

Anti-Oppressive Practice as a Transformational Tool

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Agenda

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ The SELF
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Introduction

- ▶ This presentation aims to position Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) at the personal level (Micro); specifically, using AOP as a transformational tool for self-governing in everyday practice relationships.



Introduction-Cont.

- ▶ The field of social work and social service work is complex, multidimensional, and everchanging;
- ▶ Social workers and social service workers are world changers; they touch lives, help change social policies, help find solutions to clients and varying communities' problems;
- ▶ However, social workers and social service workers are situated within the context of a social paradox where they must ensure in their daily practice and interactions they are not the oppressor to the oppressed.

Introduction-Cont.

- ▶ Social workers and social service workers carry enormous power depending on their job title.
- ▶ Sometimes based on the degree of power that that worker holds that worker subconsciously or consciously reproduces implicit or explicit forms of oppression;
- ▶ AOP while it is not the only key to open the door to social change it is an essential theoretical **stand** that SWs and SSWs need to incorporate in their daily practice relationship.

Introduction-Cont.

- ▶ Dumbrill and Ying Yee (2019) explains that ‘the nature of anti-oppressive practice is evident from the phrase itself. “Anti” means it opposes, “oppression” is what it opposes, and “practice” is the context to which it operates’ (p. 1).
- ▶ Baines (2011) argued that “anti-oppressive practice attempts to integrate the search and struggle for social change directly into the social work experience” (p.4).

Introduction-Cont.

- ▶ However, in the context of this presentation Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) serves at the personal level (Micro) as a transformational tool that aids social workers and social service workers to
 - create strategies,
 - reframing of the mind,
 - change behaviours,
 - navigate environments,
 - reflect, and evaluate their experiences to learn and grow to be effective transformational leaders.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self.

- ▶ Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) should not be perceived as an abstract thought (only theoretical), but it must be concrete (functional in its application) to our daily practice relationships;
- ▶ There should be evidence in our practice relationship that we function within an anti-oppressive apparatus to prevent implicit or explicit oppressive attitudes;
- ▶ Those oppressive attitudes that undermine our transformational authority to create and maintain change (For example, how we speak to our clients can either inspire change or further marginalize and dehumanize our clients).

Anti-oppressive Practice & The Self

- ▶ If AOP is to be effective at the personal level (Micro), AOP requires ACTION on the part of the SW and the SSW for it to be applicable to their daily experiences;
- ▶ It becomes ambiguous if we want to empower and help change the lives of our clients and impact that world while our thinking, attitude, and action continue to maintain the status quo;
- ▶ If we desire to see real change in our everyday practice relationships the transformational change first begins with us.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self

- ▶ To effectively apply AOP as a transformational tool at the personal level (Micro), we must address the complex nature of the SELF;
- ▶ The definition of SELF in this context is our ego, thought patterns, mindset, behaviours, and attitude.



Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self-Cont.

- ▶ In our daily practice relationship, an understanding of the “SELF” within the context of AOP as a transformational tool helps us to engage in experiences that sometimes challenge our sense of SELF and our way of knowing and doing.
 - For example, dealing with clients from different cultural backgrounds can sometimes challenge our way of knowing and doing, and this can cause us discomfort.
 - How do we deal with the discomfort from our position of power?
 - Do we wield the power we hold (influence or authority), or do we seek to understand differences to learn and grow?
 - The discomfort we encounter can sometimes produce a power absorbed SELF.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self- Cont.

- ▶ AOP as a transformational tool requires we address the “SELF” that part of us that sometimes resists change;
- ▶ Often the SELF resists change because we are afraid of dealing with our discomfort. Those discomforts sometimes reproduce oppressive behaviours that impact the working relationship with others.
- ▶ AOP strips us of false illusionary perceived subconscious that our actions as social workers and social service workers do not matter.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self- Cont.

- ▶ In the context of social work, the SELF is always evolving. It is never complete and always open to further growth;
- ▶ AOP as a transformational tool holds us personally accountable to always seek to develop the SELF to be effective “Change Agent;”
- ▶ An underdeveloped SELF maintains oppressive tendencies while falsely seeking to change others, systems, and social institutions;
- ▶ An underdeveloped SELF can never be fully involved in an assignment.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self- Cont.

- ▶ The underdeveloped SELF entertains “predigested thinking” which encourages a person to stick to the status quo about others (For example, those stereotypes we may hold about some of our clients, colleagues, or manager/supervisor);
- ▶ To combat “predigested thinking,” AOP challenges us to critically examine the SELF, those thoughts, behaviours, actions, or attitudes that either maintain oppression or inspire change;
- ▶ A transformed SELF is an evolved SELF; I say “transformed” because a transformed SELF seeks to empower, motivate and inspire to transform people’s lives.

Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) & The Self- Cont.

- ▶ Understanding the role AOP plays in our practice relationships offers opportunities for shaping transformational interpersonal interaction on multiples levels that transact into transformative dialogue;
- ▶ This “transformative dialogue” can take on many forms depending on the context of the relationship whether it is with your manager, supervisor, colleagues, or clients;
 - What we say and do must produce change (life to the issue/conversion/or ideas);
- ▶ AOP then as a transformational tool should cause a reciprocal exchange in our attitudes and mindset when dealing with others. I cannot say this is easy, but this is a challenge we must take on.

Reframing of the mind & Anti-oppressive practice (AOP).

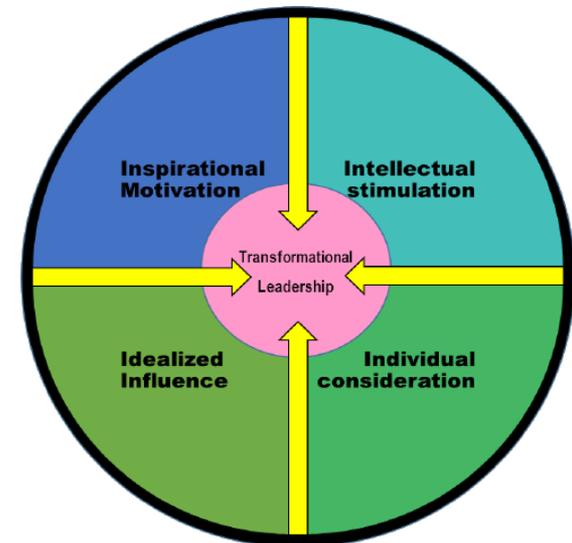
- ▶ Reframing of the mind is our ability to reflect, identify, and rethink about our perceptions of our daily practice experiences that lead to certain behaviours whether positive or negative;
- ▶ Now, within the context of reframing of the mind, anti-oppressive practice (AOP) helps us to deconstruct our interpretation of our everyday relationships to bring about personal change;
- ▶ This reframing of the mind brings us to what Sakamoto and Pitner, (n.d.), called “critical consciousness.” This “critical consciousness” challenges social workers to be cognizant of power differentials and how these differentials may inadvertently make social-work practice an oppressive experience”(P.435)
- ▶ Reframing then allows social workers and social service workers to evaluate or take a second look at how they perceived certain practice relationship experience, and the impact such experience might have on their professional decorum.

Reframing of the mind & Anti-oppressive practice (AOP)-Cont.

- ▶ Yet, for many of us reframing of the mind might prove to be challenging because such reframing might challenge our values, our traditional ways of doing;
- ▶ However, reframing of the mind from an AOP lens challenges how we think, so we openly acknowledge the pros and cons of our everyday professional relationships;
- ▶ In other words, reframing of the mind from an AOP lens takes into account that our mindset is not fixed or something that must be overcome, but as an evolving transformation that has both practical advantages and disadvantages that must be continuously reweighed.

Transformational Leadership

- ▶ Transformational leadership is described as a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems; it involves inspiring valuable and effective change in the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978; Carleton, Barling, & Trivisonno, 2018).



Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) & Transformational leadership

- ▶ Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and transformational leadership intersect, they both work conjointly to mobilize change to different degrees in individuals and organizations;
- ▶ In the context of social work and social service work practice, AOP acts as an agent to mobilize social workers and social service workers to fight against, or oppose all forms of injustice and social pollutants;
- ▶ While transformational leadership becomes the object to which social workers and social service workers rebuild, educate, inspire, and motivate to engage continuously;
- ▶ I say engage because it takes a willingness on the part of social workers and social service workers to move from their comfort zone to engage differences and respect those differences whatever they may be.

Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) & Transformational leadership-Cont.

- ▶ After we have opposed, it takes a transformational leadership attitude to rebuild; sometimes we are so focused on opposing that we fail to realize we play a pivotal role in educating others who function from a place of the subconscious.
- ▶ To be able to transform lives I posit that we should have a love for people, not just getting a pay cheque but genuine love, compassion, and an understanding of the struggles of the marginalized.
- ▶ Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and transformational leadership work conjointly to make changes and continue the process of engaging through Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation, and Idealized Influence.

Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) & Transformational leadership-Cont.

- ▶ Social workers and social service workers function within these four transformational leadership attributes.
 1. **Individualized Consideration**-helps social workers and social service workers take into account how they foster transformational relationships with others, their self-management when dealing with differences, and mindfulness to the motivation for their practice responsibilities.
 2. **Intellectual Stimulation** helps social workers and social service workers challenge their assumptions, and to value unexpected situations as LEARNING opportunities to inspire personal change.
 3. **Inspirational Motivation** allows social workers and social service workers to have a strong sense of purpose through behaviours that facilitate a feeling of optimism and a commitment that provide meaning to their everyday practice relationships.
 4. **Idealized Influence**-reminds social workers and social service workers that they influence change implicitly and explicitly in their daily practice relationships, so they must demonstrate behaviours that instill trust and respect to maintain their transformational authority.

Social Work Ethics, Insight, and Anti-oppressive Practice as a Transformational Paradigm

- ▶ Anti-oppressive Practice (AOP) correlates with the social work and social service work code of ethics. The code of ethics is a written reminder that social workers and social service workers should be mindful of their professional power and guard against any anti-oppressive behaviours that will further oppress and marginalize clients.
 - Anti-oppressive practice as a transformational paradigm provides social workers and social service workers the insight that “the best interest of the clients comes first;
 - to respect the intrinsic worth of the persons;
 - to carry out professional duties and obligations with integrity and objectivity;
 - to not exploit the relationship with a client for personal benefit, gain or gratification.”

Professional Responsibilities.

- ▶ Social workers and social service workers professional responsibilities require dedication and accountability not just to the code of ethics, and ethical principles, but also to the cause.



Anti-oppressive Practice as a Navigating Tool

- ▶ AOP serves as a navigation tool to assist social workers and social service workers in examining their present practice relationship position to determine what works and what does not.
 - It allows social workers and social service workers to be mindful of their actions, what they say and do;
 - to explore ways to deal with differences to avoid any form of practice relationship collision;
 - to develop effective strategies to empower others, not to disempower;
 - to navigate through the many different voices to find meaning that will enhance the growth of their professional relationships.



THANK YOU



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