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This paper examines, then disproves, the claim that social work practices based upon postmodern thought are either anti-science, or at the very least, weak on their respect for and application of scientific knowledge. Postmodern thought does attack the epistemological theory of positivism as well as the correspondence theory of truth. Hence, postmodern social work practices do seek to displace the role that scientific knowledge plays in guiding the helping situation. Rather than diagnosing causes and effects in a problem-solving endeavor, science is used to circumscribe the boundaries within which a postmodern endeavor at consciousness-raising takes place. Describing this new role for scientific knowledge within postmodern practice is the object of this study.

Key words: *postmodern, anti-science, positivism, social work practice, scientific knowledge*

With the appearance in recent years of postmodern social work practices—such as the strengths perspective, narrative therapy, and solution-focused therapy—some confusion has arisen over what role exactly science plays in the successful application of these approaches. Some opponents (Amundson, 2001; Pilgrim, 2000; Thyer, 2008; Thyer & Myers, 1999) have criticized them as being weak on embracing scientific evidence or ignoring it completely, thus putting clients in jeopardy.

Supporters (De Shazer, 1994; Weick & Saleebey, 1998; White, 2004) have been quick to counter that they do not ignore scientific evidence, yet they recognize it as a truth with a small "t"—which to the other side, appears to confirm their claim about being weak on science.

The relativism inherent within a postmodern approach to practice appears to critics to promote an "anything goes" attitude in which scientific knowledge can be conveniently ignored—at the peril of the client. This critique is valid—but only if an overly naïve understanding of postmodern insights is applied. While scientific knowledge does not take center stage, it does have an important role to play in guiding postmodern practice. The major goal of this paper is to outline this role.

A good analogy can be drawn by making a historical comparison to the time period when the modern, scientific approach to practice began to replace its predecessor—social work practices of the 1800s and early 1900s that were based upon moral knowledge. Some practitioners of this time period (Lubove, 1965) warned that the value-free stance of the new scientific approach would necessarily lead to an "anything goes" attitude wherein moral knowledge could be conveniently ignored—at the peril of the client. And indeed, within both the natural and social sciences, there were some examples where this came to pass, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment (Jones, 1981) being one such prominent example.

While Tuskegee and other such incidents did occur, they represented an overly naïve application of the scientific method that lead to morally reprehensible acts. They do not represent the model or ideal of how a modernist approach to research and practice should be employed. The model for modernist research and practice embraces moral knowledge—not as an investigative tool to uncover mechanisms of causality—but rather, as a guide to social work practice and research that circumscribes the boundaries within which a scientific investigation can take place. Hence, internal review boards have been set up at universities to demarcate appropriate limits on research conducted upon human subjects. The social work profession has developed a robust code of ethics as a means by which to set the conditions for a scientific approach to practice.

What this paper will demonstrate is that postmodern practice seeks a similar goal when embracing scientific knowledge. Postmodern approaches do not seek to employ scientific knowledge as an investigative tool with which to uncover mechanisms of causality in which to promote change, but rather, as a guide to practice that circumscribes the boundaries within which a postmodern inquiry can take place. To clearly define this role for scientific knowledge, this article will describe how the helping situation is defined by both the postmodern and modern discourse. But first, a brief digression in defining the term 'discourse' will be useful.

Discourse

The term "discourse" here is used as offered by Foucault (1991, 1994a, 1994b). Briefly, a discourse is an epistemological framework in which the very ordering of knowledges lends significance and value to how these knowledges are expressed and practiced. As Foucault (1994a) notes, "The facts of discourse would then have to be treated not as autonomous nuclei of multiple significations, but as events and functional segments gradually coming together to form a system" (p. xvii). To better understand this premise, we can turn to the work of the Swiss linguist Saussure from whom Foucault drew some of his insights. Note the similarity to Saussure's (1966/1906-1911) observations on language: "Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (p. 114).

Saussure uses the metaphor of a chess game to illustrate this point. While certain qualities of a chess piece never change during the game (e.g., how it moves, how it captures other pieces), the value and significance of a given piece is determined by its position on the board and its relationship to all the other pieces. Saussure's (1966/1906-1911) structuralist approach applies this principle to a conception of language in the abstract. Foucault (1991, 1994a, 1994b) adopts a poststructuralist stance by applying this principle to the practices of knowledge. To fully appreciate the implications of Foucault's move, we must go beyond the simple metaphor of a chess game.

For example, game pieces are not moved by an

individual person, but rather the interplay of multitudinous voices in society—the dominant plurality in this cacophony wins out in affecting such movement. Yet one will always be able to find dissenting voices—what Foucault (1981, 1991) terms as subjugated knowledges. More importantly to our purpose here, the arrangement or ordering of knowledges not only affects the significance and value granted to them (e.g., how positivism is both expressed and thrust forward as a major knowledge in the modern discourse), but this ordering also affects the grid/playing board upon which they are arranged and the very rules of the game itself. Hence, Foucault (1994a) talks about "space opening up" and how a discourse creates "rules of formation" (1994b) or "rules of right" (1991). Taking a cue from Wittgenstein (1968, 1970), Foucault (1994b) then speaks to how this system of ordering creates the conditions within which practices of knowledge become intelligible.

When applied to the history of social welfare in America, the above dynamic is illustrated in the following manner. During the Discourse of the 1800s and early 1900s, moral knowledge held the greatest prominence. This made the 'game' of social work interventions that of an endeavor at moral uplift (Leiby, 1978; Trattner, 1999), whether the site of this intervention happened to be the individual (e.g., Scientific Charity) or structures in society (e.g., the settlement house movement). When the modern, scientific Discourse replaced the above, the "game" of social work interventions also changed even though various objectives (e.g., alleviating poverty and hardship) remained the same. Within the modern Discourse, the game of social work interventions is that of an endeavor at scientific problem-solving (Leighninger, 1987; Perlman, 1963). Within the post-modern discourse (still small "d," as it has yet to achieve a period of dominance), the game changes once again. As will be presently elaborated upon, social work interventions become an endeavor at consciousness-raising.

This level of understanding concerning the term "discourse"—as is represented in Foucault's early works—suits this paper's purpose of explaining the role of science in postmodern practice. What follows will be a description of prominent intellectual thought concerning ontology (i.e. reality), epistemology, and causality for each the modern and postmodern

discourses. This thought does not represent the discourse as such, but rather, their positions of prominence reflect its ordering. A discourse contains not only practices of knowledge in terms of theory, but also practices of cultural knowledges. In addition, Foucault (1981, 1991) later added notions of power: prominent knowledges (e.g., positivism) serve to spawn practices of knowledge (e.g., DSM I-IV) that serve to reinforce their dominance, as well as concrete elements and practices in society (e.g., insurance reimbursement based upon DSM categories) which do the same. Foucault (1991) began using the term "apparatus" to better reflect this concrete production of the discourse in combination with the production of knowledges. The descriptions that follow are descriptions of nexuses of power within the respective discourses.

The Postmodern Discourse—Prominent Intellectual Thought

In seeking to make a very broad statement of contrast between modernist thought and postmodern thought, one can point to the prominence given to human beings. Within modernist thought, a human being is simply one object/organism among an infinite number of subjects to study. Knowledge is something that is discovered. Within postmodern thought—due to the prominence given to language—the human being is given special prominence as the conduit/creator of all knowledge.

To put it simply, the phenomenological theory of truth views reality as the appearance of a phenomenon that we experience: this phenomenon is comprised both of an existence and an essence. Briefly, existence refers to the form of the phenomenon: qualities that define its structure. Essence refers to existential nature of the phenomenon: qualities that speak to its identity. While such a theory of truth can be traced all the way back to Aristotle, Hegel (1807/1977) is credited for providing its most substantial elaboration in more recent times. One key contribution that Hegel offers is that he substantively describes and demonstrates a systematic methodology for investigating and understanding phenomena: the dialectic method. The dialectic is a method of investigation in which existential

qualities of a phenomenon are explored and hypotheses tested via a logical process of contrasting opposites (Hegel's formulation is briefly described as thesis–antithesis–synthesis). Contrasting opposites (thesis–antithesis) is a means to expose contradictions in the identity (i.e., existential nature) of the phenomenon—a consciousness-raising process that prods one to resolve the contradiction. This marks a major break with the modern Discourse, which mainly relies upon the scientific method as its systematic method for understanding reality.

Marx (Marx & Engels, 1845/1998; Marx & Engels, 1848/2008) would employ Hegel's dialectic method in his own investigations concerning political economy. However, by postulating that the essence of a phenomenon is manipulated by material conditions rather than a reflection of the ideal as Hegel proposed, Marx considerably altered Hegel's dialectical methodology. Marx's notion of a false consciousness shares some affinity today with the postmodern project of consciousness-raising. However, where both Marx and Hegel remain in agreement—and what differentiates them from the postmodern formulation of phenomenology—is that they both posited that the essence of a phenomenon is an inherent quality in the phenomenon itself, as is the case with its existence. This expression of phenomenology can be explained by its alignment with positivistic and naturalistic thought coalescing out of the Enlightenment: elements of major foci within the present modern Discourse. As Marx's choice of the term *false* consciousness indicates, there is the stance that one true reality still exists and that accurate perception is needed in order to uncover it. This is further reflected in Humanist psychology's project of seeking to understand one's *true* self.

When phenomenology is aligned with social constructionism and mimesis, one begins speaking about how reality and identity are constructed and thus multiple realities are possible. The validity of the reality rests upon the level of verisimilitude it achieves (in relation to one's actual lived experiences) within the dialogue of community.

This understanding of phenomenology promotes the stance that accurate perception is required to understand the essence of a phenomenon, and thus understand reality (as existence and essence). And it is this view of phenomenology (aligned

with positivism and naturalism) that informs Humanist psychology of the twentieth century, such as Rogers (1951), in which the goal of the therapeutic investigation is to understand one's "true" self. Within philosophical circles, this understanding of phenomenology would continue to dominate up to the work of Husserl (1913/1982). Husserl offered the notion that the essence of a phenomenon does not lie within the phenomenon itself (what he coined as the "natural standpoint"), but rather, within the structure of consciousness of the human being attempting to understand it. But it is his student, Martin Heidegger, who would completely break phenomenology from its alignment with positivism and naturalism.

Heidegger accomplishes this transformation of phenomenology by reducing the scope of phenomenology's project. In his magnum opus *Being in Time* (1927/1962), Heidegger does not seek to explain a basic phenomenological structure for all objects in the universe; rather, he attempts to describe the phenomenological structure for a human being (which he labels "Da-sein"), exploring the essence of what it means to be human. Building upon the insights of Husserl, Heidegger (1927/1962) locates the essence of being human outside of the phenomenon itself. But rather than locate it within consciousness, Heidegger locates it within language, and hence, culture. This transforms the phenomenological investigation from one of accurate perception to one of accurate interpretation, making it a hermeneutical rather than scientific endeavor. Heidegger attempts to describe the external nature of one's essence of being human with the term "world" and the reality of Da-sein as "being-in-the-world."

Gadamer (1960/1999) builds upon Heidegger's hermeneutical move in two very important ways. First, through his elaboration of a "fusion of horizons" he outlines a dialectic method based in relativism. While embracing the core purpose of the dialectic method laid down by Hegel (and Socrates)—that of exposing and thus making implicit contradictions explicit—the hermeneutic and relativistic stance changes the final stage of this process. Rather than the recognition of an antithesis to one's thesis leading to a synthesis of the two, it leads to a "fusion." This fusion is a dialogical event which opens one up to many possibilities of essence, and hence reality. Such a

dialectical process is the foundation for the various schools of critical theory (e.g., feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, etc.). As will be described shortly, when aligned with the theories of social constructionism and mimesis, this entails a consciousness-raising experience in which one actively seeks to manipulate the essence that comprises one's "world."

The other concept that Gadamer expounds upon is that of prejudice or bias. With the essence of a phenomenon existing in language, this means that the very attempt by human beings to understand a phenomenon is what grants it its essence. The world that comprises one's being-in-the-world is made up of biases. To Gadamer, bias has a neutral connotation; it is simply a template for understanding phenomena, and thus, necessary for human beings to interact in their environment. By granting phenomena an essence, bias is not something that is separate from reality: It is an essential part of reality. This becomes problematic when a particular bias serves to diminish one's being, or undercut one's self worth. This is when a fusion of horizons is sought—opening one up to other possibilities that are more life enhancing.

To summarize, a phenomenological theory of truth as expressed within the postmodern discourse is as follows. Reality is viewed as being comprised of an existence plus an essence. This essence exists within language and is granted to phenomena through human beings' attempts to understand it. Thus, bias comprises reality as it informs one's understanding of it. When a particular bias becomes problematic by diminishing one's being, it can be questioned through use of the dialectic method, a consciousness-raising experience that serves to open one up to other possible essences that are more life enhancing. Furthermore, one's essence or "world" directly speaks to one's identity. The prominence of identity in the postmodern discourse will be elaborated upon further when discussing the theory of mimesis. But first, an elaboration of social constructionism and its role in further fleshing out the notion of an essence will be provided.

Social Constructionism—Theory of Epistemology

Social constructionism is a theory of relatively recent origins, gaining much prominence with the work of Berger

and Luckmann (1966). Gergen (1999) is a prolific author who has done much to advance this theory in the field of sociology and social welfare. Social constructionism takes the stance that knowledge of reality occurs through understanding the formation of social constructs rather than a neutral observation of natural laws at work in the universe. Coming into alignment with phenomenology, it views reality as being comprised of existence plus essence. Furthermore, it views the essence of a phenomenon as being a product of language, which is granted to a phenomenon when human beings attempt to understand it. Hence, what is constructed is the essence of a phenomenon, and as part of a greater whole (existence plus essence), this consequently constructs the reality of a phenomenon. Furthermore, it is noted that the existence of a phenomenon has many attributes or qualities. The essence granted to a phenomenon grants prominence to some attributes over others—thus, in effect—shaping the existence of the phenomenon. Conversely, the various attributes comprising the existence of a phenomenon circumscribe what type of essence can be granted to it—as the granting of an essence is a socially mediated process in which agreement within a community must be achieved.

Hence reality is viewed as a social construct, constructed through a socially mediated process involving countless human choices (Gergen, 1999). The idea that these choices exert an influence on each other, and thus move towards forming a self-reinforcing network or system is captured by the term "discourse" (Foucault 1994a, 1994b). As the essence of a phenomenon (and hence its overall reality) is seen as being constructed through this socially mediated process, and this socially mediated process occurs within the scope of a particular historical and cultural context, reality is seen as being situated historically and culturally. In other words, while the existence of a phenomenon may remain fairly constant across various historical and cultural contexts, each unique context grants the phenomenon a different essence—thus creating multiple realities for the same existence within a phenomenon. This leads to the stance that there is no absolute reality (existence plus essence) that transcends time and cultures (i.e. Reality). Hence, the understanding of reality becomes a cultural and historical

project: an examination of the social mediations that construct the essences of a phenomenon.

This has huge implications when the phenomenon to be examined is a human being—as is the case for social welfare interventions. First, questions of essence relate directly to the person's identity. Second, the relativism inherent in multiple realities means that this essence is highly mutable. Third, as this essence is socially mediated, it may arise that a person's own voice is diminished in this mediation, and an essence/identity constructed that undercuts one's self-worth (e.g., being overly identified by one's diagnostic label). This, in turn, undercuts a person's perceived self-efficacy, and thus limits possibilities to bring about change to a problem area of one's existence (e.g., a problem in functioning).

Rather than intervene solely at the existence of a problem area, postmodern practices attend primarily to its essence within a person. This has led to critiques that these approaches ignore the problem, yet these critiques only have validity if one views reality as being solely comprised of existence. Being highly mutable, the constructed essence is highly open to change. This involves an examination and questioning of the social mediated process that produced the oppressive constructs and the recognition that other possible realities exist: in short, this is a consciousness-raising exercise. Once these alternative constructions are recognized, ones are selected by the client that hold most true for him/her and serve to enhance her/his self worth. Next, a community of individuals is sought that will serve to support this newly selected construction. This change towards a more empowering essence/identity of the person in relation to the problem area leads the person to act in a more efficacious manner in regards to issues of functioning, thus directly affecting the existence of the problem by either diminishing it or eliminating it. The dynamics of this process will be elaborated further in the following section on mimesis, which is reflective of social constructionism and phenomenology coming into alignment with notions of narrative.

Mimesis—A Theory of Causality

Paul Ricoeur (1984-1988), in his mammoth three volume work *Time and Narrative*, attempts to advance the project

begun by Heidegger (1962/1927) in *Being and Time*: exploring the essence of being human. He does this by demonstrating how the construction of one's essence/identity occurs within a narrative framework via its relationship to time. The existence of one's identity is represented by one's lived experiences (within mimesis, one is defined by one's actions). These past experiences (which exist as events in one's life) circumscribe the boundaries concerning who one is (i.e., reality/being as existence plus essence). Yet when reflecting upon or communicating to others one's existence (e.g., how one's day went; a problem in functioning) one does not give a second-by-second account of one's actions. Ricoeur (1984-1988) refers to this conception of time as progressing via discrete units as measured by a clock as "cosmic time." Rather, one selectively chooses from the multitude of past experiences deemed most pertinent—constructing a narrative whose theme (essence) adequately captures the reality of the situation (and hence the person) being described. Ricoeur describes this selective arrangement of events as "human time."

Usually, how one selectively chooses these lived experiences is a result of one's prejudice/bias and occurs on an intuitive level. Ricoeur describes this process as prefiguration. This same dynamic occurs when encountering phenomena (e.g., a stop sign) in one's everyday life that one seeks to understand and interact with. If one had to consciously direct the construction process for every phenomenon that one encountered during the day, one would not be able to function. Hence, bias plays an important role in understanding the phenomena we encounter. It also serves to direct our actions.

Ricoeur's (1984-1988) elaboration of mimesis is a postmodern update of the concept of mimesis offered by Aristotle (335 B.C./1996). Ricoeur's update involves breaking up mimesis into three parts. Full treatment of this formulation has been provided elsewhere (Dybicz, 2010). Briefly, this formulation is as follows: I have an image of who I am (based upon my lived experiences) and an image of who I would like to be. The image of who I would like to be guides my present actions. The image of who I am is circumscribed by my lived experiences (i.e., I am defined by my actions). Some important implications arise from this premise.

First, keeping in alignment with the postmodern project's focus on human beings (and how they understand living), the scope of this theory of causality only encompasses human action (as opposed to the modernist Discourse, whose theory of causality seeks to encompass all objects in the universe). Second, mimesis promotes a causality that is future-oriented (who I would like to be); this notion of causality is reflected in the importance given to understanding a client's dreams and goals when employing a postmodern practice approach (De-Shazer & Berg, 1992; Saleebey, 2006). Third, movement toward an image of who I would like to be is an expression of free will; consequently, free-will is an integral component in the "equation" explaining the causes of human behavior.

As mentioned above, narrative/social constructions—which serve to define who one is—usually occur on the intuitive level (via one's bias). These constructions give prominence to some qualities of one's existence over others. This, in turn, defines the horizon of who one can be. Now it may occur that a socially mediated construction/narrative is oppressive to a person in that it undercuts one's self worth by giving prominence to qualities with negative valuations (in the social work helping situation, this usually occurs when concerns about dysfunction are given the most prominence). If the person does not question these constructs, then the person's horizon of who one can become is impoverished and limited.

Thus postmodern practices aim their efforts at assisting the client in questioning these narrative constructions: hence, they represent endeavors at consciousness-raising. While a diagnosis may describe particular qualities of existence of a person, the postmodern emphasis is that a person is so much more than this. Opening up the client's awareness to these other qualities of his/her existence becomes the task at hand. Once a client's consciousness has been raised to this level of awareness, the client can then take greater control of the construction process by engaging in a consciously directed effort at selecting one's lived experiences regarding the issue of concern. This is what Ricoeur (1984-1988) describes as configuration. Past experiences (i.e., expressions of free will) are sought that contradict the theme of negative valuations offered by the old narrative construct, and instead, offer a theme promoting positive

valuations (e.g., strengths). This opens new horizons regarding how one can be in relation to the issue of concern. This new narrative construction is often referred to as a counterstory (Brubaker & Wright, 2006; Dingus, 2006; Nelson, 1995). Seeking to validate this new essence defining oneself (who I want to be), one begins to act accordingly. One seeks to make sure that problems in functioning do not interfere with or diminish the expressions of these positive valuations or strengths in one's actions. In such a manner, these problems in functioning are either eliminated or diminished.

Last, Ricoeur elaborates refiguration as the process of acting as an audience member to these narrative constructions. Capturing the socially-mediated nature of the construction process, refiguration reflects the process that not only oneself, but also other members of one's community, examines this new narrative construction to decide if it does, in fact, achieve a level of verisimilitude ("truth" with a small "t"). Occurring concurrently with building the counterstory, it becomes extremely important to advance the goal of finding a community of persons (i.e., those offering caring relationships) that can legitimate the new construction (i.e., counterstory), and thus, establish its verisimilitude.

The Role of Science within Postmodern Practice

As described above, postmodern practice interventions are endeavors at consciousness-raising. Concerns about identity are prominent, as reflections upon one's identity form the central tenet in explaining human action (mimesis). Identity is seen as arising from narrative constructions; this involves a process of selectively choosing from one's lived experiences. As these past experiences can be configured in a multitude of different ways, there are a multitude of possibilities, or facets, to one's identity—what Bakhtin (1921/1993, 1929/1984) describes as "multiple voices." The existence plus essence comprising one's identity form a reciprocal relationship. One's existence (i.e., lived experiences displaying qualities) circumscribes the boundaries as to the possible essences (i.e., themes speaking to one's qualities) that may arise in a construction. The essence that does arise from a construction gives prominence and value to some qualities over others.

Thus this consciousness-raising endeavor involves the following steps. Problem-saturated (and hence oppressive) narrative constructions are questioned: their dominance as the only possible construction of reality is questioned. As recognition is gained that other constructions are possible, these possibilities are explored, giving attention to those constructions that advance positive valuations, and thus, advance themes reflective of the client's preferred identity. This step involves moving away from the usual intuitive application of bias (i.e., the selecting of lived experiences) to one that is more consciously directed. When a theme(s) (i.e., essence) is identified that reflects a client's preferred identity, past experiences are selected that support this theme(s). Consequently, the client's future actions are directed towards creating additional lived experiences that support this theme(s), as a means to establish the verisimilitude of the new construction (counterstory). Finally, the client is linked with caring individuals who serve to validate this new construction, thus establishing its verisimilitude within a community.

Now, to elaborate a role for science and scientific knowledge (as presently defined within the modern Discourse), one must describe how it aids this consciousness-raising process. Well, the one thing that science prides itself at being extraordinarily good at doing (for it is embraced as its main project) is that of describing the qualities of existence of an object, and how this object interacts with other objects, affecting their qualities of existence. Within the field of social welfare, these descriptions are predominantly focused upon the healthy functioning of the individual in society. As stated above, the qualities of existence of a phenomenon form the building blocks (via lived experiences) from which possible themes (essences) may arise for a social/narrative construction.

Individuals access social welfare services as a result of a problem, issue, or crisis in their lived experiences. Science is able to provide a detailed description of the qualities of this problem and how it impacts qualities of functioning in other areas of a client's lived experiences. This description serves as a "map" that circumscribes the boundaries within which a possible theme may arise. The theme that arises from such a description is problem-saturated (naturally so, as the project is

to provide a detailed description of the problem). To contribute to the consciousness-raising process, this problem-saturated theme is used as the thesis from which to begin a dialectical inquiry. Past experiences are then sought that contradict the theme laid out in the thesis. This leads to a dialogical process in which a multitude of possible constructions are revealed—and a fusion of horizons occurs when the client selects a construction that serves to advance his/her preferred identity.

White and Epston (1990) offer an excellent illustration of this process when employing the technique of externalizing the problem as a means towards consciousness-raising. The first step involves "mapping the influence of the problem" (pp. 42-44). This is when scientific knowledge is used to describe the problem. For example, in his case study of Nick, a six-year-old suffering from encopresis (soiling his pants), White uses principles of systems theory to describe how Nick's bio-psycho-social functioning has been impacted at home and at school, and how his parents' functioning has been impacted as well. But rather than using this information to formulate a diagnosis and direct treatment, he uses it as a thesis upon which to proceed to the second step, "mapping the influence of persons" (pp. 45-48). In this step, he asks clients to relate expressions of free will (via past experiences) that contradict the theme of the problem's influence on one's actions. From these reflections, lived experiences are chosen that advance a new theme, and hence new construction; for Nick, the quality of being a good boy was changed from "one who does not soil his pants" to that of "one who valiantly struggles against his externalized antagonist, 'sneaky poo,' by attempting to resist its influence." Consequently, Nick began to direct his actions to support the theme arising from this new construction. Also, at this stage (and if appropriate), scientific knowledge arising from the diagnosis of the problem can be offered to the client as information and advice to help advance him/her in securing this new identity. Information and advice represents a form of care (Brubaker & Wright, 2006) that contributes towards achieving verisimilitude of the new construction.

The Modern Discourse

Inquiry in the modern Discourse does not give special prominence to the human being. In its effort to understand all objects in the universe, scientific inquiry views a person as simply one possible object/organism to study out of a infinite multitude. The same methodology is used for all. Due to space limitations and the fact that the following intellectual thought is predominantly well understood, brief descriptions are given.

Correspondence Theory of Truth—Theory of Ontology

This theory views the world, and hence reality, as comprising only existence: the human mind plays no role in the make-up of reality—it is merely a tool used to observe it. Statements about objects describe qualities of this existence and thus are seen as true (i.e., facts) when they are demonstrated (through mutually confirmed observation) to accurately "correspond" to reality.

Positivism—Theory of Epistemology

Aligning with the correspondence theory of truth, positivism emphasizes the role played by accurate observation as the means to understand reality. Truth is founded upon the combination of accurate sense experience (hence its embrace of empiricism) and positive verification (hence its embrace of the scientific method). The ideal condition for achieving this is to acquire a value-free stance. Consequently, the role played by "bias" is fundamentally different from that of social constructionism. Within social constructionism, bias is a core component in the construction of reality. Within positivism, bias is separate from reality; it's simply a creation of the human mind. Bias is something that interferes with achieving an accurate sense experience—hence, the goal is to eliminate it as much as possible.

Newton's Third Law of Rational Mechanics (Action-Reaction)—Theory of Causality

This is a theory of causality that seeks to explain the motion of all objects in the universe. An update from a definition first

proposed by Aristotle, Newton's description of a cause producing an effect (a change is the quality/qualities of existence of an object) is seen as applying universally to all things. This is why physics is often held up as the model for capturing reality. Newton's view of causality as the movement of one object/variable impacting another object/variable to produce an effect, coming into alignment with a correspondence theory of truth and positivism, forms a mutually reinforcing network that fundamentally defines the modern discourse.

The Role of Social Construction within the Modernist Discourse

How the modern Discourse was able to define a role for moral knowledge (the prominent knowledge from the preceding discourse) as a means to circumscribe the boundaries for conducting an investigation has been described earlier. Thus, the role defined for postmodern insights—particularly social constructions—(the prominent knowledge from a challenging discourse) must be different. Social constructions speak towards the operation of bias. Since the elimination of bias is a major goal in understanding reality, social constructions are eminently useful in identifying this bias. As statements of reality are communicated through language, and social constructions arise through the use of language, the difficulty in removing this bias is further revealed by understanding the social construction process. From the standpoint of conducting social welfare research, this stance may be described as "diminished positivism" (R. Leighninger, personal communication, March 25, 2010)—an acknowledgement that bias is much harder to remove than originally thought. Thus, insights from postmodernism are used as a tool to aid in one's investigation.

The upsurge since the 1970s in the recognition and importance of culture as a variable within the helping situation further reflects this stance. During this period (1970s–present) greater and greater importance has been given in the literature to achieving what first was described as cultural sensitivity, and more recently is termed cultural competency. While not determining reality itself, the social constructions (within the modern discourse) arising from culture become legitimate

variables, which in turn, affect how individuals interact with reality. This stance is illustrated by those who seek to advocate evidence-based practice, yet seek to have this same practice be culturally competent as well (Bates, 2006).

Accommodation of Knowledges between Discourses

By its very definition, a discourse is a particular alignment of knowledges and practices that mutually reinforce and signify each other. This makes it difficult for any true accommodation to take place between competing discourses. Knowledges from a competing discourse are not ignored, but they are subjugated. They take on a different expression when placed in a different alignment (i.e., discourse). A brief historical overview concerning the clash of discourses illustrates this dynamic.

The predominantly moral social welfare Discourse of the 19th century, when faced with the emergence of the modern, scientific discourse of the late 1800s, did not seek to ignore science—as the Scientific Charity movement (Trattner 1999; Zimbalist, 1977) and the Settlement House surveys (Trattner 1999; Zimbalist, 1977) attest. Yet within this predominantly moral Discourse, "science" was expressed much differently than it would be in the modern Discourse. Based upon a jurisprudence approach to investigation seeking to understand how the human soul—and its alignment with "natural laws"—explained human behavior, "science" became a tool to aid in this investigation. Science achieved expression as an organized form of data collection to support jurisprudence-based explanations (Zimbalist, 1977). Looking back at these efforts from within the modern Discourse, they are seen as highly limited and shallow expressions of science, lacking many key insights (such as the need for hypothesis testing). Hence, they are not viewed as being truly scientific (Zimbalist, 1977).

The modern scientific Discourse gained dominance in social welfare by the 1920s. It did not abandon moral knowledge, as described earlier, instead employing it to circumscribe the boundaries of its investigation. Yet, someone from the 19th century would argue that this assigned an overly limited role to moral knowledge—as within this framework moral

knowledge does not speak towards explaining how the human soul drives human action. In present times, the modern Discourse faces a challenge from the postmodern discourse. People operating within the modern Discourse have sought to incorporate postmodern insights concerning language and bias by using them as a tool to aid in one's investigation. Similar to the scenario of "science" within the moral Discourse, a postmodernist would argue that this is a limited and shallow expression of what bias/social constructions could be (by denying that bias actually comprises reality).

To date, postmodernists have not been very eloquent in elaborating a role for science. While stating that they do not seek to completely ignore scientific knowledge, energies have mostly been devoted to critiquing shortcomings of the modernist approach. Being in a subordinate position, this is a necessary step in trying to legitimize this competing position. However, current literature suggests, as was illustrated by the example of White and Epston (1990) above, that scientific knowledge is used as a means to circumscribe the boundaries of one's investigation. Yet, a modernist will view this as an overly limiting role for scientific knowledge—as it is not used to explain human action via the workings of natural laws.

Conclusion

The postmodern discourse, with its unique alignment of knowledges and practices, creates a new "game" for social work interventions: an endeavor at consciousness-raising. Successful consciousness-raising is what produces change. Within this new game, tag phrases such as "the client is the expert" and the social worker/client relationship being one of "editor/author" gain meaning and make sense. This paper has addressed the question of what role scientific knowledge and investigation has to play within an endeavor at consciousness-raising. Looking to the past for a historical comparison has helped direct where to look to find an answer to this question.

As the Tuskeegee study (Jones, 1981) illustrates, an overly naïve application of the dominant Discourse's method of investigation can lead to morally reprehensible acts that do considerable harm to participants. This should serve as a

cautionary tale against a similar "anything goes" approach by practitioners using the dialectic method of postmodernism: scientific knowledge has a vital role to play in circumscribing the boundaries within which the dialectic method—aimed at consciousness-raising—is employed.

Within the modern discourse, a universal code of ethics arose to circumscribe boundaries of practice and investigation. This was appropriate, as the modern discourse emphasizes a universal reality. The postmodern discourse emphasizes particularity in the form of multiple realities. Consequently, a continuous addition to the scientific knowledge base—the acquiring of knowledge for a multitude of contexts—is what is necessary to circumscribe boundaries. Thus postmodern social work practice calls for the continued production of scientific knowledge to meet the demands of ever-changing contexts. This role for scientific knowledge may seem shallow or inadequate to a modernist, yet as has been illustrated, such accommodation is the natural result of competing discourses.

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