**The Function of Historical Research in Social Work**


Publisher summary: “What, exactly, was the Charity Organization Society? Was it a cluster of affluent women imposing their moral propriety on the poor in the early 20th century? Or was it the first concerted effort to professionalize previously random, subjective allocations of benefits and entitlements? This book is a guide to the systematic exploration of such questions and debates in social work and social welfare history. Mastering how to pose historical questions is as essential as finding the answers. This book offers practical research tools: how to design a study, select primary sources, understand the vocabulary of archives, determine useful secondary sources, and analyze them all. The book also features a directory of archives and special collections that details their holdings, access and locations, and research grants.”


This study addresses the incidence, persistence, decline, and marginalization of historical research in social work by examining one indicator of that research, social work dissertations. This study reveals that despite the dominance of other research methods, historical research was a legitimate method for doctoral research in social work, but its use has declined over time. Before World War II, historical dissertations were common. Through the 1950s almost 13% of all social work dissertations were historical. In the 1960s and 1970s interest in history as a research method declined, but social welfare history was still a legitimate option for doctoral research. By the 1990s historical research in social work dissertations was almost non-existent. The current state of historical research seems terribly myopic, especially given developments in other social science disciplines and challenges to contemporary social work research.
Quote from text (p. 493): "History’s principal contribution to social work is to provide context to our understanding, greater depth and breadth to what we know, and assistance in further sharpening those questions we pose for analysis. To these ends, as this chapter also points out, history can be an emancipatory tool for social workers and for peoples affected by social issues of interest to our profession. The chapter presents an abbreviated overview of the range of historical issues of interest to social workers that have been examined to date, commonly referred to as social welfare history. Next, it briefly considers major points of methodology, substance, and several fallacies that may impede effective research. A historical case example, elaborating history’s potential as a social change agent, follows. A short concluding section considers the future of historical research relevant to social work."

**Black Contributions to Mutual Aid, Social Welfare, and Social Work History**


Publisher summary: "When a domestic servant named Violet Johnson moved to the affluent white suburb of Summit, New Jersey in 1897, she became one of just barely a hundred black residents in the town of six thousand. In this avowedly liberal Protestant community, the very definition of "the suburbs" depended on observance of unmarked and fluctuating race and class barriers. But Johnson did not intend to accept the status quo. Establishing a Baptist church a year later, a seemingly moderate act that would have implications far beyond weekly worship, Johnson challenged assumptions of gender and race, advocating for a politics of civic righteousness that would grant African Americans an equal place in a Christian nation. Johnson’s story is powerful, but she was just one among the many working-class activists integral to the budding days of the civil rights movement. In Black Women’s Christian Activism, Betty Livingston Adams examines the oft overlooked role of non-elite black women in the growth of northern suburbs and American Protestantism in the first half of the twentieth century. Focusing on the strategies and organizational models church women employed in the fight for social justice, Adams tracks the intersections of politics and religion, race and gender, and place and space in a New York City suburb, a local example that offers new insights on northern racial oppression and civil rights protest. As this book makes clear, religion made a key difference in the lives and activism of ordinary black women who lived, worked, and worshiped on the margin during this tumultuous time."


Publisher summary: "A leading African American intellectual of the early twentieth century, Eugene Kinckle Jones (1885–1954) was instrumental in professionalizing black social work in America. In his role as executive secretary of the National Urban League, Jones worked closely with social reformers who advocated on behalf of African Americans and against racial discrimination in the United States. Coinciding with the Great Migration of African Americans to northern urban centers in the early twentieth century, Jones’s activities on behalf of the Urban League included campaigning for equal hiring practices, advocating for the inclusion of black workers in labor unions, and promoting the importance of vocational training and social work for members of the black community. Drawing on rich interviews with Jones’s colleagues and associates, as well as recently opened family and Urban League papers, Felix L. Armfield freshly examines the growth of African American communities and the roles of social workers concerned with acculturative processes, social change, and racial uplift. In calling attention to the need for black social workers in the midst of the Great Migration, Jones and his Urban League colleagues sought to address problems stemming from race and class conflicts from within the community. Bringing together new biographical elements of a significant black leader, as well as an in-depth discussion of the roles of black institutions and organizations, this book studies the evolution of African American life immediately before the civil rights era."


Fisk University began the genesis of HBCU graduate programs in 1880. During the next fifty years, several other HBCUs established graduate programs. That group included Lincoln, Howard, and Morgan State. However, only Lincoln University established a PhD program. The primary goal of this paper is to provide a historical perspective regarding the development of social work doctoral degree programs in the context of HBCU graduate degree program development. Although HBCU
social work doctoral programs have only existed since 1978, they are significant and growing academic enterprises which are expanding the pool of doctoral level social work experts and professors of color. Further, these programs should be viewed contextually as producers of scholars on the larger landscape of the academy.


The contributions of African-Americans have been omitted from social work. This paper notes selected pioneer black women who can be ranked with such white pioneers as Dorothea Dix or Mary Richmond. Katy Ferguson and Cynthia Lugenia Burns Hope were exciting contributors in meeting the health, education, and welfare needs of African-Americans and others. They were innovative in their approach—spanning the free and slave communities of the black experience. Black women were movers, shakers, and ground breakers in developing the dual system of social welfare. They should be included in courses of history/policy, methods, human behavior, and research, and there should be courses on African-American women. They have been on the leading edge in individual and institutional responses to human needs. Ignoring their myriad contributions is indeed a sin.


Forrester Blanchard Washington (1887–1963) was an African American social work pioneer recruited to the first New Deal administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as director of Negro Work in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. This role gave Washington a platform from which to object strenuously to the development of social policies that were predisposing African Americans to chronic dependence on welfare programs instead of creating equal opportunities for employment. Washington’s policy analysis and recommendations represent social work’s advocacy for equal employment opportunity long before the related civil rights legislation was enacted in the 1960s. An analysis is offered to explain Washington’s decision to abort his federal career when the political agenda of the Roosevelt administration began to conflict with his values and professional goals. His actions are exemplary of resignation in protest—an aspect of advocacy that is often discussed than used. This article is based on Washington’s writings and materials found in the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland.


Forrester Blanchard Washington was a visionary African American social worker who led the Atlanta (University) School of Social Work from 1927 to 1954. He sought to transform the social-welfare conditions in the South through developing a much-needed educational institution to train African American social workers. Despite the oppressive and racist environment in which he worked and the compromises he had to make in his vision for the school, his legacy lives on in the continued viability of the Whitney M. Young School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University, which will celebrate its 88th anniversary in 2008.


With the possible exception of churches, fraternal societies were the leading providers of social welfare in the United States before the Great Depression. Their membership reached an estimated 50 percent of the adult male population and they were especially strong among immigrants and African Americans. Unlike the adversarial relationships engendered by governmental welfare programs and private charity, fraternal social welfare rested on a foundation of reciprocity between donor and recipient. By the 1920s, fraternal societies and other mutual aid institutions had entered a period of decline from which they never recovered. The many possible reasons for this decline included the rise of the welfare state, restrictive state insurance regulation, and competition from private insurers.


Publisher summary: “The Black Power movement has often been portrayed in history and popular culture as the quintessential “bad boy” of modern black movement-making in America. Yet this impression misses the full extent of Black Power’s contributions to U.S. society, especially in regard to black professionals in social work. Relying on extensive archival research and oral history interviews, Joyce M. Bell follows two groups of black social workers in the 1960s and...
1970s as they mobilized Black Power ideas, strategies, and tactics to change their national professional associations. Comparing black dissenters within the National Federation of Settlements (NFS), who fought for concessions from within their organization, and those within the National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW), who ultimately adopted a separatist strategy, she shows how the Black Power influence was central to the creation and rise of black professional associations. She also provides a nuanced approach to studying race-based movements and offers a framework for understanding the role of social movements in shaping the non-state organizations of civil society.”


In order to respond to concomitant factors that impact members of the extensive African Diasporic community, African-centered theory/Afrocentricity warrants elevation in the social work literature and scientific inquiry. In preparing for this special journal issue, the editors recognized the dearth of scholarship advancing this critical perspective in social work. This special issue provides information on both philosophical and conceptual thinking about African-centered social work to respond to the current challenges facing these communities. The only academic social work entity entirely devoted to furthering African-centered pedagogy is the Academy for African-centered Social Work of the National Association of Black Social Workers. A primary goal of the Academy is to expand the influence and institutionalization of African-centered social work practice, education, and research. This special issue launches another intercommunicative and inter-educational medium of approaches of this theory to the broader social work community. This introduction provides an overview of African-centered social work, discusses its empirical base, and projects the importance of further examination in the academic literature and practice community.


Social work and social welfare have historically operated from a Black perspective in understanding problems, identifying structural inequities, and designing social services for the Black community. Obviously there is no singular Black perspective, but a diversity of models promulgated by diverse players for meeting the community’s needs. Often marginalized, the practice models discussed herein provide divergent approaches and illustrate the critical roles that the Black perspective played in shaping the evolution of the social work profession.


Publisher summary: “In 1973 Marcia Lowry, a young civil liberties attorney, filed a controversial class-action suit that would come to be known as Wilder, which challenged New York City’s operation of its foster-care system. Lowry’s contention was that the system failed the children it was meant to help because it placed them according to creed and convenience, not according to need. The plaintiff was thirteen-year-old Shirley Wilder, an abused runaway whose childhood had been shaped by the system’s inequities. Within a year Shirley would give birth to a son and relinquish him to the same failing system. Seventeen years later, with Wilder still controversial and still in court, Nina Bernstein tried to find out what had happened to Shirley and her baby. She was told by child-welfare officials that Shirley had disappeared and that her son was one of thousands of anonymous children whose circumstances are concealed by the veil of confidentiality that hides foster care from public scrutiny. But Bernstein persevered. The Lost Children of Wilder gives us, in galvanizing and compulsively readable detail, the full history of a case that reveals the racial, religious, and political fault lines in our child-welfare system, and lays bare the fundamental contradiction at the heart of our well-intended efforts to sever the destiny of needy children from the fate of their parents. Bernstein takes us behind the scenes of far-reaching legal and legislative battles, at the same time as she traces, in heartbreaking counterpoint, the consequences as they are played out in the life of Shirley’s son, Lamont. His terrifying journey through the system has produced a man with deep emotional wounds, a stifled yearning for family, and a son growing up in the system’s shadow. In recounting the failure of the promise of benevolence, The Lost Children of Wilder makes clear how welfare reform can also damage its intended beneficiaries. A landmark achievement of investigative reporting and a tour de force of social observation, this book will haunt every reader who cares about the needs of children.”

The study surveyed a national sample of 100 African American master of social work graduates to retroactively assess perceived diversity content in Human Behavior courses before and after the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) established accreditation standards on diversity. Seventy-one percent of the respondents were females, the mean age was 45.8 years, and their graduation years ranged from 1958 to 2002. Most graduated from northeastern schools (34%), followed by midwestern (28%), southeastern (22%), northwestern (11%), and southwestern (5%) schools. Investigators used the Preparation for Graduate Education Social Work Education Scale and the Human Behavior Survey Addendum (alpha = .97). There were no statistically significant differences on diversity content scores for participants enrolled before and after CSWE diversity standards were established, but graduates of historically Black colleges gave higher diversity content scores in every area. Study includes discussion and implications for Afrocentric theory and the need to prepare practitioners for future social work careers in multicultural communities.


Keeping in step with our academic fore-parents, the authors have intentionally utilized the historical documents of Black scholars as historical markers to center the Black strengths perspective as it emerged through the voice of a new group of Black scholars during the 1960s. This scholarship is further institutionalized through the founding of The National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc. and in social work programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Lastly, we explore how the Black strength perspective expanded the critical lens of social work research and pushed for a culturally-informed curriculum as praxis of social work education.


Dr. Isabel Burns Lindsay (1900-1983), founding dean of the Howard University School of Social Work, was an early proponent for the consideration of race and culture in social work education and practice with racial and ethnic minorities. Using primary and secondary data sources, the authors trace the evolution of Dr. Lindsay’s thinking on the role of race, class, gender and ethnicity in the helping process and finally her development of a socio-cultural perspective. Particular attention is given to her persistent efforts to disseminate this information and incorporate it into the curriculum of the Howard University School of Social Work decades before the ideas were embraced by the profession as a whole. As a pioneer in the struggle for social justice, Dr. Lindsay’s philosophy on social work education and practice with racial and ethnic minorities informs contemporary social work practice approaches.


Black welfare workers in the South had limited opportunities for professional social work education and development. In 1926, annual public welfare institutes for Blacks were sponsored by the North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare through its Division of Work Among Negroes. They filled a critical educational and professional void. For twenty years, these annual institutes bolstered the knowledge and skills of a growing corp of Black welfare workers and the maturation of the profession in North Carolina.


This paper highlights the career of Dr. George Edmund Haynes, a pioneer sociologist and social worker. It places Haynes in a historical context examining his professional contributions during the early 1900s. Haynes’ professional activities reflected the Progressive Era’s emphasis on scientific research and social justice. Although he received some recognition as a sociologist and social worker, his contributions were relegated generally to the periphery of both the discipline of sociology and the field of social work.


This paper discusses the development of old folks’ homes for Blacks during the Progressive Era. Churches, women’s clubs, and secret societies played a major role in the development, funding, and operation of these institutions. These groups adhered to the doctrine of self-help and group solidarity which provided impetus for their charitable activities. The
members of these organizations believed that leaving “worthy” indigent Black aged to live out their last years in almshouses was cruel and intolerable. This paper highlights some of the efforts and many of the homes that were established for the Black aged through the cooperation and material support of Black churches, women’s clubs, and secret societies.


Collectively, the authors in this special issue provide information that encourages social workers to understand, accept, and appreciate the legacy of African-American leadership in social welfare history. Furthermore, they ask that the reader use this content as a model for social change and as a springboard for further research.


This article tells the story of Birdye Henrietta Haynes (1886-1922), a little-known black social welfare pioneer. Haynes was the first black to graduate from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. She was the head worker at two of the most prominent social settlements for blacks in Chicago and later in New York. Racism and segregation placed strict limitations on what Haynes was able to accomplish during her social work career. This article gives special attention to Haynes’s interaction, participation, and advocacy as a “race woman” and examines her relationships with some of the most prominent social welfare reformers of the Progressive Era.


The National Urban League (NUL), under Dr. George Edmund Haynes’ leadership made the training and education of African American social workers one of its major functions during the early 1900s. This article provides detailed information about the unique and timely fellowship program which provided funding and opportunities for many African American to study social work at leading schools of social work in the country. The Social Science Department of Fisk University also played a significant role in pioneering African American social work education, and is also briefly discussed.


The contributing authors use a new lens for understanding social welfare history and social service development. They encourage social workers to explore new model-building and to pursue new knowledge about African Americans in the social work classroom. In addition to tracing the history of community development, African American Community Practice Models specifically: presents the black community from a position of strength and leadership; documents leadership in the black community to ground national advocacy organizations; traces women’s leadership in community development; documents the unrecognized history of African Americans in the development of the Settlement Movement; highlights examples of current self-help programs sponsored by African American communities to change negative behavior patterns; documents the impact of racism on service delivery and the response to develop community support programs; and presents a challenge to expand community development for both internal and external advocacy.


This article discusses the fundamental values and principles that guided African American social work practice at the beginning of the century. The elements and dimensions that were a significant part of this practice repertoire are also discussed. As African Americans claimed their place among social work pioneers, the primacy of their mission improved the collective social functioning of their communities. For these pioneers social work was both “cause and function.” Their legacy is a strength-based practice model on which contemporary scholars and practitioners can build.

Publisher summary: “For far too long, the huge contribution of African Americans to the social work profession has been relegated to little more than a footnote. The truth is, these forward-thinking individuals enhanced the quality of life within and outside their communities for generations. Their stories have never been told. Until now. Sixteen painstakingly researched chapters, written by social workers, highlight the distinct roles of African American social work pioneers from the 1890s through the 1940s. The book discusses the birth of social welfare activities, both informal and formal, and introduces founding members of organizations such as the National Urban League and the National Association of Colored Women. Written from a social work perspective and framed within a historical context, these profiles and their accompanying lessons help today’s practitioner make the connection to current issues.”


This article traces the historical development of informal and, to a lesser extent, formal health caregiving among African American women from slavery to the Great Depression. “Sitting with the sick,” a metaphor for myriad services, including preparing meals for, housekeeping for, feeding, bathing, and generally visiting with people who are mentally or physically ill, injured, or grieving, has been an important aspect of social support among African American women for centuries. Implications are presented for practice and ways to enhance the health caregiving role using the historical record as a guide.


This article focuses on the mechanisms that African American women used during the Progressive Era to meet the needs of young African American women and girls. It identifies some of the early reform women and describes the girls and women who were the recipients of their beneficence. Attention is also given to specific strategies that were implemented by service organizations and groups, such as women’s clubs, sororities, schools, and settlement houses.


Quote from text (p. 1): “There is a rich and deep-rooted history of black philanthropy in this country dating back to colonial days. Humanitarian activity by blacks on behalf of their own communities has been central to their traditions and even their survival for more than two hundred years. Indeed, a number of today’s black charitable organizations trace their ancestry back to the colonial period. The ends pursued by black philanthropic organizations and the means employed to achieve them have much in common with those of these institutions’ white counterparts. However, the unique situation of blacks in America has also continued to pose separate issues for black philanthropy and to give it a distinctive character. The purpose of this extended essay is not to provide a comprehensive chronology of the history of black philanthropy in America; such an undertaking, while clearly worthwhile, is far beyond the scope of this research effort. Rather, the purpose is to discuss some of the key developments, events, and institutions in this rich history, and thus to shed light on the shape and thrust of black philanthropy today through an examination of some of the historical, philosophical, and social forces that have given rise to it.”


Editor Comment: Susan Kerr Chandler’s essay is a poignant analysis of the Young Men’s Christian Association’s (YMCA) early treatment of African-Americans and of its adherence to a strict color line. Chandler presents us with the paradox of an organization that based its existence on the tenets of Christian love and brotherhood, yet simultaneously used cajolery, manipulation, money, and even threats of bodily harm to establish and maintain strict segregation of the races.


Social work values require its educators to teach a history that represents diversity and inclusion, yet its history routinely omits the contributions of pioneering social workers of color. This omission promotes White hegemony as characterized by the emphasis on White reformers in the American settlement movement and the exclusion of Black social workers and activists. Using critical race theory, this article posits the need to dismantle White hegemony by examining the American settlement movement and the parallel settlement movement as a counter response by Black social workers, specifically, an unrecognized Black social worker of the 1930s, W. Gertrude Brown. This recognition portends the need for social work to critique its ahistorical perspective and per chance to rewrite its history.

This essay explores the relationship between social workers and blacks in Chicago between 1900 and 1920. In a city peopled by some thirty different nationalities, leading social workers discovered many similarities between poor blacks and poor immigrants, but they were impressed as well by the unique problems faced by black people because of racial discrimination. Both the charity and settlement wings of social work sought to discover in these years the place of blacks in a pluralistic society.

Social work purports to be a caring profession aimed at meeting the needs of its clients. But this is not the case for black people. Whether they enter the social work arena as clients, employees, or students, black people experience negative treatment. They are under-represented as users of welfare services, but are over-represented in penal institutions. The subtle dynamics of personal, institutional and cultural racism permeate the routine minutiae of social work policy and practice and these, combined with the strategies white social workers utilise to avoid the tricky task of confronting racism in their work, mean that black people’s needs receive short shrift. White social workers respond to black people’s needs in this contradictory manner because their belief that black communities ‘look after their own’ enables them to exclude black people from having access to welfare services whilst their preoccupation with black people’s deviancy facilitates their admitting black people to establishments where such pathological behaviour can be controlled. This article examines the interplay between racism and social work and concludes that white social work educators, white social workers and their managers must engage in change at the personal, institutional and cultural levels if racist social work policy and practice are to be eradicated and black people’s needs met.

Publisher summary: “Decades before the 1960s, social reformers began planting the seeds for the Modern Civil Rights era. During the period spanning World Wars I and II, St. Louis, Missouri, was home to a dynamic group of African American social welfare reformers. The city’s history and culture were shaped both by those who would construct it as a southern city and by the heirs of New England abolitionism. Allying with white liberals to promote the era’s new emphasis on ‘the common good,’ black reformers confronted racial segregation and its consequences of inequality and, in doing so, helped to determine the gradual change in public policy that led to a more inclusive social order. In Groping toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910-1949, historian Priscilla A. Dowden-White presents an on-the-ground view of local institution building and community organizing campaigns initiated by African American social welfare reformers. Through extensive research, the author places African American social welfare reform efforts within the vanguard of interwar community and neighborhood organization, reaching beyond the ‘racial uplift’ and ‘behavior’ models of the studies preceding hers. She explores one of the era’s chief organizing principles, the ‘community as a whole’ idea, and deliberates on its relationship to segregation and the St. Louis black community’s methods of reform. Groping toward Democracy depicts the dilemmas organizers faced in this segregated time, explaining how they pursued the goal of full, uncontested black citizenship while still seeking to maximize the benefits available to African Americans in segregated institutions. The book’s nuanced mapping of the terrain of social welfare offers an unparalleled view of the progress...
brought forth by the early-twentieth-century crusade for democracy and equality. By delving into interrelated developments in health care, education, labor, and city planning, Dowden-White deftly examines St. Louis’s African American interwar history. Her in-depth archival research fills a void in the scholarship of St. Louis’s social development, and her compelling arguments will be of great interest to scholars and teachers of American urban studies and social welfare history.”


Publisher summary: “The Black Panther Party represents Black Panther Party members’ coordinated responses over the last four decades to the failure of city, state, and federal bureaucrats to address the basic needs of their respective communities. The Party pioneered free social service programs that are now in the mainstream of American life. The Party’s Sickle Cell Anemia Research Foundation, operated with Oakland’s Children’s Hospital, was among the nation’s first such testing programs. Its Free Breakfast Program served as a model for national programs. Other initiatives included free clinics, grocery giveaways, school and education programs, senior programs, and legal aid programs. Published here for the first time in book form, The Black Panther Party makes the case that the programs’ methods are viable models for addressing the persistent, basic social injustices and economic problems of today’s American cities and suburbs.”


As a profession social work has sought the harmonious integration of man and his social institutions and realignment of these institutions for the betterment of man. The Proceedings therefore reflect the cultural lag in this society as few primary sources do. It is not far amiss to view the Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work as the “written conscience of America.” It is for the above reasons that the present author chose these volumes as the sole source for his research into the subject of “Changing Methods of Social Work Toward Negroes.”


My comment: E. Franklin Frazier led a round table on the education of Black social workers. Frazier made 8 key points: (1) the demand for Black social workers was high due to the Great Migration; (2) the number of available Black students was low due to financial strain; (3) he could help address this issue since he had experience recruiting Black students as the director of the Atlanta School of Social Work; (4) there were a number of places to recruit potential Black students from; (5) institutes and apprenticeships would not work; (6) it made more financial sense for Black colleges to send their Black graduates to professional schools than to start their own; (7) the admission standards for Black students should be the same for White students; and (8) scholarships could help support Black social work students.


The nature and extent of the contributions of Black people to social work education during the early twentieth century is the focus of this paper. The scope of this investigation includes: the identification of prominent Black social work educators; analysis of the curricula and the Atlanta School of Social Work and the Bishop Turtle School; and a description of the four basic approaches to social work training for Black people during this development phase of the social work profession.


Quote from text (p. 16): "Does social work as a profession provide adequate concepts for understanding the problems and social realities of oppressed communities? Are social services and programs in oppressed communities designed to meet their survival needs and liberation goals? If not, in what direction ought the profession move if it is to become a liberating force in oppressed communities? This essay, in response to these questions, offers a model for social work practice in the
black community which proceeds from an expanded definition of the goals of the profession. Neo-colonialism, survival and liberation are the principal conceptual components. Neo-colonialism is used for analysis and understanding of social, economic and political realities of the oppressed community. Survival provides a way of perceiving needs and a framework for the design and provision of social services. Liberation is viewed as a phase in a larger movement for social and economic justice which requires a diverse range of strategies and practitioner roles directed toward the ultimate goal of “being.”


This article describes Dr. Inabel Burns Lindsay’s leadership as the founding dean at Howard University School of Social Work during her 30 years of service from 1937 to 1967. It chronicles her efforts to build the School as well as her efforts to highlight social injustices of the time. Her lifelong efforts promoted the inclusion of African American social workers in the workforce and the need to understand sociocultural factors in working with different ethnic and racial groups. As a female dean, Dr. Lindsay was an avid promoter of social justice and a prolific writer and speaker on the topic. This article introduces the reader to this under-recognized social work pioneer, with emphases on the challenges of her time and her leadership style.


Social work education has had a chequered history in its attempts to address racism within the profession. The demise of anti-racist social work over the past decade raises important questions concerning its place and future within social work education. This paper re-examines the contours of anti-racist social work to explore the connections between anti-racist social work and African-centred worldviews. The author argues that sources of oppression are not confined to social work institutions and its operations, but also relate to the nature of social work knowledge. The existing parameters of anti-racist social work do not adequately challenge hegemony within social work knowledge itself. Thereby, this incongruity serves to support a hidden source of cultural oppression by negating the legitimacy and validation of alternative worldviews. The inclusion of alternative worldviews enables social work to maximise its ability to actualise humanitarian goals to offer a truly multi-cultural and anti-oppressive curriculum. Moreover, the validation of non-hegemonic ways of knowing ensures the profession’s participation in its commitment to equality and social justice.


Research data continue to indicate that black communities are disproportionately represented across social welfare statistics. The Macpherson Report (1999) considered the impact of institutional racism and the various ways in which these contingencies affect the life chances of black families and individuals. Black community-based organizations have responded to these challenges through culturally constructed interpretative frameworks in shaping and defining social welfare activities. Through a critical reading of cultural elements and products they have utilized cultural knowledge as a source and means of empowerment. These are important sites of empowerment that reject deficit approaches to embrace culturally affirming models located in cultural knowledge and lived experiences. In this way, black communities have engaged in an active process of revitalization, cultural renewal and regeneration. This article explores models of social welfare in black community-based organizations and draws on a research study conducted by the author, which examines the role and saliency of cultural knowledge in shaping social welfare delivery. Research findings reveal the ways in which black agency is sometimes located in culturally constructed ways to reflect on daily lives and experiences. Cultural knowledge acted as a vehicle in framing action-orientated communal strategies for social and educational change.


The struggles of black communities in Britain are well established in modes of empowerment that shape and direct their social welfare activities. This legacy of empowerment continues to be expressed in social action orientated strategies found in many black community based groups and organisations. The introduction of anti-racist and multicultural approaches in the empowerment process has been useful in highlighting the ways in which black communities have been disempowered through social work policies and practice. However, the experiences, values and interpretations instituted by black
communities themselves are often marginalised in the public realm. These considerations draw attention to the ways in which empowerment is largely defined by professionals and policy makers who have considerable influence in shaping and directing the life chances of black families and communities. These insights provide important ways to address marginalisation through publicly affirming and recognising the specific experiences, cultures, social realities and contributions of black communities. This paper examines concepts of empowerment in social work and maintains that the profession has ignored black communities’ interpretations, cultural antecedents, experiences and values as a source of new perspectives and ideas for practice. These new approaches can assist social workers and policymakers in responding to the changing needs of black communities.


This paper aims to focus on the politics of exclusion by opening up a debate about black perspectives in social work and articulates a comparative assessment between the UK and USA which includes contributions from social and political theory, particularly the ‘politics of recognition’. The paper begins by mapping the territory denoted in the growth of ‘studies’ in sociology and academia. Following these discussions, I review criticisms and possibilities of anti-racist social work and black perspectives to argue that in the British context, the dilution of anti-racist social work into a discriminatory practice framework undermined the place of black perspectives in social work education. In the next section, a reframing of black perspectives is envisaged with implications for social work learning and practice. By attending to these issues, social work learning and practice can support a more inclusive approach to professional knowledge which recognizes changing patterns of social life, complexity and multiple perspectives.


Quote from text (p. 104): “My concern in this article centers on the core principles of social work—social justice, equality and self-determination—essential ingredients of all social work interventions, yet values which, it is argued, cannot be actualized when the social work knowledge base is dominated by a Eurocentric worldview.”


This article raises concerns about the ethnocentric nature of existing paradigms within the social sciences that form the basis for social work theory and practice with Wack families and children. In addition, it highlights the theoretical deficits within existing social work models that do not reflect the worldviews of diverse communities in British society. Can existing social work models continue to express ethnocentric value systems as the universal way to explain human behaviour in the light of growing demands for pluralism not only between groups but also between epistemologies and worldviews? The author argues for an alternative paradigm that is grounded in the cultural and historical reality of the black experience. A broad base of information and discussion of the African-centred worldview and the development of African-centred perspectives in social work is explored. African-centred perspectives in social work challenge the profession to express its core principles of equality, social justice and self-determination in embracing alternative worldviews and paradigms as legitimate and valid bases for social work theory and practice.


Publisher summary: “This book chronicles the complex connections between race and class that have marked American social reform since the New Deal, revealing an aspect of the civil rights struggle that has been too long overlooked or obscured: the struggle for policies to expand social and economic welfare for blacks and whites alike.”


A discussion of The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA & ACL) founded by Marcus Garvey in 1915 is presented. The organization provided social services for people of African ancestry in both the U.S. and other countries as well. An analysis of this organization occurs, citing the functions of subgroups like the Universal African Legions and the Universal African Motor Corps. This organization serves as a historic model for
contemporary community development.


Atlanta University, W.E.B. Du Bois, and professional social work education are forever linked in social thought, social reform, and progressive thinking that served African Americans. As a nascent profession in the first half of the 20th century, social work in the South navigated existing racialized customs and laws that required dual systems. The Atlanta School would become the first professional School of Social Work in the deep South and the first to address the needs of a black professional social work workforce in the region. Implication of this School’s emergence and its role in contributing to innovations in strength perspective, critical race theory, spirituality, empowerment, and research in social work education will be discussed.


Movement toward professional social work and its delivery in the South began to develop at Atlanta University through its social science departments and school of social work and utilizing the city of Atlanta as its sociological laboratory. Prior to the early 1900s the delivery of social services was handled by churches and “friendly visitors” from charitable and civic organizations. However, dramatic and shifting changes in the United States economy, immigration, and social disparities fueled a need to develop a safety net for those most vulnerable and handled through trained professionals. At the beginning of the 20th century, the case of Atlanta is unique, as it specifically emerged to address the needful African American population and not European immigrants. The leadership for the social service response came from the Black intelligencia, especially W.E.B. Du Bois and other scholars from Atlanta University. Atlanta University, W.E.B. Du Bois, and professional social service work are forever linked in social thought, social reform, and progressive thinking that served African Americans. Through the use of archival research, implications regarding the profession of social work and other important social service developments will be discussed.


Due to the failure of the mainstream American settlement house movement to assist Blacks moving to cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a parallel movement was developed by Black female activists and reformers. As a historically oppressed group, African Americans used nonconfrontational strategies to fight for racial uplift and equal rights. This article posits that Black settlement houses provided a propitious environment for culturally based empowerment initiatives that contributed to the development of oppositional consciousness in the Black community. The article examines how Black female leaders’ activism was influenced by the extent of social control the settlement houses were subject to. It argues that the culture of resistance developed in Black settlement houses foreshadowed and contributed to subsequent social movements in the African American community.


Notes from NABSW website: Also published as “That rare moment in history: A documented history of the formation of the National Association of Black Social Workers” (Volumes I & II). Website summary: “Synopsis: Volume I (sub-title) A Documentary History of the Formation of the National Association of Black Social Workers. This volume covers, in some detail, the first four years of the organization. Included are the programs and participants in the first three national conferences. The Position Statement presented to the NCSW Conference which initiated a walk out from the conference and the formation of NABSW while gathered in Glide Memorial Church in May 1968 Our National Conferences followed in Philadelphia 1969, Washington D C 1970 and Chicago 1971. Volume II (sub-title) The Future of NABSW: Peril or Progress. This volume picks up the history of the organization in 1972 with the 4th Conference in Nashville Tennessee, and what the author sees as pivotal in the next National Conference in New York in 1973. The Author plays a limited role the national organization after 1973 but is active locally. At the time of the 37th National Conference Some Founders of the organization are asked to speak about the Motivations behind the need to form NABSW (Young Black Social Workers were
The following report is an account of the largely untold early history of racially segregated southern schools of social work prior to the 1964 Civil Right Act, and the responses of faculty to racial discrimination in their host universities. This report covers five schools of social work which sought to obtain or received their initial and/or sustaining funding from the philanthropies established by the Rockefeller family. Those schools were located in New Orleans, Atlanta, Chapel Hill (North Carolina), St. Louis, and Nashville.

Publisher summary: “Professing a policy of cultural and social integration, the American settlement house movement made early progress in helping immigrants adjust to life in American cities. However, when African Americans migrating from the rural South in the early twentieth century began to replace white immigrants in settlement environs, most houses failed to redirect their efforts toward their new neighbors. Nationally, the movement did not take a concerted stand on the issue of race until after World War II. In Black Neighbors, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn analyzes this reluctance of the mainstream settlement house movement to extend its programs to African American communities, which, she argues, were assisted instead by a variety of alternative organizations. Lasch-Quinn recasts the traditional definitions, periods, and regional divisions of settlement work and uncovers a vast settlement movement among African Americans. By placing community work conducted by the YWCA, black women’s clubs, religious missions, southern industrial schools, and other organizations within the settlement tradition, she highlights their significance as well as the mainstream movement’s failure to recognize the enormous potential in alliances with these groups. Her analysis fundamentally revises our understanding of the role that race has played in American social reform.”


Examining Black church support of higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this article highlights the longstanding project of African-American self-determination. Motivated donors, many of who would not in their lifetime see the fruits of their gifts, made faithful investments in the project of racial uplift. Concurrent with this, college-educated Black were given the additional charge of becoming leaders in these efforts. Using the Atlanta University Studies and historical newspaper accounts, this article explores the deep roots of Black leadership in higher-education philanthropy and concludes with recommendations for current historically Black colleges and university (HBCU) development officers.


Quote from text (p. 31): "In the rhetoric of today’s social philosophy, racism is an ugly word. We are aware that racism reflects itself in prejudice, discrimination, separation and even genocide, and we feel that these are against the values which we would like to perpetuate as a nation. We condemn racism, yet many of us do not fully understand what it is and how it operates within our society and especially within our own social work educational settings.”


Maggie Lena Walker arose from humble beginnings as the daughter of an ex-slave to become a prominent banker, entrepreneur, and community leader in the American state of Virginia in the early 1900s. She was the first African American woman in the United States to establish and lead a bank. In addition, Walker played a principal leadership role in a major African American mutual aid social service organization: the Independent Order of St. Luke. In this article, we investigate the historic emergence of intersectional leadership by exploring Walker’s leader identity development as Grand Secretary-Treasurer of the Independent Order of St. Luke. The method that we apply to the Walker case is intersectional microhistory, which is the study of unique social actors and the intersections of their gender, race, and other social categories as they change over time. We use our intersectional microhistory approach to unpack phenomenon of emerging intersectional leadership, offering deeper insights about the oppressive and multi-layered barriers that Maggie Walker surmounted as a black woman in order to effectively function as an acknowledged leader of the Independent Order of St. Luke.


Publisher summary: "In the black helping tradition, spirituality is the sense of the sacred and divine. It is a critical value deeply rooted in the African worldview and used by African Americans as a tool for survival. Provocative and well-written, Spirituality and the Black Helping Tradition in Social Work is the first book to draw a relationship between social work,
spirituality, and the helping tradition among African Americans. Offering a wealth of historical detail and narrative, Elmer and Joanne Martin explore spirituality as a foundation for understanding people of African descent and as a skill to evoke self-help. This groundbreaking book raises compelling questions about the limitations and strengths of mainstream social work in issues of black spirituality and its role in strengthening the black community today.”


Publisher summary: “Written in the African tradition of collaboration, Social Work and the Black Experience is the first book to incorporate the rich black spiritual and blues traditions for use in work with black individuals and families. The authors build on three concepts: moaning - black pain and grief; mourning - a collective effort to overcome grief; and morning - a new beginning. Students, faculty, and practitioners will find this an extraordinarily moving and useful reference. Special Features: Portrays the experiences of pioneer black social workers in the early 1940s; Focuses on the helping traditions of black people during the ‘Great Migration.’”


Publisher summary: “Readers will learn the evolution of the helping tradition from traditional Africa to slavery in the United States, among free blacks, through Reconstruction, and into rural and urban states. Spread through fictive kinship and religious consciousness, the tradition incorporated mutual aid, social-class cooperation, male/female equality, and prosocial behavior in children.”


Oral history is a useful research and teaching tool for integrating black content in social work education. It facilitates knowledge-building, enhances integration of professional values, provides a forum for testing professional skills, and expands teaching and research methodology. Examples of objectives and learning activities for the major curriculum areas are provided.


This article draws on critical race theory (CRT) to foreground the role of race and racism in the ways in which Black students experience social work teaching and learning. It reviews some of the available literature on Black social work students’ experiences of teaching and learning. The article reframes understandings of the perceived failures of this group of students to adapt to the world of higher education. It is argued that race and racism are salient determining factors in the experiences of Black students within social work education. Emphasis is placed on understanding the specificity of this group of students taking into cognisance the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts within which they are located. The article uses CRT as critical lens to reflect on peer support groups as potential counter spaces that can disrupt the negative experiences of black social work students.


This article addresses the relationship between African-American leaders and settlement house workers in the development of the NAACP. Using social movement theory and Hasenfeld and Tropman’s conceptual framework for interorganizational relations, it analyzes the linkages developed between voluntary associations and how they benefitted all involved. This linkage provides lessons for today’s struggle for social justice.


African-American Social Workers and Social Policy is the first book of its kind to combine the voices of African-American social work professionals on social policy in one volume. You’ll learn about the impact of health, child welfare, and aging, the implications of welfare reform, and the harsh statistics about race and imprisonment from respected practitioners in the field. Each chapter ends with recommendations for policy advocacy, giving you the tools you need to help reform the
The issues addressed in African-American Social Workers and Social Policy include: how proposed Social Security reforms can help or hinder efforts to bridge the wealth gap; the role of grandparents as caregivers; the implications of child welfare policies, including the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994; the effects of race, class, and gender discrimination on African-American women’s health; the significance of the Human Genome Project; how social workers can stand up to the biases of the criminal justice system.


This article describes community development efforts in urban African American communities in the Progressive era. It features the work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who mobilized people to protest for equal rights and justice, and Lugenia Burns Hope, whose Neighborhood Union was a model of organization for social support and policy change. Other efforts for "social betterment" and "social protest" are described. African American community activism was distinguished by its emphases on community building–encompassing physical, human, and social capital–and on securing justice for black citizens. The article concludes with implications for modern day community organization/development theory and practice.


Publisher summary: "Born into slavery during the Civil War, Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) would become one of the most prominent activists of her time, with a career bridging the late nineteenth century to the civil rights movement of the 1950s. The first president of the National Association of Colored Women and a founding member of the NAACP, Terrell collaborated closely with the likes of Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Unceasing Militant is the first full-length biography of Terrell, bringing her vibrant voice and personality to life. Though most accounts of Terrell focus almost exclusively on her public activism, Alison M. Parker also looks at the often turbulent, unexplored moments in her life to provide a more complete account of a woman dedicated to changing the culture and institutions that perpetuated inequality throughout the United States. Drawing on newly discovered letters and diaries, Parker weaves together the joys and struggles of Terrell’s personal, private life with the challenges and achievements of her public, political career, producing a stunning portrait of an often-under recognized political leader."


Biographical research and the study of mutual-aid networks provide invaluable data to document the historical contributions of black women to American social welfare. The achievements of these black women role models can be an inspiration to contemporary social workers. The caregiving and community social welfare activities of one such woman, Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, are discussed in this article.


Editor Comment: In the concluding article, Wilma Peebles-Wilkins focuses on mechanisms for integrating content on African-Americans into the social work curriculum as well as on the broader issue of diversity which is prominent in discussions of social workeducation.


Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett were outstanding black women reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This article describes their contributions to the fight for human rights by reframing data from secondary sources and analyzing some of the women’s original works.

My summary: Article generally explores how social workers viewed the needs of Black people and Black families in the mid-1950s-1960s.


During the 1920s, E. Franklin Frazier, the eminent black sociologist, was director of the Atlanta School of Social Work. With other black social workers, Frazier made important contributions to social work and to the struggle against racism. His legacy is missing in most histories of social welfare and is relevant to the crisis confronting social work in the 1980s.


While there is a small body of research on service provision by groups that espouse a willingness to use violence, this research often is based on a presumption that service provision is used solely as a utilitarian tool to recruit members for political or violent activities. Through an examination of service provision by the Black Panther Party (BPP), the authors seek to problematize the utilitarian notion of service provision by reframing political activism, service, and violence as parallel acts of resistance serving similar purposes of countering oppression and healing communities. During field research in Oakland, California, extensive information was collected through interviews with former BPP members and recipients of BPP social services, as well as archival documents and audiovisual materials produced both about and by the BPP. The analysis explores several examples of the BPP offering free healthcare, breakfast, and education services. The data provide evidence that an organization that has been traditionally framed as militant not only acted rationally, but also provided an important defense for their community. Both their social service provision and their commitment to bear arms were viewed locally as acts of compassion, protection, and love.


Social work graduate programs have long grappled with ways to attract and retain students at the intersection of race and gender. The central structure of this analysis is a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study on the pursuit and persistence of African-American women in graduate Social Work programs at a Historically Black Institution (HBI). The data in this article were derived from the responses of 13 participants written in their own words. The themes that emerged around the pursuit of a social work degree were (a) service to Black communities, (b) resistance to misrecognition, and a seat at the table. After sharing the salient characteristics of the findings, the article opens a discussion around the significance of HBIs in educating social workers to work in urban communities and the implications for policy and practice.


Publisher summary: “At the height of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, Black social workers, frustrated by the slow pace of social action and social change in America, organized a national movement of Black social activists willing to confront racism in America and the day-to-day injustices experienced by members of the Black community. Progressive, militant and unapologetic for their persistent dedication and commitment to addressing the pressing social needs of Black America, this book tells the story of the people and their mission to bring about change in America.”


Publisher summary: “The story of foster care in the United States is the story of the failure of the social safety net to aid poor, largely black, parents in their attempt to make a home for their children. Shattered Bonds tells this story as no other book has before-from the perspective of a prominent black, female legal theoretician. The current state of the child-welfare system in America is a well-known tragedy. Thousands of children every year are removed from their parents’ homes, often for little reason other than the endemic poverty that afflicts women and children more than any other group in the U.S. Dorothy Roberts, an acclaimed legal scholar and social critic, reveals the racial politics of child welfare in America.”
through extensive legal research and original interviews with Chicago families in the foster care system. She describes the racial imbalance in foster care, the concentration of state intervention in certain neighborhoods, the alarming percentages of children in substitute care, the difficulty that poor and black families have in meeting state’s standards for regaining custody of children placed in foster care, and the relationship between state supervision of families and continuing racial inequality.


Quote from text (p. 297): “An examination of the social welfare heritage of black Americans demonstrates their pioneer role in devising many forms of social intervention for promoting the social welfare of the group. In varying ways they have concerned themselves with developing “those provisions and processes directly concerned with the treatment and prevention of social problems, the development of human resources and the improvement of the quality of life.” Such examination also reveals that, contrary to uninformed popular opinion, members of the black population, both singly and in groups, developed on their own initiative “social services to individuals and families” and engaged as well in “efforts to strengthen and modify social institutions” which often imposed intolerable constraints against them and which had been sanctioned by both custom and law. A city in which these strengthening behaviors are significantly illustrated is Atlanta, Georgia, whose black population records a long history of developing creative and innovative ways of solving its social problems.”


Quote from text (p. viii): “This textbook was devised and developed as a corrective for omissions and deficiencies in the existing literature on Social Welfare, and especially by the absence of any extensive body of materials illustrative of the black heritage and experience in this area of knowledge. It was also deemed necessary to prepare a pioneer compilation of new and unpublished documentary source materials which reveal the social welfare activities undertaken by individuals and groups who have been typically neglected in conventional studies. Finally, the need was seen to bring to the attention of the public (in line with the current trend of defining social welfare not in terms of those roles and institutions which have functions residual to the normal operation of the economy, policy and society but rather in accordance with the posture that social welfare concerns and activities are an integral part of the functioning of a viable society), that, rooted in the necessities of sheer survival, these concepts had an earlier inception in the thoughts and activities of black leaders who deserve recognition for their pioneer roles in contributing to the emergence, organization and development of social welfare enterprise. The documentary evidences provide a historical overview of the general and specific responses of Blacks to the situational and personal problems facing them.”


The longstanding presence of African Americans in Philadelphia explains the establishment of social welfare institutions and agencies by more affluent African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Armstrong Association of Philadelphia and Women’s Christian Alliance are two of the more prominent and enduring efforts initiated by African Americans to serve their own. Both also provided a vehicle for training for African Americans who desired to join the new profession of social work.


Intrinsic to the organization’s purposes and programs are efforts to loosen the shackles of racism and economic subservience to effect social reform.


Although several models of social work practice that can better assist people of color have emerged, the cultural values of this population generally have not been used as a theoretical base to develop new practice models. This situation not only prevents a truly diversified theoretical base in social work but also reinforces the hegemony of Eurocentric concepts for
explaining and solving human and societal problems. Recently the concept “Afrocentricity” has been used to describe the cultural values of people of African descent. This article presents the values and describes the philosophical concepts of Afrocentricity as a social science paradigm on which social work practice can be conceived and built and explains the reasons for the emergence of an Afrocentric social science perspective. Social workers are encouraged to embrace the Afrocentric paradigm because of its emphasis on eliminating oppression and spiritual alienation.


Quote from text (p. 802): “Although the doctoral program at Howard’s School of Social Work was receptive to an Afrocentric viewpoint, I realized that this represented an anomaly in social work education and the profession at large. Knowing this, I increasingly began to adopt the belief that more Afrocentric social workers need to challenge and, indeed, deconstruct the Eurocentric knowledge hegemony that permeates social work education and on which social work practice is heavily based. This feeling has lead me to deliberate over some beginning ideas about the contour of an Afrocentric social work and meaning model or paradigm.”


E. Franklin Frazier’s known almost exclusively for his scholarly contributions after the publication of his seminal book, *The Negro Family in the United States*. Less is known about Frazier’s professional life and scholarly contributions during the period when he was Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work between 1922 and 1927. Frazier was part of that generation of black scholars who benefited from the fluid interfacing of sociology and social work characteristic of the early part of the 20th century. While director of the Atlanta School, Frazier made significant contributions to the knowledge base of social work and was one of the first to provide a “black perspective” to social work’s knowledge base. To unearth and illuminate the early scholarly legacy of Frazier, this paper identifies and discusses some major themes of Frazier’s writings while director of the Atlanta School of Social Work and examines their implications for contemporary social work issues. An underlying assumption of this paper is that Frazier’s scholarly contributions during his tenure as director of the Atlanta School should be conceived as a reflection of the intimate nexus between black sociology and black social work that existed during the 1920s.


Because no distinction is made in the Council on Social Work Education’s educational standards about the frequency, intensity, or pervasiveness of the various forms of oppression, social work education affirms what may be called the equality-of-oppressions paradigm. This article contends that, although the equality-of-oppressions paradigm is a valuable perspective, its ascendancy in social work education may be placing the coverage of people-of-color content at risk of being diminished. This article examines two implications of the equality-of-oppressions paradigm for people-of-color content: (1) the expanded definition of diversity, and (2) racism’s persistence in social work education. The article also offers a model of differential vulnerability to help prioritize the various forms of oppression important to social work education.


Publisher summary: “Human Services and the Afrocentric Paradigm presents a new way of understanding human behavior, attacking social problems, and exploring social issues. This excellent guide shows that understanding the simultaneous forces of oppression and spiritual alienation in American society serves as a foundation for understanding the societal problems here. The first book to offer a comprehensive exposition of how the Afrocentric paradigm can be used by human service professionals and community advocates, Human Services and the Afrocentric Paradigm discusses why and how human service work is hampered by Eurocentric cultural values and will help you to offer fair and effective services to your clients.”


The Afrocentric paradigm in social work is an important professional development towards rendering social work practice more culturally competent. Grounded in a critique of Eurocentric models of social science and social work practice, the
paradigm draws heavily on the shared cultural values and practices of traditional Africa that have been articulated most poignantly in Cheikh Anta Diop’s two cradle theory. The Afrocentric paradigm also relies on the shared experiences African-Americans have had with Eurocentric domination since the initiation of the transatlantic slave trade and their efforts to contest the inimical effects of this form of oppression. This article provides a historical overview of the Afrocentric paradigm and examines its relationship to social work. It also offers some ideas about the future viability of the paradigm within the new era of oppression by incorporation.


One of the unsung heroines of the African American tradition of community development is Maggie Lena Walker. Walker was the first woman in the United States to establish a bank that still exists today. She also started a merchandise department store, operated a newspaper, and was a prominent leader in a major African American mutual aid organization—the Independent Order of St. Luke. This article discusses Walker’s community development contributions and examines their relevance for contemporary community practice with African Americans.


In this historical case study, we use the realism–idealism framework to analyze how three National Conference of Social Work (NCSW) leaders differed in their social justice advocacy to address racial segregation during the 1930s. We argue that advocacy should welcome approaches along the realism–idealism spectrum. Navigating internal difference and diverse viewpoints enables organizations to be more effective in their social justice advocacy. Managing internal disagreement enables organizations to be more effective externally. Allowing space for negotiation and voices of dissent is necessary to effectively address persistent, contemporary social justice issues like racial discrimination and exclusion.


Sojourner Truth provides a powerful model of advocacy for the social work profession. This paper offers an analysis of this important historical figure that centers around the implications of being a doubly oppressed minority. An analysis of the nineteenth century chattel slavery system sets the stage for understanding the social environment. A brief biography of her life and evolution from enslaved chattel to feminist activist will highlight her social, spiritual, and personal development. Her philosophy, which is compatible with the modern feminist movement, is outlined by an analysis of her speeches.


This article focuses on one underdeveloped area in the study of race and social work, namely the employment of black social workers within social services departments. This includes a statement if theoretical issues, an examination of what I shall term the “ethnic sensitivity” model, and a consideration of the ways in which black social workers may contribute towards anti-racist practices within social services departments. The article is based, in part, on original research carried out in the social services departments of two Inner London boroughs.


During World War I, 85 African-American social service workers were sent to France as program directors for the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). They took up their work in the context of soaring race consciousness as they and the African-American soldiers they served encountered “free France” on the one hand and the American command’s determination to recreate Jim Crow on French soil on the other. The African-American YMCA “secretaries,” as they were called, worked with imagination, passion, and considerable skill to establish the right of the African-American soldiers to services long designated “for whites only.” Their programs were suffused by habits of collective self-help and benefited enormously from the race pride, spirit of internationalism, and militancy of the times.

Quote from text (p. 60): “I have not yet resolved that the challenge is an insurmountable one. It seems clear, however, that in order for social work to meet it with competence and efficacy a serious reexamination and reorganization of some of the profession’s most basic operating assumption, principles, and technologies is imperative. What precisely is the nature of the challenge to which we refer? I will treat this question by: enumerating several of the significant developments which, in my opinion, helped to distinguish the 1960s; by elucidating the implications of these developments and their collective meaning in terms of the status and disposition of the black community; and by suggesting some of the vital ways in which these implications bear upon the institution of social work.”


Contemporary African American social work pioneers are important sources of information; yet, knowledge about these scholars is not readily available and their perspectives have not been uncovered. This manuscript reports on four life story interviews conducted with such pioneers in an effort to profile them and share their collective recommendations to strengthen social work education. The result was five themes identified to enhance social work education, and documentation as to how to conduct life story interviews with other living social work pioneers.


In the mid 1990s a Black practice teacher programme was established in Manchester and Merseyside with the primary aim to increase the number of Black practice teachers in social work organisations, and in turn provide a supportive and encouraging learning environment for Black student social workers whilst on placement. In the north-west of England research has been undertaken, to establish the quality of the practice teaching and student learning taking place with Black practice teachers and students. This paper is an exploration of the ideas generated within the placement process that particularly focused on the discourse of racism and anti-racist practice. Black students and practice teachers explain their understanding of racism and anti-racist practice within social work. From the research, the paper will critique some of the ideas concerning anti-racism. In particular, it will question whether anti-racist social work practice needs to be re-evaluated in the light of a context with new migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. It will concluded, by arguing that whilst the terms anti-racism, Black and Minority Ethnic have resonance as a form of political strategic essentialism, it is important to develop more positive representations in the future.


Publisher summary: “During the Progressive Era, a rehabilitative agenda took hold of American juvenile justice, materializing as a citizen-and-state-building project and mirroring the unequal racial politics of American democracy itself. Alongside this liberal “manufactory of citizens,” a parallel structure was enacted: a Jim Crow juvenile justice system that endured across the nation for most of the twentieth century. In The Black Child Savers, the first study of the rise and fall of Jim Crow juvenile justice, Geoff Ward examines the origins and organization of this separate and unequal juvenile justice system. Ward explores how generations of “black child-savers” mobilized to challenge the threat to black youth and community interests and how this struggle grew aligned with a wider civil rights movement, eventually forcing the formal integration of American juvenile justice. Ward’s book reveals nearly a century of struggle to build a more democratic model of juvenile justice—an effort that succeeded in part, but ultimately failed to deliver black youth and community to liberal rehabilitative ideals. At once an inspiring story about the shifting boundaries of race, citizenship, and democracy in America and a crucial look at the nature of racial inequality, The Black Child Savers is a stirring account of the stakes and meaning of social justice.”


The attention of Negroes is focused on social work as a career at the present time as never before. Among the reasons for this interest are, first, the fact that a large proportion of the race is dependent for its very existence today on relief which is administered (theoretically, at least) by social workers, second, that the relief-administration phase of social work is the
most available avenue of employment for college trained Negroes at the present time, and third, that considering the Negro in relation to the professions as a whole today, relief administration offers the larger and more certain salaries.


 Publisher summary: “This is the story of New York’s Young Women’s Christian Association, from 1905-1945. It examines the work of middle class black women who were committed to social action and institutional expression of their religion, and how their work was the beginning of an equal rights struggle.”


 Publisher summary: “Ida B. Wells is an American icon of truth telling. Born to slaves, she was a pioneer of investigative journalism, a crusader against lynching, and a tireless advocate for suffrage, both for women and for African Americans. She co-founded the NAACP, started the Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago, and was a leader in the early civil rights movement, working alongside W. E. B. Du Bois, Madam C. J. Walker, Mary Church Terrell, Frederick Douglass, and Susan B. Anthony. This engaging memoir, originally published 1970, relates Wells’s private life as a mother as well as her public activities as a teacher, lecturer, and journalist in her fight for equality and justice. This updated edition includes a new foreword by Eve L. Ewing, new images, and a new afterword by Ida B. Wells’s great-granddaughter, Michelle Duster.”


 This exploratory study used a project-developed questionnaire to examine the perceptions of members of an African-American community (N = 102) regarding the social work profession and its commitment to issues pertinent to African-Americans. The results suggested that while the African-American respondents felt that social workers could be a source of help, a considerable amount of the respondents reported that they did not see social workers as being helpful or sensitive to the needs of African-Americans. The results of this study have implications for social work practitioners and educators.