Family Values of Social Workers and United States Adults: A Comparative Study - 2012

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This study has been submitted to the IRB for approval.

This study is a follow-up to a previous study done with members of the NASW-Oklahoma chapter.

Description: The purpose of the study is to examine the “family values” that social workers espouse, and compare these values to the greater population, taken from the General Social Survey (GSS). Social Work is a value laden profession, with the core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. Along with these core values, social workers are guided by a Code of Ethics in which they are advised that they "...should be aware of the impact on ethical decision making of their clients' and their own personal values and cultural and religious beliefs and practices." (NASW, 2008, p.3)

While there is not a consensus about what specific family values should be, the previously noted values should undergird the family values that social workers hold. Because very little is known about family values espoused by social workers and how that might impact their practice with families, this survey will be an important indicator of the values that social workers hold to. It is important to note that this survey is only asking about attitudes, and not about actual behaviors or choices.

The design includes a 12-15 minute survey created from original questions as well as questions taken from the General Social Survey (GSS) which appear to relate most to the health, strength and ideology that form broad family values. The GSS has been administered on multiple occasions to representative samples of U.S. adults and all the data gathered by the GSS is in the public domain and freely available for download.

A random sample of 4,000 members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) will be mailed an invitation to participate in the survey. In addition to examining the "family values" that social workers espouse, survey responses from social workers will be compared to responses from a sample of the national population to see how similar or dissimilar the opinions of these two groups are. It is hypothesized that social workers are likely to hold to more progressive interpretations of family values than the national population. This data will be pertinent to social workers, as they are called to serve clients who have different values than they, in a just and understanding manner.