
Is Social Work *Still* Racist? A Content Analysis of Recent Literature

Nicole A. Corley and Stephen M. Young

Addressing systems of oppression that disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minoritized groups appears to be of marginal interest in social work's professional literature. This article describes the content analysis of articles on Asian Pacific Islander (API) Americans, African Americans, Latinx or Hispanic Americans, and Native or Indigenous Americans in four major social work journals published between 2005 and 2015. (The analysis serves to update a 1992 article by Anthony McMahon and Paula Allen-Meares that examined literature between 1980 and 1989.) Of the 1,690 articles published in *Child Welfare*, *Research on Social Work Practice*, *Social Service Review*, and *Social Work* over an 11-year period, only 123 met the criteria for inclusion. Findings suggest that social work researchers are still failing to address institutional racism and are relying heavily on micro-level interventions when working with minoritized groups. Social workers need to increase efforts to dismantle institutional racism.

KEY WORDS: *antiracism; content analysis; racism; social work research*

Building on the contributions of McMahon and Allen-Meares's (1992) content analysis of social work interventions with racially minoritized groups, this study revisits the original article's guiding question 25 years later by asking, "Is the profession of social work *still* racist?" Charges of racism are especially troubling given that social work is a values-based profession in which social justice is a central tenet in the code of ethics and mandates that social workers be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity, striving to end all forms of social injustice (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). Similar mandates for social workers to confront injustice and oppression are also expressed in the NASW Presidential Task Force Subcommittee on Institutional Racism (NASW, 2007) and in the accreditation standards provided by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015). These newly revised standards and mandates reflect an increased emphasis and clarity on diversity and social and economic justice.

The findings from the original study, however, revealed evidence contrary to these stated objectives and standards. McMahon and Allen-Meares's (1992) systematic review examined 117 articles on Asian Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans published in four major social work journals between 1980 and 1989. The

authors concluded that social work is racist because only a small percentage (5.95 percent) of the 1,965 articles reviewed in top-tier social work journals addressed work with racially minoritized populations. In addition, a preponderance (77.8 percent) of the articles that did discuss social work practice with racial and ethnic minoritized groups focused primarily on micro-level interventions that emphasized cultural awareness and helping clients adapt to or concede to oppressive systems. Glaringly absent from these articles were calls for institutional change that challenged structural inequalities. The McMahon and Allen-Meares (1992) article served as a wake-up call, urging the social work profession to develop a more organized and deliberate antiracist stance.

The argument that social work is racist is not new. Scholars have noted that despite social work's historic and perceived social justice intentions, the profession's lack of attention and inaction to issues of racial injustice calls into question its true commitment to ending oppression in all its forms (Bowles & Hopps, 2014; Briggs, Holosko, Banks, Huggins-Hoyt, & Parker, 2018; Schiele & Hopps, 2009). Allen-Meares and Burman (1995) described the scarcity of social work leadership in this area as a "discomforting silence from the social work community" (p. 271). Other scholars observed that social work's lack of involvement in racial issues

given its stated antioppression value base is “unnatural” (Holosko, Briggs, & Miller, 2017).

The daily lives of racial and ethnic minoritized groups continue to be affected by a racist system of hierarchy and inequity that characteristically advantages white Americans while creating detrimental outcomes for people of color (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004). Therefore, if social workers are failing to address systemic racial inequities, they are complicit in its maintenance. Although social work has adopted cultural competence models to help professionals become more sensitive and aware of cultural differences, some scholars argue that cultural competence falls short in confronting power dynamics and structural inequalities (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016; Sakamoto, 2007).

During the 2016 Society for Social Work and Research presidential plenary speech, Dr. Larry Davis asserted that issues of race and racism remain a critical “grand challenge” for the profession—a challenge that has been neglected, in part, because of what Dr. Davis described as the profession’s focus on being inclusive. Meaningful, often difficult discussions on race and racism that critically examine historical and contemporary social injustices, Davis asserted, are lost to more comfortable discussions of diversity. He urged social work researchers to center race more prominently in their research efforts, which includes identifying transformational interventions (Davis, 2016).

Given the significant disparities in areas where social work is highly engaged (Gilbert, Harvey, & Belgrave, 2009) and recent social work scholarship questioning the responsibility of the profession to address issues of racism, by (re)asking “Is social work racist?” our updated inventory of social work journals endeavors to provide insight into how the social work profession has progressed since the original study. The goal is to inform the development of future research and practice that pursue transformative social change on issues of race and other forms of oppression.

METHOD

Consistent with the work of McMahon and Allen-Meares (1992), we selected three of the four original journals for review: *Social Work*, *Child Welfare*, and *Social Service Review*. We could not include *Social Casework*, which was in the original content analysis, as it has been out of print since 1989. We followed McMahon and Allen-Meares’s criteria in

selecting a replacement journal. The original journal criteria included (a) being national in scope, both as to audience and contributors; (b) generally considered to be the major journals of social work and to reflect trends of thought; (c) used in previous content analyses; (d) coverage of the period of this analysis; and (e) not representing any particular specialization within social work. Considering these specifications, we selected *Research on Social Work Practice* in the updated study to replace *Social Casework*.

The methodological procedures outlined in McMahon and Allen-Meares (1992) were used to guide the process, define the terms, and coach each other. The original study used a content analysis process with relevant articles published between 1980 and 1989. For this update, articles published from 2005 through 2015 were screened for inclusion and content analysis was applied. Using the journal publishers’ Web sites, with access provided by university affiliation, we reviewed journals to identify articles for inclusion. Mirroring McMahon and Allen-Meares, we first considered articles for inclusion based on the title and abstract insertion of race; once a manuscript was identified, the article was looked at as a whole to determine inclusion. Articles were included if they addressed the subject-focused categories of race, ethnicity, Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinx or Hispanic Americans, and Indigenous or Native Americans and if they recommended a social work intervention. Short publications such as editorials or book reviews were not included. This review resulted in 123 articles being identified for inclusion. Both authors independently coded each article and recorded their responses on the article review and coding sheet.

During the review and coding process, we wanted to be thoughtful about the descriptive names that would be used for the major racial or ethnic groups in the United States. We acknowledge the problematic tendency for research to use racial or ethnic identifiers or terms that may or may not be the preferred term for members of that group. The use of such generalizing descriptors can misrepresent and overlook the multiplicity of experiences and realities found within these groups. An attempt was made to honor that perspective by using what we understand to be more inclusive and representative terms of diverse communities (for example, Latinx instead of Latino or Hispanic, API rather than Asian American). Still, despite best intentions there

may be particular terms that individuals, communities, and groups use to name themselves that may not be referenced in this study.

Articles coded as *individual* interventions were those that recommended awareness of, and change in, racist and ethnocentric attitudes in social workers or that urged social workers to understand and become sensitive to cultural customs and values. Such articles asked social workers to identify their own complacency (Park, 2013), increase knowledge of various cultures (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005), and provide culturally competent assessments and interventions (Hancock, 2005).

Articles coded as *institutional* interventions were those that recommended the restructuring or modifying of society and its institutions to change the built-in inequality. Authors urging institutional interventions most often asked social workers to create awareness and advocacy to change policy (Cleaveland, 2010; Wood, 2014). Conversely, articles that discussed institutional racism but focused on individual interventions were coded individual intervention. For example, Hancock (2005) discussed the “systemic barriers Mexican families face” (p. 691) as a way to “promote culturally competent family assessments and interventions” (p. 706).

FINDINGS

Over the 11-year (2005–2015) analysis period, 123 articles met the criteria for inclusion compared with 117 articles that met the criteria in the original review covering a 10-year period. From a total of 1,690 articles published over the analysis period, the portion of content discussing minority groups corresponded to 7.28 percent of the total content (see Table 1). This proportion is an increase from the 5.95 percent of total content found in the 1992 analysis. The current review found that all previously reviewed journals increased their overall percentage of articles: *Child Welfare* (from 3.96 percent

up to 7.56 percent), *Research on Social Work Practice* (4.02 percent; *Social Case Work* originally had 7.85 percent), *Social Service Review* (from 2.57 percent up to 4.62 percent), and *Social Work* (from 7.64 percent up to 15.72 percent).

As reflected in Table 1, 81 articles (65.85 percent) published during the 11-year period focused their interventions at the individual level, which emphasized changing social workers’ attitudes or enhancing their knowledge and skills. In the updated analysis, the number of articles proposing individual interventions decreased from 77.8 percent in the original article. Of the articles reviewed, 42 articles (34.15 percent) recommended institutional interventions.

The distribution of articles across racial groups is shown in Table 2. Seventeen articles (13.82 percent) were coded minoritized in general. These articles were not specific to any one racial or ethnic group. For example, articles categorized as minoritized in general either compared various racial and ethnic groups (Ayón & Lee, 2005) or grouped various racial groups together (Schmidt, 2014). Overall, articles written about Indigenous or Native Americans (46.00 percent) and minoritized in general (47.00 percent) received greater emphasis on institutional interventions. At the other end of the scale, only 16.67 percent of Asian American articles recommended institutional interventions.

Social Work published 50 articles (or 15.72 percent of all their articles published during the reviewed 11-year period) that provided recommendations on working with minoritized groups (see Table 3). Articles that focused on various ethnic groups were well distributed among journals, with the largest number of articles focused on work with African Americans.

The distribution of articles varied over the decade; 86 of the articles (70.00 percent of all articles included in this study) were published between the years 2007 to 2012 (see Table 4). Some of these

Table 1: Number of Articles Proposing Some Form of Social Work Intervention with Minorities, per Journal, 2005–2015

Journal	Individual Intervention	Institutional Intervention	Aggregate	% of Articles Published by Journal	Total Number of Articles
<i>Child Welfare</i>	24	11	35	7.5594	463
<i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>	22	5	27	4.0238	671
<i>Social Service Review</i>	3	8	11	4.6218	238
<i>Social Work</i>	32	18	50	15.7233	318
Total	81	42	123	7.2781	1,690

variations resulted from publication of special issues focusing on racial minorities. The year with the most articles (21) was 2008, when *Child Welfare* published a special issue (volume 87, issue 2) on racial disproportionality in child welfare. Also of note, in 2009 *Social Work* published a special issue (volume 54, issue 3) focused on racial minorities, resulting in a large number of relevant articles (17) being published. In 2011, *Research on Social Work Practice* published a special issue (volume 21, issue 3) on the challenges, disparities, and experiences of African American men. In 2012, *Child Welfare* published a special issue (volume 91, issue 3) on services for Native children and families in North America.

PATTERNS OF INTERVENTION

The number of articles written about API Americans decreased significantly from the original analysis. Whereas results from the 1992 study found 20

intervention articles on API Americans, our updated review found only 14. This finding was surprising given the growing number of Asian families in the United States (Choi & Lahey, 2006). Like the original article, the literature on API Americans predominantly discussed them in terms of individual interventions. Of the 14 articles only two recommended an institutional intervention (Choi & Lahey, 2006; Leung, Cheung, & Tsui, 2012). As McMahon and Allen-Meares (1992) highlighted in their analysis, the dearth of literature on API Americans may be a result of the model minority stereotype, which homogenizes their experiences and presumes they are all socially and economically “successful.” Choi and Lahey (2006) underscored this point in their research, noting that “studies that include ethnic minority youth frequently focus only on blacks and Hispanics” (p. 444). Consequently, although API Americans make up one of the fastest

Table 2: Number of Articles Proposing Some Form of Social Work Intervention with Minorities, per Minority Group, 2005–2015

Minoritized Group	Individual Intervention	Institutional Intervention	Aggregate	% of Whole
Asian Pacific Islander American	10	2	12	9.76
Black or African American	30	14	44	35.77
Latinx or Hispanic American	17	7	24	19.51
Indigenous or Native American	14	12	26	21.14
Minoritized in general	9	8	17	13.82
Total	80	43	123	100

Table 3: Number of Minority Articles per Journal, 2005–2015

Minoritized Group	<i>Child Welfare</i>	<i>RSWP</i>	<i>SSR</i>	<i>Social Work</i>	Total
Asian Pacific Islander American	2	0	2	8	12
Black or African American	8	16	6	14	44
Latinx or Hispanic American	7	7	0	10	24
Indigenous or Native American	13	2	1	10	26
Minoritized in general	5	2	2	8	17
Total	35	27	11	50	123

Notes: *RSWP* = *Research on Social Work Practice*, *SSR* = *Social Service Review*.

Table 4: Number of Minority Articles per Year, 2005–2015

Minoritized Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Asian Pacific Islander American	1	3	0	3	0	0	1	2	2	0	0
Black or African American	3	2	5	11	5	4	8	0	1	2	3
Latinx or Hispanic American	2	2	1	0	9	2	0	2	1	4	1
Indigenous or Native American	1	0	1	2	3	5	2	8	2	0	2
Minorities in general	2	0	3	5	0	0	2	2	1	2	0
Total	9	7	10	21	17	11	13	14	7	8	6

growing ethnic groups in the United States, they remain one of the least studied (Choi, Harachi, & Catalano, 2006). Studies conducted by Pelczarski and Kemp (2006) and Mokuau, Garlock-Tuialii, and Lee (2008) urged social work researchers to disaggregate data so that the experiences of specific ethnic groups are better understood. Disaggregating data by ethnic group allows researchers to take notice of the groups' particular realities and needs.

As in the original study, social work interventions with African Americans comprised the largest category of surveyed literature, with 44 total intervention studies. The share of intervention studies peaked in 2008 with 11 articles, five of which were from a special issue in *Child Welfare* written to increase social workers understanding of disproportionality and disparity of outcomes. *Social Work* and *Research on Social Work Practice* had the most articles written about African Americans, 14 and 16 respectively. Of the 14 articles written in *Social Work*, four (29 percent) were from a 2009 special issue on racial minorities. Likewise, in *Research on Social Work Practice* six (37.5 percent) of the 16 intervention articles on African Americans were a part of a special issue on the experiences of African American men. Overall, this updated analysis found that 68 percent ($n = 30$) of the intervention studies with African Americans were individual and 32 percent ($n = 14$) were institutional. Consistent with the 1992 analysis, studies on African Americans primarily focused on culturally responsive or culturally sensitive approaches to practice, such as knowledge and application of race-, ethnicity-, and gender-centered frameworks (Jones & Guy-Sheftall, 2015; Waites, 2009). Articles that did propose institutional change often noted the importance of policy work. Departing from the individual focus, Bent-Goodley (2009) stated that for social workers to effectively attend to gender-based violence, they must "go beyond the individual and also serve as an advocate for policy and programmatic change on multilevels" (p. 267). This process further requires "an emphasis on social change and finding ways to address the intersections of oppression" (Bent-Goodley, 2009, p. 267).

There were 24 articles written on Latinx Americans, an increase of eight since the original study: 17 of the surveyed literature focused on individual interventions and seven proposed an institutional intervention. Most articles (37.5 percent) written about Latinx Americans were published in 2009:

two of the nine articles were from the special issue in *Social Work*. The majority of articles (71 percent) on this ethnic group underscored the need for social workers to "enhance their mediating role" (Quinones-Mayo & Dempsey, 2005) by expanding their knowledge of Latinx culture to work more effectively with them. Institutional interventions with this group also tended to discuss the role of policy in varying degrees of specificity. Ayón (2014) provided critical insights for social workers to work alongside Latino immigrant families through community building efforts and policy work. In a study with Latino farmworkers, Padilla, Scott, and Lopez (2014) advised social workers to go beyond cultural awareness and develop "coordinated efforts that connect the immediate needs of individuals with broader change at the societal level" (p. 164). Padilla et al. also provided specific directives for social workers to organize around critical areas of policy reform related to Latino farmworker communities. Overall, the majority of intervention studies on Latinx Americans emphasized the need for social workers to better understand issues involving immigration. Focusing social work practice on immigration, while important, seemingly locks this diverse group as perpetual foreigners, neglecting other important realities facing this population.

With 26 articles, social work interventions with Native Americans constituted the second largest category of surveyed literature, an increase of four from the original study. Half of the articles written on Native communities were located in *Child Welfare*. In 2012, a special issue in *Child Welfare* on contemporary child welfare research, policies, and practices with Indigenous communities contributed to 30 percent ($n = 8$) of the 26 articles. Unlike the original study, which reported that a preponderance of intervention studies were individual (19 individual and 3 institutional), our analysis found that the studies were more evenly distributed: 14 (54 percent) proposed individual interventions and 12 (46 percent) proposed institutional. The increase in institutional implications may be attributed to the increased use of postcolonial or decolonizing approaches when working with Indigenous communities (Burnette, 2015; Dennis, 2009). Decolonizing approaches emphasize going beyond surface-level change by encouraging social workers to develop a consciousness that understands the ways in which European or Western colonization has affected and

continues to affect Indigenous communities and underscores the use of Indigenous knowledge to provide effective services. Hodge, Limb, and Cross (2009), for example, encouraged social workers to abandon the Western therapeutic approach and rebuild the helping process using Native knowledge. Dennis (2009) also suggested using postcolonial approaches to draw on their culturally specific histories to guide practice.

Seventeen intervention articles were written on minoritized in general, compared with 25 found in the original study. Studies on minoritized in general were also fairly balanced between individual and institutional interventions: nine (52 percent) articulated individual interventions and eight (42 percent) suggested institutional. As with the other groups, individual interventions concentrated on improving the competencies of practitioners. Institutional recommendations emphasized critical self-awareness and competencies that move away from Euro-centered values toward models that are informed by communities of color to better understand the systemic barriers affecting racial and ethnic minoritized groups (Aisenberg, 2008; Allen-Meares, 2008; Yan, 2008). Exploring issues related to educational inequality, Fram, Miller-Cribbs, and Van Horn (2007) advised social workers to pay attention to certain types of policies that threaten student academic experiences and “strengthening the policies and programs that promote economic equality and meaningful choices” (p. 318).

IS SOCIAL WORK STILL RACIST?

The results of this analysis suggest that the profession is still failing to address institutional racism. Our updated inventory found that the majority of articles focused on individual interventions with the same basic intentions: educating or training social workers to become more aware or sensitive to the cultural dynamics of people of color and adapting their practice to provide culturally competent and sensitive services. The practitioner-focused or culturally competent orientation inherently validates and preserves the status quo. Individual interventions, without institutional reform, are “inadequate and damaging in the long run because they put a bandaid on social problems” (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992, p. 537). Culturally competent approaches have long been the subject of considerable debate. Although cultural competency frameworks have been an important step in the development of social workers’ understanding of people from various backgrounds and

effectively responding to their needs, they are not without limitations (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010; Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011). The idea of cultural competence is widely criticized for the assumption that cultural awareness translates into competent, antioppressive practice (Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016; Sakamoto, 2007). Sakamoto (2007) pointed to the de-political nature of cultural competency, wherein culture is viewed as neutral, thereby allowing systems of oppression to go unnoticed and unchecked. Pon (2009) echoed this sentiment, arguing that the impartial view of culture and lack of theorizing about power inherent in cultural competency is like “new racism.” According to Pon, “cultural competency otherizes non-whites, using culture to do so, all the while never having to invoke racialist language” (p. 62).

The current analysis suggests that social workers are aware of institutional racism and are doing a better job, at least, discussing the impact of oppression and the societal conditions affecting communities of color. However, these discussions appear to be empty talk as the recognition of systemic issues often did not lead to developed interventions that charged social workers with combating the structural mechanisms that perpetuate racism. The analysis also revealed that researchers who did recommend institutional change often provided vague information that lacked direction, clarity, and specificity. Authors spoke of removing barriers or being involved in policy but did not offer practical ways to engage in those efforts. The cursory nature of policy implications seemed more like a last-minute add-on. This finding of nebulous implications supports McMahon and Allen-Meares’s (1992) argument that social work is racist because a preponderance of the literature reviewed was “naïve and superficial in its antiracist practice” (p. 537).

Overall, there appears to be a significant lack of literature in top social work journals written on the experiences of people of color. Considering that the large number of clients social workers serve are people of color, few would argue about social work’s unique position to address racism (Davis, 2016). Certainly, there are specialized social work journals dedicated to developing understanding and knowledge on the impact of race, culture, and ethnicity in social work practice; however, the scant number of articles in this surveyed literature is alarming and raises doubts about social work’s commitment to issues experienced by people of color. Practitioners should not need to search for content-specific journals or look in journals from

other disciplines to find race-related or systemic-level interventions.

The paucity of articles related to racially minoritized groups brings to the fore concerns about the number of articles on people of color received and subsequently accepted by these journals. Social work research is not immune from what [Bernal and Villalpando \(2002\)](#) described as an “apartheid of knowledge” in academia. These authors along with other scholars of color point to how race-related research, particularly those produced by faculty of color, are not valued or considered meritorious scholarship ([Holosko et al., 2017](#); [Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009](#)). The hierarchical nature of journals can be viewed as emblematic to the institutional inequities social workers are championed to address. This devaluing of literature from researchers of color is just one manifestation. Another concern identified during the analysis was the impact of funding on research outputs. Competitive funding sources often drive *what* is researched as well as *how* it is researched. The ever-increasing expectation to obtain funding streams may be contributing to the segregation of knowledge in social work research.

Moreover, of the 123 articles included in the analysis, 26 percent ($n = 33$) came from special issues. Special issues, comprising invited submissions around a certain theme, are commonplace in social work research journals. We wonder if special issues on people of color is yet another form of objectification or othering because the experiences of racially minoritized groups are seemingly not part of “mainstream” publications. Overall, we agree with [McMahon and Allen-Meares’s \(1992\)](#) position that the literature of the profession is the guiding text for knowledge and practice. Ultimately, if the literature is lacking and superficial in its attention to antiracist practice, one can reason that social workers on the frontline might operate at the same level ([McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992](#)).

MOVING FORWARD

The current structures of our social service and academic institutions in the United States overwhelmingly advantage white Americans. In the United States, 85 percent of licensed social workers are predominately non-Hispanic white and most of our clients are people of color ([Center for Health Workforce Studies & NASW Center for Workforce Studies, 2006](#)) who must navigate intrinsically white structures for power, access, platform, and authority

in this country. This inequity of power in conceptualizing, developing, implementing, analyzing, and disseminating research and service delivery must be part of the conversation as well as part of the solution. The social work profession will be susceptible to allegations of negligence as long as it continues to leave it to groups most burdened by systemic oppression to instigate and implement change. As a profession based on “whiteness” ([Sakamoto, 2007](#)) and conditioned by institutional inequality, it is not surprising that social work is a hotbed for oppressive practices ([Strier, 2007](#)). To effectively address and combat the bias expressed in social work research, education, and practice, the profession should firmly adopt critical antiracist, antioppressive practice models that focus on the analysis of structural oppression ([Sakamoto, 2007](#)).

Fundamental to opposing the dominant traditions of research is the development of a critical consciousness in which social workers continuously reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and worldviews ([Sakamoto, 2007](#)). This state of awareness does not start and finish with self but must extend to institutions and the profession ([Azzopardi & McNeill, 2016](#)). Social workers must ask themselves *how* (not if) they are benefiting from oppressive systems and how they facilitate the continuation of those systems by doing nothing to dismantle them.

Critical theories such as critical race theory (CRT) are valuable because they help expose sociocultural and political processes that perpetuate the marginalization of racially minoritized groups. These theories maintain that research is not neutral and is heavily influenced by the researcher’s worldview. CRT, in particular, acknowledges that racism has been and continues to be a lasting fixture in the United States—interwoven in dominant cultural norms and politics ([Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995](#)). Therefore, issues of power, privilege, and oppression should play a prominent role in the investigation of research topics. Moreover, CRT emphasizes how a social worker’s racial privilege can act as blinders to the lived experiences of groups regularly confronted by structural racism ([Ortiz & Jani, 2010](#)).

This study underscores the need for social work researchers to disrupt and transform the way they frame, define, and interpret their research. Decolonizing the profession’s knowledge base by recognizing and integrating indigenous knowledges and different

ways of knowing is one way to challenge whiteness within social work (Sakamoto, 2007). Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) summarized the major issues in research, generally, using the following critical questions: Whose research is it? Whose interests does it serve? Who has framed its scope and designed its questions? Who will carry it out and write it up? The results of this analysis suggest that social work researchers might have difficulty handling such questions. Critical and decolonizing approaches to social work are based in action-oriented and participatory research methods. Participatory research invites the community and individuals under study to be involved in all aspects of the research process. Action research is designed to explore certain conditions and topics, subsequently leading to social action. Participatory action research, a combination the two approaches, “involves purposeful, participatory, and systematic examination and co-creation of knowledge to engage social justice issues” (Johnston-Goodstar, 2013, p. 318).

This study has limitations. As McMahan and Allen-Meares (1992) mentioned, the reasons for the limited literature found in these journals cannot be teased out from the results of this analysis. As with any descriptive methodology, content analysis is good at describing “what” is on the page but not “why” it is there. In addition, the original coding (individual versus institutional) did not take into account the complex nature of the articles reviewed for this update. For example, articles discussing historic events or pioneers in the profession of social work were difficult to allocate. On one hand, they are often discussing community-level practices that are needed to better serve that group, which seemed institutional in nature. This type of article was never specifically addressed in the original article by McMahan and Allen-Meares (1992). In general, the dichotomous nature of individual versus institutional can be criticized as being reductive, and future research can break down the types of recommendations into more specific categories (for example, shifting client perspectives, adjusting service-delivery practices to be culturally competent, policy, realigning measurements, and so on). Social work education journals can also be gleaned to gain insight into how our curriculum and standards for education prepare social workers to conduct macro-level interventions. Future researchers may also want to use meta-analysis methodologies to encompass a greater number of social work

journals, target specific groups and interventions, and incorporate macro-level innovative interventions from other disciplines.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the content related to minoritized groups in four major social work journals over an 11-year period between 2005 and 2015. Only a small percentage (7.3 percent) of the 1,690 articles reviewed proposed some form of intervention with minoritized groups. The majority of the articles (66 percent) proposed an individualistic intervention that emphasized cultural awareness or culturally sensitive practice, which reinforces the status quo or helping the cultural “other” adapt to an oppressive society. The combined results of this review and the previous content analysis by McMahan and Allen-Meares (1992) suggest that for the past 35 years social work literature has only marginally addressed institutional and structural racism. The content’s heavy emphasis on individual-level interventions is inadequate in opposing the societal and political conditions that perpetuate the racial disparities experienced by communities of color. The fact remains that people of color are more likely to experience poverty, chronic health issues, poor academic outcomes, unemployment, and higher rates of incarceration. Dismantling systemic issues requires more focused attention on developing macro-oriented social workers equipped with a critical consciousness to dismantle them. **SW**

REFERENCES

- Aisenberg, E. (2008). Evidence-based practice in mental health care to ethnic minority communities: Has its practice fallen short of its evidence? *Social Work, 53*, 297–306.
- Allen-Meares, P. (2008). Assessing the adaptive behavior of youths: Multicultural responsibility. *Social Work, 53*, 307–316. doi:10.1093/sw/53.4.307
- Allen-Meares, P., & Burman, S. (1995). The endangerment of African American men: An appeal for social work action [Comments on Currents]. *Social Work, 40*, 268–274.
- Ayón, C. (2014). Service needs among Latino immigrant families: Implications for social work practice. *Social Work, 59*, 13–23.
- Ayón, C., & Lee, C. D. (2005). A comparative analysis of child welfare services through the eyes of African American, Caucasian, and Latino parents. *Research on Social Work Practice, 15*, 257–266.
- Azzopardi, C., & McNeill, T. (2016). From cultural competence to cultural consciousness: Transitioning to a critical approach to working across differences in social work. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 25*, 282–299.
- Ben-Ari, A., & Strier, R. (2010). Rethinking cultural competence: What can we learn from Levinas? *British Journal of Social Work, 40*, 2155–2167.

- Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2009). A black experience-based approach to gender-based violence. *Social Work, 54*, 262–269.
- Bernal, D. D., & Villalpando, O. (2002). An apartheid of knowledge in academia: The struggle over the “legitimate” knowledge of faculty of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*, 169–180.
- Bowles, D. D., & Hopps, J. G. (2014). The profession’s role in meeting its historical mission to serve vulnerable populations. *Advances in Social Work, 15*, 1–20.
- Briggs, H. E., Holosko, M. J., Banks, L., Huggins-Hoyt, K. Y., & Parker, J. (2018). How are African Americans currently represented in various social work venues? *Research on Social Work Practice, 28*, 275–287.
- Burnette, C. (2015). Historical oppression and intimate partner violence experienced by indigenous women in the United States: Understanding connections. *Social Service Review, 89*, 531–563.
- Center for Health Workforce Studies & NASW Center for Workforce Studies. (2006). *Licensed social workers in the U.S., 2004*. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mV_QzN0aDzc%3d&portalid=0
- Choi, Y., Harachi, T. W., & Catalano, R. F. (2006). Neighborhoods, family, and substance use: Comparisons of the relations across racial and ethnic groups. *Social Service Review, 80*, 675–704.
- Choi, Y., & Lahey, B. B. (2006). Testing the model minority stereotype: Youth behaviors across racial and ethnic groups. *Social Service Review, 80*, 419–452.
- Cleaveland, C. (2010). “We are not criminals”: Social work advocacy and unauthorized migrants. *Social Work, 55*, 74–81.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational policy and accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master’s social work programs*. Retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Accreditation-Process/2015-EPAS/2015EPAS_Web_FINAL.pdf.aspx
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: New Press.
- Davis, L. E. (2016). Race: America’s grand challenge. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 7*, 395–403.
- Dennis, M. K. (2009). Risk and protective factors for HIV/AIDS in Native Americans: Implications for preventive intervention. *Social Work, 54*, 145–154.
- Fram, M. S., Miller-Cribbs, J. E., & Van Horn, L. (2007). Poverty, race, and the contexts of achievement: Examining educational experiences of children in the U.S. South. *Social Work, 52*, 309–319.
- Gilbert, D., Harvey, A., & Belgrave, F. (2009). Advancing the Africentric paradigm shift discourse: Building toward evidence-based Africentric interventions in social work practice with African Americans. *Social Work, 54*, 243–252. doi:10.1093/sw/54.3.243
- Hancock, T. U. (2005). Cultural competence in the assessment of poor Mexican families in the rural Southeastern United States. *Child Welfare, 84*, 689–711.
- Hodge, D. R., Limb, G. E., & Cross, T. L. (2009). Moving from colonization toward balance and harmony: A Native American perspective on wellness. *Social Work, 54*, 211–219. doi:10.1093/sw/54.3.211
- Holosko, M. J., Briggs, H. E., & Miller, K. M. (2017). Do black lives really matter—to social work? Introduction to the special edition. *Research on Social Work Practice, 28*, 272–274. doi:10.49731517706551
- Jani, J. S., Pierce, D., Ortiz, L., & Sowbel, L. (2011). Access to intersectionality, content to competence: Deconstructing social work education diversity standards. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*, 283–301.
- Jayakumar, U. M., Howard, T. C., Allen, W. R., & Han, J. C. (2009). Racial privilege in the professoriate: An exploration of campus climate, retention, and satisfaction. *Journal of Higher Education, 80*, 538–563.
- Johnston-Goodstar, K. (2013). Indigenous youth participatory action research: Re-visioning social justice for social work with indigenous youths. *Social Work, 58*, 314–320.
- Jones, L. V., & Guy-Sheffall, B. (2015). Conquering the black girl blues. *Social Work, 60*, 343–350 doi:10.1093/sw/swv032
- Lawrence, K., & Keleher, T. (2004). Structural racism. In *Race and Public Policy Conference, Berkeley*. Retrieved from <http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Definitions%20of%20Racism.pdf>
- Leung, P., Cheung, M., & Tsui, V. (2012). Help-seeking behaviors among Chinese American with depressive symptoms. *Social Work, 57*, 61–71.
- McMahon, A., & Allen-Meares, P. (1992). Is social work racist? A content analysis of recent literature. *Social Work, 37*, 533–539.
- Mokuau, N., Garlock-Tuailii, J., & Lee, P. (2008). Has social work met its commitment to Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders? A review of the periodical literature. *Social Work, 58*, 115–121.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2007). *Institutional racism & the social work profession: A call to action*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=SWK1aR53FAk%3D&portalid=0>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2017). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- Ortiz, L., & Jani, J. (2010). Critical race theory: A transformational model for teaching diversity. *Journal of Social Work Education, 46*, 175–193.
- Padilla, Y. C., Scott, J. L., & Lopez, O. (2014). Economic insecurity and access to the social safety net among Latino farmworker families. *Social Work, 59*, 157–165.
- Park, Y. (2013). The role of the YWCA in the World War II internment of Japanese Americans: A cautionary tale for social work. *Social Service Review, 87*, 477–524.
- Pelczarski, Y., & Kemp, S. P. (2006). Patterns of child maltreatment referrals among Asian and Pacific Islander families. *Child Welfare, 85*, 5–31.
- Pon, G. (2009). Cultural competency as new racism: An ontology of forgetting. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 20*(1), 59–71.
- Quinones-Mayo, Y., & Dempsey, P. (2005). Finding the bicultural balance: Immigrant Latino mothers raising “American” adolescents. *Child Welfare, 84*, 649–667.
- Sakamoto, I. (2007). An anti-oppressive approach to cultural competence. *Canadian Social Work Review, 24*(1), 105–114.
- Schiele, J. H., & Hopps, J. G. (2009). Racial minorities then and now: The continuing significance of race [Guest editorial]. *Social Work, 54*, 195–199.
- Schmidt, I. D. (2014). Addressing PTSD in low-income victims of intimate partner violence: Moving toward a comprehensive intervention. *Social Work, 59*, 253–260.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. New York: Zed Books.
- Strier, R. (2007). Anti-oppressive research in social work: A preliminary definition. *British Journal of Social Work, 37*, 857–871.
- Waites, C. (2009). Building on strengths: Intergenerational practice with African American families. *Social Work, 54*, 278–287.

- Wood, H. (2014). When only a house makes a home: How home selection matters in the residential mobility decisions of lower-income, inner-city African American families. *Social Service Review*, 88, 264–294.
- Yan, M. C. (2008). Exploring cultural tensions in cross-cultural social work practice. *Social Work*, 53, 317–328.

Nicole A. Corley, PhD, MSW, is assistant professor, School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1000 Floyd Avenue, Third Floor, Richmond, VA 23284. **Stephen M. Young, PhD, LCSW**, is BSW program director and assistant professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, University of South Alabama, Mobile. Address correspondence to Stephen M. Young, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, University of South Alabama, 5991 USA Drive N., Room 3125, Mobile, AL 36688; e-mail: smyoung@southalabama.edu.

Original manuscript received January 26, 2017
 Final revision received April 17, 2018
 Editorial decision June 7, 2018
 Accepted June 8, 2018
 Advance Access Publication August 22, 2018

LETTERS

Readers: Submit your reactions to and comments about an article published in *Social Work Research* or a contemporary issue on social work research. Send your letter (two double-spaced pages or fewer) as a Word document through the online portal at <http://swr.msubmit.net> (initial, one-time registration is required).

HANDBOOK ON BULLYING PREVENTION

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

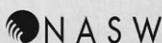
Catherine P. Bradshaw, Editor

Bullying is a topic that has raised major concern for our nation, so much, that all states have passed policies that specifically address this issue. This problem is very common among youth and adults, and has the potential to have long-term effects. In the *Handbook on Bullying Prevention: A Life Course Perspective*, chapter authors provide recommendations for prevention and early intervention in bullying situations involving youth and adults across the life course.

There are very few books specifically written about bullying across the life course, and this handbook focuses on understanding causes and consequences, as well as prevention, in several different settings, not just schools. This handbook is intended to serve as a “go-to” resource to bring awareness and provide effective strategies for stemming the harmful impacts of bullying. *Handbook on Bullying Prevention* is a helpful guide for social workers, mental health clinicians, practitioners, researchers, and educators.

ISBN: 978-0-87101-500-6. 2017.
 Item #5006. 296 pages. \$39.99.
 1-800-227-3590 • www.naswpress.org


 NASW PRESS


 National Association of Social Workers

CODE:APHB17