

Ethnicity, Values, and Value Conflicts of African American and White Social Service Professionals

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Abstract

This aspect of a broader study included 110 (68 White/European American and 42 Black/African American) social service professionals. The primary focus of this aspect of the study was to verify the value orientation or core beliefs of the practitioners who deliver services to clients through social service agencies and programs. The conceptualization of the core beliefs explored the values and value conflicts in relation to professional practice. The participants were employed in a Midwestern metropolitan region. They responded to a survey instrument that included vignettes, closed-ended items, scaled responses, as well as either-or type items. Major categories of the exploration included: life and death issues, lifestyle, domestic and social perspectives, value conflicts with the social work profession, and personal responses to value conflicts. Specific items measuring values related to abortion, homosexuality, religiosity, euthanasia, and corporal punishment were included. Study results showed statistical significance on 26 issues as African American participants were compared with White participants.

Keywords: value conflicts, social work, ethical dilemmas, ethnicity, professional relationship

Introduction

The complexity of American society (Jarrett, 2000), specifically due to its historic, economic, social, and ethnic makeup, requires that social work professionals take their clients' ethnicity, values, and professional-client value conflicts into consideration. Historical dynamics, such as unproductive treatment, have contributed to the reluctance of various population groups to engage with professional service providers. This history (Barker, 2014) has influenced the adoption of guidelines that require social workers to be culturally aware during interventions and recognizing that diversity-related characteristics have influence upon an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Barker (2014) further noted that the concept of values is influenced by one's perceptions of what comprises appropriate principles, practices, and behaviors. An individual's personal values are often considered as a representation of one's core beliefs and what an individual may perceive as right. Therefore, these beliefs do not require supporting evidence for those who embrace them and may result in behavioral and attitudinal guidelines. The expression of values helps individuals to verify and/or maintain their integrity and self-worth. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, values were categorized according to the following: (1) social,

(2) cultural, (3) religious, (4) professional, and (5) personal values.

Literature Review

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics outlines specific values and standards for professional practice. As professionals, it is critical to abide by the standards of the profession in addition to engaging in efforts to promote self-awareness. The awareness of one's own personal values will allow the social worker to recognize and confront value dilemmas that may impede professional practice. As noted, for the purposes of this study, values were identified across five categories. The *social values* category (Barboza, 1998; Sears & Osten, 2005) includes principles, customs, and beliefs that are generally accepted as norms of a particular society. These types of values are regulated by social pressures rather than public policy. For example, appreciation of loyalty, honesty, and a work ethic represent social values. Specific ethnic codes of conduct are expressions of social values because they are embraced by a major segment of society and regarded as correct ways of thinking and behaving. In contrast, *cultural values* (Edwards, 2014) is a category that represents norms and standards integrated into public policy. In other words, cultural values are institutionalized as standards for the American culture. For example, education and equality (Clay, Lingwall, & Stephens, 2012; Imber & VanGeel, 2000) are addressed through laws that require some form of educational activity for American youth.

The *religious values* category (Edwards, 2014; Edwards 2000) reflects behavioral guidelines for those who identify as members of specific faith communities. These values are typically written in doctrinal statements and refer to a type of holy reference book as the foundation for the principles. Examples of religious values relate to sexual behavior, interpersonal behavior, dietary restrictions, and childrearing methods.

The *professional values* category consists of standards and principles designed to regulate the behavior of those who practice within a specific

profession. For example, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2017) Code of Ethics identifies social work values including respecting the dignity and worth of an individual and one's right to self-determination. In contrast, the *personal values* category (Edwards, 2014) reflects when individuals adopt aspects of the previous four value categories as guiding principles for their lives.

In relation to professional social work practice, a practitioner may experience an internal struggle (Edwards, 2014) when compelled to engage in behaviors or tasks that are contradictory to one or more aspects of one's core belief system. As a result, a value conflict may occur which refers to a disagreement between one's core belief system and that of a group, organization, or society (Edwards & Allen, 2008). Consequently, some professionals who face value conflicts when providing services become perplexed or even omit some tasks associated with completing their professional obligation. As a result, value conflicts may hinder the social worker-client relationship necessary for appropriate service provision.

Zastro and Kirst-Ashman (2010) suggested that many decisions, both personal and professional, are influenced by one's beliefs about life, freedom, and protective standards. Furthermore, social work competence (Segal, Gerdes, & Steiner, 2016) requires self-awareness and a commitment to social justice, which supports the need to explore personal values. As a result, the current study sought to examine the experiences of Black/African American and White/European American social service providers based on their ethnicity, values, and value conflicts in relation to their personal beliefs.

Behaviors are an important manifestation of values particularly when there are conflicts pertaining to values such as equality and economic security. However, there may be occasions when a person must choose one of these values based upon what it means in relation to a specific social or economic circumstance. Jacoby (2006) suggested that values have a hierarchy and may reorder themselves based upon specific situations.

Other researchers noted that individuals respond to complex value-related issues such as abortion (Alvarez & Brehm, 1995) and homosexuality (Craig et al., 2005) with ambivalence due to their underlying beliefs. Therefore, conflicts between core beliefs and values of an individual may exist at a personal level yet, at the same time, conflict with prevailing public perceptions. For example, a person may hold contradictory perspectives toward homosexuality such as it is either morally wrong and/or it could be a result of genetic inheritance versus choice (Craig et al., 2005).

The research literature provides multiple examples of value conflicts social service professionals may experience. Paprocki (2014) explored when the personal beliefs of psychology graduate students lead to complications in their attempts to provide therapy to patients. For example, certain program administrators expressed challenges with students who sought to abstain from providing services to clients in same-sex relationships based upon religious beliefs. Pertaining to physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, Himchak (2011) suggested that this has a cultural component that is important when providing services. For example, reportedly African American, Hispanic, and Asian populations value respect toward elders resulting in resistance to physician-assisted suicide. In addition, regarding the issue of abortion, Denbow (2013) suggested that welfare and healthcare systems may have instances of encouraging pregnant women to engage in abortion. This researcher further noted that women experiencing poverty encounter substantially greater difficulties than their more affluent counterparts in giving birth. Denbow (2013) also pinpointed that women experiencing abuse, poverty, and pregnancy could face a multitude of challenges if they opted to bring pregnancies to term. Millner and Hanks (2002), discussed the possibility of value conflicts that clinical providers could encounter when engaging with clients who were considering abortion.

However, this current study examines a comparison of Black/African American and White/European American social service professionals on

their adherence to several family-related values, domestic relationship issues, social preferences, and their experiences with value conflicts in relation to professional practice.

Method

Participant and data collection

The primary researchers received approval from the required institutional review board to conduct a survey of social service professionals. Combined lists of social service agencies and programs were used to develop a composite list of 342 agencies and programs of which 185 were selected for study participation. The social service settings included: child welfare and adoptions, disabilities and rehabilitation services, substance abuse treatment, family service/counseling, juvenile corrections, adult corrections, schools, mental health settings, community development/planning, crisis intervention, community organization/advocacy, medical settings, and nursing homes/services for older adults. The social service administrators as well as the selected respondents returned, via mail, the signed participation agreement in a separate envelope without the questionnaire. Sixty-nine social service agencies and programs agreed to participate in this study.

The data collection instrument included multiple choice, closed-ended, scaled-response, and a series of one-paragraph value conflict case scenario items. The value-related variables were generated from a classroom exercise that undergraduate and graduate social work students participated in for four years. This tool was used to examine diversity in values, the reality of value conflicts, and realization of issues central to one's core belief system. The reoccurring value-related themes generated from the classroom exercise became the foundation for constructing the survey instrument for the purpose of this study. To enhance the validity of the instrument, it was implemented with two graduate level social work students and three social workers who were employed by a community child development center.

Results

Personal value related to fidelity in marriage

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American participants (71.4%) and White (88.2%) social service professionals with a chi square result of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 4.93, p < .05$. This means that the White respondents were more likely to agree that their personal values support fidelity in marriage.

Personal value about abstaining from sexual intercourse prior to marriage

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American (31%) and White survey participants (5.9%) with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 12.49, p < .05$ indicating that significantly more African American respondents adhered to the personal value to abstain from sexual intercourse prior to marriage.

Personal value about maintaining a meaningful and personal relationship with God

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American (92.9%) and White (54.4%) social service professionals with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 17.97, p < .05$, indicating that African American survey respondents identified a personal relationship with God was one of their personal values.

Personal value about attending a church, mosque, synagogue

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American survey respondents (71.4%) and White (30.9%) survey participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 17.16, p < .05$ indicating that significantly more African American participants agreed that attending churches, mosques, or synagogues was one of their personal values.

Personal value about monetary and financial wealth

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference in responses between African American (31%) and White (10.3%) respondents with a chi square result of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 7.45, p < .05$ indicating that for African American survey participants, money and wealth were very important.

Support for homosexual ideology and lifestyle

In response to this issue, 70.6% of White participants in the sample agreed to this variable, compared to 11.9% of African American participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 35.81, p < .05$, indicating that significantly more White survey participants support homosexual ideology and lifestyle.

Having a belief in salvation or a positive after-life in eternity

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American and White participants as 88.1% of African Americans agreed to this variable, compared to 48.5% of White respondents with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 17.56, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American participants believe in salvation or a positive after-life in eternity.

Mercy killing, euthanasia, right to terminate one's own life, or to assist others in the act

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between White (42.6%) and African American participants (11.9%) with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 11.49, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White survey respondents support mercy killing, euthanasia, right to terminate one's own life, or to assist others in the act.

Outside of value system to accept or support abortion as a response to rape or incest

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American

(36.6%) and White (15.2%) survey participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 6.53, p < .05$. This indicates that African American respondents believe that abortion in situations of rape or incest is outside of their value system.

Outside of core value system for a man to allow a woman to support him financially

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American (69%) and White (18.2%) respondents with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 29.65, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey participants believe that men should not allow women to support them financially.

Acceptance of interracial marriage

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American (14.3%) and White (1.5%) survey participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 8.21, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey participants agree with interracial marriage.

Healthy women who refuse to work outside of the home is outside of core value system

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American and White respondents, as 26.2% of African Americans agreed to this variable, compared to 4.5% of White participants, with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 11.99, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey participants believe that healthy women who refuse to work outside of the home is outside of their core value system.

Having multiple children without ever being married is outside of core value system

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between respondents as 61.9% of African American respondents in the sample agreed to this variable, compared to 31.8% of White respondents with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) =$

10.78, $p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey participants believe that having children without ever being married would be outside of their core value system.

Supportive of homosexual ideology and lifestyle is outside of core value system

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 83.3% of African American participants agreed to this variable, compared to 16.7% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 48.23, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey participants believe that being supportive of homosexual ideologies and lifestyles would be outside of their core value system when compared to White respondents.

Frequently using cuss words and vulgar language is outside of core value system

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 45.2% of African American participants agreed to this variable compared to 22.7% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(2, N = 110) = 7.33, p < .05$ showing that significantly more African Americans believe that the frequent use of cuss words and vulgar language in a professional setting is outside of their core value system.

Some of my core beliefs regarding human sexuality are not embraced by the social work profession

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 26.8% of African American participants responded with 'not at all' compared to 54.7% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 15.94, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White participants believe their core beliefs regarding sexuality are embraced by the social work profession.

Some of my cultural beliefs are in opposition to what is embraced by the social work profession

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 47.4% of the African American group responded with 'not at all' to this variable, compared to 75% of White respondents with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 12.31, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White survey respondents believe that their cultural beliefs are embraced by the social work profession as compared to the African American group.

My beliefs regarding race are not embraced by my family of origin (or those who raised me)

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 60% of African American participants felt their beliefs regarding race were 'not at all' opposed to their family of origin in comparison to 47.9% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 14.32, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American participants feel that their beliefs regarding race are not in conflict with the beliefs of their family of origin as compared to White participants.

My beliefs regarding religion/spirituality are not embraced by my family of origin (or those who raised me)

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American and White professionals as 53.8% of African Americans responded with 'not at all' to the question compared to 29.5% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 19.03, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American survey respondents feel their beliefs regarding religion/spirituality are embraced by their family of origin.

My beliefs (acceptance of) regarding corporal punishment/spanking children is not embraced by the social work profession

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American

and White survey participants, as 20.5% of African Americans responded with 'not at all' and 37.5% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(5, N = 110) = 14.90, p < .05$. This indicates that more White participants feel their beliefs regarding corporal punishment/spanking children are embraced by the social work profession.

My beliefs regarding what is appropriate language and my rejection of cussing and/or vulgar language are not embraced by most of the people at the social services agency where I work (or do my field work)

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between African American and White professionals as 30.3% of African Americans responded with 'not at all' compared to 60.9% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 13.72, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White respondents feel their beliefs regarding appropriate language and their rejection of cussing and/or vulgar language in a professional setting are embraced by the majority where they work.

Agree to refer clients to religious organization as a support system

In response to this issue, as described in a case vignette, there was a significant difference between African American and White participants as 13.2% of African Americans responded with 'not at all' to this variable in comparison to 39.5% of White respondents with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 17.93, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more African American respondents would agree to refer individuals to religious organizations as a support system when compared to White colleagues.

Agree to urge sexual responsibility to their clients

In response to this issue as described in a case vignette, there was a significant difference between African American and White research participants as 35.3% of African Americans responded with 'not at all' compared to 47.1% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 12.91, p < .05$.

This indicates that significantly more African American respondents would agree at some level to urge sexual responsibility to their clients than their White colleagues.

Agree with the advice to client to resist same-sex affection in public

In response to this issue, as described in a case vignette, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 33.3% of African Americans responded with ‘not at all’ compared to 46.7% of White colleagues with a chi square of $\chi^2(4, N = 110) = 20.99, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White research participants would disagree with advising a client to resist same-sex affection in public.

When a client chooses an option contrary to my beliefs I feel loss of integrity

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two (ethnic) groups as 10.3% of White participants agreed with this variable as compared to 0% of African Americans with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 4.62, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White participants feel a loss of integrity when a client chooses an option contrary to their own beliefs.

When a client chooses an option contrary to my beliefs I feel angry

In response to this issue, there was a significant difference between the two groups as 2.4% of African American participants agreed to this variable in comparison to 14.7% of White participants with a chi square of $\chi^2(1, N = 110) = 4.38, p < .05$. This indicates that significantly more White research participants feel angry when a client chooses an option contrary to their beliefs.

Discussion

Throughout this study, a key focus was the verification that value-related dilemmas may evoke emotional responses from the professional. The emotional feeling may influence decision-making

as well as what may represent the perception of what is identified as normal behavior exhibited by clients. As a result, this discussion section is organized around headings that are associated with value-related issues that are common to professional social service practice.

Issues related to life and death

The issue of abortion is a multifaceted, value-related dilemma where there are underlying causes as well as consequences related to the decision to accept or reject abortion as an option. If the response is based upon a fixed moral rule, then it is referred to as *ethical absolutism*; if various situations impact one’s response or behavior, then the dilemma is referred to as *ethical relativism* (Dolgoff, Harrington, & Loewenberg, 2012) which may suggest that morality is relative to the norms of one’s culture. Therefore, in the study survey, the issue of abortion was divided into multiple items: abortion to save the life of the mother, abortion as a form of birth control, and abortion as a response to rape or incest.

There was no statistically significant difference between African American and White survey participants regarding their acceptance of abortion as a method to save the life of the mother as well as for birth control. Both groups agreed that abortion was acceptable under lifesaving and birth control conditions. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the groups regarding abortion as a response to rape and incest. African Americans in the sample suggested that abortion in response to incest and rape was outside of their value system. White survey participants suggested that abortion was acceptable in the context of each of the three conditions. African American respondents indicated more of an *ethical relativist* view since they chose abortion as the option to save the life of the mother but also chose to reject abortion as an option in the case of incest or rape.

Study results show that White survey participants were more accepting of mercy killing, euthanasia, and the right to terminate one’s own life and to assist others in the act of terminating their lives. Most African American respondents rejected

mercy killing, euthanasia, and an individual's right to assist others in terminating a life. The issue of African American respondents rejecting such a practice corresponds with the results that indicated a high percentage (92.9%) embraced a value about maintaining a meaningful and personal relationship with God. They also indicated that they embraced a value that required attending church, mosque, or synagogue. This also corresponds with African American respondents embracing a belief in salvation or a positive afterlife in eternity. The concept of *religiosity* as expressed in the response to the three survey items may explain the rejection of mercy killing, euthanasia, and the right to terminate one's own life, and to assist others in the act of terminating their lives. These values related to religious beliefs may have an impact on their attitudes toward various lifestyle and domestic issues and the general social perspective (Ladner, 1998, Boyd-Franklin 2003, Edwards, 2014).

Issues related to lifestyle, domestic, and social perspectives

Although White participants were more likely to agree that their personal values supported fidelity in marriage, more African American participants adhered to the personal value of abstaining from sexual intercourse prior to marriage and were more likely to agree to urge sexual responsibility for their clients. The findings revealed that although the overwhelming majority of the two groups indicated that they did not embrace abstaining from sexual intercourse prior to marriage, statistically more African American participants embraced that view as well as that of being supportive of interracial marriage. In addition, African American participants suggested that having multiple children without ever being married was outside of their core value system. Furthermore, this corresponds to the impact of cultural *religiosity*.

The results indicated that White respondents showed statistically significant results pertaining to embracing a value that was supportive of homosexual ideology and lifestyle. In contrast, African American participants indicated that they

did not support homosexuality as it was outside of their value system. Consequently, White participants were more likely to disagree with advising a client to resist same-sex affection in public. In other words, certain White respondents would not recommend a client to resist same-sex affection in public. This was in response to a scenario in the survey describing a same-sex couple that shared a vehicle to go to their places of employment. As one of the men dropped his partner off at his place of employment before continuing to his own place of employment, the men engaged in a kiss while in the parking lot as children observed them. The survey respondents were asked, to what degree did they believe that the couple should restrain their public display of affection? There was a significant difference in the responses of the two groups, as African American participants tended to believe that the men should resist demonstrating their affection in public. This was also consistent with two other items in the survey which indicated that African American participants did not feel supportive of homosexual ideology and believed that homosexuality was outside of their value system.

Statistically significant results indicated that more African American participants did not accept a woman's option to refuse to work outside of the home (being a *stay-at-home mother*). In a similar question, African American participants suggested that men should not allow women to support them financially. This issue related to working to earn money was reflected in another question regarding the centrality of money and financial wealth in the belief system. In both sub-samples, the majority of the two groups of respondents did not embrace money and wealth as a personal value as these issues did not show a strong level of importance to be central to their value system.

Regarding the frequency of using cuss words and vulgar language, even though the majority of the two groups rejected it as a value, more African American participants showed statistically significant results that using such language was outside of their value system.

Issues related to value conflicts with the social work profession and family

More White respondents indicated that their personal core beliefs as well as their cultural beliefs were embraced by the social work profession. African American participants showed statistically significant results that certain of their core and cultural beliefs were not embraced by the social work profession. In addition, corporal punishment (spanking) seems to be a value with race-related divergence. A survey item was used to ascertain the degree to which the individual's belief regarding spanking was embraced by the social work profession. A statistically significant number of White participants indicated that the social work profession embraced their acceptance of spanking. Also, there was an ordinal scale for the respondents to indicate to what degree their beliefs regarding race were embraced by their family of origin (or those who raised the respondent). A significant number of African American participants indicated that their beliefs regarding race were not in conflict with the beliefs of their family of origin.

Issues related to social workers' value conflicts and emotional responses

There was a vignette describing a scenario with a client who felt hopeless, helpless, in despair, and who verbally indicated that he did not have a reason to continue living. The value dilemma was whether it was appropriate to make a referral to a faith-based organization for support services. There was a significant difference between the two groups of respondents as the African American participants tended to believe that it would be appropriate to make a referral to a faith-based organization for support services. This was consistent with other responses indicating that African American participants had a greater identification and expression concerning religiosity.

Another scenario in the survey described a male client who, while married to his current wife, maintained active sexual involvement with several other women and fathered two children

outside of marriage. His wife was aware of his sexual behavior but did not complain. They have two pre-adolescent children in their household. The husband's sexual behavior was not related to the reason he was referred to the social service agency. The dilemma was whether or not it was appropriate for the social worker to challenge the man to accept a more responsible sexual attitude. There was a significant difference concerning this issue as African American participants believed that they should urge the client to accept a more responsible sexual attitude.

If social workers experience value conflicts when providing services to clients, the conflicts may have an emotional impact on the professional. Therefore, the survey included items for the respondent to identify which emotions they experienced when a client chose an option that was contrary to the professional's belief system. Both groups of respondents were similar in identifying feelings such as guilt, depression, feeling ineffective, and feeling unaffected. However, two emotional responses, *loss of integrity* and *anger*, showed statistical significance in prevalence as reported by White respondents as compared to African American participants.

Limitations

Although two ethnic groups were included in the study, a limitation is that the sample size was small and concentrated within a metropolitan region, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Another possible limitation is that the study participants with social work degrees may have a greater sensitivity to diversity and value-related issues due to their educational training and standards outlined by the NASW Code of Ethics. In addition, since there were no survey items to distinguish study participants with a social work degree from participants without a social work degree, values or elements of the core belief system of those with a social work degree as compared to those with degrees in other related areas could not be distinguished.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The research findings are deemed useful for social workers as they further develop methods related to relationship building and addressing value conflicts in the social worker-client dyad across ethnic and cultural groups. Issues related to value conflicts may contribute to cognitive dissonance and the resulting frustration could be expressed through various defense mechanisms (e.g. displacement, projection, and denial). Therefore, it is important for social workers to be able to identify and understand their core values and to determine ways to reconcile the variations, distortions, and rigidity among various belief systems. If social workers lack understanding of their own core belief systems or do not contain them while interacting with a client, then challenges may occur in the professional relationship. Five problematic issues that may take place when there is value conflict between the practitioner and client include (Edwards & Allen, 2008; Edwards, 2014) challenges in establishing rapport, decreased service quality, professional burnout, social worker's sense of integrity loss, and a negative impact on a client's right to self-determination by imposing one's own values. Therefore, it is essential for social workers to be aware of the significance of their value orientations.

This study highlights major value-related issues that may contribute to limiting the effectiveness of social work practice. This study also emphasizes the need for stressing value conflicts, value incongruence, and the need for self-awareness in social work education. The concepts and value-related issues may serve as areas for self-examination as well as topics for classroom discussion and homework activities. In addition to implications for university teaching and application for those in professional social work practice, the data presented in this research may be helpful for those who conduct in-service trainings for professionals to address specific ways to implement ethical and value-related decision-making processes that are related to race and ethnicity.

In conclusion, social workers need a meaningful understanding of the variations related to values that are embraced by diverse groups. This understanding may facilitate and enhance interpersonal relationships and allow professionals to conceptualize life issues that shape clients' decision-making processes. Although the participants for this study may have received a form of social service education, the research results indicate that there are value-related conflicts associated with ethnicity and practice decisions. The NASW Code of Ethics outlines standards of practice which highlight cognizance of social justice, self-awareness, and appreciation for diversity. The underlying issues explored through this study are related to emphasizing the key tenants embedded in the NASW Code of Ethics. To further enhance the knowledge related to the findings of this current study, recommendations for areas of future research include a larger sample size with broader demographics including various locations and ethnic groups. A larger sample size would also allow for the examination of possible difference between social workers as compared to social service professionals with an academic degree in a related field.

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