
A Call for Enhanced Training and Action on the Intersections of Mental Health, Decent Work, and Career in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Un appel à l'amélioration de la formation et des mesures favorisant les recoupements entre la santé mentale, le travail décent, et la carrière en counseling et en psychothérapie

Rebecca E. Hudson Breen

University of Alberta

Breanna C. Lawrence

Brandon University

ABSTRACT

Although career is identified as a key element of counselling and counselling psychology, currently many students and professionals within these disciplines do not identify career as integral to their practice. This neglect persists despite ongoing calls for increased awareness of career development issues from scholars in the field. The authors argue that the integration of the psychology of work and career is essential to ethical practice in counselling and counselling psychology as well as a necessary area of competency in acting on fostering social justice and decent work as a human right. Recommendations for integrating career within counsellor education and counselling psychology training programs are discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Bien que la notion de carrière soit généralement reconnue comme étant un élément important en counseling et en psychologie du counseling, bon nombre d'étudiants et de professionnels dans ces domaines n'ont pas encore décidé d'intégrer cet élément dans leur pratique. Or, cette négligence persiste malgré les appels constants à une plus grande sensibilisation aux enjeux de développement de carrière de la part d'éminents chercheurs dans le domaine. Les auteures font valoir que l'intégration de la psychologie du travail et de la carrière est essentielle à la pratique éthique en counseling et en psychologie du counseling, tout en constituant un domaine de compétence nécessaire lorsqu'il s'agit de promouvoir la justice sociale et le travail décent en tant que droits de la personne. On y formule des recommandations pour l'intégration de la notion de carrière dans le cadre des programmes de formation des conseillers et de psychologie du counseling.

The disciplines of counselling and counselling psychology were developed from the vocational guidance movement, which has its roots in social justice movements devoted to supporting individuals in connecting with meaningful occupations (Bezanson et al., 2016). Career counselling has a long history in Canada. While career is cited as holding an important role in counselling and counselling psychology today, many educational training programs have moved away from the career guidance roots of counselling. In Canada, counsellors and counselling psychologists do not identify career counselling as a core aspect of their practice (Bedi, Christiani, & Sinacore, 2018), and doctoral students in counselling psychology do not identify career counselling as a primary area of focus (Bedi, Christiani, & Cohen, 2018). Numerous authors have pointed to the false dichotomies between career and personal dimensions as well as between paid and unpaid work, dichotomies that persist despite ongoing calls for increased awareness of the psychology of work, the embeddedness of work in people's lives, and the role of work in psychological health (e.g., Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Juntunen, 2006; Redekopp & Huston, 2019).

With over 25 years of calls for increased awareness and integration of career concerns in counselling and counselling psychology, there has not been a direct influence on educational training programs focused on counselling, counselling psychology, or the general practice of counsellors and counselling psychologists. Implementing relational and contextual perspectives of career and work to understand better the intersection of mental health and career/work is imperative to a science-practitioner-advocate model (Fassinger & Gallor, 2006) of counselling and counselling psychology education and training.

We argue as Blustein, Kenny, et al. (2019) do that counsellors and counselling psychologists play an essential role in working toward social justice and decent work as a human right. *Decent work*, which is defined here as work that is “fair, dignified, stable, and secure” (Blustein et al., 2016, p. 2), may seem even more out of reach for many considering current global health and economic conditions. With rising unemployment, lack of access to child care, and disproportionate impacts on young workers, recent immigrants, and women (Statistics Canada, 2020), it is more important than ever that counsellors and counselling psychologists address the impacts of social and economic inequities with their clients.

A focus on relational and contextual influences on work– and career–life development inform key ways of taking action on social justice values. Social justice values have been central in the development of the discipline of counselling psychology since the historical roots of the discipline in vocational psychology (Bedi et al., 2016). As the founder of the vocational counselling movement, Parsons focused on achieving social justice through vocational guidance (Fouad et al., 2006). Parsons originated the idea of the “Vocation Bureau” as a key public service, a place “to help any, young and old, who seek counsel as to opportunities

and resources for the betterment of their condition and the means of increasing their economic efficiency” (Parsons, 1908, as cited in Jones, 1994, p. 288).

Many contemporary figures in the field (e.g., Arthur et al., 2013; Collins, 2020; Gazzola et al., 2018) promote the integration of an increased social justice orientation into clinical training. In the current literature, numerous theoretical frameworks and models have been proposed, but less has been done related to practical implications for training programs (Gazzola et al., 2018; Kennedy & Arthur, 2014; Motulsky et al., 2014). Social justice competencies are key aspects of professional psychology practice (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d.; J. Brown et al., 2019; Pesseau, 2019; Ratts et al., 2016).

The central pillars of the field of Canadian counselling psychology include prevention and well-being, multiculturalism and social justice, and career development (C. B. Brown et al., 2014; Sinacore et al., 2011). These pillars are intrinsically connected, and a focus on work life and career life offers imperative practical opportunities to promote health and well-being and to act on social justice values. Work life and career life are topics that are not typically prioritized in many counselling programs outside of Quebec, possibly due to the tensions surrounding medicalization (Strong et al., 2018).

Understanding the central role of work in clients’ lives, the connections between mental health and work, and the relational and contextual influences on individuals’ career–life development is key to comprehensive, ethical practice in counselling and counselling psychology. We echo Olle’s (2018) observation about the “growing concern” within counselling psychology “that the field is not matching its commitment to social justice with adequate preparation of social change agents” (p. 190).

Throughout this paper, we call for not only a renewed focus on work and career issues but also a *movement to action* on work life and career life in counselling psychology and counsellor education, to advance the profession’s commitment to promoting social justice and to addressing fully the multi-faceted needs of clients in today’s changing world. To begin, we define the terms we use throughout the paper.

Defining Terms

In Canada, the field of counselling represents holistic and diverse perspectives. The mental health delivery system is on the rise and as a result is ever changing. Counsellors and psychologists (among members of related professions including social work, psychiatry, and psychiatric nursing) provide counselling services within the mental health delivery systems and at times “blur[] the distinction among these professions” (Gazzola & Smith, 2007, p. 98). As multi-faceted professions, counselling and counselling psychology have long been steeped in professional identity exploration (Gazzola, 2016; Sinacore & Ginsberg, 2015).

While such a discussion is far beyond the scope of this paper, what is pressing are the resultant definitions and particularly their links to work life and career life. The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA, 2009) defined *counselling psychology* as “a broad specialization within professional psychology concerned with using psychological principles to enhance and promote the positive growth, well-being, and mental health of individuals, families, groups, and the broader community.” Issues related to work, career, and education are listed explicitly as within this scope of practice, and guiding values include a holistic and client-centred approach to working with clients, as well as attention to social context, culture, and systemic influences (CPA, 2009). Counselling psychologists and counsellors aim to promote clients’ positive growth, well-being, and mental health.

The definition of *counselling*, as adopted by the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA, n.d.-b) is as follows:

Counselling is a relational process based upon the ethical use of specific professional competencies to facilitate human change. Counselling addresses wellness, relationships, personal growth, career development, mental health, and psychological illness or distress.

The counselling process is characterized by the application of recognized cognitive, affective, expressive, somatic, spiritual, developmental, behavioural, learning, and systemic principles.

Counselling as a profession encapsulates more than 70 professional titles, including clinical counsellor, mental health therapist, career counsellor, and vocational guidance counsellor. The profession rose to meet mental health needs and to provide vocational development in communities and schools (Stanard, 2013). The overarching aim, as described by the CCPA (n.d.-b), is to “provide an opportunity for people to work towards living more satisfyingly and resourcefully.” The education and training of master’s level counsellors is often referred to as “counsellor education.” Canada has clear training standards and accreditation systems. The CCPA (n.d.-a) established the Council on Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs (CACEP). Exploring work life and career life is intrinsically central to a counsellor’s role and should arguably be addressed through teaching, supervision, and research in counsellor education programming.

Career counselling is considered a specialization within the field of career development, which, as defined in the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (CSGCDP, 2012), “is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future.” Career counselling represents the application of theories and models of career development within counselling and counselling psychology aimed at responding effectively to the full range of clients’ career–life concerns.

Training models provide the critical context within which training occurs and direct implications for educational programming (Gazzola et al., 2018; Neimeyer et al., 2005). Many doctoral programs in counselling psychology are based on a scientist-practitioner model, which involves the continual and recursive integration of scientific inquiry and professional training and practice, with each informing the other (Belar & Perry, 1992; Blair, 2010). In contrast, the practitioner-scholar model (Ellis, 1992), typically employed in master's level programming, emphasizes the utilization of scientific knowledge and application to professional practice (see Stoltenberg et al., 2000, for a brief comparison of the two models). While these models reflect variations in the emphasis on research versus practice and training, we agree that no combination of these two traditional models is entirely adequate (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014).

We call on a third model to include social justice advocacy as necessary to meet the demands of contemporary society and hence of relevant graduate training. A scientist-practitioner-advocate model (Fassinger & Gallor, 2006) includes skills in prevention and advocacy to address the contextual factors that are the source of individual clients' distress. This model was initially rooted in improving vocational counsellors' effectiveness, primarily for women (Fassinger & O'Brien, 2000). However, recent uptake relates to training students to serve any population whose presenting problems stem, even if in part, from unjust social systems of privilege and oppression (Hoover & Morrow, 2016; Mallinckrodt et al., 2014).

An overarching commitment to social justice calls on counsellors and counselling psychologists to integrate competencies aimed explicitly at reducing inequities and addressing intersecting dimensions of oppression and to promote the well-being of members of marginalized groups (Arthur et al., 2013; J. Brown et al., 2019). Because education and work are key pathways to social equity (Fouad et al., 2006; Tomaszewski et al., 2017), work and career interventions are particularly crucial in acting toward social justice. However, tension has emerged within the practice of counselling and counselling psychology. This tension is between traditional values of social justice, multicultural awareness, promotion of growth and well-being, and lifespan development versus the increasing pressure to work within a medical model of practice, with the accompanying emphasis on diagnosis and pathology (Gazzola & Smith, 2007; Strong et al., 2018).

The rise of "medicalization" in the context of counselling has not gone unnoticed (Strong et al., 2017). Conrad (2007) referred to medicalization as a diagnosis and treatment model that predominates medical practices. This is a key difference in conceptualizing and working with client issues. Despite being antithetical to the values of counselling psychology, this pressure may play a role in the ongoing neglect of career life within the profession.

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (n.d.), *mental health* "is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully,

and is able to make a contribution to her or his own community” (p. 3). Good mental health protects against the adversities of life and reduces the development of mental health problems (Mental Health Commission of Canada, n.d.). Decent work is a social determinant of overall health and is linked overwhelmingly to good mental health (Benach et al., 2014; Canivet et al., 2016). Decent work includes “(a) working in safe conditions, (b) having time for leisure activities and rest, (c) having consistency in values between the employer, worker, and society, (d) earning fair compensation, and (e) receiving access to health care” (Blustein, Ali, & Flores, 2019, p. 173). The role of decent work as a fundamental human right has been recognized by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2008) for the United Nations and is outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ILO, 2013).

Given the centrality of work in individuals’ lives and given the intersection of work (both paid and unpaid) with mental and physical health, work-related concerns may be felt across work–life roles and settings. Maintaining an understanding of the role of work and career in people’s lives may be seen as an ethical imperative for counsellors and counselling psychologists in terms of the key principle of beneficence and the importance of maintaining competence and staying current with regards to relevant knowledge for practice (CCPA, 2007; CPA, 2017).

Intersecting Mental Health and Work

We address the need for action in ensuring that counsellors and counselling psychologists are proficient both in career and in more general areas of psychotherapy practice, to assist clients most ethically and effectively in dealing with their presenting concerns and constructing their future lives. Work has a dynamic influence on an individual’s well-being and quality of life, serving as a source of survival and achievement, of meaning and identity, and of social connection (Blustein et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016). Work consumes a large portion of our adult lives. The psychological experience of working affects other life roles, with a strong correlation between work satisfaction and overall well-being (Blustein et al., 2019; Robertson, 2013a, 2013b). In general, decent work promotes well-being and serves a protective function by providing access to livelihood, connection, and a sense of meaning and purpose.

In the face of ongoing socio-economic change that impacts the availability of decent work, it is important to understand and consider the role of employment as a protective factor against substance use, family instability, and other social problems (e.g., Juntunen, 2006). Brand’s (2015) review of research outlined the associations between job loss and unemployment, with lower long-term job quality and earnings, decreased well-being, family disruption, and diminished achievement and well-being in children of those affected by job loss and

unemployment. Contextual and systemic issues that impact employment and affect work life and mental health are discussed further in a later section.

There are many links between work and individual mental health. Unemployment and job loss are related to depression and anxiety. In contrast, work stressors—including job strain, interpersonal issues in the workplace, underemployment and precarious work—contribute also to poor mental health (Artazcoz et al., 2004; Canivet et al., 2016; Harvey et al., 2017). Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety hurt an individual's work and productivity, with mental health concerns being the leading cause worldwide of long-term disability (Petrie et al., 2017). Dawson et al. (2015) found in a longitudinal study that individuals with mental health issues are more likely to end up in precarious employment situations. The mechanisms of this remain unclear, however. Perhaps an underlying mechanism, mental health stigma, persists in the labour market (Brouwers et al., 2020; Hipes et al., 2016).

For individuals experiencing substance use and gambling disorders, the negative consequences of addictions on employment may include involuntary job loss and leaving, unemployment, and labour market stigma (Baldwin & Marcus, 2014; Henderson et al., 2017; Walton & Hall, 2016). Employment can enhance treatment outcomes and facilitate social reintegration for individuals in recovery from substance use and severe mental health conditions (Walton & Hall, 2016). Career counselling could hold an integral role in treatment and recovery planning. However, there are obstacles to obtaining career counselling for individuals in recovery (Sherba et al., 2018). An awareness of how experiences of substance use recovery intersect with and influence career-life recovery is essential for counsellors working in the field of addictions (Hudson Breen, 2020). Understanding the intersections of work and mental health for counsellors and psychologists is necessary to assist clients in building their preferred future lives.

In the context of ongoing uncertainty and volatility in the labour market, understanding the relationship between work (paid and unpaid) and mental health is essential. Career counselling may be considered a form of primary prevention. For example, career counselling interventions may aid in reducing stress and anxiety among young people who are experiencing uncertainty about school-to-work transitions, assist in developing self-knowledge, normalize the experience of indecision, and provide psychoeducation regarding processes and skills involved in career decision-making (Redekopp & Huston, 2019).

The dynamic relations between work and mental health are clear, highlighting the importance of considering work-life issues in counselling and psychotherapy. While counselling and counselling psychology have grown out of the field of vocational guidance, the field of career life and vocational psychology has continued to evolve to incorporate systemic and constructionist approaches to understanding the relational nature of career and work (McMahon & Patton, 2006; Peavy, 2000). The following section outlines theoretical developments

briefly, underscoring further the application of career–life psychology for counsellors, counsellor educators, and counselling psychologists.

Psychology of Working and Relational Theories of Career

The links between work and well-being highlight the importance of viewing work and career as integral elements of an individual's life, rather than as a separate and individual process of career choice and development. While early theories of career development tended to focus on career as an autonomous, individual process of matching interests and abilities to occupations, contemporary constructivist theories of work life acknowledge the centrality of work and relationships in clients' lives as well as the contextual factors that shape work and career experiences (e.g., Autin & Duffy, 2019; Blustein et al., 2012; Patton, 2019). An updated understanding of the concept of career as an intrinsically relational developmental process comprising all life roles reflects contemporary realities and moves beyond assumptions of traditional career theories—namely, that career is an individual enterprise that individuals have autonomy and opportunity to pursue (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006).

A constructionist, career–life perspective highlights the integral nature of work and well-being, the impacts of work life on mental health, and the centrality of career relationships. The psychology of working theory and framework disrupts the traditional dichotomy of paid and unpaid work, instead of emphasizing those who work or want to while also acknowledging explicitly the impact of macro-level socio-economic factors that shape opportunity and choice in work, calling for social justice advocacy on the right to decent work (Autin & Duffy, 2019).

Contemporary career theories and models capture important details of our current socio-economic context, the intersectional nature of work–life experiences within the contemporary global context, and understandings about the relational nature of the self and of working lives. Yet, knowledge of traditional career theories remains important for counsellors and counselling psychologists as a foundation for offering a holistic response to clients. For example, Holland's person–environment fit theory remains relevant today as the basis for several career assessments (Hansen, 2019). Super's life-span, life-space theory introduced the concept of multiple life roles and the developmental nature of career (Super et al., 1996). Gottfredson's (2005) theory of circumscription and compromise highlighted early experiences and perceptions in constraining or expanding opportunities for career–life development. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) highlighted the role of personal characteristics and context in shaping experiences of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and their effect on career goals and actions (Lent et al., 1994). The systems theory of career offered a meta-theoretical framework for conceptualizing the systemic influences on individual career lives (McMahon & Patton, 2018).

Each of these theories, along with many others, provides a useful lens to assist in conceptualizing client concerns and creating intervention plans. Yet, some students in counsellor education and counselling psychology programs may not be exposed to this rich theoretical and practical history.

Contemporary relational and contextual perspectives of working call for a holistic approach to career counselling and psychotherapy more generally, given the intersections of work, social identities, and health (e.g., Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019). Richardson (2012) noted that counsellors must assist clients with a range of life issues represented in their social contexts, including work, because of the intersections with their presenting concerns. Exploring and identifying psychological issues related to work–life context can be overlooked in clinical contexts, and counsellors must consider the importance of relationships and of care work, along with paid work, in helping clients in the construction of their career lives (Autin & Duffy, 2019; Juntunen, 2006; Richardson, 2012).

The argument for the integration of career and therapeutic counselling comes mainly from those situated within vocational psychology. Robertson (2015, 2018) suggested that positive psychology may serve as a bridge, connecting current evidence-based psychotherapy with career counselling. The dynamic relations between work and mental health and the relational influences within career life impact individuals, families, and society. The following section will expand further on contextual and systemic dynamics that affect work, mental health, and well-being and will offer an important lens for counsellors and counselling psychologists in conceptualizing client issues.

Contextual/Systemic Influences

Counsellor education must equip therapists to meet the needs of clients who are coping with increasing change and uncertainty due to globalization, the shifting labour market, and increasing work precarity (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; DiFabio, 2014; Lawrence & Marshall, 2018). While there is clear evidence that women are disproportionately affected by career pivots (frequent changes and instability of work) and precarious employment (characterized by job insecurity, limited benefits, low wages, and other forms of risk and vulnerability, such as the inability to exercise workplace rights or protections), much less is known about the systemic and relational impacts on women, families, and communities (Benach et al., 2014). Further, it is important to address gender inequality in terms of paid and unpaid work—a major influence in individuals' career–life trajectories and one that is experienced disproportionately by women (Jung & O'Brien, 2017; Padavic et al., 2020).

Rapid technological advances have transformed the Canadian economy, greatly expanding its service industry base, which demands high levels of skill and education. This has propelled the world of work to undergo dramatic and

irreversible changes, and increasingly, families must negotiate global economic instability, downturns and recessions, and work precarity and mobility. Precarious work has increased while full-time employment—and its former guarantees of job security, benefits, and career opportunities—has decreased (Kreshpaj et al., 2020; Rönnblad et al., 2019). The negative impacts of precarious work on individual and family well-being and mental health are increasingly apparent, while precarious work also increases the risk for occupational injury (Kreshpaj et al., 2020; Rönnblad et al., 2019). Women and young people find themselves particularly disadvantaged in the workforce, increasingly facing unemployment, underemployment, inequality, and instability (Kühn, 2020). The United Nations (2019) estimated that 65% of the jobs available to children born in 2018 do not yet exist. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated existing inequities, with women, young people, and recent immigrants facing disproportionate effects on career and work lives (e.g., Desjardins & Freestone, 2021; Frenette et al., 2020).

For women, the demands of unpaid labour in the home and of care work represent additional potential stressors as well as relational dynamics that influence their paid employment (Jung & O'Brien, 2017). Work and relationships are complexly integrated aspects of daily life. Relational and relational-cultural perspectives of career development (e.g., Schultheiss, 2007), the psychology of working theory (Duffy et al., 2016), and systems theory framework (McMahon & Patton, 2018) view individuals within various relational systems, such as family and romantic relationships. Therefore, access to decent work impacts not only an individual worker but also the various connected systems and people. For example, the concentration of work in specific geographical areas also affects the ability of families to stay together, forcing some families or partners into arrangements of living apart together (Ayuso, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2019), where the primary income earner is forced to migrate and work elsewhere for extended periods (for example, individuals employed in the oil sands in Alberta migrate out of province, then return home).

Noticeably, with increased technological advances and the ease of access to the Internet, combined with frequent mobility, women populating work sectors are compelled to become more inventive in their career progression. Some women are gravitating toward employment that aims at reducing social problems (Calás et al., 2009), for instance engaging in activities related to community integration (e.g., supports for new immigrant populations, social outreach positions, language skills or job training, and after-school programs for children) as well as community-based grassroots activities (such as social entrepreneurship in food service, crafts, and produce sales in local farmers' markets). Due to its integrative potential, this kind of work can have important social benefits for these workers (in terms of mental health) and their communities (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018).

Counsellors must be aware of the systemic influences and impact on their clients. Therefore, counsellor education and counselling psychology training must address the profound influence that the availability of decent work can have on clients' mental health and well-being. Career instability can mean that family life is also disrupted. For example, individuals may postpone marrying or having children. Also, families moving in search of employment affects the education and development of children. While there is evidence that a small proportion of individuals can thrive under precarious working conditions, there are clear negative social and psychological health outcomes for most workers who experience precarious work. These outcomes are linked intrinsically to relational characteristics of employment and to the changing social structure of employment (Blustein et al., 2016).

Decent work and decent working communities represent opportunities for integrative potential, meaning, purpose, autonomy, relatedness, and connection. Supporting individuals in obtaining and maintaining decent work may be seen as a social justice intervention. The social justice roots of counselling psychology call for a more specific approach to understanding the nature of precarious work. It is important that counsellors support decent work through the application of contemporary counselling interventions that include a focus on career.

Social Justice and Career

Social justice has long been considered one of the core values of counselling psychology, and there have been numerous calls to reconnect with social justice as a guiding value in counselling psychology (e.g., Arthur & Collins, 2010; Collins, 2020; Sinacore et al., 2011). A social justice orientation aligns with the focus in counselling of attending to diversity, social justice and advocacy, as well as a focus on career psychology, wellness, and health promotion across the lifespan (Sinacore et al., 2011). It is well known that those who face marginalization and oppression face increased barriers to attaining education and decent work. For example, even immigrant professionals struggle with barriers to obtaining employment in the profession that paved the way for immigration (Moffitt et al., 2020). With a focus on the role of work in people's lives, career counselling is an important link to the traditional roots of counselling psychology as well as a bridge to the future of relational and contextual models of work, offering practical ways of promoting social justice and well-being for our clients.

Despite calls to attend to the dynamics of the psychology of working, the agenda of decent work has not been formally adopted even in the field of career-life psychology (Blustein et al., 2016). Historically, a large body of research has focused on identifying predictors for finding a good fit in career and on understanding the nature of fit between work and an individual's values, interests, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as indices of well-being at work. These approaches

assume an element of choice and autonomy for individuals to pursue a work–life path of their choosing as well as stability in occupations and the labour market (Blustein et al., 2016). Contemporary career psychology must be responsive to the continually evolving contexts in which clients work and live (Borgen et al., 2015). This goal, within counselling and counselling psychology practice more broadly, aligns with the values of promoting social justice competencies in counselling psychology and counsellor education (Arthur, 2018; Arthur & Collins, 2010; Collins, 2020). The following section presents a case example that offers illustrations of the intersections of career life, mental health, and well-being as presenting issues as well as the applicability of career counselling interventions as a means of assisting clients with their concerns and as social justice action.

Work, Social Justice, and Mental Health

Sexual and gender minority clients are at higher risk for depression and suicidality (Ferlatte et al., 2020). Their challenges with relation to finding and maintaining decent work may be more pronounced due to issues of discrimination and heteronormativity. For young people, challenges to career development include a lack of safety in schools, leading to absences and lower rates of achievement, thus creating further obstacles (Goodrich et al., 2013). Chen and Keats (2016) noted that hidden minority status and potential internalized homophobia intensify the challenges youth face in terms of identity development as emerging adults. Because the development of vocational identity is occurring along with sexual identity, experiences of heterosexism and homophobia compound the challenges of this developmental stage (Goodrich et al., 2013; Huang, 2020; Prince, 2013). Overall, contextual socio-political factors may influence lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning) individuals more intensely (Datti, 2009; Resnick & Galupo, 2019).

Traditional career assessments contain heteronormative and cisgender bias, including the lack of non-binary gender options (Huang, 2020). Traditional assessments that evaluate interests and fit with particular occupations are not equipped to evaluate issues of workplace climate and inclusivity. Concerns about whether individuals may be free to live fully as themselves may shape and restrict career interests. These are concerns that may not be addressed adequately if counselling does not examine issues of work and career specifically, a major gap considering the profound impact of work on individuals' lives.

Case Example

Jane is a 36-year-old mother of two in a same-sex relationship. Her older daughter is 5 years old and has significant developmental disabilities. Her younger daughter is 4 years old and is currently receiving speech and language services. In her small community, Jane works as an on-call substitute teacher. Jane would like to work more (gain a permanent position) or even return to school

to pursue a master's degree. However, her daughters require significant support, and the family attends many specialist appointments, often out of town, requiring lengthy commutes and time off work. Struggling with balancing her desire to work with her parenting responsibilities, she experiences symptoms of anxiety and depression. To support her well-being, her family doctor referred Jane to a local counselling agency that provides services for LGBTQ+ adults.

This case example illustrates several of the issues raised in our discussion, including the importance of a career–life focus in taking action on social justice values as well as highlighting how a focus on career life as a holistic lens for assessing client concerns creates a more accurate conceptualization and offers additional ways of intervening to assist clients with their concerns.

Implications for Counsellor Education and Counselling Psychology Training

Given the importance that historically has been placed on career in counselling and counselling psychology and the potentially increasing need for career interventions, a renewed effort to ensure competency in career counselling is required. Accordingly, we offer some suggestions that could be implemented to support career counselling competencies within graduate programs. Lifestyle and Career Development is one of the core concepts and competencies required for accreditation of a graduate program in counselling (CCPA, 2002); for certification, however, career counselling is only one possible choice to satisfy the requirement of four required courses. It is relevant to our discussion that diversity and multicultural counselling is a required course for accredited programs but an elective option for certification. Standards and requirements for psychologists vary across provinces and territories, with only five counselling psychology doctoral programs currently accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association (Bedi et al., 2016). Quebec stands out as a notable exception in the certification of career counselling professionals with the *Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec*.

Given the importance and interconnection of career and multicultural counselling as areas of practice, as well as the need for specific training in these areas, one recommendation is to integrate education in both multicultural counselling and psychology of across counsellor education and counselling psychology curricula, particularly beginning with introductory pre-practicum and practicum courses. Introducing work and career as an integral aspect of psychosocial functioning that beginning counsellors should assess and address, along with other dimensions of client identity, is essential. The American Psychological Association's (n.d.) *Professional Practice Guidelines* address specifically the importance of integrating the role of work and career into psychological practice. In addition to understanding the psychological experience of work and the role of work in identity and

relationships, knowledge about the changing labour market, career counselling process and outcome, and developments in career assessment beyond traditional interest and skill matching inventories is essential to a holistic approach.

This foundational knowledge would equip students for further study in career counselling while also raising awareness of career–life issues in other courses. For example, in child and adolescent development courses (e.g., career development stereotypes, school-to-work transitions) and couple/family courses (e.g., work/life, multiple role management, relational influences on career/romantic relationships), career–life issues are integral. Swanson (2002) advocated for an integrative approach, beginning with a program review and including an appreciation of the bidirectional influence of career and other life concerns, with a particular emphasis on the importance of career counselling for traditionally underserved and marginalized populations. Attending to intersectional issues of discrimination, access to education, and decent work is key to empowering new counsellors and counselling psychologists to act on equity and social justice issues. For example, given the much higher rates of unemployment for Indigenous and cultural minority youth, career life, work, and education must be addressed within theories of counselling that are sensitive to culture and context (Marshall et al., 2013).

We also encourage the use of career counselling competencies, which is a specialization within the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners, developed by the Canadian Council for Career Development and Canadian Career Development Foundation (CSGCDP, 2012). The new Competency Framework for Career Development Professionals is being validated as part of a national research project entitled *Supporting Canadians to Navigate Learning and Work*. One emphasis of this project is to ensure that the competencies required to assist individuals with complex career development needs across the lifespan and in a changing socio-economic context are articulated, understood, and implemented fully.

Greater exposure to career interventions (and appreciation of the similarities between counselling presenting issues related and unrelated to career), greater understanding of the role of career issues in presenting concerns unrelated to career, and greater understanding of the positive impact that career interventions can have on a variety of outcomes, including a decrease in psychological distress, may help to strengthen the interest of students in further study in career. Understanding the psychology of working, issues regarding decent work and precarity, and relational and cultural influences in career life will enhance social justice and multicultural competencies. Further, we reiterate our position that ethical practice—being proactive in promoting the client’s best interests—requires that counsellors assess and treat individuals properly, including a comprehensive assessment of their work life, with sensitivity to the interconnection between career and “personal” issues.

While the growth of career counselling process and outcome research is encouraging, including evidence of the effects of career counselling on psychological distress (Milot-Lapointe et al., 2019), further advancement in this area is needed. Promoting the inclusion of research on impacts of career counselling and mental health will strengthen the evidence base supporting the inclusion of career interventions in treatment and improve overall practice. There remains a need for further research regarding the impacts of career counselling interventions on mental health and well-being (Robertson, 2013b).

In particular, there is a need for applied research in career intervention as a form of mental health intervention to strengthen the evidence base for well-being outcomes of career counselling. If graduate students are not encouraged to consider the role of work and career, there is a risk that these research areas will be underexplored by future academics. As medicalization becomes a growing part of the counselling profession, the call for evidence-based interventions will only increase, and counselling psychology researchers must continue to engage in this important work, to inform practice and to advance evidence-informed, anti-oppressive career development practice.

Given increasing uncertainty in the labour market, impacts on access to decent work, and the effects of work/career uncertainty and precarious work on well-being, career interventions have immense practical potential for addressing the concerns of individuals experiencing the intersecting concerns of work and mental health. With the need for imminent action, we recommend an upsurge in the next generation of graduate student researchers to explore empirically the influence of career development on mental health and well-being.

Conclusion

This paper calls for a renewed focus and movement to action on work and career life in counselling psychology and counsellor education, to strengthen the profession's commitment and efficacy in promoting social justice, and to address fully the multi-faceted needs of clients in today's changing world. This includes strengthening training for counsellors, including the contemporary psychology of working and relational career development theories that consider individuals' multiple life roles and relationships, culture, and socio-economic context, ideally integrated throughout the counselling and counselling psychology training curriculum.

Integral to this approach, training and practice must incorporate a social justice orientation in strengthening interventions by addressing intersectionalities and inequities. Awareness of the reciprocal impacts of work and career on the mental health and well-being of clients is essential in providing ethical and comprehensive psychotherapeutic services. We hold strong hope for a renewed interest in

the psychology of careers and in working among counsellors and counselling psychologists.

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About the Authors

Rebecca E. Hudson Breen is an assistant professor of counselling psychology at the University of Alberta. Her research and practice are focused in the area of career-life development and well-being. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9269-0763>

Breanna Lawrence is an assistant professor in teacher education and guidance counselling at Brandon University. She focuses her research on child, youth, and family mental health. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7776-658X>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rebecca E. Hudson Breen, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta, 5-129 Education Centre North, 8730 112 Street NW, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5. Email: hudsonbr@ualberta.ca