Article

Embodying Social Work as a Profession: A Pedagogy for Practice

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to highlight competing and contrasting definitions of social work that have been the subject of continuous ideological debate. These opposing interpretations have characterized public and professional discourse. It is the growth of, and struggle over, these conflicting versions of social work that we trace by exploring and expanding on the work of African American and White social work pioneers, feminist and empowerment epistemologies, and implications for social work practice and pedagogy. Our discussion emphasizes the construction of meaning through personal experiences by reuniting the head, hands, heart, and soul of our profession. We offer a reconstructed framework that echoes the groundbreaking work of our historical pioneers and collectively weaves their wisdom into contemporary social work practice.

Keywords

social work, pedagogy, feminist perspective, social work practice

Introduction

What is social work? How do we describe what social workers do? It seems as though—given the development of our professional identity over more than a century—the answers to these questions should be relatively straightforward. But, what we know is that there continues to be ideological and theoretical debates taking place in public and intraprofessional venues.

The aim of this current dialogue is to trace the growth of, and struggle over, these interpretations through the thinking of prominent social work pioneers, African American and White women, who collectively embodied a holistic view of social work and help us define our professional identity. Although the inclusion of these selected social work pioneers is limited and could be expanded to include many more historical figures, these revered women aptly represent the tenets of the reconstructed theoretical framework that we present. Second, we expand on Rose's (1983) framework of the *hand, brain*, and *heart* to describe a feminist paradigm of working in the scientific field. The justification of this selection is the premise of this article and serves as a foundation to scaffold additional feminist and empowerment theoretical framework. We reconstruct this model for social work practice by modifying these dimensions as *head, hands, and heart* while incorporating the *soul* as an important addition. Finally, we use this platform to discuss the implications of feminist epistemologies on social work practice and pedagogy with particular emphasis on how social workers construct meaning from their personal experiences. We raise these issues for a couple of reasons. Even after more than a

half century of combined teaching, we are still challenged by an engaged and ethical pedagogy (hooks, 1994, 2003) that embraces feminist frameworks as we witness our students (and practitioners) struggle with connecting their emotional and spiritual lives (what we identify as *soul*) in their professional work and as an aide to their own well-being. Our aim in this article is to expand our thinking on these subjects using a historical framework, its connection to the signature pedagogy for social work education, and feminist and empowerment theoretical paradigms as our starting point.

The way in which social work has been compartmentalized into theory and practice is analogous to the ways in which we have dissected ourselves into separate parts. In this article, we resist the professional definition that privileges only our intellectual analysis (head), devalues the practical (hands), minimizes the caring (heart), and proscribes the hoping (soul) dimensions.

Our feminist reconstruction focuses on women's ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tartule, 1986) and how this paradigm is illuminated in the profession of social work. This reconstruction unifies our past and present doctrines from a profession that was a calling, grounded in women's epistemologies, to modern realities of such

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principles and standards tied to licensure, reimbursement, and legal risks. In highlighting these divergent components, we celebrate multiple perspectives and call back feminist and empowerment principles to our dialogue.

The foundation of our framework is Hilary Rose's (1983) article, *Hand, Brain, and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences*. Rose utilizes the metaphors of hand, brain, and heart to describe the changing historical processes, techniques, and values of her discipline as women scientists have entered the field. (We add the metaphor of the soul, as explained below.)

Rose (1983) describes the female scientist as "cut in two" (p. 87) as she attempts to balance that "the abstraction of scientific practice. . . is in painful contradiction with caring labor" (p. 87). So, too, social workers are taught to adhere to the mechanisms of agency policy and protocol; caring for one's client or for one's self is oftentimes deemphasized, ignored, or suppressed in practice.

Caring labor (the heart) is an integral part of women's values and interactions at work and at home. Although Rose (1983) describes the scientific community as devaluing the heart in science, she states that "part of that feminist epistemology involves creation of a practice of feeling, thinking, and writing that opposes" the taken-for-granted common sense of science (p. 87). Our argument is that women's ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) can work in harmony with objective epistemologies in social work as this paradigm is rooted in the historical development of our profession.

This article offers an overarching approach to the many dimensions of social work using the metaphors of *head, hands, heart*, and *soul* that are implicit in the work of prominent figures in the profession: Victoria Mathews, Virginia Robinson, Mary Richmond, Birdye Haynes, and Jane Addams. As forerunners of an emerging social welfare system, these women recognized and valued the multifaceted aspects in defining and clarifying social work and its contributions to our society, and so here we explicitly recognize their influences and expand on them.

The Historical Context

Social work has been a female dominated profession since its conception in charity organizations in the late 1800s and early 1900s with African American and White leaders. Individually, these pioneers have given us lessons about the practice and purpose of social work and today's holistic social work perspective rests on the collective integration of their individualized work.

Robinson, a pioneer psychiatric social worker, authored *A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work* (Robinson, 1930), a work that embodies psychiatric counseling as a focus for the therapeutic relationship. Although written from a social work perspective, Robinson's perception of casework privileges the cognition or *head* perspective that differs from another social pioneer, Richmond.

Richmond, who is chiefly remembered for her theory of differential casework (Auslander, 2001; Chambers, 1986; Volland, 1996), authored two books, *Social Diagnosis* (Richmond, 1917) and *What is Social Case Work?* (Richmond, 1922). Her work exemplifies the *hand* in social work due to her creation of social work standards and casework techniques (Agnew, 2003; Lubove, 1969). Haynes and Addams symbolize the *heart* and *soul* of social work since they were both instrumental as pioneers in the settlement house movement. "Haynes's career was characterized by a search for a meaningful professional identity within a strictly segregated social system" (Carlton-LaNey, 2001, p. 35). Unlike Haynes's race struggles, Addams experienced an existential crisis to find meaning in a life filled with great privilege and opportunity, as well as loss and grief (Addams, 1989; Ehrenreich, 1985).

Mathews was progressive in embodying a holistic perspective of our women's work, as decreed in her 1987 speech, "elevating the head, the heart, and the soul of Afro-American womanhood" (as cited in Cash, 1993, p. 760). Matthews emphasized the utilization of the whole self to engage in serving the African American community through social welfare programs and reforms.

Early interventions were initiated by middle class women to solve the problems of the poor (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010; Lubove, 1969). The prevailing ethos was rooted in the maternal, benevolent, and conservative middle class moral standards and values of this era (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). The procurement of employment was seen as a cure for the individual and society as a whole, as a smooth functioning system depended on the ability of all able-bodied individuals to be productive citizens. Children, the elderly, and the disabled were deserving exceptions to this doctrine and these groups were taken care of by the community (Carlton-LaNey & Hodges, 2004; Pierson, 2011). Although the focus was assisting the needy, in these helping relationships middle class women also benefited from altruistic acts. These benevolent works fulfilled the need to demonstrate one's own good character; these deeds were also pragmatic in that "organized charity was the urban community's surest safeguard against revolution" (Lubove, 1969, p. 5).

Conversely, African American social work pioneers were more focused in their commitment to uplift their community and preserve the welfare of the African American family (Carlton-LaNey, 1997; Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). They engaged in mutual aid service by utilizing existing community and church resources to provide "a myriad of services and programs that included direct social provisions, as well as intangible services, all designed to meet basic human needs and to alleviate human suffering" (Carlton-LaNey, 2001, p. 113) in their communities. Oftentimes, these African American social work pioneers were further marginalized in their work from the White professional community that "generally considered both the service provider and the recipient to be unworthy" (Carlton-LaNey, 2001, p. 113).

In the early 20th century, the role of the friendly visitors changed as social work struggled to be seen in a professional light (Flexner, 1915; Lubove, 1969). In the first historical phase, social workers felt a calling; later the emphasis shifted to expertise. This new direction, sought after by social work leaders and driven by the needs of the medical profession, replicated the medical model in its methodology. Many of the first medical social workers came out of the nursing profession (Bracht, 1978; Nacman, 1977). The emphasis on scientific diagnosis, interventions, and skills was seen as necessary in working with populations that needed assessment and treatment (Auslander, 2001; Volland, 1996).

The friendly visitor continued to assist the needy, but her position was placed under the supervision of the expert social worker. The emergence of this role ensured that deserving indigent patients received reduced prices or free medical services. Social workers also advised physicians with discharge planning, as well as monitored patients' compliance and progress after their release from the hospital. These medical social workers, like their counterparts in school social work, who emerged from education a few years later, were the pioneers cultivating a new level of professionalism. Their roles were to connect hospitals and schools to family life (Auslander, 2001; Lubove, 1969).

Simultaneously, a major increase in immigration and the great migration also affected the development of social work. The diversification of the population had an impact on other helping professions including education, library science, medicine, and public health. A new and different clientele radically challenged the existing social systems (Jones, 1999).

This redefinition of professionalism in social work shifted ways of working with clients from caring relationships to a relationship where social workers became experts with skills, tools, and solutions for intervening with individuals and families in need. For example, objectivity displaced subjectivity as the manner of assessing clients; intervention replaced patronage, and techniques usurped benevolence.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as the Sigmund Freud approach became better known, the social work profession began to align itself with psychiatric and psychoanalytic theory (Bartlett & Saunders, 1970; Cornell, 2006). Casework changed into psychotherapy where the emphasis became assisting individuals to "alter, reconstruct and improve the self" (Specht & Courtney, 1994, p. 26), rather than the traditional social work value of support and assistance to develop resources for family and community life. These ideological changes were at the forefront of professional shifts and the emergence of dichotomies that continue to challenge the profession today (Austin, 1983; Lubove, 1969; Popple & Reid, 1999).

Thus, changes that have taken place in social work include a shift from engagement with clients and community to an emphasis on cognition, regulations, and evidence-based practice. These modifications affect the profession as a whole, and trickle down to the interaction of individual social workers with their clients. What we may feel on a personal level (e.g., intuition, or a spiritual connection and beliefs) is not respected in the professional discourse (Krill, 1978). The disconnection is magnified by an emphasis on legitimating decisions that are rooted in doctrines that value cognitive judgments and discount our practical wisdom and experiential learning.

Social work has been transformed from its roots as friendly visitors to a contemporary profession that is driven by managed care, regulations, and professional licensure standards (Tannenbaum & Reisch, 2001). This transfiguration, which mirrors other helping professions such as education and nursing, also pressured to produce, develop, and manage clients and patients, programs and services, and students while legitimating costs. We contend that it is through these experiences that the social work profession has been forced to justify its usefulness through scientific approaches, which has led it away from its altruistic beginnings. Thus, social work has been disarticulated and distanced from its roots, the heart and soul of our profession.

Analysis and Implications for Social Work Pedagogy

The ways in which we develop social work curricula orient students to our professional values and form expectations of how they should engage. It is with special emphasis on the pedagogy of social work that we should recognize the poignant process of educating our students to be their whole selves. This next section addresses the reconciliation of conflicted feelings and alienated parts of the social worker's self in utilizing a feminist and African American empowerment perspective. This analysis is justified and supported throughout social work literature. Noddings (1990) speaks to a disconcerting shift in which traditional women's careers are making radical changes to professionalism through a process of assimilation to scientific principles and methodologies. This adaptation dissociates itself from the aspect of caring and asserts that caring is a nonprofessional trait.

In agreement with Baines's (1991) and Noddings's (1990) assertion, we contend that the concepts of caring and professional should be reconstructed to represent the "perspective [that] a 'professional' is a good, caring teacher [social worker, librarian, nurse]" (p. 416) and that social work must bear in mind that caring is at the root of our professional values. We challenge dichotomies that contrast "feminine care, concern, and connection [with] masculine authority" (Casey, 1990, p. 302), or the existential with the scientific.

The African American perspective embraces a feminist framework in privileging an empowerment tradition: "The interconnectedness of all things and the oneness of body, mind, and spirit. [This] emphasis is on the development of the collective, rather than the individual, along with pervasive, experiential, and participatory spirituality" (Turner, as cited in Carlton-LaNey, 2001, p. 113). In this section, we use these frameworks, while scaffolding the work of our

pioneers, to build on the ways in which we teach our social work students about the practicality and advantages of incorporating a holistic approach.

Head

Much of social work education and practice is based on theoretical frameworks of psychology and psychopathology, sociology, and other related human service disciplines. In 1915, Flexner, an educator, questioned whether social work was a bona fide profession or not and challenged social workers to define its theoretical underpinnings (Austin, 1983; Flexner, 1915; Lowe & Reid, 1999; Popple & Leighninger, 2001). As a result, social work adopted the principles and perspectives of positivist social science. This approach continues to control much of our professional discourse.

By default, social work curriculum is left with fragments of various competing theories including positivist and feminist epistemologies. Social work curriculum is frequently void of any discussion of Black empowerment traditions as theoretical models. In an attempt to counter this hegemony, social work curricula now introduces an ecological perspective that involves a complex assessment of the individual nestled in multiple systems of family, culture, community, sociostructure, and history to define and address needs (Cornell, 2006).

For example, a very popular and basic theory taught to students is Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs that suggests that basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing have to be met before human beings are able to move to a higher order of thought and interaction. This model teaches students the belief that people only identify graduated needs when other more basic needs have been met and that they behave in predictable, linear ways. The limitation of this perspective is that it underestimates the ability of human beings to identify their needs on multiple levels. In turn, students may assume this narrow framework with their clients because many times clients' basic needs are not likely being met.

Within this framework, and similar to Maslow's theory, social work faculty may approach their teaching by utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom (1984) suggests that learning is linear, developmental, and progressive based on four building blocks of (a) awareness, (b) knowledge and understanding, (c) application, and (d) mastery of skills. Social work faculty present information to students didactically to initially increase awareness and impart knowledge; afterward they may use case studies to provide students an opportunity to apply their knowledge. Later in the students' education, social work internships provide opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of these skills. This pedagogical perspective is cognitively based on the idea that students are empty vessels to be filled and that they are generic rather than individual learners with their own capacities and desires.

Another characteristic of the *head* pedagogical perspective is the belief in evidence-based practice. This positivist approach is rooted in traditional social sciences perspectives where evidence-based practice values social work interventions with individuals and families that have been empirically evaluated for their efficacy (Gray & McDonald, 2007). Interventions that are not rigorously tested or significant are not valued and practiced wisdom is discounted. We rename this approach the wisdom of practice, and recognize its value as an essential part of the whole.

The *head* schema includes learning the applicable laws and policies of social work. In many agency settings, rules and regulations are particularly relevant because these procedures are enacted to protect clients, as well as to decrease the legal risk to the social service agency. Although much of our culture has moved from a more rigid ideological practice to more adaptable perspectives, some social service systems have remained relatively inflexible due to the high risk nature of their work.

Hands

In the process of professionalization, social work, like many other women's professions, developed in hierarchical form, with theory generated in the ivory tower and practice situated in the field. Yet, the power of this model (where the head is superior to the hand) has been significantly eroded, as the re-visions of social movements allow us to transcend once narrow definitions of epistemology. In our argument, the necessary synchronicity of the head, heart, hand, and soul becomes evident.

The schema of *hands* is at the core of social work interaction with clients. Social workers offer hands-on assistance as practitioners who meet face-to-face with their clients. Social workers connect with their clients in very personal ways as they engage individuals and families in developing trust and building rapport. On a macro level, public policy and social reforms have been influenced by the helping *hands* of many social workers throughout the last one hundred year history. Social work on all three levels, the micro, mezzo, and macro, embody the metaphor of helping *hands* in their work with individuals, families, communities, and systems.

The helping hand is also at the foundation of our profession from the establishment of the friendly visitors and charity organizations whose initial interventions provided referral, networking, and support (Popple & Reid, 1999) to child welfare accomplishments of the Progressive Era where women took a lead role in advocacy and legislation (Ehrenreich, 1985; Ladd-Taylor, 1994). Currently, our public and private welfare institutions and foundations distribute billions of dollars in resources and benefits as well as provide programs that serve numerous client populations in need.

Social work curriculum includes courses in human behavior and social environment, professional skills, grant writing, policy, and administration to educate students to assist with the multiple needs of their clients. Social work education includes a full integration of field education programs to give students supervised *hands*-on experience; this pedagogical

approach is compatible with the helping nature of the profession.

The 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) identified field education as the signature pedagogy of the social work profession, a term conceived by Shulman (2005). This social work educator challenges students to "think, perform and act" within the values and standards of the profession of social work. We assert that Shulman's construct is congruent with our pedagogical framework of the head, heart, hand, and soul. Field internships offer students an experiential learning opportunity (Kolb, 1984) that allows them to implement theory (head) into practice (hand) and self-reflection (heart) with self-care (soul).

Heart

Contrary to a cognition or expert schema, the concept of *heart* is the emotional call to serve those in need. African American pioneer, Birdye Haynes, served in prominent leadership roles in New York and Chicago's settlement house establishments. Known as a "race woman," Haynes' commitment to the African American community compelled her to the social work profession in an era of racial segregation and oppression. Haynes' calling was to serve as an advocate in educating other professionals to "understand [psychosocial] problems within the context of a racist and segregated system that denied African Americans equal access to resources" (Carlton-LaNey, 2004, p. 42).

In founding Hull House and inventing social work, Jane Addams legitimated caring labor in the professional realm, serving what she saw as the immediate practical needs of the immigrant communities. The multiple dimensions of social work can be traced back to Jane Addams's protean projects. Enervated by her personal grief and discontented with her own privilege, Addams transformed the meaning of altruism-in-action. More than just good works, she established the model for the settlement house, regulated the Chicago garbage system, and crusaded for women's suffrage and peace.

A strong sense of altruism, a desire for political and economic justice, or a need for a purposeful life still calls students to social work. Students often express being called to our profession because of their love and desire to help others, their strong commitment to social change, and a dedication to work for disenfranchised individuals and communities. Some students are called to social work through positive experiences such as volunteerism or exposure to positive role models, or through challenges that perhaps their families or communities experienced. We consider these at the *heart* of a vocation toward social work.

Social work pedagogy emphasizes critical thinking and analysis skills and teaches students to deconstruct the complex practice and policy implications (Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976) of our field while examining their own epistemologies. Students are expected to advocate for the best interest of individuals, families, and the community, thereby challenging social injustice at micro and macro levels (Zastrow, 2009). Negotiating this juxtaposition is at the *heart* of competent social work practice. Social work faculty often incorporate exercises that require self-awareness and reflection of their students' history, experiences, and positionality (Valentich, 2011) to acknowledge this dimension. The pedagogy of praxis, a combination of reflection and action, strengthen students' ability to examine, deconstruct, and sometimes debunk complex personal and professional assumptions (Freire, 1970). In embracing theories that reflect feminist and empowerment traditions, students are challenged to consider their personal values and beliefs, power, and privilege, and to analyze these notions within a broader macro perspective.

It is also important for faculty to recognize, value, and build on students' diversity and experiences and intentionally create curricula around critical analyses (hooks, 1994, 2003; Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976) that have an impact on students' identities as social workers. Social work curriculum has been remiss in integrating the professional narratives of African American pioneers; Carlton-LaNey (2001) joins the voices of other feminist African American scholars to maintain that it is imperative that faculty "present an accurate, truthful, and inclusive picture of social welfare history from a social work perspective" (p. xii). In class, their perceptions, decisions, or indecisions generate dialogue, stretch thinking, and demonstrate respect for diversity, what hooks (1994) regards as "engaged pedagogy" (p. 15). The task of the teacher is to help students explore these dimensions and differentiate between common sense (truth that people take for granted) and good sense (conscientiously discerning what is truth and what is not).

Finally, the heart includes dimensions of feminist epistemological perspectives that support student integration of their intuition in practice with clients. Intuition, based in a feeling perspective, is a concept that is usually not valued (Belenky et al., 1986) or utilized in an academic setting. Students should be encouraged to explore intuitive feelings in safe learning environments where they can learn about themselves and share with others. This awareness benefits the students and the educator. As a power dynamic it allows for an equal exchange of learning (hooks, 1994). Students are influenced by their client's perspectives—as educators are influenced by students—but only where trust has been built. This building of a community speaks to what Scapp contends as "the power of the liberatory classroom [as] . . . the power of the learning process" (as cited in hooks, 1994, p. 153).

Soul

Originally, social work was unproblematically grounded in religious practices. Early social workers, or friendly visitors, were often altruistic (and many times disapproving) middle class women who were volunteers from Christian churches who visited poor families in hopes that their material assistance and religious orientation would assist these

unfortunates to lead better lives (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010; Lubove, 1969). Over the years, many in the social work profession began to perceive the faith-based approach as judgmental and coercive, and the profession moved to a neutral, secular position.

The NASW Code of Ethics (2010) reflects this ideology by stating,

> Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion or mental or physical disability. (NASW Code of Ethics, 6.04 Social and Political Action)

In our educational system, a similar process was mirrored in the development of common schools.

This trend toward a secular position created a profession that ignores the religious, or spiritual beliefs of clients, and excludes those of social workers. Because this sector ideology is a part of their academic training and included in the NASW Code of Ethics, students may not recognize the importance of the religious and spiritual practices of their clients. Moreover, despite the emphasis on self-awareness in social work education, faculty may also neglect, or suppress, their students' religious and spiritual beliefs and practices.

In *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, Friere (1998) argues that students do not come to us as "empty vessels" and that pedagogical banking methods discount the importance of students' own experiences and perspectives and short change the opportunities of students to learn from each other and faculty to learn from their students. In particular, we contend that it is critical to consider the issues of race, religion, and region because they are important components of students' lived experiences.

Because we teach in the South, we are particularly conscious of the need to consider not only the historical and regional practices of racism but also to recognize the role of those churches, communities, and institutions, and those people of conscience who have consistently fought against it. The central importance of God and kin in the southern belief system continues to be a source of strength for individuals and communities in the struggle for social justice (Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976).

Faith in a higher power can provide transcendence, a perception of possibilities outside and beyond existing reality, and can promote spiritual health and well-being (Vakalahi & Starks, 2010). The faith community provides comfort, security, protection, and resilience to members and giving back is a deeply embedded value. The social worker is at the same time exercising compassion for, and demanding responsibility from, the client. Social workers may effectively use their personal beliefs in prayer, for example, to help them through professional struggles, provide strength to address dark issues without judgment, and recognize hope. These personal spiritual practices can contribute to social workers'

resiliency and minimize their vicarious trauma and burnout (Dane, 2002).

It is often this *soul* that supports and sustains a commitment to the profession in times when social workers are challenged with ethical and moral dilemmas and charged with emotionally challenging complex decision-making (Vakalahi & Starks, 2010). However, in our experience, many students struggle with the place of their religious and spiritual beliefs in their practice. Students also grapple with their own judgmental thoughts and with the incongruities between their personal belief systems and their experience in the professional sphere. Students experience what we call soulful dissonance and what Vakalahi and Starks (2010) refers to as "spiritual lynching" (p. 7) when these internal conflicts neither acknowledge, legitimate, or are valued in students' academic training.

In addition to this internal conflict, many social workers are scrutinized and under professional and community surveillance where they are more likely to be judged by their failures than by their successes (Figley, 1995; Pryce, Shackelford, & Pryce, 2007). This speaks to the predicament of operating in a system where there are no easy answers or solutions. Such existential crises may leave social workers feeling as though they have holes in their souls.

Richard Cabot, a physician and medical social work pioneer in the early 1900s, wrote about a condition that he called breathlessness (Rappaport, 2006) that today is referred to as burnout, secondary or vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue in social workers. Although he attributed many of the same characterizations in the definition of breathlessness that we do with our current definitions of burnout and fatigue, he utilized the words "dulling the social worker's soul" in his description (Rappaport, 2006, p. 6). As a declaration, this implies that social workers should not—and possibly cannot—sever connections between work and well-being, and that our training should emphasize this integration.

hooks (1994) confirms,

> Progressive, holistic education, engaged pedagogy is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. (p. 15)

As with any condition that affects the mind, body, and soul, preparation and prevention can be essential to wellness. To develop professional and personal resiliency while maintaining compassion for our work and clients, novice social workers need illustration of how to cultivate self-care to balance the conflicting physical and emotional demands of our work (Figley, 1995; Pryce et al., 2007). Such attention could provide inoculation against breathlessness for individual workers, as well as stabilize our field by retaining our experienced personnel.

Conclusion

What we conclude is that the disarticulation of the symbolic body of social work and the historical fragmentation of the discipline represents the alienation of segments of the social work profession from each other. The social worker lives at the intersection of these unreconciled ambiguities. The reconceptualization that we have presented suggests one approach that could engage aspiring and experienced social workers, institutions, communities, and those they serve in a common social mission. The head, hand, heart, and soul are reflections of the complex experiences of social workers and the wisdom of practice in action. The Council on Social Work Education has recently validated this paradigm by updating curriculum standards that redesign and thrust forward toward holistic learning and realigns theory with practice in an integrative framework (CSWE Commission on Accreditation, in press). This pedagogical model introduces social work students to the various dimensions of the profession while demonstrating their complementary functions; encourages the recognition of one's own (and others') sources of strength; supports the ability to provide and to receive comfort; and promotes the exercise of compassion for, and demand responsibility from, one's self and others. Essentially, it promises students confidence in possibilities yet unseen while reducing their trauma and burnout, and increasing resiliency. It is a model of hope, empowerment, and sustainability.

Our paradigm—firmly centered in the feminist frameworks of Baines (1991), Belenky et al (1986), Kemp and Brandwein (2010), Noddings (1990), Rose (1983), Vakalahi and Starks (2010), and Valentich (2011); the Black empowerment paradigms of Carlton-LaNey (2004), Simon (1994), and Solomon (1976); and the pedagogical models of Freire (1970, 1998) and hooks (1994, 2003)—embodies the head, hand, heart, and soul as a holistic model of social work education and practice. This reconstructed framework echoes the groundbreaking work of our historical pioneers and collectively weaves their wisdom into contemporary social work practice. As the social work profession continues to respond to new challenges, addresses emerging social issues, and encounters ethical dilemmas, it is vital that we value and implement a holistic model of biopsychosocial, spiritual health, and well-being in our work.

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