Chapter 5
Power and Knowledge

Abstract Conceptions of power are important to consider how best to address discrimination and oppression within social work practice. Early social theory accounts tended to consider power as a property that some institutions, individuals and groups accrued by virtue of unequal social arrangements of various kinds. Later poststructural accounts considered power as constituting norms, forms of knowledge and various social practices. This chapter outlines both theoretical positions to present contemporary understandings of power where they may be seen as important element in critical social work practice towards social justice. Specifically, the chapter explains structural and behavioural accounts of power, as well as pastoral power, biopower and the emergence of neuro-bio-psychological knowledge and what this means for social justice, now and into the future.

Introduction

Power is something that is deeply connected to the thoughts and actions of human beings. As stated by Russell (1975), human beings are imaginative and restless—people typically engage in a variety of activities and pursuits even long after their basic needs have been more than satisfied. Attainment of both basic needs and higher order pursuits depends on acquiring and using power. What power actually is and what it means defies simple explanation:

> We speak and write about power, in innumerable situations, and we usually know, or think we know, perfectly well what we mean. In daily life and in scholarly works, we discuss its location and its extent, who has more and who has less, how to gain, resist, seize, harness, secure, tame, share, spread, distribute, equalize, or maximize it, how to render it more effective and how to limit or avoid its effects. (Lukes, 2005, p. 61)

Barnes (1988, p. iv) says that power is 'like gravity or electricity' in that it is always around us. And like gravity or electricity, we may experience power's effects without actually understanding or observing power as a phenomenon itself. In a common-sense way, we tend to associate power with people who may be physically powerful, possess powerful or influential personalities or qualities, or occupy posi-

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tions or offices of power (Barnes, 1988). As Lukes (2005) points out, the concept of power has 'multiple and diverse meanings' (p. 61). Power may include everything from the use of physical force over the body, to elaborate social systems of rewards or punishments, to large-scale programmes of propaganda (Russell, 1986). Power is also a *capacity,* not simply a property that is exercised. Furthermore, power can be used in beneficial ways, so not all power is bad (Lukes, 2005), even though, of course, power can be abusive, destructive and violent. Power also has a practical aspect concerning how we might use power in the world to achieve things; however, these things may be defined. Power also has a moral dimension because we make judgments about the extent to which it is used either for good or evil, and power contains an evaluative aspect because we make judgments about its distribution within society, which may involve comparisons between who has power, and who does not (Lukes, 2005).

An important point to recall here—and one relevant to our discussion—is that power is often linked to domination and oppression. For Iris Young, concern with domination ought to be the main point of orientation for any serious discussion and action concerning social justice (Young, 1990). Addressing domination and oppression involves ongoing struggle because they are significant forces in the ways societies are constructed and maintained (Stewart, 2000). Power and domination are also central concerns for social work, especially for radical and critical social work that locates power and domination in social, political and economic contexts (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Healy, 2014). Although some forms of domination would seem reprehensible today to most (for example, slavery, systematic violence against ethnic groups, genocide), this does not mean such practices are confined to the dustbin of history—far from it. Yet, other forms of domination and oppression are more subtle, invisible and even tolerated, like forms of compulsory responsibilism that take place in counselling confessionals (Lukes, 2005).

Power can also be grounded in economic domination through the uneven possession of resources, the unequal distribution of marketable skills, or in the arrangements of institutions that enable some people to control the behaviours and freedoms of others through management of their labour (Weber, 1986). Some workers in the modern economy are dominated by corporations and technologies, and may feel like they have few freedoms and choices available to them. We may take this situation very personally and feel like there is no escape from it because it is hard to see where this power that is dominating our freedoms is emanating from and how it operates as a force in our lives (think, for example, of the archetypical 'faceless corporation' with no centre). At the same time, according to the sociologist Simmel (1986), domination can occur through interactions between individual people, so it is not just an economic or systemic phenomena, but it is about what individual people do to one another in interpersonal encounters. In this sense, people may feel dominated or bullied or controlled by known individuals (in their families and workplaces for example) and can pinpoint in a precise way their experience of being dominated by another person's power.

Some forms of domination are overt and manifest as outright violence. For Hannah Arendt, violence is 'the most flagrant display of power' (Arendt, 1986, p. 59) and it

can be easy to spot and object to. While violence is often overt and put towards specific purposes, there are subtle background factors that support it, which may include the interests and arrangements of collectives and groups from which individual acts of power and violence spring forward and are *made possible* (Arendt, 1986). As Simmel explains 'a super-individual power—state, church, school, family or military organizations—clothes a person with a reputation, a dignity, a power of ultimate decision, which would never flow from his (sic) individuality' (Simmel, 1986, p. 205). For example, radical feminists have long argued that patriarchy is the enabling culture behind men's oppression of women (Tong, 2009). Likewise, power and its abuse can be made possible through role, status and tradition. So there are both individual factors and social and institutional factors operating together, and it is important for social workers to be able to work with such multiple levels of analysis.

Social workers are rightly interested in redressing domination, but as pointed about by Stewart (2000), power and domination are not the same thing, and in order to understand one (domination) we must have a solid analysis of the other (power). It is the latter that is the focus of this chapter. The books, volumes and treatises that have been written about power are enormous and wide-ranging. There is simply no way that we can capture the full breadth of this literature in a single chapter. Hence, our focus is necessarily constrained to a couple of points of orientation. The first is to consider power in structural and behavioural terms. The second is to briefly discuss power in poststructural terms, specifically the work of Michel Foucault in relation pastoral power and biopower. The third is to consider power in relation to knowledge, particularly drawing on the work of Nikolas Rose on the rise of psychological and biological knowledges of the human subject. It is important to consider these perspectives as operating in dialogue with each other; for example, Foucault's analysis of power does not replace or supersede structural or juridical accounts of power, but rather, provides a useful perspective of power in the context of neoliberalisation and the administrative and regulative state. Each of these perspectives can assist social workers to conceptualise the role of power in social injustices.

Structural and Behavioural Accounts of Power

Here, we consider power as a structural and behavioural phenomenon. Galbraith (1986) states that power is an instrument with three dimensions. First, power is made possible through the threat of an adverse or painful situation where one actor can make and carry out a threat of some kind, while another is subjected to it. Behaviourally, the person subjected to the threat is placed in an invidious situation where they are forced to choose or enact a preference in order to avoid adversity or pain. In this sense, power is conceptualised as a *punishment*. For example, a policy to revoke people's unemployment benefits if they do not comply with mandatory job-seeking requirements draws on this dimension. In this example, it is presumed that losing one's benefits would yield a higher pain, discomfort or adversity, than the pain or discomfort involved in the act of complying with mandatory job-seeking

activities. Such a policy introduces the threat of an adverse consequence in order to yield behavioural compliance. Second, power is *compensatory* because it can be used to reward certain actions or behaviours. For example, the agency manager who makes sure their service stringently meets funding requirements may be rewarded with further funding. The power of the reward drives behaviour. Finally, power is a kind of *conditioning.* It is conditioning because power can be used to persuade people to believe things or change their minds and beliefs. Here, power may be ideological, normative, discursive or rational in the form of a well-reasoned argument. For example, politicians may leverage media channels to persuade large numbers of people to accept a particular argument, adopt a belief or commit themselves to an ideological position.

For Galbraith (1986), there are three additional sources that operate in the background to bring forth the overall instrumental nature of power. The first is personality (especially in relation to leadership or status), which is important to 'conditioned power—with the ability to persuade or create belief' (p. 214). People who are articulate, educated, have access to knowledge and information, can converse in the dominant language and can use dominantly accepted speech conventions can leverage these attributes into an instrument of *conditioned power* in order to persuade and influence others. Second, the ownership of property and wealth supports the instrument of *compensatory power*, because variance in the distribution of resources enables some people (that is, those people who own or control resources) to reward others (that is, those people who do not own or control resources) in ways that control and shape the behaviour of those who lack such resources. Third, organisational and institutional arrangements themselves can be the source of *punishment*, because punishments or sanctions rely on organisational or institutional backing (in the form of laws, rules or policies, for example).

In summary, power under this theory is conceptualised as a series of instrumental mechanisms and conditions that are largely observable and focused on the behavioural influences of decisions over conflicting interests. But to view power in this way alone is to only consider it in terms of behaviours, interests and conflict over decisions. Lukes (2005) contends that this is an insufficient analysis (p. 18). We must also consider the exercise and capability of power to effect *nondecision-making*, 'in which decisions are prevented from being taken on *potential issues* over which there is an observable *conflict'* (Lukes, 2005, p. 25, italics in original). Nondecision-making concerns the way that people control and shape agendas, can control what can be discussed and what can't, and can control who can participate and who is to be excluded from discussion and decision-making. Important as this is, Lukes contends again that this is an insufficient analysis of power, and following, he advances what he terms a three-dimensional view of power, which includes (1) the behavioural analysis of the capacity and exertion over decision-making; (2) the aspect of nondecision-making to consider; and crucially, (3) the way that the systemic context of power is biased in ways by 'socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions' (p. 26). This is now an expansive and encompassing concept of power, moving way beyond the behaviours of individuals to include society, culture, groups and institutional practice.

Social work theory and practice has long cherished its focus on the interplay between person and context, and so an analysis of power must also oscillate between individual factors and the broader social, cultural, economic and political milieu. We take this milieu as a point of orientation to now consider power particularly in relation to knowledge and practice—one that involves an analysis of the regulation of human conduct through knowledge, including the invention of theoretical resources and technological practices that inform and influence the theory and practice of social work.

Poststructural Accounts of Power

We restrict our discussion here to philosopher Michel Foucault who is famous for his analysis of power as being inseparable from knowledge, particularly knowledge of and about human beings; for example, knowledge produced by the human and social sciences, which is underscored by a whole range of philosophical principles and assumptions that are elementary to the Western intellectual tradition going as far back as Aristotle, but particularly since the Enlightenment. For Foucault (1986), power, by its necessity, inescapably produces certain truths and forms of knowledge. This is why Foucault semantically links power with knowledge by invoking the term 'power/knowledge' (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). Truth is not something that describes or reports on an objective empirical reality. Rather, truth operates to 'permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse' (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 229). Truth is not neutral or objective, and is not simply a thing that can be verified scientifically because its 'truth value' is dependent on the operation and circulation of power (think, for example, the oft-quoted phrase that 'truth is whatever the powerful say it is'). In the context of the human and social sciences, power creates knowledge and is also a force for the *translation* of knowledge of and about human beings into practice. Foucault writes:

> Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit…In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 230).

Knowledge here may include theories, diagnostic and assessment tools, classification systems, labels, and terminology, causal or correlated hypotheses about human behaviour, assumptions about risk, trauma, personality disorders, mental illness and so on. It also includes established routines of practice, which are norms associated with 'how things are done', to whom, by whom and on what justification, and it would even include all those forms of knowledge and practice that are invented and institutionalised in the pursuit of noble or moral ends. Knowledge (theory and prac-

tice) is not always benign and innocent, but can be containers and repositories for power.

From Foucault's (1986) point of view, there is not really some kind of overarching ruling sovereign or monarch at the root of domination. Instead, power is everywhere (even across the pages of this book) and therefore we should focus our level of analysis to 'power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions' (Foucault, 1986, p. 232). For social work, this fine-grained space for locating power is in practice—its methods, methodologies, interactions, vocabularies, bodies of knowledge, assessment tools, forms, and technologies, rules, norms and processes. Social work may have well-rehearsed approaches to organising action and criticisms of 'out there' structures of power (government, business, bureaucracy, managerial neoliberalism), and these certainly have their place in social and political activism and advocacy (see elsewhere, this volume). But what Foucault offers instead is a critically reflective problematisation of knowledge and practice itself. Foucault encourages us to confront and understand the location and formation and reformation of power at its capillary level, in sites of practice within organisations and institutions.

As Foucault has pointed out, power is a 'polyvalent force that runs through multiple sites in the social network' (Newman, 2005, p. 51). From this position, there is no outside of power, no 'power out there' perspective that we can reasonably adopt. Power is said to be everywhere and it is built into the very substrate of subjectivity itself (Newman, 2005). Drawing on Foucault's analysis, Butler (1997) explains that power is a force that constitutes the subject and makes us who and what we are. This is not the result of a straightforward internalisation of power into subjectivity because power is 'what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are' (p. 2). For example, the moment we speak into existence the concept of something as commonplace as 'human being' or 'human rights' or 'social justice' we are using some form of power (truth) to render such things thinkable and knowable as *things in the world*. And we do this, for better or worse, using a vast repertoire of different and overlapping nomenclatures for describing the human subject. So, power is seductive precisely for the things it makes happen—not just for material things or the exercise of will or force, this much is true—but for subjectivity and knowledge itself.

Foucault is not without criticism, not least of all for what his dispersed view of power means for a radical politics and organised resistance against the state and its compatriots (see Healy, 2000, pp. 56–59). In some sense, resistance needs to be (re)orientated towards 'the ideological dimension through which structures and relations of power are sustained, articulated and extended' (Newman, 2005, p. 66). This means that from a poststructural view, resistance and critique are directed towards knowledge (epistemology) and practices (techniques, technologies of power), rather than people or institutions per se (this does not absolve individual or institutional abuses of power by the way, but rather, it extends the analysis deeper into their epistemological and ideological rationalities). There is much at stake here. Foucault points us to focus a critical gaze on disciplinary power, because, as he states, disciplinary

power is key to 'the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment' (Foucault, 1986, p. 239). Hence, what is operating together is both a juridical sovereign power through state-based and corporate structures and institutions, but also a disciplinary pastoral power inscribed in everyday 'ordinary' practice. The two exist together in modern states and neoliberal societies.

Pastoral Power

To give a specific example of the way that disciplining power operates as a form of everyday knowledge and practice, we focus here on the concept of the pastoral. The pastoral is conceptualised by Foucault by invoking the metaphor of the *shepherd* who looks after, watches over and guides the *flock*. In the pastoral, the teacher may be seen as a shepherd of her students who are vulnerable to ignorance, or the doctor the shepherd of her patients who are vulnerable to disease (Foucault, 2007). One can immediately see how the social worker may exercise pastoral power in relation to service users, who are thought to be vulnerable to risk or disordered conduct. Another example of pastoral power proffered by Rose (2001) is eugenically based genetic screening and counselling.

Fundamentally, the shepherd (for example, teacher, counsellor, social worker) exercises power over the flock, and through their actions (such as counselling or tutelage) the shepherd intervenes in the conduct of others (for example, student, patient, service user), guiding them towards normatively defined ends (Foucault, 1988a). Such ends may be based in a statistical norm or average, or a socially conditioned judgment or assessment of what is proper and acceptable, or good enough. Hence, pastoral power/care is an individualising power that is concerned with 'the lives of individuals' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 67) and the role of the pastoral is 'to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 67). How this aim is achieved may depend on a variety of individually focused and often self-sanctioned practices towards self-improvement, such as 'self-examination and the guidance of conscience' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 69). In part, the aim of pastoral power is to elicit an awareness of oneself as vulnerable or flawed, and one must protect oneself from risks and dangers and carefully follow the strictures of truth and knowledge (for example, watch one's diet, follow the advice of a counsellor, insure one's life and assets, dutifully take one's medication) (Foucault, 1988a). To do this requires a heightened sense of self-awareness and personal individual reflection, but it also involves sharing aspects of one's personal self in the form of a confession, such as the kinds of confessions that transpire during counselling (Besley, 2005), or by sharing on social media one's weight-loss transformation or journey, or sharing stories of healing and efforts to be a better person, or by allowing a physician access to one's body, or by allowing a psychologist to conduct a mental examination or assessment. An examined and deconstructed self can be pieced together towards some kind of norm, through careful and diligent self-practices (Foucault, 1988a).

This form of pastoral power relies heavily on making the private self visible and open to inspection, examination and evaluation. During the eighteenth century, social and political organisation involved attempts towards *erasing spaces of darkness* and working towards a condition whereby people were rendered visible, knowable and subject to an individualising gaze (Foucault, 1980). Visibility and statistical aggregation generates ideas of what is 'normal', and this visibility and proliferation of norms sets into place social and political expectations of what proper conduct looks like (Rose, 1996a). This means that people may feel as though they are under permanent moral scrutiny (Foucault, 1977), even at the same time as they may willingly take on the role of policing themselves and the conduct of others (think, for example, the way that people frequently make judgments about others' parenting styles, or chastise friends and family for not eating enough kale).

The practices of health and welfare professions are not always organised to punish wrongdoings through corporal or capital means (although sometimes this does happen), but much practice is engineered in ways that attempt to shape the thoughts, actions, beliefs and behaviours of individuals at the level of their subjectivity using the latest science and knowledge as a point for reference and comparison (Foucault, 1977). Social work scholar Epstein (1999, p. 8) suggests that this is the art of non-influential influencing where 'to be effective, to show results, it must influence people, motivate them to adopt the normative views inherent in the intentions of social work practice'. As people are subjected to permanent inspection (for example, assessments, examinations, performance reviews, tests, social media depictions of the perfect body and perfect life), Foucault (1977) contends that individuals will invariably engage in forms of self-inspection, self-evaluation, private reflections and internalised judgments of how well they perform and fit in. In following, the individual is constructed as a biological and psychological entity, in charge of and responsible for their own physical and mental health and welfare, or seeking expert guidance and support where needed, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Hence, as Foucault states, the operation of modern forms of power are far more complicated and involved than 'a set of laws or a state apparatus' (1980, p. 158), but power also involves a vast machinery of disciplinary knowledge and practices aimed at self-improvement, regulation and the conduct of oneself and others.

Risk and Biopolitics

Within the metaphor of the pastoral, the flock is typically seen to be in some kind of danger, or posing a danger to others, so the shepherd is there to know each and every one, and protect them. The management of risk plays on this idea, particularly through the designation of certain groups of people who are most risky or at risk (Rose, 2001). The emphasis on calculating, predicting and managing risk sits with professionals, whose training and responsibilities are largely organised in relation to risks. Constantly expanding knowledge does not necessarily make things more certain and more predictable. Rather paradoxically, more knowledge and information

introduces uncertainty because new knowledge opens up more terrains of understanding and increases choice, introduces different perspectives and introduces more and more variables to consider. Professionals in this context are tasked with having to weigh competing and contested forms of knowledge, in order to decide what to do in relation to ever-increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty (Rose, 2005). When their interventions fail, as they inevitably sometimes do, public trust is undermined and professionals resort to exploiting objective science and the regulation and technocratic bureaucratisation of their craft, in an attempt to bolster credibility and public trust. Hence, it is not just the conduct of risky individuals and populations that is under scrutiny—risk assessment is 'about governing the activities of psychiatric professionals themselves' (Rose, 2005, p. 19). Therefore, it is the social worker's conduct inasmuch as service user's conduct that is under scrutiny, albeit in different ways.

For example, in the fields of criminal justice and mental health, neuroscience is enabling new possibilities for pre-emptive risk assessments of people who may pose a criminological risk to society, as well as predicting which individuals are likely to pose a risk to themselves (Rose, 2010). But while probabilistic risk assessments are not new, what is new, according to Rose, is a shift from probabilistic risk assessments derived from sociological frameworks (such as a social determinants or behavioural theoretical risk analysis), towards biologically deterministic accounts of risk rooted in neurobiology, using methods such as DNA and genetic profiling, and brain scanning (Rose, 2010).

This turn of events towards biological concepts of human behaviour and the explicit linking of biology to politics has a long history, captured in the term 'biopolitics'. Biopolitics denotes the connections made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between biological and genetic conceptions of human beings and forms of state power and administration. Biopower is an overall strategy for dealing with ideas about risks that are presented by whole populations (Rose, 2001). Biopower is explained by Dean to be 'concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations…it is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental, and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population' (Dean, 1999, p. 99). Rabinow and Rose explain this idea further:

> Across the twentieth century, the management of collective life and health became a key objective of governmentalized states, with identifiable configurations of truth, power and subjectivity underpinning the rationalities of welfare and security as well as those of health and hygiene. (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. 14)

In theory, human aspirations to be healthy, wealthy and happy are infinite (or at least expansive) and yet the capacity for individuals, community and state-based institutions to meet these aspirations are, rather unsurprisingly, finite (Foucault, 1988b, p. 163). A gap exists between what we desire and what we can achieve. We may all want to have long, healthy, prosperous lives, but the allocation of resources to meet this is capped (by nature and society), and in many cases, resources are dispersed in uneven and unequal ways. So, for example, some people and societies have access

to enormous medical technologies and resources and others do not. But the push to extend life and have it manifest itself in the most functional, prosperous and eudemonic ways exists nonetheless. So instead of power being largely used to end or eliminate life, biopower is a form of power concerned with the biological politics of human populations in ways that seek to enhance, regulate and control the biological features of human existence and populations, such as power that intervenes in and controls and regulates birth, death, illness, the need for food, security, reproduction and sanitation (Foucault, 1988b, 2003).

The political problems that arise by the emergence of the human species as a *population* and their biological needs both individually and *en masse* are turned into forms of knowledge (Foucault, 2003). The invention of statistics within the disciplines of demography, public health, education, environmental design, management and sociology—to name a few—are able to quantify and give shape to the various health and welfare problems experienced and generated by particular *population groups* (Foucault, 2003). Medical knowledge of various kinds have shaped the way human life has unfolded, enabled new forms of expertise and basically functioned to open up new vistas of possibility in human thought about human subjectivity and potential (Rose, 2007). The human and social sciences provide the conceptual and methodological tools for how problems are thought about and understood, including predictions on future problems, and models and methods of intervention (Foucault, 2003, p. 246; Rose, 1988, 1996b). For example:

> The psychological assessment produces a peculiar mode of inscription of the powers of the individual. It is a form of writing whose destiny and rationale is the dossier: a diagnosis, a profile, a score…Accumulated in the file or case notes, pored over in the case conference, the courtroom, or the clinic, the inscriptions of individuality invented by the psychological sciences are thus fundamental to programmes for the government of subjectivity and management of individual difference. (Rose, 1988, p. 194)

This extenuation of political power into the domain of the corporeal human biological subject has traversed from public health and medicine, to psychology, to psychiatry, to pharmacology, through to what Rose refers to as ‘molecular politics’ (Rose, 2001, p. 12).

The history of biopower in the twentieth century involved strategies towards population health and fitness using programmes of public health, and large-scale interventions and regulatory activities concerned with reproduction, ‘to modulate the wish or ability of individuals in certain categories to procreate—those judged to have hereditary disease, to be deranged, feeble-minded or physically defective, those who were deemed habitually or incorrigibly immoral or anti-social, especially those guilty of sexual crimes, and alcoholics’ (Rose, 2001, p. 4). These are biopolitical interventions that seek to shape and regulate the conduct of individuals and populations using coercive and regulatory instruments in order to achieve the ends of optimal health and well-being. The welfare state was the container for a range of practices, some of which were subtle and pastoral, designed to counsel or ‘shepherd’ individual conduct towards desired norms and ends (Foucault, 1988a, 1991; Rose, 2001).

Power, Knowledge and the Human Sciences

As should be clear by now, the human, social and psychological sciences function to sort, organise, classify, order and regulate human beings and their conduct, behaviours, thoughts and gestures, in ways that produce the human subject within and against a detailed institutional regulatory and disciplinary, technological, and administrative apparatus (Rose, 1988). Therapeutic expertise is imbued with various rationalities and technologies to produce a widely dispersed authority that acts to act on people's sense of themselves, by intervening on and through their subjectivity (Miller & Rose, 1994). Hence, as stated, power is not merely repressive, but it is also productive, making things possible, thinkable and sayable (Rose, 1988). In the twentieth century, the forms of knowledge that made certain things about human beings thinkable and sayable included the social sciences (sociology, anthropology and economics), the 'psy' disciplines (psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry), and medicine and biology. The biological basis to understanding and interpreting what it means to be human—including a whole edifice of theory, research and knowledge on the biological aspects of the human subject or self—has increasingly become a major organising principle in psychology, medicine and neuroscience (Rose, 2003).

One such example of the biological foundation to human behaviour is the rise of therapeutic drugs to treat mental illness, so much so that sociologist Nikolas Rose has coined the term 'psychopharmacological societies' (Rose, 2003, p. 46) to capture the way that 'human subjective capacities have become routinely re-shaped by psychiatric drugs' (Rose, 2003, p. 46). This situation raises critical questions over who owns and controls the advancement of new technologies that enable the politicisation and monetisation of human life itself (Rose, 2001). Elsewhere, Rose outlines the staggering growth and influence in psychiatric drugs in places like the United States, Europe and Japan (for example, in the year 2000 in the US, an average of 70 doses of psychiatric medication was prescribed per person—see Rose, 2003, pp. 52–53). No doubt, this explosion in influence has been driven by market forces and the global commercialisation of pharmacological intellectual property and its profitability, but it has also been fuelled by an appetite by consumers and 'psy' practitioners for drug-related interventions (Rose, 2003) and for the way that mental health practice is cloaked in risk management and risk thinking (Rose, 1996b, 2005). Although medication plays a role in mental health practice and many people derive benefits, the point that Rose makes goes well beyond the spread of psychiatric medication to pose a deeper question for what this now signals for how we understand the human person, who is now more than ever conceptualised in neuroscientific terms. The self—what it means to be human—is now somatic. Rose explains what this means:

> By somatic individuality, I mean the tendency to define key aspects of one's individuality in bodily terms, that is to say to think of oneself as "embodied", and to understand that body in the language of contemporary biomedicine. To be a "somatic" individual, in this sense, is to code one's hopes and fears in terms of this biomedical body, and to try to reform, cure or improve oneself by acting on that body. At one end of the spectrum this involved reshaping the visible body, through diet, exercise and tattooing. At the other end, it involves

> understanding troubles and desires in terms of interior "organic" functioning of the body, and seeking to reshape that—usually by pharmacological interventions. (Rose, 2003, p. 54)

What is at stake here is that the domains of social work theory and practice that draw on and intervene in individual biography and narrative, social and environmental context, and important life experiences such as abuse and trauma, are only relevant factors now in terms of how they are thought to *impact the brain*. For example, poverty is recoded away from being an economic and political problem towards one that focuses on what it does to brains of developing children (Hayasaki, 2016). And if the brain is the focal point for poverty symptomology, then the brain is the treatment zone where psychological and psychiatric talking and drug therapies land (Rose, 2003). As Rose points out, the twentieth century introduced the idea of the psychological interior as the domain of the self and for intervention for human problems (think of the enormous influence of behaviourism and psychoanalysis on human life and professional practice, even in everyday common-sense terms), but the twenty-first century is shaping up to extend this interiority in neurochemical and neurobiological ways (Rose, 2003).

The opening up of this new territory goes well beyond the helping professions and social services. Recent advancements in brain research have enabled the real possibility of being able to map in detail and make legible the specific contents of people's thinking, their minds and their intentions, in *pre-emptive* and *predictive* ways (Rose, 2016). The political and financial imperatives here are connected to strategic directions in criminal justice, anti-terrorism and the military. But the applications and implications of these sorts of technologies have much wider reach, including redefining what we mean by 'human' (Rose, 2016). It presents the possibility of being able to 'read' the human mind not just a matter of theory, but of practice too (Rose, 2016). As Rose points out, none of this is particularly new—scientists have been attempting to get inside the human brain for over a century, from phrenology (now discredited) to X-rays, electroencephalography, infrared spectroscopy and, more recently, functional magnetic imagining (fMRI) (Rose, 2016); the latter of which generates around 100,000 publications per year (Rose, 2014). Much recent practice into child development, trauma theory and therapy (to limit to just these examples) is made possible by leveraging the voluminous neuroscience research literature that seeks to map and bring into the light brain functioning. In this sense, the pastoral is becoming neutral. When thinking about justice, we can ask who will be doing the reading and who will be read? What are the social and political implications of this technological and pharmacological incursion into the biopolitical administration of human beings?

A further problem with this is that knowledge generated in a laboratory focusing in on the cellular or molecular level is context independent. Practice that blindly follows this new science ignores all the context-dependent variables, making it less possible to raise questions, discuss, examine or intervene in social context situations (Wastell & White, 2012). For example, a fixation on trauma discourses make it difficult to have a robust conversation about poverty or austerity—it just does not feature when it is crowded out by discourses of neuroscience and social work. So, it is neither the utopian or dystopian visions about mind reading nor the 'Minority Report'

scenario that we should be concerned with. Rather, as Rose points out, it is the more mundane, ordinary and less obvious ways that these 'mutation[s] in ontology' (Rose, 2016, p. 159) become layered into existing social work practice modalities, subtly conditioning our shifting view of human beings, sidestepping important questions for social workers, such as what do we understand what it is to be human? What sort of social, economic and political questions should populate our thinking about social justice? What work should be done to integrate questions of rights, responsibility, ethics and privacy into new advancements of such forms of knowledge (Rose, 2014)?

Conclusion

Politics is increasingly concerned with managing life itself—reproduction, disease, family relations and population flows (Rose, 2001). As Rose (2001) cautions, enthusiasm for new biotechnologies, which are being patterned into health and welfare, gloss over the very real risks that such technologies—despite their supposed neutralities—may lead to increasingly divisive and coercive policies and practices. This is because biotechnologies have a tendency to individualise and essentialise human nature in ways that make contrasts between 'normal' and 'deviant' more profound, more stark and more likely that certain groups and individuals are subject to increasing levels of surveillance, regulation and control (Rose, 2001). Although we should not uncritically conflate the proclivity for human prejudice with an automatic descent into neo-Darwinist eugenics, we should not forget or lose sight of how biological determinism can take root in science, knowledge and policy in ways that can spill over into racism and eugenics (Murray, 1984). As pointed out by Sidanius and Pratto (1999), human beings have biological and psychological predispositions towards in-group loyalties, so these tendencies and prejudices are never far away (see chapter one, this volume). The nineteenth- and twentieth-century racist and eugenics movements were rooted in a biological account of human beings (Rose, 2001), and biological determinism and reductionism is inherent in a lot of twentieth-century sociological thinking too (Rose, 2009, p. 68). Even modern practices such as genetic counselling can sometimes (not always, of course) be cloaked in eugenic tendencies; for example, the recent forced sterilisation of women in Californian prisons is a good example of an extenuation of 'explicit and implicit eugenics programs in the United States' (Guenther, n.d., p. 2). The biological and evolved aspects of human beings are patterned and structured into social, cultural and political institutions. This may be understandable, even if it is problematic. But understanding this helps explain, in part, why we see, for example, ultra-right nationalistic movements so bent on protecting or preserving their sense of racial superiority, such as the proponents of the deeply flawed 'Great Replacement' argument, that suggest that white people in Europe are being 'replaced' by non-white foreigners. For social workers interested in social justice, an analysis of power/knowledge and a critical reflection on new developments in knowledge about human beings helps to keep in view a central critique of the lurking spectre of eugenics. It helps social workers work to arrest the threat of an

ugly biopolitics in politics and public policy. It helps social workers to surface and debate the problems associated with risk and prevention science, and to be mindful of the subtle domination of the pastoral. Finally, it helps social workers to critique and work against the increasing emphasis on individualisation, responsibilism, risk management and the radical neoliberalisation of human subjectivity.

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