

## **Caitlin Audrey Janzen - Managing Compliance: Social work, governmentality and pharmaceuticals**

Social workers have long walked the halls of psychiatric institutions (Cohen, 1988). Historically, social work's knowledge base and aspirations to professionalism are tied to the legitimacy of the medical model. Simultaneously, the profession is under ever-mounting pressure to conform to a managerial paradigm, which espouses evidence-based practice and presumes objectively measurable competency. I found myself operating at the juncture of these two interrelated discourses and have witnessed the insidious presence of pharmaceuticals in the prevailing practices of behaviour modification and emotional regulation. This paper explored how social work practices transform us into 'compliance technicians', managing the medication regimens of youth established through the psychiatric encounter. A productive path of theorizing power and practices of authority is through the lens of governmentality. Foucault's (1981) description of government goes beyond state politics referring to the vast network of institutions, agencies and experts with various knowledges and practices that shape the behaviours, wants and needs of citizens. I argued that wealthy pharmaceutical corporations, with their political influence, exemption from law and expansion into our daily lives, constitute an institution within the network. Within this system, social workers function as arms of the state, policing the boundaries between normal and abnormality (Donzelot, 1997). Here I explored how social workers engage in practices of normalization and management through their often unquestioned support of pharmaceuticals. This analysis is made more germane by caseloads that reflect disproportionately high representation of marginalized populations, those marked by race, gender, class and age. I concluded with questions about the presence of social work in advocacy and resistance roles in an increasingly medicated world. If we continue our path as 'compliance technicians' who hold the word of consulting psychiatrists as sacrosanct, social workers run the risk of becoming brokers for the pharmaceutical industry.