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Review of *A Dream Deferred: How Social Work Lost its Way and What Can Be Done*. David Stoesz, Howard Jacob Karger, and Terry Carrilio. Reviewed by Michael Reisch.

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of limited expertise and resources. Potential responses to the identified shortcomings are also reviewed.

Perhaps the book's only weakness is its failure to clearly articulate rights-based approaches in developmental social work. Also, chapter contributors could have addressed challenges of using the developmental approach in their respective field of practice. Nevertheless, the book is well developed and comprehensive, offering a unique perspective to social work. Each of the subject areas addressed are well researched and thoughtfully positioned. With the current push for internalization in social work education, the book fills a void in the field and is likely to be of interest to students and scholars in a number of fields, including international social work, organizing, and community development. It is a wonderful resource for graduate as well as upper-level undergraduate students. Practitioners in the global social welfare field, policy makers and anyone who is concerned about inequality, social justice, and social exclusion will find the book useful.

*Margaret Lombe, Graduate School of Social Work,
Boston College*

David Stoesz, Howard Jacob Karger, and Terry Carrilio, *A Dream Deferred: How Social Work Lost its Way and What Can Be Done* (2010), New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. \$39.95 (hardcover).

The authors of this book, a self-described "critical examination of social work education," draw inspiration from Specht and Courtney's *Unfaithful Angels* (1994) in the themes they emphasize and in their provocative style. They argue that a combination of factors—particularly the absence of scholarly credentials among social work leaders, the over-expansion of social work programs at all levels, the declining quality of students, and the embrace of an "anti-empirical orientation to social reality"—have undermined the profession's credibility and influence, provided ammunition to conservative critics, and weakened the potential it possessed during the Progressive Era to promote a more socially just society. The book is most effective when the authors—who clearly favor a positivist, empirical basis for scholarship—base their

assertions on the extensive data they collected. It is weakest when they shift from analysis to speculation and depart from their thoughtful critique to take on phantom enemies. When this occurs, their analysis degenerates into self-serving polemic.

The book begins by tracing the historical development of social work education from its emergence in the late 19th century and locating the sources of the profession's contemporary weakness. These include the abandonment of empirical research in favor of a reliance on practice wisdom and moral pronouncements, the focus on individual functioning rather than the social context, the failure to resolve persistent identity crises and develop internal coherence, and "the expansion of accredited social work programs far beyond the requisites for professional education" (p. 38).

In succeeding chapters, the authors present a pointed critique of the intellectual and administrative deficiencies of social work journals; the paucity of scholarship among deans and directors, journal editors, and CSWE board members; the lack of sufficient faculty and well-qualified students to fill the ever-expanding number of accredited programs; and the high debt and poor job prospects of today's graduates. The most compelling sections of the book are those that address two closely related issues: the mismatch between unimpeded program growth and labor market realities, and the decline in social work salaries coupled with students' soaring debts. Although the chapters which decry the deficiencies of social work leadership and the influence of anti-empirical approaches to scholarship raise important issues, the authors' arguments are less effective on these points for several reasons.

First, they equate effective educational leadership with scholarship of a particular nature. Although scholarly credibility is a necessary quality in a dean, it is just one of a variety of traits that effective educational leaders possess. Many excellent scholars make terrible deans, particularly in an era when their intellectual role has been superseded by the demands of resource development and external relations.

Second, they vastly overstate the influence of postmodernism and inaccurately blame it for the profession's emphasis on identity-based concerns. These antedated the emergence

of postmodernism in social work by two decades. Third, the authors' argumentation is sometimes seriously flawed. They occasionally cherry-pick statistics and posit dubious cause/effect relationships between discrete phenomena, such as the lack of scholarships among deans and the predominance of a "social agency model" in schools of social work.

Finally, in virtually every chapter they insert gratuitous and often speculative asides—which, ironically, have little or no foundation in data. This detracts from the book's worthy points and gives the impression the authors are more interested in settling personal and professional scores than presenting a serious critique. Space limitations preclude citing the numerous examples of such excesses.

The book concludes with a series of "radical reforms" to save social work education. Some are eminently sensible, others quixotic, nearly all have uncertain consequences. They include the deregulation of CSWE; imposing restrictions on program growth and reducing the number of low quality Ph.D. programs; raising admission standards, primarily through standardized tests; instituting "performance-based accreditation" (although specific criteria are not suggested); recognizing the Ph.D. as the terminal degree; and enhancing the profession's leaders, primarily by asserting the primacy of scholarly productivity in selecting them. Although many social work educators will take umbrage at its tone and substance, *A Dream Deferred* may stimulate a conversation the profession has ignored for too long. That alone would be a worthy outcome.

Michael Reisch, School of Social Work, University of Maryland

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010). New York & London: The New Press. \$27.95 (hardcover).

Two-thirds of the way through her powerful analysis of the criminal "justice" system, Alexander asks: "If someone were to visit the United States from another country (or another planet) and ask: Is the U.S. criminal justice system some kind of tool of racial control?" In the same paragraph, she answers her question: