An Online Survey of Social Workers' Family Values

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Abstract

Little is known about the "family values" espoused by social workers and how these values may affect their practice. Our study reviews the conceptual nature of "family values" and explores the family values of social workers. We review literature on the measurement of values and present findings from an online survey of the family values of National Association of Social Workers (NASW)-Oklahoma Chapter members (N=283). A principal components analysis identified seven family values factors. A regression on the unrotated principal component of progressive family values identified three predictors ($p \leq .01$) of progressive values: years of social work practice, metropolitan (rather than rural) residence, and not being engaged in direct social work practice. On balance, respondents expressed progressive family values in most but not all areas. Recommendations for research and practice are developed.

Keywords: family values, values measurement, values scale, and social work values

Introduction

Little is known about the family values espoused by social workers and how these values may affect practice with families. Social workers are guided by a Code of Ethics, which identifies a set of core values embraced by the profession. The code's preamble states: "The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values. These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective" (NASW, 2008, p.1). Furthermore, social workers are expected to impartially consider the values of individuals and groups despite potential opposition to their own values. The code also advises social workers to be aware of how their personal values and cultural and religious beliefs affect their work with clients (NASW, 2008, p.3).

This study focuses on one aspect of core values of social work that address the importance of human relationships—purposeful efforts to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of families. Our study reviews the conceptual nature of "family values" and represents an initial look at the family values of social workers. We examine how congruent social workers' values may be with those of individuals and families for whom they provide services or administer policy practice. We present a comprehensive review of the values measurement literature and the link of that literature to social workers' values. We also present results of an online survey of the family values National Association of Social Workers (NASW)-Oklahoma Chapter members (*N*=283), identifying espoused family values and priorities.

Background and Content
Values Defined

The concept of values is broad and encompasses numerous definitions. The study of values is multidisciplinary and includes, but is not limited to, the fields of social work; sociology; philosophy; psychology; economics; political science; business management; communications; and anthropology (Abbott, 199; Abbott, 2003; Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005; Mumford et al., 2002; Rokeach, 1979; and Karp, 2000). Furthermore, the "different disciplines have pursued this topic with unique orientations to the concept of values" (Karp, 2000, p. 3212). According to Rokeach (1979), "understanding human values is a never-ending process—a groping toward an ultimate objective that can be attained only by a method of successive approximation" (p. ix).

In many ways, values are the means by which we define ourselves. Moreover, "values are a reflection of who we are, of our culture, and of our own unique heritage" (Thames and Thomason, 2000, p. 1). Values are integral in our lives. According to Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck (1961), "values answer basic existential questions, helping to provide meaning in people's lives" (as cited in Karp, 2000, p. 3212). Values can affect choices,

decisions regarding courses of action and outcomes, goals, attitudes, and behavior (Thames and Thomason, 2000; Mumford et al., 2002; Rokeach, 1979; and Karp, 2000). Mumford et al. (2002) maintain, "it seems fair to say that whenever the phenomenon of interest involves choice, or preferences, values are likely to be a crucial explanatory construct" (p. 348). Additionally, values mold our beliefs and perceptions (Thames and Thomason, 2000). Referencing the work of the sociologist, Robin Williams, Rokeach (1979) affirms that "values are core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society. They serve as standards or criteria to guide not only action, but judgment, choice, attitude, evaluation, argument, exhortation, rationalization, and one might add, attribution of causality" (Rokeach, 1979, p.2).

Values are often fraught with conflict. For example, Trotzer (1981) states, "efforts to identify the nature of values are always jeopardized and often contamination by the connotation that values inherently contain a right-wrong, good-bad component" (p. 43). Additionally, Trotzer (1981) states, "this ultimately generates judgments of affirmation or condemnation, depending on which side of the polarity the evaluator stands." (p. 43). Despite their conflicted nature, values are integral to the functioning of social life. According to Rokeach (1973):

> Values are multifaceted standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways. They lead us to take particular positions on social issues and they predispose us to favor one ideology over another. They are standards employed to evaluate and judge others and ourselves (p.13).

From a sociological perspective, values connect individuals to society. For instance, "values…help ease the conflict between individuals and collective interests" (Karp, p. 3213). Furthermore, values join people and enable them to "work together to realize collectively desirable goals" (Karp, 2000, p. 3212).

The Measurement of Values

Given their centrality to both individuals and society, values "deserve more research attention than they have received thus far" (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005, p. 170). Further, given the significance of values to the field of social work, one would presume that much social work literature has focused on values and values measurement. However, such is not the case. According to Abbott (2003), "the profession of social work's value base continues to be recognized as an essential ingredient of sound social work practice; however, few instruments have been developed to measure its presence" (p. 641). Therefore, we now examine research on values in related fields.

The social psychologist Milton Rokeach is among the most influential researchers on values (Karp, 2000). Towards the end of his career, he developed an instrument to examine "individual commitment to a set of values" (Karp, 2000, p. 3214). This instrument, the Rokeach Value Survey, has been used widely across numerous disciplines (Rokeach, 1973). It comprises two sets of values with 18 individual values in each set. *Instrumental values*, "reflect modes of conduct, such as politeness, honesty and obedience" (Karp, 2000, p. 3214). Contrastingly, *terminal values*, "reflect desired end states, such as freedom, equality, peace, and salvation" (Karp, 2000, p. 3214).

Using a modified version of the Rokeach's instrument, Edwards et al. (1981) examined the configurations of values of professionals in varying fields and of students preparing for professional livelihoods. Specifically, the study examined "the espoused value preferences of first-year graduate students and alumni from four professional programs at the University of Kansas-Public Administration (MPA), Social Welfare (MSW), Law (LLB), and Business (MBA)" (Edwards et al., 1981, p. 124). Their findings suggest significant values differences for those in the different programs.

Schwartz expanded values measurement based on Rokeach Values Survey. Schwartz's Value Survey (SVS) includes 57 items that represent "10 motivationally distinct values that are theoretically derived from universal requirements of human life, namely Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-Direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security" (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005, p. 170). Just as did Rokeach's survey the SVS "focused on the measurement of values that are assumed to be universal" (Karp, 2000, p. 3216). Lindeman & Verkasalo (2005) examined a modified version of the SVS, the 10-item Short Schwartz's Value Survey (SSVS), and found that measure to be reliable and valid (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005).

Rokeach's and Schwartz's surveys pose direct questions to clients about their values and, as such, can be characterized as direct values measure. In contrast, the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), also developed by Schwartz, describes persons who hold given values and then asks respondents to rank how much they would like each person. As it doesn't ask direct questions about values, the PVS can be characterized as an indirect measure. It has demonstrated good validity (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005).

Mumford, Connelly, Helton, Van Doorn and Osburn (2002) developed an experiment to compare direct versus indirect values measurement. They found that indirect measurement better predicted clients actions in a performance task and that indirect measurement assesses "expressed choices of the individual," rather than "social ideals" (p. 70). They conclude that indirect tools may be the best means with which to measure values, however, for those who have well-formulated values and are able to articulate them, direct measures may be just as or more appropriate (p. 370).

A final values measure, the Professional Opinion Scale (POS), (Abbott 1999; 2003) provides a "methodologically sound and convenient means for assessing degree of commitment to social work values" (Abbott, 2003, p. 641). According to Abbott (2003), "the POS is made up of items reflecting the broad spectrum of public social policy issues identified as being a major concern by the membership of NASW" (p. 645). Additionally,

the social policy statements are regularly revised "to reflect changing trends and new developments" in the profession (Abbott, 2003, p. 645).

The Importance of Family Values

All families possess values, though values vary with the diversity of families (Walsh, 1998). Several factors shape families' value systems. According to Trotzer (1981) "…families and family members espouse certain identifiable value characteristics of their peculiar heritage in interaction with their surrounding environment" (p. 42). Furthermore, "the process by which families and family members develop their value orientations emerges out of some multiple combination of genetic, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, education, environmental, and experiential factors which are translated from one generation to another through the basic fabric of family interaction" (Trotzer, 1981, p. 43). Values are passed forward from generation to generation. Though the core values tend to remain similar, both internal and external factors modify these across time. Trotzer (1981) maintains:

> Parents serve as carriers, monitors, developers, reinforcers, stimulators, interpreters, and evolvers in regard to their children's values. Children, in turn, merge their experiences with their own set of values that they, in turn, pass on to their children. So the process recycles ad infinitum. But always the result is that values are the foundation upon which lifestyles are built (p. 43).

Some might argue that values have deteriorated or that they have little role in the shaping of society. Yet, values are what help bind families and societies together. According to Walsh (1998), "in today's cynical and political climate, holding ideals may seem naïve, and yet values are needed more than ever in facing unprecedented challenges in our family and social world" (p. 69). Therefore, by acknowledging and studying the values of families, we can better understand how families function in society. Trotzer (1981) asserts "when

values are not effectively accounted for, disintegration of basic social units (the family) occurs" (p. 53). Lastly Trotzer (1981) states, "this, in turn, undermines both the stability (order and security) and the support (belongingness and nurturance) that civilized man has come to depend on for individual existence, societal progress, and creative advancement of the human species" (p. 53).

As previously stated, there is little research on the particular values of social workers, especially in comparison with social work clients. One such study by Hodge (2002) compared the spiritual values of social workers to its client base (Hodge, 2002, p. 573). Instead of using one of the value measurement tools previously listed, Hodge (2002) took data from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is representative of the national U.S. population and the same questions are asked every 2-3 years (Hodge, 2002, p. 575). Hodge (2002) separated out the participants that self-identified as "lower class" (p. 576). Hodge (2002) states that these self-identified "lower class" participants were retained because of the profession's commitment to the poor, and thus these "lower class" participants are more likely to represent the clients that social workers will interact with (p. 576). The variables examined included the participants' theology (whether conservative, moderate or liberal), as well as their involvement in religious practices (p. 577-578). Hodge (2002) found that social workers were much more likely than their client base to hold liberal religious views, and that the client base was more likely to hold more conservative views (p. 579). However, in terms of religious practice, social workers and their client base were equally as likely to be active in some type of religious practice (Hodge, 2002, p. 579). Hodge (2002) states that these findings are important, because social workers must be culturally competent when working with clients. If many of the clients that social workers come into contact with are religiously conservative, social workers who hold different spiritual views must be aware of these views and prepared to work with such clients in an unbiased manner (p. 579-580).

A Historical Perspective on Family Values

Values of families have changed in American culture over the years. One can perhaps conjure up an image of the nuclear, two-parent American family. Yet, such families make up only about 20% of today's American households (Stone, 1994, p. 69). Using data from three studies—The General Social Survey, the Monitoring the Future study, and the Study of American Families—Thornton (1989) examined nearly thirty years of changing values and norms. Thornton (1989) found changes in "the normative imperative to marry, they remain married, to have children, to restrict intimate relations to marriage, and to maintain separate roles for males and females" (p. 879). His study revealed large values changes in certain years, but little change in others: "the changes in family attitudes and values were particularly striking during the 1960s and 1970s, but during the yearly 1980s there was a general flattening of the trends" (1989, p. 873). Thornton also found correspondence between family values and social trends. Thus, "many family changes parallel trends in socialization values, religious beliefs, political allegiances, and support for civil liberties" (1989, p. 873).

If two-parent family structure is no longer the norm, changes in family structure are increasingly defined along sociodemographic lines, and increasingly affect 'middle-class' America. Wilcox (2010) addresses the institution of marriage in contemporary America:

> Among the affluent, marriage is stable and may even be getting stronger. Among the poor, marriage continues to be fragile and weak. But the most consequential marriage trend of our time concerns the broad center of our society, where marriage, that iconic middle-class institution, is floundering. For the last few decades, the retreat from marriage has been regarded largely as a problem afflicting the poor. But today, it is spreading into the solid middle of the middle class. (p. 13).

A Political Perspective on Family Values

Just as in earlier times, family values continue to provide ammunition for political debate and controversy (Cahn & Carbone, 2010; Cloud, 1998; and Tankersley, 2008). In *Red Families v. Blue Families*, Cahn & Carbone examine family values in terms of rhetoric and political mannerisms. They assert that controversies regarding the values that guide family life have "…challenged our images of the American family" and have wide ranging effects "…at the national level, in state courts and legislatures, in drafting local ordinances, and in our own families" (p. 1). Cloud (1998) examined political speeches, interviews, and political editorials along with secondary material that used the term 'family values' in the 1992 Presidential campaign. Both political parties used family values rhetoric for political gain, while scapegoating minority families and families that faced poverty or other social problems.

Methods
Participants and Sampling

Members of the Oklahoma Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in 2010 or 2011 comprised our pool of potential study participants. Among 1,243 study-eligible members, 983 had email addresses at Oklahoma NASW. Three "e-mailings" were sent to potential participants, each containing a link to our online Qualtrics survey. The first mailing was in May 2011; the second was about one week subsequent to the first, and the third was about one week subsequent to the second. Twenty-two email addresses were not valid. Among the 961 members with valid addresses, 283 responded, a response rate of 29%. These 283 respondents form our sample.

Study Variables

Given the near absence of research on social workers' family values, we developed our own survey instrument. We piloted it first with a sample of undergraduate social work students (N=17) at the University of Oklahoma. Our final survey comprises two sections. The first comprises

44 pairs of opposing values statements presented in semantic differential format and tapping varied aspects of family life and values. Using a six-point (1-6) scale, participants indicated their relative preference for one statement over the other. For instance, one section was anchored with "elder care should occurring only within the family" (coded as 1) and "elder care may occur outside of the family" (coded as 6). The second section comprises sociodemographics and questions regarding social work practice. To protect anonymity, no data was gathered on ethnicity. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete.

Analyses

We begin presentation of results with an overview of sample characteristics, including those related to social work practice. Next, we present responses to the 44 opposing values statements. Then, we present findings from a principal components analysis based on 35 of the statements. Six of the 44 items were eliminated from our factor analysis because of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was less than .65. Two more items were eliminated because they loaded at less than .35 on all items. Our analysis uses a (orthogonal) varimax rotation. We experimented with factor analyses (estimated of communality in the main diagonal) and with oblique rotations, but did not see substantial improvement, and, thus, rejected these options. Next, we examine relationships between sample characteristics and scores on the rotated components. Our final analysis regresses sample characteristics on the unrotated first principal component.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the study sample. As expected, a majority respondents, almost 84%, were female. Respondents ranged in age from 20 years old to 80 years with more than 50% reporting that they were aged 53 or older. More than 90% had MSW degrees or were pursuing this degree. About two-thirds of

respondents responded that they engaged in direct practice with families. More than 80% had children and almost 70% reported that they were married.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of 2010-2011 National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Oklahoma Chapter Survey Respondents

	Frequency (*n*)	Percent (%)
Sample Size	283	100%
Gender		
Male	41	14.5%
Female	237	83.7%
Missing	5	1.8%
Age (year)		
<=33	45	15.9%
34-43	47	16.6%
44-52	45	15.9%
53-59	46	16.3%
60-63	40	14.1%
64+	44	15.5%
Missing	16	5.7%
Degree level		
BSW or pending	15	5.3%
MSW or pending MSW or above	264	93.3%
Missing value	4	1.4%
Years of practice		
<=5	56	19.8%
5.1--13.0	43	15.2%
13.1--21.0	54	19.1%
21.1--30.0	46	16.3%
30.1+	48	17.0%
Missing	36	12.7%
Direct practice with families		
Yes	187	66.1%
No	88	33.1%
Missing value	8	2.8%
Practice Setting		
Metropolitan	95	33.6%
Rural	37	13.1%
Mixed	151	53.4%
Marital Status		
Previously or currently married	235	83.0%
Never married	43	15.2%
Missing	5	1.8%
Have Children		
Yes	197	69.6%
No	81	28.6%
Missing value	5	1.8%

Responses to Family Values Items

Table 2 presents the 44 values items. For each item, Table 2 presents the statements that anchor the lower (a response of 1, left) and upper (a response of 9, right) polies of the response continuum. A response of 5 is exactly in the middle and, thus, conveys indifference/neutrality with respect to the two anchoring statements.

To facilitate interpretation, when an item's mean response is less than "4," Table 2 bolds its left-side statement, and when its mean is greater than "6", Table 2 bolds its right-side statement. Hence, the bolded statement indicates the anchoring statement that the sample, taken as a whole, "leans towards." For means between "4" and "6," neither statement is bolded; such a mean conveys that the sample is fairly "balanced" on the item in question.

Table 2
Items in Principal Components Analysis and Rotated Components

#	Anchor on Left (Scored as '1')	M	SD	Anchor on Right (Scored as '9')	Component
2	**Pro no-fault divorce :**	3.5	2.4	Against no-fault divorce	-1
3	Time at work prioritized over family:	7.1	1.5	**Time spent at home with the family prioritized over work**	-6
4	Family problems/issues solved within the family	5.6	1.3	Family problems/issues solved by seeking help outside the family	+7
9	Marriage with strict lifelong conditions (covenant marriage):	5.1	2.4	Marriage without strict lifelong conditions (non-covenant marriage)	+1,+2
10	Elder care within the family:	6.6	1.7	**Elder care outside of the family**	+4
11	The teaching of values to children in the home:	6.4	2.0	**The teaching of values to children outside of the home**	+4
12	Parochial schools (schools with religious affiliations):	5.5	1.3	Secular schools (schools without religious affiliations)	+2
13	**No corporal punishment of children:**	3.9	2.5	Corporal punishment of children	-5
14	Involvement in church should occur as a family:	5.0	1.3	Involvement in church should occur individually	+2
17	No active role of religion in child-rearing:	6.2	1.9	**Active role of religion in child-rearing**	-2,-1
18	No lifelong cohabitation outside of marriage:	6.9	2.5	**Lifelong cohabitation outside of marriage**	1,2
19	In support of single parent families:	4.1	2.1	Against single parent families	-1
20	Private providers of familiy social services:	5.2	1.0	Public providers of familiy social services	+7
22	Marriage among individuals of the same faith:	7.4	2.2	**Marriage among individuals of different faiths**	+4
23	Women with young children should stay at home:	7.4	2.0	**Women with young children should be free to work outside of home**	+5,+1
24	**Marriage within different racial groups:**	1.9	1.7	Marriage only within the same racial group	-2,-3
25	Children within wedlock:	5.7	2.6	Children outside of wedlock	+1
26	**Open marriage:**	6.8	1.9	Closed marriage	-1
27	**Religious values taught in schools:**	6.5	2.1	Religious values taught outside of schools	+2
28	**Pre-marital cohabitation :**	3.0	2.3	No cohabitation before marriage	-1,-2
29	Creationism:	5.9	2.8	Evolution	+2
30	The family should be responsible for the long-term care of their elderly family members:	4.7	1.1	The government should be responsible for the long-term care of elderly family members	+6
31	**Sex education within schools and other venues:**	2.2	1.8	Sex education only within the family	-3
32	The Bible (or other religious texts) is the only adequate source for the teaching of values:	7.5	2.2	**There are many different sectors for the teaching of values**	+2
33	**Family planning:**	1.9	1.5	No family planning	-3
34	Abstinence before marriage is preferred:	4.2	2.5	Abstinence before marriage is not preferred	+1,+2
35	**No parental consent for access to birth control devices or drugs (open access):**	3.8	2.5	Parental consent for access to birth control devices or drugs (restricted access)	-3
36	No intervention in dying :	6.6	2.0	**Intervention in dying**	+6
37	**Same-sex marriage should be a recognized as equal :**	3.5	3.0	Same-sex marriage should not be recognized as equal	-1,-2
38	No separation of church and state:	7.0	2.3	**Full separation of church and state**	+2
39	**Gun control:**	3.0	2.3	No gun control	+5
41	**Pro-choice**	3.5	3.0	Pro-life	-1
42	In marriage, the male role as head of the household is preferred:	5.9	2.4	In marriage, the male role as head of the household is not preferred	-1
43	**Community involvement for the family should be priortized:**	3.4	1.6	Community involvement for the family should not be prioritized	-7
44	It is acceptable to have firearms in a household with children:	5.5	2.6	It is not acceptable to have firearms in a household with children	+5

Note: *N* varies from 276 to 283
Note: Only items 8, 9, and 14 do not differ statistically ($p \leq .01$) from a 'middle' response of '5.0'.

A perusal of the bolded statements reveals that, on balance, the sample favors "progressive" values over "traditional" ones. Some of the most "one-sided" responses include: endorsement of time at home over work (Item 3), interfaith marriage (22), women working outside of the home (23), that there are many sources for teaching values (32), and that family planning is important (33). Yet, responses are not towards the progressive end for all items. For instance, respondent do not unanimously register their disapproval of the statement "in marriage, the male role as head of the household is preferred" (42). Similarly, corporal punishment (13) is not condemned by all. Further, we note that the three items with the largest standard deviations –those conveying the greatest diversity of opinion—concern "hot-button" areas at the center of controversy: "pro-choice vs. pro-life" (41), same-sex marriage (37), and "creationism vs. evolution" (29).

Principal Components Analysis

Table 3 presents results from the principal components analysis and subsequent varimax rotation. Prior to rotation, a strong central component emerged, explaining about 32% of total variance in the 36 items. Cumulatively, the seven extracted components explain 57.72% of the variance.

Varimax rotation yielded the seven rotated components, which are "named" in Table 1. The first two rotated components are much stronger than the next five, each explaining about 13% of the variance. The defining item—that with the highest loading—for the first factor, Nontraditional Marriage, was item 25, focused on the acceptability of having children outside of wedlock. The second rotated component, Progressive Religious Values is defined by item 27 which concerns teaching religious values in school. We named the third rotated component Family Planning and Sexuality. In the initial rotation, positive loadings conveyed traditional values, those that are not supportive of family planning and sexuality. Hence, we multiplied loadings for all items by -1.00 so that positive loadings convey support for Family Planning and Sexuality "match" that of all of the six other components: For all components, high scores (and positive loadings) convey progressive values while low scores (and negative loadings) convey more traditional ones. The defining item for Family Planning and Sexuality concerned endorsement of family planning (item 33). We named the fourth component Family Connects to Society. High scores on this factor convey a desire to connect family with the larger society both in terms of services that society can provide and in terms of

Table 3
Results: Principal Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation (*N* = 236)

#	Rotated Component	Prior to Rotation		Subsequent to Rotation		
		Eigen Value	% of Variance	Squared Loading	% of Variance	Defining Item
1	Non-traditional marriage	11.24	32.11	4.69	13.39	25
2	Progressive religious values	1.95	5.58	4.58	13.09	27
3	Family Planning and Sexuality	1.48	4.72	2.74	7.84	33
4	Family connects to society	1.37	4.23	2.40	6.86	10
5	Gun Control	1.31	3.73	2.37	6.78	44
6	Prioritization of Family needs	1.20	3.44	1.84	5.26	3
7	Strong Public Services Total Explained 57.72%			1.58	4.51	20

a general willingness to engage in society. The defining item concerns whether family or 'outside of the family' should provide elder care (10).

The final three rotated components are named Gun Control, Prioritization of Family, and Strong Public Services. Positive loadings (high scores) on Gun Control convey support for fun control as well as a stance against corporal punishment of children. Prioritization of Family Needs involves putting family first. For instance, positive loadings on its defining item (Item 3) endorse prioritizing time at home above time at work. Positive loadings on the final factor, Strong Public Services, convey support for public social services, and, in general, for services designed to support families.

Observe that the right-most column in Table 2 lists the number of the component on which each item loaded most strongly, as well as the direction of that loading. When an item loaded at above .400 (or below -.400) on more than one component, numbers for both components are provided, with the first number conveying the strong component. Scores for the components were saved using SPSS's regression option. For all component scores, the mean score equals 0.00 and the standard deviation equals 1.00.

Associations of Rotated Factors and Sample Characteristics

Exploratory one-way ANOVAs were run using the sample characteristics in Table 1 as grouping variables and the rotated component scores as dependent variables. For respondent's age and years of practice, our ANOVAs examined linear trends as well as overall differences between means.

Gender showed statistically significant association only to Progressive Religious Values. Perhaps surprisingly, men scored higher (more progressive): Men, $M=.48$, $SD=.74$, $N=32$; Women, $M=-.07$, $SD=1.02$, $N=200$; $p=.048$. Educational degree yielded two statistically significant

differences; for both Gun Control and Prioritization of Family needs, those with BSWs (or pending) had more traditional component scores than did those with MSWs (or pending). For Gun Control: BSW, $M=-.82$, $SD=.88$, $N=13$; MSW, $M=.07$, $SD=.87$, $N=220$; $p=.001$. For Prioritization of Family Needs: BSW, $M=-.58$, $SD=1.36$, $N=13$; MSW, $M=.02$, $SD=.97$, $N=220$; $p=.0350$. Participation in direct practice was associated with more traditional values on two factors, Nontraditional Marriage and Gun Control. For Nontraditional Marriage: Direct Practice, $M=-.10$, $SD=1.08$, $N=149$; Not in Direct Practice, $M=.18$, $SD=.82$, $N=81$; $p=.046$. For Gun Control: Direct Practice, $M=-.09$, $SD=.95$, $N=149$; Not in Direct Practice, $M=.12$, $SD=1.04$, $N=81$; $p=.035$.

Those with social work licenses were more progressive on Gun Control and Prioritization of Family Needs. For Gun Control: Licensed, $M=.12$, $SD=.96$, $N=162$; Not Licensed, $M=-.18$, $SD=1.02$, $N=70$; $p=.033$. For Prioritization of Family Needs: Licensed, $M=.07$, $SD=.91$, $N=162$; Not Licensed, $M=-.21$, $SD=1.18$, $N=70$; $p=.048$. In line with expectations, those from rural settings espoused more traditional values on Gun Control than did those in mixed or metropolitan settings: Metropolitan, $M=.05$, $SD=.94$, $N=78$; Rural, $M=-.55$, $SD=1.10$, $N=29$; Mixed, $M=-.03$, $SD=.96$, $N=40$.

Statistically significant differences by age group were found for four components, Progressive Religious Values, Family connects to Society, Gun Control and Prioritization of Family Needs. For the most part, component scores become more progressive as age group increases. An exception is the Progressive Religious values factor, where the youngest age group evidenced more progressive values than did those in the subsequent three agre groups. Table 4 presents mean component scores by age group.

Table 4
Statistically Significant Components by Age Group (N = 225)

Rotated Component	Age Group					
	≤ 33	34 -- 43	44 -- 52	53 -- 59	60 -- 63	≥ 64
Progressive Religious Values[a]	.19	-.36	-.29	-.12	.42	.25
	(.97)	(1.05)	(1.16)	(1.00)	(.78)	.83
Family Connects to Society[b d]	-.35	.25	-.17	.04	.03	.34
	(.86)	(1.09)	(1.06)	(.97)	(.91)	(.96)
Gun Control[a c]	-.31	-.39	.12	.36	.19	.16
	(.99)	(1.12)	(.85)	(.96)	(1.08)	(.71)
Prioritize Family Needs[b c]	-.55	-.01	.08	.14	.06	.19
	(1.11)	(.70)	(.95)	(1.03)	(1.03)	(1.03)

Table 5 shows that for years of social work practice, associations to the components were, on balance, similar to those for age group, with three associations achieving significance: Family Connects with society (positive linear trend only, $p=.002$), Gun Control (main effect, $p=.003$ and positive linear trend $p=0.00$), and Prioritize Family Needs (positive linear trend only, $p=.03$). We note that the five-category years of practice variable and the six-category age group variable are highly correlated, $r=.71$, and, this, in part, explains the similar patterns of relationship to the components for these variables.

Exploratory Multiple Regression Analysis

Our final analysis was a stepwise multiple regression analysis on the unrotated principal component. This component's mean equals 0.00, and its standard deviation equals 1.00. High scores convey progressive family values. We entered all characteristics from Table 1 into the regression.

Table 5
Statistically Significant Components by Years of Practice

Rotated Component	Years of Practice				
	≤ 5	6 -- 13	14 -- 21	21 -- 30	≥ 31
Family Connects to Society[c]	-.31	-.23	.01	.35	.37
	(.95)	(1.16)	(.97)	(.83)	(1.01)
Gun Control[a b]	-.23	-.39	.12	.36	.19
	(.94)	(.88)	(1.10)	(.94)	(.76)
Prioritize Family Needs[c]	-.15	-.10	.04	.09	.27
	(1.12)	(.84)	(.96)	(1.04)	(.85)

[a] main effect ($p \leq .01$), [b] linear trend ($p \leq .01$), [c] linear trend ($p \leq .05$)

Those with *p* values under .05 comprise the final model, which is presented in Table 6. Surprisingly, work in direct practice predicted a lower component score and, thus, more traditional family values. Both years of social work practice and, residence in a metropolitan rather than in a rural or 'mixed' area predicted progressive values.

as 'time at work' (item 3) is often instrumental to meeting family needs, characterizing 'time at work' vs. 'time at home' as 'traditional' versus 'progressive' is a poor fit. The reader is cautioned that the means in Table 2 can be interpreted too narrowly. For instance, item 19's mean is near the center of the nine-point scale (M=4.1). This does not convery that some social workers are "against"

Table 6
Regression on the (Unrotated) Principal Component

Predictor	*B*	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	-.09		
In Direct Practice?	-.58	-.28	.000
Years in Practice	.02	.26	.001
Metropolitan Residence	.54	.16	.002
Adjusted *R* squared .106			

Discussion

Relatively little is known about the family values that social workers espouse and how these values impact social work practice. In fact, our literature review found no instruments specifically designed to measure family values, let alone family values for the profession of social work. This is surprising as values play such a central role in social work.

As we begin to interpret findings, the reader should be aware of several limitations. Our response rate is low (29%), and this recommends some caution in generalizing findings. Our participants are Oklahoma-based and findings may not generalize well to other parts of the United States. Our ratio of sample size (*N*=236) to number of items entered into the principal components analysis is about 7 to 1, and, thus, below the 10 to 1 minimum ratio that is sometimes recommended. This low ratio suggests that different components could have emerged with a larger sample size. Though we have characterized items along a traditional to progressive continuum, not all items fit well along this continuum. For instance,

single-parent families but rather that some view these families as facing substantial barriers—income, time, childcare, etc. Finally, our analyses are exploratory and, thus, some significant associations likely reflect the workings of chance.

Certainly, it is interesting that the legal rights for same-sex marriage (item 37) and pro-choice vs. pro-life (item 41) statements produced the greatest diversity of opinion. Our expectation had been for fairly homogenous opinion on these, as the social work profession strongly supports same-sex marriage as well as the pro-life position. Responses were also varied on the 'Creationism/Evolution' item, suggesting that many respondents strongly favor one of these polies over the other.

Our social work sample concurred on the importance of social services for families. The strong support for family planning (33) and for the statement "Benefits to families should not be cut even if citizens have to pay more taxes" (Item 16; not presented in Table 2) highlight these trends. We found strong support for a 'progressive' role for women in family and society; for instance, our participants feel that "Women with young children

should be free to work outside of home" (23). Yet, support for progressive roles for women was less than unanimous. The diversity of opinion on the 'pro-life/pro-choice' item (41) has already been mentioned. Further, our sample took a centrist position regarding whether the male role of head of household is preferred (42).

Non-traditional marriage and Progressive Religious Values emerged as the two strongest rotated components, that is, as the two explaining the greatest variance. We have no explanation regarding why men expressed more progressive religious values than did women; this may reflect chance. Those with MSWs were more progressive than those with BSWs on two components, Gun Control and Prioritization of Family Needs. Perhaps the values infused into graduate social work education contribute to greater progressivity, or perhaps those with MSWs are, simply, older, and this influenced responses. The more traditional responses of those in rural areas on items connected to Gun Control were expected. Gun ownership is a way of life in many rural settings; social workers in such settings are, presumably, affected by community norms regarding guns. In general, progressivity increased with age (see Table 4). Yet, the youngest age group (≤ 33) scored higher on the Progressive Religious Values component than did the next three groups (34-59). This result is in accord with the greater acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage among younger (rather than older) persons in the wider population.

The final analysis was a multiple regression on the unrotated principal component, in other words, a regression on "progressive family values." Years of social work practice demonstrated positive association with progressivity, more so than did age group, which did not achieve significance. Interpretation of the positive association between years of practice and progressive values presents a conundrum. Do progressive values lead to longer—and perhaps more satisfying—careers in social work? Or do more progressive values build steadily as one continues on in their social work career? This conundrum is beyond the limits of our research design.

We can only speculate regarding why those in direct practice are more traditional in their family values. Does work in the "trenches" temper progressive tendencies into a hardened, more traditional pragmatism? Finally, those in metropolitan settings were more progressive. Just as Oklahoma is more rural and more traditional in values than is the United States as a whole, rural areas in Oklahoma may be more traditional than metropolitan ones—this at least appears to be the case for Oklahoma's social workers.

The less than universally progressive response in our sample reflects, we think, Oklahoma's conservative political and religious values. We suspect that NASW members in "blue" (liberal, Democratic) states hold values that are, on balance, more progressive than those that we found.

A next step in research is perhaps to examine how social workers' values compare to those in the population at large. One way to accomplish this is to administer family values—related questions from large nationwide surveys—for instance, the General Social Survey—to representative samples of social workers. We suspect that such research will more clearly highlight the largely progressive values in social work.

In general, we found more progressive values among more experienced and older respondents than among younger ones. This may create an interesting dynamic between older social work supervisors and their younger supervisees. Our findings highlight the importance of social work curricula that focus on values, and how values enter into one's personal life and professional practice. The generally—though not totally—progressive values of social workers and the more conservative—and perhaps more diverse—values of our clients and society, represent and important and continuing challenge for the profession.

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