

The General Public's Perception of Social Work

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

Social workers serve in a variety of difficult roles, which can sometimes lead to confusion about what it is that social workers do, and can also contribute to negative perceptions about the profession. Prior research focusing on public perception of social work has been mostly descriptive, with limited attention on what contributes to the understanding and perception of the profession. This study explores the following research questions: (1) How do people get information about social workers? (2) Do the sources of information contribute to an individual's understanding and perception of the profession? and (3) What demographic characteristics are associated with this knowledge and perception? A survey of approximately 100 Columbus, Ohio residents was conducted at libraries and communities across the city. Using linear ordinary least squares and Poisson regression, several demographic characteristics were associated with knowledge and perception of the social work profession. Results of the research show that personally knowing a social worker and having knowledge about social work are significantly associated with a person's positive perception of the profession. Additionally, personally knowing a social worker and having an Associate's Degree or higher are significantly associated with having more knowledge about social work. Finally, higher levels of knowledge about social work are associated with a more positive perception of the profession. This suggests that it is possible that people are more likely to have a negative view of social work because they misunderstand it than that they actually feel negatively about its true nature. Therefore, social workers need not try to convince people that the profession is good, but merely educate them on what it is actually about. The dissemination of correct information about the profession could potentially help decrease resistance in clients and make social workers feel more approachable to those considering seeking services.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Social Work

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Chapter 1: Statement of Research Topic

The profession of social work has a varied nature in that people can hold the same title of social worker while working in vastly different locations and capacities. It has also evolved throughout the years and has become increasingly professional since its origin, recently having won title protection in the state of Ohio in 2013 (Rinehart, 2013). Given these factors, it can be tricky for the general public to gain an accurate understanding of what the profession of social work encompasses. This study seeks to understand: (1) what knowledge people have; (2) where this knowledge comes from; (3) what the general public's perception of social work is; (4) what influences that perception; and (5) what demographic factors are associated with knowledge and perception. The goal of the research is to inform social workers about how to best address misconceptions about the profession by uncovering the misunderstood aspects and the sources of this information.

Correct information and a more positive perception of social work would help the profession in several ways. First, it may decrease resistance in clients, reducing that barrier for services and allowing social workers to engage with clients more effectively and efficiently. Secondly, it could make people more likely to seek services. If a person does not realize the full scope of what social workers do, they may not know that their problem is something a social worker could help with. Similarly, it might make it easier for someone to seek help knowing that a social worker is someone they can trust. Finally, it could improve the relationship that social workers have with the communities they practice in, making it easier to both involve people in community-wide efforts and to garner support for the funding of social services.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study focuses on the general public's knowledge and perception of social work. Data was collected on participant demographics, attitudes about social work, levels of knowledge about the profession, and the sources of this knowledge. Most of the previous research on this topic has largely been descriptive. The most recent results specifically addressing social work are from 2004, leaving about a decade of unmeasured change.

In 2004, LeCroy and Stinson conducted a random digit dial with 386 respondents. Sixty percent of participants of this study reported a positive perception of social workers. Also in 2004, the National Association of Social Workers conducted a series of eight focus groups held in three cities (Anaheim, Atlanta, and Baltimore), six of which drew participants from among general public, and two of which consisted of social workers. The purpose of these groups was to help shape their Public Education Campaign, which launched in 2005. Overall, participants' perceptions of social workers were positive (NASW, 2004). A more recent study, conducted in 2011, sought to understand college students' perception of human service providers, particularly counselors (Wantz & Firman, 2011). While this research was not specific to social work, some social workers practice as counselors and members of the profession can be seen as human service providers. Participants were comprised of 261 students at a private college in the Midwest. Sixty-six percent of respondents reported a positive view of professional counselors. In contrast to these three studies, during the years 1995-1996, researchers surveyed 452 adults in Alabama to measure knowledge and attitudes about social workers and reported an overall negative attitude towards social workers (Kaufman & Raymond, 1995). However; the researchers cautioned that their results should not be generalized outside of Alabama, citing a key limitation of a low visibility of social workers in the state.

When it comes to understanding the requirements for becoming a social worker, there was some uncertainty shown in several studies. In LeCroy and Stinson's 2004 research, 53% of participants correctly indicated that a bachelor's degree was required. In 2004, the NASW also found that confusion exists over the difference between caseworkers and social workers and that the public does not fully understand what education and credentials are required, although their research indicates they do believe it requires a college education, experience, and perhaps licensing.

Another area of confusion regarding the profession is what roles social workers can take. When it came to identifying the roles that social workers play, there was some bias towards seeing social workers in the role of "child protector." Additionally, social workers were reported to be seen as "very effective" with child abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence, but were least reported among various professions as being effective at issues involving alcoholic adults, abused children, marital issues, disruptive children, and sexually abused adults (LeCroy and Stinson, 2004). Another study showed that the majority of participants strongly identified social work with the government and believed that social workers deal primarily with the poor and with children. Participants struggled to understand advocacy and social justice in a social work context (NASW, 2004).

There is some contention over which sources people gain information about social work from and which of these are influential. In one study, the most frequently reported sources of information about social workers were personal experience (35.7%), knowing a social worker (30.8%), television (12.4%), and newspapers (10.8%) (LeCroy & Stinson, 2004). The NASW found that knowledge was shaped primarily by the media, both news and entertainment (2004). Wantz and Firman's (2011) results showed movies (63%), school and education (60%),

television (44%), personal experience (27%), and the internet (24%) as being relatively influential of perceptions and newspapers (13%), human service providers (10%) as being relatively non-influential. Kaufman and Raymond (1995) found that having utilized social services in the past significantly predicted knowledge, but not positive attitude.

While all of the studies attempted to measure knowledge and perception and to investigate the source of the knowledge, only one delved into the potential sources of perception. Kaufman and Raymond (1995) found that higher levels of knowledge about social work and social work settings significantly predicted a more positive attitude towards the profession. While there is no other research on this particular subject within the field of social work, researchers encountered similar findings in a study focusing on knowledge and attitudes about the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in the United Kingdom. This research surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,022 people to assess levels of knowledge about crime, sentencing and the CJS; attitudes to sentencing; and confidence in the CJS. Of these, 220 then participated in an experiment to test the impact of providing information. Providing simple factual information improved knowledge about crime and sentencing, and also had an impact on attitudes to and confidence in the CJS, although the evidence for a direct relationship between improvements in knowledge and attitude change is less clear. All three of the information formats tested improved knowledge and had some influence on attitudes (Chapman, Mirrlees-Black, & Brawn, 2002).

Finally, a gap was found between the beliefs of the groups comprised of social workers and those comprised of the general public, with the social workers thinking that the public had a more negative view of social work and a lower expectation of education and training than they actually did (NASW, 2004). The NASW performed the only study that specifically included information from social workers, so this finding is not corroborated elsewhere.

Of these studies, one focuses purely on a college campus, another in a very rural area, a third on three major cities, and finally one across the nation. In this last study by LeCroy and Stinson (2004), the majority of participants were female (67%), married (58%), White (80%) and had some level of college education (65%). These demographics are biased towards educated Caucasian females. It seems likely that this bias emerged from the survey method of a random digit dial, meaning all participants had the resources to own a home phone and were home and had the time to answer it. This causes some doubt of the generalizability of the results to the population of the United States as a whole.

The majority of these studies show that the public has an overall positive perception of social work, although social workers may feel that they do not. A bias towards seeing social workers as dealing primarily with low income clients and children was seen throughout the research. Additionally, the research varies in the reports of where people get their information about social workers from, with some highly rating personal experience and others citing the media. While it was the oldest study and an outlier in showing more negative perception of social workers, the Alabama study was the only one to draw a correlation between knowledge of social workers and a more positive perception of them (Kaufman & Raymond, 1995).

The most current research on public knowledge and perception of social work is still a decade old. Given the ever-changing nature of public opinion, there is reason to believe that more recent research is needed to ensure an accurate portrayal of the general population's knowledge and perceptions of the profession. Additionally, there is some clarification needed on which sources of information about social work are significant. Most investigation into Kaufman and Raymond's (1995) finding of a connection between knowledge of social work and positive attitudes towards it would also be useful in helping the profession know how to better improve

its public image. The research presented here will attempt to measure what knowledge the general public has about social work, where that information comes from, what the general public's perception of social work is, and if there are any significant factors associated with either knowledge or perception.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The survey was created by expanding upon existing surveys on similar topics and begins with a knowledge portion, moves on to an opinion section, and finishes up with a demographics questionnaire.

Paper surveys were distributed at three locations throughout Columbus, Ohio: the Vineyard Community Center and the Northside and Franklinton branches of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. These locations are spread out across the North, West, and Southeast sides of Columbus. By using a sample that spans the city, the researcher hoped to gain results that accurately represented the demographics of Columbus. Additionally, libraries and community centers represent locations that are accessed by people of varying levels of socioeconomic backgrounds. The researcher visited each location twice on different days at varying times over the period of July – October 2015 in order to get the most diverse sample possible.

At each location, the researcher set up a folding card table either inside the building or outside the entrance. Along with the table were a recruitment poster and a bright green plastic basket full of smiley face stress balls that served as the incentive. Occasionally the researcher was accompanied by one of her key personnel who helped to distribute surveys to multiple people at the same time. Adults age eighteen or older who spoke English were eligible to participate.

The researcher asked adults entering and leaving the library or community center if they were interested in taking a survey. For those who agreed, the researcher obtained verbal consent from those who met the age eligibility requirement. Participants completed the paper-and-pencil survey and the researcher placed it into a manila envelope.

One hundred and fifty-one surveys were collected, but due to incomplete data, only 103 were used in analysis. After survey collection was complete, the researcher entered the data into IMB SPSS Statistics Version 22.0.

Measures.

Dependent Variables

The key dependent variables are positive perception of the social work profession and knowledge of the social work profession. These variables are scales that were created using a combination of multiple questions.

The positive perception scale consists of 12 questions, listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Positive Perception Scale Statements

Likert Scale Statements

Is your impression of social workers generally positive or negative?

I would recommend seeing a social worker to a friend with a problem.

Social workers make a difference in our country.

Social workers promote positive change.

Social workers are necessary.

Social workers help people.

Social workers can provide counsel as well as a psychologist or psychiatrist would.

People choose to be social workers because it doesn't require much textbook intelligence.

Social workers take advantage of the government.

Social workers tend not to be very good at math and science.

Social workers look down on their clients.

Social work is a fall back career.

Social workers talk about their clients outside of work.

The first question in the positive perception scale was answered through a Likert scale including: “Very Negative,” “Negative,” “Neutral,” “Positive,” and “Very Positive.” This was coded on a scale from 1-5 with 1 representing “Very Negative” and 5 representing “Very Positive.” The next 11 items that are included in the positive perception scale are a series of statements to which respondents marked their answer on a Likert scale that ran from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” This scale was coded from 1-5 with one representing “Strongly Disagree” and 5 representing “Strongly Agree.” Items that were negatively worded were reverse coded during analysis such that a higher score means a more a positive perception of social workers.

The knowledge scale consists of nine questions. Five questions, listed in Table 2, were on a Likert scale that ran from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.

Table 2. Knowledge Scale Statements

<u>Likert Scale Statements</u>
Social workers primarily deal with people on welfare.
Social workers primarily work with children.
Social workers can be in private practice.
I understand the difference between a social worker and a case worker.
I understand the difference between sociology and social work.

The Likert scale was coded from 1-5 with one representing “Strongly Disagree” and 5 representing “Strongly Agree.” For the first two questions, an answer of one or two was considered correct and was coded as a one while all other responses were coded as a zero. For the last three Likert scale questions an answer of four or five was considered correct and coded

as a one, while any other answers were considered incorrect and coded as a zero. Two multiple question and two yes or no questions, listed in Table 3, were also included in the scale.

Table 3. Knowledge Scale Questions

Multiple Choice and Yes or No Questions

At minimum, what level of education is needed to be a social worker?"

What is the starting salary for a social worker?

Do social workers need a license to practice in the state of Ohio?

Do Social workers have to practice continuing education?

For the first multiple choice question the options grade school, GED, high school diploma, Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and P.h.D were presented. During analysis these options were assigned the numbers one through seven in that order and any response greater than or less than five was coded as a zero, indicating that it was incorrect, while five was coded as a one, indicating that it was the correct response. For the second multiple choice question the options Under 20,000, 20,000-40,000, 40,000-60,000, 60,000-80,000, 80,000-100,000, and above 100,000 were presented. During analysis, these options were assigned the numbers one through six in that order and any response greater than or less than two was coded as a zero, indicating that it was incorrect, while two was coded as a one, indicating that it was the correct response. The last two questions had a possible answer of yes or no and for both of these "yes" was the correct answer and was coded as a one, while "no" was coded as a zero.

Independent Variables

Several independent variables were included in the analysis. The demographic characteristics included: sex (1=male, 0=female), marital status (1=single or divorced, 0=married), religiosity (1=individual considers self religious, 0=individual does not), race (1=White, 0=Non-White), political leaning (1=liberal, 0=conservative or other), highest level of education attained (1=Associate's degree or higher, 0=high school or less), and income (1=\$80,000+ per year, 0=<\$80,000). A dummy variable indicating whether the respondent personally knew a social worker was also included. A series of variables were included regarding where individuals report that they receive information about social workers, including newspapers, word of mouth, television, or the internet.

Data Analysis

Every question in the positive perception scale follows a Likert scale method and some questions were reverse coded so that a higher number on the scale always means a more positive perception. Because the scale used was a continuous outcome, a linear OLS regression was used to estimate the positive perception model.

Poisson regression was used to analyze the knowledge model to account for the count nature of that outcome variable.

Chapter 4: Results

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 103 surveys that had complete data, the respondents' demographics, listed in Table 4, are as follows: 46% are male, 56% are single, 75% are religious, 73% personally know a social worker, 41% are White, 34% identify as Liberal as opposed to Conservative or Other, 38% have completed an Associate's degree or higher, 23% have received information about social workers from newspapers, 51% have received information about social workers by word of mouth, 21% have received information about social workers from television, 24% have received information about social workers from the internet, and 10% have an estimated yearly income of \$80,000 or greater. On the positive perception scale, the average score was 3.8 with possible values ranging from one to five with five being the most positive. On the knowledge scale the average amount of items correct out of nine was 5.4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
Male	.46	.50
Single	.56	.50
Religious	.75	.44
Personally knows a social worker	.73	.45
White	.41	.49
Liberal	.34	.48
Has an Associate's degree or higher	.38	.49
Received information about social workers from newspapers	.23	.43
Received information about social workers by word of mouth	.51	.50
Received information about social workers from television	.21	.41
Received information about social workers from the internet	.24	.43
Have an estimated yearly income of \$80,000 or greater	.10	.30
Positive Perception	3.81	.57
Knowledge	5.41	2.00

Positive Perception

Of the independent variables in the positive perception scale, personally knowing a social worker and the amount of knowledge one has about social workers were shown to be significantly correlated ($p < .05$) to having a more positive perception of social workers, as can be seen in Table 5. Receiving information about social workers from newspapers was shown to have a marginally significant correlation ($p < .10$) to a more positive view of the profession.

Table 5. Linear OLS regression results: positive perception of social work profession

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>
Knowledge	.18*	.09
Gender	.06	.11
Unmarried	-.06	.12
Religious	.58	.30
Personally know a social worker	.32*	.14
Know someone who has received services from a social worker	-.25	.17
White	-.0	.11
Liberal	.04	.13
Has an Associate's degree or higher	.15	.12
Have an estimated yearly income of \$80,000 or greater	.23	.20
Received information about social workers from newspapers	.26+	.15
Received information about social workers from the internet	-.06	.16
Received information about social workers from television	-.20	.16
Received information about social workers by word of mouth	-.10	.12
Received information about social workers from personal experience	-.01	.15

* $p < .05$

+ $p < .10$

N=10

Knowledge of the Social Work Profession

Of the independent variables in the knowledge scale, personally knowing a social worker and having obtained an Associate’s degree or higher were significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with having greater knowledge about social workers, as can be seen in Table 6. Additionally, in the section where participants were asked to mark each item that they had received information about social workers from, an ‘Other’ category was included with space for respondents to write a response. In this section, five percent of participants wrote in a response along the lines of school, college, university, or professors. Being religious and being liberal were both marginally significant ($p < .10$) in their association with having knowledge of social work.

Table 6: Poisson regression results: knowledge of social work profession

<u>Variables</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>
Gender	-.07	.09
Unmarried	.14	.10
Religious	.18+	.11
Personally Know a social worker	.40*	.13
White	.03	.09
Liberal	.04+	.01
Has an Associate’s Degree or higher	.13*	.09
Received information about social workers from newspapers	.17	.11
Received information about social workers by word of mouth	.01	.10
Received information about social workers from television	-.01	.10
Has an estimated yearly income of \$80,000 or greater	.08	.12
Received information about social workers from the internet	-.20	.13

* $p < .05$
 + $p < .10$
 N=103

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study sought to discover what knowledge the general public has about social work, where this knowledge comes from, what the general public's perception of social work is, and if any demographic factors are associated with these. The results show that the general public has an average amount of knowledge about social work, with the distribution showing a normal bell curve and the most common result being a correct answer on five out of nine knowledge questions. As for where this knowledge comes from, personally knowing a social worker was significant along with having an Associate's degree or higher. Demographically, being liberal or religious were both marginally significant in having knowledge of the social work profession. When it comes to perception, the majority of participants have an either neutral or positive view of the profession. Receiving information from newspapers was marginally significant in having a more positive view of social work, but there were no other significantly associated demographic factors.

While similar studies have been conducted in the past, they have all focused on different samples and the most recent one pertaining to social work as a whole was completed in 2004. Wantz and Firman conducted their study in 2011, but their sample consisted entirely of college students from one private university and was focused on human service providers, specifically counselors, with some participants drawing from their experience with campus-based counseling services. While the NASW and LeCroy and Stinson both completed studies in 2004, the NASW drew from small focus groups, some of which were comprised entirely of social workers and LeCroy and Stinson utilized a random digit dial, resulting in a sample bias towards older economically-stable White women. Kaufman and Raymond conducted their research in 1995 in

rural Alabama. Their research was the oldest and most geographically unique due to the low visibility of human service providers in the area they surveyed.

Results of the study indicate that, on average, residents of Columbus have a view of social work that falls in between neutral and positive, leaning more heavily towards positive. This overall positive response matches the results of the majority of other studies. LeCroy and Stinson (2004) found that 60% of respondents reported a positive perception of social workers and Wantz and Firman (2011) found that 66% percent of respondents reported a positive view of professional counselors. With 57.3% of respondents in this study reporting either a positive or very positive impression of social workers, the numbers are remarkably close, all hovering around 60%.

The average respondent was correct about slightly more than half of the knowledge questions. When it came to credentials, 82.4% of respondents believed that social workers are required to be licensed in the state of Ohio and 79.2% believed that social workers are required practice continuing education. These numbers were both higher than the researcher had anticipated. Additionally, 63.1% of respondents believe that social workers use research based methods. However, 55.4% incorrectly believe that it one can become a social worker with an Associate's degree or less. In comparison, LeCroy and Stinson reported 53% of respondents believing social work required a Bachelor's degree, while in this study that number was 29.7%.

While the NASW found that the majority of their study participants believed social workers deal primarily with the poor and children, this study found that less than a quarter of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statements that social workers work primarily with children (23.7%) and that social workers work primarily deal with people on welfare (23.3%).

The NASW (2004) also reported that overall, participants' knowledge was shaped by news and entertainment media. Although one of the researcher's goals was to determine which sources of media were the most important in disseminating information about social work, the findings suggest that media does not play a very large role in affecting peoples' knowledge of the profession, with newspapers as the only media source to be even marginally significant. LeCroy and Stinson (2004) also report newspapers to be one of the most frequently reported sources of information about social workers with 10.8% of respondents marking it as such. They also report that 12.4% of their respondents had received information about social workers from television, a source that was shown to be insignificant in this study, along with, surprisingly to the researcher, the Internet. This finding also differs from those of Wantz and Firman (2011) which showed that television and movies were more influential of perception than personal experience. However, this could be explained by the fact that their sample was limited to college students who have less life experience and potentially spend more time consuming media. This study found that personally knowing a social worker was significant in the amount of knowledge one has about social work, matching LeCroy and Stinson's (2004) finding that the second most frequently reported source of information was knowing a social worker (30.8%), only beaten by personal experience (35.7%).

The reports of this study show that the two significant factors in someone's perception of social work are personally knowing a social worker and the amount of knowledge one has about social work. This finding corroborates that of Kaufman and Raymond (1995), who found that higher levels of knowledge about social work and social work settings significantly predicted a more positive attitude among respondents in Alabama. It also fits with the similar finding

regarding the CJS, which supports the idea of a connection between information about certain professions and attitudes towards them.

These findings are important because they suggest that in order for social workers to improve their public image, the best things they could do would be to disseminate correct information about the profession and increase personal connection. Knowing what is significantly associated with a more positive perception can help social workers be able to target public image campaign strategies that are more likely to show results.

Limitations

The study had 151 respondents with 103 of these providing a complete response. According to an online sample size calculator at rayosoft.com, this number is large enough to allow for a confidence level of ten, but is still lower than all of the other studies mentioned. The researcher attempted to accurately represent the demographics of the population of Columbus, Ohio by using a variety of locations, but was limited in the types of locations that would allow survey distribution. Therefore, the researcher ended up utilizing libraries and community centers. However, these types of locations do attract relatively diverse patrons, especially considering the researcher visited locations in the Northeast, Southwest, and center of Columbus.

When compared to the census data for Columbus, Ohio the demographic results of the survey are relatively similar. Compared to the 51.2% of Columbus residents who are female, the survey had 54.4% female respondents. African-Americans were slightly over-represented in the study with 41.7% African American respondents as compared to 28% of African American Columbus residents and 40.8% White respondents as compared to 61.5% of White Columbus residents. Additionally, the census reports that 83.3% of Columbus residents age 25 or higher

have a high school degree or higher and 33.1% have a Bachelor's degree or higher, while 75.7% of survey respondents have a high school education or higher and 21.4 have a Bachelor's degree or higher. The census reports an average per capita income for the past twelve months of \$24,351 while 71.9% of study participants made between zero and \$40,000 in the past year (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Overall, this data suggests that the survey respondents are a relatively accurate representation of the population of Columbus, Ohio.

Other limitations include the fact that the study is cross sectional, because data were collected only at one specific point in time. The cross-sectional nature precludes the researcher from being able to establish causality in the findings. Additionally, while information was collected about a large number of variables, there were too many to use them all in data analysis and only a select few are included in the results. Due to this, there may be a possible omitted variable bias which could impact findings by overestimating or underestimating the effects of the included variables.

There are also measurement limitations in several sections. When participants are asked to agree or disagree with statements like "I understand the difference between sociology and social work" or "I understand the distinction between a social worker and a case worker" the survey relies on their assessment of their own knowledge to be accurate when it may not be. Additionally, while personally knowing a social worker was shown to be significant in both the knowledge and positive perception scales, one thing the study was not able to determine is how many people know a person who is a social worker, but are not aware that that person is involved in the field of social work.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Given that knowledge was shown to be a significant factor when it came to positive perception and level of education was shown to be a significant factor when it came to knowledge, more research should be done on what it is about having obtained some form of post-secondary education that is associated with having more knowledge about social work and a more positive view of the profession. It is unclear from the results of this study whether the factors relating to someone being able to complete an Associate's degree or higher or the actual education itself is what makes the difference.

Implications for Practice

The fact that personally knowing a social worker was found to be significant in both increasing the amount of knowledge that one has about social work and improving one's positive perception of social work suggests that it would be beneficial to the profession's image for social workers to proudly take ownership of their career choice and freely discuss it with the people that they know. It also suggests that if a campaign to improve the public image of social work were to be done that it should focus on increasing knowledge of the profession. The findings show that it is possibly not persuasion that needs to be done, but rather education. Finally, since knowing a social worker personally was significant, another potential strategy for an educational campaign could be to showcase several different social workers from a variety of roles in a more personal light.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that while the state of the general public's perception and knowledge of social work is not as poor as some social workers may believe, it could still be improved. The findings suggest that an effective way to do so would be to focus on education and personal connection. Doing so would benefit the profession of social work in several ways. A more positive image could result in more funding for social services. Additionally, it could decrease resistance in situations where people are mandated to work with a social worker or increase the amount of people who voluntarily seek help from a social worker.

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Appendix A

Survey

Please fill bubbles in completely using the provided pen.

The following questions will pertain to what you know about social work.

1. At minimum, what level of education is needed to be a social worker?

- Grade School
- GED
- High School Diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- P.h.D

2. What is the starting salary for a social worker?

- Under 20,000
- 20,000-40,000
- 40,000-60,000
- 60,000-80,000
- 80,000-100,000
- Above 100,000

3. Do social workers need a license to practice in the state of Ohio?

Y N

4. Do social workers have to practice continuing education?

Y N

5. Are social workers primarily male or female?

M F

The following questions will be on a scale. Please fill in the bubble for your response.

6. Is your impression of social workers generally positive or negative?

Very Negative Negative Neutral Positive Very Positive

7. I would recommend seeing a social worker to a friend with a problem.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. Social workers make a difference in our country.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. People choose to be social workers because it doesn't require much textbook intelligence.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. The need for social workers is decreasing.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. Social workers take advantage of the government.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

12. Social workers promote positive change.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

13. Social workers tend not to be very good at math and science.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

14. There should be more social workers.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

15. Social workers primarily deal with people on welfare.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

16. Social workers use research based methods.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

17. Social workers have a right to take children away from their families.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

18. Social workers look down on their clients.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

19. Social work is an easy career.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

20. Social workers are necessary.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. Social workers primarily work with children.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

22. Social workers can be in private practice.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. Social work is a fall back career.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

24. Social workers help people.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

25. Social work is a demanding career.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

26. Social workers like their job.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

27. The need for social workers is growing.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

28. Social workers talk about their clients outside of work.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

29. Social workers can provide counsel as well as a psychologist or psychiatrist would.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. Social workers are paid a fair salary.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

31. Social workers are overworked.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

32. The media affects the way I view social workers.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

33. I understand the distinction between a social worker and a case worker.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

34. I understand the difference between sociology and social work.

<input type="radio"/>				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

35. I would recommend seeing a social worker to a friend with a problem.

- Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

36. Fill in the bubble for the locations you would expect a social worker to be employed.

- Schools
- Hospitals
- Restaurants
- Prisons
- Office buildings
- Department of Children Services
- Homeless shelters

37. Fill in the bubble for any of the following if you have ever received information about social workers from them.

- Personal Experience
- Word of Mouth
- The Clergy

(For the following, if you can remember, also list the specific source.)

- Books _____
- Movies _____
- Entertainment television shows _____
- Televised news broadcasts _____
- Newspapers _____
- Magazines _____

The Internet _____

Other: please list

The next questions will pertain to basic demographic information about you. Again, this survey is anonymous.

38. What is your age?

18-24

24-30

30-40

40-50

50-60

60-70

70+

39. What gender do you identify with?

male

female

other

40. What race are you?

White

Black

Hispanic

Asian

American Indian or Alaskan Native

other

41. What is your marital status?

- single
- married
- divorced

42. How much money do you think you make in one year?

- Under 20,000
- 20,000-40,000
- 40,000-60,000
- 60,000-80,000
- 80,000-100,000
- Above 100,000

43. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Elementary School
- Grade School
- GED
- High School Diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- P.h.D

44. Do you identify as liberal, conservative, or something else?

- liberal
- conservative
- other _____

45. Do you consider yourself to be religious? Y N
46. Do you personally know a social worker? Y N
47. Do you know someone who has received services from a social worker? Y N

Appendix B

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact the principal investigator, Katie Maguire Jack at maguirejack.1@osu.edu or 614/699-4154, or the student conducting this study, Leah Cramer, at cramer.236@osu.edu or 740/739-7438.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Appendix C

**Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent
(Undergraduate Student Co-Investigator – Consent Documentation Waived)**

“Hello, my name is Leah Cramer. I am an undergraduate student at The Ohio State University, and I am undertaking research that will be used in my senior thesis project.

I am studying the opinions and knowledge that the general public has about professionals. The survey will involve questions about what you know and think in regards to professionals as well as some general questions about demographics.

This survey will take about five to ten minutes of your time.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. Your name will not be collected and therefore will not be linked to anything you say, either in the survey or in the text of my thesis or any other publications.

There are no other expected risks of participation.

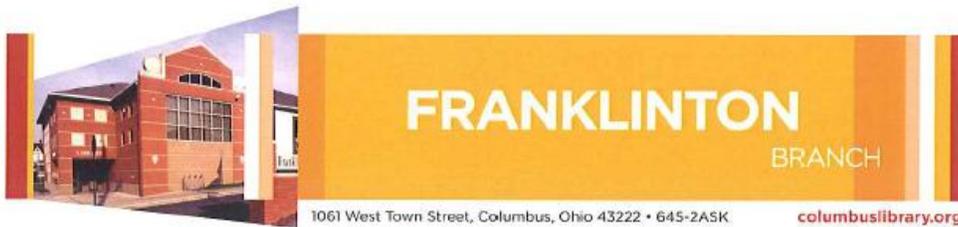
Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can, of course, decline to answer any of the questions as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, my thesis advisor or our university research office at any time. Here is a contact card.

“Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate?”

If so, let’s begin....

Appendix D



05/22/2014

Dear Reviewers:

I am writing to express my support for the proposed research to be conducted by Assistant Professor, Dr. Katie Maguire-Jack and undergraduate student Leah Cramer from the Ohio State University College of Social Work. I am the branch manager of the Franklinton Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer plan to collect survey data from persons at or above the age of eighteen over the time period of July 2014 - October 2014. Leah Cramer will provide a written survey to participants. We are excited to partner with Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer here and look forward to the results of this study.

Sincerely,

Steve Pullen

Branch Manager
Columbus Metropolitan Library
Franklinton Branch
1061 W. Town St.
Columbus, OH 43222

614-479-3413
spullen@columbuslibrary.org



Appendix E



May 27, 2014

Dear Reviewers:

I am writing to express my support for the proposed research to be conducted by Assistant Professor, Dr. Katie Maguire-Jack and undergraduate student Leah Cramer from the Ohio State University College of Social Work. I am the Pastoral Director of Vineyard Community Center.

Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer plan to collect survey data from persons at or above the age of eighteen over the time period of July 2014-October 2014. Leah Cramer will provide a written survey to participants. We are excited to partner with Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer here and look forward to the results of this study.

Sincerely,

Kerry Davis
Pastoral Director
Vineyard Community Center
Kerry.Davis@vineyardcolumbus.org
614-259-5502

fax: 614.890.5056

phone: 614.259.5500

www.vineyardcommunitycenter.org

6000 Cooper Rd. Westerville, OH 43081

Appendix F

May 23, 2014

Dear Reviewers:

I am the Manager of the Northside Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library and am writing today to let you know that Assistant Professor Katie Maguire-Jack and undergraduate student Leah Cramer from the OSU College of Social Work have received approval to conduct a survey at the Northside Branch.

Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer plan to collect survey data from persons at or above the age of eighteen over the time period of July 2014-October 2014. Leah Cramer will provide a written survey to participants. We are pleased to cooperate with Dr. Maguire-Jack and Leah Cramer and look forward to the results of this study.

Sincerely,

Candy Princehorn, Manager

Northside Branch

Columbus Metropolitan Library