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Attitudes of college students toward social work as a career

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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ATTITUDES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARD SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

A thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(Continued)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES
(Continued)

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Problem

Enrollment in graduate schools of social work is declining despite the continuous increase in positions available to trained social workers. Recruits from the ranks of college graduates are badly needed but not forthcoming. The question which this study seeks to explore is: "What do college upperclass students think about social work as a potential career choice?"

Much has been written recently regarding the shortage of professional social workers. Although between 1946 and 1950 there was a steady increase in the number of students enrolled in graduate schools of social work, since 1950 there has been a decline each year in the total enrollment. Since 1950 enrollment has dropped 20 per cent (from 4,336 full-time students in November, 1950, to 3,512 full-time students in November, 1954) and enrollment in 1955 was the lowest it has been since 1946.[1]

At the meeting of the American Association of Schools of Social Work in 1947 a session entitled "The Responsibility of the Association for the Expansion of Facilities and Resources for Training Social Workers" concluded that "large numbers of

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1. Council on Social Work Education, Statistics on Social Work Education, November, 1954, p. 3.

social workers, qualified by training and experience are needed at levels of practitioner, supervisor, and teacher."[2] They felt that the general public was ready to make use of social work facilities in a way that they had never been before. But instead of expanding its services to meet this readiness the field of social work seemed barely able to hold its own because of the small number of trained workers graduating from the schools each year.

That same year the president of the American Association of Schools of Social Work pointed out that full professional preparation for practice was not even a possibility for most social workers in this country because of the lack of schools, the over-crowding of existing schools, and the inability to find well qualified teaching and supervisory personnel. Last year, however, the president of the Council on Social Work Education (successor to the American Association of Schools of Social Work) declared that we are now in a position where we are not even using our present educational facilities to their full capacity. In 1954 at least two-thirds of the schools would have admitted more students if qualified persons had applied.[3] Thus the shortage of trained social workers is

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2. American Association of Schools of Social Work, Proceedings of the Twenty-eighth Annual Meeting, 1947, pp. 9-10.

3. Fedele F. Fauri, "The Shortage of Social Workers: A Challenge to Social Work Education," Social Work Journal, 36:49, April, 1955.

clearly no longer the result of inadequate educational facilities, but, instead, the result of the inadequate number of persons now making use of existing facilities.

Why are more college graduates not entering this field where the need for trained workers is so great that even the inexperienced new graduate may choose his position from among literally dozens of openings across the country? Why are not an increasing number of persons attracted to a field where present workers feel so strongly concerning the importance of their tasks that they are ready to declare: "No other group has the same knowledge of the needs and potentialities of men. No other group has the required skill to meet these needs and develop these potentialities."[4]

Perhaps the most commonly suggested explanation of this situation is the one which lays the blame squarely on salaries in the field, claiming that they are shockingly low in comparison to those offered in other professions where the educational requirements are equivalent. Mr. Fauri, former president of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, summed up this viewpoint succinctly when he said that ". . . in a competitive society you can recruit, or you can sell a service successfully, only if what you have to offer measures up to what is offered by others."[5] There is no doubt but that

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4. Louis Wirth, "Social Goals for America," Social Welfare Forum, 1949, p. 19.

5. Fedele F. Fauri, op. cit., p. 50.

the proponents of this viewpoint are correct when they insist that as far as financial remuneration is concerned social work can compete neither with other professions like law, medicine, and engineering, nor with the business and commercial world. The importance of potential salaries as a factor in the decision-making of college students about to choose a career would seem to be borne out by the results of an investigation of the career choices of college graduates who major in sociology and psychology made by the Cleveland Welfare Federation. They asked deans, professors, and heads of departments at thirty colleges what main factors they thought were influencing students in selection of careers at present. "Income" was named by twenty of the schools and was the only factor which stood out prominently in the replies.[6]

Despite all the evidence it can be argued that, hopefully, social work does not recruit its personnel from among those who are thinking so much in terms of material gain as of service rendered, and thus this competitive criterion may not be the most important one. This was suggested in the aforementioned report of the Cleveland Welfare Federation when one head of a sociology department said that most of the students who choose social work have "some kind of a call." Certainly it is this idealism, this belief that social work is a "chosen

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6. Social Work Personnel Committee of the Cleveland Welfare Federation, Career Choices of College Graduates Who Major in Sociology and Psychology, 1954, p. 3.

profession" combining unparalleled opportunities for service with interesting and exciting work that has motivated most social workers in the past. What, then, many persons in the field are asking, has happened to this challenge today?

This suggests another possible explanation for the shortage of social workers. Is there a lack of knowledge and a confused understanding among the general public as to just what social work is and just what social workers do, and therefore of the job opportunities and challenges for service which exist in this field? There is a tendency among social workers to shrug their shoulders and say that this lack of awareness on the part of the general public exists but is only natural since social work is such a new profession and ecompasses such a wide variety of activities within its scope. But this alone does not explain what Professor Clyde White has referred to as a "profound disinterest" in the profession, for there are various other equally new occupations which seem to be much better understood and respected by the general public, such as those in aviation and occupational therapy.[7] In a study conducted by the Welfare Federation of Cleveland among high school seniors in greater Cleveland it was found that of thirty occupations the students were asked about that of social worker was the second least well-understood occupation of all, with

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7. R. Clyde White, "Prestige of Social Work and the Social Worker," Social Work Journal, 36:33, January, 1955.

only the job of the professional entertainer being less clearly defined in the minds of these boys and girls.[8] Unless in college these boys and girls find themselves exposed to the field of social work and career possibilities within it in a much clearer, more inspiring way than they evidently have been by the conclusion of their high school education, we can hardly hope to recruit many future social workers from among their ranks. That it is not only these high school students in Cleveland but many others, both young and old, all over the United States who know little about social work, and are perhaps confused by what little they do know, is suggested by the comprehensive and careful study made by Hollis and Taylor of social work education in the United States. One of the two areas where these authors state that social workers are doing a far from adequate job is in developing and providing information about the social work profession to other professions and to the public.[9]

There are those who feel not only that the average American's picture of social workers and what they do is a rather vague and confusing one, but that it is also an unfavorable one which relegates the social worker to a low status

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8. Occupational Planning Committee of the Cleveland Welfare Federation, Social Prestige of Occupations, A Study of the Relative Prestige of Occupations among Greater Cleveland High School Seniors, 1955.

9. Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor, Social Work Education in the United States.

and perhaps even harbors unfortunate stereotypes regarding what the typical social worker is like. It is hard to estimate just how much of the feeling which social workers have that people in general are looking "down on" them rather than "up to" them is due to a professional inferiority complex and how much to their real insight into and understanding of the feelings of others. Social workers could hardly be expected to know to just what degree they are understood or misunderstood, liked or disliked, appreciated or resented, since there has never been any real study made of what the public thinks of them. Some fear that the general public still maintains a picture of them formed back in the depression days. Thus Damon Turner writes,

> The stereotype of the grim-visaged snooper intent upon examining the clothing hanging in the backyard as a clue to the need of people is unfortunately still accepted by much of the public as typical of the social worker.[10]

Even friends of the profession, such as Katharine Brooks, warn social workers that they have assumed "an Olympian role of understanding many things incomprehensible to the laymen" and thus blinded many people to the real worth and dedication of their work.[11]

Aside from the problem of unfavorable stereotypes of

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10. Damon A. Turner, "The Licensing Effort-Seven Years Later," Social Work Journal, 35:68, April, 1954.

11. Katharine Hall Brooks, "A Layman Looks at Social Workers," Social Work Journal, 35:23, January, 1954.

social workers which may or may not be widely believed, surveys have clearly indicated that among both high school[12] and college students[13] social work is believed to have less status in the community than any other profession. On the other hand, social workers themselves believe that they have more ability to help others than any other professional person except the doctor.[14] This would seem to add evidence to the likelihood that persons who enter social work are more concerned with a call to help others than with either financial or social prestige rewards.

In addition to these factors of low salaries, lack of knowledge about the field and its opportunities, and low status in the community, one further factor has been suggested as partly responsible for the lack of social work recruits. This is the high educational requirements of the field, the fact that it takes two years of both academic study and unpaid field work to secure a Master's Degree. In education, a field with which social work is in constant competition for personnel, one can secure a Master's Degree in one year and then take a job at a salary which is often higher for nine months of work than that which the social worker receives for eleven

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12. White, op. cit., p. 23.

13. Norman Polansky, and others, "Social Workers in Society: Results of a Sampling Study," Social Work Journal, 34:77-78, April, 1953.

14. Ibid., p. 78.

months of work. The belief that we are just not going to be able in the foreseeable future to fill all the jobs opening up in social work with persons who have completed two years of graduate training has led some experts in the field to suggest that some plan should be worked out whereby jobs in social work could be classified according to their required skills so that persons could be trained during undergraduate years or in a one year graduate course to fill certain of these jobs.[15]

Thus we see that there is no dearth of possible and plausible explanations for the failure of the social work profession to recruit its needed personnel. Indeed, in the light of this summary of possible hindrances to recruitment the reader may wonder how social work ever recruits anyone at all! Yet a certain number of college graduates do enter schools of social work and go on to become capable and dedicated workers in the field. To shed further light upon the way in which college students look upon social work when considering possible careers is the purpose of this study.

Value of the Study

As we have seen many different explanations have been offered for the declining enrollment in schools of social work and the difficult time the profession is having in recruiting future workers. All of the above factors, either singly or

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15. Fedele F. Fauri, op. cit., p. 51.

in various combinations, have been suggested as being at the root of this problem. Thus some social workers declare we must work to secure higher salaries, others proclaim that our greatest need is to interpret our profession better and to improve our public relations, while still others feel that we must supplement the existing type of professional education with some other less lengthy form of training. Much more study needs to be done before we will know enough about the way in which prospective recruits look upon the field of social work to take concrete steps toward making the field a more inviting one to them. As far as this author has been able to discover no one has yet made any attempt at a comprehensive study of the attitude of college students toward professional social work as a vocation.

Referring to the problem of better interpreting social work to the general public, the executive director of the National Publicity Council declared: "In approaching the public relations of the social work profession . . . a first need is an opinion study to tell us what we are up against."[16] Because it would seem that in the area of social work recruitment also our first need is an opinion study among potential workers to "tell us what we are up against, this study has been undertaken. Although it must of necessity be undertaken

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16. Sallie E. Bright, "A Proposal to a Buffeted Profession," Social Work Journal, 29:92, July, 1948.

on a very small scale, it is hoped that it may provide a beginning for future more extensive research to discover just how the various factors which we have discussed (and very possibly others which we know nothing about as yet) are operating as today's college students look over the various fields and make their vocational choices.

CHAPTER II

THE METHOD OF THE STUDY

Parts of the Problem to be Explored

After much consideration it was decided to explore the following aspects of college students' attitudes toward professional social work as a potential career choice:

1. What do they know about job opportunities in social work and the nature of the work which these jobs involve?
2. How do they feel that the salaries of social workers compare with the salaries of those in other vocations and professions?
3. What do they believe to be the professional status or prestige of social workers in the community?
4. How much ability do they feel social workers have to help and serve people as compared with the ability of those in other fields of endeavor?
5. What kind of person do they picture the typical social worker as being?

The Questionnaire[1]

It seemed that in view of the time which the author had at her disposal these questions could best be explored through the use of a questionnaire which a certain number of college upperclassmen would be asked to fill out. A five page questionnaire was therefore constructed which, in addition to exploring the above five points, asked for some background information regarding the student and about any vocational

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1. For copy of questionnaire see Appendix B.

decision he had made thus far.

Although an attempt was made to simplify the filling out of the questionnaire by enabling the student merely to check correct answers whenever possible, the questionnaire also contained open-end questions and encouraged the insertion of other answers when the possibilities stated were not exhaustive. In this way it was hoped that factors which the author could not foresee might be uncovered.

What basis did the author have, one might ask, for believing that the answers to these various questions would prove at all revealing and would shed some light on the attitudes of college students toward a career in professional social work? Five years ago, under the auspices of the Columbia University Council for Research in the Social Sciences, Eli Ginzberg and three associates made an extensive investigation of the process of occupational choice among students.[2] They sought to establish an approach to a general theory of occupational choice. The three basic elements in the theory which resulted from their efforts were:

1. That occupational choice is a developmental process.
2. That this process is largely irreversible.
3. That compromise is an essential aspect of every occupational choice.

If occupational choice is clearly always the result not of a

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2. Eli Ginzberg, and others, Occupational Choices: An Approach to a General Theory.

single decision but of a series of decisions made over a period of years then to the degree that these decisions are influenced by conscious intellectualization and rationalization, they can be explained by their makers in terms of the reasons and factors involved. If, also, compromise is involved in every student's choice and he has had to weigh advantages and disadvantages involved in his various potential choices, then it should be possible for him to communicate to others the factors which seemed of greater and lesser importance to him in making his decision.

Admittedly this decision making process is not carried on at a completely conscious level and is influenced by unconscious motivations as well as consciously considered factors. If a student has little or no insight into his emotional needs he may himself be largely unaware of the real reasons for his vocational choice. Nevertheless, there will probably be factors which he believes are the ones on which he has based his choice. This study cannot deal with unconscious emotional needs and drives and the way in which they influence career choices; it concerns itself solely with the things which students consciously believe and feel and the reasons which they give for acting in a certain manner. Thus it seeks only to explore the students' attitudes toward social work as a vocation on the conscious level where they weigh the pro's and con's of the opportunities which they find open to them.

The Sample

The results of their study of occupational choice enabled Ginzberg and his associates to outline the various stages in the developmental process through which students make their vocational decisions. They determined that the "crystallization stage," the stage at which the student finally synthesizes the many forces which have relevance to his decision and commits himself to a certain course, comes when he is about twenty or twenty-one years old, or during the junior or senior year in college. Before this, during their first two years of college, students are in the "exploration stage" during which they are interested in investigating various opportunities but not yet ready to commit themselves. Since the purpose of this study was to learn what students know and think about professional social work it seemed wisest to administer the questionnaire to upperclass students who would already have passed through the "exploration stage" and who were therefore more likely to have formulated some opinions concerning the advantages and disadvantages of various vocations.

To ensure a sampling which would contain a number of students who had given active consideration to a career in social work, classes in the field of sociology or psychology were chosen. Thus two classes in Principles of Sociology (each under a different instructor) and one in Social Psychology were visited and the questionnaire administered to all

the students in these classes.[3] The author feels that she was fortunate in securing the cooperation of the three professors concerned and in thus being able to administer the questionnaire during class time. Admittedly this meant that the students were under pressure to comply in filling out the questionnaire whether they wished to or not and that some of the questionnaires may have been answered hastily or half-heartedly. On the other hand, this insured a sampling of the opinion of the students enrolled in these courses which could not have been secured by a questionnaire filled out voluntarily during the students' free time, for in the latter case the returns undoubtedly would have been smaller and tended to come more from those who had the greater interest in social work.

Limitations of the Methodology

The major limitation of this study is undoubtedly the small scale on which it is being undertaken and the inability of the author to administer the questionnaire to enough students for the results to have much statistical significance. Closely connected with this is the limitation involved in the type of sample which the author was able to secure, a sample which clearly cannot be said to be typical of the college population of the United States. Only six of the students

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3. All three of these classes were at Boston University, and although the majority of the students were juniors or seniors there were some sophomores also.

participating in the survey were from outside of the New England Middle Atlantic States region and almost two-thirds of the group were from Massachusetts.[4] The group was heavily urban in background with all students except nine having grown up in cities.[5]

There are in addition several limitations inherent in the questionnaire method which should not be overlooked. One of these is the inflexibility of a method such as this one where the researcher is neither able to observe the individual subject's response to the question and provide further interpretation and encouragement to draw him out if this is needed, nor to seek clarification of the subject's responses if these should prove to be confusing. Because of this inability to individualize one is never sure whether the subjects are each reading the same meaning into the same question or not, and, on the other hand, whether the different subjects really mean the same thing by the same answer or not. This leaves the validity of all results of this nature open to further question and exploration.

On the other hand, some individuals may express themselves more candidly on paper, this being a very impersonal medium, than they would to an interviewer. It was hoped that

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4. See Appendix A, Table 21, showing geographical distribution of students.

5. "Cities" is used in the sense of the standard definition of a city as a municipality with a population of over ten-thousand inhabitants.

by not asking the subjects to put their names on the questionnaires greater frankness in their replies would be encouraged.

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the author was that of constructing a questionnaire which would elicit all the information deemed necessary and yet not be of such length that the students would lose interest or become resentful before completing it. For the sake of brevity it seemed preferable to sacrifice some questions the answers to which would have been very enlightening.

CHAPTER III

CAREER CHOICE AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS

The questionnaire was administered to eighty-two students in three classes.[1] The answers of four students were not used, two because they were graduate students and two more because they were foreign students here only for temporary periods of study. Thus the findings reported here pertain to the replies given by seventy-eight undergraduate students at Boston University. Of these seventy-eight students fourteen reported that they had already decided upon careers in the field of social work; twenty-two reported that they were at present deciding between social work and other possible vocations; and forty-two reported they had ruled social work out in their consideration of possible careers. Some in this last category had already decided upon a vocation and others had not yet done so, but all had decided against social work. Throughout this report those who declared that they had already decided upon a career in social work are referred to as "future social workers;" those who stated that they were currently deciding between social work and some other vocation or vocations are referred to as "potential social workers;" and those who said they had definitely ruled out social work are referred to as "non-social workers."

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1. For a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix B.

Table I shows the college class and course distribution of the students who participated in the survey.

TABLE I.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO COLLEGE CLASS AND COURSE

College Class	College Course			Total
	Social Psychology	Principles of Sociology 1	Principles of Sociology 2	
Sophomores	5	8	7	20
Juniors	18	12	6	36
Seniors	8	5	8	21
Unclassified	0	1	0	1
Totals	31	26	21	78

Table II shows the college class distribution of these students according to their vocational interests.

TABLE II.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO COLLEGE CLASS AND INTEREST IN SOCIAL WORK

College Class	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
Sophomores	6	7	7	20
Juniors	5	10	21	36
Seniors	3	4	14	21
Unclassified	0	1	0	1
Totals	14	22	42	78

We see from Table II that the largest proportion of "future social workers" are found among the sophomores. While only about one-seventh of the juniors and seniors were "future social workers" approximately one-third of the sophomores fell in this category. It should be noted that sophomores are less likely to have made firm career choices than juniors and seniors.

Table III shows the distribution by sex of the seventy-eight students surveyed.

TABLE III.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO SEX AND COLLEGE COURSE

Sex	Social Psychology	Principles of Sociology 1	Principles of Sociology 2	Total
Male	14	7	6	27
Female	17	19	15	51
Totals	31	26	21	78

As can be seen from Table III the men were outnumbered in the group surveyed, there being almost twice as many women as men. Since the typical situation on almost any college campus is that more women than men major in sociology and

psychology, these figures are not surprising.[2]

The ratio of men to women is even more striking when we look at the sex of those who are interested in social work as a career, as shown in Table IV below.

TABLE IV.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO SEX AND INTEREST IN SOCIAL WORK

Sex	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
Male	2	4	21	27
Female	12	18	21	51
Totals	14	22	42	78

Table IV shows that of the twenty-seven men in those classes which were surveyed only six, or less than one-quarter, have decided upon or expressed interest in careers in professional social work while of the fifty-one women, thirty, or well over half, have decided upon or expressed interest in a career in social work.

Table V summarizes the age distribution of the students surveyed. The average age of these seventy-eight students was

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2. Social Work Personnel Committee of the Cleveland Welfare Federation, Career Choices of College Graduates Who Major in Sociology and Psychology, 1954. This report states that at the fifty colleges and universities surveyed there were only 103 males majoring in sociology as contrasted with 846 females and only 146 males majoring in psychology as contrasted with 755 females.

21.9 years. The average age of the fourteen students who had decided upon careers in social work was 22.1 years and that of those who were considering social work among other possible vocations was 20.5 years.

TABLE V.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE AND INTEREST IN SOCIAL WORK

Age	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
18	1	3	1	5
19	3	6	7	16
20	3	7	9	19
21	2	3	10	15
22	0	0	1	1
23	2	0	1	3
24	0	0	2	2
25	0	0	2	2
26	0	1	1	2
27	1	2	2	5
28	0	0	0	0
29	0	0	1	1
30	2	0	1	3
31	0	0	1	1
32	0	0	2	2
33	0	0	1	1
Totals	14	22	42	78

Of the fourteen "future social workers" eleven stated the time at which they had made their decision to enter the field of social work. Of the forty-two "non-social workers" twenty-five stated the time at which they had decided upon careers other than social work. Table VI shows the level in school where each of these thirty-six students was when he made his career choice.

TABLE VI.

SCHOOL CLASS AT WHICH STUDENTS MADE THEIR CAREER CHOICES

Class Level	Future Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
High school	1	6	7
University freshman	1	1	2
University sophomore	5	11	16
University junior	3	6	9
University senior	1	1	2
Totals	11	25	36

The majority of the seventy-eight students who participated in this study were majoring in Psychology or Sociology, with a small number majoring in various other subjects. Table VII shows the students' major subjects.

TABLE VII.

STUDENTS' MAJOR SUBJECTS

Subject	Number of Students
Psychology	36
Sociology	33
English	2
Economics	1
Education	1
Government	1
History	1
Public Relations	1
Speech Education	1
Comparative Literature	1
Total	78

One of the areas which the questionnaire sought to investigate was the degree to which each student had come in contact with social work or social work agencies in his part-time or summer work, extra-curricular interests and activities, or regular work if he had been out of school for some time between high school and college or during his college education. Table VIII shows the number of students who had had such contacts.

TABLE VIII.

STUDENTS' CONTACTS WITH SOCIAL WORK

Job or Extra-Curricular Activities Related to Social Work	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers
None	6	9	31
One	4	9	9
Two or more	4	4	2
Totals	14	22	42

In the light of the above information regarding the background of these students several generalizations can safely be made regarding those in the survey who are "future social workers." First of all, they are for the main part women. The male student who stated that he was not going into social work because "it is a female's occupation" was, unfortunately, making a very apt observation. Secondly, these students are fairly typical of the entire group in regard to age range. Lastly, those students who are going into social work have had considerably more contact with social work and social agencies, either through their extra-curricular activities or through jobs they have held, than have the students who are not going to be social workers (see Table VIII). Whether this experience has been a factor in their decision to become social workers, or whether their decision to become social workers has led them to secure this experience is impossible to say

for sure, although it is probable that both are true in some degree.

Although the number of students who gave information regarding the time at which they made career decisions was small, it is interesting to note that only one student decided to become a social worker before entering college as contrasted with six students who had decided upon other vocations by this time (see Table VI). This can probably be explained by the fact that students do not tend to have the contact with social workers up until this time that they would with teachers, doctors, business men and those in other occupations.

CHAPTER IV

THE STUDENTS' VOCATIONAL RANKINGS

Status Ranking

Each student was asked to rank ten vocations placing a number one by the vocation which he felt commanded the most respect in the community and working down to number ten for the vocation on the list which he believed commanded the least respect in the community. Table IX presents the ten vocations in the order in which they were ranked and gives the mean rank and standard deviation for each one.[1]

TABLE IX.

RANKING OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE COMMUNITY*

Vocation	Mean Rank	Standard Deviation
Doctor	1.5	0.81
Minister	2.9	2.31
Clinical psychologist	4.2	2.00
Engineer	4.5	2.17
High school teacher	5.3	2.01
Social worker	5.8	1.86
Nurse	6.4	1.73
Occupational therapist	6.8	1.72
Laboratory technician	8.1	1.49
Secretary	9.4	1.17

* Seventy-three students of the seventy-eight took part in this ranking.

1. See Appendix A, Tables XVIII - XX for distributions of rankings.

It is not at all surprising that such ancient and long-esteemed professions as medicine and the ministry should be seen by these students as commanding the greatest respect in the community. Nor is it surprising in this age of science to find the engineering profession ranked so highly even though many engineers have done no graduate work.

It may be somewhat startling to some, however, to see how clearly the line is drawn between what are considered predominantly male vocations and predominantly female vocations. Those four professions with the highest status are the predominantly male ones of medicine, the ministry, clinical psychology, and engineering. Those five with the lowest status are the predominantly female vocations of social work, nursing, occupational therapy, secretarial work and that of the laboratory technician. Right in between these two groups we find the high school teachers, a vocation which might be said to bridge the gap between these two groups since it cannot easily be classified as either essentially male or female.

In view of the large number of students in the survey who stated that they were deciding between social work and teaching it may be important to note that high school teachers were rated as having slightly more prestige in the community than social workers. Actually the difference in the status rankings of these two professions was not great (only 0.5) and may have little statistical significance with such a small sampling of students. One cannot help wondering if in ranking

high school teachers above social workers in status these students were perhaps merely recognizing the fact that most people have more respect for the old, well-established, familiar profession of teaching than for the much newer, less well-established and certainly not clearly understood social work profession.

It is interesting to note that the two occupations for which the standard deviations show greatest agreement among the students are those at the very top and the very bottom of the list, doctor and secretary. Although there is certainly not close agreement among the students as to the status of social workers, there is more agreement regarding their status than there is regarding that of clinical psychologists, high school teachers, ministers, and engineers, four vocations which ranked higher than social work in the status ranking.

Service Ranking

In the second ranking the students were asked to arrange the different vocations according to the degree of opportunity to help people and be of service to others which they felt each one offered. Table X gives the ten vocations in the order in which they were ranked with the mean rank and the standard deviation for each vocation.

In ranking the ten vocations according to the degree of opportunity to help people and be of service to others that each presents the students were expressing their own ideas and

TABLE X.

RANKING OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE*

Vocation	Mean Rank	Standard Deviation
Doctor	1.7	1.22
Social worker	3.4	1.45
Clinical psychologist	3.7	1.97
Minister	3.9	2.26
Nurse	5.0	1.58
High school teacher	5.3	1.89
Occupational therapist	5.5	1.61
Laboratory technician	8.2	1.14
Engineer	8.8	0.95
Secretary	9.4	0.77

*Seventy students out of the seventy-eight took part in this ranking.

not necessarily those of the community. It is clear that these students felt that only in medicine is there more opportunity to be of service than in social work, although clinical psychology was a close runner-up. In view of the number of students who were deciding between social work and teaching it is interesting to note that teaching was ranked sixth in terms of service. It seems clear that the consideration which sends many students into the teaching field instead of social work is not generally a belief that they can be of greater

service in the former field.

The standard deviations in the service ranking show that there was most agreement among the students in regard to the ranking of that vocation which they felt offered the least opportunity for service, that of secretary. There was second most agreement in the ranking of the vocation which was second from the bottom of the list (engineer), and third most agreement in the ranking of the one which was third from the bottom of the list (laboratory technician). It would seem, therefore, that the students tend to agree most closely about the ranking of those vocations which they feel offer the least chances for service.

There was a fair amount of agreement regarding the ranking of social workers and doctors, the two vocations which the group as a whole felt offer the greatest opportunities for service. The remaining five vocations showed a low degree of agreement among the students as to just where each one should be ranked. Students' opinions differed most markedly in regard to the degree of service which could be rendered by a minister and a clinical psychologist.

Salary Ranking

In the third ranking the students arranged the different vocations according to the salary or earnings which they thought each vocation commanded. Table XI shows the ten vocations in the order in which they were ranked according to

salaries and gives the mean rank and standard deviation for each one.

TABLE XI.

RANKING OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO THE SALARIES EARNED*

Vocation	Mean Rank	Standard Deviation
Doctor	1.3	0.46
Engineer	2.1	1.14
Clinical psychologist	4.2	1.73
Laboratory technician	6.0	2.32
Occupational therapist	6.1	1.95
Nurse	6.7	1.88
High school teacher	6.9	2.02
Secretary	7.1	2.53
Minister	7.2	2.35
Social worker	7.6	1.92

* Seventy-three students out of the seventy-eight took part in this ranking.

It is clear from the above mean ranks that the group as a whole considers social workers the lowest paid of any of these ten vocations.

There is a considerable gap between the three vocations at the top of the list and the last seven vocations. The difference between successive mean ranks for each of the first three vocations is greater than that for the last seven vo-

cations in the list. The gap between the mean rank of the clinical psychologist and that of the laboratory technician is 1.8, which is larger than the entire spread between the mean ranks of the last seven vocations, 1.6. It would seem that the students divided the ten vocations into two groups. They felt quite optimistic about the earning powers of the first group which consisted of doctors, engineers, and clinical psychologists. On the other hand, the students not only felt rather pessimistic regarding the earning power of the seven vocations at the bottom of the list, but they also saw less difference between their earning powers.

The standard deviations show a higher degree of agreement in the rankings of the vocations judged to be highest paid. However, as a whole, the students show a greater spread of opinion in regard to the salaries earned in these ten vocations than they do in regard to the status accompanying them or the degree of service which can be rendered through them. Social workers were in about the middle again, with the least agreement being in regard to the salaries of secretaries, ministers, and laboratory technicians.

Vocational Rankings of "Future Social Workers"

Table XII summarizes the relative rankings of each of the ten vocations by the total group in respect to status, salary, and service.

TABLE XII.

MEAN RANKINGS OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO STATUS, SALARY, AND SERVICE

Vocation	Status	Service	Salary
Clinical psychologist	4.2	3.7	4.2
Doctor	1.5	1.7	1.3
Engineer	4.5	8.8	2.1
High school teacher	5.3	5.3	6.9
Laboratory technician	8.1	8.2	6.0
Minister	2.9	3.9	7.2
Nurse	6.4	5.0	6.7
Occupational therapist	6.8	5.5	6.1
Secretary	9.4	9.4	7.1
Social worker	5.8	3.4	7.6

Table XIII shows the mean ranks of each vocation according to status, salary, and service when ranked by the fourteen students within the total group who had definitely decided upon careers in social work.

Several very interesting changes in the relative rankings of these vocations occur when we compute the means of the ranking given to them by the fourteen future social workers as contrasted to those of the total group. In regard to status, despite slight variations in the means, the general order of the ranking was the same with just one exception. While the total group had placed high school teachers fifth and social workers sixth in terms of community prestige, the future social

TABLE XIII.

MEAN RANKINGS OF TEN VOCATIONS BY FOURTEEN "FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS"

Vocation	Status	Service	Salary
Clinical psychologist	4.1	3.8	3.6
Doctor	1.4	1.5	1.2
Engineer	4.7	8.9	1.7
High school teacher	5.4	6.0	7.7
Laboratory technician	8.0	7.9	6.1
Minister	2.8	3.8	7.2
Nurse	6.4	4.9	6.9
Occupational therapist	7.9	5.5	6.6
Secretary	9.3	9.7	6.9
Social worker	5.1	3.2	6.9

workers placed social workers fifth and high school teachers sixth, reversing the total group's rating of these two professions. This can be interpreted in either of two ways and probably both are correct at times. One might say that it is those students who feel that social work has higher status than teaching who, in deciding between the two, choose social work. On the other hand, it might also be claimed that those students who have already decided upon social work as a career, because of their own decision and the influences to which it exposes them, tend to start thinking that social work has more prestige than teaching.

In the service ranking by the fourteen future social

workers the order is again the same as that given by the total group with one exception. The future social workers rate occupational therapists just above instead of just below high school teachers in their ability to be of service. It is not difficult to understand why those who have chosen a career such as social work would tend to be slightly more impressed by the services of occupational therapists than the usual student.

Perhaps most striking of all the differences in the rankings by future social workers is that found in their salary ranking of the ten vocations. Here the only big difference is that the high school teachers instead of social workers received the bottom ranking. Social workers, nurses, and secretaries received exactly the same mean rankings. As data presented later will show, this would seem to indicate that those who have decided upon social work as a career have a more accurate understanding of salaries in this field than those who have not, although even these students tend to believe that occupational therapists and laboratory technicians make more than social workers and that nurses and secretaries make as much.

CHAPTER V

THE STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

Students' Knowledge of Openings in the Field of Social Work

The students were asked what they thought to be the present situation as regards the availability of positions for trained social workers. The following list shows the number of students who responded to each answer suggested.

A. Very plentiful and rapidly increasing..... 34

B. Fairly plentiful with little difficulty in securing work..... 18

C. Available but somewhat difficult to secure..... 12

D. Not too difficult to secure now but likely to be less available in the near future..... 7

E. Very difficult to secure..... 2

F. No answer..... 5

From the above figures we see that less than half the students answering this question were aware of the plentiful and rapidly increasing job opportunities in the field of social work, while nearly a third of the students believed that it was now, or might be in the near future, difficult for trained social workers to secure positions.

Table XIV shows a breakdown of the number who checked each answer according to their interest in the field of social work.

From this table we see that while 79 per cent of the

TABLE XIV.

STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL WORK JOBS*

Availability of Positions*	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
A.	11	6	17	34
B.	1	8	9	18
C.	1	4	7	12
D.	1	3	3	7
E.	0	0	2	2
F.	0	1	4	5
Totals	14	21	38	73

* For the meaning of A through F see categories discussed in text above.

future social workers correctly estimated the job opportunities in social work only 29 per cent of the potential social workers and 45 per cent of the non-social workers were aware of this situation. It is interesting to note that the potential social workers are least aware of the many job openings in the field of social work.

Students' Knowledge of Tasks Performed by Social Workers

In an attempt to investigate the degree of understanding which these students had regarding the actual work performed by social workers, ten tasks were suggested and the students asked to check off those which a trained social worker would

ordinarily perform. Below are listed the five tasks which might correctly be performed by a social worker with the number of students who correctly checked these as tasks attributable to social workers.

A. Act as advisor to a neighborhood group which has decided to try to do something about the inadequate trash collection situation in their district..... 32

B. Lead a group of boys and girls who meet weekly in a community center to work at different arts and crafts..... 57

C. Work out a monthly budget of needs with a wife whose husband had died leaving her with three children and no means of support..... 57

D. Counsel with a new mother who is deciding whether she should keep her illegitimate baby or surrender it for adoption..... 68

E. Be a member of a team with doctor, psychiatrist, and psychologist at a clinic and help them plan and carry out treatment for a pre-delinquent youngster..... 73

The next list describes five tasks which would not correctly be performed by trained social workers with the number of students who in each case correctly did not attribute the task to social workers.

F. Give vocational guidance to high school students..... 47

G. Assist in the physical rehabilitation of children crippled by polio..... 59

H. Determine the guilt or innocence of parents charged with neglecting their children..... 64

I. Administer psychological tests for diagnosing emotional disorders..... 65

J. Direct therapy with psychotic patients in a mental hospital..... 67

As might be expected in view of the newness and relative weakness of the community organization and group work disciplines within the field of social work, it was the case work tasks which were most clearly understood as being the everyday work of professional social workers. Well over half the students were convinced that a trained social worker would not be the adviser of a neighborhood group seeking action on a community problem, and over one-fourth of the group did not believe that a trained social worker would be leading a group of boys and girls working at arts and crafts in a community center.

Less easily understood is the fact that twenty-one of these seventy-eight students did not feel that a trained social worker would work out a budget with a mother who needed Aid to Dependent Children welfare funds. Whether the students felt that a trained social worker would not be bothered with details of such a financial nature or whether they were really not aware of public welfare work as a form of social work, it is impossible to tell. Perhaps the number of students who answered this question incorrectly is an indication that these students tend to think of trained social workers as being employed mainly in the private social agencies, and not in public welfare work. At any rate it is the tasks described in items D and E, ones performed chiefly in a private agency setting, which the group understood most clearly as those that a professional social worker would perform.

It would seem that these students had a strong tendency to think of social work in terms of "counseling", again a natural phenomenon in view of the predominance of the psychiatric case work branch of social work. It is probably for this reason, and because they did not realize that vocational counseling is in itself a separate skill, that nearly half the group felt social workers would ordinarily be found giving vocational guidance.

That practically one-fourth of the group do not understand the basic difference between the work of a physiotherapist or occupational therapist and that of a social worker may be seen by their answers to item G. The group is much clearer about the role of the social worker in a psychiatric setting, and all but eleven realized that he would not direct therapy with psychotic patients. Only thirteen confused the social worker's role with that of a clinical psychologist. Fourteen students felt that a social worker would act as judge or jury as well as an investigator in a case where neglect of children by their parents was suspected.

It is interesting to note that the task which was marked most correctly of the ten was that which referred to the social worker's cooperating with a doctor, psychiatrist and Psychologist as a member of a clinic team.

Table XV shows the percentage of "future social workers," potential social workers," and "non-social workers" who answered each item correctly.

TABLE XV.

CORRECT ANSWERS GIVEN BY STUDENTS IN REGARD TO SOCIAL WORKERS' TASKS

Task*	Percentage of Future Social Workers	Percentage of Potential Social Workers	Percentage of Non-Social Workers
A	29	37	48
B	86	60	77
C	86	64	74
D	100	87	84
E	100	92	94
F	57	55	65
G	79	82	72
H	86	92	77
I	100	69	86
J	86	87	86

* For the meaning of A through J see tasks listed in text above.

When the students' understanding of social work jobs is considered according to the student's vocational interest we find that those students who have already decided upon a career in social work have the highest average percentage of correct answers (81 per cent). Oddly enough, the potential social workers have the lowest average percentage of correct answers, 73 per cent, while the non-social workers' percentage of correct answers is 76.

Actually it seems that the important factor in a student's understanding of social work tasks is not necessarily the student's interest in social work as a career but some other aspect

of the individual's experiences since there were many students in each of the above three categories who did very well and many others who did very poorly on this aspect of the survey. It would seem fairly clear, however, that the student who has majored in sociology or psychology is apt to have a little more understanding of the social worker's job than the student in some other fields, since the students majoring in psychology or sociology had an average of 2.4 mistakes while the students majoring in other fields had an average of 3.5 mistakes.

Students' Opinions of Social Workers as Persons

In order to determine what kind of person these college students believed the usual social worker to be they were asked to check descriptions which they felt could justly be applied to the typical social worker. Following is a list of the suggested descriptions.

A. A kind, intelligent and understanding person who sincerely wishes to help others.

B. A "do-gooder" who receives gratification from feeling that she (he) is helping the poor.

C. A religiously motivated person who feels she (he) must devote her (his) life to helping the under-privileged.

D. An unmarried woman who is compensating for her own lack of any family by concerning herself with the affairs of others.

E. A person who is usually more concerned with getting her (his) job done than understanding the problems of clients.

F. An individual who enjoys being in a position where she (he) can direct others and tell them what they

should do.

Of the seventy-five students who answered this question, sixty checked description A, sixteen checked description B, three checked description C, two checked description D, one checked description E, and none checked description F.[1]

Table XVI shows a breakdown of the number of students who checked each description in terms of their interest in social work.

TABLE XVI.

STEREOTYPES OF SOCIAL WORKERS HELD BY STUDENTS

Description of Typical Social Worker*	Future Social Workers	Potential Social Workers	Non-Social Workers	Total
A	13	19	28	60
B	1	3	12	16
C	0	1	2	3
D	0	0	2	2
E	0	1	0	1
F	0	0	0	0

* For the meaning of A through F see the descriptions listed above.

On the whole the group of students surveyed had a very favorable opinion of social workers. They did not feel that they were social misfits, authoritarian individuals, women who

1. The total number of replies is greater than seventy-five (the number of students answering this question) because students were permitted to check more than one description.

were compensating for their unmarried state, or persons who were capitalizing on the misfortune of others. Out of seventy-five persons who answered this question, sixty, or 80 per cent, agreed that social workers were kind, intelligent and understanding persons who sincerely wished to help others. A number of the students who checked this answer, however, as well as the 20 per cent who did not, attempted to emphasize through answers which they wrote in that social workers' motives were not 100 per cent altruistic and that social workers are persons who receive gratification from helping others. Thus they are actually seeking to help themselves as well as others, or, as one student put it, trying to "help themselves through helping others." None of the students, it is important to note, made any suggestion or inference to the effect that there was anything wrong in a person's seeking out a vocation because it met his own needs as well as those of others.

To the degree that this group of students is typical of students majoring in sociology or psychology, one is led to believe that it is not because of any unfavorable stereotype of the social worker that more such students are not choosing social work as a career today. This is not to deny that the general public, or sections of it, may still entertain various unfavorable pictures of what the social worker is like or what he does. It would seem, however, that the average college student who is studying psychology or sociology today does not share such prejudices.

From Table XVI it can quickly be seen that those students who had already decided to become social workers did not question the motives of social workers in the same way that those students who had ruled this vocation out did. As might be expected there was more feeling among potential social workers that a social workers' motives might not be completely altruistic than among future social workers, although not nearly as much as among the non-social workers.

Reasons for Deciding Against Social Work as a Career

Those who had definitely decided against social work as a career were asked the reason for this decision. Thirty-eight students answered this question. Table XVII shows the reasons given by these students for deciding against social work as a career.

The reason for not wishing to become a social worker mentioned more frequently than any other by these students was that salaries in the field were too low. Twelve students, over one-fourth of those who had decided against social work as a career, and almost one-third of those who replied, gave this as their reason. In one-half (or six) of these instances this was their only reason. The second most frequently mentioned reason was that of not wanting to spend two years in graduate study, which was checked by ten students.

Little need be said regarding the eighteen students who decided against social work primarily because they felt they

TABLE XVII.

STUDENTS' REASONS FOR DECIDING AGAINST SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

Reason for Adverse Decision	Number of Students*
Low salaries	12
Length of graduate study	10
More useful in other work	9
Not best fitted for social work	7
Lack of information about opportunities	4
Strength of other interest(s)	3
Graduate training too expensive	2
Knew nothing about social work	1

* There were forty-two students who had ruled out social work. The number of responses totals more than forty-two because some students gave more than one reason.

were not best suited for it or that they could be more useful in other fields. These decisions are the result of the value judgements or personal self-evaluation which each student makes for himself. Nor could much probably have been done to influence those two students whose only reason for not considering social work at all was the strength of other interests.

But what about the rest of the group? All eighteen of these students decided against social work because of the following factors or a combination of them:

1. Low salaries.
2. Length of graduate study.

3. Lack of information regarding opportunities.
4. Expense of graduate study.

It would seem that these are all adverse decisions (with the possible exception of number two) which could have been influenced by recruitment work in the field. These students might in some cases have been influenced by the proper information regarding present salaries and salary trends, regarding the opportunities opening up so rapidly in different parts of the social work field, and regarding the wide availability of scholarships for graduate school training.

Reasons Given for Deciding Upon Social Work as a Career

Those fourteen students who had already definitely decided upon social work were asked the reasons for their decision. Ten of these students declared that the desire to be of service to others, helping them solve their problems and meet their needs, was uppermost in their thinking. With one student this was only a secondary factor. Three students said that the enjoyment or gratification they would receive from such work was the primary factor in their decisions and five gave this as a secondary factor. In the case of one student the desire to work with people was stated as the most important factor and with four others this was a secondary factor. Other secondary reasons, each mentioned by two students, were the opportunities for advancement in this field, the fact that their husbands' work was in an allied field, and the prestige involved. Only one student felt that the income involved was

an inducement, and this student rated it as third in his reasons for becoming a social worker.

These reasons given by the future social workers for their decisions were those which one would expect in a field which offers great opportunities for service but not for financial or prestige rewards. Over two-thirds of the students felt that service to others was their primary motive, while most of the others were perhaps only putting the same thing in a different way when they stated that the enjoyment or gratification they would receive from their work was uppermost in their decision. There was hardly any mention of status or financial reward and it was never mentioned as a primary reason for entering the field. It would be easy to feel that these students were perhaps just making their motives appear to be very high ones were it not for the fact that their own rankings of social workers in the same questionnaire lend considerable weight to their statements.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Work as a Career

Those students who were at present weighing the pro's and con's of social work in order to decide between it and other vocations were asked to state what they felt to be the advantages and disadvantages of social work. The advantage mentioned most often was that as a social worker one could help people and meet various needs in society. Of the sixteen students who stressed this two, who were deciding between

social work and teaching, felt that they could perhaps help people more through social work because in it they would work with young people on a more personal basis than education permitted. Seven students mentioned that social work was rewarding or gratifying and would yield them real satisfaction. Five others stated as an advantage the fact that they would be learning something (about themselves as well as others) through their work. Two felt there was an advantage in the prestige accorded social work.

There was striking agreement among the students in regard to the disadvantages of social work in relation to other vocations they might be considering. Only two factors were mentioned by more than one student and these were salary and graduate training requirements. Thirteen stated that social work salaries were low and fourteen stated that the time necessarily spent at graduate study was long. Two of these fourteen seemed primarily concerned with the cost of this graduate training, but the others merely stated the two year period as a disadvantage.

These factors stated by the potential social workers as being the advantages and disadvantages which they feel must be considered in their decisions are practically the same as the reasons given by the future social workers for their choice of career, and the reasons given by the non-social workers for not choosing this career. That is to say, while the future social workers said that their reason for choosing

this career was because of the opportunities for service to others and the self-gratification which it offered, the potential social workers saw these same factors as being the advantages which a career in social work had to offer them. On the other hand, while the non-social workers had in many instances based their decisions on the low salaries which they felt were prevalent in the field or the length of graduate study which they knew was required, the potential social workers saw these same factors as the disadvantages of this field.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF SURVEY RESULTS

Number of Students Entering Professional Social Work

Of the seventy-eight students who replied to the questionnaire fourteen, or 18 per cent of the total group, had already decided upon a career in professional social work. If all of the twenty-two potential social workers should decide to become social workers then thirty-six students, or 46 per cent of the group, would be entering social work careers.

This percentage is in sharp contrast to the report issued by the Cleveland Welfare Federation in 1954. In their survey of the future plans of seniors who had majored in sociology and psychology at thirty colleges and universities, of 1850 students in this group only 182, or less than 10 per cent, intended to enter graduate schools of social work. Even if none of the twenty-two potential social workers at Boston University decide in favor of social work as a career, the fourteen future social workers would represent 18 per cent of the group surveyed in contrast to the 10 per cent in the Cleveland Welfare Federation Study.

It would certainly be unrealistic to hope that because of these figures as high as 18 per cent of the Boston University students majoring in sociology and psychology will some day be entering schools of social work. It should be kept in mind that only seventy-eight of several hundred students majoring

in these fields at this school were included in this survey, and there is no way of knowing just how representative this sample is. Of those fourteen students who stated that they would enter professional social work only three were seniors, and even in their cases they were stating their intentions near the beginning of their senior year. In the Cleveland Welfare Federation Study just mentioned, in contrast to the 9.8 per cent of the students majoring in sociology and psychology who said they would enter schools of social work, 23.6 per cent said that they would take employment in social agencies without graduate training. Although all of the fourteen students surveyed who were going to be social workers seemed to be thinking in terms of going to a school of social work, six of them were only in their sophomore year and five more still only juniors. How many of these students when they come to the end of their senior year will still be ready and able to take on two years of graduate training? This is a question which only a follow-up study could answer with any certainty.

One factor which needs to be considered carefully is the feeling expressed by many students that they do not wish to undertake two years of graduate training. Has not this problem become such an important one for the future of social work in this country that social work educators must take it upon themselves to deal with it immediately? Other countries, such as Canada, have shown that there are alternatives to depending completely upon two year professional training courses.

Actual Salaries in Social Work

In general it can be said that the students felt social workers were in about the middle of the ten vocations listed in regard to their status in the community; at the very bottom of these ten vocations in regard to salary; and right next to the top of these ten vocations in regard to their ability to be of service. Among the ten vocations which the students ranked, social work was placed sixth in terms of status, tenth in terms of salary, and second in terms of service.

Although both status and service rankings were measures of opinion and could not be checked by any factual criteria, the third ranking by these students, that of salary, is one where the ideas of the students can be compared to the actual facts in the situation.

It must be stressed, however, that the facts in this particular situation are not easily established with any certainty. Salaries vary greatly within the same profession within different parts of the country, in rural and urban areas, in various branches of a profession, and according to the particular skills, experience, and ability of the individual. The figures which are used here for each vocation represent an average of different sections of the country, both rural and urban, for the base year of 1953, and are for the average person in that profession, not for the beginner or for those with the longest experience.

Below are listed in descending order the average yearly

salaries for members of each of the ten vocations.[1]

1. Doctor.....$15,000
2. Engineer..... $8,100
3. Clinical Psychologist..... $6,500
4. Social Work..... $5,500
5. High School Teacher..... $4,900
6. Occupational Therapist..... $4,000
7. Minister..... $3,900
8. Laboratory Technician..... $3,700
9. Nurse..... $3,600
10. Secretary..... $3,000

In the three professions which were rated as commanding the highest salaries (doctors, engineers, and clinical psychologists) the students were correct both in placing them at the top and in the order in which they ranked them. The rankings of the other seven vocations differed from the ranking according to actual salaries commanded. Four of these vocations, occupational therapist, high school teacher, minister, and secretary were only one or two places above or below their real ranking. Nurses were placed three positions higher than

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1. The figures for social workers, occupational therapists, laboratory technicians, and nurses are compiled from the Health Careers Guide Book," a National Health Council publication; those for doctors are from the Journal of the American Medical Association for October, 1954; those for engineers are from the Income and Salary Survey of the National Society of Professional Engineers; those for high school teachers are from "Teachers' Salaries, Then and Now," Bulletin I, Fund for Advancement of Education, Ford Foundation, October, 1955; those for ministers are from the Yearbook of American Churches; and those for secretaries are from the National Office Management Association.

they should have been and laboratory technicians four places higher. This may indicate a tendency for these college students to think of nurses in terms of those having a college degree as well as a nursing degree, although the above salary is an average of that commanded by nurses with the regular R.N. It is also possible that the students, not knowing much about laboratory technicians, think of them more as fully trained chemists, physicists or biologists, instead of as persons trained only to perform certain specific tasks in a laboratory.

This leaves social work, the only vocation which was listed six places away from its real position in terms of salary. In reality social work should have been placed fourth (or possibly fifth)[2] on the list. By these students it was placed at the very bottom. They believed that even the secretary who might not be a college graduate could command higher wages than the professional social worker. Why this vast discrepancy between the actual earnings of social workers and these college students' pictures of these earnings? There are several possible explanations of this underestimation on the part of the students of social workers' earnings. One is that because until recently social workers were paid on a much lower

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2. Because of the lengthy vacations received by high school teachers it may be that in terms of time worked their salaries are as high or slightly higher than those of social workers.

level than they are today, these students are just not up to date in their information. Another is that social workers have protested so long, loudly, and convincingly, that they are seriously underpaid that they have convinced those who hear them that they receive even less pay than they do!

In the light of this information one cannot help wondering whether those students who are deterred from entering social work because of the salaries paid in the profession are deterred by the actual salaries or by what they mistakenly believe are the salaries. We have already seen that, as a whole, these students considered social work the lowest paid of the ten vocations and that the average of their salary ranking of social workers was 7.6. When we look at the salary ranking given social workers by those eleven students[3] who have decided not to become social workers, partly if not wholly because of the way they feel about salaries in this field, we find that they feel social workers' salaries are even lower than does the whole group. The average of their ranking was 8.9 as contrasted with the group's average of 7.6. While half the students in the total group placed the social workers between positions one and seven, all but one of these eleven students placed them between positions seven and ten. It is clear then that if the total group's picture of social workers'

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3. One of the twelve non-social workers who ruled out social work because of the low salaries did not do this ranking.

salaries is worse than the reality situation, and if these eleven students' picture is even bleaker, these students are making their vocational decisions in regard to social work on false premises.

Misconceptions Regarding the Availability and Content of Social Work Jobs

There is no question in this country today but that positions open to the trained social worker are not only abundant but are increasing at a rapid pace. In the first half of 1954, R. Clyde White reported that the graduate School of Applied Social Sciences at Western Reserve University had 470 requests for caseworkers and eighty-nine requests for group workers, while the following June they graduated only thirty-three caseworkers and twenty-seven group workers.[4] This situation is reflected in the placement bureaus of all Schools of Social Work and is becoming more acute each year.

The general public is well aware of the tremendous need in our country for teachers and for scientists. Since social work is very small compared to either of these professions perhaps it is not surprising that the general public is not equally aware of the need within its ranks. However, it is indeed surprising to find that college students majoring in sociology or psychology, from whom many future social workers

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4. R. Clyde White, "Prestige of Social Work and the Social Worker," Social Work Journal, 36:33, January, 1955.

will be drawn, have not been made aware of the great need in this field. Only half of the students in this survey realized how plentiful openings for trained social workers were. Most of those who had already decided to become social workers were aware of the current situation. However, one-third of the potential social workers felt that jobs were only "fairly plentiful" while another one-third believed that it would be somewhat difficult, either now or in the near future, to secure social work positions. Almost one-third of those who had decided against social work were of the same opinion. Here indeed, if this group of students is at all typical, are figures for social work recruitment personnel to be concerned about.

From this survey it must also be concluded that, if this group is at all typical, the average university student, even if he is majoring in sociology or psychology, does not really have much more understanding of the role of the social worker than a general idea that social workers give counseling to individuals and work together with doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists in an attempt to help disturbed or delinquent persons. He is as likely as not to think of social work as synonymous with case work, and to have little understanding of the work of the social worker in a public agency, in group work, or in community organization. Thus, along with the need to make students aware of the job opportunities in social work, there is a need also to educate them in regard to the content

of these jobs. Otherwise students will not be in a position to make a correct decision as to whether or not this is a field in which they would be happy and effective workers.

We have noted previously that those who are in the process of deciding to be or not to be social workers recognize the same opportunities which have drawn some into social work and the same disadvantages which have turned some away from social work. Why then do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages in some cases, while in others the opposite is true?

Some students will, of course, turn to other fields, such as medicine or psychiatry, and feel that here they can find the advantages of social work (such as opportunity for service) without the disadvantages of low salary and prestige. This is not possible for many, however, since the training for such alternative fields is usually more expensive and more lengthy than that for social work.

For those students who have ruled out these alternatives, and who must decide between social work and some vocation which does not seem to them to present the same opportunities for service, it would seem that the decision as to whether the advantages are greater than the disadvantages or vice-versa will probably be made on the basis of the individual student's own value system.

What Must Be Done to Recruit Social Workers?

Several areas have been noted where the mere supplying

of information by recruitment workers would undoubtedly have some effect in terms of increasing the number of students choosing social work as a career. A greater awareness of job openings and the rate at which they are increasing, of the great variety of opportunities in the field, of the scholarships available for professional study, and of the actual salaries now being offered to trained social workers would all tend to interest more students in this profession.

Two major problems in recruitment exist, however, which must be faced, neither of which can be solved as easily as the above. One of these is the reluctance of many students to spend two years more in full-time study after the completion of their college course. This is a point at which social work educators will have to make the decision as to whether or not any satisfactory curriculum short of the present two year one can be established which would prepare students to handle effectively at least certain social work jobs. As they make this decision they will need to keep in mind that many of the jobs in social work, such as those in public welfare, will not go long unfilled, but will be filled, if not by trained workers by those with no training.

The second major problem, and probably the chief one in recruitment, is that of students' feelings regarding salaries. Social workers have, perhaps, too hastily jumped to the conclusion that the recruitment problem was one of actual salaries instead of students' beliefs or feelings regarding these

salaries. The results of this study have clearly indicated a possibility that most students think social work salaries are much lower than they actually are.

It may be claimed that, aside from the fact that social work salaries are not as low as some believe, they are still much too low. Although not denying that this is true in some instances and in certain areas, such as medical social work, the author believes that this factor has been greatly over-emphasized recently. In what ways this overemphasis may be connected with the growth of the philosophy of materialism in our culture, or with professional social workers' need to compensate for the low prestige and lack of recognition of their work, it is not the purpose of this study to speculate.

Some will say that it is very idealistic to expect social workers to do their work for such small returns. But it must be remembered that social work salaries are low not in the sense that they permit only a bare subsistence wage but only as compared with salaries in certain other professions. By this same standard teaching and the ministry are two professions which have been underpaid for a long time, and yet they do not experience the same recruiting problems that social work does.

True, it is idealistic to hope that some students' values will be such that they will not place financial rewards foremost in their thinking. But no profession is based on a greater idealism (at least in relation to man and his potentiali-

ties) than is social work, and if social work ever becomes completely a matter of skill at manipulating persons without any real concern for their total well-being then it will have a sad ending as a profession. This author is convinced that at present there is a real danger of social workers' becoming so concerned with their own professional standing and financial remuneration that they no longer concern themselves effectively with getting at the roots of the evils in our society which are creating the problems that they are attempting to deal with. If this ever happens then social workers will truly be going about in circles always alleviating one unfortunate situation only to find three more springing up in its place.

Social workers are dedicated to a concern for the total well-being of the individual through the satisfaction of both his material and emotional needs. It is this author's opinion that they will be more effective in recruiting others to this task if they devote their major efforts to inspiring in others this same concern rather than to increasing the material rewards of such work.

Accepted
Katherine Spencer
5-20-57

APPENDIX

A. Supplementary Tables

B. Questionnaire

TABLE XVIII.

RANKINGS BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO STATUS*

Vocation	Rankings 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Clinical psychologist	2	10	16	24	6	7	1	3	1	3	73
Doctor	48	21	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	73
Engineer	0	12	24	7	7	6	7	6	4	0	73
High school teacher	1	4	11	9	19	8	9	7	4	1	73
Laboratory technician	0	0	1	1	5	2	9	19	28	8	73
Minister	21	24	9	5	5	0	3	3	1	2	73
Nurse	0	0	3	8	11	18	14	8	9	2	73
Occupational therapist	0	0	1	10	4	16	11	17	13	1	73
Secretary	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	3	8	55	73
Social worker	1	2	5	8	16	12	16	7	5	1	73
Totals	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	

* Seventy-three students answered this question.

TABLE XIX.

RANKINGS BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO SERVICE*

Vocation	Rankings 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Clinical psychologist	7	20	10	9	7	11	4	1	1	0	70
Doctor	46	9	9	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	70
Engineer	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	20	27	19	70
High school teacher	3	3	10	4	11	17	17	4	1	0	70
Laboratory technician	0	0	0	1	1	2	13	24	22	7	70
Minister	8	17	9	11	10	7	4	0	1	3	70
Nurse	1	4	7	12	17	15	12	2	0	0	70
Occupational therapist	1	1	3	17	12	14	15	6	1	0	70
Secretary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	17	41	70
Social worker	4	16	22	12	11	3	1	1	0	0	70
Totals	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	

* Seventy students answered this question.

TABLE XX.

RANKINGS BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OF TEN VOCATIONS ACCORDING TO SALARIES*

Vocation	Rankings 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Clinical psychologist	1	3	34	11	10	5	4	3	2	0	73
Doctor	56	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	73
Engineer	15	50	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	73
High school teacher	0	0	1	8	13	12	7	13	8	11	73
Laboratory technician	0	2	12	9	14	4	8	11	8	5	73
Minister	1	2	2	6	5	13	8	11	7	18	73
Nurse	0	0	5	7	6	11	21	8	11	4	73
Occupational therapist	0	0	6	15	11	13	4	13	11	0	73
Secretary	0	0	8	11	4	5	8	7	11	19	73
Social worker	0	0	0	4	10	9	13	7	14	16	73
Totals	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	

* Seventy-three students answered this question.

TABLE XXI.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF
STUDENTS ACCORDING TO STATES

State	Students in Urban Areas	Students in Rural Areas	Total
California	1	0	1
Connecticut	3	1	4
Illinois	1	0	1
Massachusetts	45	5	50
Missouri	1	0	1
New Jersey	4	1	5
New York	8	1	9
New Hampshire	1	0	1
Ohio	2	0	2
Pennsylvania	0	1	1
Rhode Island	2	0	2
Washington D.C.	1	0	1
Totals	69	9	78

SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

We would like to know what you, as a college student, think about social work as a career, regardless of whether your own interests are along these or other lines. Your cooperation in filling out this brief questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. There is no need to put your name on this paper and all your answers will be treated as confidential.

1. College Classs _____

2. Sex _____

3. Date of Birth _____

4. Home Town and State _____
(not present residence but place where you grew up.)

5. Father's Occupation _____

6. If you entered college immediately upon graduation from high school leave this question blank. If not, please fill out the items below.

   A. Number of years between high school and college _____.

   B. Jobs held on a regular, full-time basis during that time:

   _____

   _____

   C. Other comments: (Type of work done if G.I., etc.)

   _____

   _____

7. What part-time or summer jobs have you held thus far while in college?

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. What is your major subject in college? If this has changed please state previous one also;

   _____

9. Mention two or three of the main extra-curricular interests which you have had during college so far:

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. Rank the following vocations by placing a number between one and ten before each one. In this question the number 1 should be placed before the job which in you opinion commands the most respect in the community and the number 10 before that job which is esteemed the least.

___ Clinical Psychologist
___ Doctor
___ Engineer
___ High School Teacher
___ Laboratory Technician
___ Minister
___ Nurse
___ Occupational Therapist
___ Secretary
___ Social Worker

11. Follow the same ranking procedure as in the previous question, this time placing the number 1 before that job which you feel generally commands the highest salary or earnings and the number 10 before that job which commands the lowest salary or earnings.

___ Clinical Psychologist
___ Doctor
___ Engineer
___ High School Teacher
___ Laboratory Technician
___ Minister
___ Nurse
___ Occupational Therapist
___ Secretary
___ Social Worker

12. Follow the same ranking procedure as in the previous question, this time placing the number 1 before that job which you feel presents the greatest opportunity to help people and be of service to others and the number 10 before that job which offers the least opportunity to be of service.

___ Clinical Psychologist
___ Doctor
___ Engineer
___ High School Teacher
___ Laboratory Technician
___ Minister
___ Nurse
___ Occupational Therapist
___ Secretary
___ Social Worker

13. Which of the following best fit(s) your idea of the typical social worker and the kind of person he or she is apt to be? (Encircle the letter before one or more, of if none seems correct to you fill in G.)

A. A "do-gooder" who receives gratification from feeling that she (he) is helping the poor.

B. A kind, intelligent and understanding person who sincerely wishes to help others.

C. A person who is usually more concerned with getting her (his) job done than understanding the problems of the clients.

D. A religiously motivated person who feels she (he) must devote her (his) life to helping the underprivileged.

E. An individual who enjoys being in a position where she (he) can direct others and tell them what they should do.

F. An unmarried woman who is compensating for her own lack of any family by concerning herself with the affairs of others.

G. Other:

14. In thinking about my future vocation: (Encircle the letter before the correct one.)

A. I did not or have not considered social work at all.

B. I considered social work among other possibilities but did not consider it very seriously or really do much to investigate possibilities along this line.

C. I seriously considered becoming a social worker at one time but decided against it.

D. I have decided to become a social worker.

E. I am deciding at present between social work and some other vocation.

F. Other:

15. Fill out only the <u>one</u> of the following three sections (A, B, and C) which applies to you.

A. I am not going to become a social worker because: (Encircle the letter before those which apply to you.)

1. I did not even consider social work at all since I knew for sure just what I wanted to do and the thought of becoming a social worker just never occurred to me.

2. I didn't even consider social work as it was never brought to my attention and I knew little or nothing about this profession.

3. I think I might have considered becoming a social worker if I had been given more information about opportunities in this field.

4. Salaries are too low in this field.

5. It takes two years of graduate training and I don't wish to spend this long a time in further study.

6. The graduate training is too expensive for me to undertake.

7. My parents (or friends) ha ve discouraged me from this vocation.

8. Social workers don't seem to be very highly thought of or well-respected in the community.

9. I haven't liked very much the social workers I have known.

10. I felt that I was not best fitted for this kind of work.

11. I felt tha t perhaps I might make a fairly good social worker but could be even more useful in the other work which I have chosen.

12. I felt that although I might be fitted for this kind of work I would not enjoy the work a social worker does because:

_____

_____

(Please explain above why you feel you wouldn't enjoy the work)

B. My main reasons for deciding to become a social worker were: (Please state in order of importance.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. I am trying to decide between social work and one or more other vocations. The following are the advantages and the disadvantages which it seems to me that social work has in relation to the other field(s) which I am considering:

Advantages: _____

_____

Disadvantages: _____

_____

16. If you have definitely decided upon a certain vocation please state the year when you made your decision: _____.

17. My vocational preference(s) at present is (are) _____.

(Fill in the above space and encircle the appropriate letter in A through F on the next page.)

17. con't

A. I have definitely decided upon the above-mentioned vocation.

B. I am not yet sure but am thinking about the above vocation.

C. I am trying to decide between the 2 or 3 vocations named above.

D. I have left the above space blank because I have no clear idea yet of what I wish to do.

E. I have no vocational preference as I expect to marry soon.

F. Other: _____

18. Encircle the letters before those activities listed below which you think are ones that a trained social worker would perform. You may encircle as many as you think are appropriate.

A. Work out a monthly budget of needs with a wife whose husband has died leaving her with 3 children and no means of support.

B. Determine the guilt or innocence of parents charged with neglecting their children.

C. Direct therapy with psychotic patients in a mental hospital.

D. Counsel with a new mother who is deciding whether she should keep her illegitimate baby or surrender it for adoption.

E. Act as advisor to a neighborhood group which has decided to try to do something about inadequate trash collection situation in their district.

F. Assist in the physical rehabilitation of children crippled by polio.

G. Be a member of a team with doctor, psychiatrist, and psychologist at a clinic and help them to plan and carry out treatment for a pre-delinquent youngster.

H. Administer psychological tests for diagnosing emotional disorders.

I. Give vocational guidance to high school students.

J. Lead a group of boys and girls who meet weekly in a community center to work at different arts and crafts.

19. I believe that for trained social workers jobs at present in social work are:

A. Very plentiful and rapidly increasing.
B. Fairly plentiful with little difficulty in securing work.
C. Available but somewhat difficult to secure.
D. Very difficult to secure.
E. Not too difficult to secure now but likely to be less available in the near future.

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