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E. Franklin Frazier and the Interfacing of Black Sociology and Black Social Work

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

The renown sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier (1894–1962), is known almost exclusively for his scholarly contributions to the discipline of sociology. All of his books such as *The Negro in the United States*, *The Negro Family in the United States*, and *The Black Bourgeoisie* were published after Frazier had completed the Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago in 1931. There is a less known segment of Frazier's professional life that is important to acknowledge and highlight if his work as a scholar and advocate for social change is to be fully understood and appreciated. This stage of Frazier's professional life is the period when he was

Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work between 1922 and 1927. Indeed, Frazier was the second director of the school, preceded only by another sociology professor. Frazier made significant contributions to the knowledge base of social work during his years as director, and, along with George Edmund Haynes, Forrester B. Washington, and Charles S. Johnson, was one of the first to provide a "black perspective" to social work's knowledge base. The scant attention given to Frazier's professional life while at the Atlanta School is revealed by this writer's ability to locate only one social work journal article that specifically addresses the subject (see, Platt & Chandler, 1988).

This paper has three primary objectives: 1) to demonstrate how Frazier's activities with the Atlanta School of Social Work represented an intimate connection found between social work and sociology during the early part of the century; 2) to underscore some major themes in the writings of Frazier during his tenure with the Atlanta School; and 3) to explore the implications of Frazier's early ideas for contemporary social work issues.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify a few terms: *black sociology* and *black social work*. For this paper's purpose, black sociology is defined as the ideas generated by African American sociologists to describe and explain social phenomena and social problems relevant to the African American community. Black social work refers to the strategies or interventions developed and employed by African American social workers to bring about change in the lives of African Americans who experience social and psychological problems. These problems can be associated with African Americans collectively, as family units, or as individuals. Though knowledge production and knowledge application are generally seen as two separate activities as reflected in these definitions, they can and should be interchangeable. The interchangeability of these professional roles was manifested in the intimate connection between sociology and social work at the beginning of the 20th century.

INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

Frazier's activities with the Atlanta School of Social Work typified an intimate nexus that existed at the early part of the

20th century between sociology and social work. This connection was not only discerned in the black world but also the white world. In the white world, sociology and social work paralleled in their development. Each was interested in the escalating social problems that resulted from the expansive migration of European immigrants and greater urbanization that occurred during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries (Trattner, 1994). It was thought that there was a mutual relationship between sociology and social work, with sociology being responsible for determining general laws and principles that shape human relations and social work being responsible for providing the necessary data for testing and establishing those laws and principles (Trattner, 1994).

Social work among European Americans during this time was bifurcated into two camps: 1) the Charity Organization Societies (COS), and 2) the Social Reform or Settlement House Movement (Day, 1997; Jansson, 1993; Trattner, 1994). While the COS, like the Settlement House Movement, was concerned with the problems of poverty and acculturation caused by the wave of European Immigrants, it was the social reformers of the Settlement House Movement, such as Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, and Florence Kelly, that aligned themselves more closely with sociology. This is attributed to that movement's emphasis on a social environmental explanation of poverty, family dissolution, unemployment, and crime. A significant aspect of the Settlement Movement's motto and mandate was "research," and many of the Settlements were laboratories for field and ethnographic studies that sought to uncover the causes of poverty and crime and to examine the lifestyle patterns of the immigrants (Jansson, 1993; Trattner, 1994).

A similar evolution occurred between black sociology and black social work. The scene instead was the migration of African Americans from the agrarian south to the industrial north, which influenced considerable dislocations and problems for African Americans generally and African American families specifically. Problems of unemployment, racial discrimination, crime, homelessness, and child abuse and neglect increasingly threatened the survival and advancement of the African American community and became eyesores for the African American professional elite in the north (Franklin, 1997; Trotter, 1993).

Juxtaposed against the growing social problems was the practice of racial discrimination by white philanthropic and social

service organizations whose refusal to address the needs and problems of African Americans left significant numbers without assistance and a mechanism to advocate for stable employment, decent housing, and civil rights (Moore, 1981; Thomas, 1967). The escalating social problems experienced by African Americans along with the racial preferences of many European American social workers began to spark interest in some to establish a national social service organization to address the specific needs and issues of African American migrants in the north as well as in the south. The social service organization that was established to address, reduce, and eliminate the problems of African American migrants was the *National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes*, better known as the Urban League. Established in 1910 by both European and African American elites, the League embodied and affirmed the intimate nexus between sociology and social work, with special emphasis on sponsoring research that identified problems associated with urbanization, inequality, and economic discrimination (Moore, 1981).

At this point in its development, black sociology was almost exclusively identified with the study and amelioration of social problems within the African American community, and this was especially the case within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Jones, 1974). The Urban League's philosophy and organizational aims affirmed this focus, and its validation of the relationship between social work and sociology was evidenced by its combined focus on a) social science research methods and b) scientific charity methods to classify and resolve the problems of the African American community. In this regard, the founders and proponents of Urban League philosophy believed in the superiority of the emerging scientific methods, as opposed to traditional African American healing strategies, in bringing about positive social change for African Americans (Martin & Martin, 1995).

The Urban League, during its initial years, gave scholarships and fellowships to African Americans who were interested in pursuing training in social work (see Edwards, 1974; Moore, 1981). Frazier was a direct product of the Urban League's philosophy, and, after receiving his master's degree in sociology from Clark University in Massachusetts in 1920, he received a research fellowship from the Urban League to study at the New

York School of Social Work (Edwards, 1974), which is now the Columbia University School of Social Work. Frazier was not unlike many African American Urban League types in that they had training in social work and in some other social science, usually sociology. George Edmund Haynes, the first executive director of the Urban League, also was an example of this. Frazier's connection with social work would expand and crystallize when he became director of the Atlanta School of Social Work, from which he produced copious articles examining the social problems of African Americans.

THE ATLANTA SCHOOL AND FRAZIER

Frazier came to Atlanta to assume a teaching position in Morehouse College's sociology department (Frazier, undated; Edwards, 1974; Platt & Chandler, 1988). However, part of the expectation of assuming the position was for Frazier to serve as acting director of the Atlanta School. Frazier's predecessor, Gary Moore, who also was a sociology professor at Morehouse, was on leave at Columbia University completing work on his doctorate. Frazier became the permanent director in 1922 after the unexpected death of Moore (Frazier, undated).

The Atlanta School of Social Work was an excellent place from which Frazier could gain popularity, contribute to the nexus between sociology and social work, and develop his scholarly ideas. The School received considerable attention because it was the first school whose specific aim was to offer social work training to African Americans. It was formed in 1920, two years before Frazier's arrival, out of concern that more trained African American social workers were needed to help prevent, alleviate, and eliminate the social problems of African Americans (Thomas, 1967). The School was incorporated under Frazier's leadership in 1924 (Frazier, undated), and he traveled and worked extensively to better market the School and to improve its standards (Platt & Chandler, 1988). As the second director of the Atlanta School, serving until 1927, Frazier had an immense opportunity to significantly shape the direction of black social work and to affect its knowledge base. It is his contributions to the knowledge base during his directorship that we now turn our attention.

MAJOR THEMES OF FRAZIER'S SCHOLARLY WORK WHILE DIRECTOR

According to Edwards' (1968) extensive bibliography of Frazier's work, Frazier published 28 articles in the five years that he directed the Atlanta School. His works were found in such periodicals as *Opportunity*, *Crisis*, *The Southern Workman* and *The Journal of Social Forces*, and, in these publications, he addressed a wide range of topics that pertained to the African American community. The extensiveness of his scholarly contributions implicitly demonstrates his belief that the written communication of ideas was a critical component in the examination of the problems of the African American community and in the struggle to render the United States a better place for that community. This valuation of written communication as a means of social change and critique not only helped catapult Frazier as a chief player in the dialog and social commentary of African Americans but also gave black social work a model for publication productivity. Unfortunately, the level of written contributions of African American social work faculty today has not followed Frazier's lead (see Schiele, 1991, 1995).

In examining Frazier's contributions to the scholarly literature during his directorship of the Atlanta School, at least four dominant themes are detected: 1) the deleterious effects that slavery had on African Americans generally and the African American family specifically; 2) the faith that the application of the scientific method would more effectively identify, alleviate, and eliminate the social problems experienced by African Americans; 3) the necessity of African Americans to formulate business cooperatives; and 4) the critique of racism.

The Deleterious Effects of Slavery and Its Aftermath

Even before his acclaimed 1939 book, *The Negro Family in the United States*, Frazier avouched in several of his 1920s articles that 1) slavery had destroyed most—if not all—of the remnants of African culture among African Americans; and 2) the inimical conditions of slavery was a primary source of many of the psychological and social problems that African Americans experienced. Frazier especially addressed the adverse consequences for the African American family, to which he gave much attention while

at the Atlanta School. As Edwards (1974) contends, Frazier's professional interest in the African American family had its roots in his association with the social work profession. Frazier's interest in the African American family and the impact slavery had on its structure and on its members was best discerned in two articles he published in the 1920s: 1) *Is the Negro Family a Unique Sociological Unit?* (Frazier, 1927a); and 2) *Three Scourges of the Negro Family* (Frazier, 1926a). In each, Frazier identified some unflattering features of the African American family that he maintained were fundamentally generated from the horrors of slavery and its consequences.

Frazier (1927a) delineated three reasons why the "Negro" family was an unique sociological unit. The first reason, the one which he appeared to believe was most central, was the break in cultural continuity from Africa. This cultural disconnect, Frazier asserted, had demoralizing implications for sex mores and for family control among enslaved Africans:

"While the Negro lived under institutionalized sex and family relations in Africa, . . . the African sex mores were thoroughly disorganized under the institution of slavery . . . The slaves on the plantations lived in the demoralized condition that naturally followed the destruction of the African tribal and family controls . . ." (Frazier, 1927a, p. 165).

The second reason Frazier gave for why the African American family should be considered a unique unit of sociology was the African American family's failure at assimilating European American cultural norms. Again, Frazier (1927a) attributed this to ". . . the total destruction of The African social heritage" (p. 166), which for him implied that the African American family had no other cultural model or alternative than that of the white master's culture. Frazier's concern over cultural conformity was particularly aimed at the degree to which African Americans had not internalized sexual monogamy as a cultural ideal. Frazier (1927a) hypothesized that this lack of internalization varied by geographical area, assuming that the anonymity of urban life, as compared to the social control of rural life, served to undermine the solidarity of African American families. In this regard, Frazier viewed urbanization as a major hindrance and challenge to the stability of African American families.

The last reason Frazier offered to justify the African American family as unique for sociological study was the African American family's low economic and social position in American life. He maintained that two factors facilitated this position: 1) the low employment and occupational status of African Americans as indicated by the high percentage of African Americans in domestic/personal services and on the low end of agricultural work; and 2) the social relics of the plantation system of the south. Regarding the latter, Frazier (1927a) asserted that the intermixing of blacks and whites brought about the isolation and ". . . inbreeding of mulatto communities" (p. 166) that fostered problems associated with concubinage and the desire among some mulattos to cross over into the white social world. Both these occurrences, for Frazier, caused greater instability and internal strife among African American families. The problems of concubinage and the crossing over of mulattos were to be themes found in Frazier's later work, *The Black Bourgeoisie*.

In the article, *Three Scourges of the Negro Family*, Frazier (1926a) reinforced the ideas of the first article but provided a more detailed analysis and scathing description of the African American family. As the title indicates, Frazier likened the condition and status of the African American family to that of a calamity. He intimated that the causes of this calamity, all ultimately associated with the consequences of plantation life and its legacy, were 1) the disorganization of the African American family, 2) poverty, and 3) poor health. While Frazier acknowledged that the causes were interrelated, he assumed that an underlying factor in all three was "ignorance." For Frazier (1926a), ignorance not only implied illiteracy, but also a ". . . lack of traditions, knowledge, and ideals which all people acquire by living in the social and physical environment to which they have become adapted" (p. 210). Again, Frazier identified slavery as the reason for this "lack of social intelligence" among African Americans and asserted that the sudden severance from the folkways and mores of slavery, brought on by emancipation, did not offer African Americans ample time or opportunity to adapt to folkways and mores of the new milieu once freed. In this, we see earlier evidence, which was later to imbue *The Negro Family in the United States*, of Frazier's assumption that the abolition of slavery left African Americans without a moral

restraint on their behavior. Here, Frazier's notion that slavery functioned as a mechanism of social control for enslaved Africans, providing "moral" guidelines for behavior, was revealed.

While Frazier's examination of how slavery influenced the development of African American families was important, one shortcoming of his 1920s ideas about the African American family was his view that European American family characteristics should serve as the benchmark for determining appropriate family behavior and functioning for African Americans. Of course, this Cultural Ethnocentric Model, as Dodson (1997) refers to it, is based on Frazier's assumption that slavery destroyed the African heritage. Henry (1997) maintains that Frazier's allegiance to this assumption was a result of his concern that the acknowledgment of African relics in African American life would only provide further ammunition for the social Darwinists of his day who believed that black people and African culture were at the lowest level of social and cultural evolution. Assuming the veracity of this information, it can be suggested that the focus on slavery, emancipation, and urbanization for Frazier helped to counterbalance attacks that suggested that genetic inferiority was the chief reason for African Americans' failure to advance and to internalize "appropriate" norms of human behavior. The long term effect of this Cultural Ethnocentric framework is that though Frazier's analysis may have stemmed from good intentions, his application of middle class, European American family norms to evaluate the viability and functioning of African American families was adopted by many family services agencies of the 1920s to develop assessment and intervention strategies that may not have been appropriate for and effective with many African American families.

Faith in the Scientific Method

Like many African Americans in social work at that time, Frazier placed high value on the scientific method and felt that it was a much better tool to identify and alleviate the social problems of African Americans than the old "folk" techniques that African Americans had used since slavery (Martin & Martin, 1995). He, similar to many other African American social workers in the 1920s, was especially critical of the methods used by black

ministers to bring about change in the lives of African Americans. To this end, Frazier (1924a) concluded that "They [churches] are still more interested in getting Negroes into heaven than in getting them out of the hell they live in on earth" (p. 252). The church, Frazier avouched, was too conservative and relied too much on emotionalism to affect the kind of progressive change needed in the African American community (Frazier, 1924a).

While Frazier was critical of the church, he did not suggest that African American ministers be denied training opportunities in social work. Frazier felt that African American ministers needed to be exposed to social work knowledge and techniques such as casework, since they were prominent leaders in the African American community (Frazier, 1923). The "social viewpoint" of social work would help African American ministers acquire knowledge about such things as the causes of poverty and family dissolution.

Frazier's faith in the scientific approach must be viewed within the broader context of social work during the early 20th century. Scientific charity among social workers generally was believed to be superior to other modes of helping. This was because of its characteristics of rationality and bureaucratization that stressed efficiency, a fixed division of labor, standardization, nonduplication of services, and a linear, problem-solving approach (Lubove, 1983; Wenocur & Reisch, 1989). The veneration of the rationalization and bureaucratization of social services was a result of the increasing validity that had been given to the philosophy of positivism in the mid to latter 19th century, which conceived religious and metaphysical (nonrational) explanations and resolutions of social problems as dubious. Frazier, as well as other African American social workers, internalized this viewpoint and capitulated to the dichotomy between the secular and sacred, the seen and the unseen. Therefore, any emphasis placed on emotions, sentimentalization, or "mystical" powers of the metaphysical or unseen world were interpreted as ludicrous and uncouth. Moreover, Frazier (1924b) contended that African Americans' attribution of "magical" causes to their illnesses was a primary psychological impediment to the improvement of their health.

The Need For Business Cooperatives

The writings of Frazier during his tenure at the Atlanta School demonstrate that he had keen understanding of class divisions

within the African American community and their potential adverse corollaries. Long before he wrote his acclaimed *The Black Bourgeoisie*, Frazier raised concerns about the level of "conspicuous consumption" among the African American business elite in the 1920s. Though he admired their zeal and work ethic, particularly among the Durham, North Carolina elite (see Frazier, 1925), Frazier admonished against the formation of businesses for the exclusive purposes of expanding leisure time and enhancing conspicuous consumption (Frazier, 1924c). For Frazier (1924c), the conspicuous consumption among African Americans revealed their need to emulate the white capitalist elite, and thus prevented awareness of how African Americans could use their accumulated wealth collectively to uplift the race:

"We should not seek the placing of mammoth fortunes into the hands of a few men who can ape the . . . wasteful consumption of the leisure class . . . The new emphasis upon business . . . should mean raising the general economic level of our group rather than the eruption of peaks of affluence to dazzle the mob" (p. 296/297).

These ideas illustrated Frazier's consciousness about the dire economic consequences that the avarice generated by capitalism could have for the African American community collectively. In order to foster economic growth for the entire African American community, and become less dependent on white businesses and philanthropy, Frazier (1924c, 1924d) recommended cooperative enterprises for African Americans. Cooperatives are economic strategies that emphasize the need for the collective buying, selling, and production of goods and services (Karenga, 1993). They allow persons to unify and collaborate as producers and as consumers so as to acquire wealth in a collective, rather than an individualized, fashion. Frazier's exposure to cooperatives was gained during his trip to Denmark in 1921/22 where he studied Danish Folk Schools and their role in the cooperative movement (Edwards, 1968, 1974; Frazier, 1922; Henry, 1997). Frazier's advocacy of cooperatives reflected his sentiments for socialist ideas, which date back even further when he was a student at Howard University (Edwards, 1968).

Frazier (1924c, 1924d) felt that cooperatives were advantageous for African Americans in several ways: 1) cooperatives required small amounts of capital investment; 2) cooperatives

were relatively simple, especially as they concerned the attribute of “. . . dividends being paid in proportion to [the] amount of goods bought by the members of the cooperatives” (Frazier, 1924c, p. 297); 3) cooperatives were appropriate for the stage of business development of the African American community in the 1920s. [Here, Frazier suggested that since African Americans lacked extensive wealth and business skills, they should set their business aims to establish smaller retail operations, rather than establishing larger wholesale businesses]; 4) cooperatives allowed African Americans to become producers while maintaining their consumer status; 5) cooperatives could help African Americans to cut out the white middle man and afforded greater employment opportunities for their people; 6) cooperatives could provide African Americans with educational opportunities in business principles and methods; and 7) cooperatives were more consistent with the spirit of democracy that would help foster the inclusion and participation of all members of the African American community in the area of business development.

It is interesting to note that Frazier abandoned the idea of business cooperatives in 1928, leaning increasingly more towards socialism, rather than capitalism, as the preferred economic structure (see Henry, 1997; Platt, 1991). In the 1930s, at Howard University, Frazier, along with Abram Harris and Ralph Bunche, challenged the hegemony of the “racial” paradigm and encouraged greater cooperation of European and African American workers and greater attention to be placed on class conflict as the essential crisis in America (Henry, 1997; Platt, 1991).

Critique of Racism

Throughout Frazier’s work, an underlying theme, though not always apparent, is a critique of racism. Frazier’s critique of racism fundamentally embraced three ideas: 1) that the problems of African Americans were due not to inferior genes but to stimuli in the social environment; 2) that race prejudice was akin to the thinking process of the insane; and 3) that racism suppressed attitudes of resistance among African Americans.

Like many African American scholars of his day, Frazier sought to demonstrate that theories of genetic inferiority of African Americans were bogus and were not confirmed by evidence.

Frazier (1927a) contended that the belief, found among those who advocated "instinct" psychology, that the culture of a people represented their biological development was fallacious. This belief emanated from the popular social Darwinist thesis of that time that posited a hierarchy of cultural evolution, with European American culture being superior to all others, particularly to that of Africans and African Americans. Frazier (1927a) criticized social evolution theory by stating that ". . . there is no basis for the rather general erroneous belief that social evolution follows a definite course, each stage growing naturally out of the preceding stage because of some inherent principle" (p. 165). Implicitly, what Frazier did here was to identify the shortcomings of linear logic and what Ani (1994) calls the *ideology of progress*. In both, time and history are viewed as a series of invariable, progressive and sequential steps toward inevitable improvement.

Frazier's disapproval of the cultural evolution thesis also was predicated on his belief that there had been ". . . no important organic changes in the human race" (Frazier, 1927a, p. 165) in recent history. Therefore, his explanations of the variations among the races—especially between European and African Americans—focused on stimuli in the social environment and, for Frazier, the most relevant stimuli that explained African Americans' status and position was slavery and its socioeconomic, psychological, and political aftermath.

In one of the most provocative articles written by Frazier during his tenure at the Atlanta School, he associated racism with insanity (Frazier, 1927b). *The Pathology of Race Prejudice* illustrated Frazier's use of psychoanalytic concepts to explain the racist attitudes and behavior of southern whites. After he argued that race prejudice was a form of insanity, and suggested that whites had a "Negro Complex," Frazier proceeded to delineate the intrapsychic processes of this form of mental illness. For him, the characteristics of this insanity were dissociation, rationalization, and projection. More specifically, Frazier suggested a) that white southerners separated their deleterious treatment of African Americans from their general self concept, that their belligerent treatment of African Americans in no way undermined their moral character; b) that white southerners justified their delusions about African Americans even in the face of over-

whelming evidence to the contrary; and c) that southern whites attached to African Americans their own socially undesirable thoughts and needs that they no longer could repress. In this case, Frazier contended that the need to stigmatize African Americans as criminals and sexual perverts, for example, represented an intense urge in white southerners to absolve and purge themselves of their insatiable thoughts about deviance and sex.

Frazier's critiques of racism and the genetic and evolutionary explanations of racial differences not only rendered him provocative among those in the broader academic community but also caused personal trouble for him as director of the Atlanta School. According to a paper written by Frazier (undated) entitled *My Relation with the Atlanta School of Social Work*, he alleged that his principal nemesis, a white professor in the School by the name of Helen Pendleton, used his ideas on race to subvert his leadership and to influence the Board of Trustees of the Atlanta School to engender ill feelings toward him. The Board finally asked for Frazier's resignation in 1927 and gave as the official reason the conflict between Ms. Pendleton and him, being told that he did not ". . . have the proper temperament for an executive" (Frazier, undated, p. 4). In the same paper, Frazier stated that upon further inquiry, he discovered that a major reason for his dismissal was his position on the race problem:

"My position on the Race Problem was not what was expected of one in my position. That this was probably the real reason is borne out by the fact that Miss Kaufman . . . a member of the Board had taken me to task for my attitude towards the South . . . and . . . Some members of the board objected to my refusal to attend 'Jim-crow' [professional] meetings" (p. 4, 5).

Last, Frazier's critique of racism centered on the impact it had on suppressing attitudes that supported resistance among African Americans. Frazier (1924e) contended that this was manifested in the feeling of "love" that many African Americans professed to have towards whites. Concluding that this feeling was deceptive, Frazier asserted that it also detracted attention from the real issue, which was justice. Frazier (1924e) suggested that "The Negro does not want love. He wants justice" (p. 213). When justice was denied to an oppressed group, Frazier (1924e)

added, hatred, not love, was the appropriate feeling and “. . . a positive moral force” (p. 213). For him, hatred as a moral force was a more sound option than capitulation:

“A few choice souls may rise to a moral elevation where they can love those who oppress them. But the mass of mankind either become accommodated to an enforced inferior status . . . or save themselves by hating the oppression and the oppressors” (Frazier, 1924e, p. 213).

In this regard, Frazier saw love of the “oppressor” as incompatible with strategies to ensure the survival and advancement of an oppressed group. What Frazier subtly implied here was that feelings of love among African Americans towards European Americans facilitated the continuation of white supremacy by suppressing in African Americans the value of resistance.

FRAZIER'S LEGACY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social Policy

The Personal Responsibility of Act of 1996, signed into law by President Bill Clinton and which eliminates the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program, is heavily imbued with ideas about the social and moral costs of out-of-wedlock births and the growing number of single parent, female headed households in U.S. society generally and among African Americans specifically. Frazier's identification of these problems in the 1920s and in his *The Negro Family in the United States* has been used recently by some social scientists and politicians to malign African American families for lacking “family values” and to rationalize the reduction in social spending to the poor, who are disproportionately African American. What is called the “social pathology” framework of the African American family can be traced to Frazier's work, and it has been suggested that Moynihan's (1965) study of the African American family, which laid the groundwork for the ideas of later neoconservative thinkers such as Charles Murray and Thomas Sowell, was merely a recitation of Frazier's earlier work (Valentine, 1968).

Although it can be argued that a major limitation of Frazier's work on the African American family was his use of Eurocentric (i.e., European American) criteria to evaluate African American family life and structure, unlike many of the right and left wing persuasion today, Frazier invariably identified slavery as a primary cause of the problems of the African American family. Frazier's analysis of the role slavery has played in the lives of African Americans is needed today to provide a historical evolution of problems that afflict African American families and to prevent slavery from being dismissed as a trivial event having no bearing on contemporary social problems.

The Scientific Method

Frazier's faith in the scientific method of casework and other social work methods has had both positive and negative results for contemporary African American and other social workers. On the positive side, the use of the scientific method has given social workers a more efficient procedure to describe and analyze the problems that face the African American community. The scientific method's attributes of linear logic, reductionism, and use of descriptive and inferential statistics has allowed massive amounts of data on the African American community to be collected, thus providing a broader descriptive perspective on African Americans and their problems. On the negative side, Frazier's reliance on the scientific method, which some have described as being a European/European American interpretation of science (see Akbar, 1984, 1994; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1990; Kershaw, 1992), influenced the devaluation of the traditional, cultural ways African Americans helped themselves that relied considerably on emotion, spirituality, and the Black church (Martin & Martin, 1995). If the latter is valid, and if cultural factors should be used to shape helping strategies, social workers' disregard of the dimensions of affect and spirituality from the helping process obviates consideration of the full range of potentially helpful interventions that may be more effective in alleviating the problems of African Americans.

Part of Frazier's exclusive or heavy reliance on the scientific method was his belief that African Americans had no set of traditions that transcended slavery and that predated African

Americans' importation to America as slaves. The question of whether or the extent to which African relics play a role in African American behavior, values, and ethos is still a point of division today among social workers: those who believe in the survival of African relics and/or who believe that African Americans should reaffirm their "lost" African past tend to advocate for interventions that integrate elements of traditional African and African American culture; those who affirm Frazier's belief that slavery decimated most African vestiges generally downplay the need to develop interventions predicated on elements of traditional African and African American culture, opting instead for what they refer to as "universal" interventions.

The Need for Business Development

Frazier's ideas about conspicuous consumption and collective business enterprises also have implications for contemporary black social work. Because of the predominance and long tradition of the psychodynamic and psychosocial paradigms of social work practice, many social workers tend to "micronize" or confine the causation of the problems experienced by African Americans to conflicts inside the individual or within the individual's immediate milieu such as the family. While this provides important information that can be used to transform the lives of African Americans, seeking the sources of problems within the individual without recognizing the complex political and economic dynamics that shape that individual's life omits the inclusion of more innovative helping strategies that underscore problems in the political economy of capitalism. Helping African American consumers of social work services to form business cooperatives may be one strategy that can reduce and assuage the adverse effects of the political economy of capitalism on African American families.

Discussions of African American business enterprises have received scant attention in the social work literature. However, some are beginning to advocate its inclusion in social work practice. For example, Schiele (1996) suggests that African American social workers should form partnerships and collaborate with African Americans trained in business to form foundations from which African American owned and operated human service

organizations can be established and funded. This same model can be used to help consumers of social work services to receive information and start-up capital to establish their own businesses or at least to become collective investors. Although this approach would help enhance the economic status of African Americans collectively, a critical question about this strategy is to what extent will greater participation in the capitalist system among African Americans corrupt or compromise values of collectivity, spirituality, and mutual aid, values believed to be critical to traditional African/African American culture? Frazier abandoned his advocacy of cooperatives, which reflect some core values of capitalism, in the 1930s in favor of a more socialist orientation. While the formation of business enterprises is needed to address the exigencies and egregious economic status of African Americans, the question of economic preference, and its relationship to sustaining or destroying cultural values, may be a more important concern in the long run.

Racism

Frazier's critique of racism and his discussion of its implications for activities of resistance among African Americans should be examined by social workers today. Since racism is less overt now than it has ever been in the United States, African Americans could be at greater risk of being seduced by the values of equality and meritocracy. This sense of racial *false consciousness*, discussed by Schiele (1996), has persuaded some African Americans to consider race as declining in significance, being rivaled or eclipsed by additional sociodemographic factors such as gender and social class (see, for example, Hooks, 1989; Wilson, 1987). While gender and social class greatly influence the problems experienced by people, and, along with race, interact in very complex ways, Frazier's 1920s writings on resistance suggested that racism in America was a factor pertinent to all African Americans regardless of gender and social class. If this still is true, then perhaps more attention needs to be given to racism as a central, not peripheral, theme in social work practice with African Americans. A critical aspect of this theme should be identifying racist stimuli in the broader and more intimate social environment that preclude African Americans from not only successfully coping with racism but also from resisting it in both its subtle and manifest forms.

With the publication of *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), Frazier's critique of social Darwinist philosophy is relevant today. Social workers assist many African Americans from low socioeconomic communities who have not had favorable conditions, like others, to optimally develop themselves. Because these persons may score low on I.Q. tests—which some refer to as “culture tests” (see Walters, 1995; Wilson, 1980)—Herrnstein and Murray (1994) would refer to them as “cognitively deficient” and by implication culturally and economically worthless. Social workers today should be circumspect that they are not seduced by this form of cultural chauvinism and should work to strengthen efforts to undermine the stigmatization that can ensue from the imposition of I.Q. tests.

CONCLUSION

E. Franklin Frazier's scholarly works while director of the Atlanta School of Social Work are rarely acknowledged and examined. His relationship with social work reflected the intimate nexus between social work and sociology that existed in the early part of the 20th century. Because of this relationship, some of the first systematic ideas about the nature and causes of the problems of African American families emerged. Whatever one may think of Frazier's legacy, he at least wrote about the pressing issues of his day and placed them in the public arena for debate and dialog. The internalization of the false dichotomy between practice and research, and between practice and writing, has placed many contemporary social workers in jeopardy of believing that the written communication of ideas is not a social work function and that it has little to do with social change. Social workers today should view Frazier as a model of how one in social work can employ the written mode of communication to influence social dialog, public debate, and, ultimately, human and societal transformation.

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