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Lisa A. Goodman, Belle Liang, Sarah R. Weintraub, Janet E. Helms and Rachel E. Latta

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• **Rejoinder**

Warts and All:
Personal Reflections on Social Justice in Counseling Psychology. Reply to Kiselica, Palmer, Thompson and Shermis, and Watts

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In their comments regarding Goodman, Liang, Helms, Latta, Sparks, and Weintraub's article "Training Counseling Psychologists as Social Justice Agents: Feminist and Multicultural Principles in Action," Kiselica, Palmer, Thompson and Shermis, and Watts offered a number of useful suggestions for elaborating on social justice theory, practice, and training. Their reactions and feedback challenged Goodman et al. to revisit and clarify their thinking about several related issues, including (a) the importance of student and faculty self-examination, (b) the need to ground our social justice theories and practice in organizing philosophies, (c) the difficulties of educating students about social justice work, and (e) the imperative to collaborate across professions. In this reply, the authors discuss each of these issues in turn, noting points of agreement and disagreement with their colleagues.

Because academics so often write in a vacuum, without any feedback beyond critical comments from reviewers, it is a thrill to participate with colleagues in ongoing conversations about ideas, to discover points of agreement as well as points of disagreement, and to work collaboratively to move the conversation forward. It is therefore an honor to be a part of the discussion on social justice and counseling psychology in this issue of *The Counseling Psychologist*. We are grateful to Kiselica (2004 [this issue]), Palmer (2004 [this issue]), Thompson and Shermis (2004 [this issue]), and Watts (2004

We want to express our deepest appreciation to our colleagues in the counseling psychology program at Boston College (David Blustein, Maureen Kenny, James Mahalik, Sandy Morse, Guerda Nicolas, Robert Romano, and Mary Walsh) who make Boston College such a wonderful place to work and learn. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to the first author, Lisa A. Goodman, Ph.D., Department of Counseling and Developmental Psychology, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Campion 310, Chestnut Hill, MA 02461; phone: 617-552-1725; e-mail: goodmalc@bc.edu.

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[this issue]) for their thoughtful reactions to our article "Training Counseling Psychologists as Social Justice Agents: Feminist and Multicultural Principles in Action" (Goodman et al., 2004 [this issue]). Their reactions and feedback challenged us to revisit and clarify our thinking about several related issues, including (a) the importance of student and faculty self-examination, (b) the need to ground our social justice theories and practice in organizing philosophies, (c) the difficulties of educating students about social justice work, and (e) the imperative to collaborate across professions. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

ON THE AUTHORS' SELF-EXAMINATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

With regard to ongoing self-examination—the first of six principles outlined in our initial article (Goodman et al., 2004)—Kiselica (2004) expressed disappointment that the faculty authors did not reveal their own "imperfections," mistakes, or personal struggles doing social justice work but rather left it to the students to do so. In our initial article, we chose to emphasize student reactions to their First Year Experience (FYE) placements because the FYE was such a central part of the article, and students are the "frontline" of the FYE. Nevertheless, as we noted in that article, if we as faculty members want to create an environment in which students feel safe to reveal their vulnerabilities in an ongoing process of self-examination, we certainly cannot exempt ourselves from this process.

Although we, as individual faculty members, have shared some of our own struggles with our advisees or in our classes, we have begun to have these kinds of discussions as a larger group only recently. Over the past 6 months, we have initiated a series of "town meetings" that include all counseling psychology faculty and doctoral students in which we have tried (fumblingly, at first) to talk about oppression in our program and in our own lives. This is certainly an important aspect of the self-examination required for students and faculty doing social justice work. Another aspect is simply to be in touch with our own motivations and conflicts about doing this work—feelings that may influence how we talk with community members and how we do the work itself.

The three faculty authors of this article (Sarah Weintraub, the third author, and Rachel Latta, the fifth author, are doctoral students whose voice we heard in the initial article) accept Kiselica's challenge to describe our internal processes in this regard—warts and all. We do so to illustrate how varied and complex the process of self-examination can be. We represent three different races and grew up in different circumstances—geographic, economic, reli-

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gious, and cultural. We therefore come to this work from very different places, both internally and externally. Nevertheless, our feelings are far from unique. We hope, therefore, that our self-disclosures will encourage others to feel more comfortable with their own.

Lisa Goodman

Thompson and Shermis (2004) urge us to examine ourselves relative to the other. As a relatively privileged White woman, I have worked for the past 17 years with and for poor women, many of whom are women of color and most of whom have experienced devastating psychological and physical violence at the hands of intimate partners. I have chosen to focus my work on communities of which I am not a part. My presumed outsider status leads me to face justifiably guarded, suspicious, or even rejecting reactions on the part of community members. They wonder what my "real" motives are, whether I am willing to work on their questions and concerns rather than my own (making the assumption that theirs are different from mine) or whether I will abandon the community once a specific project has ended. On my bad days, these kinds of responses make me feel defensive, exhausted, and angry. I wonder to myself, "What on earth more do I have to do to prove my good intentions? Why should I even have to do so? Why should I work where I am not appreciated?"

On my better days, however, I remember that I do this work as much for myself as for the women with whom I am trying to connect. When I am brought face to face with oppression and suffering, my initial reaction is always empathy. But because I am a person of privilege, the empathy often gives way to shame, anger, sadness, and helplessness; to avoid these sometimes unbearable feelings, I find that I turn my face away, reducing my own humanity and ability to live life fully. By promoting social justice, I seek to ameliorate the differences between me and others that at once oppress them and threaten to divide me from myself. Finally, as a woman, a Jewish woman, it is my obligation and privilege to engage in Tikkun Olam—work to repair the world and make it whole—especially for women. Such work is a central part of my identity. It connects me to larger communities (Jewish, feminist, academic, social activist, geographic) and provides a range of life experiences (outside the constricting walls of a privileged life) that give my life a deeper sense of meaning. It is therefore incumbent on me to earn the respect of the women whose help I need to advocate more effectively for women's rights. When I remember this, I find a more empathic place in myself and respond more openly and nondefensively to community members' initial reactions.

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Janet Helms

A rat ate my chartreuse dress. It was a special dress that my grandmother had made for me out of remnants from the fabric store. If it were starched, the skirt stood out and billowed in the wind like a bell when I turned round in circles. I took special care of the dress and stored it in a wooden chest in the pantry where I kept my clothes at 6 years old until the rat ate through the chest and consumed most of my bell dress. I was hurt and angry, but I had been taught not to expect any better behavior from rats given the many examples in family lore of how rats preyed on or were thwarted in their attempts to prey on the Helms family. I learned to fear, loathe, and avoid rats. The mere picture of a rat sent chills down my spine. When I was 19, as a condition for passing my experimental psychology course, I was required to feed, cuddle, clean up after, and train a rat. It was a white rat, whereas the rats in my house were more colorful. Nevertheless, it was a rat! I will confess that I did not cuddle him, but he was well fed and could push an operant conditioning bar with the best of them. But he was a rat, and I was not sad when I learned what its ultimate fate would be!

When I enter any setting, I am potentially perceived as more than or less than I should be to do social justice work. If I am perceived as too privileged, then I must remind myself that the rat ate my dress. If I am perceived as not smart or competent enough, then I must remember that I fed the rat. I do not conceptualize myself as "relative to the other." I am the "other" in so many ways. I know that the privileges that I enjoy today can be taken away in a minute when a law or rule changes or an angry or powerful White person decides that I am not deserving. I know this because it has happened to so many people who were and are like me in the ways that are important. By doing social justice work, I reduce the distance that I (that we) can fall.

Belle Liang

Similar to my colleagues, Lisa and Janet, my motivations toward social justice work are as personal and complex as being a first-generation Chinese American Christian woman. It's difficult to sort out the source(s) of my motivation. As the child of immigrant parents who fled Communist China, learned English, worked through college, attained white-collar jobs, and moved into middle-class suburbia, I might be motivated by an awareness of the distance that we have come and, thus, the "distance that we can fall." Or is it guilt over being born into socioeconomic privilege and being raised without want? Is it righteous indignation over my own experiences of prejudice and discrimination against Asians and against women? Or is it ambivalence

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over playing minority and gender cards to achieve my academic and career goals? Is it solidarity with other women of color? Or is it a sheepish attempt to identify with oppressed people to whom I am merely an imposter? Or does it stem from my spiritual obligation to follow Jesus' example and calling to "give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come and accompany Me walking the same road that I walk" (Matthew 19:21; *The Amplified Bible*, 1987)? Or is it secondary gain—approval from others and the promise of treasures stored up in heaven? Admittedly, the answer may be a mixture of all the above.

Just as the sum of my ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and faith defies easy definition, my motivations toward social justice work are too contradictory to distill. They are simultaneously noble and less than noble. Yet in the end, I believe motivations are far less important than the doing. As Saint Paul urged the Church of Philippi,

> It is true that some [do God's work] out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love. . . . The former [do so] out of selfish ambition, not sincerely. . . . But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, [the work is done]. (1 Phil. 1:18; *Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2003)

These are complex internal processes and ongoing ones. We do try to be open about them, however, especially with students—to demonstrate that one can and should do social justice work despite external and internal conflicts, including others' doubts and one's own inevitable self-doubt and frustration. The only other option is not to do the work, and that decision would lead to an entirely different set of internal struggles while removing any possibility of successfully combating social injustice on any scale.

ON THEORY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Philosophical Grounding

Moving beyond the personal to the level of theory, Thompson and Shermis (2004) urge that we ground our ideas about the nature of social justice in larger organizing philosophies—ones that include historical and current conceptualizations of the nature of social justice. It was beyond the scope of our initial article to do this kind of philosophical exploration because we wanted to focus on the real-life practice of social justice and the theories already embedded within counseling psychology (i.e., multicultural and

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feminist theory) that could be employed to help us. Still, we wholeheartedly agree with the value of placing discussions about the role of social justice in counseling psychology in a philosophical context. As Prilleltensky (1997) points out, articulating philosophical values is congruent with Galbraith's (1996, p. 1) call "to explore and define what, very specifically, would be right. Just what should the good society be? Toward what, stated as clearly as possible, should we aim?" (in Prilleltensky, 1997, p. 518). Providing philosophical grounding will not only help us to position social justice as a primary purpose of counseling psychology but will also draw us into the important discussion of what kind of society we as counseling psychologists are aiming to create.

As an example, John Rawls (1971) put forth an organizing philosophy on which to hang social justice theories when he contrasted his own theory of justice against libertarian and utilitarian views. Libertarianism advocates maximum individual freedom and limited government control. Rawls believed that a libertarian society would be profoundly unequal, given differences in individual capabilities, tolerances, and resources. Utilitarianism holds that a redistribution of the means to happiness is appropriate if it maximizes the general happiness, even though some persons, including the least advantaged ones, are consequently worse off. Rawls found this view problematic as well, claiming that the hardships of some people could not be justified by a greater common good. Rawls's philosophy, by contrast, combines the "social contract" traditions of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau with the Kantian moral tradition, which holds that every person is morally equal and deserving of respect (Wakefield, 1988). According to this view, resources and bargaining power should be distributed across all people except to the extent that departures from equality make the least advantaged group better off (Rawls, 1971). This idea could provide a strong basis for incorporating social justice aims, theories, and practice into counseling psychology for the obvious reason that it moves us beyond the traditional, individualistic philosophies pervasive in psychology to a focus on social inequities and the need to redress them (Goodman et al., 2004).

Let us be careful, however, not to let an ongoing discussion of abstract philosophies serve as a replacement for action now. Prilleltensky (1997) argues for an integrative social justice model that "will place as much emphasis on moral philosophy as on practice" (p. 519). He notes that existing models tend to remain at a level of abstraction that makes it difficult to imagine actual implications for action. It is this action part of the social justice model that our article sought to tackle. We chose to identify six principles that would provide concrete bases for joining theory and action.

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On Conceptual Scaling, Conceptual Transformation, and Affirmation

Although not specifically about the philosophies underlying notions of social justice, Watts (2004) offers several interesting concepts to help guide our thinking about how to stretch individual-level psychological concepts to work at meso and macro levels. First, he introduces the notion of conceptual scaling, arguing that in our efforts to conceptualize the nature of social justice work, we should, to the extent possible, preserve traditional concepts and interventions but make them "scalable" by linking them to similar ideas at levels of analysis beyond the micro level. For example, Watts points out that the individualistic notion of self-efficacy can be "scaled up" or mapped onto community functioning by broadening it to encompass the notion of collective efficacy (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).

Watts also introduces the concept of conceptual transformation when simply retooling a concept for use at a broader level is not sufficient. In the case of conceptual transformation, a more qualitative shift in the meaning of the term is required to ensure that it is liberatory rather than oppressive. For example, he argues (as have counseling psychologists Ridley [1984] and Terrell & Terrell [1984]) that the informal diagnosis of paranoia, often given to African Americans who show suspiciousness, should be transformed into the idea of "cultural mistrust," a broader, more systemic notion that recasts a pathologizing term into a strength-based term, suggesting a long-standing resistance strategy in the face of oppression.

Related to Watts's notions of conceptual scaling and conceptual transformation, both he and Kiselica underscore the need to affirm the lived experience of individuals and communities in a way that is strikingly different from traditional therapeutic approaches that pathologize or problematize without consideration of context. For example, Watts (2004) objects to the use of terms like *coping* and *resilience*, arguing that the former "connotes managing challenges, and the latter, bouncing back from them." In both cases, the individual must make internal adjustments to adapt to potentially unjust conditions. By contrast, Watts offers the term *resistance* to connote fighting to combat unjust conditions rather than adapting to them. Discussing clients' anger, Watts eloquently writes, "Indignation borne of social injustice is a special kind of anger, one that indicates a need for guidance rather than management" (p. 862). Imagine what it might feel like for clients or community groups when a therapist or consultant helps them channel their rage in ways that change their environments, as opposed to negatively labeling their anger and working to tamp it down. This kind of approach replaces stigmatization with affirmation, and self-doubt with empowerment.

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We appreciate the notions of conceptual scalability and conceptual transformation and wholeheartedly agree that there is no need to throw out the baby (traditional psychological concepts) with the bathwater. We as counseling psychologists need to build on existing theoretical frameworks wherever possible rather than to reinvent the wheel. Indeed, this is exactly what we attempted in our article. We tried to stretch individually focused ideas grounded in feminist and multicultural psychology to make them applicable at broader systemic or community levels. We believe that the particular contribution of counseling psychology to social justice work lies in its already existing formulations about how to intervene with people in collaborative and strength-based ways.

ON EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Thompson and Shermis (2004), Watts (2004), Kiselica (2004), and Palmer (2004) also challenged us to clarify our thinking about the nature of education in social justice–oriented counseling psychology programs. Indeed, making social justice work central in counseling psychology programs requires faculty and students to think carefully about issues at the curricular and administrative levels. We have excellent models to help us in this regard. As Palmer reminds us, for example, community psychology has been at the forefront of efforts to engage in "action, research, and practice committed to liberating oppressed peoples and respecting all cultures" (Palmer, 2004, quoting The Society for Community Research and Action, http://www.apa.org/about/division/div27.html).

Who Benefits From Our Social Justice Curriculum?

Social justice education must rely on a curriculum that speaks directly to the students participating in it. Watts asserts that much of our article and much of the FYE is geared toward privileged White students, who, he presumes, make up a majority of the student body. We certainly did not intend to leave this impression in our initial article. Indeed, our students of color, who now make up almost 50% of the doctoral student population, describe the principles laid out in the initial article as relevant to their experiences as well. Furthermore, our students come from a wide range of economic and religious backgrounds. All of our students stretch to work with people different from themselves in certain respects. The FYE challenges students to work across differences not only of race and class but also of gender, religion, sexuality,

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age, and ability, among others. Therefore, with regard to self-examination—our first principle for social justice work in counseling psychology—all students must explore the various ways in which their own identities shape their perceptions and experiences. Likewise, the other five principles—sharing power, giving voice, raising consciousness, building on strengths, and leaving clients with tools—are no more applicable to privileged White students than to any other group. While students at Boston College differ in their ability to think critically about the world and their own positions in it, most of our students choose or are accepted into our program because they are knowledgeable about and attracted to its social justice mission and have already grappled with some of these issues.

Watts also wonders whether our initial article highlighted the sociopolitical development of doctoral students to the exclusion of the sociopolitical development of oppressed communities themselves. It is true that our article largely focused on reframing the role of counseling psychologists from professionals working exclusively at the micro level to social justice agents who address the meso and macro levels as well. But by stressing the importance of sharing power, giving voice, building on strengths, and leaving clients with tools to do the work themselves, we hoped to highlight the role of oppressed groups working with social justice agents, just as we highlighted the role of psychologists working with communities. We hope that as a field, we continue to develop theoretical and practice-based models that can guide the work of psychologists and community members as joint actors in the creation of a more just world.

With What Resources?

Moving to the practical, Thompson and Shermis (2004) implicitly raise the issue of resources when they describe those presumably available at Boston College as "extraordinary." This is not actually the case. Although, as Palmer (2004) notes, social justice is central to the Boston College's mission, the FYE program was developed without any financial resources whatsoever. Over time, several of the projects (e.g., Tools for Tomorrow) have received funding from various sources. But the projects were up and running before they received a dime. Other FYE projects (e.g., ROAD: Reaching Out About Depression) were created by community members before the FYE was even born. In these cases, students and faculty worked with the existing projects to create a role for counseling students. In addition, while the development and maintenance of the FYE required a sizable time commitment on the part of faculty and students alike, no course credit, no grants (until recently), and no wider university support beyond its (admittedly important) general social

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justice mission were granted to students or faculty for development and maintenance.

Boston College does, of course, benefit from its location in resource-rich (and problem-rich) Boston. However, as we posited in our initial article, social justice work, as described, can be implemented not only in urban settings but also in rural settings or in any setting where oppression exists (i.e., all settings). Indeed, Thompson and Shermis (2004) offer an example of their own work as social justice agents in Bloomington, Indiana. The Heritage Project (HP) is a community-building effort that "helps empower parents, teachers, and community members to combat problems of race and other structural disadvantage (e.g., poverty, homelessness, gender inequity) by equipping them with constructive tools for dismantling manifestations of injustice" (p.875). The creation of the Heritage School and the development of its consultative component most likely required considerable resources. However, involving counseling psychology students as social justice agents in the HP presumably requires few additional university resources beyond students' time and the time and dedication of faculty supervisors who agreed to offer training and supervision.

Of course, we do not want to suggest that such work is easy. More resources are needed for this work. As Kiselica (2004) so aptly pointed out, with limited coverage and compensation offered for most social justice–oriented work, the more time a practitioner dedicates to such activities, the less time he or she has for work that is more highly compensated. Similarly, as we mentioned in our initial article, faculty members often engage in social justice work as an add-on, given that such work is generally not valued as highly as more traditional research in tenure and promotion considerations (McCroskey, 2003). And students who want to remain competitive with their peers in more traditionally structured programs must cover the same material as these latter programs in addition to the activities and curricular content central to a focus on social justice. It is clear that not only are more resources necessary but a broader acknowledgement of the value of social justice work is also critical.

Balancing the Curriculum

Likewise, we agree completely with Kiselica's (2004) point that when we add social justice training to our curricula, something else has to go. We cannot be all things to all people. We have struggled with this very issue at Boston College. Indeed, in response to growing concern among faculty and students that the workload for the students was becoming untenable, we recently held a faculty retreat to examine our curriculum and eliminate all

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"nonessential" courses. Our attempt to trim the curriculum was a difficult and frustrating process, given American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation requirements, the need for students to be competitive for internships, and faculty desires to retain the courses that had been valuable to us as students while adding courses that were missing from our own education. In the end, we combined where we could and acknowledged that the student workload remains quite taxing. To some extent, we are still trying to be all things to all people.

The process of negotiating between training our students to do social justice work and preparing them to meet traditional professional requirements will be ongoing as we experiment with different possibilities. But the balance will be difficult to achieve within current structures. We wonder, with Palmer (2004), how APA accreditation standards might shift to accommodate social justice work. We also wonder whether and how internship sites might learn to appreciate the special skills our students have developed by nature of their involvement in such work. We agree with Kiselica (2004) that on a fundamental level, training students to be social justice agents and training them to be competent practitioners go hand in hand; helping students understand and improve the lives of individuals requires their acknowledgement that the health of individuals, communities, and systems are inextricably linked.

ON INTER-PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

Like Palmer (2004), we believe that to influence complex problems and systems, we need to develop interventions that are integrative and multilevel and that involve meaningful interprofessional collaborations. Indeed, as Brabeck, Walsh, Kenny, and Comilang (1997) stated, counseling psychologists are ideally positioned to participate in such collaborations as they receive focused training in consultation and collaboration. As we noted in our initial article, many of the FYE activities rely on such partnerships. Students involved in the Juvenile Rights Advocacy Projects work with law students, lawyers, and judges to develop more context-sensitive and rehabilitation-oriented sentences for incarcerated adolescents. Students working with Tools for Tomorrow collaborate with teachers and administrators, encouraging schools to address nonacademic barriers to learning and career preparation. Students working with ROAD collaborate with lawyers, law students, and community leaders to develop interventions that are responsive to low-income women's real needs. Likewise, the Haitian community project involved collaboration with public health experts, domestic-violence practitioners, and Haitian community leaders.

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Indeed, several professions have recognized interprofessional collaboration as "best practice" (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics, 1994; American Association for Counseling and Development, 1990; American Bar Association, 1993; American Psychological Association, 1997; National Association of School Nurses, 1995; Walsh & Park-Taylor, 2003).

As we articulated in our initial article, however, true partnerships are difficult to maintain. They necessitate, for example, that we blur long-standing professional boundaries or, as Palmer (2004) wrote, lay down "the mantle of specialty recognition," leading to concerns about loss of professional identity (Brabeck et al., 1997). They also require considerable compromise, as conflicting professional ethics codes, values, perspectives, and methods are inevitable (Brabeck & Latta, 2003).

Structural barriers within universities may also thwart collaborative efforts. For example, as Brabeck et al. (1997) point out, teaching interdisciplinary courses is difficult in universities where only one faculty member is credited for having taught any one course. Moreover, when collaborative courses are added to a curriculum, others must go. Which ones? If students spend time learning about the perspectives of other disciplines, there is necessarily going to be less time for them to learn about their own.

Compensation structures also stand in the way of successful interprofessional collaboration. As Kiselica (2004) points out, counseling psychologists who attempt to work across disciplinary boundaries often come up against a narrowly focused health care system that covers psychotherapy but not interprofessional advocacy to change the conditions that lead to the need for therapy. Kiselica provides a poignant example of the need to transform the health care system's methods of compensation. For an explosive 14-year-old boy seeking services in a traditional fee-for-services setting, a weekly hour-long anger-management intervention will have limited benefits without concurrent work to address some of the sources of his anger—a poor foster-care placement, substandard educational curriculum, and overly punitive probation conditions. Interventions into these root causes ideally would be conducted by an interdisciplinary group. But who will pay for them? As Kiselica (2004) wrote, and as mentioned above, "The dedicated practitioner who devotes his or her time [alone] to the latter services forsakes compensation that would be attained by serving other clients whose problems are less complex and for whom social justice interventions might not be required. Therein lies the rub" (p. 842). No wonder so many psychologists burn out on their public sector jobs and retreat to the relative psychological and economic comfort of clients who "just need to talk." The system is clearly broken.

It is therefore imperative, as Kiselica (2004) asserted, that we as a profession join with other mental health professions to convince our state and federal legislatures to expand the range and type of "mental health" services and

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the nature of compensation for those services to include "social justice activities" that are likely to be inter-professional in nature.

CONCLUSION

Again, we are thrilled to be part of *The Counseling Psychologist*'s ongoing discussion about the role of social justice in counseling psychology. We hope that this discussion will lead to real, substantive shifts in our work as scholars, practitioners, program developers, and policy makers and that these shifts, in turn, will improve the lives of oppressed people. As we quoted in our initial article, Rabbi Tarfon, a rabbinic scholar of the Mishnah, taught that "you are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it" (Pirke Avot 2:21).

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