

Social Work within the National Association of Colored Women: Clubwomen as Othermothers and Captive Maternals

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ABSTRACT

Racial uplift, self-determination, and mutual aid function as mechanisms for Black communities to combat racial discrimination within the United States. Within the earlier formative education of social work, Black women were largely excluded from formal training and thus exercised their own discretion to create networks that allowed them to practice social work informally. This article explores how clubwomen of the early twentieth century performed social work through their commitment to the National Association of Colored Women. More specifically, the focus of this research examines the work of Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell as they contributed to the uplift of Black women and youth. The research draws upon the primary sources of the Mary Church Terrell Papers, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, and the National Association of Colored Women's archival materials within online databases. Secondary sources provide context to the evidence of social work, the modality of clubwomen's practices, and the implications of their roles as Black women within the early civil rights movement of the 1930s and 1940s. By classifying the Black clubwomen as othermothers and captive maternals, one can understand their role as social workers grounded in embodied discourse.

Keywords: clubwomen, social work, Black feminism, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church Terrell

Introduction

The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was formed after a conference in Washington, D.C. on July 12, 1896. It was initially a merger of the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW) and the Colored Women's League (CWL). The NFAAW was based in Boston, Massachusetts, while the CWL was based in Washington, D.C. The merger occurred due to the fact that both organizations dealt with issues based on sexism. This sexism was especially exemplified by the president of the Anti-Slavery Society, James W. Jack. In a letter he wrote in 1895, he stated that the Black women were "prostitutes and were natural thieves and liars" (as quoted in Jones 1982, 22–23). Women of the NACW were faced with gendered oppression due to their lack of respectability as a result of their exclusion from occupations and roles claimed by their male counterparts. Understanding the organization from this angle is especially important as the NACW sought to improve conditions for the race on the basis of gender-based services. However, not only did the members of the NACW concern themselves with women and children, they were also concerned with issues of state-sanctioned violence through imprisonment and convict leasing (Campbell 2013). The club women supported elderly homes as well (NACW 1992). This article takes a critical look at the social welfare

efforts of the NACW at the national and local levels and measures them according to the concepts of embodied discourse, othermothering, and the captive maternal.

At its core, this article is concerned with the impact of Black women on the field of social work. Historically, the work of African Americans as influential figures in securing support programs and resources for their communities has received little recognition. Segregationist policies of structural racism caused many of the issues plaguing Black communities, and as a result, African Americans have traditionally developed mechanisms to combat the discriminatory institutions that created these inequalities. In order to advocate for self-determination and foster the advancement of Black people, social clubs such as the NACW were founded. This article is thus informed by the following questions: How did Black women's clubs use theory to guide their social work? How was the relationship to power defined for leaders within the NACW's clubs and for club members? Were there any differences between national and local chapters of the NACW? This article argues that the contributions of Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune within the NACW's clubs and their organized local chapters elevated the field of social work through embodied discourse as well as the role of club women as othermothers or captive maternals.

In order to chronicle the contributions of these two women, this research will explore the manuscripts and trace their involvement with the club movement of the 1920s to 1940s. The NACW papers are rich with meeting minutes, convention notes, and club histories that detail happenings at the local and national levels. Both the Mary Church Terrell Papers and the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers highlight the two women's personalities, leadership styles, and attitudes. Their leadership of the NACW led to the creation of local chapters that propelled the welfare practices of the national organization and its local chapters. Terrell and Bethune contributed to the formative practices of Black feminist thought and, subsequently, to the concept of intersectionality. This canonization of an as yet unnamed theory informed their social work practices. To explain their practice, Brittany Cooper's concept of "embodied discourse" provides a frame for the relationship between the social work of club women and the communities they intended to serve (2018, 13–14). According to Cooper, "embodied discourse is a form of Black female textual activism wherein race women assertively demand the inclusion of their bodies and, in particular, working-class bodies and Black female bodies by placing them in the texts they write and speak" (2018, 13). In this research, embodied discourse provides the foundation for practicing social work through the NACW and its local federations. In addition to the concept of embodied discourse, the "captive maternal" as theorized by Joy James (2016) lays out the space that club women occupied within their relationship to power in the United States. To understand the captive maternal in this sense, it is useful to provide a definition. Captive maternals are individuals "feminized into caretaking," and they involuntarily "stabilize the culture and wealth" of the West (James 2016, 255–56). Club women such as Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune occupied roles as captive maternals through their leadership in the NACW, along with the women who helped to lead efforts of community care, such as elderly homes and welfare for youth. While they sacrificed their time for causes that required great attention, the state used this to its advantage by refusing to adequately address the issues that plagued African American communities. The operative definitions of the social welfare of the Black women's club movement and modern-day tenets of social work highlight the prominence of Black women as pioneers of the social work profession as they sought to improve the material conditions of African Americans. Moreover, a deep analysis of their work is

necessary not only to understand their contributions to social work as a field but also their legacies as social work professionals.

Literature Review

Mutual aid has been a feature of many communities for several decades, and it exists to help individuals gain access to resources that would otherwise not be efficiently distributed to vulnerable populations. The issues that inspired the founding of the NACW were related to the provision of social services to children and the need to combat stereotypes of Black criminality. To do this, Black club women who were middle to upper class came together for the common goal of uplifting the race. Firsthand accounts of these experiences clearly demonstrate the temperaments of Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune. The Mary Church Terrell Papers include several speeches and addresses related to causes that could be classified as forms of social work. The National Association of Colored Women collection and the Mary McLeod Bethune papers indicate the political condition of African Americans through significant historical shifts in American history. The Bethune papers edited by Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World* (2001) provide a timeline of Bethune's involvement in the New Deal as a result of her pioneering educational work. However, the primary documents provided in several collections do not explicitly address the connection between the embodied discourse of Bethune and Terrell and their humanitarian contributions as social work formations. Nor do these documents refer or allude to the NACW as an institution of social work.

As stated previously, embodied discourse asserts the positionality of Black women out of their intersectional identities. Brittany Cooper explains in *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Black Women* (2018) that the necessity for embodied discourse is due to the invisibility of the Black body since the onset of chattel slavery in the West. As a result of being subjected to inhumane conditions and being further dehumanized in relation to whiteness, Black clubwomen found a way to make themselves intellectually legible through their social work formations. The concept that Cooper provides relies heavily on developing a framework that privileges personal experience, but her research does not marry the theory of embodied discourse to the practice of social work to illuminate other possibilities of Black women's legibility. Part of the project to maintain legibility occurs through motherhood, and *Black Feminist Thought* (2000) by Patricia Hill Collins offers insightful variations of motherhood that help to understand the NACW as an extension of family. Collins defines these relationships by recognizing the women in women-centered networks as "othermothers" (2000, 177–80). Family separation played a major role in dehumanizing the enslaved Africans brought to the United States. Subjecting the Black body to treatment as property meant that familial ties were not always based on blood relation and thus fictive kinship provided a substitute for biological family.

A tradition that played out in the NACW's clubs was that Black women with material means created networks for the racial and "moral uplift" of the Black community. Collins (2000) offers a classification of these women that illustrates what may have helped to guide their work within social clubs. To be seen as an othermother would mean that reverence and recognition of one's engendered understanding of femininity would be performed through the nurturing of community members. Programs that create a supportive structure for young women such as with homes for delinquent girls are important to consider, as Collins does not explicitly name club women as part of this classification of othermothers, and as not much prior research has been

done to make this connection. In line with the nurturing involved in being an othermother within relationships to community, Joy James (2016) explains that the Black maternal figure, within their relationship to the theory of the West or the state, maintains a role of caregiving that is contextualized through captivity. Nurturing is not just an autonomous choice by the clubwomen. It is a choice that requires their affective labor to support African Americans as the state does not support the Black community sufficiently. Thus, clubwomen are feminized into caretaking through gender roles, but also through the exploitation of the United States in that their sacrifices are necessitated by the state's neglect. This is useful for understanding how the social work of the NACW stabilized the economy of the United States, especially during the Great Depression. In *The Womb of Western Theory: Trauma, Theft, Time, and the Captive Maternal*, James defines the captive maternal in terms of caretaking and argues that it is important to situate social work within this sphere. In relation to othermothering, surrogate maternals step in to take care of community members whose immediate families may not have the resources, time, or emotional drive to provide support. As such, one could argue that clubwomen become hypervisible to the state as they are sacrificing their time to uplift the community ravaged by the disregard of the state. Thus, the moral mandate of leaders such as Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune to provide care is not entirely out of their own volition. It is due to the neglect and abandonment of government agencies, exclusionary welfare programs, and the criminalization of Blackness.

Social Work and Black Club Women

Up until the 1960s there were not many integrated professional spheres that allowed for Black social workers to learn about the profession alongside their white counterparts. Consequently, differences in modes of practice and theory developed that informed the treatment of issues within the Black community. In regard to the approaches of Black women, the theoretical application of social work can be understood in terms of embodiment. Standards of intellectual thought have been heavily censored and policed. For the Black club women of the early twentieth century, their bodies functioned as “sites of theory production” (Cooper 2018, 19). Thus, when Anna Julia Cooper states, “when and where I enter in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole race enters with me” (1988, 31), she emphasizes the embodiment of her Blackness and womanhood. Moreover, this challenge edifies the Black woman as an authority of her being, and while not in compliance with the standard representations of femininity, she makes her racialized and gendered self visible.

African Americans during this time were marked not just by Blackness but also by its racial connotations. Much like Anna Julia Cooper understood that her womanhood was unique, America during the early twentieth century levied specific punishments against the indocility of the Black body. As Black people faced mistreatment by whites in the South, including lynchings, low wages, Jim Crow segregation, and other forms of violence, there was an influx of Black southerners to northern states in America (Gary and Gary 1994, 69). According to Edward Franklin Frazier, “Since the mass migrations of Negroes to northern cities, there has emerged a relatively large and influential group of leaders who are primarily concerned with the social welfare of Negroes. In fact, the field of social welfare has provided one of the chief fields of employment for the educated Negro” (1949, 550–52). What Frazier highlights is the necessity of Black leaders addressing the social woes ailing the Black community in the North. This brought many questions to the fore. How would this social welfare be conducted? What does it mean to

practice social welfare within the parameters of being a captive maternal? Who will step up to the plate to concern themselves with the issues facing African Americans? Also, how does embodied discourse enhance the practice of social work? Without intertextual analysis of the importance of embodiment and social work, the work of Black club women as social workers is nearly impossible to understand.

In a curriculum study, the Council of Social Work Education defined social work as the following:

Social work seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, singularly and in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationships which constitute the interaction between man and his environment. These activities can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources, and prevention of social dysfunction (Boehm 1958, n.p.).

This definition of social work provides a guide for measuring the work of several African American leaders during the Progressive Era in American history. The field of social work acts as a corrective institution to establish a healthy relationship between individuals and their society. What has to be addressed is the dysfunction that interrupts the right to self-determination, agency, and dignity. Brittney Cooper explains in *Beyond Respectability* that dignity is “not socially contingent” (2018, 16). In other words, not only does social work operate as a practice to combat dysfunction and inequality, but it is also of use due to its mandate on dignity as a humane imperative. The activities of social work do not allow for partiality on the consideration of these rights. Anna Julia Cooper alludes to the intersectional struggle in her book *Voice of the South* when she states: “While our men seem thoroughly abreast of the times on almost every other subject, when they strike the woman question they drop back into sixteenth century logic” (1988, 75). To highlight how social work needs to be practiced to be of use to those who are impaired, Anna Julia Cooper offers an explicit example of how gender is considered an impairment, showing how the issues within the African American community cannot be properly addressed without confronting sexism.

The exclusion of Black women from conversations about racial issues facilitated the dominance of the Great Race Man ideal. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton defined race men as having “race consciousness, race pride, and race solidarity” (as quoted in Carby 1998). This definition emphasized uniformity, as race man placed the race before himself. Silence on the matter of race women left little room for their development during the Progressive Era. The exclusion of Black women as marginal to the pursuit of racial solidarity meant that Black women had to forge their own paths to produce knowledge on their embodiment and the possibilities of their leadership. Phillip Bryan Harper calls attention to the role of masculinity in achieving dominance by asserting,

Since the dominant view holds prideful self-respect as the very essence of healthy African-American identity, it also considers such identity to be fundamentally weakened wherever masculinity appears to be compromised. While this fact is rarely articulated, its influence is nonetheless real and pervasive. Its primary effect is that all debates over and claims to “authentic” African-American identity are largely animated by a profound anxiety about the status specifically of African-American *masculinity* (as quoted in Carby 1998; emphasis original).

This theorization of authenticity as determined by masculinity hints not only at the exclusion of women but at the erasure of Black women's contributions. Social work was a vehicle to assert racial pride and self-help. The masculinity inscribed within the Black identity discounts the feminization of those who perform gender as women. If one deviates from the masculinization, then the influence one has becomes questionable, unstable, and inauthentic. With this in mind, Black women who became race women were tied to or held captive by their classification as women and caregivers. Race men maintained their dominance by pushing prominent Black women to the margins and to the feminization of uplift around child welfare, education, and so forth. However, the categories of femininity and masculinity proved to be unstable as women such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell took up the same responsibilities and duties as the race men of their age. Their roles as captive maternals illustrate their relation to power and influence in accordance with their investment in caregiving as members of the NACW.

The self-help work of Black women in the social clubs of the 1920s to 1940s cannot be divorced from embodied discourse and the relationship between themselves and the environment in which they sought to enrich their communities. Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the NACW, exhibited through her speeches the mark of a race woman. In an address to the students of M. Street High School on September 15, 1915, Terrell informed the student body of the "certain conditions which confront the Colored-American today." She went on to say that "some of us are doing everything we can to improve these untoward conditions under which we are obliged to live" (Terrell 1915). These sentiments highlighted the role she occupied as a captive maternal as she sacrificed for the uplift of the Black community. Much like the race men described by Drake and Cayton as committed to the pursuit of racial solidarity, Terrell advanced a similar stance. In particular, throughout the speech, Terrell emphasized the use of "we." This "we" speaks to the group-centered mentality expected of a race woman. However, beyond that, Terrell maintained a position of agitation, stating later that if we "agitate continuously" (Terrell 1915) then justice will prevail. This leads to the understanding that some Black women maintained a perspective of rebelliousness, and purposely chose not to be respectable. Terrell challenged the assumptions that Black women should be subservient and should not be outspoken about their disappointment regarding their mistreatment within the Black community. Instead of remaining silent, Terrell voiced her complaints about injustice and thus inserted herself as a race woman, just as Black men had done.

However, of even more importance is that Terrell emphasized the uplift of the race. In understanding social work in relation to this statement, it is important to understand that social work can be practiced in terms of its theoretical foundations. According to John G. McNutt (2013), the Settlement House Movement of the early 1900s was one of the earliest professional forms of social work that laid the groundwork for the social work profession today. At that time, some training was available to Black social workers. Robenia B. Gary and Lawrence E. Gary provide a list of priorities for Black social workers in the early twentieth century as follows:

- 1) demonstration to the public that everybody "with love in his heart" could not do social work in a professional manner; 2) identification of knowledge and skills necessary for the practice of social work; 3) the establishment of schools for the training of social workers; 4) the development of professional organizations; 5) the publication of major books dealing with social work theory and practice; 6) the development of professional journals; and 7) an identification of values shared by social workers (1994, 67).

While such activities were characteristic of Black social workers, not all social work at that time was labeled specifically as social welfare. As discussed previously, race men and race women felt obligated to establish a unified racial consciousness as a way to morally and materially uplift African Americans. Similarly, embodied discourse functioned in a manner that resonated with Black club women who found ways to improve the conditions of their communities. The first activity explains that not everyone is skilled to do social work simply because they feel compelled to help. This makes it even more important that the work of Black club women leaders be accorded recognition and merit. Because their efforts were grounded in what the Combahee River Collective (1977) refers to as the “personal is political” ethic, past presidents of the NACW such as Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune used their understanding of the world to establish the NACW as a site of social work practice. This provided the contextual environment necessary for producing effective social workers. Unlike educational institutions such as the Atlanta School of Social Work, the NACW functioned as a physical gathering place to sharpen the minds of social workers in training.

Leadership in the National Association of Colored Women

The speeches and biographies of Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune act as the recorded documents of theory that informed the social work of the NACW. For example, during the early 1940s, Bethune addressed the Division of Negro Services in a speech in New York and explained the pressing issues of “poor farm incomes; poor wages; crowded housing condition[s]; hazard[s] to health that accompany these decisions; [and] the need for education, for job training, for job possibilities” (Bethune n.d.). Bethune believed that these issues required the attention of every individual, a claim that evokes embodied discourse and the use of the personal politics of oneself to seek self-determination and self-advocacy.

Iris Carlton-LaNey’s *African American Social Work Pioneers’ Response to Need* (1999) illuminates the values and principles of social work practiced by African Americans in the early twentieth century. Carlton-LaNey outlined “self-help, mutual aid, race pride, and social debt” (1999, 311) as the motivations behind the practice of social welfare. To mobilize and spread the word on mutual aid and self-help, the NACW’s clubs effectively used the *Women’s Era* literary magazine for outreach (Carlton-LaNey 1999, 311). As stated earlier, the concept of race pride is adjacent to the representations of race men and women. Social debt, however, was the motivation behind using one’s esteem and class to “Lift As We Climb,” which is the motto of the NACW. One of the more notable ways in which this motto was exemplified can be found in the establishment of schools. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Women in 1904 for the purpose of contributing to the racial uplift of African American women (Peebles-Wilkins 2013). The fact that a Black woman was purposely establishing a school for other Black girls and women further entrenches the value of embodied discourse in the case of Bethune’s social work, and I would argue it uses tenets similar to Black feminist thought. Central to this theory of embodiment is the use of Black women’s experience as another dimension of social work practice. If Mary McLeod Bethune had not been a Black woman who used her identity to inform her work around education and racial uplift, the prospects for improving the lives of Black women in need of support would have been more limited.

Mary McLeod Bethune occupied an interesting position within society during her tenure as a world-renowned educator. She served as the president of the NACW from 1924 to 1928. Bethune had a philosophy of education specifically for “negro girls” (McCluskey and Smith

2001, 84). In 1926, she wrote an essay on her philosophy that stated that “a great deal of new freedom rest[s] upon the type of education which the Negro woman will receive” (McCluskey and Smith 2001, 84). The essay also asserted that domesticity was the highest extent to which Black women could be rendered visible and successful; however, the education of the Black woman would be foundational to the continued emancipation of the Negro. While emancipation had been achieved legally, there were still areas in which Black people were bound. Intellectual freedom was one such area, and Mary McLeod Bethune advocated especially for the freedom of education as it would be the means through which total freedom could be achieved. Moreover, what was important to the quest for freedom was the embodiment of Black femininity and the notion that the freedom of the race would not be guaranteed until the freedom of the Black girl was actualized.

Bethune’s life is a testament to this fact, as she led by example to be able to mentor and lead the charge for other Black girls to follow in her footsteps toward educational advancement. In 1894, Mary McLeod Bethune graduated from Scotia Seminary (Barber-Scotia College) in Concord, North Carolina, and she later went on to the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago with the intent of becoming a missionary (Peebles-Wilkins 2013). By taking a closer look at her relationships through the framework of embodied discourse, it’s clear that Bethune led by example. Her commitment to education meant that she situated herself within the fight for educational equality. What made institutions like her Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls successful in their fundraising were the connections that Bethune had within the NACW. For example, her tribute to Frances Reynolds Keyser in 1932 indicated that the former president of the State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs in New York and Florida was supportive of Bethune-Cookman College (McCluskey and Smith 2001, 87). Networks of support helped to fortify the mission of Bethune’s institutional endeavors. In this way, she not only used embodied discourse to define her relation to the work she did while president of the NACW, but she also formed bonds with othermothers within the organization.

In looking at Mary McLeod Bethune as a captive maternal, it is helpful to highlight her role in the New Deal. As part of the National Youth Administration, Bethune concerned herself with the state of affairs of Black youth, especially as the United States was gearing up for World War II. In a speech to the Second National Conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth, Bethune explained that “no such united democracy can possibly exist unless...common opportunity is available to all Americans regardless of creed, class, or color” (McCluskey and Smith 2001, 87). Later, in a drafted letter to President Roosevelt, Mary McLeod Bethune stated that one of the shortcomings of the New Deal legislation was that there were inadequate “safeguards for federal aid to education and health which would insure equitable distribution of federal money” (McCluskey and Smith 2001, 236). As Joy James (2016) describes the relationship of the captive maternal to the state, the resistance of Black women does not necessarily grant access to the aid that many have struggled for. In the case of Mary McLeod Bethune, her advocacy was a form of social work in that she used her experiential authority as a Black woman to help uplift the community through her roles in the Roosevelt administration. Despite her commitment to social work and her pleas to President Roosevelt and other cabinet members, federal assistance was not guaranteed for the African American community. Thus, she continued to sacrifice her time, often to no avail. This illustrates the theft of women’s time, as Black women with fewer systemic advantages than their white counterparts continued to bear the brunt of racial uplift in the name of social work. In addition to this, Bethune aligned with the part of social work concerned with the provision of individual and social resources. She stood in

proxy for other Black people who had not entered with her in her role as the special advisor for minority affairs in the Roosevelt administration, yet she entered for them by advocating for services. This advocacy was what she referred to as equal opportunity under a united democracy. Bethune made her intentions known and championed services to prevent further social dysfunction in the African American community.

Mary Church Terrell used her intellectual prowess to mobilize club women toward work that would “remedy [the] evils” of lynching, convict leasing, and Jim Crow segregation (Terrell 1899). She served as the first president of the National Association of Colored Women for five years. Terrell was well educated and had received both a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Oberlin College. She was proficient in English, German, French, and Italian. This enabled her to address multiple crowds abroad and apprise them of the state of race relations in America. Her training and intellect also distinguished her from other working-class women.

In a letter addressed to the NACW on the duties of the organization, Terrell lamented the burden that working women faced when trying to care for their own homes and the residences in which they worked (Terrell 1899). Terrell stated that it was the duty of club women to endeavor to secure proper care for the children of working women who could not afford it themselves. This points to the differences and similarities between the community the club served and the population of the club. The club was primarily composed of middle- to upper-class Black women who had obtained an education and who used racial solidarity to connect them to the less fortunate of the race.

In this same letter, Terrell (1899) insisted on the importance of establishing kindergartens and day cares. According to Terrell, the race problem must be solved by providing adequate services to children. This inclusion of the race problem in Terrell’s letter also points to a theoretical appeal of intellect. Asking her audience, comprised of Black women, to concern themselves with race signifies embodied discourse through a discursive sequence of thought, and she situates Black womanhood in the middle of that sequence. It was similar to how Mary McLeod Bethune insisted that the freedom of the Negro was predicated upon the right to education for the Black girl. These two leaders were in line with one another in terms of their approaches to racial uplift.

The captive maternal is also a useful template for understanding what Mary Church Terrell proposed as an alternative for the “unfortunate women and tempted girls” (Terrell 1899). For example, she advocated for the involvement of these women in “schools of domestic science” (Terrell 1899). What Terrell proposed was the continuation of the captive maternal in modes of caretaking, especially for those who were “not blessed with advantages of education and moral training” (1899). For Terrell and many other club women, domesticity was an American ideal that had to be adopted by all women in order to gain respect. The elevation of morality was important for Terrell as she felt that the race would be judged based on the behaviors of the uneducated. Thus, she attempted to reach these women through the modes and practices of home life.

The appeal to motherhood through the othermothering of working-class women’s children presented another avenue to achieve ideals culturally attuned to what American society expected of women. The only issue was that for the longest time, Black women were not seen as capable of much, and thus Terrell concerned herself with the welfare of youth in order to counter these low expectations at a young age. Terrell herself had lost three children shortly after their birth, and she subsequently treated the youth work of the NACW as a substitute for the children she never had the chance to raise and nurture. Thus, one could conclude that Terrell functioned as a

captive maternal who othermothered those served by the NACW. On at least one occasion, she suggested as much:

So tenderly has this child of the organized womanhood of the race been nurtured, and so wisely ministered unto by all who have watched prayerfully and waited patiently for its development, that it comes before you to-day a child hale, hearty and strong, of which its fond mothers have every reason to be proud (Terrell 1899).

Child welfare was integral to the mission of the NACW. Without making efforts to ensure that children were cared for in terms of nurseries and kindergartens, the mission of the club would be devoid of much of its communal meaning. However, these interests were also self-righteous. Although genuinely concerned with the well-being of working-class women and their children, the NACW also led paternalistic efforts to regulate the behavior of women, projecting upon them the expectations that white Americans had of them (Roberts 2005, 963).

Conclusion

Both Bethune and Terrell relied on putting their efforts toward the welfare of children and other working-class women as a way to uplift the race. However, the leadership style of Bethune was more focused on education and government agencies. Terrell concerned herself with home life, and while she did travel abroad on behalf of the NACW and other women-centered organizations, she was not as extensively connected with the White House as Bethune. Bethune relied heavily on her connections to ensure funding for Bethune-Cookman College. In their capacities as leaders, the two women realized that the education of youth was an important principle behind the NACW. In addition, they used their privileges to secure opportunities for others.

Social work functions similarly today. Many social workers are educated and can provide services at the macro and micro levels. The macro level deals with institutional concerns, while the micro level addresses interpersonal aspects. Both Terrell and Bethune demonstrated their ability to influence other women to rally behind those less fortunate. They did so by fostering collective action within their club networks, but also by concerning themselves with the need for proper education for community members, particularly youth.

This article has illuminated the ways in which service was a major feature of the NACW and its membership. However, it is also important to note that the NACW and its members' contributions to social work should be carefully considered and analyzed to determine the modes of their practice. Examining the utility of othermothering, captive maternals, and embodied discourse helps to provide some tools to understand their role in social work, but these frameworks build upon Black feminist thought. While this study of the NACW has been primarily historical in focus, the imprint that the organization left on intellectual traditions has been generative for understanding contemporary theories within the field of social work. Focusing on the efforts of Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune as leaders of the NACW highlights the various ways in which social work has been conceived and practiced, as well as the relevance of these two women to this field and to the larger American society of their time and beyond.

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