Diversity and Social Justice

Guiding Concepts for Career Development Practice

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What does culture mean to you?
2. What does social justice mean to you?

Introduction and Learning Objectives

Vignette: Imagine

Imagine a world where every student had equal access to basic education, had supports to encourage academic success, and had resources to access higher education. Imagine a world where every child could live out the dream, "you can be whatever you want to be when you grow up." Imagine a world where gender, religion, social class, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or age would not be a barrier for pursuing career opportunities. Imagine a world where people could do their jobs without concern about fitting in, without fear of exploitation, and with the same pay as their co-workers. Imagine a world where people had access to relevant career development services that took into account their values, their current needs, their views regarding work, and other roles in their lives. Imagine a world where professionals could address people's career development needs through interventions with individuals, but also make a positive difference by initiating systemic and social change.

Overview

Although the above statements may seem idealistic, they are intended to get you thinking about some of the key influences on people's career development and to encourage reflection on some of the opportunities and barriers that impact the lives of Canadians seeking to fulfill their educational and occupational goals. The purpose of this chapter is to position cultural diversity and **social justice** as guiding concepts for understanding career development. Although Canada is known around the world for its progressive policies on multiculturalism, there are notable differences between policies and practices. The lives of many Canadians are seriously impacted by whether or not they are members of dominant groups who have more economic and political power, by their access to economic and social resources such as education and employment, and by their capacity to access professional services (Arthur & Collins, 2010). As you review the content of this chapter as well as those of other chapters, we hope you will consider the influence of culture on career development and the roles that career development practitioners play in addressing social justice issues.

We begin with an exploration of the term "culture" as it relates to the identities and experiences of individuals and groups. We then take a look at the cultural context of Canada, examining the impact of culture on career development for particular non-dominant populations. This leads into a more detailed examination of how culture specifically impacts career development perspectives, resources and services, theories, and models. We emphasize the importance of infusing cultural awareness into all aspects of career development, which necessitates active change in current career practices. We end with an exploration of the implications of social justice for career development practices.

By the end of this chapter, our aim is that you succeed at the following learning objectives:

1. Define the meaning of culture and social justice.
2. Describe how culture influences career development.
3. Identify individual differences in educational and occupational attainment.
4. Explain the relationships between culture and social justice.
5. List common barriers for access to career development services.
6. Identify competencies required by career development practitioners.
7. Discuss levels of interventions that could be used to address social justice issues.

What Is Culture?

Vignette: Peter

Peter works in an employment agency where clients come from a variety of countries and cultures. He has been running workshops for his clients but notices that it is difficult for participants to talk openly about their career concerns, and he often wonders if they are getting much out of it. Some of the clients seem impatient when he takes the time to explain ideas related to career, career planning, and the decision-making process. Most of the questions that clients ask are focused on job searching. Peter wonders if he should educate the workshop participants about career planning or simply emphasize the job search process. He doesn't want to do this, but there is pressure from the agency director to show how the workshop connects to the agency mandate of job placement. He raises his concern with a trusted colleague who asks him more about the needs of clients who attend the workshop. They talk about the possible cultural influences on his clients' participation and how he could better tailor the workshop to address their short- and longer-term needs. Peter feels excited about this possibility but also a little confused about how to change his approach to meet the needs of clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In this section, we will explore the meaning of culture, cultural diversity, and cultural identities. As you read through this section, reflect on the vignette above and ask yourself how Peter's culture or the cultural identities of his clients might be impacting the success of his career development workshops.

The Meaning of Culture

Culture is a term that is part of everyday language, yet has various meanings. People often use the term to mean race or ethnicity. However, culture is not just one specific characteristic; it includes a range of factors and experiences that influence how people view themselves, how they view other people, and how they behave. Arthur and Collins (2010) outline several assumptions about culture:

1. Every individual is a cultural being.
2. Culture is learned and transmitted through social interactions and from generation to generation.
3. Culture is dynamic and changeable.

As practitioners, we are each unique cultural beings. We need to reflect on our own personal culture and understand who we are and what we bring to professional practice. This also means that we need to consider how our cultural background impacts the way we view other people. The second and third points emphasize how

culture is transmitted through shared customs, values, and traditions (Sue & Sue, 1990). The emphasis on learning reinforces that culture is not fixed; our personal cultural identities change and evolve over time (Collins, 2010). In turn, through our life experiences, we integrate new understandings into how we define ourselves. These same basic assumptions apply to our work with clients. Every interaction requires us to appreciate the cultural identity of the other person. It is also our responsibility to learn about the cultural norms and practices of other people and to develop a better understanding about the influences of culture on their career development.

The Meaning of Cultural Diversity

We invite you to consider the following question: Whom do you think of when you use or hear the terms "culturally different" or "culturally diverse"? What are your first thoughts? What are the cultural characteristics that led you to consider them as culturally different from you? Is it country of origin? Is it visible differences, such as skin colour, sex, age, or ability? What about people whose differences might not be visible but are expressed through attitudes and behaviour? Your personal beliefs about culture may lead you to categorize other people on the basis of only one or two factors. We caution you about making assumptions based on group membership or perceived differences. Sometimes, the person who looks the least like you actually has the most in common with you, and vice versa!

The Meaning of Cultural Identity

When people have a similar cultural background of customs, values, and traditions — they are likely to have a similar worldview; when they have very different cultural backgrounds, their assumptions are more likely to be different (Pedersen & Ivey, 1993).

People's cultural identities are also a composite of their experiences. Two individuals from the same cultural community may define their own cultural identity very differently based on different experiences, affiliation with different cultural groups, or emergent aspects of their own identity, such as sexual orientation.

We see **cultural identity** as the unique composite of cultural influences (including gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status) that define each individual (Collins & Arthur, 2010). The factor most important in understanding the cultural identity of another person is how that person sees herself or himself (Collins, 2010). Career development practitioners must avoid cultural stereotypes and consider carefully the relevant cultural influences on each person's career development.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

Questions on the Vignette

1. How might Peter's cultural identity shape the lens through which he views the career development needs and priorities of his clients?
2. What effect might his cultural lens have on the selection and effectiveness of the activities and processes he implements for his workshops?

The Canadian Context

This section provides an overview of Canada's population with some background information about selected populations. Please consider this information in the context of the previous definition of culture. Background knowledge about group membership may provide a potential starting point for cultural understanding; however, you must always explore an individual's unique worldview, experiences, and cultural identity to appreciate his or her idiosyncratic career development needs. We conclude with some further reflections on the implication of diverse cultural identities to career development.

Inuit, Métis, and First Nations Peoples

Canada is a nation that is founded on cultural plurality. According to the 2012 Census (Statistics Canada [SC], 2012), the population of Canada is approximately 34,880,500 people. When we refer to cultural diversity within the Canadian context, it is important to recognize the people who founded our country. The 2006 Census reported about 1.1 million as **Aboriginal peoples** — specifically, **Inuit**, **Métis**, and **Aboriginal** peoples. However, it is noteworthy that between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal populations grew by 45%, compared to 8% growth in the rest of the population (SC, 2008).

There are about 630 First Nations communities in Canada with First Nations constituting the largest indigenous group in Canada (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009). First Nations are culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse peoples, residing in both their traditional territories and in rural and urban areas throughout Canada (Blue, Darou, & Ruano, 2010). First Nations peoples experience high rates of under-employment and unemployment in comparison to the dominant populations of Canada. The lingering effects of colonization, historical oppression, and differential rates of access to education and employment opportunities are all influential forces (Arthur & Collins, 2010). Focusing on education appears to be key to helping future generations achieve academic and work success (Offet-Gardner, 2010).

Immigrants and Refugees

Over the past 30 years Canada has become much more ethnically diverse due to shifting patterns in immigration and an increase in immigrants and **refugees** from new countries of origin. (Arthur, 2010). There have also been greater numbers of temporary foreign workers and students from other countries attending schools in Canada. Together, these groups resulted in more than 500,000 newcomers in 2008 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2009a). Canada depends upon immigration as part of a national strategy to fulfill projections of labour market needs in the future. With an aging population, Canada needs more skilled labourers from other countries in order to prosper economically (Arthur, 2012).

As people with diverse cultural practices come to study, work, and live in Canada, it is incumbent on us to consider how effectively our career development practices and services address their needs. Many factors impact the career development and employment experiences of new Canadians. Newcomers require recognition of their foreign credentials and experience. They may encounter cultural differences in teaching and learning methods. The time it takes to be accepted by local communities, workforces, and organizations is a factor. Resources and supports for transition between the home country and Canada will differ among groups.

There is a tendency to consider immigrants and refugees as if they are a homogenous group. However, there are many factors premigration, such as educational attainment and availability of documentation, as well as postmigration, such as language capacity, recognition of foreign credentials, and experience, that impact their career development in a new country (Arthur, 2012). Involuntary relocation due to war or natural disasters results in unplanned career and life disruptions. Other career issues may begin to surface upon arrival in Canada at a time when securing education or employment is an urgent matter. Further issues may surface after a period of living, learning, or working in Canada. For example, immigrant youth are least likely to pursue postsecondary education, which has consequences for their short- and long-term career development (Bezanson et al., 2007). Secure employment is a major concern for family stability. There may also be role shifts and changing family dynamics, depending on which family members are successful in gaining employment (Arthur, Merali, & Djuraskovic, 2010).

Although the onus to adapt to Canadian society is often placed on immigrants, we need to consider if local communities, schools, and workplaces are sufficiently prepared to welcome and integrate people who choose Canada as their new home. The process of integration is not just the responsibility of newcomers, but a complex process shared with members of the receiving society, including career development professionals (Arthur, 2012).

Religious Diversity

One of the important aspects of cultural diversity in Canada is the increase in religious diversity. The non-Christian population continues to grow, particularly the number of people practising Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh religions (CIC, 2009b). In previous decades, religion might have been viewed as a personal or private matter. However, there is growing recognition that religious and spiritual beliefs play a strong role in shaping people's cultural worldview, including their perspectives on gender roles, personal values, and one's purpose in life. As we explore cultural influences on career development, the role of religion in people's lives should be considered a key area of influence.

Sexual Orientation

In exploring dimensions of cultural diversity, you are encouraged to look beyond Canada's increased ethnic diversity. For example, it is estimated that the population of people with **non-dominant sexual orientations** ranges between 3% and 10% of the population (Alderson, 2010). However, exact statistics are difficult to ascertain, as many members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community feel that it is not socially acceptable to be public about their identity. The degree to which individuals feel that they can be open about their sexual orientation has implications for their career development (Degges-White & Shoffner, 2002). Workplace discrimination based on homophobic attitudes continues to impact hiring practices, as well as daily interactions with co-workers, employment benefits to same-sex partners, and the general sense of safety in the workplace (Collins & Oxenbury, 2010).

Ability

The dimensions of ability and disability have not received sufficient attention in the discussion of cultural influences on career development. The term "disability" is used to describe individuals with "a variety of distinct physical, intellectual, and emotional conditions" (Arthur & Collins, 2010, p. 33). It is often not ability, per se, that influences career opportunities; it is that other people's views stigmatize and position individuals as disabled, creating barriers to access and success. Although there is increased support for **persons with disabilities** in educational, social, and work environments, there continue to be major gaps in educational preparation and employment mobility which reduces their economic capacity and quality of life (Office of Disability Issues, 2002). Even though many accommodations have been made in workplaces for those with disabilities, much more could be done to fully recognize the capabilities of all people who could contribute to the Canadian labour force.

Socioeconomic Status and Social Class

There has been surprisingly little attention paid to socioeconomic status and social class (SESC) in the literature addressing career development within the Canadian context. Perhaps it is easier to point out living conditions or other factors associated with poverty in other countries, than it is to acknowledge the persistently high poverty rates in our own (Valetta, 2006). Approximately 5% of Canadians are classified as low income (SC, 2006). However, there are higher rates of poverty among single seniors, families led by single-mothers, members of visible minority groups, and people with disabilities (National Council of Welfare, 2006). Low-income Canadians face major barriers for economic and social mobility, which is strongly associated with determinants in physical and mental health (Pope & Arthur, 2009). The lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the incidence of health concerns. People's access to educational and employment opportunities is fundamentally tied to SESC. There are approximately 1.5 million Canadians who may be characterized as the **working poor**, people who work more than 910 hours per year, but whose income levels still fall below poverty cut-offs (Fleury & Fortin, 2004).

Implications of Diverse Cultural Identities

From our viewpoint, all clients have a cultural background that influences how they view themselves and their relationship to education, **work**, and other life roles. However, it is not their group membership, per se, that leads to career barriers or challenges; rather it is the way in which particular individuals or groups are positioned in our society that leads to conditions of oppression or marginalization, which in turn impact career development. It is paramount that we pay attention to which people or peoples are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of educational and employment opportunities. It is also important to remember that people within each of these groups will have varied experiences, some more successful than others.

We caution you not to categorize people or assume understanding based on their group membership. This can lead to stereotyping and a failure to recognize the unique aspects of each individual's **cultural identity**. There are multiple dimensions that make up a person's cultural identity and the intersections of those factors are what make people unique (Collins, 2010). For example, gender may have a significant impact on career development, but how this plays out may be quite different depending on other cultural or contextual factors. Compare, for example, women who are raised in a middle-class household to women who arrived in Canada as refugees with little family support, or lesbians in a work environment where they feel unsafe about being out. Career practitioners need to balance a general knowledge about the cultural beliefs and practices of diverse populations with an assessment of each individual client's worldview and needs.

The bottom line is that everyone has a unique cultural identity. This identity may affect the ways in which we perceive ourselves and the ways in which we are perceived by others. These perceptions, in turn, can have a significant influence on career development. In the next section, we will consider the ways that our Canadian society affords some people more opportunities and resources than others, including access to educational and employment systems.

❖ Stop and Reflect

Questions on the Vignette

1. How might cultural diversity impact the willingness of participants to open up and share their perspectives and needs in the workshop?
2. What questions might Peter need to ask himself about the cultural identities of his clients to create content and processes that will meet their needs?

Culture and Career Development

Cultural influences are inextricably woven into people's career development in several ways. Culture may affect one's understanding of career and career development, the use of career development resources and services, the perceived availability of career resources and services, and the relevance and appropriateness of career theories and models. We discuss each of these in this section. We wrap up with a call to move from an understanding of cultural diversity to action that transforms career practices. Remember to return to the vignette to see what insight this discussion provides.

The Meaning of Career and Career Development

It is important to recognize that the terms **career** and **career development** may not have the same meaning for everyone. These terms need to be understood according to the historical and cultural influences that have led to contemporary definitions. "Career has been and is enmeshed in notions of work, employment, occupations, and jobs" (Young & Collin, 2004, p. 4). "The term career development is culturally constructed. For members of diverse cultural groups ... the term career may mean different things, if it holds significance at all" (Arthur, 2007). The term has been criticized for being an elitist concept based on the notion that people have free choice about self-expression through their work and other life roles (Arthur, Collins, McMahon, & Marshall, 2009). This may not be the experience of millions of people around the world who work to survive and for whom work is no more than a means to that end. Some authors have suggested that we should, instead, place the emphasis

on the concept of "work" (Blustein, 2006, Blustein, Kenna, Gill, & DeVoy, 2008), because it has more universal relevance and applicability. It is important to consider whether our clients relate to the concepts of career and/or work as a meaningful construct in their lives (Richardson, 2009).

Use of Career Development Resources and Services

For many people, cultural beliefs may also impact whether or not they make use of professional services. There can be strong cultural norms about how future educational and vocational options are decided. Family members may be highly influential in decision making. Religion, gender roles, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity may either limit or expand the types of occupational and lifestyle choices viewed as acceptable (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009). Family resources, either in the form of economic support or in terms of attitudes or beliefs, may be strong influences on the career pathways of children, youth, and adults. There may also be strong cultural beliefs about the acceptability of seeking help outside of the family or community. Discussing important issues about career or education with a stranger may, indeed, be a foreign idea!

Perceived Availability of Career Development Resources and Services

Beyond individual and family attitudes towards seeking help, the perceived availability of services is an important consideration. There is significant variability in the extent to which career development services are available, and in the design and delivery of those services in different countries around the world (Watts & Sultana, 2004). One of the biggest barriers to accessing career development services may be a lack of information about their availability and their relevance to an individual's education and employment planning needs. If the priority is accessing a living wage, then career-values assessment or career-life meaning may seem irrelevant.

When people do access services, they are looking for resources that are relevant to their situation. One key issue is the capacity of these services to address the needs of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Arthur & Lalande, 2009). Although services offered to the general public may address common issues, such as job search, career planning, and decision making, they may neglect fundamental needs of clientele when cultural issues are not taken into consideration. The adage one-size-fits-all does not work when offering culturally responsive professional services. The design and delivery of programs must be matched with the unique needs of people who are living in our communities, and evaluation methods should be used to demonstrate how cultural diversity is incorporated (Arthur & Lalande, 2009).

Relevance and Appropriateness of Career Theories and Models

In order to offer culturally relevant professional services, it is important to consider the theories and models used as guides. A number of **cultural assumptions** are evident in theories and models of career development. The following have been adapted from Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnston (2009):

1. The assumption of **individualism** and **autonomy** — the individual makes choices that ultimately shape that person's destiny.
2. The assumption of **affluence** — the individual holds a certain amount of affluence, including financial resources.
3. The assumption of **opportunity** — the individual is in control of and can choose to strive towards selection, attainment, and ultimate satisfaction in career choices and in life.
4. The assumption of the **centrality** of work in people's lives — work plays a central and pivotal role in people's lives and in fulfilling personal identity.
5. The assumption of the **linearity**, **progressiveness**, and **rationality** of development — the individual's progress in the world can be described and decided upon in orderly, rational, and linear terms.

The examples of cultural assumptions illustrate how many of our theories and models of career interventions are based in a Western **worldview**. How well do these theories and models inform professional practice with populations whose values and cultural norms contrast the views of dominant culture in Canadian society? Applying such models without considering their cultural relevance to all people or peoples is **ethnocentric**; it reflects a false belief that the Western worldview is right and applies to everyone. As a result, the cultural validity of related programs and services is called into question. When career development practitioners select theories and models to guide their practices, they need to consider how effectively these models account for cultural influences on people's career planning and decision making and provide appropriate career-related interventions (Arthur & McMahon, 2005).

Moving Past Awareness to Action

So far in this chapter, we have highlighted two important steps for enhancing **cultural competence** in career practice:

1. Career practitioners must recognize cultural differences, often coined as **cultural sensitivity**.
2. Career practitioners must reflect on their own personal cultural background, assumptions, and cultural lenses.

However, simply recognizing diversity is not a sufficient base for competent professional practice. These steps remain at a relatively passive level, without **initiating action** to embrace diversity and to respond to career development needs from the client's point of view. As supported by the recent revisions to the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (National Steering Committee, 2004), a third step is required:

3. Practitioners need to design and deliver effective interventions that take into account unique aspects of the other person's cultural worldview.

Practitioners need to develop the skills to move from a passive approach to actively incorporating the influences of cultural diversity into their practices with all clients. Above all, they need to infuse their work with an understanding of the effect of cultural influences on people's career development. The onus is on career practitioners to diversify their worldview, their understanding of people's career issues, and the types of interventions that they offer to support clients. Figure 1 provides an overview of the culture-infused counselling model of Arthur and Collins (2010), which focuses on development of specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills in three core-competency domains. For some clients, attention to multiple influences on cultural identity will be essential for building a culturally sensitive working alliance and designing culturally responsive career interventions.

CORE COMPETENCY DOMAINS	CULTURAL IDENTITY INFLUENCES						
	Ethnicity /Cultural Heritage	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Ability	Social Class	Religion	Age
Awareness of your own cultural identities and worldview							
Understanding of the cultural identities and worldview of your client(s)			• Attitudes and Beliefs • Knowledge				
Establishment of a culturally sensitive working alliance that supports social justice							

Figure 1: Assessing Cultural Identity Influences.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

Questions on the Vignette

1. How might the meaning of career and/or work influence engagement of Peter's clients?
2. How might some of the assumptions common to the Western worldview be expressed through this workshop? What barriers to engagement might these create for clients?
3. What actions might Peter take to infuse his understanding of cultural diversity into his career practices in a way that transforms these practices for his clients?

Linking Culture and Social Justice

Many theories and models utilized by career counsellors were developed in a social context in which notions of career development were linear and progressive, and the world was characterized as stable and secure (Hudson, 1999; Savickas, 2003). However, clients who experience employment as chaotic, unpredictable, and/or unstable require career development interventions that address the environmental and social conditions that impact their lives. This requires us to carefully analyze our theories and methods of interventions in light of the realities of people who are marginalized in Canadian society. Rather than fitting people into existing practices, we need to consider how well our theories and interventions support the experiences of our clients. A major concern is that most interventions focus on working with individuals. To fully embrace cultural diversity, career practitioners require education about interventions to address organizational, systemic, or environmental change (Arthur, 2005). This final section of the chapter will explore the relationship between culture and social justice, examine some research on how career practitioners view social justice, and summarize the implications for career development practice.

Relationship Between Culture and Social Justice

We can no longer ignore the fact that the career development of people living in Canada is strongly influenced by the systems that surround them. We need to acknowledge systemic inequities and oppressive practices. The relationship between culture and social justice can be summed up in two key points (Stead, 2004):

1. Cultural affiliation provides some people with vocational privilege and better access to resources.
2. Cultural affiliation poses as a constraining force through which some people

are excluded from educational opportunities and access to a fuller range of occupational choices.

Some groups of people continue to face challenges with employment access, retention, and mobility. These include persons with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, women, visible minorities, and other members of non-dominant populations (Arthur, Broadhead, Magnusson, & Redekopp, 2003).

Defining Social Justice

Social justice was foundational to occupation guidance at the beginning of this century (Parsons, 1909), and has recently resurfaced as a major theme in career development literature (e.g., Arthur, 2005; Fassinger & Gallor, 2006; Irving & Malik, 2005). Although the concept of social justice has stood the test of time, there are many different perspectives about how to define it. Arthur and colleagues (2009) highlight three core components of social justice relevant to the discussion of career development:

1. Fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.
2. Direct action to ameliorate oppression and marginalization within society.
3. Full inclusion and participation of all members of society in a way that enables them to reach their potential. (p. 23)

It is important for career development practitioners to examine how their work may inadvertently support the status quo by focusing on helping clients to adapt to oppressive social and employment conditions. From a social justice perspective, career issues are influenced by both client factors and their surrounding environment and social structures. When clients' career issues are defined only as intrapersonal, there is a risk of blaming clients for their situations. We must consider the environmental and societal forces acting as systemic barriers to people's growth and development. People of different cultural backgrounds continue to be marginalized in society through discriminating social rewards and sanctions that determine who receives the better education and employment positions in our society.

Practitioner Views of Social Justice

Although there is a growing belief that social justice is an important aspect of career development, there are few examples to guide the incorporation of social justice into career-related interventions. To that end, we designed an exploratory study with career development practitioners in Canada to consider their views on social justice and how they incorporated social justice practices (Arthur et al., 2009;

Arthur, Collins, Marshall, & McMahon, 2013). It was found that practitioners associated social justice with advocacy, equity, fulfillment and personal potential, equal opportunities, inclusive practices, relevant client resources, education, improved policies, and the acknowledgement of contextual influences on people's career development. Furthermore, they believed that practitioners should consider possible social justice issues in their work with all clients. However, practitioners also identified gender, socioeconomic status, immigration, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and criminal record as specific cultural factors associated with more educational and employment disadvantages. Discrimination and other forms of oppression are often internalized negatively by clients and become significant barriers to their career development.

Implications for Career Development

Embracing social justice as a core value has significant implications for contemporary career development practices. A social justice lens requires more awareness of the cultural identities and contexts of their clients; consciousness of their own cultural identities and potential biases; understanding of the influences of social, economic, and political systems on career resources and opportunities; and an ability to move beyond the individual to target these contextual influences as part of career interventions.

Career practitioners require a deeper understanding of social justice concepts, and more education and training in how to translate that knowledge into both **micro** and **macro systems** interventions (Burwell, Kalbleisch, & Woodside, 2010). However, practitioners face certain barriers and conditions that undermine their efforts to incorporate social justice concepts into career development interventions (Arthur et al., 2009). These include, but are not limited to, lack of time and financial resources, support from supervisors, mandates of their work setting, insufficient training, lack of interest, doubts about trying to change the status quo, or fears regarding the potentially negative impact on their employment. Along with the barriers clients face, there are several organizational and structural barriers that need to be addressed. Career practitioners may benefit from additional training about how to influence the systems that not only impact their clients, but also the systems in which they work, in order to enact roles and interventions related to social justice.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

Questions on the Vignette
1. What external, systemic factors might be affecting the career paths of clients that Peter is working with?

2. Why might "job search" be a more important focus for these clients than "career" and "career decision making"?
3. What actions might Peter take to explore the systemic barriers faced by these clients?
4. What barriers might Peter himself face in shifting his focus towards social justice interventions?

Summary and Conclusion

We invite career practitioners in Canada to fully consider the contextual influences on people's lives. As noted in the discussion of social justice, it is important to frame people's career issues in light of the conditions and systems that surround them. Canadian society affords a wealth of resources in comparison to many other countries around the world. However, that does not eliminate our responsibility to look inward and see how the lives of many people in Canada are adversely impacted by unequal distribution and access to social and economic resources. Culture and social justice are inextricably linked to the provision of career development services. They influence the ways in which practitioners view both themselves and their clients and are key to the design and implementation of effective interventions on a range of levels, including individual, organizational, community, systems, and social change.

We introduced this chapter with a series of statements directed at imagining a world without sociocultural barriers, where individuals were given the necessary support to reach their academic and occupational potentials. In conclusion, we invite readers to consider ways of making those dreams a reality through professional practice.

Imagine a world where career practitioners embraced diversity, where honouring the cultural identities of their clients was part of everyday practice. Imagine working in ways that make a positive difference for clients through addressing the barriers that adversely impact the career development of many individuals in Canada.

We hope that readers can envision ways of incorporating these aspirations into their future roles as career development practitioners.

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Glossary

Aboriginal peoples is the term used to collectively describe three cultural groups of Aboriginal people: Inuit, Métis, and Indians (commonly referred to as First

Nations). Each group has distinct histories, languages, and social, cultural, and spiritual beliefs.

Career is a lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of work, learning, and leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic and unfold throughout life. Careers include how persons balance their paid and unpaid work and personal life roles.

Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving preferred future.

Cultural assumptions in career theory:

- **individualism/autonomy**: assumption that the individual makes choices that ultimately shape his or her own destiny;
- **affluence**: assumption that the individual holds a certain amount of affluence, including financial resources;
- **opportunity**: assumption that the individual is in control and can choose to strive towards selection, attainment, and ultimate satisfaction in career choices and in life;
- **centrality**: assumption that work plays a central and pivotal role in people's lives and in fulfilling personal identity;
- **linearity**, **progressiveness**, and **rationality of development**: assumption that individual's progress in the world can be described and decided upon in orderly, rational, and linear terms.

Cultural competence is the set of skills, attitudes, behaviours, and policies that allow one to understand the cultural identities of one's clients, and to work effectively within and across different cultures.

Cultural identity is a term that refers to the unique composite of cultural factors (including gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, ability, and socio-economic status) that define each individual.

Cultural sensitivity refers to the awareness of the centrality of culture and cultural identity of both the counsellor and the client. It includes the recognition of cultural influences, differences in worldview, and potential personal biases.

Culture includes a range of factors and experiences that influence how people view themselves, how they view other people, and how they behave.

Ethnocentrism refers to the judgement of other cultures by the standards of one's own.

First Nations is the term used today instead of Indian. It refers to Status and Non-Status Aboriginal people in Canada. Status Indians are registered under the Indian Act, and Non-Status are not. Many communities also use the term "First Nation" in the name of their community. Currently, there are 615 First Nation communities, which represent more than 50 nations or cultural groups and 50 Aboriginal languages.

Immigrant refers to a person from another country who has migrated and permanently resides in Canada.

Initiating action is the act of embracing cultural diversity and responding to career development needs from the client's point of view. Practitioners must be able to design and deliver effective interventions that take into account the unique aspects of the client's cultural worldviews.

Inuit are Indigenous peoples that reside in the Arctic regions of Canada, Denmark, Russia, and the United States. In Arctic Canada, about 45,000 Inuit live in 53 communities in Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (Northern Québec), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories. Each of these four Inuit groups has settled land claims. These Inuit regions cover one third of Canada's land mass.

Macro system is based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Development reflects the influence of several environmental systems including the macro system that describes the culture in which individuals live. Cultural contexts include, for example, developing and industrialized countries, socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity.

Métis are Aboriginal people who can trace their parentage to First Nations and European descent. Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Micro system is based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Development reflects the influence of several environmental systems including the micro system or the setting in which the individual lives. These contexts include the person's family, peers, school, and neighborhood. It is in the micro system that the most direct interactions with social agents take place (e.g., with parents, peers, and teachers). The individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but someone who helps to construct the settings.

Non-dominant sexual orientations are defined by the gender to which individuals are sexually attracted. Someone who is attracted primarily or exclusively to members of the same gender is characterized as gay, lesbian, or homosexual, though the

latter word has largely fallen out of use. Someone who has strong, viable attraction for people of both genders is characterized as bisexual or pansexual.

Persons with disabilities refers to persons who identify themselves as experiencing difficulties in carrying out the activities of daily living or experience disadvantage in employment, and who may require some accommodation, because of a long-term or recurring physical or developmental condition.

Refugee refers to someone who faces persecution in their home country or the country where they normally live, or who would face persecution if they returned to that country. The United Nations (1967) defines refugee as any "person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (p. 2). Retrieved from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/protocolrefugees.pdf>.

Social justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities; the direct action to ameliorate oppression and marginalization within society; and the full inclusion and participation of all members of society in a way that enables them to reach their potential.

Work is a set of activities with an intended set of outcomes, from which it is hoped that a person will derive personal satisfaction and contribute to some greater goal. Work is not necessarily tied to paid employment, but to meaningful and satisfying activities (e.g., volunteer work, hobbies).

Working poor is a term used to describe individuals and families who maintain regular employment (910 hours per year) but remain in relative poverty due to low levels of pay and dependent expenses.

Worldview is the way in which an individual perceives his or her world from philosophical, ethical, social, and moral contexts.

Discussion and Activities

Discussion

After reading the chapter, revisit your original responses to the pre-reading questions.

1. What does culture mean to you?
2. What does social justice mean to you?

Discussion Questions

1. How true do you think this statement is for children in Canada: "You can be whatever you want to be?" What might influence their realities as they try to live out this dream?
2. What are the potential implications of a mismatch between the worldview of career development practitioners and the worldview of clients?
3. What are the key competencies that you think career practitioners need in order to incorporate social justice into their roles?

Personal Reflections

1. What dimensions of culture are relevant for your personal identity? In which situations or relationships are some dimensions of your identity more prominent or visible than others? What leads you to shift how you present your identity in different situations?
2. In reflecting on your own career development, what influences have helped you to be successful? To what degree were those influences related to your personality or personal history, to your social or cultural context, or to broader community or societal factors?
3. In reflecting on your own career development, what personal and/or systemic barriers have you faced?
4. How have you approached your own career planning and decision making? Did you follow certain predetermined steps, or did chance other unforeseen events play a role? To what degree were these events influenced by cultural or social justice influences?
5. What influences did your family or other significant people in your life have for your career development? What academic programs or types of occupations were you encouraged or discouraged from pursuing? How did your family's views of gender roles, ability, socioeconomic status, or other cultural identity factors influence your choices?

Career Practitioner Role

1. When you were a child, what messages do you remember hearing about people from non-dominant cultural groups in Canada? What evidence was there to support those messages?
2. What personal biases or cultural lenses might influence your views of others and your views of career development practice? How open are you to examining these biases and embracing other perspectives? What makes you hesitant to engage in this self-examination and change?
3. What values related to cultural diversity and social justice resonated for you as you read this chapter? How might principles of social justice align with your worldview?

Activities

Thoughts on the Vignette

On reading the vignette about Peter, write down your initial impressions of the career practitioner, his client group, and potential issues that may arise for him and/or his clients. After reading the chapter, revisit the vignette and your initial responses and identify any blind spots or preconceived ideas. How might you view this scenario differently by applying a cultural identity and social justice lens?

Lifeline Activity

Create a visual map of your life path using significant memories or turning points from the past that have influenced your career development. You may choose an age range or a period of time instead of your entire lifeline. This activity is intended to increase awareness of the impact of past events and influences (e.g., context, family, social class, gender, etc.) on your choices and directions.
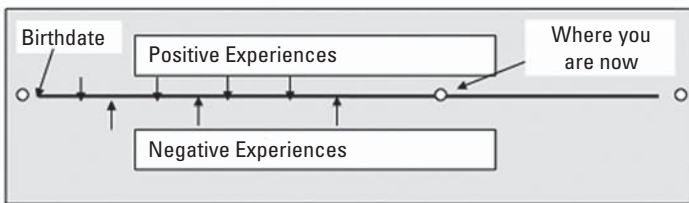

Figure 2: Visual Map of Life Path.

To construct your lifeline:

1. Draw a horizontal line across your paper.
2. Put a dot at each end of the line.
3. Over the left dot, place a zero. This dot represents your date of birth, so write your date of birth under this dot. The dot on the right represents the end of your life.
4. Now put a dot which indicates where you are right now on the line between birth and end of life.
5. Above the line, experiences that were positive, happy, or rewarding should be plotted chronologically. Below the line plot experiences in chronological order that were negative, unhappy, or painful.
6. The distance above or below the line indicates the degree of positive or negative impact or feeling.
7. Focus on experiences that have influenced who you are as a cultural being and the direction of your career development.
8. Try to write at least two or three positive and challenging events or experiences.
9. Label these events or experiences in such a way that you will be able to identify

them. One idea might be to use symbols to identify these different markers on the path.

10. Note the cultural factors that influenced this event or experience — for example, your own cultural identity, family or community influences, broader social contexts, et cetera.

Debriefing:

1. What patterns did you notice?
2. How is your present situation affected by the points along your path?
3. How much control have you had over the events in your life?
4. How did you manage to get through that challenging time in your life?
5. Were there any "allies" along the way?
6. What messages did you receive from important others in your life at that time?
7. What surprising thing have you learned about yourself and your lifepath in relation to influences of culture on your career development?
8. At what points did someone advocate for you or did you advocate for someone else?

Case Analysis

Create a client case taking two or three cultural factors mentioned in the chapter and imagining how they might impact the individual's career choices, resources, or opportunities. Map potential social justice issues that might affect this particular client. How might you work with this client in providing resources and supports?

Community Resources

Explore the social justice initiatives in your community. One way to do this is to interview someone who works at a career centre, an agency, a women's shelter, et cetera. Here are some potential interview questions to get you started:

- What does social justice mean to you?
- Can you give me an example of how you incorporate social justice into your work?
- What are some of the challenges in implementing a social justice framework?
- How has your understanding of social justice/advocacy changed over time?

Uncovering Blindspots

For this exercise, you should work in pairs or with a small group of other students in your class. One student should be the career practitioner and one should be the client. Start by role-playing a client session in which diversity is not focused on at all or is ignored. Then role-play the same session focusing on the same issues, but make diversity a central focus for the practitioner. You might want to switch roles for the

second round. Discuss what it was like from both the practitioner's and the client's perspective in both scenarios.

Social Justice in Everyday Life

Sometimes social justice boils down to a simple action in everyday life. Describe a time when you did or said something that could be described as an act of social justice; for example, standing up for a friend or a principle that you strongly believe in. What were the outcomes of that simple action? What challenges or barriers did you encounter in carrying out this act? What did you learn about yourself, about social justice, and about advocacy?

Resources and Readings

Resources

Websites

Counsellors for Social Justice (Canada) <http://www.counsellorsforsocialjustice.ca
Synergos <http://www.synergos.org/>.
EdChange: Choosing Social Justice Activities <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural
/activities/choosing.html>.
National Institute for Multicultural Competence <http://www.coedu.usf.edu/zalaquett
/nimc/nimc.html>.
Social Justice Organizations <http://www.startguide.org/orgs/orgs06.html>.
Social Justice: A moral imperative for counsellors <http://counselingoutfitters.com
/vistas/ACAPCD/ACAPCD-07.pdf>.
Social Justice Advocacy among Graduate Students <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/csd
/summary/v046/46.3nilsson.html>.
Teaching Tolerance Activities <http://www.tolerance.org/activities>
Economic and Social Justice: A Human Rights Perspective, by David Shiman: Part II
Activities <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/tb1b/Section2/
index.htm>.

Videos on Social Issues

A Land called Paradise by Kareem Salana <https://www.youtube.com
/watch?v=sbcmPe0z3Sc&list=PL6146946ABC5A8BA2>.
Democracy Now: website for the U.S. independent news program with international
coverage <http://www.democracynow.org/>.

Supplementary Readings

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