



Trudy Askew – Multiple Identities

This Quiet Revolution

Building a Conceptual Framework for Everyday Restitution

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INTRODUCTION

The **everyday actions of individuals** have been shown to be one of the **key sites at which structural inequalities are enacted** and resisted, whether these be based on race, class, or gender, to name but a few (Essed, 2002)

In the **context of South Africa** where the colonial legacy of racism was transformed into the legalized, race based inequality of apartheid, with attendant physical and symbolic violence perpetuated (broadly speaking) by the white oppressors against the black oppressed.

This system was resisted and eventually ‘transformed’ during a ‘democratic revolution’, and there have been numerous state based attempts at **restitution or ‘making right the wrongs of the past’**.

However, 20 years after the first democratic election, inequality still largely cleaves along racial lines, and simmering **‘black anger and white obliviousness’** erupt regularly in the public and private spheres (Molefe, 2012)

It is in this context that I argue for the **necessity of ‘everyday restitution’** to be promoted and enacted where the **individual acts performed on an everyday basis should effect a more socially just society.**

CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

Feminisms

Recognises systems of social stratification and that these **link the personal and the structural.**

Recognises that **countering oppressions** must be read in **an intersectional** way – i.e. it’s not just about gender, its also about race, class and other structures that create inequality.

Recognises that **systems need to transform** in order for individuals lives to change, and that this can happen at the level of the individual (hooks, 2000).

Narrative Theory

Particular strands of narrative theory also recognise **the link between the personal and the structural.**

They claim that the stories we tell are shaped by the stories we’re mired in.

By examining where these ‘normative’ narratives come from, they **can be destabilised**, and we can start telling new stories, creating new possibilities. (Tamboukou, 2004)

Resistance Scholarship

In any system of oppression, there are also **systems of resistance.**

Systems of oppression are not static, they change with context and over time.

Resistances must be understood as complex, context and time dependent too (Heldke & O’Connor, 2003).

Social Justice

In order to take action to overcome systems of oppression, we **first have to see their impact.**

Once we **‘recognise’ the impact, we can take action to make change** (Juul, 2010)

Actions taken by individuals within communities and collectives are the most effective way of creating social change (Bornstein, 2004).

Everyday Restitution

Broadly defined as **‘making right the wrongs of the past’**.

Drawing on Swartz & Scott (2012) actors need to be operating from a more complex understanding of their positions than ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’.

Acts need to address the links between the personal and structural in the forms of the ‘elements of personhood’ – dignity, equality, opportunity, means, memory and citizenship.

These actions in the South African context could be seen as forms of **‘everyday restitution’**.