School Psychologists as Leaders for Social Justice

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This book provides an important focus on leadership as an essential school psychology skill. To what ends does school psychology leadership seek to achieve? Social justice is a potentially powerful framework from which to address this question.

Over the past several years, social justice has gone from a somewhat fringe school psychology topic to an approach that is increasingly viewed as central to school psychology practice, particularly in the United States (Jenkins et al., 2017). For example, in 2016 the then-president of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Melissa Reeves created a Social Justice Task Force. By 2017, NASP had approved a formal definition of social justice and identified social justice as one of its five strategic aims. NASP also launched a monthly podcast on social justice beginning in October 2017. Globally, the International School Psychology Association lists social justice as one of the six prevailing ethical principles in its ethics code (International School Psychology Association, 2011).

Just as leadership can be challenging to define, so also does social justice have many different definitions and interpretations. We thus begin by providing an overview of the historical origins and common modern definitions of social justice. We follow with a synopsis of the nascent best practices social justice literature in school psychology. In particular, we posit that a commitment to children's rights and to culturally responsive practice is central to bringing social justice principles into

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school psychology practice. We close with a case study and potential implications for practice and training.

1 Historical Context and Contemporary Practice

Defining Social Justice in School Psychology Like leadership, social justice is something that is widely sought but is very challenging to define and takes on different meanings in different contexts. In the first comprehensive book on school psychology and social justice, Shriberg et al. (2012) argue that there are at least three ways that one might think of social justice. First, social justice can be considered an aspirational goal for society. Second, borrowing from multiculturalism, social justice can be thought of as a filter through which one takes information. Finally, social justice can be thought of as a verb, something school psychologists *do*.

To date, there have been six empirical studies where social justice has been defined through a school psychology lens, including definitions offered by cultural diversity experts (Shriberg et al., 2008), school psychology graduate students (Briggs et al., 2009; Moy et al., 2014), and practitioners (Jenkins et al., 2017; Biddanda et al., 2019; Shriberg et al., 2011). Most recently, a qualitative study was conducted with nine practicing school psychologists who were within 7 years of receiving their degree (Jenkins et al., 2017). Recurring themes from these studies are that social justice can be defined by taking personal responsibility both to promote the protection of rights and opportunities for the children and families served by school psychologists and by engaging in culturally responsive practices while doing so.

Echoing this research, in 2017 NASP created and endorsed its own definition of social justice. This definition reads:

> Social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action. School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth.
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> (Adopted by the NASP Board of Directors, April 2017, definition can be accessed at: http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/diversity/social-justice)

Even within this relatively concise definition are a number of complex and interrelated topics and terms. One way to sift through this complexity is to divide social justice into three of the broad subcategories articulated by Diaz (2014): distributive justice, procedural justice, and relational justice. Distributive justice has to do with how resources are distributed in society. Procedural justice relates to the process through which decisions are reached. Relational justice speaks to how people are treated (Diaz, 2014). Each is described in more detail.

Distributive Justice Scholars suggest that the concept of distributive justice dates back to Aristotle, who first introduced equity and allocation of resources by relative deprivation (Jost & Kay, 2010). Aristotle viewed equity as proportionality, which is in line with the current view of equity and distributive justice. That is, if an individual feels that they are not getting the proportionate deserving of inputs, psychological distress would result, followed by the emergence of the need to restore equity. This approach has parallels in the equity theory of leadership, first popularized by Adams (1963), in which leaders seek to ensure that people feel that their rewards (e.g., pay, status) are commensurate with both their individual contribution and with the contribution of others. Applied to societies, Aristotle argued that real or perceived inequities would bring resentment and anger towards the group who the under-benefited perceives as over-benefitting. The emphasis is the word "perceived." Each individual is entitled to their own perception of equity, meaning they will feel uncomfortable when they perceive themselves being over-benefited and subsequently feel resentful when they perceive to be under-benefited (Jost & Kay, 2010).

In equity, people tend to compare their allocation of resources to others to determine their status of benefit. When they feel that their needs for equity are not met, relative deprivation theory suggest people will engage in collective action to redefine the status quo (Jost & Kay, 2010). Furthermore, people become motivated to take collective action to rectify the situation when they believe that the system is unjust. They believe that the system, the world, listens to the voices wanting justice, and rules/laws are made to be as just in allocating resources.

Within education, distributive justice is perhaps most associated with Jonathan Kozol's seminal book *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1992). Describing how the funding for US schools is heavily based on local wealth, Kozol vividly describes the inequity of schools in wealthy areas being able to provide a world-class education, whereas schools in poor areas often struggle to provide the basics. Research suggests that more experienced staff members tend to move to schools that are from more advantageous areas (e.g., higher socioeconomic level, less number of students with disabilities). As a result, schools in poorer neighborhoods typically end up with more novice staffs and fewer material resources (Darden & Cavendish, 2011). While school psychologists do not control the funding structure of US education, distributive justice principles compel school psychologists to advocate that all students have access to the resources needed to reach their potential, both monetary resources and human resources.

Procedural Justice Procedural justice has to do with how decisions are reached. This model suggests that people will consider the final outcome to be fair if they perceive the decision-making process and rationale to be just. In order to have a just outcome and decision-making process in their own perception, people desire to be involved in the process themselves by either presenting evidence to influence the decision or being involved in the decision itself (Jost & Kay, 2010). In addition, Tyler (1994) suggested that people care much about the fairness of the decision-making process and outcome as a means of expressing their voices to the fellow society members and checking their social standing. By being entrusted with

decision-making, people perceive how much the authorities accord them with trust, value, and respect and provide belongingness (Jost & Kay, 2010).

A primary mechanism for achieving procedural justice is the creation and just application of laws designed to protect the rights of all students (Shriberg, 2016). While not commonly viewed from this lens, modern school psychology might be viewed as owing a lot of its growth to the special education rights movement (Shriberg, 2014). The 1954 Brown v Board of Education case led to the desegregation of US schools by race. If it was no longer legal to keep children out of school due to race, special education rights advocates were successful in bringing changes to the law that not only ended legal exclusion of children from school based on ability status but also provided, through PL 94-142 and subsequent revisions, the legal framework for providing a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students. Whether focusing specifically on the rights of students with special needs, or, more broadly, on ensuring that fair and equitable practices are followed in all school procedures, the modern school psychologist needs to have command of the law. Indeed, in a study of randomly selected NASP members, one of the most important social justice tools identified was knowledge of the law (Shriberg et al., 2011).

Relational Justice Relational justice speaks to how people are treated. This can be viewed as either the absence of harm (e.g., the absence of discrimination) or the promotion of positive relationships (Diaz, 2014). Various forms of oppression where power is used to harm people is often based on one or more elements of cultural diversity, e.g., sexism, racism, classism, religious discrimination, homophobia, transgendered oppression, and ableism. The burgeoning research on microaggressions speaks to how individual interactions can be quite damaging, if not devastating, to the educational future of children (Allen et al., 2013). Microaggressions are defined as everyday stereotypes, insults, and snubs that send denigrating messages to a target group (Sue & Sue, 2016). These messages are often subtle and the person delivering this message may or may not consciously intend harm. An example would be assuming that parents of an Indian/Southwest Asian student work in a convenience store or that the parents of a student who is Muslim are not patriotic.

At the systems level, the well-documented racial disparities in school discipline practices, including the common finding that students of color, especially African American males, tend to be sent for discipline procedures for more subjective violations (e.g., teachers feeling "threatened") (Skiba et al., 2002), are another example of a violation of relational justice. On the positive side, the movement towards restorative practices can be viewed as a mechanism for relational justice. Central to restorative practices is the idea of seeking to repair the harm done to others (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

Just as school psychologists cannot control policies covering school funding but can advocate for equitable practices, so also cannot school psychologists monitor every interaction that occurs in schools to protect against all microaggressions. However, school psychologists, with the combination of our psychological training

and unique positioning in schools, are often well positioned to act as agents of social justice (Song et al., 2019). As relates to relational justice, school psychologists can both view situations through a multicultural lens, making both violations of relational justice and opportunities for positive relational justice experiences easier to spot and ensure that they themselves are models of relational justice. We can "walk the walk" when it comes to putting relational justice principles into practice. While not explicitly using the term "relational justice," this idea of "walking the walk" and treating others with respect and dignity has been prevalent throughout different studies of school psychology and social justice (e.g., Jenkins et al., 2017; Biddanda et al., 2019; Shriberg et al., 2008).

This approach also has several overlaps with leadership theory, perhaps particularly in terms of servant leadership (e.g., Greenleaf) and the appropriate use of referent power. Servant leadership was first articulated by Robert Greenleaf. In a book commemorating the 25th anniversary of Greenleaf's classic writings, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) describe that the servant leader takes care to ensure that other people's greatest needs are being met and that those people, while being served by the leader, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants. According to Greenleaf, servant leaders (a) listen first so they may understand a situation; (b) develop their intuition and the ability to "foresee the unforeseeable"; (c) lead by persuasion, forging change by "convincement rather than coercion"; (d) conceptualize the reforms they seek and lift others to see the possibilities also; and (e) empower by creating opportunities and alternatives for those being served.

Referent power comes from a larger model originally developed by French and Raven (1959) about ways in which individuals can exert power and influence in organizations. Referent power is based on the ability to influence others based on others' positive perception of you. Thus, regardless of one's individual job responsibilities, school psychologists have the potential to set a moral and ethical example in terms of the ways in which they demonstrate respect for all children and families. If others see the school psychologist as ethical and credible, then the school psychologist may be more successful in positively influencing others to also respect all children and families.

2 Best Practices in Leading for Social Justice in School Psychology

While the literature on school psychology and social justice is just emerging, there is evidence to suggest that the application of social justice principles to practice is quite broad. An analysis of the articles appearing in five leading school psychology journals from 2010 to 2013 found that 13% of these articles met research criteria for both having an applied focus and covering at least one pillar of their definition of social justice (Graybill et al., 2017). In a study of randomly selected NASP

members, 94% of respondents indicated that considerations of institutional power in schools were salient to social justice and school psychology. Respondents rated "promoting best practices in school psychology," "conducting culturally fair assessments," and "advocating for the rights of children and families" as the most realistic actions practitioners can take to support social justice. In addition, significant age differences were evident, with younger respondents appearing to be both more apt to report exposure to social justice concepts and also less willing to take personal risks to pursue social justice aims than older respondents (Shriberg et al., 2011). In recent qualitative studies of school psychology practitioners regarding bringing social justice principles to practice, the primary barriers to social justice identified were lack of fair evaluation practices in the special education process, lack of resources, resistance from those in the school who have different philosophies, lack of awareness of best practices, and apathy on the part of fellow educators. The primary opportunities for supporting social justice that were identified were advocating for fair special education evaluation practices, maintaining cultural awareness about the students they are working with, engaging in self-reflection and being aware of one's privileges, educating staff members, implementing effective interventions oneself, and identifying and working effectively with allies, particularly school leaders, whenever possible (Jenkins et al., 2017; Biddanda et al., 2019).

The two meta-themes among this research is the importance of taking a child rights framework and using a culturally responsive framework in the service of social justice advocacy. This overlap was the focus of a conceptual piece by Shriberg and Desai (2014). Their position is that these concepts are two sides of the same coin in terms of the end goal of supporting the rights and opportunities for child. In the next two sections, each concept is described in more detail.

2.1 Child Rights Framework

Child rights is a concept perhaps most closely linked with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter referred to as "the convention"). Passed in 1989 and subsequently adopted by all nations except the United States, the Convention lays out foundational rights for all children, covering aspects of life both directly (e.g., the right to an education) and indirectly (e.g., the right to live in a safe home) related to positive school experiences. Perhaps most directly germane to school psychology are the right to a free education (Article 28), the right for this education to be respectful of the child's personality and culture (Article 29), and the right of a child with a disability to "a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community" (Article 23), which is inclusive of the right to education (United Nations, 1989).

These and other rights spelled out in the Convention speak to different elements of distributive, procedural, and relational justice. For example, the right to a free education (Article 28) can be viewed as a distributive justice idea. Article 19, which

states that governments have an obligation to protect children from violence, can be viewed as a form of procedural justice. Article 12, which speaks to the right of children to have input into decisions affecting them, can be thought of as relational justice. Recurring throughout this document is a vision of child rights that is holistic and does not view children through a deficit lens but rather challenges adults to ensure that children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In a series of articles edited by Cavin Mcloughlin and Hart (2014) that appeared in six leading journals widely read by school psychologists, connections between the Convention and school psychology were described. For example, using a distributive justice framework to take on modern notions that link "accountability" solely with academic test scores, Garbarino and Briggs (2014) challenge school psychologists to imagine a world where accountability is based on there being no correlation between socioeconomic status and child well-being. To achieve this aspiration, school psychologists would need to engage in advocacy to support equitable access to services that promote healthy development. They argue that this can be advanced both at the individual school level through data collection and focused advocacy, as well as through collective action such as school psychology organizations advocating for legal and public policy reform.

Reflecting both procedural and relational justice, Lansdown et al. (2014) focus on a child's right to active participation in decisions impacting them as a central school psychology value. They note that whereas it would be widely viewed as inappropriate for a group of men to speak for all women, as one example, we regularly exclude children from discussions and decisions that impact their lives, a clear violation of Article 12 of the Convention. Article 12 states that every child is capable of forming his/her own views and has the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and that their opinions should be given weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

Translated to school psychology practice, an implication is that school psychology should not be done *to* children but rather *with* children. An example of valuing children's right to active participation and input into their school came in a pair of studies focused on reducing bullying at a middle school. In these studies, which took place over a period of 3 years in the same school, the students in this school played an active role in shaping the changes that took place. For example, after an initial round of student interviews revealed that there were great inconsistencies in how teachers and administrators defined bullying and responded to similar situations, with some imposing harsh sanctions and others looking away, a sustained effort was made to standardize practices (Shriberg et al., 2015). The following year, following up on students' desires to have more input, a student leadership group was formed where the leadership task was to develop strategies for reducing bullying at the school. Teachers nominated students who had leadership potential and were not believed to be involved with bullying. School administration was involved so that there was a greater chance of the student suggestions being implemented (Shriberg, Brooks, et al., 2017a). Ultimately, changes were made based on student suggestions.

2.2 Culturally Responsive Practice

The second essential pillar of leading for social justice in school psychology is culturally responsive practice. In a chapter on "Diversity in School Psychology and Culturally Responsive Practices," Song, Miranda, Radliff, and Shriberg (2019) describe culturally responsive practice as a core school psychology competency, a view also reflected in the NASP practice model (NASP, 2020a). Specifically, this model identifies "Diversity in Development and Learning" as one of three "Foundations of School Psychology Service Delivery," followed by a list of sample culturally competent practices.

Cultural competence—we prefer the term "culturally responsive practice" as "competence" implies a binary classification (one is competent, or one is not) whereas "responsive" implies a continuum—is defined as the ability to understand and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (DeAngelis, 2015). Culturally responsive practice has three primary components: (1) awareness of one's own assumptions, values, and biases, (2) understanding the worldview of others, and (3) developing culturally appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue & Sue, 2016). Examples of cultural awareness include asking oneself "how was I socialized?" and identifying one's core beliefs, values, and potential cultural blind spots (Song et al., 2019). As one becomes more self-aware, one can begin to learn more and value the perspectives of others. Often graduate courses in multiculturalism emphasize this component, with class discussions and assignments geared toward greater awareness and appreciation for the worldview of persons with different backgrounds and life experiences (Song et al., 2019). Finally, there is a commitment to action.

Social justice can be seen as the latest phase of multicultural school psychology (Shriberg & Desai, 2014), the phase that springs directly from cultural responsiveness. Based on a framework described by Vera and Speight (2003), the first phase of multicultural school psychology involves establishing cultural diversity as a valid focus of research inquiries and practice discussions. Does the world look different based on cultural diversity elements such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, and age and/or ability level, among others? The society-altering Brown v Board of Education of Topeka (1954) court case featured research by Kenneth and Mamie Clark that demonstrated that when presented with White and Black dolls, Black children almost always stated that the White dolls were prettier, smarter, and better at everything they did than the Black dolls (Shriberg, 2014). This was the first time that psychological research played such a pivotal role in a major court case (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). Subsequent decades saw rapid growth in scholarship related to cultural diversity, as well as professional endorsements of the value of cultural diversity. Summarizing trends in counseling psychology that could also apply to school psychology, Speight and Vera (2003), noted:

> It is a sure sign of progress that we are no longer reading articles that argue whether diversity is important, but instead have a developing body of literature that allows for scholarly

> debate regarding how to integrate multiculturalism into our research training, and practice. (p.253)

As multiculturalism gained acceptance, there was a need for research that described cultural competencies for working with different demographic groups. Thus, culturally responsive practice reflects phase two of multicultural school psychology. In a seminal study, cross-cultural experts in school psychology identified 102 critical cross-cultural competencies for school psychologists (Rogers & Lopez, 2002). These 102 competencies fell under fourteen distinct categories. These categories, listed in order of participant ranking of importance, are: assessment, report writing, laws and regulations, working with interpreters, working with parents, theoretical paradigms, counseling, professional characteristics, consultation, culture, academic interventions, research methods, working with organizations, and language.

Although defining and working toward cultural competence are important goals, critics (e.g., Song et al., 2019; Speight and Vera, 2003) argue that multicultural competence must be linked to social justice. The distinction relates to disrupting the status quo. For example, consider the previously described research on racial injustices in school discipline procedures (Blake et al., 2016: Skiba et al., 2002). If an individual child is referred to a school psychologist based on discipline concerns, this school psychologist can—and should—work with this student in a culturally responsive manner. However, reflecting prevention principles, if one is not also seeking to disrupt the underlying dynamic that is causing students of color to be disciplined in a discriminatory manner, then one is falling short of her/his potential as a positive change agent. This is where social justice comes in. Social justice involves using culturally responsive practices to disrupt individual, institutional, systemic, and/or cultural structures that harm children, disproportionality children from groups that are oppressed within the society where the school psychologist is working.

3 Implications for Training and Practice

3.1 Training

As social justice has become more entrenched as both an aspirational goal and a set of specific competencies for school psychologists, so also are school psychology graduate training programs incorporating social justice principles. While there has been no known scholarship documenting this change, anecdotally as a person who has taught in a university with a social justice mission for many years, it used to be the case that applicants would comment on how rare it was that our graduate program emphasized social justice in our materials. This has not been true for some time.

That said, as noted by Rogers and O'Bryon (2017), there is little to no scholarship evaluating the extent to which multicultural training is incorporated into school

psychology graduate programs, and it is likely that implementation is inconsistent. Additionally, faculty who teach on topics related to multiculturalism and social justice often receive great scrutiny, particularly faculty who are not white, cisgendered males (Reynolds, 2011). As one participant in a survey of faculty who teach multicultural counseling courses stated:

> As a white male teaching multicultural counseling courses, White students initially see me as 'selling out' while students of color are not sure they trust my motivations. My faculty colleagues of color are often victims of 'uprisings' by resistant (mostly White) students. My being White and male seems to unfairly buffer me from these angry expressions. (Reynolds, 2011; p. 172)

Thus, any consideration of teaching for social justice needs to consider the specific programs and instructors involved. However, there is growing scholarship on key components of graduate training on social justice in school psychology at the program level. In two book chapters on this subject, several overarching themes were identified: (1) engage in dialogue at the program level regarding why training for social justice is important, (2) develop a mission statement/core training goals related to social justice, (3) embed meaningful experiences that help to make social justice a real thing, not simply a theoretical construct or aspiration, and (4) provide a safe and supportive forum for eliciting voice and constructive dialogue (Shriberg, 2012; Shriberg, Vera, & McPherson, 2017b).

In program-specific articles on training for social justice, Li et al. (2009) described their school psychology program as taking a three-pronged approach: (1) integrating social justice into courses, (2) engaging students in social justice scholarship and research, and (3) faculty and students collecting acting in concern with their core values and ethical standards for the purpose of improving the lives of others in real-world settings. Radliff et al. (2009) identified five key areas central to infusing social justice in their program. These key areas are (1) mission statement, (2) student body, (3) program courses and experiences, (4) community partnering, and (5) community-based projects.

Grapin (2017) has summarized several studies examining graduate training in social justice in school psychology from the perspective of school psychology graduate students. First, Briggs et al. (2009) conducted a focus group with school psychology graduate students in a program that had an overt social justice mission. These students indicated that their most impactful social justice experiences occurred in service learning, practice, and internship. As an outcome of this study, at these students' recommendation, a specific required course on school psychology and social justice was created in order to better integrate the program's stated social justice mission with both the required service-learning component (which took place in year one, as did the new course) and with the curriculum as a whole (Moy et al., 2014). Moy et al. (2014) conducted focus groups with four different school psychology graduate cohorts in this same program over the course of 3 years. As with the pilot study conducted by Briggs et al. (2009), these students consistently identified their field experiences as the most impactful social justice learning experiences and stated a desire for more field experiences in underserved areas. In a

similar study, Miranda et al. (2014) surveyed graduate students in a school psychology graduate program that had a strong multicultural and social justice focus and also found that these students identified field experiences as particularly impactful.

Thus, there are preliminary but consistent findings from students in programs with an overt social justice focus that the applied experiences connected with this focus are quite important. There are also some important individual and personal factors that recur. Specifically, the students in Miranda et al.'s (2014) study recognized that they were in the early professional stages of a lifelong pursuit of cultural competence and social justice advocacy. In a study of impactful social justice experiences for counseling psychology doctoral students and practitioners who met criteria as social justice advocates, these participants spoke to the role of mentors, exposure to injustice, and the importance of their graduate curriculum (e.g., courses, assignments) as particularly powerful factors in their development as agents of social justice as graduate students (Caldwell & Vera, 2010).

Miranda et al. (2014) ultimately broke multicultural and social justice training into two broad categories, foundational and dynamic. "Foundational" relates to elements that reflect the program's core values, such as the program's mission statement, program philosophy and specific efforts to recruit, and mentor for diversity. "Dynamic" reflects elements that are more fluid, such as course assignments, community partnerships, and community-based projects. These elements can and should be adjusted based on community and student's needs and emerging understandings of social justice. The strong social justice training program is both rooted in its foundations and continuously adjusting its dynamic elements.

3.2 Practice

A recurring theme in applied social justice research in school psychology is the necessity to openly address issues of power and privilege (Jenkins et al. 2017; Shriberg et al., 2008, 2011). In a chapter centered on social justice advocacy in school psychology, Briggs (2012) provided several advocacy strategies that can be used across the public health prevention tiers. As a prelude to social justice advocacy, she offers the following questions to consider before deciding if and how one might act in accordance with social justice principles:

1. Am I acting on behalf of others because it is easy or because it is necessary?
2. Is immediate change critical in order to prevent harm, or can I take the time to empower others to advocate for themselves?
3. If I advocate on behalf of others, what will happen when I am not around to lead advocacy efforts? Will change be institutionalized; will the process continue, or will my efforts disappear with me? (p. 300)

Several studies have been conducted focused on common challenges and opportunities related to bringing social justice principles into practice. Consistent with Rogers and Lopez's (2002) findings, Song et al. (2019) notes the most salient cultural

diversity issue in school psychology from the 1960s–1990s was assessment. In social justice research, school psychology practitioners identified the overrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities in special education as a major social justice challenge (Jenkins et al., 2017; Biddanda et al. 2019). Relatedly, conducting culturally fair assessments is consistently identified as an important social justice action step (Jenkins et al., 2017; Shriberg et al., 2008, 2011).

From the first study of multicultural experts in school psychology (Shriberg et al., 2008) through the most recent examination of veteran school psychologists who identify as social justice advocates (Biddanda et al., 2019), the theme of taking personal responsibility recurs as a critical social justice action step. While no individual school psychologist is responsible for social injustices nor can any individual, school psychologist or otherwise, single-handedly eliminate social injustice, we all have the opportunity—and, based on NASP's Ethical Code (NASP, 2020b), the ethical responsibility—to speak up and combat the status quo when that status quo is unjust. Specifically, veteran school psychologists who identify as social justice advocates described using three primary strategies for taking personal responsibility: (1) using political savvy, (2) modeling the change one is seeking to bring about, and (3) working in a culturally responsive manner. Miranda et al. (2014) argue that social justice practice reflects CARE: cultural competency, advocacy, relationship building, and empowering and engaging.

While generally not couched in leadership terms, there is believed to be much overlap between this emerging literature on social justice advocacy and prevailing leadership principles. In a chapter on advocacy in school psychology, leadership—along with social justice and ethics—is identified as a central pillar of effective advocacy (Song et al., 2019). Indeed, there are interconnecting relationships between social justice, leadership, ethics, advocacy, and cultural responsiveness. Can one be an effective leader if one is unethical? Not if one believes that leadership is different from power grabbing. The head of a cult may have power, but if this power is used to control others, this is not leadership (Shriberg & Shriberg, 2010). Similarly, anyone can advocate, but there is likely a big difference in effectiveness between someone who advocates using strong leadership practices versus someone who advocates in a destructive manner. Inasmuch as social justice topics are typically deeply rooted both culturally and systemically and accordingly typically bring risks with those who question the status quo, social justice advocates can clearly benefit from having knowledge about and a commitment to core leadership competencies. Like cultural responsiveness, there is no one "correct" way to lead and practice can be very situationally dependent.

Leadership theory also places a premium on self-awareness of one's leadership strengths and of the environment in which leadership is expressed (Shriberg & Shriberg, 2010). In this spirit, Fig. 1 provides a potential template for getting started as an agent of social justice who seeks to be connected with leadership theory and practice. This template has questions covering four primary areas: identifying the topic, considering yourself as an agent of social justice, considering the context/environment in which you seek to bring about change, and questions to get started. Social justice leadership is thus considered both a personal and a professional

endeavor. At a personal level, one might be most successful if one is working on topics that one is personally passionate about and where one is in a position to actualize one's leadership strengths. At a professional level, social justice leadership involves leveraging one's knowledge, passion, and strengths within a context where change is more likely to occur. This is not to say that change is impossible in some situations rather that some situations are more conducive to change than others. For example, a school that has just experienced a highly visible incident of bullying may be more

The Topic/Issue
What is the topic/issue? What makes this a social justice issue? Why does this topic/issue matter to me? Why does this topic/issue matter to my school/district?
Myself as a Social Justice Advocate
What are my leadership strengths? What biases do/might I have? What social justice advocacy skills do I bring to the table and where do I need to grow? What conditions lead to my doing my best work?

Fig. 1 Starting a social justice action plan

Professional Self in Relation to School/District
What real world barriers and opportunities impact upon this topic? Who are my allies? Who else would need to be involved in order to obtain success?
Getting Started
What elements of social justice am I seeking to address (e.g., distributive justice, procedural justice, relational justice)? What would the measurable goals and other indicators of success be? How can I ensure a participatory process? What should my first and second step be in light of the answers to the above?

Fig. 1 (continued)

open to leadership on bullying prevention than another school that is in denial that bullying is occurring. The authors encourage you to use this template to consider a social justice issue that you might address in your role as a school psychologist.

Case Example While social justice can be a potent aspirational goal and while the topic does not lend itself to set strategies, it is often helpful to think about a specific case in which one might apply leading for social justice principles. In this spirit, the following fictitious case is provided, with analysis afterward.

Zahra is a 10-year-old fourth grade girl whose family recently emigrated from Iran to a suburban US elementary school. Zahra comes from a well-educated and professional family, although her parents have had to take minimum-wage-level jobs upon coming to the United States and thus live in the poorest area of the town. Zahra was a strong student in Iran but had limited to no English skills upon coming to the United States. Despite having a growing Iranian population, this school only provides instruction in English and Spanish and has not hired any staff with fluency in Persian, these students' native language.

Zahra's teacher is concerned about her minimal academic progress. She states that she senses that Zahra is quite bright but that her language barriers are getting in the way of her ability to succeed. Zahra's parents indicate the same thing. They also note that Zahra reports being called a terrorist by some of her classmates and, while not directly calling out Zahra's teacher, indicate that many Iranian parents report that their children are regularly called "terrorists" by other students and do not feel welcome in the community, including by many of the school staff. Noting that the school provides support for students whose native language is Spanish, they report that Iranian parents are questioning why similar support is not provided in Persian to students such as Zahra.

If you were the school psychologist in the school, keeping the social justice frameworks of distributive justice, procedural justice, and relational justice in mind, and also considering the importance of child rights and culturally responsive practice to social justice advocacy, how might you proceed?

There are no easy answers to this question. Zahra's situation touches upon all of the core social justice frameworks highlighted. Going in chapter sequence, let us first consider this situation in light of distributive justice, procedural justice, and relational justice. In terms of distributive justice, this scenario speaks specifically to resource allocation in this school. At the level of the individual student, Zahra's educational needs are not being met. How can resources be adjusted to address this? Also, at what point does it become inappropriate that the school has language supports for students who speak English or Spanish, but not Persian? There are no easy answers to these kinds of questions, but a school psychologist with an eye toward distributive justice both knows the law in this regard and also seeks to maximize existing resources and push the school to reallocate resources as appropriate. Similarly, from a procedural standpoint, it may be that this school does not have strong processes in place to track the learning outcomes of the Iranian immigrants both individually and as a group. Having this data and ensuring proper procedures

are followed when there are learning gaps can play a direct role in resource allocation and basic fairness. Finally, in terms of relational justice, as immigrants from a nation that is often demonized in the United States, this vignette speaks to violations of relational justice (e.g., being labeled as "terrorists," potential conscious or unconscious biases among students, educators, and in the community) that Zahra and other families are facing that negatively impact their rights and educational experiences.

There are also clear elements where a child rights orientation and commitment to culturally responsive practice come into play. Concerning child rights, Zahra has a right to a free education where she is able to achieve her learning potential. She also has a right to be heard in this situation—this vignette does not capture her perspective. Concerning cultural responsiveness, school psychologists have an obligation both to be self-aware of their own biases in this situation and to learn about and value the viewpoints of Zahra and her family. If the school is engaging in practices that do not reflection cultural responsiveness—e.g., violations of relational justice—the school psychologist is compelled to act, both in this specific case and in a systemic manner if there are systemic barriers (e.g., prejudicial school culture).

Finally, consider the action steps one might take using Fig. 1 as a guide. First, at the personal level, why does this situation matter to you? While school psychologists have an obligation to serve all students regardless of one's personal passions, social justice efforts are hypothesized to be more impactful if there is also a personal connection. Similarly, what leadership strengths do you bring to the table in this situation? For example, are you strong with connecting with the Iranian children and families? Perhaps you have a personal connection from your own history or have professional experiences you can bring to bear in this situation as a culturally responsive practitioner. Or maybe you have strong referent power and thus your advocacy with or on behalf of this family is more likely to be heard. Then, consider best practices research and the law as relates to this student's rights and the broader systemic issues at play. Is the school in compliance with the law? Are there individual and/or institutional barriers and opportunities toward achieving a just outcome (e.g., others in the school who either are already engaged on this issue or could be with some leadership)? Finally, what would be your concrete initial action steps? Most likely this would involve steps specific to Zahra's situation while also considering the broader ecology that may be impacting other Iranian students and families in a similar situation.

4 Conclusion

Social justice is proposed as a critical framework through which school psychology leadership can be expressed. Divided into distributive, procedural, and relational justice and based on the principles of child rights and culturally responsive practice, implications for training and practice are provided. Ultimately, however, much depend on the individual. Do you see it as your role to be a leader for social justice, and what talents do you bring to bear in this regard?

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