Transatlantic Transfers in Social Work: Contributions of Three Pioneers

Rebecca L. Hegar

Rebecca L. Hegar, Professor of Social Work at the University of Texas at Arlington, has a long standing interest in the history of social work in Europe and the U.S.A.

Correspondence to Professor Rebecca L. Hegar, Ph.D., School of Social Work, University of Texas at Arlington, Box 19129, Arlington, TX 76019–0129, USA. Email: rhegar@uta.edu

Summary

Internationalism has been a prominent theme in the transatlantic history of social reform, and many pioneering social workers championed the causes of peace, war relief, human rights, and international avenues for dispute resolution. For some, internationalism was inseparable from social welfare. Jane Addams in the United States, Alice Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, and Alice Salomon of Germany were central figures during the early 20th century in transatlantic campaigns for social reform and international co-operation, as well as in the emergence of social work. This article draws from letters, autobiographies, and published works of these three pioneers to reconstruct their social networks and to examine their contributions to the transatlantic transfer of knowledge. International diffusion of thought and practice has high salience for a profession embracing change in the 21st century.

Keywords: social welfare history, internationalism, Czech Republic, Germany, United States

Introduction and methods

The lives of pioneering social workers illustrate the idealism of the earliest period of social work history and offer insight into the values and priorities that animated their struggle for social reform and professional advancement. Publications over the past twenty years demonstrate renewed international interest in the contributions of Jane Addams, Alice Masaryk and Alice Salomon among historians (Lehmkuhl, 1988; Sklar et al., 1998; Skilling, 2001; Schüler, 2004; Kendall, 2000),

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The British Association of Social Workers. All rights reserved
sociologists (Deegan, 2002) and social workers (Wieler, 1988a, 1988b; Kubičková, 2001; Berger, 2005). However, the single published treatment of connections among the three women concerns only Addams and Solomon and has appeared exclusively in German. That work—Schüler’s (2004) detailed exploration of Solomon’s and Addams’ transatlantic dialogue—makes a major contribution to the international history of social welfare.

Research for this paper involved searches for unpublished source material, particularly correspondence, through contacts with the Alice Salomon Archive in Berlin, the Alice Masaryk Manuscripts at the Lilly Library of Indiana University and the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago. Unfortunately, little of the correspondence Solomon received in Germany survived the Nazi era (Feustel, 2005), and Masaryk’s letters in the Lilly Library include no correspondence from Addams or Solomon (Cape, 2005). The only source of relevant correspondence identified in research for this article is the extensive microfilmed collection of Jane Addams’ papers (Addams, 1984). Letters from this source are cited as ‘JAP, 1984’, followed by reel and frame numbers.

Other resources include autobiographies by Addams (1910, 1930) and Salomon (1983, 2004), as well as an autobiographical compendium of Masaryk’s writings (Mitchell, 1980) and a compilation by Sklar et al. (1998) of original documents. The author also searched relevant US serial publications, including Social Service Review, The Survey and the annual Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, as well as two international library databases: WorldCat and Karlsruhe Virtual Catalog. Finally, the author reviewed secondary sources published in English (e.g. Unterberger, 1974; Wieler, 1988a, 1988b; Kubičková, 2001; Skilling, 2001) and, to a much more limited extent, in German (e.g. Lehmkuhl, 1988; Schüler, 2004; Berger, 2005).

Historical research is particularly salient in social work because the field is highly contextual. Values and trends in society have been inextricably linked with the emergence and development of social innovations. The contributions of early international leaders in social work offer insights into themes that have persisted as the field has matured, including the importance of human rights and social justice, tension between vocationalism and professionalism, debates about the auspices of social work education, and concern with the balance between public and private provision of services. The pioneers profiled here contributed to the international transfer of ideas and methods concerning these and other issues as social work emerged from the charitable and voluntary activities of the nineteenth century. The evolution of social work has continued relevance in the twenty-first century because theories and practices continue to spread internationally through the process of diffusion or cultural borrowing, which is introduced in the following section.
Theoretical perspectives on diffusion and cultural borrowing

Theories of social change explain patterns in the emergence or evolution of institutions and societies. Structural theories suggest that social change occurs when a society reaches a particular stage of development. For example, according to structural theory, social work emerged when traditional family and community supports no longer met key human needs. Diffusion theory can explain social change in the absence of structural change, or it can supplement structural arguments. Sociologists apply diffusion theory to a range of phenomena relevant to social work, including the spread of labour unions, riots and violent protest, and social movements (e.g. Pilcher et al., 1978; Oberschall, 1989; Hedstrom, 1994). Contemporary social work literature includes critiques of diffusion as a mechanism of social development, because spreading innovations may not benefit the societies receiving them (e.g. Tang, 1996).

Rogers (a rural sociologist who began his work in the 1950s) offered a classic definition: ‘Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication, in that the messages are concerned with new ideas’ (Rogers, 1995, p. 5). Rogers and other theorists ground diffusion within social systems theory, positing that innovations and ideas spread through webs of communication among individuals linked in networks. Those who spread ideas readily are labelled ‘opinion leaders’, and those who do so with the intention of creating change are ‘change agents’ (Rogers, 1962, p. 17) — terms and concepts very familiar within social work. Mechanisms for diffusion of ideas include publication, public speaking, travel, observation and immigration, among others illustrated in this study.

Like sociology, historical scholarship also addresses the spread of innovations, sometimes called trading or transfer. Examples of such transfers during the nineteenth century included philanthropically funded social housing, hospitals and schools, as well as cultural institutions (Adam, 2002). In this article, the author applies ‘diffusion’, ‘transfer’ and ‘cultural borrowing’ to transactions within an international social network through which Addams, Masaryk and Salomon communicated their ideas about social service and social reform.

Careers of Addams, Masaryk and Solomon

Addams, Masaryk and Salomon share several characteristics with prominent female contemporaries, including influential family backgrounds, higher educations and lives without marriage or children. The three
women stand out because of their leadership in multiple social causes and practice arenas, though each concentrated her primary energies on specific aspects of social reform: Addams in settlement work and international peace, Salomon in the international women’s movement and social work education, and Masaryk in international relief and social work education, as well as the cause of Czechoslovak independence.

Addams’ Hull House settlement in Chicago was central to the connections forged by the women. Both Masaryk and Salomon first met Addams in Chicago, and each stayed at Hull House during visits to the USA (Mitchell, 1980; Salomon, 2004). Although Addams formed one of the primary links between them, Masaryk and Salomon had careers that were more similar. Both were among the first European women to earn the Ph.D. and to become involved in social work education. At this point, a brief sketch of each woman’s life and career provides a foundation for later discussion of contributions each made to the spread of social work ideas.

Jane Addams (1860–1935)

Jane Addams’ father was a mill owner who also served for sixteen years as a senator in the Illinois state legislature. Three years after Jane was born in 1860, her mother died giving birth to her ninth child. At the time of the movement to abolish slavery, Jane’s father reared his large family in sympathy with Quaker religious teachings about human equality and pacifism. After Jane completed college, she enrolled in 1881 at a medical school for women (Bryan et al., 1996), but her formal education ended when her father died and she herself became ill. She spent two years recuperating in Europe (1883–85), and she again travelled in England and on the Continent in 1887 and 1888. While in London, Addams visited Toynbee Hall—the settlement house founded in 1884 by clergyman Samuel Barnett. Then, upon her return to Chicago, Addams worked with friends and donors to establish the Hull House Settlement in 1889 (Addams, 1910).

Addams achieved unique prominence among early US social workers through organizational roles, lecture tours and writing. During the First World War, she led the US delegation to the 1915 International Congress of Women at The Hague and was elected Congress President. Much of Addams’ later career was devoted to working for international peace and war relief—predominant themes of her second autobiography (Addams, 1930). Although Addams was deeply admired both in the USA and abroad and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, she also was reviled by many Americans for her pacifism and activism (Addams, 1930). She died in 1935, a life-long resident of Hull House.
Alice Masaryk or Masaryková (1897–1966)

Alice Garrigue Masaryk (or Masaryková, the feminine form of her Czech surname) was born in 1879, the oldest among five children of Tomáš Masaryk, who would become the first President of Czechoslovakia, and his American wife, Charlotte Garrigue. Tomáš Masaryk, a professor and political journalist, served in the Austrian Parliament, while his wife, a feminist from a prominent Unitarian family, adopted his cause of Czech nationalism (Skilling, 2001).

In 1898, Alice began medical studies in Prague, though she later finished her degree in philosophy, studied further in Berlin and London, and wrote her dissertation about the Magna Carta (Mitchell, 1980; Skilling, 2001). During an extended visit to the USA beginning in 1904, Masaryk lived at the University of Chicago Settlement and established a lasting friendship with its leader, Mary McDowell (Mitchell, 1980). It is likely that the first time Jane Addams had heard of Alice was when Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk wrote as a stranger asking Addams’ ‘guidance and protection for her [Alice] should you meet her’ (JAP, 1984, 4–795). Alice subsequently stayed a fortnight at Hull House as Addams’ guest (Mitchell, 1980).

After returning home, Alice Masaryk taught on the secondary level, while organizing a university group to explore social theory and practice. In 1915, she was abruptly arrested and imprisoned in Vienna, charged with political crimes related to her father’s Czech nationalism. To forstall her execution, Addams, McDowell, Julia Lathrop, Grace Abbott and other US settlement leaders launched a campaign credited by press reports with generating 40,000 letters and cables to Vienna (McDowell, 1916; Unterberger, 1974; JAP, 1984, 9–1369, 38–801). When Masaryk was freed after eight months, she worked with others to establish in 1918 a first School of Social Welfare in Prague (Mitchell, 1980).

Masaryk also founded the Czechoslovak Red Cross, which she led from 1919 to 1938. She served as President of the 1st International Conference of Social Work (ICSW) in Paris in 1928 and of the 2nd ICSW meeting in Frankfurt am Main in 1932 (Mitchell, 1980). Her professional activities in Europe continued until 1938 when events of the Second World War forced her resignation from the Red Cross and her exile to the USA. There, Masaryk experienced poor physical and mental health and was hospitalized for long periods (Skilling, 2001). With the exception of three years spent in Czechoslovakia after 1945, she lived in the USA until her death in 1966.

Alice Salomon (1872–1948)

Alice Salomon was born in 1872 into a large, secular Jewish family in Berlin, with parents and relatives in business and banking. As a young woman,
Salomon aspired to be a teacher and worked with charitable organizations, and the editor of her autobiography speculated that she learned of the settlement house movement when she travelled to England in 1896 (Salomon, 2004). In 1902, she entered Friedrich Wilhelms University, where, as a woman, she struggled for the right to complete her doctoral studies in 1906 (Salomon, 2004). She had achieved prominence in charitable work and had established an early training course for charity workers several years before she founded Germany’s first non-sectarian women’s school for social studies in 1908 (Salomon, 2004; Berger, 2005).

Addams’ correspondence indicates that she was already familiar with Salomon’s reputation in 1908, when Salomon visited Canada and the USA in her new role as Secretary of the International Council of Women (ICW) (JAP, 1984, 5–847). The two women met in Chicago, and Salomon referred in her autobiography to many subsequent visits to Hull House (Salomon, 2004). For the next twenty years, Salomon’s career was divided between service to the ICW and leadership in social work education (Salomon, 2004).

Like Masaryk and Addams, Salomon’s life was shaped by the political events of her time. She did not attend the 1915 Congress of Women at The Hague (a decision she later called a mistake) because of opposition rooted in patriotism by the German National Council of Women (Salomon, 2004). However, immediately following the Congress, as participants travelled to meet with European leaders to advocate for peace, Salomon enabled Addams to meet with German Chancellor Hollweg (Salomon, 2004).

Salomon continued to provide leadership during the difficult post-war years in Germany. In despair over famine conditions in 1918, Salomon and colleague Anita Augsburg appealed for food relief, on behalf of the German National Council of Women, to Addams and Edith Wilson, wife of President Woodrow Wilson (‘The first international task: Food’, 1918). Addams was able to respond only after peace was established in 1919 when she, Dr Alice Hamilton of Hull House, and Dr Jacobs of the Netherlands joined a delegation of the Society of Friends from England and the USA to deliver food aid (Addams, 1930; Salomon, 2004).

As conditions in Europe slowly improved, Salomon continued her leadership in social work. In 1925, she launched a more academically advanced social work programme in Berlin, and, in 1928, she led the group on social work education at the 1st ICSW meeting in Paris. Despite some professional setbacks brought on by resurging anti-Semitism, she received several recognitions in 1932, including the naming of the Berlin School of Social Work in her honour (Salomon, 2004; Berger, 2005). However, with Hitler’s rise to power, her situation inevitably changed.

A convert to Protestantism in 1914, Salomon became aligned during the Nazi era with the ‘Confessing Church’ that resisted control by the German state (Salomon, 2004). The Gestapo ordered her to leave Germany in 1937,
citing her 1936 lecture tour in the USA as one ground (‘Distinguished exile’, 1937; Salomon, 2004). Salomon fled first to England, then to the USA. Unfortunately, her last years were marked by poverty, illness and increasing isolation (Wieler, 1988a; Berger, 2005). She died in New York in 1948.

Contributions to diffusion of social work knowledge

Common themes in the lives of Addams, Masaryk and Solomon go beyond their families, educations, progressive religious traditions, choice of careers and political struggles. Through scholarship and advocacy, organizational leadership and international travel, and direct cultural borrowing from other countries, the three women contributed to transatlantic diffusion of social work knowledge at a time when the profession was emerging from earlier models of charity, voluntarism and reform.

Scholarship and advocacy

Each of the three women was a prolific author who used publication as a vehicle for advocacy, as well as for dissemination of ideas. Emphasis here is on scholarship that was particularly relevant and accessible to a transatlantic audience because it was published or translated abroad.

Addams wrote or co-authored numerous books and more than 500 articles in both popular and academic journals (Bryan et al., 1996). The German translation of Twenty Years at Hull House, published in 1913, is discussed later in this section because of the role Salomon played in its publication. A comprehensive index to The Jane Addams Papers (Bryan et al., 1996) and international library databases include a few additional works published before her death in French (Adams, 1921) or German (Addams, 1915a; Addams and Salomon, 1923; Relgis et al., 1932). In addition to Addams’ autobiographical writings and her co-authored account of the 1915 Conference of Women at The Hague (Addams et al., 1915), her publications advocating world peace had particular relevance for a transatlantic audience (Addams, 1907, 1915b, 1922). Only decades after her death did Addams’ scholarship receive international recognition as a feminist voice in the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism (Lehmkuhl, 1988; Deegan, 2002).

Salomon was equally prolific, publishing at least twenty-four books and hundreds of articles during her life, as well as her posthumously published biography, which first appeared in German in 1983 (Salomon, 1983, 2004; Schüller, 2004). Although her editor attributes the relative obscurity of her later life in the USA in part to the fact that few of her major works had appeared in English (Salomon, 2004), she had published several articles
in the influential American journal, *The Survey* (Salomon, 1920, 1922a, 1922b, 1923a), as well as in other professional venues (Solomon, 1923b, 1931). Most of Salomon’s US publications concerned social services and economic problems in Germany. Addams’ correspondence revealed that she frequently used her position as contributing editor for *The Survey* to help Salomon connect with US markets for her writing and lectures (JAP, 1984, 12–1170, 1326, 1327, 1494, 1591, 21–1255, 23–1030, 1033, 1058).

Salomon, in turn, aided the transatlantic exposure of several Americans. For example, she recommended to Addams a prospective translator for *Twenty Years at Hull House*—a young German woman who had lived for a time in an American social settlement (JAP, 1984, 6–649; Sklar et al., 1998). Salomon herself introduced the German edition of Addams' book (1913); her preface is reprinted by Sklar and colleagues (1998), along with helpful commentary. In addition to helping bring Addams to German audiences, Salomon included translated portions of *Social Diagnosis* by Mary Richmond (1917) and of work by US social work educators Karl de Schweinitz and Porter Lee in her book, *Soziale Diagnose* (1926), according to Stuenkel (1927). She also wrote for German audiences about her impressions of the USA (Salomon, 1909, 1924), which contributed to the distinctive role she played for almost thirty years as a cultural interpreter between the social service worlds of Germany and the USA.

It is apparent from the attention that Solomon and her work received that she gained rather wide exposure in the USA. For example, her books were reviewed in *Social Service Review* and *American Sociological Review* (Stuenkel, 1927; Hathway, 1938). However, her editor reported that she was unable to find a publisher during her lifetime for the autobiography she wrote in English after her immigration (Salomon, 2004). Numerous events of her life were reported as news items in professional publications, including her role at the first ICSW (Sand, 1928), her lectures in the USA (‘Neighbors’, 1923; ‘Distinguished visitor’, 1936; ‘Lectures’, 1939), her expulsion from Germany (‘Alice Salomon exiled’, 1937; ‘Distinguished exile’, 1937), her application for US citizenship (‘New Yorkers’, 1937), the politically motivated rescission of her Ph.D. degree in Germany (‘Honoris Causa’, 1939), her 75th birthday (‘Tribute to an educator’, 1947) and her death (‘Died: Dr. Alice Salomon’, 1948).

Alice Masaryk, though not as prolific as Salomon or Addams, published several professional books, notably a study of the Czechoslovak Red Cross (Masaryk, 1935). Like Salomon, she became quite well known in the USA through her writings and press coverage of her life. For example, she published an early article about Czech immigrants during her initial stay in Chicago (Masaryk, 1904). Masaryk’s first exposure to a wider US audience came during her imprisonment in Vienna, when major newspapers and *The Survey* publicized her situation and the campaign to aid her (McDowell, 1916; Unterberger, 1974). Later, *Atlantic Monthly* published
correspondence between Masaryk and her mother dating from her imprisonment (Masaryk, 1920a, 1920b).

In 1921, The Survey devoted an issue to Czechoslovakia, including a short message from Masaryk, whose father had become President the previous year (Masaryk, 1921). A similar number of The Survey in 1930 included a biographical article about Alice (McDowell, 1930). In 1939, when the same journal reported that she had been forced to resign as the head of the Red Cross, the editor observed that ‘Few European social workers are as well known to their American colleagues as Miss Masaryk’ (‘People and things: C’est la guerre’, 1939, p. 25). The Survey also covered her talk at the National Conference of Social Welfare the same year (‘And Now, Buffalo’, 1939; ‘Dr. Alice G. Masaryk’, 1939). Masaryk frequently spoke and wrote about international themes arising from her Red Cross experience and her role as goodwill ambassador for Czechoslovakia.

Organizational leadership and international connections

Like their writings, the leadership positions that Addams, Masaryk and Salomon undertook in international organizations were instrumental in the bi-directional spread of social work knowledge across the Atlantic. The organizational work and travels of the three women were so extensive that the examples presented here are merely illustrative.

For example, in addition to at least three personal journeys to Europe before 1900, Addams made several extended speaking tours and numerous other trips in her roles with professional and women’s organizations (Bryan et al., 1996). She gathered with Europeans in Budapest at a women’s suffrage conference in 1913 and presided over the 1915 International Congress of Women at The Hague, as discussed above (Addams, 1930). Following that meeting, she visited Salomon’s school and gave a public lecture about Hull House at Berlin’s East Side Settlement (Sklar et al., 1998). Upon her return in 1919 with the Society of Friends’ relief mission, Addams again met with German colleagues, including Salomon and Siegmund-Schultze, head of the settlement house she had visited in 1915 (Addams and Hamilton, 1919; Addams, 1930; Salomon, 2004). She made several other transatlantic trips as President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), organized in 1919 in Zurich, including later meetings in Vienna (1921), The Hague (1922), Dublin (1926) and Prague (1929), as well as in Washington (1924, 1935).

Addams’ frequent visits to Europe reinforced her network of influential friends and acquaintances. For example, when she met with English leaders in the cause of peace in 1915, both Prime Minister Asquith and the Bishop of London were former settlement house residents whom Addams recalled having met years earlier (Addams, 1932). Addams’ correspondence
suggests that Masaryk joined her in speaking at the 1921 WILPF Congress in Vienna (JAP, 1984, 13–1305), and Salomon accepted Addams’ invitation to address the Congress at The Hague in 1922 (Salomon, 2004). There, Salomon met and developed lasting friendships with two English sisters, Eglantine Jebb and Dorothy Buxton, who founded the organization later known as the International Save the Children Union (Solomon, 2004).

In Salomon’s key organizational roles with the ICW, she developed especially close ties with the long-serving President, Ishbel Maria Gordon, Lady Aberdeen, and she wrote of many summers spent at the Aberdeen estate (Salomon, 2004). Salomon’s eventual leadership of the International Association of Schools of Social Work also provided opportunities to build a transatlantic network that included Porter Lee, Director of the New York School of Social Work (Salomon, 2004).

In her position as President of both the first and second ICSWs, Masaryk also worked closely with both European colleagues and Americans, once hosting the planning committee at the Presidential residence near Prague (Skilling, 2001). Masaryk made few if any professional visits to the USA between 1904 and her emigration in 1939. However, in her first year as a US resident, she spoke at the National Federation of Settlements conference and at the National Conference of Social Work (Masaryk, 1939; Mitchell, 1980). The latter talk voiced her frequent theme of international understanding.

While Masayk’s work took place primarily in Europe, Salomon was able to make several transatlantic crossings between the World Wars. She toured in the USA twice during 1923 and 1924, staying at the Henry Street Settlement in New York and at Hull House and speaking at the National Conference of Social Work in Washington. Salomon’s talk, about the role of churches in social services, appeared in full in the Conference Proceedings (Salomon, 1923). Another article published that year was based on an interview or correspondence with Salomon about social work in Germany (‘The Organized Social Workers of Germany’, 1923). It was on her lecture tour in 1924 that Salomon met an American couple who later would sponsor her emigration to the USA (Salomon, 2004). Salomon returned to the USA for another lecture tour in 1936, before leaving Germany permanently in 1937.

Given the extent of their travels and organizational involvement, as well as their personal acquaintanceship, it is somewhat surprising that Addams, Masaryk and Salomon were not more frequently in the same place at the same time. For example, Masaryk was unable to travel to the USA in 1922 because of her mother’s illness (JAP, 1984, 15–151). In 1926, Addams was invited to visit Salomon’s Berlin school, but the trip was cancelled because of Addams’ ill health (JAP, 1984, 18–490). A much anticipated reunion between Addams and the Masaryk family was cancelled when Addams was in Prague for the 1929 WILPF meeting because a health crisis affecting Tomáš Masaryk took his family out of the city.
Addams’ health made her forgo the 1932 International Conference of Settlements in Berlin, after repeated pleas from the organizers (JAP, 1984, 23–408, 767, 1163). Finally, despite Salomon’s and Masaryk’s simultaneous involvement in social work education in neighbouring countries, research for this paper confirmed only a single occasion when the two women worked together: the 1928 ICSW in Paris, where Masaryk was President and Salomon chaired the section on social work education that led to establishment of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (Mitchell, 1980; Salomon, 2004). However, despite their inability to meet more frequently in person, Addams, Masaryk and Salomon engaged in transatlantic diffusion of ideas in their writing and organizational roles, as well as in direct cultural borrowing.

Direct cultural borrowing

Social settlements are themselves prominent examples of direct cultural borrowing from England that influenced the evolution of social work in the USA and elsewhere. The social survey—an important research method employed by US settlements at the time of Masaryk’s visit in 1904—had roots in Germany, where an association for social policy carried out surveys beginning in the 1870s (Suin de Boutemard, 1990). However, the direct inspiration for US settlements to adopt the social survey method came from the work of Charles Booth. Booth (an industrialist, informally trained sociologist and, later, English Privy Councillor) studied the conditions of the poor and ultimately published his multivolume classic, *Life and Labour of the People of London (1891–1903)* (Booth, 1902; ‘Booth, Charles’, 1910). Similar efforts to study poverty in the USA began in 1893, when Congress authorized *A Special Investigation of the Slums of Great Cities*. US social reformer Florence Kelley, charged with carrying out the study in Chicago, stayed at Hull House, where residents transcribed data onto block-maps. When the results of this work appeared in *Hull House Maps and Papers*, the editor noted the connection with Booth’s work in London (Holbrook, 1895).

Masaryk no doubt became aware of the US surveys during her stay in Chicago. After she regained her freedom of action following Czechoslovak independence, one of her first undertakings was to enlist the help of American social workers from the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) with The Prague Survey, which adapted methods developed in England and the USA to the new setting (Crawford, 1921; Skilling, 2001). Masaryk wrote the introduction to the multi-volume survey results (Crawford, 1921), and she formed a life-long friendship with one of the YWCA workers, Ruth Crawford Mitchell, who later edited Masaryk’s autobiographical writings (Mitchell, 1980).
Transatlantic trading of expertise also characterized social work education and scholarship. For example, Lees noted in his introduction to Salomon’s autobiography that research she initiated through the association of German schools of social work concerning stressors on contemporary families was modelled on the scholarship of Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, whom she had met at Hull House (Salomon, 2004). Breckinridge was founding Dean of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy from 1908 until 1920 (Quam, 1995b). Abbott, who had studied at the London School of Economics, directed research at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy and later served as Dean of the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago (Quam, 1995a). Like Salomon, Masaryk wrote later about educational links to the USA:

From my visit to Chicago, I brought home with me a firm conviction that there are three things which help social work: spiritual awareness, good education, and dedication to work. Years later we endeavored to found the first Social School in Prague . . . on these three ideals (Mitchell, 1980, p. 304).

In addition to their early experiences in Chicago, the three women participated in ongoing exchanges related to social work education. For example, Addams noted in correspondence that she visited Salomon’s school in Berlin at least twice and expected one of the school’s students to be in residence at Hull House in 1926, adding that ‘All social workers in America very much admire the training given [in Berlin]’ (JAP, 1984, 18–490). Social work students from Czechoslovakia also participated in exchanges; Crawford (1921) reported twelve studying in the USA during 1921. In Berlin, Salomon assigned students to read Addams’ Twenty Years (1910), and she explained her purpose for translating works by Richmond and others as follows: ‘With the development of numerous schools of welfare work and the introduction of instruction in social work in other education institutions of Germany a thorough search into methods of charitable care becomes urgent’ (Salomon, 1926, as cited in Stuenkel, 1927, p. 339).

Salomon, in particular, wrote and spoke about social work education. Her 1936 lecture tour, sponsored by the American Association of Schools of Social Work, included an address comparing social work education in different countries (‘Distinguished Visitor’, 1936). The next year, Salomon had the opportunity to work in Geneva on an early comparative study of social work education which she described as ‘written in English, printed in Germany, published in Switzerland, supported by Americans (the Russell Sage Foundation), and paid for by an international organization’ (Salomon, 2004, p. 198). Salomon’s comparative study addressed important themes concerning the auspices, prerequisites and curricula of social work education programmes (Salomon, 1937; Hathway, 1938).

A final note is in order concerning trends in the professionalization of social work—a theme about which all three women showed some
ambivalence. Addams and Salomon began their public service at a time when work for charity and reform was performed by volunteers and those trained in other disciplines. Sklar and colleagues (1998) concluded that Salomon ‘identified with Addams’s motives for her work, particularly with her concept of social work as a calling rather than a profession, a concept they both defended as the field professionalized’ (Sklar et al., 1998, p. 169).

Writing in 1920 for a US audience, Salomon did express regret for the loss of voluntary social workers in the post-war German context:

... there seems little hope of keeping the former volunteers together, and there is great difficulty in winning new ones. ... Those who have lived on a moderate income and who gave all their time and strength to social work, are actually compelled to earn a living. Many of them are still struggling against their fate, are still trying to remain faithful to their old ideals. ... But in the long run this would only mean starvation for them (Salomon, 1920, p. 666).

However, in other writings, Salomon advocated strongly for professional social work, as one might expect from one who founded a pioneering professional school and supported herself through social work education and scholarship (Salomon, 2004). In her autobiography, Salomon wrote that advanced education ‘provided me with credentials for professional social work. The time had passed when amateurs could lead the movement’ (Salomon, 2004, p. 47).

Masaryk was the least ambivalent about the trend toward professional social work, possibly because her academically oriented, feminist parents encouraged her to prepare for a career (Mitchell, 1980). However, because she worked very little in the social service arena until about age thirty-nine, she entered the field after professional social work had been established. Nevertheless, the first Czech social work graduates in 1921 had to fight for recognition as professionals because ‘paying wages to social workers was not usual because the traditional concept of social activities was associated with unprofessional charitable service’ (Kubičková, 2001, p. 308). Although Masaryk was the most whole-hearted in her support for professionalism, she directed the Czechoslovak Red Cross for twenty years as a volunteer.

Conclusions: cultural borrowing in the twenty-first century

Any historical research seems to reveal that many early themes persist into the present. In the twenty-first century, there still is a transatlantic debate surrounding professionalization, although today it is less about voluntarism than about the movement of social workers into mental health and
therapeutic services, as has become common in the USA and some other countries (e.g. Dellgran and Höjer, 2005).

Like professionalization, other themes of this historical study strike distinctively contemporary notes. Salomon, writing in 1920, described with optimism an experimental scheme for supporting voluntary social service agencies with public funds that foreshadowed both the German model of subsidiarity in the provision of social services (Sachse, 1988) and the current international debates over privatization (e.g. Dellgran and Höjer, 2005).

Salomon’s writing about the auspices of social work education also resonates in the present. She described reaction in 1925 to her proposed school of higher education for social work and social pedagogy: ‘It was new for Germany, where the universities remained limited to the traditional four faculties and had not added academic provisions for the newer professions’ (Salomon, 2004, p. 157). The venue for social work education still varies considerably by country and is the subject of ongoing debate, in Germany and elsewhere. Although there is no single, best model for social work education internationally, contention over its auspices is ongoing.

A final theme raised by the lives of the women profiled here concerns the contributions of immigrants within the social work profession. Although a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, immigration is an obvious channel for diffusion of knowledge. Wieler and Zeller (1995) have published one treatment in German, but the effects of immigration on social work practice have yet to be thoroughly explored. Salomon and Masaryk left Europe for the USA when they were past sixty years of age, and they were able to make only limited additional professional contributions due to challenges of employability and health. However, other European immigrants of the same era had significant impact on US social work (Wieler and Zeller, 1995; Kalcher, 2004), and other immigration countries benefited similarly (e.g. Spiro, 2001).

The influence of immigration as a vehicle for diffusion has obvious implications for the twenty-first century. Immigration is approaching historically high levels in the USA, and many European and some Asian countries are experiencing immigration and migration unprecedented in modern times. Immigration laws and the rights of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are topics of debate and professional advocacy on both sides of the Atlantic in a political climate that confounds foreign origins with terroristic threat. Among those displaced from their countries of origin will be social work colleagues who bring with them different credentials and unfamiliar approaches to social issues. The field will be enriched if the diffusion of knowledge and borrowing of innovations continue through immigration, as well as through the other established channels for diffusion of knowledge.

Addams, Masaryk and Solomon stood at a high-water mark of internationalism in social work during the first three decades of the twentieth
century, despite the conflicts of that era. Now, more than a 100 years after social workers forged transatlantic links of collegiality and friendship, their successors in the profession face similar challenges to find common bonds in a wider global context.

References


Addams, J. (1910) Twenty Years at Hull House, New York, Macmillan.

Addams, J. (1913) Twenty Years of Social Work by Women in Chicago, translated by E. Münsterberg, Munich, C.H. Beck

Addams, J. (1915a) The Voice of the Peoples Concerning the War, Basel, Zbinden.


Masaryk, A. G. (1935) *Ceskoslovenský cervený kriz* [Czechoslovak Red Cross], Prague, J. Benda.


