SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

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Social Work Practice
With African Americans
in Urban Environments
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Editors
It is indeed an honor to dedicate this work to the late Dr. Jay Carrington Chunn, our colleague, mentor, friend, and proverbial giant among the shakers and movers of our time. From his time as the dean of the Howard University School of Social Work, to his presidency at Medgar Evans College, and to his developing and directing the National Center for Health Behavioral Change, and being senior administrator and doctoral professor at Morgan, Jay lived and thrived on motivating others and getting that next project, publication, or book, done. Likewise, he was the thrust we needed to complete this book for which we will be eternally grateful. The entire School of Social Work at Morgan State University will forever remember and uphold the legacy of Dr. Chunn and his sense of urgency about every effort to move the needle toward social and economic change for marginalized people everywhere. It is our hope that he would be proud of this work as its goal is to better prepare urban social workers and human service practitioners to work with African Americans.

Anna McPhatter
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Foreword

This foreword is being written during the unfolding of urban turmoil in the City of Baltimore, Maryland, in response to systemic injustices faced by African American men across the nation. In 1951, Langston Hughes, through poetry, posed the following question, “What happens to a dream deferred?” He ends his sociopolitical poem with yet another profound question–truth, “Does it explode?” Across the nation’s urban centers, we are mourning deaths of young men like Freddie Gray, and bracing for what can happen to others who languish from the cumulative disadvantages that have yet to be addressed by social policies that mend rather than reform social welfare. The founding dean of the Howard University School of Social Work, Dr. Inabel Burns Lindsay, in her 1967 centennial address to the university, alluded to the difficulty of reform and the role of social work. She stated that “the process may be uncomfortable, disillusioning, and at times probably disheartening. But if social work is to realize its unlimited potential, the challenge of the future must be accepted.” In his book, *Community Social Work Practice in an Urban Context*, Delgado (1999) asserts that the future of social work is inextricably linked to how well it addresses urban issues related to urban communities of color. The editors and contributors to this book have indeed responded to the challenge to provide context for practice in urban environments that are swollen with untended injustices and interventions that are too often color-blind or misguided. This valuable contribution, “Social Work Practice With African Americans in Urban Environments,” brings focus to the unique needs of urban individuals and communities. It is a resource for social work educators and practitioners at micro-, mezzo-, and macro-levels.

Urban areas are defined as densely developed residential, commercial, and other nonresidential areas. The Census Bureau reports that in the last decade, urban population has grown by more than 12%. These areas now account for 80.7% of the U.S. population, up from 79.0% in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas: “urbanized areas” of 50,000 or more people and “urban clusters” of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Taken together, they had an overall population density of 2,534 people per square mile. These data clearly document the importance of specialized urban practice that is a community-based and strengths perspective utilizing a variety of indigenous efforts.
that heavily rely on empowerment strategies using both informal and formal resources. Delgado (2010) acknowledges that social work literature has not kept pace with urban contexts and the related complexity of urban life. African Americans are largely concentrated in urban areas. The authors of this book are affiliated with Morgan State University, a historically Black college and university (HBCU) located in Baltimore, Maryland. According to the 2010 census, Baltimore has the second highest percentage (65%) of Blacks or African Americans in the nation. This is important given that many of the authors have practiced and researched in the City of Baltimore, thus adding authenticity based on their experience and scholarship with urban African Americans and organizations and institutions involved in service delivery. It is important to note, however, that there are clear differences among cities (Black, Kolesnivoka, & Taylor, 2010); however, the authors have presented content that is transferrable, given this recognition of uniqueness.

African Americans have exhibited extraordinary resiliency in surviving the lingering effects of the pernicious U.S. institution of slavery, and thriving. Although many families have navigated this terrain and made extraordinary gains, others are still crippled by the cumulative years of inequality. These individuals often make up the caseloads of human service agencies and organizations. Social workers in these organizations provide critically important support to individuals across the life span who exhibit a range of problems. According to the U.S. census (2013/2015), African Americans make up 13.2% of the U.S. population, yet they are disproportionately represented with chronic disease, health disparities, poverty, unemployment, wealth, and many more variables related to quality of life. Racism continues to play a significant role in determining the outcomes and quality of life of African Americans. To address these problems that often intersect, social work practice must focus on the complexity of the lives of African Americans and identify interventions that are culturally responsive and consistent with the core values of the social work profession. Urban-based and urban-driven issues (Delgado, 2010) that uniquely impact African Americans require sensitivity that is born out of the Black experience. Contemporary social work practice cannot ignore this landscape and is thirsty for scholarship and interventions, such as the ones in this book, that are not ahistorical and recognize the enormous gains from Civil Rights for many while simultaneously acknowledging what Dean Emeriti Douglas Glasgow of the Howard University School of Social Work calls The Black Underclass. In his seminal book, Glasgow (1981) asserts that antipoverty programs and other social programs failed to uplift certain segments of the population. It is this segment of the population that most requires the culturally competent interventions that are addressed in this book.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) states that the core values of social work are service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2008). Effective practice of social work insists on these core values being honored. In addition to adhering to the core values of the profession, competent practice must also consider the context of practice and employ related knowledge, skills, and abilities to address the needs of the client system(s). To ensure that context is inextricably linked to social work education and
practice, the Council on Social Work Educational Policy Statement gives primacy to it and defines it as encompassing “the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting” (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008).

The book begins with a rich overview that addresses critical perspectives, concepts, and theories that provide an understanding of why the unique focus on urban social work practice with African Americans is absolutely essential to competent social work practice. This book also aligns itself with the context of practice through insightful chapters that cover a range of contemporary practice arenas including child welfare, aging, public health, mental health, substance use, domestic violence, faith-based, and school settings. Chapters also examine work with specific populations such as adolescents, immigrants, sexual minorities, HIV/AIDS, caregivers, victims of violence, and urban gangs. Additionally, the book provides a sociohistorical lens through an in-depth review of African American social work pioneers who have paved the way for many of our successful programs and culturally relevant interventions. The book ends with policy implications that build on the strengths, resilience, and cultural values of African Americans.

Collectively, the authors provide an understanding of both the challenges and strengths that African Americans face residing in urban communities. The chapters include evidence-based practice, research, and case studies to acquaint the reader with the subject matter. Some authors provide assignments that can be used to stimulate the learning of students related to the topics. Others stimulate critical thinking about the nature of oppression and discrimination. This can be used to enrich the knowledge of students and practitioners. They present a number of theoretical frameworks including African-centered, Africentric, critical race, feminist, womanist, intersectionality, and modern social work. Additionally, strengths and ecological, historical, and international perspectives are used by authors. Cultural competence is the overarching lens used by the authors present relevant practice knowledge and skills.

In the seminal book, Social Work and the Black Experience, Martin and Martin (1995, p. 1) stated two decades ago, “Social work literature seldom treats black individuals as a unique people with unique cultural and historical experiences.” They go on to state the danger in lumping people of color together because of the missed nuances. This book avoids this pitfall. By focusing specifically on the African American community, the authors have deepened our knowledge of both the within-group differences and shared experiences. They help explain not only the challenges but offer interventions and strategies that can serve as a bridge to success in working with African American individuals, families, groups, and communities. Building on seminal works such as Solomon’s (1976) Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities and Robert Hill’s Strengths of Black Families (1972) and Strengths of Black Families Revisited Twenty-Five years Later (1999), this new resource is a welcomed addition to social work literature. As a former social worker in public housing in an urban metropolitan area, I truly understand the value of this book. Social work programs, especially those located in urban centers will find the value of this book in preparing culturally
competent social workers who strongly embrace social justice and strengths-based practice.

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Preface

This is the cutting-edge diversified urban human services book we have all been waiting for. Although many social workers and other human service professionals work in urban settings, few have been educated in programs that deliberately focus on urban environments, and even fewer emphasize the unique experiences of African Americans in those environments. Compiling and managing the process for publishing this book has been a true labor of love. Our final nudge came from our mentor and colleague, Dr. Jay Carrington Chunn, who transitioned only a few weeks after we submitted the successful book proposal to Springer Publishing Company. Several of us were planning an urban social work book, but CSWE accreditation and building a school of social work became such a huge task that no one had time to even think about it, but Dr. Chunn! He literally pushed us for a couple of years and would not let it fade from our view, and finally we were ready to move forward with an idea that had been brewing for years.

Over the course of the past 20 years, I have had a unique opportunity to participate in the process for building a school of social work at an institution designated as the State’s Urban University. When I arrived on the campus of Morgan State University as a newly appointed assistant professor in what was then the department of social work, it was an exciting, yet grueling time. My department chair at the time, Anna McPhatter had just arrived the year before. The department, a BSW Program that was started in the early 1970s, had a long history with many graduates, but it had become stagnant with a small faculty that had all worked in the department for 20 plus years. Well, Anna McPhatter does not do stagnant! I remember that when she saw me doing well over my share of advising students or chairing too many department committees, she would say, “it won’t always be like this.” It was that promise, and the energy and excitement that were exchanged in the classroom with my students that formed the initial foundation for the reasons I stayed.

Later, when an opportunity presented itself, we were asked to develop an MSW and PhD Program, but even before then we knew we had something pretty special going on. With courses on diversity, social and economic justice, and Black families in our BSW Program, our graduates had earned a solid reputation in the public and private human service agencies throughout the Baltimore and Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Students would often recall situations in the field placement agency in which the MSW
students from other institutions would rely on them for their knowledge and skills when working with various client populations. We knew we were doing something unique, but I do not think we really knew how important it was, until our students and graduates and agencies continuously confirmed it for us over and over again.

The something different is a unique perspective as social work educators on how to engage clients in urban environments, particularly African Americans. You will find that unique perspective weaved throughout our course syllabi in all three of our social work programs. And that unique perspective is reflected throughout every chapter in this book.

What we know for sure is that fear can never be a factor when engaging the populations we serve. Because many of our students come from the various communities we prepare them to serve, they are a valuable resource in the classroom and in creating a curriculum that best meets the needs of the urban community. We also believe that urban social work cannot be divided into micro, mezzo, and macro, but that urban social workers need skills in all areas in order to meet the needs of complex urban populations. Urban social workers have to constantly be thinking outside the box, working with other professionals on interdisciplinary teams, and with residents of the community in their neighborhoods, churches, schools, and homes in order for transformation to take root. Meeting people where they are is not just a social work slogan we add to our lectures when we do not know what else to say, it is a skill that we teach our students to use, so they can do their very best work.

This book should be used with any group of students being prepared to be comfortable working in and negotiating urban centers, and those who want to realize the unique experiences and challenges faced by African Americans in those environments. It can be used at the undergraduate and graduate level. And there are some interesting topics and perspectives you have not read about before that will certainly challenge your worldview. It addresses the challenges of urban social work in regard to public health, health, and mental health; substance abuse, criminal justice, and violence prevention; navigating the urban built environment; and the intersection between African Americans and other diverse groups.

The experiences of African Americans in urban communities are unique, and require an in-depth appreciation of the interface between micro- and macro-level factors to be truly understood. This text, an outgrowth of an actual urban social work curriculum with a focus on the African American experience, field education, community engagement, and practice, presents a framework for urban social work practice that encompasses a deep understanding of the challenges faced by this community. From a perspective based on empowerment, strengths, resilience, cultural competence, and multiculturalism, this book delivers proven strategies for social work practice with the urban African American population.

As additional aids in preparing students in the understandings, perspectives, and competencies necessary for practice in the urban African American environment, qualified instructors can request both an Instructors’ Manual and chapter based PowerPoint presentations by emailing textbook@springerpub.com.

Rhonda Wilbon
Acknowledgment

The editors would like to thank Ms. Erin Harris for her commitment and assistance with the many tasks associated with editing a book. We would never have met our goals and time lines without all your hard work.
Conceptualizing social work within an urban context with a specific population is a multifaceted endeavor that demands much thought and reflection. As a school of social work within a 150-year-old historically Black university, designated as the state’s urban research university, the task becomes even more daunting as efforts are made to clarify the essentials of this endeavor for our own program within the local context as well as make a meaningful contribution to the broader urban community contexts. To facilitate the task at hand, the profession of social work offers foundational elements such as accreditation standards and codes of ethics on which to build a conceptual framework for examining the human experience in context. The Council on Social Work Education’s 2008 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS, 2008) states that “context encompasses the mission of the institution in which the program is located and the needs and opportunities associated with the setting. Programs are further influenced by their historical, political, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and global contexts.” Reflecting the significance of a mission relative to context, Morgan State University’s mission states that the university:

Serves the community, region, state, nation, and world as an intellectual and creative resource by supporting, empowering and preparing high-quality, diverse graduates to lead the world. The University offers innovative, inclusive, and distinctive educational experiences to a broad cross section of the population in a comprehensive range of disciplines at the baccalaureate, master’s, doctoral, and professional degree levels. Through collaborative pursuits, scholarly research, creative endeavors, and dedicated public service, the University gives significant priority to addressing societal problems, particularly those prevalent in urban communities. (Morgan State University, 2012)
I. CONCEPTUALIZING URBAN SOCIAL WORK

Derived from this university-level mission, the School of Social Work’s mission at the Morgan State University is “To fully prepare urban social work leaders who are committed to the alleviation of human suffering, social justice, and the improvement of the quality of life for diverse urban populations.”

The discussion in this chapter reflects the experiences of our school as we have worked to bring our social work programs in concert with the urban context in which we educate and train our students. In this discussion, the conceptualization of urban social work with African Americans emerges from contextual, historical, cultural, social, demographic, political, economic, and global parameters. The education and training of social work students include perspectives, concepts, and theories that have proven critical to effectively work with African American people and communities. Following a brief discussion of the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and principles that undergirded the analysis of the school and resulted in refocusing and reframing a long-term urban social work emphasis, further description of concepts, perspectives, and theories that have been found critical for the practice of social work in urban environments is provided. Also discussed are examples of relevant courses and curriculum content included to describe critical knowledge, values, and skills that are essential in preparing urban social workers.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS, BELIEFS, AND PRINCIPLES

In the substantive review of our Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work curriculums, considerable time was spent in discussing principles, beliefs, and assumptions, which would prove important in this arduous process. Viewing Morgan’s School of Social Work as a case example, it is hoped that these will be helpful for others engaging in a similar process. These beliefs and principles include:

Society is not color-blind; therefore race, ethnicity, culture, gender, disability, language of origin, and sexual orientation, always matter. Since the founding of this country and the import of slaves into America, the history of racism has continued to permeate every aspect of U.S. society. One does not have to look far for recent examples, such as Ferguson, Missouri, and the killing of Michael Brown, a young African American man, by a White police officer who suffered no consequence or retribution. Over the past year, the criminal justice system has shown many examples of how the color of one’s skin determines the value of one’s life and that this practice continues nationally with impunity. In practicing with African Americans in urban communities, this reality must always be at the forefront of the urban social worker’s thoughts, together with well-developed methods of assessment and interventions to address the presenting needs of these communities.

Eurocentric values, worldviews, traditions, development and dissemination of knowledge, and practice interventions do not reflect the history and life experiences of people of African descent, and therefore are largely ineffective as currently practiced within the broad arena of professional social work. Much of social work history,
theory development, and practice perspectives, although acknowledging the importance of culturally competent social work practice, rarely pursue cultural competence as a critical goal with the forthrightness and depth required when working with African Americans and other people of color. The roles of history, race, and culture in psychosocial–spiritual development and in individual, family, and community experiences unfortunately do not have a place of prominence in most social work practice (McPhatter, 2004). Schiele (1997, 2010) vigorously challenges both the validity of Eurocentric social and behavioral science as the singular way of knowing and the effectiveness of intervention approaches that derive therefrom.

Engagement with African Americans within an urban context by necessity includes the environmental context; history; experiences of structural oppression; classism; internalized oppression, as well as strengths and resilience. Since its inception, the profession of social work has touted the importance of the environmental context in serving people. Unfortunately, the profession has waned in its emphasis on these contextual factors, especially in what is most often conceptualized as “clinical social work” and the tendency to isolate social work as either micro or macro. Most social workers in the United States choose micro social work, also known as direct or clinical practice, and fail to see macro practice as an essential component to micro or mezzo practice. This failure alone denies persons of African descent the importance of the totality of their experiences in the United States. The nature of oppression and discrimination and how it impacts African Americans both individually and institutionally, and strategies for addressing these are absolutely a priority in any interaction in which social workers engage with this population (McPhatter, 1997; McPhatter & Ganaway, 2003). Moreover, urban social workers must be knowledgeable about the role they may play in exercising their own privilege and be committed to giving up those privileges to attain the goal of social justice. Social workers must also understand the dynamics of internalized oppression and how this dynamic perpetuates oppression as well as proscribe negative self-concepts and low self-esteem. Additionally, although the profession of social work expresses a propensity toward the incorporation of strengths and resilience in their approach to practice, by its failure to not only be knowledgeable about these as they play out in African American lives and collective communities, social workers still predominantly utilize deficit-oriented models inherent in conceptualizations of clinical social work practice. The historic resilience and strengths of African American communities must be elucidated in practice and also used as starting points for personal and collective empowerment (Hill, 1972; Martin & Martin, 2002).

Urban social workers have an ethical obligation to know and understand the landscape that makes up the lives of the people they serve and must always work toward the goal of cultural competency and effectiveness in carrying out their professional roles. This principle applies to any context and any area of social work practice; it is particularly important when the people served by the social worker are culturally, racially, and ethnically different from the social worker, their colleagues, and the agencies within which they practice. As McPhatter (1997) queries, “what would be the purpose of attempting to serve people one is unwilling to learn about?” Urban social
workers simply do not have an option to not spend the time and effort to become thoroughly immersed in the culture of people of African descent and all of the nuances they bring to the service encounter (Martin & Martin, 2002).

Individuals and families residing in inner cities and urban environments are heavily impacted by the seemingly insurmountable social and economic problems they face. Working to help urban individuals and families must be approached equally within the context of working to help communities become well. It is our belief that urban people can rarely achieve wholeness when their communities are not whole. Simply stated, the work of urban social workers must always be about partnering and collaborating with urban communities for the larger common good. This, by necessity, includes an advocacy, social justice, and empowerment emphasis in the perspectives and practice approaches of urban social work. While individual, family, and small group interventions are certainly important, they must always be undertaken with a broader and more societal and global view as the context (McPhatter, 2004).

These beliefs, assumptions, and principles have served as a critical guide to Morgan School of Social Work’s approach to educating and training social workers. They inform the school’s thinking, they reflect curricula models, and they serve as the basis for conceptualization of urban social work with African Americans. Although commonly used social work theories, perspectives, and practice approaches are not excluded, subjecting these to the scrutiny of the appropriateness for African Americans in urban communities similar to the one that makes up the urban context is common practice in our program. With optimism, the principles and frameworks tried, tested, and adopted in Morgan’s School of Social Work will be relevant to and used by other urban programs and be seen as pertinent to social work regardless of where it is practiced.

CRITICAL CONCEPTS, PERSPECTIVES, AND THEORIES

The following theories, concepts, and perspectives serve as the foundation for urban social work as integrated in the programs at Morgan’s School of Social Work. Undoubtedly, other perspectives might have been selected, but the ones selected have been found to be grounded both historically and practically for the population for which students are being prepared. These include African-centered perspective, cultural competence, advocacy and empowerment, and strengths and resilience.

African-Centered Perspective

The Afrocentric paradigms emerged from several African American psychologists and other social scientists who had grown weary and frustrated with the deficit-oriented views of African American life and who documented the inconsistencies of these views with the reality of life experiences of people of African descent (Akbar, 1984; Asante,
Eurocentric worldviews reflected a belief system that placed the European American worldview, culture, and behavior as the norms and certainly preferred if not superior to others, specifically those of African American people, which are often described as dysfunctional and as never quite measuring up to the Eurocentric yardstick. Moreover, Asante (1987, 1988), who is credited with coining the term Afrocentricity, indicates that Afrocentric frameworks solidly place the study of people of African descent within African cultural values and worldviews. This theoretical perspective then would challenge social workers to view human behavior and functioning of African Americans and thus tailor their practice interventions within the African cultural context and traditions.

Schiele (1997) defines Afrocentric social work as “a method of social work practice based on traditional African philosophical assumptions that are used to explain and to solve human and societal problems” (p. 803). African-centered social work includes knowledge, values, and skills that evolve from a foundation of historical and cultural aspects of West Africa from which slavery predominantly emanated and survived over time, but these life experiences of African descendants most often are used as strengths in contemporary African American communities. This approach is indeed rooted in the values of ancient African experiences that survived in the DNA of people of African descent and are easily identified by social workers when they are knowledgeable about these experiences.

The African-centered perspective has three major foci (Schiele, 2010): (a) It promotes an alternative social science paradigm toward one that most reflects the cultural and political reality of African Americans and away from paradigms that are staunchly Eurocentric in ideology; (b) the African-centered perspective moves toward the removal of negative distortions, preconceived notions, and damaging theoretical and practice approaches toward people of African ancestry, and legitimates a worldview more particular to that carried in the minds, hearts, and practices of everyday life experiences of African Americans; and (c) the African-centered perspective promotes a worldview that fosters human and societal transformations inclusive of universal needs for spiritual, moral, and humanistic endeavors. The African-centered perspective is essential as a theoretical concept that forces urban social workers to think differently and reflectively about the African American experience in the United States and how that experience evolves from deeply rooted cultural values, folkways, family structures, and individual and community behaviors. It reminds the social worker that African American people are not, in fact, “willy-nilly” mimicking the White world and that African American culture, language, dialects, child-rearing practices, and civic and social institutions of support are historic, well developed, and thoughtfully executed every single day despite the obstacles that exist in the communities. Moreover, the African-centered perspective enables the urban social worker to draw on a number of approaches for working with African American individuals, families, and communities (Bent-Goodley, 2005).

Bent-Goodley describes a number of African-centered principles that inform practice with victims of domestic violence but can be used as belief systems and approaches...
for a broader perspective on practice with people of African ancestry. These principles are briefly summarized as follows:

**Fundamental goodness**—This principle states that people are inherently good and are not predisposed toward harming or hurting others. Adopting this principle will help urban social workers begin to see people who have been vilified in media and other societal arenas as worthy and valuable members of the society.

**Self-knowledge**—This principle essentially denotes the importance of the social worker being conscious of his or her own self and nature, recognizing areas of deficit and needs for growth and healing, and acknowledging, for example, his or her own privileged status and how that status often contributes to maintaining structures that oppress others. The worker must come to grips with his or her lack of knowledge about the experiences of urban African Americans and commit to begin the process of remedying this void in his or her education and practice experiences; and it is most critical regarding self-knowledge for the worker to honestly assess the extent to which his or her work is damaging to the individual and community empowerment that must occur in his or her practice with African Americans.

**Communalism**—This principle describes communalism by Harvey (2001; Harvey and Hill, 2004) as the “sensitivity to the interdependence of people and the notion that group concerns transcend individual strivings.” Much of what is taught in social work focuses on the individual and often negates the familial, let alone community, context in which individual functioning and behavior occur. This tragedy is amplified with African Americans in urban communities daily, without any thought to the interdependence of individuals and the impact of extended families and neighborhoods. Students in social work education cannot be allowed to miss this fundamental principle as they structure their work with people in the urban environment, particularly people of color.

**Interconnectedness**—This principle further highlights the connections African Americans make in collective struggles for survival, to respond to oppression, and to work toward the health and well-being of the collective. There is rarely a single African American who does not understand what the “hook up” means and the context in which it is expressed. This is a colloquialism that essentially says, “I am looking out for you,” and is stated to express mutuality.

**Spirituality**—This principle is a major component of African-centered theory and occupies a place of centrality among most, if not all, of the contemporary scholars of Afrocentricity (Harvey, 2001; Martin & Martin, 1995, 2002; Schiele, 1997, 2010). Spirituality, although having different meanings for different people, essentially recognizes the existence of a universal “God,” a sacred or divine force on which people can rely for guidance, healing, and survival. Although African Americans are predominantly connected with organized religious traditions, the role of spirituality in their daily life existence can never be understated. Martin and Martin (1995) eloquently described the traditions of people of African descent to utilize spirituals and blues, that is, “Moanin”—identifying the problem; “Mourning”—examining and identifying pain and suffering and the path needed for healing through collective empathy,
support, and hope; and “Morning”—an indication through spirituals and the early morning connection with Jesus that they were on the verge of a breakthrough. The wider social work profession has come to accept and embellish the role of spirituality in human development and behavior and the subsequent practice of social work. However, social workers who practice with African Americans will need to not only grasp the significance of spirituality and religion to this group, but be cognizant and conversant with them about the role of the pastor and the Black church in any social work intervention.

**Self-reliance**—This principle refers to the ability of the individual to develop the kind of life skills that enable them to make contributions to the whole through their own efforts. This principle implies that strengthening oneself in all personalized arenas is not targeted at self-realization alone but a deep expectation is that others participate in this effort of self-development and they expect to benefit from individual contributions as well. An example of this principle is the case in which whole African American communities contribute to the educational success of a young man or woman from their community, with the explicit understanding that the person will come back to the community to contribute in whatever manner he or she can.

**Language and oral tradition**—This principle, which is reflected in the African-centered paradigm, refers to West African traditions of multiple methods of communication, including rhythms expressed in drums, music, dance, blues, hip hop, dialects, and other tools used to communicate or confuse outsiders. In contemporary America, communication has become increasingly complex with the advent of social media, which demands that the urban social worker be ever vigilant regarding intergenerational communication differences, the intention of communication, the target of messages, the integrity of the messages, and the effectiveness of communication that comes from trust developed in the relationship.

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**Cultural Competence**

Cultural competence was selected by the school as one of the pillars for urban social work practice. Cultural competence has been defined as the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client system functioning within the appropriate cultural context (McPhatter, 1997). Green (1995) indicates that the culturally competent practitioner conducts professional work in a way that is congruent with the behavior and expectations that members of a distinctive culture recognize as appropriate among themselves. It is from these perspectives that the following guiding principles derive:

1. Culturally competent social work practice is a mandate that all practitioners and agencies must pursue.
2. Achieving the goal of cultural competence is a multilevel, multisystemic effort that includes individual, interprofessional, and organizational activities.
3. Becoming culturally competent requires commitment from the top level of the organization and must be reflected in the organizational mission and values, as well as fiscal and human resources. Just as agencies develop strategic plans for carrying out their overall mission with measurable outcomes, cultural competence as a goal must be held to a similar standard of measure.

4. Cultural competence is a protracted endeavor and should never be treated as a one-time initiative or as an afterthought; failure to include cultural competence as a priority in the overall purpose, mission, goals, and objectives of the organization sends a message to practitioners as well as those served by the organization that cultural competence is not important and even minimal efforts by a few committed individuals will fall short.

The urban social worker must always be on the journey of becoming culturally competent. Lacking knowledge, values, and skills to practice effectively within a cultural context essentially limits the practitioner’s work to minimal usefulness. Social workers who work within every geographic and demographic area must have cultural competency as a high priority in their work. This means that there is a working familiarity with the culture of the population in which the worker practices, along with an ongoing commitment to learn about the values, beliefs, family orientations, strengths, religious orientations, and other values of a population. McPhatter (1997) proposed a Cultural Competence Attainment Model that includes the following components:

- **Enlightened consciousness**—restructuring one’s worldview to include acceptance of other cultures and beliefs to be as valuable and acceptable as one’s own. This is often a difficult and painful process as one is often challenged to reject socialization, values and norms of his or her own family, his or her formal education, and that of the wider society that places value on people based on their race, ethnicity, and/or gender. This work is critical as one engages the cultural competence protracted process.

- **Grounded knowledge base**—examining and adapting formal as well as informal education to reject the Eurocentric bias, which is the foundation of our learned history, mythology, values, and science, toward incorporating a comprehensive range of information from diverse communities, disciplines, religions, social institutions, family structures, and communities; and analysis of theoretical constructs with an emphasis on strength-based and resilience concepts. This knowledge base is inclusive of how institutional structures historically impede the well-being of communities of color.

- **Cumulative skill proficiency**—engaging in a skill development process that builds proficiency through focused reflection and evaluation in addition to knowledge. Ability to intervene at the individual, family, organizational, community, and policy levels to achieve not only needed resources and services, but also social justice and system change.

Social work attracts practitioners, who most often have altruistic intentions, selfless spirits, and the motivation to make a difference. Good intentions, however, must not stand...
in the way of an honest self-appraisal, and the willingness to embark on a sustained journey of continued development toward cultural competence. The increasingly diverse children, families, groups, and communities we serve deserve nothing less.

Cultural competence may be viewed from a client-centered or an organizational perspective. McPhatter (1997, 2004) stated: “Achieving cultural competence is a dynamic protracted and developmental change process that requires genuine commitment on the part of chief executive staff, mid-level managers, direct service workers and support staff...the organization is actively pursuing identifiable and measurable outcomes.” The goals for a culturally competent organization include a diverse workforce, a well-developed strategic plan for achieving cultural competence, partnership with diverse communities, a structure for facilitating professional cultural competence goal attainment, cultural competence performance goals in employee evaluations and provision of knowledge, and training toward a continuous journey that enhances the organization (McPhatter, 1997, 2004). Cultural competence enhances practice effectiveness and sets up a circular process whereby culturally diverse clients are successfully served. Likewise, urban practitioners experience success and pride in meaningful ways while impacting the lives of others. In addition, the organization itself achieves its mission in a manner that positively impacts the larger community.

**Empowerment and Advocacy**

Similar to the African-centered perspective and cultural competence, advocacy and empowerment are viewed as critical endeavors in which students must be adept. Empowerment and advocacy have been included in the social work methods of intervention and as guiding principles for achieving social justice for several decades. Empowerment is defined by Whitmore (1988) as “an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live” (p. 13). This point of view acknowledges that the primary goal of empowerment at the individual level is to help clients gain power and reduce powerlessness over anything that blocks their ability to lead healthy fulfilling lives. It aims to increase self-confidence, and is an interpersonal as well as collaborative process. Social work pursues empowerment as a global endeavor and as a way of addressing oppression and discrimination inherent in the structures and institutions of the larger society. Anderson, Wilson, Lengwe-Katembula, and Osei-Hwedie (1994) developed a model of empowerment in Africa that included five practice dimensions: personal, social, educational, economic, and political. Social workers practice within these realms one at a time or all at the same time. While practitioners most often work in the personal dimension with individual clients, it is critical for urban social workers to always include all five dimensions in their areas of function. Urban social workers are challenged by complex environmental issues that are unrelenting in the lives of people who live in inner cities. The urban social workers must be absolutely as competent in addressing personal issues of powerlessness as they are...
in engaging agencies and institutions that block opportunities for large segments of the urban community. For example, helping clients address low self-esteem and lack of basic resources may occur at the micro- or mezzo level; assisting a neighborhood with recalcitrant landlords would require macro-level engagement and collaboration to bring forth educational, economic, and political dimensions of empowerment.

At the core of empowerment and advocacy is the representation of the interests of powerless people and through the utilization of the people’s own voices work to achieve social justice and equality. Whether advocacy occurs at the case level or identifies a larger cause as the focus, urban social workers do not have the luxury of choosing one or the other. It is their role to always keep at the forefront of their work these larger issues that demand their knowledge and skills and that impact individuals and families. Lord and Hutchinson (1993) developed the following Empowerment Principles for Community Practice based on the research and experience of vulnerable people who were engaged in efforts of gaining power over their lives and communities:

1. In order to understand empowerment, citizens who are devalued must be seen as oppressed and marginalized by society, not simply as clients to be served. Sources of oppression range from poverty and abuse to social isolation and lack of access to valued resources.

2. Service systems must give up their control over people who are currently devalued. This means eliminating the power relationships that exist between professionals and citizens by ensuring collaboration and supporting consumer-controlled initiatives.

3. For a power transfer to occur, citizens must be the ones to identify the problems and solutions to personal and community issues and must have direct access to funding that normally only goes to service agencies.

4. Although power cannot be given to people by professionals, concerned professionals (urban social workers) can work to eliminate the systematic barriers that have been created, which oppress, control, and disempower vulnerable citizens.

5. Listening to the concerns, stories, feelings, experiences, and hopes of people who feel powerless is the basis for broadening people’s awareness of their oppression. The language of professionalism, which encourages dependency and control, needs to be replaced by dialogue, which supports mutuality and reciprocity.

6. Build on the strengths and capacities of citizens and avoid a focus on deficits. This is critical for building self-esteem, which is both an outcome and part of the empowerment process.

7. Participation in community life at three levels is critical for the empowerment of individuals: working on issues that affect their own lives; connecting with others who have had similar experiences; and being involved in a range of community groups and activities.
8. Encourage and support citizens to make ongoing contributions to their communities through access to valued social roles, such as employee, volunteer, mentor, advocate, or friend.

9. Citizens who are consumers of services should have control over the resources and personal supports they need to live with dignity.

10. It is possible to learn important strategies about prevention from studying the process of empowerment, for example, as people become more empowered, they rely less on formal service systems and more on informal support networks. These learnings can be used as important principles for proactively empowering potentially vulnerable individuals and groups.

Strengths and Resilience

Strengths and resilience are critical additional dimensions to the previously discussed perspectives essential to urban social work. Social work has embraced a strengths perspective as an important way of viewing people, their personal and social problems in favor of the deficit and pathology orientation, which has been characteristic of the profession since its early beginnings. A focus on what is wrong with people rather than their strengths limits a multitude of opportunities for people to grow interpersonally as well as within their social context. Weick (1992) suggests that “every person has an inherent power that may be characterized as life force, transformational capacity, life energy, spirituality, regenerative potential, and healing power . . . that can guide personal and social transformation” (p. 24). In this, the assumption is that within each of us there is a capacity to learn, relearn, grow, and change. Saleebey (1992) adds that “individuals and groups have vast, often untapped and frequently unappreciated reservoirs of physical, emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, social, and spiritual energies, resources and competencies” (p. 6). People not only survive difficult traumas and life experiences, but often learn and grow from these experiences finding them to be of great benefit.

The strengths perspective when applied to African Americans often refers to their ability to not only survive slavery, oppression, discrimination, profiling in the justice system, and socioeconomic disadvantage but also to thrive in spite of these insidious attacks. Black families, for example, rely heavily on extended family, fictive kin, informal social networks, the Black church, and self-help and civic societies as buffers for challenging and stressful life events. Hill (1972) and Hines and Boyd-Franklin (1996) describe strengths of Black families to include loyal and strong kinship bonds; flexible family roles; deep religious faith; and orientations toward work, education, and achievement. These dimensions of Black family life are too often overlooked by social workers who maintain narrow practice perspectives and interventions steeped in pathology, preconceived ideas, and a focus on their own cultural yardstick. A strengths perspective requires that an urban social worker be extremely knowledgeable about
the numerous services and resources available in urban communities at both the informal and formal institutional levels. They must be knowledgeable about policies and programs that are culturally competent, accessible, and beneficial to urban people. Moreover, they absolutely must be skilled at both assisting clients and in removing barriers to service provision through their own advocacy. Partnering and collaborating with clients or consumers and modeling strategic and effective interventions with these systems leave lasting lessons on empowerment at both the individual and community levels. Urban social workers do not fall prey to economic or political systems that have left out the voices of urban people but become major allies with urban dwellers in challenging these systems that do not behave in the best interest of people of color.

Saleebey (2002) developed an extensive list of questions that may be used in assessing strengths. For example: How have you managed thus far given all the challenges you have had to contend with? What have you learned about yourself and your world during your struggles? Which people have given you special understanding, support, and guidance? When things were going well in life, what was different? What, now, do you want out of life? What are your hopes, visions, and aspirations? What is it about your life, yourself, and your accomplishments that gives you real pride? These questions and similar others assist the social worker in moving the emphasis toward the capture of personal and social strengths and in essence remind people of the inherent resilience that they already possess.

Resilience refers to people’s innate capacity to respond to challenging and adverse events they encounter over their life course, reducing the chance that these events will result in negative or debilitating outcomes. All people have this inherent quality but whether it is used effectively to ward off difficult life issues depends on the extent to which people recognize and are aware of this capacity and the extent to which people have relied on this capacity in past life events. Resilience includes personal qualities and environmental resources that facilitate health and overall well-being. A resilience perspective requires the social worker to pursue and focus on what works and why. Understanding what helps people respond effectively to adversity gives clues for new social work interventions that can be used for future adaptations to traumatic or stressful events. Bachay and Cingel (1999) in a qualitative analysis of minority women, found that self-efficacy, well-defined faith lives, and the ability to reframe barriers and obstacles were important protective factors that enhanced their resilience. Others have identified family cohesion and higher satisfaction with social support (Carbonell, 1996), community closeness, faith in people, compassion, and spirituality (McMillen and Fisher, 1998) as buffers and protective factors for negative life issues, whether related to normal biopsychosocial development or unanticipated crises. A strong racial and cultural identity has also been found to enhance resilience. Altogether, these personal characteristics and environmental assets present important avenues for urban social workers to tap into as they incorporate these strengths into personal and community empowerment (Carlton-LaNey, 2001).
CONCEPTUALIZING A SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM: CASE STUDY

The program completed an in-depth analysis and review of the vision, mission, and goals for the social work programs. We developed the aforementioned assumptions, beliefs, and values, and then agreed that the curriculum would be grounded in the previously discussed theories, concepts, and perspectives. We certainly did not consider these to be exhaustive, but rather a starting point for ongoing deliberations and change. For example, we continue to embrace ecological perspective and generalist practice as foundational and significant in our conceptualization of culturally competent social work practice. We are vigilant, nonetheless, in our emphasis on the African-centered paradigms—cultural competence as an ever-present goal, empowerment, strengths, and resilience—which is absolutely critical for practice with African Americans who reside in urban environments. The discussion that follows will provide examples of our curriculum, which we believe are in concert with our overall contextual practice framework. The school’s goals also frame the curriculum and will also be included.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK GOALS

1. To prepare social work leaders, activist scholars, and practitioners committed to solving urban social and economic problems and enhancing the quality of life of urban populations and communities.

2. To develop a cadre of social work professionals who are culturally competent, knowledgeable, and skilled in addressing all forms and mechanisms of social injustice, oppression, and discrimination.

3. Through varied social research and knowledge development and dissemination, contribute to best practices with African American families, communities, and organizations and other historically disenfranchised and marginalized populations and communities.

4. Utilizing democratic values, social work values and ethics, a global perspective, and critical pedagogy, socialize graduates with compassion and commitment to service civic and community engagement with particular emphasis on addressing issues of poverty, human suffering, and socioeconomic disadvantage.

5. To develop an appreciation for the historical and contemporary contributions of African Americans to the field of social welfare and social work as the context for urban social work practice.

The curriculum that was subsequently developed evolved from the school’s goals and included, for example, some of the following required and/or elective courses. (See Table 1.1 for a complete list of courses.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.1 MSW Curriculum Sample</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation Curriculum Courses (All Required)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 501: Generalist Social Work Practice (Practice I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 502: Neighborhood Advocacy and Development in Poor Urban Communities (Practice II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 503: Foundation Practicum I (16 hours/week) (Field I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 504: Foundation Practicum II (16 hours/week) (Field II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 505: Life Course Development and Issues (HBSE I)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 506: Urban Organizations, Neighborhoods and Communities (HBSE II)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 507: Social Welfare and Urban Economics (Policy I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 509: Chemical Dependency and Community Violence: Urban Perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 510: Research and Urban Social Problems (Research I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced Curriculum Core Courses (All Required)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 601: Psychopathology and Clinical Intervention (Practice III)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 602: Social Work Practice With Urban Black Families (Practice IV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 603: Advanced Field Practicum III (24 hours/week) (Field III)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 604: Advanced Field Practicum IV (24 hours/week) (Field IV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 608: Organizational Policy and Leadership in Human Services (Policy II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 610: Evaluation Research of Urban Social Problems, Services and Interventions (Research II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentration Courses and Recommended Electives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gerontology (‘*’ Indicates Required Courses for Concentration)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 620: Urban Social Work Practice With the Aged and Their Families*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 621: Social Forces Affecting Older Adults and Their Families*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 622: Coping With Losses and Grief*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 623: Implications of Intergenerational Issues for Urban Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Children, Youth and Families (‘*’ Indicates Required Courses for Concentration)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 630: Urban Child Welfare*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 631: Child Abuse and Neglect*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 632: Juvenile Justice: Prevention, Development and Intervention*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 643: Popular Youth Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Social Work (‘*’ Indicates Required Courses for Concentration)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 640: Social Work in Urban Schools*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 641: Schools in Communities*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 642: Urban School Social Work and Special Education*</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 643: Popular Youth Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Health Social Work (‘*’ Indicates Required Courses for Concentration)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWK 650: Social Work Practice in Health and Disease Prevention*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 651: Epidemiology*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
1. URBAN SOCIAL WORK WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS

TABLE 1.1 MSW Curriculum Sample  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 652: Maternal and Child Health Macro Practice, Programs and Policies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 653: Public Health Policy, Urban Health Services, Issues and Planning*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Electives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 670: Spirituality, Religions and the Helping Tradition</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required Courses**

- Advocacy and development in poor underserved communities
- Generalist practice in urban communities
- Chemical dependency and community violence
- Clinical intervention with Black families

**Elective Courses**

- Spirituality, religions, and the helping tradition
- Coping with grief and loss across the life span
- Juvenile justice and delinquency prevention
- Popular youth culture
- Social work in urban schools

The competencies that follow also include a sample from the various courses that reflect not only the underlying belief structure discussed earlier but also the theoretical and conceptual constructs discussed. The course competencies are critical for urban social work and serve as examples of knowledge, values, and skills students are expected to acquire on completion of the program:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM–5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and understand the evolution of the *DSM–5* and the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination.

2. Demonstrate knowledge of traditional West African family formation and functioning prior to the onset of the international slave trade, including an understanding of basic concepts, definitions, and trends, and the identification of cultural values and historical forces that have shaped life experiences of African–Black families, including extended and aged kin, from slavery to the current era.

3. Critically analyze major theoretical perspectives that have developed over the past 100 years on Black families’ structures and functioning, applying best practices for assessment, intervention, and evaluation.
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4. Demonstrate an understanding of basic social problems African–Black families have experienced over time and common results—reactions to adversity in urban centers.

5. Develop and apply advanced skills in assessing African–Black families’ strengths, resources, and potentialities, and demonstrate clinical skills for the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of Black families in urban environments.

6. Develop an ability to analyze social policy and its impact on the lives of African–Black families—particularly those who reside in urban environments—from a historical and contemporary perspective.

7. Identify, critique, and analyze the contributions of African American social welfare pioneers to the field of social work, social work practice, social justice, and public policy, and their impact on the current social work practice context that influences the life experiences of African–Black families.

8. Acquire new knowledge and understanding of theories and values of planned organization change in the context of social services to African Americans and other urban minority families, children, other organizations, and communities.

9. Understand the barriers to equitable participation of all persons who, because of labels, are denied access to basic social rights and privileges as clients and providers in human service organizations and an ability to apply this knowledge to policy designs and intervention strategies.

10. Recognize and assess the historical context and the connection of discrimination across the life span and the implications for those oppressed groups as they age.

11. Recognize the importance of religion and spirituality among diverse populations in shaping life experiences related to mourning practices and the role of grief and loss at the same time as they are facing a range of social problems with the intent of gaining awareness, combating oppression and discrimination, and encouraging the unique coping skills within such marginalized groups.

12. Comprehend how the interdependence of generations across the life course recognizes the contributions of all age-group members to strengthen communities and organizations.

13. Respect and promote older adults’ rights to dignity and self-determination; and assess and address the adverse impacts of aging policies on historically disadvantaged populations.

14. Understand relationships among poverty, race, culture, gender, class, and the dynamics of oppression, and how these contribute to overrepresentation of African American and other children of color in the child welfare system.
15. Identify and differentiate appropriate approaches and strategies for culturally competent practice with African American children and their families and other oppressed inner-city school populations while demonstrating an understanding of and sensitivity to the role of poverty and oppression in the lives of disadvantaged inner-city children and their families.

16. Demonstrate an ability to negotiate urban communities, organizations, and public and private agencies for the benefit of urban youth with an emphasis on understanding and interpreting the role of micro, mezzo, and macro-practice models in the promotion of organizational change on behalf of urban youth, including developing a sense of responsibility for activism to promote such change.

17. Identify and critically reflect on urban African American and other diverse spiritual perspectives and experiences.

IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has presented what are believed to be critical theories, concepts, and practice perspectives essential for effective practice with African Americans within the urban context. Although these reflect promising practices among African American scholars and practitioners, nonetheless, they are not exhaustive. It is strongly believed that if urban social workers pursue these theoretical and practice perspectives, they are much more likely to be effective in their work with African Americans who live in urban communities. More importantly, a lack of understanding of these critical areas most assuredly perpetuates culturally ineffective practice, which will frustrate the worker, increase chances of burnout, and, even worse, result in negative or damaging outcomes for a substantial population of Americans.

To begin with, the urban practice community must commit to becoming culturally competent as individuals, interpersonally, and organizationally. This would include a critical examination of the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs hereto described. Undoubtedly, if an honest examination occurs, the need for further knowledge, values, and skills will become apparent. This very simply requires an acknowledgment that “typical” social work knowledge, values, and skills taught in many schools of social work that continue to be Eurocentric in their orientation do not meet the needs of African Americans in urban communities as they also do not do so for other historically marginalized groups. We willingly acknowledge that some of these traditional perspectives do have value, but we do not believe that they provide the depth that is required for competent practice with these oppressed groups. Moreover, our experiences have been that social workers, even during this time in our history, still have trouble freely and honestly addressing issues that impact African Americans, such as racism, or serving as models for addressing individual and structural discrimination for their students. It is our fervent hope that this work will serve as an impetus for once again making what seem to be difficult topics to embrace.
a priority, with the goal of making a real difference in the lives and communities of a substantial population in our country. Inability to do so will continue to have serious negative implications on social work practice for African Americans, other people of color, as well as the broader social work community. Still needed in order to further strengthen the constructs herein embraced is practice-related research, which can possibly add to what has already been developed, predominantly by scholars of African descent. This requires, however, some commitment to developing and disseminating new knowledge that acknowledges and is grounded in the cultural values representative of people of African descent. These principles should undergird any practice or research endeavors taken on by the profession of social work that is targeted at African Americans or other oppressed groups. The implications of commitment to this work are profound and should be approached with the immediacy demanded if global social work goals are to be reached. The whole of society will certainly be better off if the profession of social work is able to make significant strides in effectively addressing the needs of communities that are still on the margins of achieving equality and social justice.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Suggested Readings

1. URBAN SOCIAL WORK WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS


REFERENCES


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I. CONCEPTUALIZING URBAN SOCIAL WORK


