

An Analysis of Afrocentricity as Theory for Social Work Practice

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Abstract: *Afrocentricity is developing rapidly within the social work profession as a theory for practice with African Americans. Afrocentric practitioners claim the theory provides a basis for understanding African Americans from an African perspective and cultural value system, and it is the most effective approach to address racial oppression. However, social work has not critically analyzed the merits of Afrocentricity as a source of knowledge to inform the profession. This article takes the initial step to determine whether Afrocentricity is in-fact a theory. Afrocentricity is described, discussed, and analyzed based on current and accepted definitions of theory. The analysis reveals Afrocentric epistemology lacks the rigor to be accepted as an empirically-based theory for practice. The author concludes that Afrocentricity is more accurately categorized as an ideology. Research and practice implications of this conclusion and the need for further critique are discussed.*

Keywords: *Afrocentricity, African-centered, empirically-based theory, cultural competent social work*

INTRODUCTION

Human service professions must constantly adapt to the dynamism of societal change as it relates to politics, culture, technology, and knowledge. For example, political climates can produce legislative outcomes harmful to populations-at-risk (Alzate, 2006). Cultural trends influence inter-group relationships, including race, class, gender, and age cohorts. Medical advances in health and mental health require all helping professions to assess and develop treatments and interventions that produce optimal outcomes. For these reasons and more, social work must be self-critical and adapt to the realities of society. One of the profession's responsibilities to clients and to the profession is to "...critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work practice (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 1996, Section 4.01-b)." As the profession examines new ideas, social workers must be willing to accept or reject knowledge based on objective criteria. Practice approaches developed from untested trends, appeals to emo-

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