) hours that allow for free time and adequate rest, (c) organizational values that complement family and social values, (d) adequate compensation, and (e) access to adequate health care” (p. 130). I/O psychologists have also focused on operationalizing decent work, for example, developing and validating the decent work questionnaire (Ferraro, Pais, dos Santos, & Moreira, 2018a), and examining the role of decent work in motivation of knowledge workers, and the mediating role of psychological capital (Ferraro, Moreira, dos Santos, Pais, & Sedmak, 2018b).

The promise of the DWA is that it potentially addresses each of the other marginalizing conditions we describe. However, concerns have been raised that the DWA has been compromised by neoliberal influences within the ILO (Blustein, et al., 2016; Maul, 2019). The failure to take actual steps toward realizing the DWA among developed countries that have endorsed it, and the disconnection between the DWA and goals of gender equality, also have been raised as concerns (Charlesworth & Macdonald, 2015).

The Psychology of Working Framework by Blustein and colleagues (PWF; Blustein, 2006, 2013; Blustein et al., 2008) addresses unemployment and precarious work and aims to predict access to decent work in light of experiences of marginalization and discrimination (Autin & Duffy, 2019). The PWF confronts the narrow range of people and careers on which traditional vocational psychology has focused, expands the conceptualization of work to highlight its role in fulfillment of key human needs for survival, connection, and self-determination, and positions work (including care work) within the larger context of social, economic, and political structures and constraints. Its offspring, the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT, Duffy et al., 2016), incorporates structural (economic constraints and marginalization) and individual (work volition and career adaptability) characteristics and moderators (proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and economic conditions) in predicting decent work, and assesses how decent work satisfies needs for survival, social connection, self-determination, and well-being. Both the PWF (Blustein et al., 2019) and the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016) are heuristic structures for conceptualizing efforts to promote human rights in career development, and for carrying out the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda.

PWT has been applied to workers in various countries (e.g., Turkey [Kozan, Isik, & Blustein, 2019], Korea [Kim, Duffy, Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2019]), from different social backgrounds (e.g., Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2014, Autin, et al., 2018; Douglass, Velez, Conlin, Duffy, & England, ;2017), and of different life stages (e.g., Kim, Fouad, Maeda, Xie, & Nazan, 2018). This burgeoning literature is yielding general support for the model, and expands the relevance of VIO psychology beyond its historically narrow samples and settings. Recommendations for future PWF/PWT research and practice toward decent work for all include enhancing social protections for unemployed and precarious workers, increasing attention to care work, and fostering people’s capacity to cope with and adapt to the changing world of work (Blustein et al., 2019). These multi-level recommendations reflect the human-centered approach to decent work advocated by the ILO.

In summary, we contend that these five marginalizing conditions, identified from existing social justice research, perpetuate injustice among workers and prospective workers at multiple levels of the

ecology. These conditions replicate uninterrupted within VIO's social efficiency and developmental discourses. In discussing marginalizing conditions, we also identified signs of progress, such as research on living wages, PWF/PWT, and critical consciousness. Our recommendations build upon these and other promising developments.

4. Reconstructing VIO Psychology for Inclusive Social Justice

Our review makes evident that a reconstructed VIO psychology, centered on the perspectives of those for whom work is inaccessible, unsafe, precarious, absent meaning, and insufficiently compensated, must address underlying marginalizing conditions. Based on our analysis, we further contend that the replication of injustice is aided by lack of recognition of three key factors fundamental to shaping beliefs about social justice: context, power, and perception. We next use these three factors to frame our recommendations for future VIO research and practice, highlighting the need to question the traditional locations and levels of analysis in our work (context), who we typically study and serve (power), and the ideological underpinnings and assumptions of the discipline (perception) (see Figure 1). We identify potential cultural and ideological blinders regarding social justice progress that are embedded in and informed by context, power, and perception, and we propose that broader global aims like the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; UN, 2015) offer a horizon toward which to orient future work.

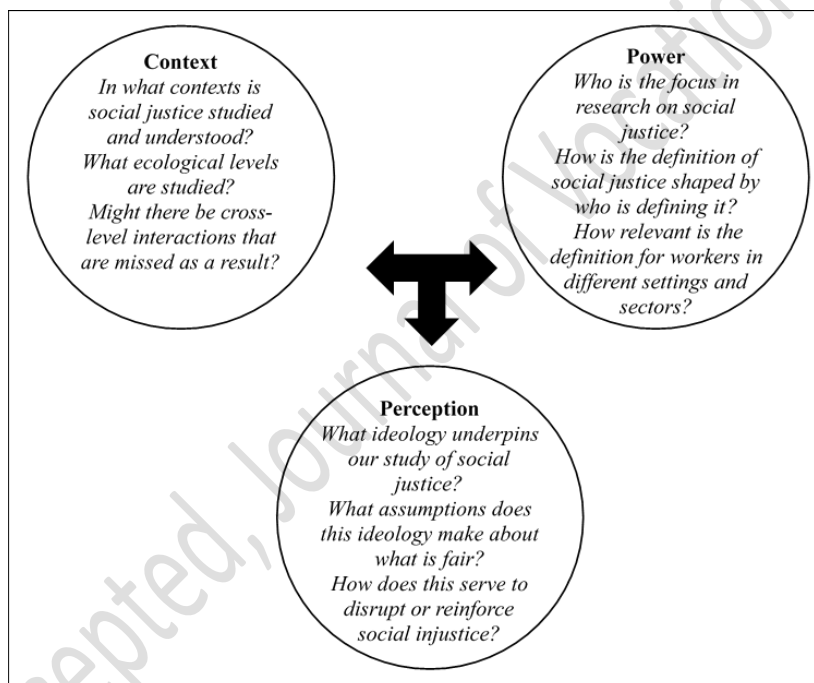


Figure 1. Interrogating context, power and perception in VIO social justice contributions

4.1 Context

Conceptualizations of what is socially just and fair vary for people living and working in different cultural, economic, and social *contexts* (Oltra, et al., 2013). Dynamics of distributive and procedural justice operate within familial, school, community, and governmental contexts, as well as within and across different ecological levels (Prilleltensky, 2012). Employees in different countries vary in the degree to which procedural, interactional or distributive justice is most strongly linked with overall perceptions of fairness (Kim & Leung, 2007), and relative power difference has been identified as playing

a key role in explaining reactions to (in)justice and impact on work outcomes (Lam, Schaubroek & Aryee, 2002; Brockner et al., 2001). Historical context also is salient, given the dynamic evolution of what is considered to be fair over time (e.g., women's right to serve in the military vs. in active duty). Our suggestions here highlight avenues for attending to how context may constrain our levels of analysis and our conceptualizations of social justice.

Pursue research and practice in contexts most adversely affected by marginalizing conditions. Prioritize the voices of those in contexts traditionally excluded from VIO work, such as the informal economy that is home to the majority of the world's workers. Develop collaborations led by researchers and practitioners outside of North America and Western Europe. Advocate for projects based on non-Western and non-traditional knowledge, particularly in non-Western and non-traditional contexts. Move beyond dichotomous indicators of employment to capture variation in the nature and quality of employment.

Be explicit about spaces of privilege, power, oppression, and marginalizing conditions. Describe research participants with respect to the structural and systemic advantages and disadvantages that shape their past, present, and future contexts. Make visible how the dynamics of privilege, power and oppression shape education and work for *all* populations, not simply those with marginalized identities or statuses. Extend implications and recommendations beyond the individual or group level, to acknowledge and address the structural conditions and constraints on participants' lives.

Connect the local with the global; pursue multi-level engagement with systems. Focus on how specific or combined marginalizing conditions affect families and communities, as well as individuals, to better highlight the manner by which individualistic solutions can preserve the status quo, and the importance of including contextual factors. Illuminate the complex relationships between marginalization, marginalizing conditions, and the physical and mental health and well-being of workers and prospective workers (e.g. Duffy et al., 2019). Make consistent, explicit connections between VIO scholarship and the UN SDGs by connecting individual or community level variables with higher ecological levels, such as with implications for poverty reduction or climate change (MacLachlan's 'understanding up', 2014; e.g. McWha-Hermann, Maynard & Berry, 2015). Require journal authors to highlight how their work contributes to the SDGs (as in the APA journal *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*). Use the SDGs as a roadmap for social justice research, providing VIO psychology an interdisciplinary opportunity to contribute to global issues.

Collaborate across disciplines and with multiple stakeholders. Engage with national bodies (e.g., national psychology associations), governmental bodies (e.g., departments or ministries of labor), and international organizations and networks (the UN, the ILO, e.g. Blustein, Masdonati, & Rossier, 2017; Scott, 2011). Promote evidence from psychological research to decision makers, and connect agencies with VIO psychology areas of expertise, such as measurement and operationalization of poverty and decent work. Highlight the psychological processes and factors critical to evaluating government policies such as guaranteed income (Blustein et al., 2019) or universal basic income, to ameliorate trauma associated with sudden unemployment in the wake of Covid-19 (Johnson, Johnson, Webber, & Nettle, 2020). Shift into the space traditionally filled by economic scholars to be front and center in the search for people-centered solutions to global employment issues (Blustein et al., 2019). Incorporate skills for influencing policy makers into competencies for professional psychologists (Ali, Flanagan, Pham, & Howard, 2018; Fouad & Kozlowski, 2019).

4.2 Power

Constructions of social justice in VIO psychology overemphasize the experiences of those in

positions of *power* (Lefkowitz, 2008), and those who are WEIRD (Henrich et al., 2010) and POSH (Gloss, et al., 2017). Privilege and power shape beliefs about what is fair and what people deserve (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). We contend that the traditional beneficiaries of VIO psychology, how social justice is applied within VIO psychology, and even who defines social justice in our work reflect the ideologies of those with the power to decide and define. As such, much of what is known about social justice lacks relevance to the most marginalized and vulnerable workers, such as the 61% of the global workforce operating in the informal economy (ILO, 2019a), tenuous workers and those with second jobs (Bergman & Jean, 2016) or care workers within and outside of the market (Richardson, 2012). To enact our definition of social justice within VIO psychology requires exercising a preferential option that is inconvenient, uncomfortable, and at odds with the structure of academic and professional rewards.

Interrogate choices of research and intervention participants. Question the bases on which decisions about research participants are made (e.g., to avoid translation, for procedural convenience). Stop rationalizing the WEIRD and POSH focus that has dominated VIO psychology, and alter the reward structures that perpetuate this narrow focus. Engage in research and practice with the people in greatest need of decent work around the globe, including those that are marginalized and vulnerable, and those in non-traditional work settings (e.g., humanitarian work psychology; McWha-Hermann et al., 2015). Prioritize the aims of those traditionally marginalized and disempowered. As with efforts to expand the contexts in which we work, build relationships and collaborators across lines of privilege that enable inclusion. Seek to make explicit the unseen marginalization and social injustice of marginalized groups. Use our own privilege (e.g., access, authority, etc.) to subvert imbalances, where possible.

Challenge who benefits from the findings of research studies and interventions. Actively question who is being served by VIO research, a stance exemplified in Humanitarian Work Psychology's (HWP) emergence as a reaction to the historic focus of I/O psychology on the corporate sector (e.g. Carr, MacLachlan, & Furnham, 2011; Berry, et al., 2011; McWha-Hermann et al., 2015; Gloss & Foster Thompson, 2013). Question the assumptions on which research questions are based, and the extent to which findings provide practical solutions for research participants. Consider how research questions might generate knowledge that perpetuates power structures (for example, teaching tomorrow's professionals how to more effectively manage marginalized employees), in order to rewrite the questions to challenge those structures. VIO psychologists have the potential to make great contributions to poverty reduction through application of our tools and theories to non-traditional work settings, such as humanitarian and development organizations (Berry et al., 2011), and to improving the working conditions of vulnerable and marginalized workers in all settings (Carr et al., 2011).

Engage critical epistemology. Make explicit whose knowledge is considered legitimate. Theories that attend to indigenous knowledge (e.g., Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006) are too often sidelined in favor of knowledge generated by academicians using scientific methods (Stead, 2004). Neoliberalism and privilege combine to influence what are considered to be valid research tools (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Lack of representativeness renders suspect our fundamental construct definitions, for example, what is 'flexible' from a management purview may be experienced by employees as unpredictable and irregular (Bergman & Jean, 2016), and necessitates scrutiny, culling, and/or adaptation of existing theories and frameworks (DaSilva, Paiva, & Ribeiro, 2016). VIO social justice efforts should deconstruct our notions of expertise and authority to center the knowledge of participants and collaborators.

4.3 Perception

VIO research on injustice has typically focused on individual *perceptions* of justice experiences relative to comparative others, rather than focusing on topics and methodologies that articulate justice in terms of fulfilling basic needs, or illuminate cultural variations in justice constructions (e.g., Oltra et al.,

2013; Greenwood, 2002; Prilleltensky, 2012). In contrast, Oltra and colleagues (2013) propose a non-perceptual view of justice that highlights ethics-based approaches as a basis for understanding justice. They advocate drawing upon works from a range of disciplines that emphasize the importance of non-renounceable rights, values, and/or principles, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948) and utilizing nondiscrimination theory (Cortina, 2008; Demuijnck, 2009). These perspectives challenge the status quo and individualistic conceptualizations of justice. The following recommendations address the ideological underpinnings of social justice research and practice.

Make values, positionality, and ideological influences transparent. Attending to marginalizing conditions requires acknowledging that ideologically-embedded values do, and have always, infuse(d) our research and practice (Lefkowitz, 2008). The questions we ask and overlook, the methodologies we employ and dismiss, the findings we determine important and irrelevant, and the conclusions we derive and deride, are shaped by and reflect researcher identities, worldviews, and values (Eagly & Riger, 2014; Unger, 1983). We lack a shared expectation of illuminating and debating the implicit values and moral implications of our work (Prilleltensky, 1997). Drawing out the implicit values underpinning the discipline is an essential step toward transparency of neoliberal influences. Making values explicit also requires articulating a vision of what is a “good life” and “good society” (Prilleltensky, 1997), and acknowledging that these visions will vary in different social, economic and cultural contexts.

We call for developing a consistent standard and practice of reporting the values, positionality, and ideological influences reflected in VIO psychology contributions, and explicit attention to how our research questions and agendas are shaped by privilege and neoliberal ideology (see a succinct acknowledgement of positionality in Blustein et al., 2020). This includes, among other things, explicitly claiming (or refuting) a preferential option for non-renounceable human rights over other considerations in our work.

Contest neoliberalism and generate alternatives. Islam and Zyphur (2009) argue that there is promise for VIO psychology to reposition its focus on positivism and its emphasis on profit and management. In alignment with these and other scholars, we call for a shift away from purely individual, instrumental, competitive perspectives in VIO psychology that are grounded in neoliberalism (Bal et al., 2019; Bal & Doci, 2018; Bello & Chacon, 2015; Doci & Bal 2018; Islam & Zyphur, 2006; 2009), and for making transparent neoliberal influences on VIO psychology in order to develop and draw on alternative approaches.

One such potential alternative is the *capability approach* which aims to measure human development and wellbeing without privileging profit, wealth, or resources (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003; UN Development Programme, 2019b). Capability is a function of agency within the structural constraints that limit real options and shape perceptions of what is possible and desirable. The capability approach has had significant traction in multiple disciplines, but while it has been applied to workplace equality (e.g., Gagnon & Cornelius, 2000) and sustainable employability (Van der Klink et al., 2016), it has had little traction within mainstream VIO psychology (see Gloss et al., 2017, for an important exception).

We call for the infusion of a capability perspective into VIO research and practice such that the quality of the environment (schools, organization, communities, societies) is evaluated in conjunction with marginalizing conditions and individual skills and agency. We call for further alternatives that disrupt notions of individual blame and responsibility for the marginalizing conditions, and for elucidation of how such alternatives would shift VIO psychology questions, variables, methods, and implications for social justice (see Nussbaum, 2003).

Accountability. As we deconstruct discourses and develop alternatives to neoliberal models, we

must develop and evaluate emancipatory interventions that generate pathways for systemic transformation (Hooley et al., 2018, 2019). For example, emancipatory responses to problematic labor arrangements include raising worker consciousness about the injustice of such arrangements, and enhancing individual and collective agency for contesting and transforming such arrangements (Sultana, 2018). To parallel these processes, we advocate for increased accountability in VIO research and practice, making it routine to highlight how findings and practices serve to reinforce injustice or protect human rights, including the right to decent work.

4.4 Recommendations across context, power, and perception

Promote and engage a greater breadth of methods and designs. Inherent in recommendations across considerations of context, power, and perception is the need to continuously expand our methods and designs. Such expansion should enable rigorous pursuit of questions in contexts and with people that VIO psychology has neglected, define constructs and desired outcomes from participant perspectives, and meet criteria for psychopolitical validity (Prilleltensky, 2008). One example with potential for VIO research is *testimonio*. Within critical race research in education, *testimonio* has been employed as a liberatory methodology (Bernal, Burciaga, Carmona, 2012; Pérez Huber, 2009). Distinct from other narratives such as oral histories, *testimonio*, “has the unique characteristic of being a political and conscientized reflection that is often spoken...to bring to light a wrong, a point of view, or an urgent call to action” (p. 525, Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). Approaches like this have the potential to enable VIO psychological research to step outside the scientist-practitioner model and into emotive spaces where systemic inequalities and injustices exist and perpetuate.

Foster critical consciousness among VIO psychologists. Building on earlier work recommending fostering critical consciousness across lines of privilege and power (Blustein, McWhirter & Perry, 2005), we underscore the role of VIO psychologists in shaping progress toward social justice. We need models for critically self-aware research and practice that potentiate, rather than problematize, the inherent paradoxes and tensions between organizational aims and social justice goals (Mease, 2016). VIO psychologist critical consciousness is important to ensuring that research carefully and explicitly attends to how privilege, power, and oppression structure research assumptions, methodologies, questions, and findings.

To pursue this aspirational agenda, just as multicultural training of students acknowledges the hegemony of Whiteness and maleness, so too the training of VIO professionals should acknowledge the hegemony of neoliberalism and the unintended consequences of neoliberalism for perpetuating and maintaining privilege and prioritizing the interests of the market over basic, non-renounceable human rights. Drawing from the wisdom of the Black Lives Matter movement (blacklivesmatter.com), there are parallels between the way that non-Black people fail to recognize, acknowledge, or interrupt the perpetuation of anti-Blackness, and the way most VIO psychologists fail to question or challenge the status quo. This inaction does not hurt most of us personally or professionally. But it should.

Conclusion

We have proposed a definition of social justice and a critical psychology lens for evaluating social justice efforts in VIO psychology. This overtly values-based proposition requires moving beyond neoliberal, individualistic, perception-based approaches to justice. We claim a preferential option for securing non renounceable human rights, recalling the liberatory stance of Martín-Baró, “it is a question of whether psychological knowledge will be placed in the service of constructing a society where the welfare of the few is not built on the wretchedness of the many, where the fulfillment of some does not require that others be deprived, where the interests of the minority do not demand the dehumanization of

all” (p. 46, 1994).

We invite researchers and practitioners in VIO psychology to apply this definition and lens and our recommendations to more clearly center on the perspectives of those with the least access to decent work. VIO research and practice should be evaluated in keeping with critical questions of who is and is not being served, and how a given effort interrupts and challenges, or replicates and reinforces, the unfairness of the status quo. To do this, our recommendations focus on making explicit underpinning issues of context, power, and perception.

VIO psychology efforts to promote social justice and well-being at individual, micro and meso levels should continue, but we advocate for a broadening of strategies and aims to tackle the macro-level conditions that affect the majority of the world’s workers. The scope of change and chronic injustice experienced by so many calls us to re-envision our role and purpose. To the extent that VIO psychology explores alternatives to neoliberalism and develops new emancipatory responses that interrupt dominant discourses and support transformation of marginalizing conditions, we have opportunities to effect change and enhance the relevance of our work beyond a narrow segment of society.

Through articulation of signs of progress, we identify ways in which VIO psychologists are tackling marginalizing conditions. Living wages, PWT, the DWA, critical consciousness, and humanitarian work psychology are all initiatives that shift the emphasis of VIO psychology to address the concerns of those historically left out. The quest for social justice is not a departure from the goals of psychological science, but a recognition that aims of improving human welfare are subverted by collective failure to see the water we are swimming in. Such collective failure keeps us ‘servants of the powerful’ (Lefkowitz, 2008) rather than servants of the vast majorities. If neoliberalism is the driver of damaging and damning changes to work that adversely affect a majority of the world’s population, then we must not be afraid to develop and promote alternatives that center human dignity and thriving over market efficiency.

Similar to Prilleltensky’s (1997) call for annunciation, Lefkowitz (2008) contends, “In order to take a normative or moral position, one must move beyond mere description and putatively scientific “value-free” perspectives. One has to take a stand and assert what interpersonal, organization, political or societal conditions ought to exist- and defend that position in moral terms” (p. 446). The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals are a comprehensive, human-centered example of annunciation that can orient VIO psychology social justice efforts for decades. Lasting transformation in the face of contemporary global challenges requires exercising a preferential option for human rights. Continued application of the critical psychology lens and a proliferation of emancipatory approaches in VIO psychology are necessary to interrupt dominant discourses that center problems of, and solutions to, marginalizing conditions on individuals.

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