Defining Social Justice

In a just society, opportunities, resources, and worth are distributed equally and fairly, with no individuals or groups holding particular advantages or disadvantages in access or advancement (Fouad et al., 2006).

Clients from nondominant populations (as defined by ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic status) are most likely to present with issues that reflect unfair practices, policies, and other systemic barriers (Fouad et al., 2006).

Social justice is defined as "collaborative, action-oriented, socially relevant, community focused and initiated" activities (Helms, 2003, pp. 205-206) that seek to eradicate inequities in society (Vera & Speight, 2003) and enhance the health of marginalized groups.

Social justice is a human rights issue that impacts professional practice in career development and career counselling, particularly since access to and attainment of education and work provide a central means for ensuring social equity (Fouad et al., 2006; Hargrove et al., 2003).

History of Social Justice

Vocational psychology has traditionally played an important role in advocating for social justice, through the work of individuals like Frank Parsons, Donald Paterson, (and others?) (Fouad et al., 2006; Hargrove et al., 2003).

In the last few decades, the emphasis on social justice has been overshadowed by other professional issues (Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Hargrove, Creagh, & Kelly, 2003).

However, the shifting demographics of Canadian society and increased systemic barriers to career and life success (Arthur & Collins, 2005b) are bringing social justice back to the forefront (Arthur & Collins, 2005a; Fouad et al., 2006).