

# Social Problems: A Critical Power-Conflict Perspective (5th Edition)

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## Use of Critical Consciousness in Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice: Disentangling Power Dynamics at Personal and Structural Levels

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### Summary

One of the limitations of anti-oppressive perspectives (AOPs) in social work is its lack of focus at a micro and individual level. AOPs should entail the social worker's addressing the needs and assets of service users, challenging the oppressive social structure and, most importantly, critically challenging the power dynamics in the service-provider/service-user relationship. Critical consciousness challenges social workers to be cognizant of power differentials and how these differentials may inadvertently make social-work practice an oppressive experience. The authors contend that critical consciousness fills in some of the gaps of AOPs, and argue for a fuller integration of critical consciousness into teaching and practice of AOPs. The methods to work toward critical consciousness, such as inter-group dialogues, agent-target distinctions and empowerment, are detailed.

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