In Search of Women of Color in the Social Work Journal Literature (1998–2007)

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This article reports the findings from a secondary analysis of data that categorized the content on women of color in 17 selected social work journals over a 10 year period (1998–2007). The study reports the number of articles per journal containing content on women of color and referents to their social identities, themes, curricular areas, authors' analytical methods and the amount and degree of feminist content, and compares the data to women overall. Findings revealed that in most areas the content on women of color was proportionate to that of women overall. Noted exceptions include the following: Women of color are almost twice as frequently referred to in their client roles than in their family or worker roles, somewhat more likely to be referred to as mothers/caregivers, and less likely to be referred to as social work professionals. For women of color, the professional issues theme was less frequently present, and the frequency of being used as a research participant was higher than for women overall. Only slightly more than one-tenth of articles in the women of color category contained some feminist content, whereas human rights content in this category was higher proportionately than for articles on women overall. Implications for the profession and future research are discussed.

Introduction

The scarcity of content on women of color has been noted over the years by social work scholars. Gutiérrez (1990) asserted that the unique needs of women of color were rarely

presented in the social work literature; and Morris (1993) similarly argued that although the social work literature included much theoretical and practical information on working with specific racial and ethnic minorities, much of this literature did not "address the particular issues faced by women" (p. 100). Johnson (1991) noted that the contributions of African American women were omitted from social work history, and that many social work texts addressed the limited inclusion of African Americans in the literature by "lumping together all minorities of color as persons with special needs" (p. 2). The history of feminist social work too has been primarily chronicled by White middle-class women's activism that marginalized and failed to include the participation and contributions of women of color (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). Although many of these critiques address the omissions of women of color from the social work literature, curiously, no study can be located that specifically quantifies these omissions or at least documents what does exist qualitatively in the social work journal literature pertaining to women of color. Arguably, a profession's journal literature identifies the most critical issues and populations of concern, suggests a level of commitment to them, and documents how the profession responds or should respond to them (Zimbalist, 1978), while also disseminating knowledge and maintaining a historical record (Lindsey & Kirk, 1992).

An analysis of the journal literature might answer if there is a distinct body of literature on women of color in social work or if women of color are located at the intersection of two disparate bodies of knowledge, one on race and one on women (Morris, 1993). What does the prevailing literature on women of color look like in the journal literature?

An electronic search (August 2012) was conducted to find articles on women of color in social work journals using the Social Work Abstracts Database (SWA) and SocINDEX (1988–2012). Table A reflects the number of abstracts found in SWA and SocINDEX containing the

search terms in the abstract and then in the title. To qualify for the title column in SWA, the search criteria required that the first part of the search term (e.g., *women of color*) be present in the title, but *social work* could be present anywhere in the article, because it was assumed the article was about or for social work if it was abstracted in SWA. For SocINDEX, the first part of the term had to be present in the title, and *social work* had to be present in the abstract to distinguish it from non–social work related articles. The results are contained in Table A. The number of hits in SWA reflecting the presence of the search words in the abstract was 3.5 times as many as the number of hits with the search words present in the titles. In SocINDEX there were twice as many instances of the search words in abstracts than in titles. These numbers reveal that the journal literature on women of color in social work is certainly not vast. Further, the disparity in numbers between the title and abstract categories implies that though women of color are mentioned in the article, they are not central to the discussion. Thus, the numbers suggest a lack of representation of these populations in the literature while also signifying that the literature as a whole fails to meet an explicitly expressed criterion in social work: That to fully understand and give voice to a population, its social position or standpoint must be duly explored with regard to the intersections among “gender, culture, color, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation, and how these factors interact and affect one’s everyday world” (Swigonski, 1993, p. 172). Instead, women of color in the literature, arguably as in social work and in society, seem hidden under layers, marginalized, or absent from the primary discourse.

Table A: Number of abstracts found in SWA and SocINDEX containing search terms in abstract and title

	Abstract		Title	
Search terms	**SWA**	**SocINDEX**	**SWA**	**SocINDEX**
Women of color *and* social work	47	51	7	35
African American women *and* social work	75	70	26	24
Latina women *and* social work	9	8	1	4
Hispanic women *and* social work	15	8	5	1
Asian women *and* social work	12	16	3	6
Native American women *and* social work	5	5	2	1
Muslim women *and* social work	5	4	3	3
Total	168	162	47	74

The disparities in the number of hits between databases also indicate that not all electronic databases abstract equally; the SWA tallies are slightly higher than SocINDEX in the abstract category but notably lower in the title category, though admittedly, the articles found in SocINDEX were not all from social work journals. However disappointingly low these numbers may be overall, they reflect only quantity and therefore say nothing about the nature of this literature to an interested academic or practitioner seeking to access it.

I attempted to determine the quality of this literature through a secondary analysis of data that were originally collected for a content analysis on women and social work in the social work journal literature over a 10 year period (Barretti, 2011). The purpose of this study was “to characterize the articles on women and social work from 17 social work journals that were abstracted in the Social Work Abstracts Database (SWA) from 1998 to 2007, report the findings, and compare them to the findings from a content analysis (Barretti, 2001) conducted in the previous 10 year period (1988–1997)” (Barretti, 2011, p. 266). The following seven questions guided the studies for both time periods.

1) How many articles on women did each social work journal contain?

2) In which journals was women's content most likely to appear?

3) What social identities or roles were most frequently used to depict women?

4) Which themes pertaining to women captured the most attention?

5) Which social work curricular areas were most frequently mentioned?

6) Which analytical methods were used by the authors?

7) To what extent was the article feminist or reflected a variation of feminism?

Three additional questions were also addressed in the updated (1998–2007) study:

8) Were women used as research participants in the articles coded as empirical?

9) Did the abstract specifically state that it included women of color?

10) Did the author employ a human rights perspective or use human rights language?

With regard to Question 9, "women of color" included any racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious minority. There were three possible answers/codes to this question: (1) yes; (2) no, and (3) color or diversity implied (the abstract employed language such as "diverse women" or "international women"). I found that out of a total of 505 articles that responded to the search words *women* and *social work* in the 17 qualifying social work journals from 1998–2007, only 151 (or 29.90%) of all abstracts fell into the "yes" category as explicitly including women of color. Another 15 or 2.97% of all abstracts met the criteria for color or diversity implied. The two categories collapsed (included women of color plus color or diversity implied) totaled 166, or only 32.87% of all 505 abstracts on women and social work. I concluded that the social work journal literature addressed women of color/ diversity only in about a third of all abstracts on women from 1998–2007. The

majority of abstracts (*n*=339 or 67.13%) sampled from 1998–2007 did not include women of color or imply color or diversity (Barretti, 2011).

This article presents and discusses the results of an analysis of the 151 abstracts that explicitly included women of color. The nine research questions stated previously, which guided the original study, were slightly adapted to specifically include *women of color* instead of simply *women* for the secondary analysis. The nine sets of findings correspond to the nine research questions and are presented, compared, and discussed for women overall (Barretti, 2011) and for women of color.

Brief Overview of the Method for the Original Data Collection

Journal abstracts that were indexed in the SWA database and that responded to the search words *women* and *social work* for the search period (1998–2007) were included in the original data set (Barretti, 2011). The content analysis method was used to evaluate the abstracts. Content analysis was chosen because this method allows the researcher to classify and characterize the journal literature by using the actual language employed in the title or abstract and then numerically quantify the categories. I used previously established and pretested categories and codes that were derived from the manifest language used in the abstract and that corresponded to the research questions. I then searched the qualifying abstract for this information (e.g., what social role is used to identify women, *mother;* what is the focus or theme of the article, *violence*; and what perspective is used, *feminist).* Manifest coding is particularly useful when coding for nuanced phenomena, such as feminism, when the concept under investigation is open to wide interpretation (Barretti, 2011; Neuman, 2000).

The 17 professional journals chosen for the sample (Barretti, 2001) were guided by information about their effect on social work's knowledge base in prior studies (Baker, 1992; Lindsey & Kirk, 1992). The journals were *Affilia; Administration in Social Work; Clinical Social Work; Families in Society (*formerly *Social Casework); Smith College Studies in Social Work; Social Service Review; Journal of Social Work Education; Social Work; Social Work with Groups; Social Work Research; Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work; Journal of Gerontological Social Work; Health and Social Work; Journal of Multicultural Social Work; Journal of Progressive Human Services; Research on Social Work Practice; and Social Work in Health Care.* (It is recommended that the reader view the original studies [Barretti, 2001, 2011] for a more detailed account and justification of the methodology.)

SPSS was used to record and analyze all data concerning each of the 505 qualifying abstracts for 1998–2007. To answer each of the nine research questions as they pertained to women of color, frequencies, and cross tabulations were computed with the original data in SPSS and reported for each question/ category.

Limitations

The limitations that applied to the original studies (Barretti, 2001, 2011) also apply to the secondary analysis of the data for women of color in this study. First, the individual journal's rate of publication for women of color relative to the overall number of articles the journal published from 1998–2007 was not tabulated (Barretti, 2011). Second and more critically, the search engine for the data in this study, SWA, may not serve as a reliable repository of all published social work journal content (Holden, Barker, Covert-Vail, Rosenberg, & Cohen, 2008), or of all articles about women**.** However, the study's aim was not to test SWA's reliability but rather to report what is available to academics, practitioners, and students

searching for content on women of color and social work in social work's signature database. (I did attempt to compensate for some of SWA's abstracting limitations when collecting my data; see Barretti, 2011, p. 267). Third, it should be noted that the 151 abstracts containing content on women of color are a subset of the 505 articles on women overall and have not been separated from the women overall category when analyzed. Thus, the numbers in the women of color column in Table I should be read as a proportion of the numbers in the women overall column (e.g., in Table I on the next page, *Affilia* published 48 articles on women of color out of 190 articles on women overall, or 48/190). Finally, the content analysis method is limited in what it can reveal about the literature under analysis. The findings are nothing more than quantifications of keywords or codes that were present in abstracts and that generated categories for the purposes of organizing the data. A more nuanced qualitative analysis is needed to reveal what this body of work communicates as a whole.

Findings

Results from Questions 1 and 2

The findings in this section are organized by research question: (1) How many articles on women of color did each social work journal contain? (2) In which journals was content on women of color most likely to appear?

Table I: Number of articles containing content on women of color and content on women overall by journal between 1998–2007

	Women of color		Women overall	
Journal title	***n***	**%**	***n***	**%**
Affilia	48	31.80	190	37.62
Social Work	13	8.60	42	8.32
Health and Social Work	23	15.23	44	8.71
Social Work in Health Care	15	9.93	51	10.10
Families in Society/Social Case Work	8	5.30	20	3.96
Journal of Gerontological Social Work	9	5.96	27	5.35
Social Work with Groups	2	1.33	19	3.76
Social Work Research	11	7.28	25	4.95
Smith College Studies in Social Work	4	2.65	7	1.39
Journal of Social Work Education	1	.66	7	1.39
Administration in Social Work	0	0	7	1.39
Clinical Social Work	1	.66	23	4.55
Research on Social Work Practice	4	2.64	14	2.77
Social Service Review	7	4.64	19	3.76
Journal of Multicultural Social Work	3	1.99	4	0.79
Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work	2	1.33	5	0.99
Journal of Progressive Human Services	0	0	1	0.20
Total	151	100	505	100.00

Table I reports the number and percentage of articles containing content on women of color and content on women overall found in each of the 17 social work journals in the sample between 1998–2007. As mentioned earlier, abstracts that explicitly stated that the articles included information on women of color totaled only 151 of the 505 (29.90%) or less than a third of all articles on women. It is worth noting that *Affilia* accounted for 48 or 31.80% of all content on women of color in this study. Viewed another way, 48 of 190 (25.26%) or about a quarter of all women's content published by *Affilia* between 1998–2007 included information on women of color. The second highest instance of providing content on women of color was *Health and*

Social Work, which contributed 23 articles or 15.23% of all content on women of color during 1998–2007. *Health and Social Work* contributed a greater percentage of articles on women of color (15.23%) during 1998–2007 than for women overall (8.71%). These two journals, *Affilia* and *Health and Social Work*, contributed almost one half (n = 71 or 47.03%) of all content on women of color during 1998–2007. The remaining 15 journals combined contributed the remaining 52.97% of the articles. This includes the *Journal of Social Work Education*, which contributed only .66%, and *Social Work*, which contributed only 8.60% of the articles in the women of color category (yet 13/42 or 30.95% of all abstracts on women published by *Social Work* included women of color).

Results from Question 3

What social identities or roles were most frequently used to depict women of color?

Table II: Frequency of social identity referents to women of color and to women overall between 1998–2007

	Women of color			Women overall		
Client	*n*	% for category	% for all referents	*n*	% for category	% for all referents
Medical/Mental health patient	29	25.22	14.35	98	24.14	13.30
Trauma survivor/victim/battered woman	22	19.13	10.89	85	20.94	11.53
Alcoholic/Substance abuser	7	6.08	3.46	28	6.90	3.80
Elder	9	7.82	4.45	30	7.39	4.07
Social welfare recipient	21	18.26	10.40	81	19.95	10.99
Homeless	2	1.74	.99	11	2.71	1.49
Lesbian	1	.87	.50	4	0.99	0.54
Prisoner	4	3.48	1.98	9	2.22	1.22
Other	20	17.40	9.90	60	14.78	8.14
Subtotal	115	100	56.92	406	100	55.09
Family						
Mother/caregiver	35	67.30	17.33	103	59.20	13.98
Reproducer/pregnant	6	11.54	2.97	23	13.22	3.12
Partner/Straight/Wife	6	11.54	2.97	22	12.64	2.99
Daughter	2	3.85	.99	8	4.60	1.09
Partner/Lesbian	0	0	0	6	3.45	0.81
Other	3	5.77	1.49	12	6.90	1.63
Subtotal	52	100	25.75	174	100	23.61
Worker						
Social work professional/activist	12	34.29	5.94	70	44.59	9.50
Client worker	10	28.57	4.95	38	24.20	5.16
Student	7	20	3.47	24	15.29	3.26
Other	6	17.14	2.97	25	15.92	3.39
Subtotal	35	100	17.33	157	100	21.30
Total	202			737		

Table II indicates the number of referents made to the social identities of women of color and women overall between 1998 and 2007. Referents were placed in three categories: client, family, and worker. Because many of the articles referred to more than one social identity, all the

referents were counted. Thus, if the woman (or women) in the article was referred to as homeless and mentally ill and a mother; all three referents were counted. Thus, the total number of referents exceeded the total number of abstracts in the study. In the 151 abstracts that explicitly included women of color, 202 referents were made to their social identities. The highest number of referents for women of color fell in the client category, with 115 or 56.92% of all referents. Similar to the data for women overall in the client category, the medical/ mental health patient category was highest of all (*n* = 29 or 25.22%), comprising about a quarter of all referents for women of color. Also reflective of the women overall category, women of color who were clients were next likely to be referred to as trauma survivors/ victims/ battered women (*n* = 22 or 19.13% of category) and third likely to be referred to as social welfare recipients (*n* = 21 or 18.26% of category). These percentages closely approximated those of women overall. These three client categories comprised 62.61% of referents in the client category and a little more than a third (35.64%) of all referents made to women of color. Fifty-two referents or 25.74% of all referents were made to women of color in their family roles. As with women overall, women of color were most likely to be referred to as mothers/caregivers (*n* = 35 or 67.30% of category). When considering all three categories of client, family and worker, the mothers/caregivers referent was the highest for both women of color and women overall. However, this subcategory is somewhat disproportionately higher for women of color, representing 67.30% or more than two thirds of the family category, whereas for women overall, mothers/caregivers represent 59.20%, or slightly more than half of the family category. Referents to women of color as workers were the lowest of the three categories, representing 35 or 17.33% of all referents (compared to 21.30% for women overall). A mere 12 references (34.29% of category and only 5.94% of referents overall) were made to women of color as social work professionals/activists

as compared to 44.59% of the category and 9.50% of all referents for women overall. In sum, women of color are more than twice as likely to be referred to in their client roles (*n* = 115 or 56.92%) than in their family (*n* =52 or 25.75%) and worker roles (*n* =35 or 17.33%), respectively. Although women overall were also more than twice as likely to be referred to in their client roles than in their family or worker roles, the disparities between the family (23.61% of all referents) and worker (21.30% of all referents) categories for women overall is not as great as it is for women of color (family = 25.75%; worker = 17.33%).

Results for Question 4

Which themes pertaining to women of color captured the most attention?

Table III: Frequency of major themes for women of color and women overall between 1998–2007

Major Themes	Women of color		Women overall	
	n	%	*n*	%
Health	28	18.54	95	18.80
Economic security	16	10.60	68	13.50
Violence	16	10.60	70	13.80
Professional issues	5	3.31	53	10.50
Family & home	28	18.54	45	8.90
Work	2	1.32	15	3.00
Ideology/social action	6	3.97	20	4.00
Mental health	31	20.53	80	15.80
Feminism	2	1.33	17	3.30
Life cycle	2	1.33	20	4.00
Race/gender	14	9.27	15	3.00
Criminal justice	1	.66	7	1.40
Total	151	100	505	100

Table III reports the frequency of the prevailing social issue or theme related to women of color and women overall as discussed in the abstract. The most frequent themes for women of color

came from mental health (*n* = 31 or 20.53%), health (*n* = 28 or 18.54%), and family and home (*n* = 28 or 18.54%), which combined comprised more than half of all abstracts on women of color (57.61%). The percentage of mental health abstracts for women of color (20.53%) was slightly higher than for women overall (15.80%). Viewed another way, 31 of 80 abstracts in the mental health category (38.75%) included women of color. Twenty-eight of 45 abstracts or 62.22% of all articles in the family and home category included women of color, making it disproportionately higher than for women overall (18.54% versus 8.90%, respectively). Other disparities were also evident. The economic security and violence categories contained slightly lower percentages of articles (10.60% each) for women of color than for women overall (13.50% and 13.80%, respectively). Perhaps most striking is the disparity in the professional issues category between women of color (3.31%) and women overall (10.50%). Only 5 of 53 articles on professional issues in this study (or only 9.43%) included women of color. Percentage-wise, there was about twice as much content on women overall than on women of color in the work (3% versus 1.32%, respectively), life cycle (4% versus 1.33%, respectively), and feminism (3.30% versus 1.33%, respectively) categories. Only 2 of 17 articles on feminism in this study included women of color (11.76%), 2 of 20 articles on life cycle (10%), and 2 of 15 articles on work (13.33%). Perhaps not surprisingly, 14 of a total of 15 articles (or 93.33%) in the study that fell in the race/gender category contained content on women of color.

Each of the major themes was also coded into 38 subcategories. For women overall the top subcategory rankings by prevalence for 1998–2007 were (1) battered women/domestic violence, (2) practice/ research/educational issues, (3) welfare programs/reform, (4) caregiving/parenting/custody/adoption, (5) mental health services/therapy/counseling (this category was tied with social activism/reform/unionism), and (6) substance abuse (Barretti,

2011). For women of color, the most highly ranked subcategories, also in descending order, were (1) caregiving/parenting/custody/adoption, (2) trauma/ PTSD/stress/depression/anxiety, (3) battered women/domestic violence, (4) social activism/social reform/unionism, (5) practice/research/educational issues, and (6) health care/insurance/services.

Results for Question 5

Which social work curricular areas were most frequently mentioned or represented in articles about women of color?

Table IV: Frequency of curricular area for women of color and women overall between 1998–2007

Major themes	Women of color		Women overall	
	n	%	*n*	%
Casework/HBSE	79	52.32	226	44.70
Group work (includes CW+GW)	9	5.96	34	6.70
Community organization	8	5.30	12	2.40
Social policy	31	20.53	120	23.80
Education	5	3.31	27	5.30
Research methods	7	4.63	12	2.40
Field education	0	0	2	0.40
Mixed curricular & other	12	7.95	72	14.30
Total	151	100	505	100

Note: HBSE=human behavior in the social environment; CW=case work; GW=group work

Table IV reports the frequency of curricular area in abstracts for women of color and women overall from 1998–2007. Case work (CW)/human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) (*n* = 79 abstracts or 52.32%) and social policy (SP; *n* = 31 or 20.53%) led as the most frequently represented curricular areas for women of color, a trend also noted for women overall (CW/HBSE: *n* = 226 or 44.70%; SP: *n* = 120 or 23.80%). For women of color these two categories combined totaled almost three quarters of all articles (72.85%). However, when

CW/HBSE accounted for slightly more than half of all articles (*n* = 79 or 52.32%) for women of color, they represented slightly less than half for women overall (*n* = 226 or 44.70%). Of special interest is that most of the articles in community organization (*n* = 8/12 or 66.66% of all articles categorized as community organization included women of color) and research methods (*n* = 7/12 or 58.33% of all articles categorized as research methods included women of color). Percentage-wise, the women of color category contains only about half as much content in the education (3.31% versus 5.30%) and mixed curricular (7.95% versus 14.30%) categories than women overall. Only 5 of 27 education articles (or 18.51%) and only 12 of 72 mixed curricular articles (or 16.66%) contained references to women of color.

Results for Question 6

Which analytical methods were used by the authors in articles about women of color?

Table V: Frequency of analytic perspective for women of color and women overall between 1998–2007

Major themes	Women of color		Women overall	
	n	%	*n*	%
Empirical	102	67.55	277	54.90
Nonempirical	49	32.45	228	45.10
Total	151	100	505	100

Table V reflects the frequency of analytic perspective for women of color and women overall for 1998–2007. As defined in the earlier studies (Barretti, 2001, 2011), the empirical category includes quantitative and qualitative studies, and mixed quantitative/qualitative studies for which original data were collected by the author(s) for the purpose of the article, or a secondary analysis of previously collected data (e.g., national data). The nonempirical articles include those of a conceptual, theoretical, or practical nature, including narratives, nonempirical case studies,

literature reviews, historical studies, and program descriptions (for which the unit of analysis is a specific program, model, or treatment approach but empirical data are not collected or the data collected are not the focus of the article). When the empirical (*n*= 277 or 54.90%) and nonempirical articles (*n* = 228 or 45.10%) are almost evenly split for women overall, there is an almost 2:1 ratio between empirical (*n* = 102 or 67.55%) and nonempirical (*n* = 49 or 32.45%) articles for women of color. A closer look at the empirical category breakdown reveals that for women of color, the quantitative studies represented 36.42% (*n* = 55) of all articles; qualitative studies 28.47% (*n* = 43); and mixed quantitative plus qualitative 2.64% (*n* = 4). For women overall, quantitative studies represented 28% of all articles, qualitative studies represented 24.2% of all articles (Barretti, 2011), and quantitative plus qualitative represented 2.7% of all articles. Therefore, there is a higher percentage of quantitative (+8.42%) and qualitative studies (+4.27%) in the articles that include women of color than for women overall. Viewed another way, women of color are included in a little more than a third of all empirical articles (102/277 or 36.82%) and in less than a quarter of all nonempirical articles (49/228 or 21.49%) for women overall (*n* = 505) between 1998–2007.

Results for Question 7

To what extent was the article feminist or did it reflect a variation of feminism in articles about women of color?

Table VI: Frequency of feminist plus somewhat feminist content combined in individual journals for women of color and women overall between 1998–2007

Journal	Women of color		Women overall	
	n	%	*n*	%
Affilia	11	57.90	77	66.40
Social Work	0	0	6	5.20
Social Work in Health Care	0	0	2	1.70
Journal of Social Work Education	1	5.26	2	1.70
Smith College Studies in Social Work	1	5.26	1	0.90
Administration in Social Work	0	0	4	3.40
Clinical Social Work	0	0	2	1.70
Families in Society/Social Casework	1	5.26	1	0.90
Social Work With Groups	0	0	6	5.20
Research on Social Work Practice	0	0	2	1.70
Social Service Review	3	15.80	5	4.30
Journal Multicultural Social Work	0	0	0	0
Journal of Progressive Human Services	0	0	1	0.90
Health & Social Work	0	0	2	1.70
Journal of Gerontological Social Work	0	0	2	1.70
Social Work Research	1	5.26	2	1.70
Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work	1	5.26	1	0.90
Total	19	100	116	100

Table VI indicates the frequency of feminist plus somewhat feminist content combined in individual journals for women of color and women overall during 1998–2007. As stated earlier, all abstracts were coded by manifest language; thus, no predetermined definition of feminism

was used to assess the abstract's degree of feminism. Abstracts were classified as self-identifiably feminist when the title or abstract specifically stated the word *feminist*. Abstracts were classified as somewhat feminist when the abstract did not include the word *feminist* but employed language such as "patriarchy, gender oppression, gender justice, gender inequities, women's rights, sexism, regulation of women's behavior, or gender biases," (Barretti, 2001, p. 285). All other articles that were about women but lacked either the word *feminism* or a gender-lens perspective were classified as not feminist (Barretti, 2001, 2011). The data reveal that only slightly more than one tenth or 19 of 151 articles (12.58%) that explicitly stated they included women of color also contained at least some feminist content. (Eight of these 19 articles were self-identifiably feminist, 11 were somewhat feminist, and 132 were not feminist.) In contrast, 116 of 505 articles (or 22.96%) contained at least some feminist content for women overall as compared to 19 of 151 (or 12.58%) that contained at least some feminist content for women of color. The 19 articles containing some feminist content for women of color represented only 16.37% of all feminist articles (n = 116) and only 3.76% of all articles (n = 505) analyzed in this study.

Affilia published more than half of the feminist plus somewhat feminist articles (n = 11 or 57.90%) that explicitly included women of color (seven were self-identifiably feminist and four were somewhat feminist). However, this percentage was still notably lower than for women overall (57.90% for women of color compared to 66.40% for women overall). Thus, of all articles containing feminist content published by *Affilia* 1998–2007, only 14.28% (11 of 77) included women of color. *Social Service Review* contributed three articles (or 15.80%) including feminist content in the women of color category. Thus, 60% (3 of 5) of all articles containing feminist content published by *Social Service Review* included women of color. Five other

journals contributed only one article each that included both feminist content and women of color.

Results for Question 8

Were women of color used as research participants in the articles coded as empirical?

In addition to coding for referents to women's social identities (see Table II), the author also coded each abstract for whether women were used as research participants/subjects (yes/no). The purpose of adding this category was to follow-up on an observation from the earlier study (Barretti, 2001), which found that women were increasingly being used as research participants in empirical studies carried out by the authors, rather than being treated as clients for the problem under discussion in the article. The articles that were coded as empirical for the analytic perspective category (see Table V) were not sufficient to answer this question, because some of the authors conducted a secondary analysis of available (e.g., national) data in their studies and thus did not employ human subjects in their research. The data for this category reflected an almost even split between women as research participants (n = 255 or 50.49%) and women not used as research participants (n = 250 or 49.50%) in the 1998–2007 sample for women overall (n = 505). In contrast, women of color were used as research participants in 100 of the 151 (66.22%) abstracts and not used as research participants in 51 of the 151 (33.78%) abstracts in their category. In sum, 15.73% more articles in the women of color category included women as research subjects than did the women overall category during the study period (66.22%–50.49%).

Results for Question 9

Did the author employ a human rights perspective or use human rights language in articles containing women of color?

Table VII: Frequency of human rights perspective/language for women of color and women overall between 1998–2007

	Women of color		Women overall	
	n	%	*n*	%
Self-identifiable human rights perspective	8	5.30	15	2.97
Human rights perspective/language implied	24	15.89	64	12.67
No evidence of human rights	119	78.81	426	84.36
Total	151	100	505	100

Table VII indicates the frequency of a self-identifiable human rights perspective and human rights language for women of color and women overall during 1998–2007. The author added Question 9 to the study to find out whether a human rights perspective was supplanting a feminist perspective in the literature, a hypothesis that was not supported by the data. Three codes were used for this category: (1) yes, self-identifiable human rights perspective (article specifically states that the issue, theory, or intervention under investigation is a human rights issue); (2) no evidence of a human rights perspective or language*;* and (3) human rights perspective/language implied (author uses terminology such as *antioppressive practice*; *economic, social, and cultural rights*; [protection against] *discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, or political opinion*; *civil and political rights against arbitrary powers of the state*; *equal protection under the law*; *rights to due process*; *inalienable rights*; *freedom of*

speech, belief, the right to assembly, education, work, liberty, and freedom from torture; *international law/justice*; Barretti, 2011). Only 15 (or 2.97%) of a total of 505 abstracts employed a self-identifiable human rights perspective for women overall during 1998–2007. Sixty-four abstracts (or 12.67%) used an implied human rights language or perspective. When the two categories were added together, a total of 79 or 15.64% of all abstracts included some human rights language or perspective for women overall, leaving 426 abstracts or 84.36% of all abstracts with no mention of a human rights perspective or human rights language. For women of color a self-identifiable human rights perspective was present in only 8 or 5.29% of all articles on women of color, and an implied human rights perspective was present in 24 articles or 15.89% of all articles on women of color. Thus, there was a slightly higher proportion of journal literature during the study period that contained at least some human rights content in the women of color category (21.18%) than in the women overall category (15.64%). However, slightly more than half (53.33%), or 8 of 15 articles with a self-identifiable human rights perspective, and a little over a third (37.50%) or 24 of 64 articles containing some human rights language included women of color, although articles containing at least some human rights content and women of color combined represented only 6.33% of all articles in this study (32 of 505).

Discussion

Some troubling findings emerged from this analysis raising a number of unanswered questions warranting further attention and investigation. First, there remains a general paucity of social work journal literature that includes women of color. Despite social work's iterated value on integrating diversity in practice and scholarship, publications including women of color not only remain disappointingly scant, but also are poorly represented and distributed throughout the major journals in our profession. Articles on women of color abstracted from 1998–2007

represented less than a third of all articles on women overall in 17 social work journals in what is already a shrinking pool of articles on women as compared to the previous 10 year period (Barretti, 2001, 2011). Additionally, just as women's content in general has been provincialized to *Affilia*, so has content on women of color, when in fact women of color should be an integral part of all scholarship that includes women in social work. This content should not be relegated to a separate journal, a special issue, or a special section. Though the categories "women of color" and "women overall" were separated artificially for analytical purposes in this study, in actuality, there is only one journal literature on women in social work. However, the inadequate representation of women of color in an already shrinking women's scholarship renders it even further incomplete and invalid. Women's literature can only be comprehensive when it contains representations of all women of all origins, colors, ethnicities, classes, gender orientations, disabilities, and abilities. It fails to represent women when it fails to represent any woman for whom gender is part of her identity or of her marginalized status in society. This poses distinct problems for social work educators.

Morris (1993) notes that to obtain content on women of color, most social work educators must draw on two distinct bodies of literature, one on gender and one on race. Vakalahi and Starks (2010) point to the "lack of conceptualization of the intersectionality between gender and race/ethnicity" in the literature (p. 111). A cursory look through a number of randomly selected social work texts confirms this assertion; a separate section often exists for racial/ethnic minorities, and a separate section exists for women, but no section was located for women of color. Does this lack of attention to the paucity of a connected scholarship (Hill-Collins, 2003) reflect social work's inability to recognize the problem or its inability to recognize women of color? Are articles containing content on women of color infrequently written or infrequently

published, or both? One way to respond to this question is to investigate who does submit articles that centralize the experiences and standpoints of women of color.

Schiele (1992) contends that when social work faculty of color publish, they are most likely to write about issues of importance to their racial/ethnic group, and thus their higher publication rates ensure a more diverse social work knowledge base. However, Shiele (1995) found in his study of submission rates among a national sample of 264 full-time African American social work faculty that submission rates were significantly associated with being male and having a doctorate, suggesting "the existence of an unequal influence…in shaping social work's knowledge base, especially about people of color" (p. 51). He cites a number of studies in social work that found lower productivity rates among women, even when race and ethnicity were controlled. These findings imply that the academy reflects or even reproduces the existing social stratification in America, where race and gender marginalize diverse faculty not only from a lack of participation in the educational hierarchy, but also from representation in theory building and practice. Schiele (1995) recommends that women, African-American faculty, and faculty of color submit more manuscripts to peer reviewed journals to generate greater diversification and lessen inequality in knowledge production and dissemination. However, Schiele's (1995) recommendations beg the question of whether faculty of color should assume prime responsibility for boosting scholarship on women of color. Although the literature indisputably benefits from diverse authorship, it requires a commitment from all members of the profession to include women of color, whenever women are the topic or unit of analysis in the article.

As previously alluded to in the Introduction of this article, exclusion cannot and should not be measured in lack of quantity, but in lack of centrality. The relatively high number of hits

containing the generic *women of color* relative to the low numbers of hits containing specific populations of color in the search terms (see Table A) suggests that women of color are added and stirred into articles, sometimes as part of convenience samples in program evaluations or sometimes as part of an amorphous tag line; for example, that the problem or issue under study affects diverse women or all women regardless of race. Kanuha (1996) argues that the resultant absorption of distinct groups of minority women into one amorphous category in which they are assumed to be equal to or at equal risk of some problem affecting all women trivializes the nuances of their experience, obstructing a true understanding of who these women are and how they are affected. The use of the tag line is not only a token attempt at inclusion of diverse perspectives, but also evidence of sloppy research and theory building. Conflating women of color's unique experience with "the dominant group only maintains its hierarchical status and accompanying power and privilege… and also structurally mitigates any claims for a redistribution of resources and power in the [racial] hierarchy" (Kanuha, 1996, p. 40–41). Exclusion then cannot merely be defined as the relative absence of women of color from the social work literature, but also perhaps as the failure or reluctance of the profession to enter into a meaningful dialogue about this critical paucity and its broader implications.

Second, women of color are referred to almost twice as often in their client roles than in their family or worker roles and somewhat more likely to be referred to as mothers/caregivers, with caregiving/parenting/adoption as the most highly ranked thematic subcategory. Women overall and women of color are disproportionately represented in the literature as clients. In the client category, women are most frequently referred to as medical/mental health patients, trauma survivors/victims/battered women, and social welfare recipients. In addition, the literature most frequently refers to women in their traditional roles as caregivers, whereas scant attention is paid

to other aspects of women's experiences or identities (e.g., as lesbians, homeless, prisoners, partners, workers, professionals or students) and the intersections among their many identities. Further investigation is needed to determine whether the high numbers of referents to women of color as caregivers represent a higher prevalence of caregiving issues in the lives of women of color or an overemphasis on the traditional aspects of their roles, possibly neglecting others. The emphasis on client status suggests dependent, deferential roles for women, deemphasizing other more empowering roles. Because most of the articles fall into the CW/HBSE curricular areas and many fall under the theme of mental health, the implication is that women in the literature are "likely to need or receive therapy" (Barretti, 2001, p. 289). However, our profession endorses applying an empowerment perspective when treating clients who are women of color (Gutiérrez, 1990). Therefore, in addition to accepting women's definition of the problem (p. 151), perhaps we should accept their self-referents as well. How would women construct their identities in the literature? Probably, this construction would reflect intersectionality among their many aspects and roles. However, there is some danger to an espoused intersectionality that only focuses on multiple marginalized identities (Nash, 2008), because many of the referents to women of color here disproportionately represent aspects of their oppressed or dependent status.

Gutiérrez and Lewis (1999) address the historical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors contributing to the problems, challenges, and needs of women of color and offer a strengths-based model that social workers can use to empower clients against systematic oppression. The language of empowerment—with its roots in community organization, feminism, and political science (Gutiérrez, 1990)—offers many possible alternatives such as *consumers, activists, organizers, collaborators, participants, facilitators, advocates,* and *change agents.* Although a low number overall, two thirds of the articles categorized as community

organization in this study included women of color. Would more published articles on community organization add to the tally of more empowering referents yielding a more empowering literature for women overall?

Third, women of color are disproportionately less likely to be referred to as social work professionals/activists than women overall. Professional issues were represented in less than a third of all articles on women of color, and there is little representation for women of color in the work category. Practice/research/educational issues ranked low in frequency for women of color in the thematic subcategories. Women in social work education generally lag behind men (Holley & Young, 2005). Women of color are particularly underrepresented in the academy (Vakalahi & Starks, 2010), facing obstacles including pay discrimination, racism, a paucity of full professor positions (DiNitto, Aguilar, Franklin, & Jordan, 1995), and mentoring opportunities to assist them in fully developing and fulfilling professional goals and serving as future leaders and administrators (Simon, Perry, & Roff, 2008). Vakalahi and Starks (2010) asserts that, although a recent phenomenon, "women of color in social work education possess unique gender and racial/ethnic-based qualities and competencies that when garnered and embraced, have humanized the academy" (p. 110). In light of the need to understand and better represent the experiences of women of color in the academy and the barriers they face to advancement, two books have emerged that incorporate women's narratives about their challenges and successes in rising to leadership (Vakalahi & Peebles-Wilkins, 2009; Vakalahi, Starks, & Hendricks, 2007). Alternately, the journal literature does not seem to be keeping pace with the evolving, diversifying academy and the issues and themes of relevance to it and its implications for scholarship and practice.

Women of color were also infrequently referred to as students in the literature in this analysis (although the incidence of women of color is proportionately higher in this category than for women overall). There were only a tiny number of articles in the education category and none in field education that included women of color. As it is, very little rigorous, grounded inquiry has been conducted on the socialization of students to the social work profession (Barretti, 2004). An exploratory, inductive inquiry into this process reveals a differential process for female students of color, who report having generally few or no faculty members of color to provide mentoring and critical role modeling for them (Barretti, 2003). Surely, our profession can benefit from knowing and understanding more about how "race and gender intersect to construct differential socialization experiences" (Barretti, 2004, p. 23) to ensure the successful preparation of a diverse and competent cadre of future professionals in practice and in social work education.

Fourth, empirical articles, and the frequency of being used as a research participant, was higher for women of color than women overall. In a proportionately greater empirical literature that includes women of color, participation of women of color as research participants is more frequent than that of women overall. The implications of these findings are arguable. In my earliest study (Barretti, 2001), I argued that an increasing empirical literature and a decreasing practice literature were problematic for a profession the purpose of which was to proactively intervene in the lives of (women) clients and in society. I also argued that women's inclusion as research subjects in empirical studies signifies only that they are being studied, not that they are receiving needed interventions. Alternatively, research is critical for the development of theory and knowledge so that the profession can better intervene on behalf of clients.

Including race and gender as variables in a quantitative study (and more of the articles that include women of color are quantitative than qualitative) does not make the study women-centered. As a profession, we must acknowledge and take responsibility for the limitations of our constructs, samples, theories, and frameworks for analysis when they fail to fully illuminate and contribute to our knowledge base on any population, including but not limited to women of color. Hill-Collins (2003) argued for reconceptualizing race, class, and gender as categories of analysis; for seeing the connections among these categories, especially in our scholarship; and for acquiring new theories on how this triumvirate has shaped women's experiences and that of all groups. However, it behooves our profession to include still more facets of a woman's diversity and self-identification as it affects the quality of her experience and status if that scholarship is to be considered truly woman-centered.

Collaborative research efforts with communities of color are needed to fully develop a knowledge base on diverse women and also "to inform community practice that is culturally relevant and effective" (Vakalahi & Starks, 2010, p. 121). It is a widely held myth that women of color are unorganized or need organizing (Grahame, 1998). Though arguably invisible to mainstream academic communities, diverse women are highly visible in the leadership of their own issues in their own communities. Inviting their participation in publications relating to social issues of importance to them is not just good community collaboration for the academy, but also good social work and good knowledge building. In this way, the experiences of women of color will be represented and included in scholarship and theory-building.

However, the methods needed to gain understanding, build theory, and inform practice must be participatory and, whenever possible, empowering and based in a community action model. Additionally, although the profession needs to document the needs, challenges, and

survival strategies of women who are clients, we also need to know more about women who are professionals and activists and the issues affecting them, because the journal literature is woefully inadequate in this area. As mentioned previously, some social work scholars are already doing this (e.g., Gutiérrez & Lewis, 1999; Vakalahi & Peebles-Wilkins, 2009). Vakalahi, Starks, and Hendricks (2007) framed their study using theories of feminism and intersectionality.

Fifth, there is little representation for women of color in the feminism category. The number of articles containing some human rights content was slightly higher in the women of color category, although still a very small percentage of all articles in this study. As mentioned previously, less than a quarter of all articles on women and social work between 1998–2007 contained at least some feminist content (Barretti, 2011), whereas the present analysis revealed that only slightly more than one tenth of articles that included women of color also contained at least some feminist content. As evidenced in the data, a human rights perspective does not appear to be supplanting a feminist one. Arguably, the low numbers of articles containing feminist content for women overall and for women of color may reveal tensions not just between women and feminism, but also between social work and feminism; the latter has been well-discussed in the literature. What is less explored, however, is whether those topics of concern to feminist authors and readers are presented as of concern to and including women of color.

Is the relative omission of women of color from the journal literature's feminist content a symptom of a problematic history between feminism and women of color? Kemp and Brandwein (2010) note that despite an ethos of equity and empowerment, racial and class biases stubbornly persisted toward women of color in the most seemingly inclusive activist efforts for gender equity throughout most of the first and second wave of the women's movement and in the

foundational years of the social work profession as well. Until the 1980s women of color were largely excluded by White feminists, prompting them to organize separately yet successfully, often interweaving unique cultural and spiritual aspects of their heritage and political oppression into their activism (Kemp & Brandwein, 2010). Over the past several decades women of color have challenged not just feminism's underrepresentation of race/ethnicity as confluences of gender discrimination, but also the shortage of race/ethnic perspectives in theory-building (e.g., Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983) and the exclusion of women of color in feminist leadership and scholarship (Hill-Collins, 1990, cited in Kanuha, 1996), favoring instead a womanist perspective. Womanism posits that the oppression of women of color is bound up with both race and gender and cannot be addressed by a White, liberal, middle-class feminist agenda that is ignorant of how racism and sexism intersect in the lives of women of color (hooks, 1990).

This analysis did not include coding for a womanist perspective, but it is certainly an area that could benefit from extensive quantitative and qualitative analysis. The relative absence of women of color in feminist content may reflect the need for a more explicit articulation of common struggles and oppressions between womanists and feminists that do not diminish awareness of real and important differences in their standpoints or interests. However, this begs the question of whether this type of inclusive collaboration could possibly occur without a supportive, activist, social work context to spawn and nurture it. As long as there is a continuing diminishment of community organizing and activism in the social work profession and, by extension, its literature, it seems there is little encouragement or incentive for the kind of representative, successful partnerships that could trigger the changes needed in scholarship, the profession, and society overall. Much can be learned from the collective empowerment gained

through communitarian movements of diverse, working class, union women fighting on both basic bread-and-butter survival issues and freedom from harassment and discrimination (Chandler & Jones, 2003).

The guiding principles of our profession and the means chosen to actualize them are important considerations for discussion and evaluation, but not of direct concern to this inquiry. Hence, the final implication from the data presented in this study is this: If the literature continues in the direction of failing to centralize women and their experiences, then the profession stands to be diminished by a deficiency in theory, knowledge, and practice building that remains critical to the advancement and realization of a truly inclusive and socially just society.

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