

Anti-Oppressive Practice Resources

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Baines, D. (2000). Everyday practices of race, class and gender: Struggles, skills and radical social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 11(2), 5-27.

Baines, D. (Ed.). (2007). *Doing anti-oppressive practice: Building transformative politicized social work.* Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Exploring how to translate anti-oppressive theory into everyday social work practice and how to “do” politicized, transformative social work, this book brings together ten authors with extensive backgrounds in social justice and front line practice. Drawing on practice vignettes, personal experiences and case work examples, the authors focus on social work practice in a variety of settings, including child welfare, mental health, addictions, clinical therapy, women’s services community, and health. Suggesting ways to approach anti-oppressive practice in an era of globalization, cutbacks and growing inequity, the authors show that dedicated social justice-oriented social workers can do more than apply band-aids to social problems. They can politicize everyday work with clients, resist oppression, and challenge injustice on the front lines, while simultaneously working to transform larger systems.

Barnoff, L., & Moffatt, K. (2007). Contradictory tensions in anti-oppression practice in feminist social services. *Affilia*, 22(1), 56-70.

The implementation of an anti-oppression approach in feminist agencies must deal with contradictory tensions within the model. Feminists imagine anti-oppression as a model of practice that deals with all structures of oppression. At the same time, feminist members of marginalized communities perceive that their particular form of oppression is not attended to in the model. The authors contend that one must understand anti-oppression practice within the historical and social conditions that create inequity and offer implications for practice.

Dalrymple, J. & Burke, B. (2006). *Anti-oppressive practice: Social care and the law (2nd Edition).* UK: Open University Press.

In this book, the authors challenge the notion that anti-oppressive practice has lost its potency or become commodified into a professional response to inequalities. Retaining a commitment to the principles and values of anti-oppressive practice, discussion about contemporary practice is guided by a critical understanding of personal values and the context of practice.

Some key questions are explored:

- How is anti-oppressive practice relevant in contemporary practice?
- How can the law be used as an empowering tool?
- How can the law be used to develop and inform anti-oppressive practice?

The authors draw on their own experiences and those of practitioners, service users and careers to understand issues of power and oppression, demonstrating how the law can be used to inform the development of critical anti-oppressive practice. The book therefore points the way to practice that is both empowering to service users and ultimately liberating for practitioners.

Damianakis T. (2006). Seeking the spiritual in anti-oppressive organizational change. *Critical Social Work*, 7 (1). Retrieved on July 4, 2009 at:

<http://cronus.uwindsor.ca/units/socialwork/critical.nsf/main/E69344834B819BFB852571790072>

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Anti-oppressive frameworks are well established in both the United Kingdom and North American social work literature as one means of addressing social inequities. The literature in spirituality has grown substantially, establishing initial theoretical models and an empirical trail. The relationship of spirituality to critical social work models including anti-oppressive frameworks have yet to be fully examined. The purpose of this paper is to conceptually explore relationships between spirituality and anti-oppressive practice, specifically anti-oppressive organizational change, using as exemplar a small women-centered agency's four-year engagement in anti-oppressive organizational change. Using qualitative methodology, four in-depth interviews explored the experiences of agency staff and volunteer members during this agency's period of transition. Analysis of the interviews revealed the importance of critical consciousness in an examination of power, privilege and oppression, and the importance of empowerment approaches. Additionally, results describe the importance of spirituality in establishing purpose and connection, and in this study, in shaping interpersonal, intrapersonal processes and the quality of the experience of anti-oppressive organizational change. Future research addressing social inequities within an anti-oppressive framework should consider the potential role or influence of the spiritual dimension.

Dominelli, L. (2002). *Anti-oppressive social work theory and practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book tackles a subject of crucial importance to students and practitioners alike: how social workers can enable their clients to challenge and transcend their manifold oppressions that disempower them (whether through poverty disability, mental illness, and so on). It moves from a discussion of social work's purpose and ambitions to an exposition of theory, and from there, to the practice arenas of working with individuals, in groups within organizations and within a wider social and political context.

Specifically, the book explores the limitations of approaches that rely wholly on narrowly focused professional expertise for resolving client problems. Such approaches ignore the complexity of the range of levels at which social interaction occurs and diminish the client's own involvement in shaping the circumstance of their lives. Instead the book argues for the replacement of these models with holistic, empowering practices that place the client at the center of a relationship that involves professional intervention.

Dominelli, L. (1996) 'Deprofessionalizing social work: Anti-oppressive practice, competencies, postmodernism.' *British Journal of Social Work*, 26 (2), 153–75.

Social Work is in a state of flux. One of the key factors impacting on the direction it is currently taking is market forces. This article argues that the globalization of the economy and the internationalization of the state are affecting social work education and practice in Britain through the competency-based approach being promoted by CCETSW and the government. This is leading to the demise of the autonomous, reflective practitioner, creating instead, a fragmented, deprofessionalized service that is poorly placed to meet the requirements of anti-oppressive practice.

Freire, P. (1990). A critical understanding of social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 1(1), 3—9.

Marilynn Moch's translation of Paulo Freire's piece was published in the *Journal of Progressive Human Services'* own predecessor, *Catalyst: A Socialist Journal of the Social Services*. Freire's words are a reminder of what progressive social workers aspire to and how the values and characteristics of progressive social workers that Freire identifies in his speech remain relevant today.

Griffith, D.M., Mason, M., Yonas, M., Eng, E., Jeffries, V., Plihcik, S., & Parks, B. (2007). Dismantling institutional racism: Theory and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 39, 381-392.

Despite a strong commitment to promoting social change and liberation, there are few community psychology models for creating systems change to address oppression. Given how embedded racism is in institutions such as healthcare, a significant shift in the system's policies, practices, and procedures is required to address institutional racism and create organizational and institutional change. This paper describes a systemic intervention to address racial inequities in healthcare quality called dismantling racism. The dismantling racism approach assumes healthcare disparities are the result of the intersection of a complex system (healthcare) and a complex problem (racism). Thus, dismantling racism is a systemic and systematic intervention designed to illuminate where and how to intervene in a given healthcare system to address proximal and distal factors associated with healthcare disparities. This paper describes the theory behind dismantling racism, the elements of the intervention strategy, and the strengths and limitations of this systems change approach.

Larson, G. (2008). Anti-oppressive practice in mental health. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 19* (1), 39-54.

This article identifies the challenges to incorporating an anti-oppressive practice approach in the field of mental health, which has traditionally utilized a discourse and perspectives of a bio-medical model. Schools of Social Work often teach anti-oppressive and social justice approaches which make it difficult for students to link theory and practice in fields such as mental health. In this article, seven principles of practice are presented as a framework for working with people with disabling conditions of mental health. Specific strategies for implementing these principles are presented.

Maiter, S. (2009, February 27). Using an anti-racist framework for assessment and intervention in clinical practice with families from diverse ethn racial backgrounds. *Clinical Social Work Journal*. Retrieved July 4, 2009, from <http://www.springerlink.com/content/h317443468763343/>

Cultural competency and cultural sensitivity are now widely considered to be essential for clinical social work practice with individuals and families from diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Failing to incorporate these concepts into clinical services can be harmful to clients, can fail to meet the needs of members of diverse ethn racial communities, and can result in inappropriate services. Yet a sole focus on culture can obliterate our understanding of the consequences of race and racism on individuals and families. The use of a discursive anti-racist framework for assessment and intervention in practice with members of diverse ethn racial communities is suggested and explained through the use of a case example.

McDonald, P. & Coleman, M. (1999). Deconstructing hierarchies of oppression and adopting a 'multiple model' approach to anti-oppressive practice. *Social Work Education, 18* (1), 19-34.

This paper seeks to establish that hierarchies of oppression exist, that these are destructive, degrading and dehumanizing, and that these hierarchies need to be understood in order to preclude unwitting collusion with hierarchical thinking and operating. The roles of hegemony and of attributes in hierarchies are outlined and discussed. Hierarchies of oppressive experiences are defined and denounced as inextricably emanating from the same destructive form as their inverse, hierarchies of oppression.

Having deconstructed hierarchies of oppression, it is the authors' assertion that a new, fundamentally non-hierarchical approach is called for in understanding and challenging oppression in all its forms. A 'multiple model' approach is outlined to this end and the authors contend that failure to progress and adopt a multiple approach has, to date, been determined by the absence of an adequate more than by resistance and by internalized oppressive hierarchical thinking, which mirrors the destructive phenomena of oppression itself. The authors conclude by

suggesting that without progress social work and social education will continue to collude with and replicate oppressive hierarchical thinking.

McLaughlin, K. (2005). From ridicule to institutionalization: Anti-oppression, the state, and social work. *Critical Social Policy*, 25, 283-305.

Anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices are considered essential components of social work education and practice. This paper charts the rise and rationale for these initiatives, detailing the social and political factors that influenced their development and incorporation into the profession. The criticism of such measures from a variety of perspectives is also discussed. Whilst this was at times vitriolic and did affect policy, the claim that it constituted a backlash is contested. Influenced by a Marxist view of the state and Foucauldian insights into both the power of discourse and controlling aspects of the 'helping professions', it is argued that what were considered radical measures have now become institutionalized and in the process lost their original meaning. Antioppressive social work, rather than being a challenge to the state has allowed the state to reposition itself once again as a benign provider of welfare, and via the anti-oppressive social worker is able to enforce new moral codes of behaviour on the recipients of welfare.

Moore, P. (2001). Critical components of an anti-oppressive framework. *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, 14 (3), 25-32.

There are many aspects to who we are as people. This determines how people view us and how we see others. Many of these factors are born with us, and we have little control over them. Through socialization and society we view people based on many things we have learned to be "right." In an anti-oppressive framework, these views are broken into six main lenses; racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, and class oppression. Many of the biases we have as workers enter our practice without us being aware of them. The purpose of this article is to define and explain the critical components of an anti-oppressive framework of practice and how they apply to the work we do. The framework offers a model to challenge the basic beliefs of the dominant and powerful society through the empowerment of those who are oppressed. Through the elimination of societal-imposed barriers such as race, gender, orientation, abilities, and age, we can confront and eradicate the class system in which we currently live and continue to support.

Mullaly, B. (2001). Confronting the politics of despair: Toward the reconstruction of progressive social work in a global economy and postmodern age. *Social Work Education*, 20 (3), 303-320.

The emancipatory project of progressive social work as it was developed in the 1970's and early 1980's in Anglo-democracies has been brought into question on two fronts. First, the changing nature of capitalism from a post-war centralized form to a global decentralized form has rendered irrelevant much of the earlier analysis of capitalism which had been used by progressive social workers to develop emancipatory theory and

practices at both the personal and political levels. Second, postmodern and poststructural thought have discredited many of the concepts (meta-narratives), ideals (universalisms), and discourses that underpinned the modernist development of progressive social work that addresses both of these challenges. The following elements of a reconstructed form of progressive social work are presented and discussed; bridging what is positive and liberating in the tradition of progressive social work with a postmodern deconstruction of its problematic elements to the point where reconstruction is possible; identification of human needs that are universal and transcultural; new social movement theory; a revitalized public sector; anti-oppression as the framework for progressive social work; challenging and resisting the dominant order; and the constructive use of anger.

Parrott, L. (2009). Constructive marginality: Conflicts and dilemmas in cultural competence and anti-oppressive practice. *Social Work Education*, 28 (6), 617-630.

This paper argues that social work education in the United Kingdom (UK) needs to develop teaching cultural competence in order to respond to the increasing cultural diversity of service users. In recognizing this it argues that anti-oppressive practice (AOP) is central to this task in linking issues of social justice with culture. This paper explores some of the dynamics of culture and argues that a more complex conceptualization of how cultures are constituted will be enable social work to be more effective. It will argue that cultures are not monolithic. Culture is a site of struggle around which different groups seek to imprint their values as the culture norm upon less powerful others. It discusses the inevitable conflicts that student social workers face in intervening in different cultural practices that may be considered harmful. It discusses criteria for working in cultural dialogue to enable student social workers to work in an anti-oppressive way. In negotiating the conflicts inherent in social work practice with different cultures it argues that student social workers adopt a position of 'constructive marginality.'

Pitner, R. O. (2005). Use of critical consciousness in anti-oppressive social work practice: Disentangling power dynamics at personal and structural levels. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35 (2), 435-452.

One of the limitations of anti-oppressive perspectives (AOPs) in social work is its lack of focus at a micro and individual level. AOPs should entail the social worker's addressing the needs and assets of service users, challenging the oppressive social structure and, most importantly, critically challenging the power dynamics in the service-provider/service-user relationship. Critical consciousness challenges social workers to be cognizant of power differentials and how these differentials may inadvertently make social-work practice an oppressive experience. The authors contend that critical consciousness fills in some of the gaps of AOPs, and argue for a fuller integration of critical consciousness into teaching and practice of AOPs. The methods to work toward critical consciousness, such as inter-group dialogues, agent-target distinctions and empowerment, are detailed.

Pon, G. (2009). Cultural competence as the new racism: An ontology of forgetting. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 20, 59-70.*

This article argues that cultural competency promotes an obsolete view of culture and is a form of new racism. Cultural competency resembles new racism both by otherizing non-whites and by deploying modernist and absolutist views of culture while not using racialist language. Drawing on child welfare, cultural competence is shown to repeat what Lowe (1993) calls an ontology of forgetting Canada's history of colonialism and racism. A recommendation is made for jettisoning cultural competency and emphasizing instead a self-reflexive grappling with racism and colonialism.

Rife, H.A., & Kondrat (1997). Social worker alienation and disempowerment in a managed care setting. *Journal of Progressive Social Work, 8(1), 41-55.*

Managed mental health care is a growing force in the mental health industry. Using critical theory, this article critiques the new directives in mental health treatment and the impact on the social worker. It is argued that the management of services has taken the form of technical control of the relationship. The end result is seen as potentially alienating and disempowering to both the social worker and to the treatment relationship. The implications for practice and research are discussed.

Rossiter, A.B. (1996). A perspective on critical social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 7 (2), 23-41.*

This paper articulates a perspective on critical social work that draws from poststructuralism and critical theory. Arguing that the critique of positivism, the unreliability of generalizations about humans, and the influence of new social movements have undermined the credibility of mainstream social work practice and theory, the author advocates the need for social work theory and practice that is predicated on social justice. The paper offers a critique of structuralist approaches to practice and then seeks to embed social work practice in epistemic responsibility and communicative responsibility.

Sakamoto, I. & Pitner, R.O. (2005). Use of critical consciousness in anti-oppressive social work practice: Disentangling power dynamics at personal and structural levels. *British Journal of Social Work, 35(4), 435-452.

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consciousness fills in some of the gaps of AOPs, and argue for a fuller integration of critical consciousness into teaching and practice of AOPs. The methods to work toward critical consciousness, such as inter-group dialogues, agent–target distinctions and empowerment, are detailed.

Stepney, P. (2006). Mission impossible? Critical practice in social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 36(8), 1289-1307.

In recent years, the capacity of social work to be a force for progressive policy and social change has been significantly eroded. Social work in the UK has been re-branded and reshaped within New Labour’s modernized welfare state, only to become politically compromised and compliant: ‘the dog that didn’t bark’ even when its soul appeared to be stripped out. This article offers a response to this predicament informed by a structural modernist analysis revitalized by elements of critical postmodernism (Fook, 2002). Without wishing to offer any definitive prescriptions, the concept of critical practice is worthy of consideration, as it offers the potential for combining the role of protection with prevention whilst embodying possibilities for critical reflection and change. This became the focus of a recent conference organized around the theme of celebrating social work (Torfaen, 2002). Further, it offers practitioners a means for critical engagement with the issues that lie at the root of injustice and exclusion, to develop a more emancipatory approach, whilst resisting pressures for more enforcement and control.

Wilson, A., & Beresford, P. (2000). ‘Anti-oppressive practice’: Emancipation or appropriation? *British Journal of Social Work*, 30, 553-573.

This article offers an initial critical discussion of the concept of anti-oppressive practice – AOP – from the perspective of service users. Whilst acknowledging the emancipator aspirations of anti-oppressive practice, it also considers its regressive potential. AOP has become central in social work theory and practice and indeed is sometimes presented as a key approach and theory of social work. This discussion highlights the failure so far significantly to involve service users and their organizations in the development of anti-oppressive social work impact upon service users; the problems raised by the failure so far to address the use of social work and social care services as an area of difference and category of social division. Finally, the article examines alternatives to existing notions of anti-oppressive practice based on the equal involvement of service users.

Wilson, E. (2005). Community in diversity: reinventing liberatory practice. Doctoral dissertation, Perth: University of Western Australia. See also shortened paper from this thesis Wilson, E. (2005) Reinventing liberatory practice: how do we work with groups of which we are not a part? *International Conference on Engaging Communities, QLD*. <http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org/abstracts/Wilson-Erin-final.pdf>

The research that informed this paper asked: how can we work as allies of groups of which we are not a part? This question is particularly focused on work with people who have experienced colonisation by those who are aligned (by race, class, gender, culture or

position) with the colonisers or oppressors. The research brings together literature in the fields of community work, adult education, and feminist and postcolonial theory, with Indigenous viewpoints and experience. An analysis of Indigenous viewpoints identified a range of key ideas about achieving social change. These ideas are developed into several frameworks, two of which are discussed. The first framework offers a way of conceptualising work against oppression and proposes that it must involve a focus on fostering emancipatory agency. Emancipatory agency involves the capacity to know and to act towards social justice ends via meaning-making which follows ethical criteria. An ethics of meaning-making is proposed which includes a focus on: multiplicity and difference; the partial nature of all knowings; the context/situation of meaning; and the critical/reflective attitude in meaning-making. This type of agency is dependent on the process of transformative dialogue which is inherently communal and is based on four micro processes: affirming the O/other; encountering, exploring and experiencing of multiple and partial views; moving between positions of self and others; and enacting meaning into the world. A second framework operationalises these ideas in the field of community development. Community development is understood as involving a 'trialectic' of three interdependent principles: relationship, organisation and justice. A seven-step method of practice to enact these principles is proposed.

Compiled by L.Nissen from published abstracts.

Helpful Websites:

What is Anti-Oppressive Social Work?

<http://aosw.socialwork.dal.ca/whatisaosw.html>

Oppression, Domination and Privilege Theory

<http://aosw.socialwork.dal.ca/theory.html#top>

Journals:

Journal of Progressive Human Services

Critical Social Work

<http://www.criticalsocialwork.com/>