

Spring 2026 Editorial: Values. It's What We Do

Carol Hostetter
Valerie Decker

The twenty-one articles for the Spring 2026 issue are intentionally grounded in social work values, whether the focus is education, practice, research, or theory. The issue has a focus on reimagining social work through the lens of equity, social justice, and professional transformation. Across the articles, authors critically examine how social work education, practice, research, and theory can better align with our stated values by addressing systemic racism, oppression, and structural inequality. Key themes include anti-racist and abolitionist approaches, ethical and values-based education, interprofessional and experiential learning, cultural responsiveness and inclusion, and support for diverse and marginalized populations, including refugees, military-affiliated students, survivors of violence, women experiencing multiple disadvantages, and communities affected by climate change. Several contributions emphasize the need to strengthen workforce preparation through innovative teaching methods, advocacy training, simulation learning, and ongoing professional development. The issue also highlights the importance of advancing social change through movement-based practice, environmental justice, critical quantitative methods, and new theoretical frameworks. Collectively, the articles call for a more reflective, inclusive, and socially accountable profession that actively confronts oppression while preparing social workers to address emerging societal challenges.

Manderscheid and Ward lead off by proposing an agenda for future social work education and practice. They examine the significant societal and professional changes shaping the future of social work and, through a conceptual analysis, outline a bold agenda for the profession. Their recommendations include transforming professional preparation, creating centers of excellence in practice, leveraging the Grand Challenges initiative, and rethinking CSWE standards.

Also applying values as they look towards the future, *Bryant and Richardson* present curb cutting as an abolitionist framework for advancing greater integrity and consistency across social work's ethics, values, research, education, and public engagement. Through a conceptual analysis, they argue that curb-cutting offers a flexible approach for identifying and addressing contradictions between the profession's stated commitments and its practices. They further contend that applying curb-cutting across diverse domains, including race, gender, disability, economics, pedagogy, and service delivery, can support the development, implementation, and evaluation of more equitable and effective approaches within social work.

Nielsen examines how our values have been taught, by analyzing five introductory social work textbooks to show how race is represented in social work's historical narrative. The findings reveal evidence of normalization, individualism, negation, and distorted racism, suggesting that dominant accounts of the profession's history often reflect white-centered perspectives. Nielsen argues that preparing students for anti-racist and anti-

Carol Hostetter, LCSW, PhD., Editor and Professor Emerita, School of Social Work, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.
Valerie Decker, MSW, Assistant Editor, School of Social Work, Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN.

Copyright © Authors, Vol. 26 No. 1 (Spring), i-v, DOI: 10.18060/30145



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

oppressive practice requires more accurate and inclusive historical narratives, including the use of critical whiteness studies to challenge prevailing assumptions and reconstruct social work education.

Continuing the examination of values in social work education, **Gilreath, Williams, Windmiller, Cross, and Polaha** explore an interprofessional education (IPE) initiative designed to enhance students' understanding of the social work profession within team-based health care. Focusing on a simulated, case-based learning module grounded in the IPE core competency of values and ethics, the authors describe how students from multiple health professions engaged with standardized patients to address social determinants of health and collaborate with social workers as members of interdisciplinary teams. Their findings suggest that participation strengthened students' understanding of social work roles, fostered professional identity development among social work students, and increased other health professions students' ability to effectively partner with social workers in patient care.

Ma'ayan, Panhorst, and Haney focus on teaching students a new way to consider social work ethics. The authors argue that ethical decision-making should also account for organizational contexts, provider privilege and bias, cultural responsiveness, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the broader effects of decisions on agencies and communities. Using an illustrative case study, they demonstrate how the model can help students and early-career practitioners develop more nuanced ethical reasoning. Their work highlights the importance of incorporating mezzo-level considerations into ethics education and offers educators a practical tool for strengthening students' critical thinking skills.

Teaching students racial justice advocacy is the topic of a paper by **Terrana, Abu-Ras, Kaplan, and Pizzo**. Drawing on Transformative Learning Theory, the authors examine the impact of virtual racial justice advocacy initiatives on social work students' confidence, commitment, and engagement. Using pre- and post-surveys of 135 BSW and MSW students participating in either a Legislative Education and Advocacy Day webinar series or a student-led virtual advocacy project, they found significant gains in students' confidence across multiple advocacy-related competencies. The findings suggest that virtual advocacy experiences can strengthen students' racial justice advocacy skills and support the development of macro-level competencies, particularly within the growing landscape of online social work education.

Cousineau and Nightingale examine the integration of spirituality and religion into social work education and practice through an exploratory study of social workers nationwide. They found that many respondents felt adequately prepared by their social work education to address spirituality in practice and reported actively incorporating spiritual issues into their work. The authors argue that spirituality should be treated as an important component of the social work curriculum, alongside topics such as trauma, social justice, and financial hardship.

A look at social work education in Australia comes from **Muzingili**, who examines the role of cultural homophily among international master of social work students in Australia. Cultural homophily is the tendency for students to associate with peers from similar

cultural backgrounds. The study explores both the factors driving culturally homogeneous group formation and its effects on intercultural learning. While participants described these groups as sources of emotional support, academic security, and linguistic comfort, the findings also suggest that such clustering can limit intercultural engagement, critical reflection, and professional readiness. Muzingili argues that cultural diversity alone does not ensure the development of intercultural competence and recommends intentional pedagogical strategies to better prepare students for culturally responsive social work practice.

Weiss, Fileta, Glenn-Cook, Pratt, and Ardon-Elias examine the experiences of military-affiliated students at a western U.S. university through a trauma-informed case study involving 61 semi-structured interviews with veterans, National Guard members, veteran alumni, and military-connected family members. Their findings highlight the campus Veteran and Military Center as a critical source of academic, social, and emotional support, particularly through assistance with VA benefits, community-building, and empathetic staff engagement. At the same time, participants identified challenges related to visibility, staffing, space limitations, mental health resources, and cultural differences between military-affiliated and non-military students.

Simulation-based learning serves as the focus of a study by **Knapp, Pritchard, McDonald, and Lagorio**, who explore its effectiveness in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between nursing and social work students. Drawing on observations and focus group discussions involving 44 undergraduate students, the authors examine how simulation experiences promote key competencies associated with interprofessional practice, including values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, teamwork, and communication. Their findings suggest that students demonstrated respect, empathy, cultural sensitivity, active listening, and a growing appreciation for one another's professional roles.

Interpersonal violence education is the focus of a study by **Driessen and Renner**, who explore the experiences of graduate social work students enrolled in a specialized elective course on the topic. Using case study methodology, with surveys and interviews, the authors examine how the course influenced students' knowledge, professional perspectives, and preparedness for practice. Their findings indicate that students reported increased understanding of interpersonal violence and reflected on their responsibilities as future social workers, while also identifying practical, action-oriented strategies for responding to survivors.

Jordaan explores the support and continuing professional development needs of newly qualified social workers in South Africa as they transition from university into practice. Using an instrumental case study design and online World Café discussions with newly qualified social workers and supervisors, Jordaan identifies challenges related to gaps between professional education and practice realities, organizational constraints, and the need for ongoing professional and personal development. The findings also highlight strategies for strengthening workforce readiness, including structured induction programs, accessible continuing professional development opportunities, internship models, and closer collaboration between educators and employers.

Faculty diversity and advancement within highly ranked schools of social work are examined in a study by **Cunningham-Williams and Fields**. Through a content analysis of publicly available data from 10 highly ranked research-intensive schools of social work, the authors explore the institutional resources, supports, and characteristics that may influence the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black, Indigenous, and LatinX faculty members. Their findings indicate that these schools share substantial financial and research resources, yet the authors note that faculty experiences continue to be shaped by persistent systemic challenges. The study offers insights for faculty navigating careers in research-intensive academic settings and identifies considerations for institutions seeking to strengthen pathways to recruitment, retention, and promotion, particularly to the rank of full professor.

Shifting from social work education to social work practice, **Sarantakos and Sliva** draw on the successful campaign for the Chicago Reparations Ordinance to examine how social workers can contribute more effectively to social change movements. Using the concept of movement lawyering as a framework, the authors describe how collaborative partnerships among torture survivors, community members, and advocates led to reparations for victims of police torture in Chicago. They argue that the same social and political conditions that gave rise to movement lawyering call for the development of *movement social-working*, a practice approach grounded in solidarity, collective action, and structural change.

Hoselton, Walsh, and Grittner argue for a homemaking approach to social work practice with refugees resettling in Canada. The authors contend that traditional social work interventions have focused primarily on social rather than material and spatial dimensions of resettlement, limiting the profession's ability to address the full range of challenges faced by refugees. Drawing on the concept of homemaking, they propose a more holistic practice framework that attends to refugees' social relationships, living environments, and sense of belonging in new communities.

Using the lens of severe and multiple disadvantage, **Boyce and Dadswell** examine the experiences of women involved in street-based prostitution and the intersecting challenges that shape their lives. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 10 women, the authors explore how homelessness, substance use, mental health concerns, and experiences of violence are often intertwined and reinforced by broader gendered structural inequalities. The authors argue that social work can better support this population by placing gendered structural inequalities at the center of practice and reconnecting with the profession's critical and social justice-oriented roots.

Ezea, AbdulRahman, and Fajembola explore the often-overlooked experiences of individuals who serve as informal sources of emotional support within communal settings in Nigeria. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 22 participants, the authors examine the emotional burden associated with repeatedly receiving others' emotional disclosures without adequate reciprocity or support. Their findings reveal widespread experiences of emotional exhaustion, burnout, and compassion fatigue, shaped by cultural expectations that encourage helping others while discouraging personal vulnerability.

Climate change and environmental justice are the focus of a study by *Nel and Khosa*, who examine how social workers can respond to the growing impacts of climate change in South Africa. Drawing on interviews with South African social workers and an international key informant, the authors explore the profession's current engagement with climate-related challenges affecting vulnerable populations, including women, children, and low-income communities. Their findings suggest that, despite social work's commitment to social justice and human rights, practitioners have been slow to take a proactive role in addressing the climate crisis.

We conclude the issue with three articles that extend our exploration of social work values into the realm of research and theory, examining how scholarship can be used to challenge oppression and advance social change. *Ma* challenges conventional uses of statistics in social work and related fields by proposing *critical statistics* as a framework for confronting colonial, racist, and white supremacist narratives embedded within quantitative research. Drawing on her experiences as a Southeast Asian scholar working in settler-colonial contexts, she argues that statistical methods have often been used to reinforce harmful stereotypes and systemic inequities affecting Indigenous and racialized communities. To counter these patterns, Ma combines critical race theory, anti-colonial inquiry, quantitative methods, and storytelling within a participatory action research framework.

Samimi, Keene, Heath, and Keyes advocate for the integration of QuantCrit, or Quantitative Critical Race Theory, into social work research as a means of addressing the limitations and inequities embedded within traditional quantitative approaches. The authors argue that without a critical framework, quantitative methods can obscure structural racism, reinforce deficit-based narratives, and perpetuate systems of oppression. They outline alternative approaches that challenge positivist assumptions, foreground community knowledge, and situate data within broader social and historical contexts.

Shifting from questions of research to questions of theory, *Yusta-Tirado, García-Aguña, de Gea-Grela, and Fernández-Roses* propose an innovative conceptual framework that draws on the Doppler effect in physics to better understand social problems and social work interventions. The authors introduce the *Theory of Perceived Frequency*, arguing that changes in the perceived urgency, intensity, and visibility of social issues can shape how individuals and societies respond to inequality, social exclusion, risk, and vulnerability. By applying insights from the natural sciences to social work theory, they offer a dynamic perspective on the evolution of social problems, the development of resilience, and the creation of protective systems.