Anti-Oppression Through a Postmodern Lens: Dismantling the Master's Conceptual Tools in Discursive Social Work Practice

Critical Social Work 13(1)

Catrina G. Brown[1]

[1] Dalhousie University

Abstract

Anti-oppression discourse has emerged within critical social work in an effort to address issues of diversity, difference, and inclusion. Drawing upon Audre Lorde's (1984) famous words "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" this paper will argue that modernist aspects of anti-oppressive discourse may unwittingly deploy the masters' or dominant conceptual tools. A critical reflexive lens identifies unintended, modernist conceptual practices of power which may reify dominant discourse. Specifically I focus on three modernist practices of power which may limit anti-oppression discourse: 1) the essentialism of the subject, 2) subjectivism or writing out the social, and 3) the reproduction of dominant social discourse. Through exploring these three related domains, I argue for a blending of modernist and postmodernist assumptions which holds onto the strengths of both modernism and postmodernism while abandoning their limitations. This blended approach will facilitate a critically reflexive anti-oppressive practice.

KEYWORDS: Anti-oppression, postmodernism, social work practice, reflexivity

Introduction

Anti-oppression discourse has emerged within critical social work in an effort to address issues of diversity, difference, and inclusion. Drawing upon Audre Lorde's (1984) famous words "the masters tools will never dismantle the master's house" this paper will argue that modernist aspects of anti-oppressive discourse may unwittingly deploys the masters' or dominant conceptual tools. As conceptual practices of power, these dominant conceptual, ideological, and discursive tools cannot then dismantle oppressive discourses and social relations despite their intention to do so. On the contrary, although unintended, modernist conceptual practices of power within anti-oppression discourse may actually reify dominant discourse and in doing so existing relations of power (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007a, 2007b). A postmodern lens may heighten critical epistemological reflexivity about our discursive practices, advancing the social

Brown

justice agenda within anti-oppression discourse (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007a, 2007b). This paper argues for a "both/and or blended approach" in the ongoing process of refining anti-oppressive, thereby avoiding the limitations of both modernist/structural and postmodernist approaches.

As is often noted, social work anti-oppressive theory is an umbrella term reflecting different views and different types of theory. According to Baines (2007):

> Rather, than a single approach, AOP [anti-oppressive practice] is an umbrella term for a number of social justice oriented approaches to social work, including, feminist, Marxist, post-modernist, Indigenous, post-structuralist, critical constructionist, anti-colonial and anti-racist….As part of larger movements for social change, AOP is constantly refining its theory and practice to address new tensions and social problems, as well as underlying structural factors (p. 4).

Epistemological Assumptions

Anti-oppression discourse has emerged alongside the larger social discourses of post-modernity within progressive social work, whereby the coalescing issues of diversity, difference, and oppression are now situated at the center in the commitment to social justice. Indeed, "an outsider could be forgiven for thinking that anti-oppressive practice is synonymous with, or even comprises, contemporary social work (theory and practice) (Wilson & Beresford, 2000, p. 565). Encapsulating a multitude of existing emancipatory approaches to social work, including feminist, structural, and anti-racist, anti-oppression, attempts to offer an inclusive framework for addressing issues of gender, race, class, and other forms of oppression. At this stage in its development, anti-oppression discourse provides a scaffold or framework which brings together these distinct analyses under one umbrella. While it offers general principles committed to anti-oppression and social justice, which join these analyses and increasingly emphasizes inter-sectionality, it does not offer a comprehensive or unifying theory of multiple and overlapping axis of oppressions (Wilson & Beresford, 2000). At the heart of this discourse is a desire to blend politically motivated common agendas for social justice which recognizes the non-hierarchical, multiple-axis of oppression, while also sustaining distinct agendas related to specific social sites such as gender. Taken together the efforts of anti-oppression discourse in social work are committed to social justice, and to ameliorating structural oppression.

At least in part, the emergence of anti-oppression for social work becomes an attempt to reconcile the complexity of oppression while not privileging one form over another. Further, too singular a focus on competing forms of oppression threatens divisiveness, resulting in the fragmentation and subsequent immobilization of joint forces for social action. Anti-oppression discourse then enables social work to address a broad range of social structural inequities while minimizing some of the deleterious effects of fragmentation through a focus on plurality and intersectionality.

It is clear from recent volumes on anti-oppressive thought and practice related to social work that this approach is represented by multiple world views (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2009; Baines 2007, 2011; Dominelli, 2002; Fook, 2002; Healy, 2005; Heldke & Connor, 2004;

Brown

Mullaly, 1997, 2002, 2010; Shera 2003). Some social workers committed to social justice focus on postmodernism (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007a; Chambon & Irving, 1994; Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999; Gormond, 1993; Healy, 2005; Pease & Fook, 1999; Pon, 2009; Sanda & Nuccio, 1992), critical social work (Carniol, 2000, Fook, 2002; Hick, Fook, & Pozzuto, 2005; Hick & Pozzuto, 2005; Pozzuto, Angell, & Dezendorf, 2005), or critical reflection (Fook, 2002). Many focus their commitment to social justice in social work within political economy, the welfare state, and feminism (Leonard, 1997; McGrath, Moffatt, George, & Lee, 1999; McKeen, 2006, 2004; McKeen & Porter, 2003; Mosher, 2000; Neysmith, 2000). Yet, others address particular substantive issues through a lens committed to social justice such as disability (MacDonald, 2000), homelessness (Karabanow, 2004), pedagogy, (Campbell, 2002, 2003), research (Strier, 2006), queer theory (McPhail, 2004), and gender and the body (Brown, 1993, 2007c, 2007d; Brown & Jasper, 1993a, 1993b; Brown, Weber, & Ali, 2008). Anti-oppressive social work practitioners draw increasingly on the field of narrative therapy with its postmodern, social constructionist, and critical approach (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007a, 2007b, Strong & Pare, 2003; White, 1991, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007). While all these foci contribute to anti-oppression some describe their work through the language of social justice or critical social work language and some use the language interchangeably.

Clearly, it is not possible to generalize comments on anti-oppressive practice to the broad range of work that seeks to advance social justice social work. I am, therefore, not suggesting that all conceptual practices of anti-oppressive or critical social work conceptual practices limit the scope of social justice. This article intends to contribute to the larger critical social work conversation as part of the process of "refining its theory and practice to address new tensions" (Baines, 2007, p.4). Extrapolating from the spirit of Fook's (2002) notion of critical reflection toward examining our fundamental assumptions, my attention centers on examining the possibilities for establishing a both/and approach to anti-oppression and critical social work. By this I mean, addressing the complexities of modernist and postmodernist contributions to critical thought with an emphasis on questioning the modernist conceptualization of experience and the subject or self.

Alongside Hick (2005) I argue, reflexive inquiry allows for the elaboration of how social life and experience are organized. "The intent is not to understand experience subjectively but rather reflexively. It would aim to uncover the social relations organizing people's everyday experience. Both the social worker and the client are viewed as situated" (Hick, 2005, p.42). Similarly, Rossiter (2005) argues critical reflection emphasizes the development of theory from experience. She asks, 'how do we critically problematise the very experience from which we draw our conclusions" (Rossiter, 2005, p. 3). Critical epistemological reflexivity will explore taken for granted assumptions about experience in this discussion. I will begin by exploring three conceptual limitations that can be observed in modernist or structural conceptual practices in social work: 1) the essentialism of the subject, 2) inadvertent subjectivism or writing out the social, and 3) the reproduction of dominant social discourse. Through exploring these related domains, like Hick and Pozzuto (2005), I will ultimately argue for a blending of modernist and postmodernist assumptions which holds onto the strengths of both modernism and postmodernism while abandoning their limitations. This critical reflexivity is intended "to avert as far as possible replicating oppressive social relations in practice" (Healy, 2005, p. 80).

Brown

Critical Reflexivity

In social work, Fook (2002) has made popular the notion of critical reflection. This article is critically reflexive of anti-oppressive conceptual practices thinking critically from within critical theory; turning critical thinking back on ourselves (D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007; Finlay, 2008; Fook, 2002, 2003; Fook & Aga Askland, 2007; Fook, White, & Gardner, 2006; Yip, 2006). Baines (2011) argues that in order to promote social justice in front line social work practice "self-reflexive practice and ongoing social analysis are essential components of AOP" (p. 7). We need not limit ourselves to being critically reflexive of oppressive, mainstream or dominant social practices. It is vitally important that we reflect on those ideas and practices most dear to us. Epistemological reflexivity according to Willig (2001), "encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge).... and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions...." (p. 10). This reflexivity involves being aware of our own contribution to the construction of meaning (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

If as Wilson and Beresford (2000) suggest, AOP has become a 'sacred cow' in social work, it is all the more important that we engage in critical reflexivity. Engaging in critical reflexivity, which moves beyond personal reflection or self-awareness but to purposeful awareness of our discursive practices, which may both challenge and reinforce mainstream practices of power, guards against "producing authoritative accounts as knowledge" (de Montigny, 2011, p.23). As suggested by Rossiter (2005) discourse analysis contributes to critical reflection as it helps to make visible ways that ideas and practices may impede social justice. She states: "I suggest we gain new vantage points from which to reconstruct practice theory in ways that are consciously orientated to our social justice commitments" (Rossiter, 2005, p. 7).

Critical reflection about how anti-oppressive theory and practice are invoked or deployed includes work by Baines (2011), de Montigny (2011), Mclaughlin (2005), Pon (2009), Wilson and Beresford (2000), and Williams (1999). Others, such as McBeath and Webb (2005), are concerned about the treatment of power in postmodern critical social work (p. xiv). Some have critiqued the lack of critical analysis of the state within anti-oppressive discourse. Mclauglin (2005) for instance, argues that "[r]ather than being a challenge to the state, anti-oppressive practice has conversely allowed the state to reposition itself as a benign provider of welfare, as the solution to the problems of the oppressed" (p. 284). Concern has also been expressed that the focus on diversity in anti-oppressive thought has diluted the focus on race and racism and fails to offer a complex theory of inter-sectionality (Williams, 1999). Further, Pon's (2009) critique of the modernist concept of cultural competency often taken up in social work, emphasizes the importance of critical reflexivity on racism and colonization. While the concept of cultural competence was perhaps well intended, Pon's reflexivity suggests it is not only obsolete; it produces a new form of racism. His reflexivity challenges cultural competence for its lack of theorizing about power and rejects its othering of non-whites and absolutist approach to culture. Despite these comments, critiques have been notably cautious. de Montigny (2011) argues that with the growing popularity of anti-oppressive practice and its mainstreamed integration into the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) accreditation standards has made some people reluctant to critique anti-oppressive theory and practice noting, "who among social workers is foolhardy enough to be seen to oppose opposing oppression?" (p. 9). Yet, critical reflexivity of and within anti-oppressive practice facilitates the "difficult and painstaking work of

Brown

discovery" (de Montigny, 2011, p. 26). Enabling critical reflexivity within anti-oppressive theory prevents prescribing what counts as knowledge. It prevents constrained or formulaic approaches which may elide new ideas and developments.

Baines (2007), like de Montigny (2011), identifies some dangers of authoritarianism and its limiting impact on our capacity for critique and social change:

> Authoritarianism also hijacks social justice concepts in the teaching and practice of [anti-oppressive practice] AOP, remaking these concepts in narrow, deterministic ways, dictating shallow solutions and removing possibilities for far-reaching critique or strategies…. rather than expanding our capacity for broad debate and critique, authoritarian approaches control and limit social justice agendas by an insistence on formulaic ways of using concepts common to AOP approaches. Those who deviate from this usage are often derided as oppressors or conservatives (p. 24).

Any tendency within radical or critical thought which constrains or prescribes the nature of critique works against itself. Theory committed to social justice must welcome critique. Authoritarianism is most certainly a master's conceptual tool that should be discouraged through critically reflexive anti-oppressive theory and practice. Its existence has the effect of shutting down questions, such as those which explore the foundational concepts or epistemology that shape our theory and practice. Exploring the importance of dismantling the master's conceptual tools in refining anti-oppressive theory is part of ongoing debates in social work and other fields where theorists attempt to sort out how postmodernism can co-exist or mingle with critical theories often rooted in modernism (Brown, 2007a, 2007b, 2007d, 2011; Hick, Fook, & Pozzuto, 2005; Hick & Pozutto, 2005; Pease & Fook, 1999). Mullaly (2010) challenges the notion that there is an absolute divide separating modernism and postmodernism reminding us that postmodernism and critical theory are often influenced by the same writers which critique the Enlightenment.

Modernism and Postmodernism

As a system of thought, modernism upholds a belief in the existence of one knowable objective reality which can be determined through positivist science (Flax, 1990; Chambon & Irving, 1994; Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999; Haraway, 1990; Nicholson, 1990; Butler & Scott, 1990). Truth claims legitimized by western science often take the form of totalizing and universalizing grand narratives. Through universalizing one interpretation of truth is presumed to be equally true for all individuals. The claim that these narratives represent objective truth strips them of their social construction, their history, and thereby, their political character, while simultaneously claiming to be the path to human enlightenment, emancipation, and progress. Despite these critiques, grand narratives within modernism allow for critical visions of broad scale social transformation. For instance, grand narratives associated with modernism often include Marxism and other critical theories which sought radical social change and which did not support dominant notions of truth and objectivity associated with modernism. Marxist theory, the historical, intellectual and political root of critical theory was critiqued by feminism in the early 1980's for totalizing oppression to social class and economic production. Socialist and Marxist

feminists emerged arguing for the integration of modes of reproduction and the acknowledgement of reproductive labour (Burstyn & Smith, 1985; Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1975; Smith, 1977; Ursel, 1986). Subsequently, second wave feminism was critiqued for totalizing oppression to gender, although there were feminist theorists who did address class and sexual orientation (Snitow, 1983; Valverde, 1991; Vance, 1984). Following continued critiques of exclusion and representation and specifically of race, anti-oppressive perspective today shifts the emphasis to diversity and to the multiplicity and inter-sectionality of oppression. (Baines, 2011; Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007; Flax, 1990; Mullaly, 1997, 2002, 2010). With these foci has come the need to acknowledge postmodernism in social work.

Postmodernism has emerged over the past thirty years and is often thought of as a critical rejection of modernist foundations of knowledge. Truth or reality is seen to be socially constructed and thus shaped by social forces and as such what is typically considered truth or reality is called into question. Its influence on progressive thought has resulted in a rethinking or unpacking of central concepts, and the need to confront issues of inclusion, exclusion, diversity, essentialism and the foundation of what has been considered knowledge (Brown, 1994, 2001, 2003; Butler, 1992; Chambon & Irving, 1994; Crosby, 1992; Di Stephano, 1990; Haraway, 1988; Nicholson, 1990; Riley, 1988, 1992; Scott, 1988; Spelman, 1988). Although this deconstruction of the relationship between power and knowledge or discourse has critical merit, it is often critiqued for its refusal to take a solid position on social issues (Brown, 1994; Ife, 1999). Within postmodernist anti-oppressive approaches to the social world, assumptions about neutrality and objectivity have been exposed as a fiction, masking the partial and located nature of all knowledge (Haraway, 1988). Falsely universalized and objectivist claims about social reality which have often upheld limited and privileged world views have been contested by the growing visibility and challenge of competing standpoints. In challenging the hegemonic knowledge base which has upheld the power and privilege of some at the expense of others, this approach deeply challenges the notion of universal truth and objective knowledge.

While modernism and postmodernism often get presented as yet another oppositional epistemological construction, there is fluidity and overlap between them. Anti-oppressive discourse is ambivalently positioned in modernism, for although it rejects the idea of objective knowledge its commitment to social justice cannot rely on the relativism or lack of position often characterized by postmodernism (Brown, 1994, 2003, 2011; Healy, 2005; Ife, 1999). Instead, anti-oppressive discourse requires taking a stance which may sometimes involve the modernist ingredient of adopting a unifying vision; for example, the notion of social justice or anti-oppression itself (Brown & Augusts-Scott, 2007b). The focus on the local and subjective, and the uncertainty of social life, make it difficult to sustain a broad scale vision for social change (Healy 2005). Some have argued that postmodernism is dangerous for critical social work as it not only has little vision for social change, it tends to be negative, and it comes about at a time when issues of identity and category have taken center stage and the focus on deconstruction is likely to shift away from those conversations (Brotman & Pollack, 1998).

Despite these critiques I concur with Hick and Pozutto (2005) that a blending of the strengths of modernism and postmodernism will best challenge social oppression:

Brown

> It is the challenge of taking up both a materialist analysis that examines structures and a postmodern analysis that rejects starting with a grand theory….this mingling of critical social theory with post-modernism or post-stucturalist theory is necessary today….both are continually emerging and diverging and should not be understood as closed, unanimous or finalized frameworks (p. xvi).

In this mingling, Hick (2005) suggests we must view power reflexively as socially assembled and coordinated not possessed; that structures of oppression are reproduced through ideology; critique positivist social science and understand that people are embodied agents able to participate in social change (p. 49).

The Master's Conceptual Tools: Essentialism in Conversations about the Self

Beginning with the standpoint of the oppressed is justified as a response to previous exclusion and invisibility in hegemonic accounts of the social world. Bishop (1994) adopting this view states: "remember that in the oppressor role you cannot see the oppression as clearly as the oppressed group can" (p. 98). Others such as Freire (2004), Mullaly (2002), and Young, (2000) articulate the complicated social mechanisms which can indeed impede seeing from the position of oppression. The beginning of a tricky tension is sought between questioning the authority of experience of the oppressed while valuing the knowledge and experience of those oppressed. Influential and classic theorist, Freire's (2004), textured treatise recognizes the complex dialectical conflict of the oppressor/oppressed relationship whereby "the oppressed are afraid to embrace freedom; the oppressors are afraid of losing the 'freedom' to oppress" (p. 7). Marxist notions of "false consciousness" (Marx, 1977) popular in the 1960's and 1970's were replaced by a "standpoint" approach, which both emphasized social location and acknowledged the exclusion of the experiences and knowledge of the oppressed. Standpoint feminists emphasized women's voice, representation and inclusion.

Earlier standpoint based feminists, such as Hartsock (1997) and Smith (1997, 1987, 1986), express versions of these ideas. Smith states the study of women's everyday life as it is lived "begins where women have been and are still generally located, outside the ruling apparatus" (1986, p. 6). Seen to be outside the relations of ruling - outside of power - women's experience is epistemologically privileged. For this reason, these experiences are seen by Smith and standpoint theorists in general, to mean that women are able to produce a "truer" account of reality as it is less shaped by the interests of power. In a well-known debate with standpoint theorists, Hekman (1997a) suggests that the "belief that the standpoints of women resists the discursive constitution that defines all "partial and perverse" [ruling group's visions] perceptions of reality is major theme of the feminist standpoint theorists of the 1980's" (p. 346). Drawing upon Foucault, Hekman (1997a) argues,

> The vision of the oppressed is itself another discourse, not the apprehension of "true" reality. It is undoubtedly a counter-discourse, a discourse that seeks to break the hold of the hegemonic discourse, but it is not closer to "reality" than the discourse it exposes. What it may be closer to, however, is a definition of a less repressive society" (p. 345).

Brown

Within such standpoint approaches experience is often authorized in the process of centering marginalized knowledge (see debate, Harding, 1997, Hartsock, 1997, Heckman, 1997a, 1997b; Hill Collins, 1997, Longino, 1993; Smith, 1997). Experience is then understood to have an identity which is problematically conflated with Aessence, and that identity is seen to determine one's politics. Every identity is presumed to have a standpoint and every standpoint an identity. Alongside the focus on identity politics, the tensions and contradictions which exist in modernist standpoint approaches to anti-oppression discourse include the problems of essentializing and universalizing experiences (Brown, 2007a, 2011).

Feminist postmodernist theorists critiqued feminist standpoint theory for its essentialism and universalizing of women's voice and experience (Alcoff, 1988; Scott, 1988) and for the reified category of women itself (Butler, 1992; O'Riley, 1988, 1992). This occurred almost simultaneously with the feminist emphasis on addressing race, and then subsequently race, class and gender (Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1995). After unpacking the meaning of the category of women other social categories came under similar scrutiny. Influenced by Foucault (1980a, 1980b), as well as postmodernism in general, some feminist theory became more conceptually reflexive about the essentialism, universalism, and totalizing within social categories, such as gender, race, and class, its approach to power and knowledge, and of oppositional constructions such as powerful/powerless, oppressor/oppressed, emotion/reason, body/mind, subjectivity/objectivity etc. (Hill Collins, 2004; Spelman, 2004).

These critiques offer valuable insights for anti-oppressive theory in social work as uncovering, encouraging, and validating the suppressed voice of the oppressed is often a key assumption of anti-oppressive practice. Such uncovering is thought to reveal the non-oppressed or "true self". This view suggests that the "authentic self", is freed or liberated from dominant and oppressive structures and narratives through expression of the suppressed first voice (Brown, 2007a, 2011). The naturalized self implies the existence of a real discoverable self (White, 2001, 2007). Narrative practice in social work recognizes that underlying this belief is the idea that if we expose and challenge oppressive conditions which have had an impact on which people have become in the world the real or authentic self will be uncovered. Naturalistic accounts of the subject, are conceptualized as though there were a pure, untouched, or unscathed self-independent of the social (Smith, 1999). The focus needs to remain on the conditions and construction of identity and self. A postmodernism lens suggests that there can never be a self-outside of its social construction (Brown, 2007a; Foucault, 1980a; Smith, 1999).

Ironically, the new story of the oppressed self-risks being separated from power, from its social construction in this humanist and modernist interpretation (White, 2001). While we have learned from Foucault (1980a, 1980b), we cannot escape power - it is everywhere - the fiction of the idealized first voice is that it has managed to escape social construction, escape power. It must then exist as inherently real, true, or essential. Privileging, idealizing, and naturalizing the first voice, or first voice experience, takes it up as it is pre-constituted. The subsequent privileging or authorizing or experience as truth as uncontestable means it does not need to be unpacked - it can be left as it is.

According to Hick (2005) experiences must be situated within the social contexts in which they have emerged:

Nor does the beginning in everyday experience mean that experience is somehow more real or that one person's experiences is more authentic than another's. The intent is not to understand experience subjectivity but rather reflexively. It would aim to uncover the social relations organizing people's everyday experience. Both the social worker and the client are viewed as situated (p. 42).

While the language of "identity politics" is less at the center of critical thought today than the previous two decades, the privileging of first voice relies on both standpoint and identity politics frameworks which I suggest pose a number of contradictions and constraints for anti-oppressive practice. Highlighting some of the tensions in anti-oppressive practice Baines (2007) observes:

….identity and social location are often used in authoritarian ways in the classroom and in practice. …Unfortunately, concepts such as social location and identity are often too often promoted in authoritarian ways, for example, when students or social workers are encouraged to more or less confess external identifiers such as race, class, gender and sexual orientation in order to determine who is an oppressor and who is oppressed. These confessional practices often hide more about oppression than they reveal, and more importantly from a political perspective the demobilize people making them feel that their fate has been sealed and that there is little that can be done beyond feeling bad and guilty, or by simply repeating a string of identifiers without actually understanding how any of those factors related to power, privilege and oppression (p. 25).

When categories are not unpacked, left intact, and essentialized the essentialism of such social categories can result in essentialism of experience, first voice, and self. Such naturalized notions of the self or subjectivity are essentialist. Essentialism is defined by Fuss (1989) as follows:

Essentialism is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the "whatness" of a given entity. In feminist theory, the idea that men and women, for example, are identified as such on the basis of transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences has been unequivocally rejected by many anti-essentialist poststructuralist feminists concerned with resisting any attempts to naturalize human nature (p. xi).

Following the work of Haug (1992), Smith (1987, 1990, 1999), and Scott (1992) I argue that we need to treat experience as the beginning of social inquiry "as both an interpretation and in need of interpretation" (Scott, 1992, p. 37). Smith reminds us that there is no self-outside the social - the self is fully social (1999). As such, there can be no autonomous, fixed, given, essential self. If there can be no "true" story, or no "true self", and all stories and constructions of self are discursive/material, then we must seriously question our well-intended desire to privilege the first voice, the suppressed voice in such a way that it is treated as truth (Brown, 2007a). Accounts of experience can importantly reveal the material conditions of lived experiences which are "real". The meanings attached to those conditions and the links to specific identities however need to be unpacked alongside the material conditions. From this view, the concept of

Brown

voice within anti-oppressive theory and practice also has limitations. According to Baines (2007):

> So, just as the insights of anti-oppressive practitioners need to be analyzed in relation to critical theory and social values, so too, do the insights of clients, community members and activists. Voice cannot be taken at face value any more than the stories that clients tell about their experience (p. 25).

According to Smith (1999), "experience, as it is spoken, is always social and always bears its social organization" (p. 96). Recognizing that experience is "ideologically cast" (Fuss, 1989, p. 114), Smith (1987, 1990, 1999), and Haug (1992) suggest that we need to be concerned with how experience is socially organized. Rather than taking it at face value, the construction of experiences is explored as a way to politicize and change the limits of essentialism (Fuss, 1989, p. 119). Haug (1992) reminds us that individuals cannot give objective accounts of themselves, rather they subjectively construct and transform their experiences "until their existence becomes relatively uncontradictory" (p. 9). Haug (1992) suggests that we need to attend to the paradoxes of experience in which experience is both an obstacle to, and a necessary aspect of how we can "know" the world. Life is an ongoing process of (re)constructions in which we represent ourselves.

The degree to which theory is essentialist is often seen as a measure of its ability to be progressive or of its capacity to enable social change. Essentialism within feminist theory, for example, may reinforce sexist, stereotypical, or patriarchal categories of women and it entrenches individuals within oppressive social relations. Feminist essentialism entrenches women within patriarchal social relations through reinforcing patriarchal constructions of femininity when it suggests, for example, that women are by nature caring, nurturing, passive, or simply victims.

Likewise, those working with interpersonal violence may still presume men are by nature violent. In the 1980's the idea that all men are potential perpetrators and all women potential victims was a common assertion within the women's movement (Augusta-Scott, 2007). Similarly anti-racist essentialism may entrench racialized people within racist social relations through reinforcing racist and stereotypical constructions of race. Like with gender, race is often totalized and universalized. Diversity between and among women and racialized men and women is minimized. There is then one single story rather than many. Awareness of how we talk about gender, race, and class, for example, is a pivotal aspect of critical reflexivity.
The anti-essentialist and critical stance of postmodern feminist epistemology provides a way in which to evaluate theories of anti-oppressive practice. However, the polarization of essentialism and constructionism, or the idea that "differences are constructed, not innate" is problematic as it obscures the way these approaches are "deeply and inextricably co-implicated with each other" (Fuss, 1990 p. xii). Further, Alcoff (1988) suggests that the postmodern alternative to essentialism or nominalism - "the idea the category of women is a fiction and that feminist efforts must be directed toward dismantling this fiction" only serves to make gender invisible again (p. 417). We cannot simply embrace the paradox of essentialism and nominalism in which difference is either denied - nominalism, or emphasized - essentialized. Alcoff develops the concept of positionality in an effort to go beyond this paradox. This third approach recognizes

identity as a point of departure, but also as a construction which needs to be critically unpacked (p. 432). This appears to be a politically helpful way to both hold onto and reject aspects of socially constructed identity. This notion of positionality is applicable to other social categories such as race and class.

While an essentialist approach understands individual identity characteristics arise from nature and are absolute, and nominalism suggests they arise from oppressive social relations within society. Both approaches can be similarly fixed, preconstituted, ahistorical, and immutable. The degree of overdetermination within both essentialism and nominalism precludes the possibility of subjective agency. As Alcoff (1988) observes, we can critique essentializing practices even when the theory is based on a socially constructionist view if it is ahistorical, universalized, and overly determinist. Within such determinist approaches, individuals are simply products of the social world, stripped of their agency and capacity for resistance. When individuals are characterized as objects rather than subjects, the social world simply acts upon them. If discourse assumes individuals have no agency, experiences in the social world are more than just stable or fixed, they are virtually unchangeable. Social identities become inevitable within this approach, whereby social constructionism becomes as limiting as biological determinism. These conceptual practices of identity are not likely to advance transformative social work practice.

The Master's Tools: Writing Out the Social in Conversations about the Self

Essentializing the subject writes out the social (Brown, 2007a, 2011; Smith, 1999). It constructs individuals' subjective life as if it just is. The social construction of subjectivity is lost, and thus we are left with a sometimes inadvert conservatizing individualizing, whereby individual experiences and struggles are situated outside their social and historical context. Paradoxically, those committed to anti-oppressive social work understand that individuals' struggles are often located within the social context of oppression. Yet, the privileging and essentializing of the suppressed voice and of the subject contradicts this stance. It is important to notice that this approach is not consistent in its position on the subject.

Writing out the social reflects subjectivism, whereby implicitly or explicitly the individual becomes a transcendental subject (Smith, 1999). When experience is treated as though it were outside social construction, outside the social, we lose the history of its construction; we lose how it was put together, how it was socially organized. Decontextualized, dehistoricized, and depoliticized approaches to subjectivity, and experience, produce a politics of the personal. A critical reflexive epistemology recognizes that beginning anti-oppressive practice with pre-constituted social categories such as gender, race, class, or ableism means that we have begun with a process which is decontextualized, dehistoricized, and depoliticized. This means the central concepts themselves remain intact, separated from their social construction. Dominant assumptions about gender, race, and/or class, for example, may go unquestioned and may in fact be simply reinscribed. We have begun with the masters tools - these dominant foundational social categories are organized within dominant discourses and dominant social relations. We keep them alive in part by living them as they were constructed, thereby naturalizing them, making them inevitable. The subsequent subjectivism and essentialism, is ironic, inadvertent, not the intent. Anti-oppression discourse must tackle this because it is may potentially retrench

oppression rather than challenge dominant social discourse and dominant social relations of power.

Rositter, (2005), Pozutto, Angell, & Dezendorf, (2005), and Fook (2002) contend that the postmodern emphasis on the construction of meaning and social relations through language, discourse, and narrative is valuable to critical social work. A central task in narrative therapy, an increasingly popular approach adopted by social workers (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007a, 2007b), is to unpack people's stories. Externalization within narrative therapy includes unpacking, contextualizing, and politicizing foundational concepts such as gender, race, ability, self, experience, power, sexual orientation, addiction, eating disorders, and depression in the process of situating the problem story outside the individual. This involves exploring the social construction and influence of dominant and oppressive discourse on these stories, and the limiting and totalizing negative identity conclusions that may result (i.e., "I am a failure", "I am a terrible person", "I am an alcoholic", or reflecting the social notion of the good woman -"as a woman I can't be too demanding" or "I am only a good mother if I am selfless").

According to Smith (1999):

Writing the social is always from where people are. Discovery is of the relations that generate multiple sites of diverging experience. It is from those multiple and diverse sites that their dimensions, organization, and organizing powers can be brought into view (p. 8).

Resurrecting the subjugated voice of the oppressed is surely a central goal of anti-oppressive practice. However, bringing the suppressed voice into view, uncovering subjugated knowledge or stories frequently means deconstructing thin descriptions which reinforce dominant social stories and taken for granted everyday discourses.   Seeking out thicker descriptions means exploring not only the gaps and contradictions in stories, but what has been left out. Influenced by Mead (1977), Smith (1999) argues that only through ongoing processes of human interaction, and symbolic communication is a thoroughly social self-constructed. We organize meaning and make sense of our lives through stories. Language and meaning do not exist independent of social life and are reconstituted, recreated, or reproduced through their very use. White and Epston (1991), drawing on Foucault state, "We are subject to power through the normalizing 'truths' that shape our lives and relationships" (p.19).

Writing in the Social: Narrative Strategies for Restorying Experience

People organize and give meaning to their experiences and, thereby, their lives through the storying of experience: we live storied lives (White & Epston, 1990). Yet, our stories do not simply represent or reflect some inherent, pre-given, or uncontestable meaning that exists. These stories do not, therefore, reflect a reality outside of the social meanings that we draw upon to make sense of our own experiences. Instead, socially mediated language ascribes meaning to our stories, and through language we reify social meaning, reconstituting our own lives, and often dominant social discourse. Storying is dependent on language as we ascribe meaning through its usage, and in so doing, constitute our lives and relationships. Language allows for the belief that knowledge and social order exists independent of human activity, however, meaning can only

arise through human interaction. Language acts as symbols or signifiers of the objectivated world simultaneously creating and reinforcing taken for granted realities (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Not only does language make shared meaning possible, humans see what language and concepts permit them to see. Although language and knowledge are not synonymous, they have mutually influencing characteristics.

What is critical for anti-oppressive discourse is the idea that human life is inseparable from meaning, and meaning is in a constant process of becoming, which humans are both creators of and created by; while material reality may exist outside human activity, all social life is inseparable from meaning making processes. As such, meaning is always multiple, political, and contestable. The knowledge of this allows us to see that alternative less oppressive social realities are always possible, and that meaning is not static or fixed. Social life often produces dominant realities that are treated as though they were real in and of themselves, and that do not reflect the interests of all. Anti-oppression discourse is sharply aware that its task is not only to challenge falsely universalized realities, but to resurrect marginalized and alternative knowledge.

A dynamic process constitutes the way we participate in making sense of our lives. Individuals are active participants in the creation of their stories; however, these stories draw upon available social discourses and thus consist of both subjugated and dominant knowledge. As our lived experiences exist within a field or web of power and knowledge, no story is outside power (White & Epston, 1990). No telling or hearing of a story is outside the social construction of meaning and, therefore, neutrality is not possible (White, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). Power is reconceptualized not as something possessed but something constructed and socially organized and enacted through everyday mechanisms of power including discourse (Brown, 2007b; Fook & Morley, 2005; Foucault, 1980a, 1980b; Hick, 2005; White, 2001, 2007). If we understand the social world as socially constructed it is theoretically and politically congruous to adopt a constructionist approach to the self, subjectivity, and experience. Experience is then discursive, socially constructed, historically located, and interpretive. From this perspective, self-stories cannot be inherently "truer" than other stories. There can be no self-legitimizing stories. Narratives are constructed through a selective process about which information to include and which to leave out. In this selective process much goes untold, and no story is able encompass the richness of experience, its gaps and contradictions. Social workers on the side of social justice cannot take a neutral stance to either truth claims or power (Brown, 2003; White, 1994; White & Epston, 1990). Thus practitioners must actively unpack and reconstruct oppressive stories, and in so doing, the power relations embedded within them (Brown, 2003; 2007a, 2011; Fook, 2002, White, 2001; White & Epston, 1990). This means that we cannot adopt a neutral stance to these stories, but must help unpack them in order to create less oppressive stories, which then means that we are to take a position when we hear clients' stories. We are likely to reframe clients' stories through our own positioned and preferred narratives. The binary construction of the expert authoritative first voice of the oppressed or clients and the social workers' disingenious 'not knowing', depoliticized lack of position which mimics neutrality are problematic (Brown, 2007). Anti-oppressive social work in this sense must involve the deliberate shifting of, oppressive, and often, hegemonic discourses. This means that we cannot take up stories of experience as "truth", but as stories that have arisen within culture. If we wish to understand the political nature of experience it is necessary to situate it within the social context in which it is produced. From a critically reflexive epistemological stance, anti-oppressive

Brown

discourse needs to challenge the limitations of essentialism and subjectivism.

Τhe **Master's Tools: Reification of Dominant Discourse of Difference**

Within a critical reflexive epistemology, a third limitation of modernist conceptual practices of power I focus on here, is its inadvertent reification of dominant and oppressive discourse. This is a critical focal point for reflexivity as discursive practices of power can unobtrusively and invisibly work against the emancipatory agenda of anti-oppression discourse. Specifically, I examine pre-constituted binary or oppositional constructions of differences as conceptual practices of power which reifies dominant discourse and social relations of power. The modernist foundation of anti-oppression discourse centers on a number of key concepts, including difference which is most often articulated in terms of gender, race, and class. Since the late 1980's, differences between social groups are emphasized with the conversation shifting to social location and identity. Following debates within feminist postmodernism some have argued that the pendulum has swung from a focus on sameness or what we have in common in order to mobilize for change within social justice based anti-oppressive agenda's to one on difference and plurality (Brown, 1994). Socially constructed differences are too often simply reified, and the approach becomes one which re-inscribes existing differences rather than challenging social categories as social, historical, and political constructions. Now people are constructed in terms of difference rather than sameness. We have simply invoked the flip side of the binary, losing it seems the possibility that people are likely to be both the same, and different, both within social groups and between them.

We are likely to produce as many problems with the focus exclusively on difference as we did with a focus exclusively on sameness. While the focus is on difference, sameness and unity are emphasized within social groups, as are a shared reality, experience and oppression. Binary oppositions are reinforced by focusing on shared interests and experience within specific social locations such as gender, race, and class. Aside from the fractiousness, and immobilizing of possible social action, which others have identified as a limitation, the totalizing focus on difference is objectifying, and othering. People are positioned as insiders and outsiders, and those most marginalized are reified in these positions as others. To always be positioned outside the center is to stay at the margins. Rather than challenging the center, it freeze frames the preconstituted categories of the haves and the have nots as though it could never be any other way. At the same time, the current focus on intersectionality is at least in part a response to this critique and has the potential to challenge these binaries as well as totalization of social categories as more complex thinking about identity continues to emerge.

Beyond dominant binary constructions of social location and identity within modernist anti-oppressive discourse are oppositional conceptual practices such as mind/body, reason/emotion, individual/social, subjective/objective, expert/non-expert, powerful/powerless, content/process, oppressor/oppressed, powerful/powerless, expert/not-knowing and theory/practice. All of these dualisms are conceptual practices of power which can be taken apart to reveal tremendous conservatizing limitations (Brown, 1994, 2007b).

When dominant discourse bound to dichotomy is deconstructed, the both/and complexity of differences and similarities becomes visible. However, when essentializing and reinscribing

Brown

difference remain intact, differences are seen as self-evident. Within this approach, the foundation of knowledge itself has failed "to see anything but its own preconceptions" (Crosby, 1992, p.133). Crosby states:

> It is impossible to ask how "differences" is constituted as a concept, so
> "differences" becomes substantive, something in themselves - race, class, gender -
> as though we knew already what this incommensurate triumvirate means! (1992,
> p.137). ....That is, knowledge, if it is to avoid the circularity of ideology, must
> read the process of differentiation, not look for differences (1992, p.140).

Processes which idealize difference do not necessarily deal with the mechanism of oppression (Alcoff, 1988). Alcoff (1988) states: "The mechanism of power referred to here is the construction of the subject by a discourse that weaves knowledge and power into a coercive structure that "forces the individual back on him and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way" (p. 415). Feminism for example, has often treated categories of men and women as fixed, immutable, or essential, frequently employing an already fully constituted and essentialist category of "Woman". The current focus on difference and diversity has produced important questions on how we can talk about social categories (Butler, 1992; Riley, 1988, 1992). Butler (1992) and Riley (1988, 1992) had a powerful impact of feminism when they questioned the category of gender itself. Butler suggests that we "relieve the category of its foundational weight in order to render it a site of permanent political contest" (1992, p.8).

Radical and cultural feminists of the 1970's and 1980's were critiqued for gender essentialism by other feminists. For instance, while acknowledging the role of cultural factors and socialization in understanding gendered experiences, feminist therapists such as Worell and Remer (1992) who invoked the notion of "feminine values" and the relational therapists of the Boston Stone Center (Baker-Miller, 1976; Surrey, 1991) who emphasized a "self-in-relation" women's psychology different from men's more individualist psychology, were critiqued for their overly determined and thus limiting notion of gender. Such approaches are faulted for presuming that people live fully, rigidly, unambiguously within binary divides and that there is no fluidity or movement among ascribed gender traits. Reifying rather than challenging binary gender constructions are thought to be helpful to a feminist agenda toward gender equality, and the greater possibility of gender expression.

bell hooks (1995) raises similar concerns for radical Black politics recognizing a tension between the need for "reformulating, outmoded notions of identity", and challenging the need to critique "notions of universality and static over-determined identity" while arguing for the "formation of radical black subjectivity". She further argues that there is a need to acknowledge a "difference between a repudiation of the idea there is a black "essence" and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle" (1995, p. 122). Again we see a desire to both preserve and reject elements of identity construction.

By exploring the limitations of oppositional and dominant social discourses one can discover what is left out of the story or rendered invisible (Rossiter, 2005). Dominant discourses requires ongoing taken for granted participation for their reproduction (Pozutto, Angell, &

Brown

Dezendorf, 2005, p.31). Counterstories can emerge outside constraining discourses when these discourses are deconstructed and disrupted.

Rossiter (2005) illustrates the value of deconstructing these oppositional constructions through discourse analysis and as a way to critically reflect upon and problematize experience. Through deconstructing case histories in her social work classes, Rossiter is able to identify the "ruling" or dominant discourse in the stories and the way that discourse shapes perspectives, actions, and experience itself. Within narrative therapy, the process of externalization similarly involves deconstructive elements in the unpacking of people's stories and the re-authoring of preferred counterstories. Pozutto, Angell, & Dezendorf, (2005) suggest that narrative therapy is able to destabilize dominant discourse:

> Narrative therapy, because of its critical, deconstructive elements, has the possibility of modifying the continued reproduction of social relations…Narrative therapy questions the fundamental concepts each individual utilizes to understand and create his or her world. Narrative therapy seeks to remove the 'naturalness" of present social relations and reveal their possibility. In this sense, it is a critique; in the sense that it assists in creating opportunity and alternative human actions facilitating growth and development, it is therapy. … The critique is destabilizing.… To problematize the natural is not an easy task, particularly since power relations and systems of knowledge support it (p. 35).

Clearly, we cannot characterize social identity as inevitable. Although we need to avoid using categories of social identity as though they were natural, ahistorical, essential or unified, it is important that we preserve a tension between accepting, valuing, and rejecting these categories as they now exist (Butler, 1992; Riley, 1988). Simply reinvoking binary gender categories sets up a limited framework for discovery and limits alternative possibilities in our work with clients. Reinscribing difference in everyday talk becomes a normalizing technique of power. Brown & Augusta-Scott (2007a, 2007b), Elliot (1998), Hare-Mustin (1994), and Rossiter (2005) emphasize the value of deconstructing dominant discourse and allowing alternative counter-stories to emerge that have been previously rendered invisible within clinical work.

Master's Tools: Limitations of Modernism and Postmodernism
Knowledge, Power, and Difference

The modernist construction of power within anti-oppressive practice often reveals a binary approach to knowledge and power which presumes that people either have power or they do not (Brown, 2003, 2007b; Flaskas & Humphries, 1993; Fook, 2002; Fook & Morley, 2005; Foucault, 1980a; White & Epston, 1990). Power is constructed as intentionally imposed from above to in order to control others, and that in doing so, those with power maintain their own power and privilege, at the expense of those without power and privilege. Foucault (1980a, 1980b) articulates a more textured approach to power which allows us to notice how power is filtered through everyday discourse. Normalizing or regulating techniques of power infuse daily cultural practices and as they escape substantial contention, they reinforce socially constructed reality.

Rethinking power includes challenging the ways that both social workers and clients keep oppressive stories alive either through not unpacking experience and/or through the social

workers attempt to be neutral (Adams-Wescott, Dafforn, & Sterne, 1993; Brown, 2007a; Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Hare-Mustin, 1994). Anti-oppression discourse needs to resolve the question: who gets to define the truth (Brown, 2003; Williams, 1999; Wilson & Beresford, 2000)? It is currently conflicted for, on the one hand, it maintains a firm position against oppression and injustice, while on the other, it privileges first voice which may not always stand up against oppression. Further, as Wilson & Beresford believe that the experiences of service users are often appropriated by social workers who "retain the power to determine what is anti-oppression" (2000, p. 564).

Reflecting the narrative writings of White (1995, 2001), we need to unpack and reconstruct clients' stories rather than leave them intact. Non-coercive and dialogical reframing practices will shift unhelpful and oppressive discourses and enable the creation of alternative or preferred stories by examining how clients' stories have been put together, what ideas predominate and what alternatives are rendered invisible within these stories. Related, is the question of human agency, and the possibility for resistance and action outside of dominant discourse. For instance, an approach to eating "disorders" among those committed to anti-oppression frequently constructs women with eating disorders as victims without agency. Madigan (1998), Maisel, Epston, and Borden (2004), and White (2004) all committed to social justice, and challenging oppression reflects this problem. They are very concerned to center their work on women's oppression, and in the narrative process of externalizing the problem, and while they situate eating disorders squarely within the social pressures for women to be thin, women are rendered puppets who are terrorized by eating disorders. In over-prescribing to this theory in their effort to contextualize women's focus on eating and the body, competing stories which may be meaningful to women are obscured. Their desire to be champions of anti-oppression has inadvertently, not only constructed women as passive victims of a pernicious culture, but as having no agency.

Not seen, for example, is that for many women, their struggle with eating and their bodies is a form of agency, it is an effort at having greater control over one's life (Brown, 1993; 2007c, 2007d; Brown, Ali & Weber, 2008; Gremillion,2001; Lawrence, 1984; Orbach, 1986). The body in this way becomes both a subjectively meaningful and culturally viable arena for expressing internal discontent and struggle, for voicing the suppressed voice. Resurrecting the suppressed voice will then include trying to hear the stories the body tells. Rather than imposing the political view that women binge and purge, or engage in self-starvation, simply as victims of a culture obsessed with thinness, a more helpful, more emancipatory strategy would be to explore ways that these behaviours make sense to women, ways that women are expressing their power and agency, not just their powerlessness. Unfortunately, what is communicated to women in these well intended anti-oppressive practices is that they are victims without agency or power. Abandoning the eating disorder becomes the acceptable measure of well-being and expression of power; however, this problematically negates the power exercised through the eating "disorder" itself (Bordo, 1993; Brown, 2007c, 2007d; Brown & Gremillion, 2001; Jasper, 1993; Orbach, 1986). Assumptions about women as powerless victims prevents being able to see eating disorders as complex performances of counterstories.

Anti-oppression discourse can appear "postmodern" at first glance, because it rejects modernist ideas such as objectivity and neutrality, while being centered on issues of difference

Brown

and plurality. However, I have argued that modernist practices of power are evident in anti-oppressive discourse. I have argued that anti-oppressive social justice based approaches to social work will be strengthened by abandoning the limitations of essentialism, subjectivism and in avoiding reifying dominant social discourse of difference. At the same time anti-oppressive theory is clearly positioned on the side of social justice, and does not hide behind a false veneer of neutrality, except when adopting the "not knowing" position popularized in collaborative approaches as way to escape the "all knowing" expert position (Anderson, 1997). In this way anti-oppressive discourse is positioned. It has a point of view- it takes a stance. Indeed, its strength lies primarily in its passionate commitment against oppression. Paradoxical moments, however, surface as a result of the dilemmas of multiplicity itself. For while positioned, there is potential slippage into relativism in the desire to be everywhere at once.

Perhaps the most common critique of postmodernism is its focus on multiplicity, on plurality and difference. In social work, the umbrella approach to recognizing the multiplicity of forms of oppression within anti-oppressive theory and practice represents the desire to be everywhere, to be all inclusive. This "pluralist dream of being everywhere" has been described by Bordo (1990) as a new form of detachment, or a form of neo-objectivism. The focus on endless difference and the desire to create a "view from everywhere" - representing all positions equally, has produced a Aview from nowhere. For Haraway (1988), the relativist position "of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally" is evident in such constructions (p.584). Postmodern relativists refuse "to assume a shape for which they must take responsibility" (Bordo, 1990, p.144). Haraway suggests relativism, like objectivism, is a "god trick" promising the view from everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. "The equality of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry" (1988, p.65). Anti-oppression discourse produces objections from some to its postmodern influences - its potential slippage into relativism and depoliticization through its focus on diversity and multiplicity. Of course, others object to its modernist influences - its refusal to adopt a position of neutrality, and its subsequent strong stance against oppression. These concerns are echoed by Williams (1999) regarding the shifts from anti-racist theory/practice to the pluralist anti-oppressive practice.

Examination reveals, however, that anti-oppression discourse is grounded in Western modernist thought, albeit, with increasing ambivalence. Although more firmly rooted within a modernist foundation, it is my contention that the epistemology of anti-oppression discourse is a blend of modernism and postmodernism. The focus within anti-oppression discourse on difference and plurality reveals its postmodern leaning. Arguably, the "parts" include gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and dis-Ability, and these I suggest remain largely reified within their modernist construction. Similarly, central concepts to anti-oppression discourse such as experience, knowledge, truth, empowerment, and power remain either problematically uninterrogated or reflective of a modernist conceptual foundation (Brown, 2007a, 2007 b, 2011).

Within a modernist foundation of knowledge, positivist truth claims have been rooted not only in notions of objectivity, but in notions of sameness, homogeneity, and unification among individuals, and social groups. Even the left, including feminism, has a not so distant history of erasing difference, wishing to elevate the common good, the common goal of equality, and social justice. Influenced by postmodernism, and the politics of diversity, these exclusionary practices have been largely abandoned, replaced instead by an emphasis on difference and diversity

(Brown, 1994). As a corrective against exclusionary practices which have silenced marginalized voices, anti-oppression discourse in social work today emphasizes and privileges the first voice. The focus is then on difference, and on experiences of oppression related to that difference. Significant attention is given to "power and privilege" whereby individual actors are encouraged to identify their location in relation to power and privilege. Discourses centered on difference and multiplicities are always at risk of the problems associated with relativism. This is a paradoxical position within anti-oppression discourse, because on the one hand it is clearly positioned on the side of social change and social justice - it is after all anti-oppression - while on the other, it may suffer from its desire to be everywhere or multi-partial (Anderson, 1997).

As postmodernism embraces multiplicity and complexity it is often associated with and critiqued for its relativism and subsequent depoliticization (Bordo, 1990; Brown, 1994, 2003; Healy, 2005; Ife, 1990). Critiques of postmodernism within social work also include its rejection of materialism in favor of what seems an increasingly philosophically idealist thrust. Brotman and Pollack (1998), for example, argue that postmodernism is likely to "decontextualize and depoliticize our practice and help to retrench postmodern values that are antithetical to social change" (p.11). When combined with a relativist stance, its prescription against unifying or grand narratives, and its pessimistic approach to deconstruction prohibit an emancipatory vision for the future (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Leonard, 1997, 2001). Gorman refers to deconstruction without offering alternatives as "skeptical postmodern analysis" and urges us to develop affirmative postmodern analysis that enables social transformation (1993, p.250). The task for anti-oppression discourse then is how to merge a non-essentialized, non-universalized understanding of oppressed groups with an emancipatory agenda for political struggle and social change (Brown, 1994). Anti-oppression discourse in social work must contend with both the politics of diversity and the problems of essentialism. In doing so, it must abandon problematic foundational assumptions of its standpoint theory roots (Brown, 2001). This critique of modernist conceptual practices within some anti-oppressive discourse mirrors earlier feminist critiques of and debates about feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1997; Hartsock, 1997; Hekman, 1997a, 1997b; Hills Collins, 1997; Longino, 1993; Smith, 1997).

The Both/And

Blending the strengths of both the modernist foundation of anti-oppressive discourse and of the postmodern critiques of its limitations, allows one to escape the essentialism and subjectivism of modernist anti-oppressive discourse while emphasizing an anti-oppressive agenda then emphasizes holding onto a clear political position. This blend further allows for a greater degree of reflexivity which may help limit conceptual practices which reify dominant discourse and the dangers of relativism or lack of position associated with postmodernism. By not inadvertently writing out the social through conceptual practices of essentialism and subjectivism we are able to ensure that resurrecting subjugated voices includes recognizing the social and political forces which shape them. The "personal is political" can be fostered through avoiding slippage into essentialism and subjectivism. When "we write in the social", instead of "writing it out" (Smith, 1999) individuals' problems and struggles exist within a social structural context, and are no longer taken up as simply individual subjective experiences.

Blending the strengths of modernism and postmodernism discussed in this paper enables

Brown

taking a position against structural oppression while rendering visible individual agency and power. Thus a reformulated approach moves beyond the modernist binary construction that one either has power, or one does not (Brown, 2007b; Fook & Morley, 2005; Hick, 2005). Instead, greater attention to the subtleties of techniques of power in day to day life allows for a "both/and" approach to the ways people often have and do not have power.

A postmodern stance on anti-essentialism and anti-totalizing may prevent reproducing preconstituted "truths" about difference. Instead, the ways that difference is socially organized and shaped within oppressive social relations may be underscored. This means reflexive awareness of similarities and differences between and among social groups, and the importance of not reifying socially constructed identities. While we do not need to abandon social categories, we do need avoid simply re-inscribing and entrenching them. As such, we can strive to hold onto a tension between rejecting and accepting aspects of these categories.

Drawing on the strengths of modern and postmodern sensibilities will allow for an anti-oppression discourse which strives to be inclusive of marginalized and suppressed voices, without deferring to naturalized experience or emotion. There is thus no autonomous, fix, unified, discoverable self, for the self is always fully social. As all individual experience is more than subjective, there can be no singular voice. Further, as all stories are socially constructed they embody both dominant and subjugated knowledge. The postmodern contribution to anti-oppression discourse offers this reflexivity around the social processes which shape the self, and encourages unpacking the stories that clients tell, and to co-write more helpful, less oppressive ones. Within this approach both the client and the social worker are active embodied subjects who contribute knowledge.

According to Hick and Pozzuto (2005):

The mingling of critical social theory with post-modernist or post-structuralist theory is necessary today. Some authors have called for a mingling of critical social theory and post-structuralist. …We are taking the position that we should not reject theories of the modern era out-of-and. Instead, we should retain certain visions, theories and practices from the modern era, seeing the post-modern as continuous with the modern. In other words, social work practice in the current era definitely requires a turn in our modes of thought, but perhaps not a complete overhaul (p. xvii).

This blend of modernism and postmodernism for anti-oppression discourse in social work enables seeking social justice through challenging oppression and domination, and encourages reflexive discursive practices to resist contributing to oppression. In short, this blended approach to anti-oppressive social work enables it to face the task of combining a non-essentialized understanding of social life with its emancipatory agenda.

Conclusion

Emanating within the cultural conditions and circumstances of the moment, anti-oppressive discourse, like all discourse, is not static (Harvey, 1990; Leonard, 1997, 2001). Anti-oppression social work discourse is a response to previous approaches to social work, both

progressive and traditional, which homogenized and falsely universalized human experience, producing further exclusion and marginalization. As a discursive practice it continues to evolve, and in seeking to address criticism it comes face to face with its ambivalent and contradictory positions within modernism and postmodernism. Through a critical postmodern lens, I have outlined three related conceptual limitations within modernist standpoint foundations influencing anti-oppression discourse: essentialism, subjectivism, and reification of dominant discourse. I have argued that if anti-oppression discourse wishes to advance its emancipatory agenda it needs to address the problem of essentialism and subjectivism which in tandem produce reified dominant discourse. However, I am not holding up postmodernism as flawless, and suggest that anti-oppression discourse needs to be reflexive about problems related to relativism and subsequent depoliticization. Moreover, commitment to social justice based social work means that anti-oppressive practice benefits from critical reflexivity regarding ongoing tensions and contradictions.

References

Adams, R., Dominelli, L., & Payne, M. (2009). (Eds.). *Critical practice in social work* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Adams-Westcot, J., Dafforn, T., & Sterne, P. (1993). Escaping victim life stories and co-constructing personal agency. In S. Gilligan & R. Price (Eds.), *Therapeutic conversations* (pp.258-276). New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 13*(3), 405-436.

Anderson, H. (1997). A philosophical stance: Therapists' position, expertise, and responsibility. In H.Anderson (Ed.), *Conversation, language and possibilities. A postmodern approach to therapy* (pp.93-107). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Augusta-Scott, T. (2007). Conversations with men about women's violence: Ending men's violence by challenging gender essentialism. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.197-210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

Baines, D. (Ed.). (2011). *Doing anti-oppressive practice. Social justice social work* (2nd ed.). Black Point, NS: Fernwood.

Baker-Miller, J. (1976). *Toward a new psychology of women.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

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

Berger. P. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Bishop, A. (1994). *Becoming and ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression.* Halifax, NS:Fernwood.

Bordo, S. (1990). Feminism, postmodernism, and gender skepticism. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism (pp.133-156). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Brotman, S., & Pollack, S. (1998). Loss of context. The problem of merging postmodernism with feminist social work. *Canadian Social Work Review, 14*(Winter), 9-21.

Brown, C. (1993). Feminist contracting: Power and empowerment in therapy. In C. Brown & K. Jasper (Eds.), *Consuming passions. Feminist approaches to weight preoccupation and eating disorders* (pp.176-194). Toronto, ON: Second Story Press.

Brown, C. (1994). Feminist postmodernism and the challenge of diversity. In A. Chambon & A. Irving (Eds.), *Essays on postmodernism and social work* (pp.35-48). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Brown, C. (2001). *Talking body talk. An analysis of feminist therapy epistemology.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, Toronto.

Brown, C. (2003). Narrative therapy: Reifying or challenging dominant discourse. In W. Shera (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on anti-oppressive practice* (pp.223-245). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press.

Brown, C. (2007a). Dethroning the suppressed voice: Unpacking experience as story. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.177-196). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C. (2007b). Situating knowledge and power in the therapeutic alliance. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.3-22). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C. (2007c). Discipline and desire: Regulating the body/self. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.105-132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C. (2007d). Talking body talk. Merging feminist and narrative approaches to practice. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.269-302). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C. (2011). Reconceptualizing feminist therapy: Violence, problem drinking andre-storying women's lives. In D. Baines (Ed.), *Doing Anti-oppressive Practice. Social Justice Social Work* (2nd ed.) (pp.95-118). Black Point, NS: Fernwood.

Brown, C. & Augusta-Scott, T. (2007a). *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making Lives.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C., & Augusta-Scott, T. (2007b). Introduction: Postmodernism, reflexivity, and narrative therapy. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.), *Narrative therapy. Making meaning, making lives* (pp.ix-xliii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, C., & Jasper, K. (Eds.). (1993a). *Consuming passions. Feminist approaches to weight preoccupation and eating disorders.* Toronto, ON: Second Story Press.

Brown, C. & Jasper, K. (1993b). Why weight? Why women? Why now? In. C. Brown & K. Jasper (Eds.), *Consuming passions. Feminist approaches to weight preoccupation and eating disorders* (pp. 16-35). Toronto, ON: Second Story Press.

Brown, C., Weber, S., & Ali, S. (2008). Women's body talk: A feminist narrative approach. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 27*(2), 92-104.

Burstyn, V. & Smith, D. (1985). *Women, class, family and the state*. Toronto, ON: Garamond.

Butler, J. (1992). Contingent foundations. Feminism and the question of postmodernism. In J. Butler & J. Scott (Eds.). *Feminists theorize the political* (pp.3-21). New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, J., & Scott, J. (1992). (Eds.). *Feminists theorize the political*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Campbell, C. (2002). The search for congruency: Developing strategies for anti-oppressive social work pedagogy. *Canadian Social Work Review, 19*(1), 25-42.

Campbell, C. (2003). Anti-oppressive theory and practice as the organizing theme for social work education: The case in favor. *Canadian Social Work Review, 20*(1), 121-126.

Carniol, B. (2000). *Case critical* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

Chambon, A. & Irving, A. (Eds.). (1994). *Essays on postmodernism and social work*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Chambon, A., Irving, A., & Epstein, L. (Eds). (1999). Reading Foucault for social work. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Crosby, C. (1992). Dealing with difference. In J. Butler & J. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp.130-143). New York, NY: Routledge.

de Montigny, G. (2011). Beyond anti-oppressive practice: Investigating reflexive social relations. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 22*, 8-30.

D'Cruz, H., Gillingham, P., & Melendez, S. (2007). Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance for social work: A critical review of the literature. *British Journal of Social Work, 37*, 73-90.

Di Stephano, C. (1990). Dilemmas of difference: Feminism, modernity, and postmodernism. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (pp.63-82). New York, NY: Routledge.

Dominelli, L. (2002). *Anti-oppressive social work theory and practice*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, MacMillan.

Brown

Eisenstein, Z. (Ed.). (1979). *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Elliot, H. (1998). En-gendering distinctions. Postmodernism, feminism, and narrative therapy. In S. Madigan & I. Law (Eds.), *Praxis. Situating Discourse, Feminism and politics in narrative therapies* (pp.35-64). Vancouver, BC: Cardigan Press.

Finlay, L. (2008). Reflecting on 'reflective practice'. A discussion paper prepared for Practice-based Professional Learning Centre (PBPL CETL). *The Open University, 52*, 1-27. Retrieved from http://www8.open.ac.uk/opencetl/files/opencetl/file/ecms/web-content/Finlay-%282008%29-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf

Flaskas, C., & Humphreys, C. (1993). Theorizing about power: Intersecting the ideas of Foucault with the "problem" of power in family therapy. *Family Process, 32*, 35-47.

Flax, J. (1990). Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (pp.39-62). New York, NY: Routledge.

Fook, J. (2002). *Social Work. Critical theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fook, J. (2003). Critical social work: The current issues. *Qualitative Social Work, 2*, 123- 130.

Fook, J., & Morley, C. (2005). Empowerment: A contextual perspective. In S. Hick, J. Fook, & R. Pozutto (Eds.). *Social work. A critical turn* (pp.67-85). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Fook, J., & Aga Askeland, G. (2007). Challenges of critical reflection: 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained'. *Social Work Education, 26*(5), 520-533.

Fook, J., White, S., & Gardner, F. (2006). Critical reflection: A review of contemporary literature and understandings. In S. White, J. Fook, & F. Gardner (Eds.), *Critical reflection in health and social care* (pp.3-20). Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press.

Foucault, M. (1980a). *The history of sexuality. Volume 1. An introduction*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1980b). *Power/knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. New York, NY: Pantheon.

Fraser, N., & Nicholson, L. (1990). Social criticism without philosophy: An encounter between feminism and postmodernism. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (pp.19-38). New York, NY: Routledge.

Friere, P. (2004). Pedagogy of the oppressed. In L. Heldke & P. O'Connor (Eds.), *Oppression, privilege, and resistance. Theoretical perspectives on racism, sexism, and heterosexism.* (pp.5-23). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Fuss, D. (1989). *Essentially speaking: Feminism, nature and difference.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Gormond, J. (1993). Postmodernism and the conduct of inquiry in social work. *Affilia, 8*(3), 247-264.

Gremillion, H. (2001). Anorexia: A canary in the mine. An Anthropological perspective. Interview with Helen Gremillion. In *Working with the s*tories of women's lives (pp.135-149). Adelaide, AUS: Collected by Dulwich Centre Publications.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*, 575-599.

Haraway, D. (1990). A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism (pp.190-233). New York, NY: Routledge.

Harding, S. (1997). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited": Whose standpoint needs the regimes of truth and reality? *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 382-391.

Hare-Mustin, R. (1994). Discourses in the mirrored room: A postmodern analysis of therapy. *Family Process, 33*(March), 19-35.

Hartmann, H. (1975). The happy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Toward a more progressive union. In L. Sargent (Ed.), *Women and revolution: A discussion of the unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism.* Boston, MA: South End Press.

Hartsock, N. (1997). Comment on Hekman's Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited: Truth or justice, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 367-374.

Haug, F. (1992, Month). *"Learning from experience". A feminist episte*mology (Unpublished paper). Presented at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, ON.

Harvey, D. (1990). *The condition of postmodernity.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Healy, K. (2005). *Social work theories in context. Creating frameworks for practice.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Heckman, S. (1997a). Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited. *Signs: Journal of*

Women in Culture and Society, 22(2), 341-365.

Heckman, S. (1997b). Reply to Hartsock, Collins, Harding , and Smith. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22(*2), 399-402.

Hick, S. (2005). Reconceptualizing critical social work. In S. Hick, J. Fook, & R. Pozutto (Eds.), *Social work. A critical turn* (pp.39-51). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Hick, S., Fook, J., & Pozutto, R. (2005). *Social work. A critical turn.* Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Hick, S., & Pozzuto, R. (2005). Introduction: Towards "becoming" a critical social work. In S. Hick, J. Fook, & R. Pozutto (Eds.), *Social work. A critical turn* (pp.ix-xviii). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Hill Collins, P. (1997). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited": Where's the power? *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 375-381.

Hill Collins, P. (2004). Toward a new vision: Race, class, and gender as categories of analysis and connection. In L. Heldke & P. O'Connor (Eds.), *Oppression, privilege, and resistance. Theoretical perspectives on racism, sexism, and heterosexism* (pp.529-543). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

hooks, b. (1995). Postmodern Blackness. In W. Truett Anderson (Ed.). *The truth about the truth. De-confusing and re-constructing the postmodern world* (pp.117-124). New York, NY: Penguin Putnam.

Ife, J. (1999). Postmodernism, critical theory and social work. In B. Pease & J. Fook (Eds.), *Transforming Social Work Practice: Postmodern Critical* Perspectives (pp. 211-223). St.Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Karabanow, J. (2004). Making organizations work: Exploring characteristics of anti-oppressive organizational structures in street youth shelters. *Journal of Social Work, 4*, 47-60.

Lawrence, M. (1984). *The anorexic experience.* London, UK: The Women's Press.

Leonard, P. (1997). *Postmodern welfare. Reconstructing an emancipatory project.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Leonard, P. (2001). The future of critical social work in uncertain conditions. *Critical Social Work. 2*(1). Retrieved from http://www.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/

Logino, H. (1993). Feminist standpoint theory and the problem of knowledge. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 19*(1), 201-212.

Lorde, A. (1984). Age, race, class, and sex: Women redefining difference. In *Essays and speeches* (pp.114-123). Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

MacDonald, J. (2000). A deconstructive turn in chronic pain treatment: A redefined role for social work. *Health and Social Work, 25*(1), 51-58.

Madigan, S. (1998). Practice interpretations of Michel Foucault. Situating problem externalising discourse. In S. Madigan & I. Law (Eds.), *Praxis. Situating Discourse, Feminism and politics in narrative therapies* (pp. 15-34). Vancouver, BC: Cardigan Press.

Maisel, R., Epston, D., & Borden, A. (2004). Biting the hand that starves you.In spring resistance to anorexia/bulimia. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

McBeath, G. & Webb, S. (2005). Post-critical social work analytics. In S. Hick, J. Fook, & R. Pozutto (Eds.), *Social work. A critical turn* (pp167-188). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

McGrath, S., Moffatt, K., George, U., & Lee, B. (1999). Community Capacity: The Emperor's New Clothes. *Canadian Review of Social Policy, 44*, 9-23.

McKeen, W. (2004). *Money in their own name: The feminist voice in poverty debate in Canada, 1970-1995*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

McKeen, W. (2006). Diminishing the concept of social policy: The shifting conceptual ground of social policy debate in Canada. *Critical Social Policy, 26*(4), 865-887.

McKeen, W., &. Porter, A. (2003). Politics and Transformation: Welfare State Restructuring in Canada. In W. Clement & L. Vosko (Eds.), *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation* (pp.109-134). Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

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

McPhail, B. (2004). Questioning gender and sexuality binaries: What queer theorists, transgendered individuals, and sex researchers can teach social work. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services, 17*(1), 3-21.

Mead, G. (1977). *On social psychology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mosher, J. (2000). Managing the Disentitlement of Women: Glorified Markets, the Idealized Family, and the Undeserving Other". In S.Neysmith (Ed.), *Restructuring caring labour* (pp.30-51). Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.

Mullaly, B. (1997). *The new structural social work. Ideology, theory, and practice.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Brown

Mullaly, B. (2002). *Challenging oppression. A critical social work approach*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Mullaly, B. (2010). *Challenging oppression and confronting privilege* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Neysmith, S. (Ed.) (2000). *Restructuring caring labour*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.

Nicholson, L. (Ed.). (1990). Feminism/postmodernism. New York, NY: Routledge. Nightingale, D. J., & Cromby, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Orbach, S. (1986). Hunger strike. The anorectic's struggle as a metaphor for our age. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Pease, B., & Fook, J. (1999). *Transforming social work practice: Postmodern critical perspectives*. London, UK: Routledge.

Pon, G. (2009). Cultural competency as new racism: On ontology of forgetting. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 20*, 50-71.

Pozutto., R., Angell, G.B., & Dezendorf, P.K. (2005). Therapuetic critique: Traditional versus critical perspectives. In S. Hick, J. Fook, & R. Pozutto (Eds.), *Social work. A critical turn* (pp.25-51). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Riley, D. (1988). *"Am I that name?" Feminism and the category of `women' in history*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Riley, D. (1992). A short history of some preoccupations. In J. Butler & J. Scott (Eds.). *Feminists theorize the political* (pp.121-129). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rossiter, A. (2005). Discourse analysis in critical social work: From apology to question. *Critical Social Work, 6*(1). Retrieved from http://www.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/

Sands, R., & Nuccio, R. (1992). Postmodern feminist theory and social work. *Social Work, 37*(6), 489-94.

Scott, J. (1988). Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: Or the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism. *Feminist Studies, 14*, 33-50.

Scott, J. (1992). Experience. In J. Butler & J. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp.22-40). New York, NY: Routledge.

Smith, D. (1977). *Feminism and Marxism. A place to begin a way to go*. Vancouver, BC: New Star Books.

Smith, D. (1986). Institutional ethnography: A feminist method. *Resources for Feminist Research, 15*(1), 6-12.

Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic. A feminist sociology.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, D. (1990). *The conceptual practices of power. A feminist sociology of knowledge.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, D. (1997). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(2), 392-398.

Smith, D. (1999). *Writing the social: Critique, theory and investigations.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Snitow, A. (1983). *Powers of desire, the politics of sexuality.* New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Spelman, E. (1988). Inessential woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought. Boston, MA: Beacon Books.

Spelman, E. (2004). Gender and race: The ampersand problem in feminist thought. In L. Heldke & P. O'Connor (Eds.), *Oppression, privilege, and resistance. Theoretical perspectives on racism, sexism, and heterosexism* (pp.483-501). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Strier, R. (2007). Anti-oppressive research in social work: A preliminary definition. British *Journal of Social Work, 37*(5), 857-871. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bc1062

Strong, T. & Pare, D. (2003). *Furthering talk: Advancing in the discursive therapies.* Boston, MA: L-Kluwer.

Surrey, J. (1991). The self-in-relation: A theory of women's development. In J. Jordan, A. Kapan, J. Baker-Miller, I.Stiver, & J. Surrey (Eds.), *Women's growth in connection. Writing from the Stone Centre* (pp.51-66). New York, NY: Guildford.

Ursel, J. (1986). The state and the maintenance of patriarchy: A case study of family, labour, and welfare legislation in Canada. In J. Dickinson & B. Russell (Eds.), *Family, economy and the state. The social reproduction process under capitalism* (pp. 150-191). Toronto, ON: Garamond Press.

Valverde, M. (1991). *Sex, power, and pleasure.* Toronto, ON: Women's Press.

Vance, C. (Ed.). (1984). *Pleasure and danger. Exploring female sexuality.* Boston, MA: Routledge.

Brown

White, M. (1989a, October). *The world of experience and meaning.* Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 1-2. Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1989b, October). *Therapy in the world of experience.* Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 4-6. Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1989c, October). *Narrative therapy. What sort of internalizing conversations?* Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 1-5. Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1991). *Deconstruction and therapy.* Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 3, 21- 40. Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1994). *The politics of therapy: Putting to rest the illusion of neutrality.* Dulwich Centre Newsletter, 1, 1-4. Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1995). *Re-Authoring lives: Interviews & essays.* Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (1997). *Narrative therapy and poststructuralism.* In M.White, Narratives of therapists lives (pp.220-231). Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (2001). Narrative practice and the unpacking of identity conclusions. Gecko: A *Journal of Deconstruction and Narrative Ideas in Therapeutic Practice, 1*, 28-55.

White, M. (2003). Working with people who are suffering the consequences of multiple trauma: A narrative perspective. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 1*, 45-76.

White, M. (2004). *Narrative practice and exotic lives: Resurrecting diversity in everyday life.* Adelaide, AUS: Dulwich Centre.

White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

White, M. & Epston D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Williams, C. (1999). Connecting anti-racist and anti-oppressive theory and practice: retrenchment or reappraisal? *The British Journal of Social Work, 29*(2), 211-230.

Willig, C. (2001). Introduction. In C. Willig (Ed.), *Introducing qualitative research in psychology. Adventures in theory and method (*pp.1-14). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

Wilson, A. & Beresford, P. (2000). Anti-oppressive practice: Emancipation or appropriation. *British Journal of Social Work, 30*(5), 553-573.

Brown

Worell, J. & Remer, P. (1992). *Feminist perspectives in therapy. An empowerment model for women*. Oxford, UK: John Wiley.

Yip, A. (2006). Self-reflection in reflective practice: A note of caution. *British Journal of Social Work, 36*, 777-788.

Young, I. (2000). Five faces of oppression. In M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, R.Castaneda, H. Hackman, M. Peteres, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice. An anthology on racism, antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and classism* (pp.35-49). New York, NY: Routledge.