

**“LPI’S LIFE SOURCE MAPPING:
7 ‘E’S OF LIBERATION” AND SPIRITUALITY**

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**‘LPI’S LIFE SOURCE MAPPING:
7 ‘E’S OF LIBERATION’ AND SPIRITUALITY**

A holistic, liberatory social work practice framework
with seven self-reflective mapping points,
integrating everyday principles
of anti-oppression and liberation.

In a workshop at the 2006 “First North American Conference on Spirituality and Social Work” Dianne Prevatt-Hyles, with co-presenter Jana Vinsky, explained her self-reflective liberatory practice framework, “LPI Life Source Mapping:7 E’s of Liberation”. In this workshop we demonstrated how this analytical framework with seven mapping points would enable social workers to better assess how to support service users within the practices, policies and structures of their everyday social work (Sakomoto & Pinter, Payne 1997, p.438). We further explored how this system of analysis “The 7 ‘E’s of Liberation” equate the seven mapping points with the 7 point Chakra System, reflecting life energy needs. We also indicated how structural oppression, along with personal circumstance, can mitigate the support or suppression of one’s chakras. Chakras are points on the body that represent sources of vitality and indicate the location of energy fields. The concept originated in the Indian tradition of Vedas 2000-600 BC and is presently integrated into the Yoga philosophy (Anodea 2006).

Video clips from Liberation Practice International (LPI) Curriculum Video were used throughout the workshop to bring in many narratives and conversations into this evolving seven-point analytical framework. It illustrated how it is used in practice to address both structural oppression and personal circumstance. This framework also reflects input from numerous students who were exposed to it in the classroom. The co-presenter Jana Vinsky also gave practice illustrations throughout.

This framework of Liberation reflects the theorizing from my lived experiences of oppression and activism as well as from other African-Canadians and many others. It speaks to personal agency and resistance within the context of systemic barriers, with themes of spirituality, hope, resilience and joy. “LPI’s Life Source Mapping: 7 ‘E’s of Liberation” draws on Hill-Collins (2000) *Black Feminist Thought* which includes her Four Domains of Power and Anodea (1996) ‘Rights of the Chakras.’

Power Relations and Socio-Political Oppression

These processes of power relations and socio-political oppression are identified by Collins (2000) as being constituted by four “domains”, which include: The Structural domain, the Disciplinary domain, the Interpersonal and Hegemonic domains. The Structural domain is found in social, economic and political institutions, the Disciplinary domain is located by examining the organizational practices of the social institution, the Interpersonal domain reflects everyday social interactions. All these domains, are sites of oppression and resistance, and are permeated by the Hegemonic domain “By manipulating ideology and culture, the Hegemonic domain acts as a link between social institutions, the organizational practices, and the level of everyday interaction” (Collins 2000, 284).

These four domains each locate specific sites of oppression and resistance, where structures of race, class, gender, sexuality and nationality mutually construct each other. They are therefore useful when determining possible systemic influences that can affect the life-force needs of the client and his or her arenas of love, personal agency and resilience as reflected in the “7 ‘E’s of Liberation”.

Rights of the Chakras

The seven points of this system of analysis reflect the seven life force needs of the client, which Anodea (1996) presents as our rights, which if unmet, negatively impact our chakras, located in various energy sites in our bodies.

For example, if one’s right to speak and express oneself is not voiced, this could negatively impact that individual’s 5th chakra in the throat area. Within our 7-point system, as ‘EXPRESSION’ is encouraged and the systemic impact of silencing marginalized identities and perspective included; from that point a social work practice is geared towards addressing this individual, and *also*, socio-political repression. This demonstrates the holistic approach of the 7-point system when it addresses life force needs.

The following will indicate all the “7 ‘E’s’ of Liberation”, and illustrate this connection between the 7-point analysis system and the life force needs, signified by the chakra system. Anodea’s definitions of the chakras are also used throughout. Retrieved 2006, (www.sacredcentres.com/chakras.htm).

The 7 ‘Es’ of Liberation

Transcendence
Emancipation
Expression
Engagement
Efficacy & Exercise of Power
Energy of Possibility
Entitlement

The Chakras System

Transcendence - Chakra 7
I See – Chakra 6
I Speak and I am Heard - Chakra 5
I Love and I am Loved – Chakra 4
I Act – Chakra -3
I Feel – Chakra- 2
I am Here, I Have- Chakra –1

The “7 ‘E’s of Liberation” and the Seven Point Chakra System: Emancipatory Possibilities for Social Work Practice.

LIFE SOURCE MAPPING: “7 ‘E’S OF LIBERATION”

The First ‘E’ of Liberation and Chakra Seven, Transcendence: Chakra seven:

is the crown chakra that relates to consciousness as pure awareness. It is our connection to the greater world beyond, to a timeless, spaceless place of all-knowing. When developed, the chakra brings us knowledge, wisdom, understanding, spiritual connection and bliss (Anodea 2006)

This chakra is included within the 7 –point analysis, to create an initial context for understanding socio-political situations, by conceding firstly to the oneness shared by humanity, despite the divisive dynamics of power illustrated by the four “domains” listed by Collins (2000).

The second “E” of Liberation practice, “E”manicipation coincides with Chakra six, “I See”

...the brow chakras or 3rd eye centre. It is related to the act of seeing, both physically and intuitively. As such it opens our psychic faculties and our understanding of archetypal levels. When healthy it allows us to see clearly, in effect, letting us see the big picture (Anodea 2006).

In relation to Chakras 6, the second “E” of Liberation, the mapping point, “Emancipation”, refers to the ability “to see beyond”. It is understood as the ability to see beyond the conditioning and scripts perpetuated by the dominant culture. As Critical Race Theorist Delgado (2000) points out, it is here, in what Collins (2000) has identified as the Hegemonic domain, that a powerful potential for change can be found. It is the everyday, subtle forms of racism, considered normal, natural and common sense within North American society, that present significant, systemic problems that must be addressed.

Emancipation is a process of deconstructing the “normative common sense truths” which are taken for granted, in order to expose power relations and to clarify one’s position within them. The hegemony of this “common sense” is maintained through the shaping of images, symbols, influencing the very values and standards of normalcy; *this* is how dominant groups maintain their power.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Within an LPI Frame of Reference, dynamics of Externalization, Systemic Chatter, The Noticer and Lenses of Engagement or Objectification become paramount to the process of “Emancipation” (Prevatt-Hyles, D., Vinsky J., 2005). The social worker needs to begin to see the ‘normative common sense truths’, not as standards for the ‘normal’ but only as that which sustains dominance. Thus, a social worker must work to see, to “notice” his/her own biases and “Systemic Chatter” (the larger social narratives coming through them), and examine how that impacts them in practice, recognizing that we are all implicated in social discourses, which can interfere in equitable service delivery.

With the help of “The Noticer” the social worker needs to examine the “Lenses of Objectification” in his/her practice, (“Lenses of Objectification”) include ways of perceiving people and their issues in a pejorative, accusatory light, for example, criminalizing, pathologizing, etc.) and how these lenses operate to sustain dominance in all domains.

In practice, the worker needs to help the client to collaboratively build a critical understanding of what is contextualizing his/her experience, as a premise for helping the client address it. Beyond the self-reflexive uses of “Externalization” that can be employed to the social worker’s advantage, distancing the person from the oppressive situations or ideologies, this process can be significant in a client’s own Emancipation. It presents the opportunity for him/ her to then visualize who he or she wants to be, despite the determinants of the hegemonic ways of understanding and articulation. Thus there is an emancipatory space created between self and situation, and a perspective from which to look at a situation critically, as more than a “personal problem”, as a “socio-political formation” elucidating the power dynamics that maintain personal shame or marginalization (Prevatt-Hyles 2000).

Due to the fact that this is a politicized kind of self-reflexivity for both social workers and service-users, we see that this emancipatory “seeing beyond” the “systemic chatter” can happen on an individual or group level; indeed, it integrates the two.

This consciousness can be rearticulated and reaffirmed, crafting counter-hegemonic knowledge for emancipation, empowerment and resistance. This process can occur within the community, the schools or the family. Helping a service user identify demeaning socio-political scripts, social workers can address self-esteem, self-definition, and re-centralize the marginalized experiences of many service users. In addition, social workers can also work on a systemic level to change the Structural, Disciplinary, or Interpersonal structures that generate and sustain this Hegemonic domain.

The third “E” of Liberation practice, “E”xpression, coincides with Chakra five, “I Speak and I am Heard”

This is the chakra located in the throat and is thus related to communication and creativity. Here we experience the world symbolically through vibration, such as the vibration of sound representing language (Anodea 2006).

The mapping point, “Expression” refers to the right to voice. It is when an individual or a group communicates who they are, and where the expressions of needs are accorded space and respect. Within dominant discourses and institutions, a suppression of expression can lead to identity and perspectives being marginalized, silenced, or not reflected; this occurs for example in the media, or in school curriculum. It can also lead to identities being rejected and not claimed for instance, the marginalization of some sexual identities, enhance the fear of ‘coming out’.

This mapping point centers the voices of the marginalized as the voices of authority. This is similar to structuralist social work principles whereby the client is considered the expert on his/ her situation (Carniol, 2005).

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

In social work practice, it is essential to facilitate “the speaking of one’s truth”; to engage in a kind of listening that invites people to express themselves. Identifying the demeaning scripts that curtail expression, social workers can then support clients to re-author the scripts in their lives. In this listening process, an accepting space is created to acknowledge the possible significance of one’s group identity, ideology and cultural practices, which may be erased through dominance and homogenization. Reflections of different realities that challenge the regular assumptions, can be integrated into larger

structures as well, such as the curriculum, media, as well as representation on a micro level, for example the images on the walls of one's office. The object of the fifth "E", "Expression", is thus to work with service users to have their inner power and their word, their voice acknowledged and expressed individually and also in their community.

This intention is communicated by the social worker through intentional listening, validation and, acknowledgement. Liberation practice encourages a continual examination of inclusion efforts in social work practice, and challenges simple "lip service to diversity" which actuality occludes "Expression".

The next "E" of Liberation practice, "E"ngagement, parallels with the fourth Chakra, "I Love and I am Loved"

"This chakra is called the heart chakra and is the middle chakra in a system of 7. It is related to love and is the integrator of opposites in the psyche; mind and body, male and female, persona and shadow, ego and unity. A healthy 4th chakra allows us to love deeply, feel compassion, have a deep sense of peace and centeredness (Anodea 2006).

"Engagement" is being able to encounter another person or group beyond the scripts and definitions of the dominant social discourses. It is about seeing another for his/her definition of who he/she *says* he/she is, rather than listening to an imposed lens of interpretation. It is the ability to be with another, without judgement and evaluation, experiencing love and compassion. It is about valuing one another. "Engagement", is thus useful when examining and taking action in the Interpersonal domain of power.

Yet the subtleties of power negotiation in the **Interpersonal domain**, while engaging some of the most pervasive forms of Hegemonic "common sense", are not only difficult to perceive but often are disregarded. Razack (1998) argues that we always need to be looking at ourselves to see if our actions and attitudes are supporting oppression. Subtle domination in the Interpersonal domain encourages all subordinated groups and all individuals 'to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group's specialized thought-hegemonic ideologies that in turn justify practices of other domains of power' (Collins, 2000, p.287). Sometimes, each group will **see their** own oppression as fundamental, but fail to recognize that in the Interpersonal domain, a **matrix of domination** contains few pure victims or oppressors.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

For a social worker to practice “Engagement”, in the Interpersonal domain that is created between the worker and the service user is a step that is complex, but important. A social worker must engage in self-reflexivity to notice the routinized, day-to-day practices of the subtle, Interpersonal domination. The social worker needs to examine how he or she assesses and interprets, to ensure a non-judgmental, interpersonal climate. In practice, engaging with people and maintaining this kind of awareness can occur collaboratively; finding a way that still respects a service user’s goals, agendas and perspectives is paramount, because, important always give the client space to illustrate their situated knowledge in order to express who they are.

Important aspects of practicing “Engagement” in the Interpersonal domain include paying attention to dynamics using an LPI frame of reference: “From Intention to Outcome” Recognition, Attunement, Comfort Level, and of course Power Relations and Action. (Prevatt-Hyles, D., Vinsky J., 2005)

For **Recognition** to occur, a social worker must strive to see beyond the stereotypes, assumptions and expectations that they may have, which are of course informed by the dominant perspectives. A social worker then must critically examine, and try to recognize these lenses and perspectives of “the Other” as lenses.

As it pertains to **Attunement**, the social worker must be open and curious, maintaining a respect for difference in cultural practice, and working to refrain from pathologizing the service user.

Additionally, it is important to be aware of **Comfort Level** when working with the service user, to acknowledge the fear and discomfort that may be occurring on either side of the discussion, and attempt to ameliorate the situation by getting to know the client, opening the relationship up to trust, and examining where the fear might come from.

To pay attention to **Power Relations** in this case means to acknowledge one’s own conditioning and privilege in the role of social worker as well as within identity groups.

Finally, addressing the systemic chatter and structures through **Transformative Action**, one can hope to create and sustain engaging relationships where one is recognized, not “Othered”.

The Liberation practice of “E”fficacy & “E”xercise of Power, Couples with “I Act” or, Chakra –number three.

This chakras is known as the power chakras, located in the solar plexus. It rules our personal power, will, and autonomy, as well as our metabolism. When healthy, this chakras brings us energy, effectiveness, spontaneity, and non-dominating power (Anodea 1996).

This mapping point, “Efficacy”/“Exercise of Power” is defined as the ability to have a sense of one’s own impact upon one’s environment by drawing on internal and external resources needed for action. With such resources, there can be an increase of influence for an individual or for a group, in terms of opportunity, mobility and equitable resource distribution. These could facilitate efforts to transform organizational and structural barriers. Through the process of “Emancipation”, and addressing the internalized dialogue and scripts, a clearing can be made for agency and exercise of power.

This is reflected internally, within the workplace and within social work practice.

INTERNAL

In the process of “Emancipation”, Collins (2000) identifies four main concepts that facilitate the activation of a consciousness directed at achieving agency and the “Exercise of Power” and lead to individual and collective action. Firstly, the importance of self-definition challenging the underlying power dynamics and credibility of the definer. A more meaningful definition is found within a collaborative, not oppositional context of family and community. Secondly, there is the significance of self-valuation and respect, and the content of these definitions. Thirdly, there is emphasis on the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and Fourthly, there is the centrality of a changed consciousness, which can focus on personal empowerment and reclaiming space (Collins, 2000, p. 119).

When consciousness is directed at achieving “Efficacy” and the “Exercise of Power”, the next step is to move from silence to language, and begin individual as well as collective action. Furthermore, when linked to group action, our individual strategies gain new meaning; and we can gain some sense of control.

WORKPLACE

As a social worker, you do become part of the organizational and managerial structure of society at large; but, one still has to find opportunities for resistance and action to address the practices of the Disciplinary Domain. Cornel West (1993) identifies the ‘Cultural Critic’ as a strategic position of resistance, whereby the person inside can still be involved in transforming disciplinary organizational policies: “one who stays attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer, paradigms, viewpoints and methods-yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling structures of criticism”

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Specific ways to practice “Efficacy” and the “Exercising of Power” are to facilitate:

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- a) self-definition, self-valuation and respect, self-reliance and independence, and work towards a changed and empowering consciousness that is geared towards energizing oneself for action.
- b) skills, resources, networks, and opportunities for personal and social significance and change.
- c) space or relationship where the service user's agenda, goals and perspectives are given significance and addressing feelings of powerlessness.
- d) support and collaboration between the community and the service user.
- e) structures, policies, procedures, programs and practices that remove barriers to mobility, and include the voices and perspectives of marginalized or subordinate groups.

The next “E” of Liberation practice is “E”nergy of Possibility, and coincides with the second Chakra, “I feel”.

The 2nd chakras, located in the abdomen, lower back and sexual organs, is related to the element water, and emotions and sexuality. It connects us to others through feeling, desire, sensation and movement. Ideally, this chakras brings us fluidity and grace, depth of feeling, sexual fulfillment and the ability to accept change (Anodea, 2006).

This mapping point, “Energy of Possibility” can arise through healing. “Energy of Possibility” is achieved through a depth of feeling, and surrender to “what is”. In transformative healing, emotions and sensations are experienced and from this place, and, a vibrancy and vitality is awakened, from which joy and creation can grow.

Individual and Collective Trauma impact our “Energy of Possibility”, it can create feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and powerlessness, and a space of doom and gloom. Collective or cultural trauma, such as slavery is linked to the formation of a collective identity and construction of a collective memory (Alexander, 2004).

Spirit injury and spirit murder, are spoken about as the deep pain of hurt, rejection, constant negation, criticism, invisibility, helplessness, culminating in a desire to withdraw (Barnes, 2006; Williams, 2002) resulting from trauma and standing in the way of love. “Systems of domination exploit folks best when they deprive us of our capacity to experience our own agency and alter our ability to care and to love ourselves and others” (hooks, 2001, p.18).

The trauma impacts our self-love and agency and through community consciousness, support and action are continually being addressed.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

To put into practice an “Energy of Possibility”, and to activate the second chakra “I Feel”, we focus on and *hearing* the emotional anger, pain and hurt from individual or collective trauma and experiences; seeing the impact of the trauma, and not collapsing it with negative behavior or other issues. When listening, we need to identify the particular “doom and gloom” feelings of hopelessness, overwhelm, and self-hate, both for ourselves as well as the service user. We need to identify the systemic chatter and the specific situations of discrimination and oppression feeding the doom and gloom and collaboratively address them, whether it is contemporary or historical. Resiliency, transformative healing, self-care practices and change initiatives, can facilitate passion, vibrancy and movement out of doom and gloom for all.

The social worker, in fostering resiliency, encourages his/her healing resources, activating a natural process of diagnosis, self-repair and regeneration in response to injury or trauma and by empowering families, including those in transitions, reduces vulnerability to future stress. Immigration for instance, poses challenges of loss and adaptation, often met with resiliency (Walsh 1998). Resilience also requires acknowledging and respecting personal and structural limitations, counter to the Western philosophy of individual success. The social worker can mobilize individual, family and community resources to promote healing and growth. Here, hope, joy and spirituality are employed to energize and cultivate resilience for both service user and provider. Self-care and seeing through the myths and the shaming around the body is significant (hooks, 2004).

Spirituality as a source of healing and resilience is honoured in this practice, and service users can be encouraged to speak about their own meanings of spirituality. Centralizing spirituality as paramount for healing and resiliency also reflects Black-Canadian feminism and ties into the current upsurge of incorporation of spirituality within social work practice (Sheridan, 2001). Similarly, Cornell West (1996) has referred to Combative Spirituality, spirituality within hope and struggle.

Being open to hearing and respecting these narratives, while also reflecting on one’s own narratives, could facilitate understanding, connection and joy. Within the Black experience, including that of activism, and many conversations around family and community, narratives of overcoming with hope, joy and resiliency, with the use of music, humor and folk wisdom are passed on, including in my own family and extended community.

Social workers can support a healing of this collective trauma e.g. a revival of First Nations strength and determination after experiencing collective trauma by supporting the

restoration of traditional systems of belief and practice, the resurgence and reclamation of languages, the growth of a First Nations' sense of national identity and the reconstruction and deconstruction of Aboriginal people's histories (Aboriginal Healing 2004, pp 32).

“E”ntitlement is the last “E” of Liberation practice, and it coincides with the Chakra “ I am Here, I Have”:
Chakras one, located at the base of the spine. This chakra forms our foundation. It represents the element earth, and is therefore related to our survival instincts, and to our sense of grounding and connection to our bodies and the physical plane. Ideally this chakra brings us help, prosperity, security, and dynamic presence (Anodea 2006).

This mapping point, “Entitlement” is defined as the right to living provisions that include stability, safety, and security, and is aimed at ensuring that service users can feel rooted and grounded. Fair resource distribution is required to address the need for food, shelter and medical care.

Social Justice Issues and facilitating social action within social work practice are often focused on the Structural Domain, or, institutional transformation through the following three spheres: Black Political Activism, Struggles for Group Survival and Sustaining Independent Consciousness (Collins 2000).

Black Political Activism is aimed at changing the rules that circumscribe lives; Institutional transformation is one kind of this effort, aimed at changing discriminatory policies and procedures found in the workplace, the media, schools, government offices and other social institutions. Constraints, including racism and sexism, make institutional transformation difficult.

A social worker can also facilitate collective action and efficacy for change. Forms of activism could include social advocacy, community organizing, self-help groups for efficacy and collective action, changing governmental and organizational policies, socio-economic and political change.

The complexity of this activism and the role of the social worker is reflected not only in addressing more than one form of oppression, but also in acknowledging the multiple domains of power that participate in every form of oppression and need to be addressed in order to sustain change.

Struggles for group survival are just as important as confrontations with institutional power. Actions are taken to create Black spheres of influence, seemingly invisible spheres of social life and organization, within existing social structures. Black women's collective action within everyday life challenges domination in these multi-faceted

domains, such as ‘The mothers addressing concerns at school’. Similarly, Njoki Wane (2002), a prominent African Canadian Feminist, refers to the multiple perspectives experienced by the community, encouraging these perspectives to be expressed.

A social worker can also try collaboratively to foster individual and group survival on an interconnected local and global level. One can work without evaluation to foster safety, security, and stability within the home and the other environments of the client. Additionally, the social worker could identify fostering rights, such as opportunities, resources, living provisions, shelter, education and employment.

Sustaining independent consciousness as a sphere of freedom enables African American women to engage in additional forms of resistance. A social worker can identify systemic issues that might curtail that sphere, by examining all elements of practice. He/she can also cultivate a space for agency and resilience within the domains of power, Hegemonic, Interpersonal, Disciplinary and Structural.

Conclusion: LPI Life Source Mapping presents a holistic and empowering social work practice framework that is applicable for all and used by many of my students. It is transferable in kind, due to the emphasis on dynamics, practices and processes, and can be used within professional, inter-personal, as well as community settings. It is hoped that it can achieve a sustainable collaborative transformation *on all levels*, focusing on explicit micro-practices that reflect larger power relations, within our every day social work practice. It supports the worker to contextualize the individual and community within systemic oppression, while generating openings for hope, agency and possibility, for transformative action and social justice. Students express some ways it supports the worker: “The 7E’s is something that I will hold on to for life. It is an easy and handy way for me to deal with situations. I now know how to empower me and the people I will be working with in the field”; “I learned how to put social action principles into practice. I also figured out how I as an individual can create change. The Seven E’s clearly shows how we can be agents of change”; “I see how these concepts can be useful in working with service users to provide hope (the power of which should not be underestimated) in a society that can be unfair”.

This workshop also included clips from the LPI video: “Life Source Mapping and Liberatory Social Work”, demonstrating how this framework can be integrated into our work as social workers, when addressing issues of oppression and liberation within a Canadian context.

This video is available for sale, please contact author Dianne Prevatt-Hyles at dhyles@liberationeducation.com or www.liberationeducation.com for more information.

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