ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to reveal the determinants affecting selection of employment by second year graduating social work students at Michigan State University. It was hypothesized that there is a hierarchy of determinants influencing job selection for the beginning social worker; and that this hierarchy differs on the basis of certain variables characterizing the candidate, such as sex and marital status. Five determinants were selected based on a review of the literature. Data obtained from a forced choice questionnaire confirmed the first hypothesis, with the following hierarchy being established for the five determinants tested: (1) type of agency; (2) extra-agency variables; (3) opportunity for professional advancement; (4) employment conditions; and (5) economic factors. The second hypothesis was rejected, since introducing controls for sex and marital status produced no significant variation in the hierarchical arrangement of these determinants.

A STUDY OF OUTSTANDINGNESS INFLUENCING JOB SELECTION AMONG GRADUATING PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS

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Although many studies have been conducted and many theories advanced regarding the broad area of occupational choice, little is known about the process which brings people and jobs together.[1] The need to determine what job seekers are looking for within their chosen occupation is great. This need is reflected in both the employers' request for an answer, and in the employers' diversified efforts at employee recruitment.[2] As a partial answer to this need, the following study concerns itself with gaining some insight into the determinants which bring second year graduate social work students toward a union with their first professional position.

Students who are about to complete their training for the profession of social work have firmly made their occupational choice. Dr. Eli Ginzberg, who has spent considerable time and professional effort toward the development of "a General Theory of Occupational Choice", emphasizes the irreversibility of this process. Dr. Ginzberg presents the following basic postulates:

> "First, occupational choice is a <u>process</u> which takes place over a minimum of six or seven years. . . . Second, since each decision during adolescence is related to ones experience up to that point, and in turn has an influence on the future, the process of decision-making is basically <u>irreversible</u>. Finally, since occupational choice involves the balancing of a series of subjective elements with the opportunities and limitations of reality, the crystallization of occupational choice inevitably has the quality of compromise." (Italics added)[3]

In accordance with Dr. Ginzberg's process of decision-making, second year graduate social work students have made an "irreversible occupational choice." What they have not made, however, is the selection of a specific job within the profession of Social Work.

A graduate social work student who is about to finish his studies and select a specific job has a number of positions from which to choose. Each available position varies somewhat with regard to such things as salary, fringe benefits, working conditions, geographic location, opportunity for professional advancement and type of client to be helped. These varying factors have traditionally been advanced as determinants of a specific job selection. The individual must evaluate these varying determinants and in light of his own personal and professional desires select a job based on those determinants most important to him. This study was conducted to determine the relative significance of these determinants and their variance with regard to certain variables such as sex and marital status.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature reveals that there are several important determinants involved in job selection. The Department Task Force on Social Work Education and Manpower in the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare lists the following factors as important in relation to both recruitment and retention: ". . . social work

salary scales and levels . . .; the public image of the social worker and the respect accorded him; opportunities for career advancement; and the need for personal and professional satisfactions from this career choice."[4]

Salaries in social work have long been a subject of critical comment and contradiction. A survey in 1956 of California county welfare workers revealed that the most frequently cited reason (45%) for leaving the profession was low salaries.[5] Another study of resignees of social work agencies, made in 1960 by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, indicates that increased salary alone was reported as the key determinant that would have prevented resignation.[6] Conversely, in a 1956 poll of delegates attending the National Conference of Social Workers, only 23% indicated that salary was a major determinant in their choice of a career.[7]

This typifies the contradiction that exists among traditional factors credited as determinants of specific job selection. Further review of the literature revealed that no one particular determinant is singularly responsible for social workers' occupational preference.[8] The available literature gives us, at best, only approximations. Almost anything one might say, based on these studies, can be and is violated in specific instances.

Justification and Limitation of the Study.

When attempting to uncover determinants which social

workers in general apply as criteria of specific job selection we find contradiction and inconsistency. Perhaps these determinants as criteria change with relation to where the social worker happens to be along the continuum of his career. That is, a social worker just about to embark on his professional career will have a different heirarchy of determinants as criteria of his job selection than will a professional social worker who has been in the field for five years. In accordance with this concept we expect to find an interaction of determinants which will be arranged in a heirarchial order for our study group - second year graduate social work students at Michigan State University.

Our results will not give further information regarding why social workers choose their profession, nor will our heirarchial structure of determinants be applicable to social workers other than those just about to embark upon their professional career. We will, however, uncover a heirarchy of determinants which the beginning professional social worker applies as a determinant of his job selection. This prediction could then be used to develop recruitment programs for agencies within the profession.

Our hypothesis for study focus, therefore, states that there is a heirarchy of determinants influencing job selection for the beginning professional social worker; and this heirarchy reflects certain variables characterizing the candidates, such as sex and marital status.

Definition of Terms

Heirarchy of Determinants: That from a list of five Determinants presented (Economic, extra-agency, employment conditions, opportunity for professional advancement, type of agency) one will be selected by the group as the most important job selection criteria, another as 2nd important, etc. That is, they will fall on a continuum ranging from most important to least important.

Job Selection: This refers to the choice of a specific employment position within the profession of social work.

Study Group

The study group consists of all full time, second year graduate social work students at Michigan State University enrolled in the Spring term of 1967. This includes 46 full time students in the following breakdown: 16 married men; 10 married women; 5 single men; 15 single women.

Data Collection

Our data collection method was a forced choice questionnaire. On the basis of our review of the literature, we began by positioning the following five determinants as job selection criteria: economic factors; extra-agency variables; employment conditions; opportunity for professional identification and advancement; and type of agency. Under each of these determinants, we selected three specific subfactors (outline next page) from which we derived our forced choice questions:

Data Collection continued

I. Economic factors

A. Salary

B. Fringe Benefits

C. Job Security

II. Extra-Agency Variables

A. Geographic Location & Cost of living

B. Family ties.

C. Community Facilities.

III. Employment Conditions

A. Friendly & cooperative staff.

B. Caseload size and working hours.

C. Office space and equipment.

IV. Opportunity for Professional Advancement

A. Opportunity to obtain ACSW

B. Adequate supervision

C. Opportunity to supervise students or case aides.

V. Type of Agency

A. Work focus (i.e. in office or in the field)

B. Clientele

C. Work method (casework, group work, c.o.)

In order to rank the subfactors in their order of importance, the members of our research team selected, under each determinant, subfactors which were most important to him. Under each determinant, the subfactor which received

the largest number of votes in a poll of the research team was given the number one position, the second largest number of votes was given the number two position, and the last was given third postion. The subfactors in the outline above are ranked in their order as selected by the research team.

Given a heirarchy of subfactors under each determinant, we then developed our forced choice questionnaire pitting subfactor No. 1 in the first determinant against subfactor No. 1 in the second determinant, etc. We continued this process until each subfactor No. 1 was pitted against every other subfactor No. 1 and each subfactor No. 2 was pitted against every other subfactor No. 2 and each third subfactor against every other third subfactor (see questionnaire in Appendix).

Marital status and sex were noted on the questionnaire in order to pinpoint respondent's characteristics with respect to their heirarchial selection. Information on prior commitment, type of agency committed to, and whether the student planned to fulfill the commitment was also requested in an effort to determine the validity of commitment as a recruitment procedure.

Data Analysis

On the basis of the choices made by the study group on the questionnaire, the number of times each subfactor was selected was totaled and under each determinant the total for all three subfactors constituted a student's

score for that particular determinant. This same procedure was followed for the remaining four determinants and each student's score was then posted on a table (See Table A in appendix). This procedure gave us a complete breakdown of each student's responses.

Table 1 shows the totaled responses to each determinant of the entire study group as indicated in table A. The chi square significance test showed that the categorical responses were not randomly distributed, but were arranged in a hierarchy in accordance with our definition. As shown in table 1, the "type of agency" determinant was ranked significantly higher than the other determinants. "Economic factors" were the least important determinant based on the total number of responses as given in table A. Thus these two determinants formed the opposite poles of our continuum. The other three categories fall inbetween with "extra-agency variables" ranking second in importance. "Opportunity for professional advancement" and "employment conditions" were close in number of responses and indicated no significant difference in their position in the hierarchy. Table 1 shows the determinants in their hierarchical arrangement.

Table 1. Distribution of Responses of Total Study Group

Determinants	Number of Responses*	Percent
Type of Agency	370	26.9
Extra-Agency Variables	335	24.3
Opportunity for Professional Advancement	266	19.3
Employment Conditions	261	19.0
Economic Factors	145	10.5
Totals	1377	100.0

*x^2=105.26 p>.005 df=4

Table 2 introduces a control for sex. The data indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents in the hierarchical arrangement of the five categories of determinants for job selection. There is virtually no difference in the number of positive responses for the three categories of employment conditions, opportunity for professional advancement, and type of agency. However, as was expected, the males scored "economic factors" somewhat higher than did the females. The female members of the study group selected "extra-agency variables" more frequently than did the males, as expected. Frequent selections of the subfactor "family ties" under the category of "extra-agency variables" by the females account in large part for this difference.

Table 2. Distribution of Rank One on Selection Determinants by Sex

Determinants	Responses by Sex*	
	Males Number of Percent	Females Number of Percent
Type of Agency	27.6	26.2
Extra-Agency Variables	22.4	26.0
Opportunity for Professional Advancement	19.1	19.5
Employment Conditions	18.4	19.4
Economic Factors	12.5	8.9
Totals	100.0	100.0

*x^2=6.76 p>.10 df=4

A control for marital status is introduced in table 3. The data reveal that there is no significant change in the hierarchy or determinants for job selection between married and single students. Only a slight variation is noted in the category of "economic factors", where the married respondents scored somewhat higher than the single respondents, as expected. However, this may be partially due to the fact that 62% of the married students are male, while 75% of the single students are female.

Table 3. Distribution of Rank One on Selection Determinants by Marital Status.

Determinants	Responses by Marital Status*	
	Married Number of Percent	Single Number of Percent
Type of Agency	26.5	27.4
Extra-Agency Variables	24.8	23.8
Opportunity for Professional Advancement	18.9	19.7
Employment Conditions	13.6	19.4
Economic Factors	11.2	9.7
Totals	100.0	100.0

*x^2=1.16 $p>.10$ df=4

Discussion of Results

The initial part of the hypothesis, that there is a hierarchy of determinants influencing job selection for the beginning professional social worker, was verified by the data of this study. Analysis of the responses of the total study group reveals that the five categories of job selection determinants are not distributed randomly, but rather fall into a hierarchical arrangement, as hypothesized. The hierarchical arrangement found places "type of agency" first; "extra-agency variables," second; "opportunity for professional advancement" third; "employment conditions" fourth; and "economic factors" fifth.

The second part of the hypothesis, that this hierarchical arrangement will reflect the sex and marital status of

Discussion of Results

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The second part of the hypothesis, that this hierarchical arrangement will reflect the sex and marital status of

the respondents, was disproven by the data. No significant difference was found in the hierarchy established by the total study group when introducing controls for sex and marital status. Only slight variations in the number of positive responses given each of the five categories was noted. The females scored extra-agency variables somewhat higher than did the males, while the males gave economic factors a higher score than did the females, as expected. It was expected that the single students would rank extra-agency variables higher than the married students, but the data reveal a slightly higher score for this category from the married students. As expected, economic factors scored somewhat higher with the married respondents than with the single respondents.

Of interest is the unexpected fact that economic factors received the lowest rank of the five determinants tested. Previous studies reveal that salary was often the most frequently mentioned reason for worker migration.[9] One possible explanation for the low score received by economic factors in this study is that there is a minimum salary level presented by social work agencies and expected by graduating students. It is recognized that if salaries are raised, this category will become more and more important in job selection. At present, salary standardization within the profession prohibits this from being a major determinant. However, it may be a very potent variable influencing occupational choice in the first place. An additional

received the lowest rank of the five determinants tested. Previous studies reveal that salary was often the most frequently mentioned reason for worker migration.[9] One possible explanation for the low score received by economic factors in this study is that there is a minimum salary level presented by social work agencies and expected by prospecting students. It is recognized that if salaries are raised, this category will become more and more important in job selection. At present, salary standardization within the profession prohibits this from being a major determinant. However, it may be a very potent variable influencing occupational choice in the first place. An additional

unexpected result of the study was the high scores and the top ranking given to the "type of agency" category. This finding suggests that a social work student's prior selection of a particular type of agency may be basically irreversible, as is his occupational choice, as stated in the theory of Eli Ginzberg.[10]

The data revealed that fifteen students (33%) were committed to work in specific social work agencies. The variety of agencies to which the respondents reported committments prohibited any analysis of the responses with regard to the type of agency issuing the stipends. However, the fact that only two of the committed students plan to pay back the agency issuing the stipend indicates that stipends with work committments are an effective recruiting tool for social work agencies.

Suggestions for Further Research

The scope of this study is limited by the study group composed of the second year graduate students at one school of social work. A similar, more extensive study sampling students from all or a sample of graduate schools of social work in the United States would produce broader implications for methods of recruitment and would not be limited to a specific geographical area.

The fact that "economic factors" were ranked last among the five determinants tested, while ranking high in other research regarding social worker mobility, suggests a

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The fact that "economic factors" were ranked last a-mong the "low" career items tested, while ranking high in other measures, such as the social worker mobility, suggests a

comparison study between graduating social work students and social workers with specified amounts of work experience within the profession. A concurrent study could be made of samples from both groups or a follow-up study with the present sample could be attemped.

Summary

It was hypothesized that there is a hierarchy of determinants influencing job selection for the beginning professional social worker; and that this hierarchy differs on the basis of certain variables characterizing the candidate, such as sex and marital status. The study group consisted of 46 full time, second year graduate social work students at Michigan State University enrolled in the Spring term of 1967. The first hypothesis was shown to be correct, with the following hierarchy being extablished for the five determinants tested: (1) type of agency; (2) extra-agency variables; (3) opportunity for professional advancement; (4) employment conditions; and (5) economic factors. The second hypothesis was rejected, since introducing controls for sex and marital status produced no significant variation in the hierarchical arrangement of these determinants.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kadushin, Alfred, "Determinants of Career Choice and Their Implications for Social Work," Social Work Education. Vol. VI, No. 2, (April, 1958), pp. 17-27.

2. Ibid.

3. Ginzberg, Eli, et. al., Occupational Choice, An Approach to a General Theory. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 198.

4. Closing the Gap in Social Work Manpower, Report the Departmental Task Force on Social Work Education and Manpower, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare (U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, Wash., D.C.), p. 69.

5. California Separation of Social Workers, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare (Wash., D.C.: Bureau of Public Assistance, Social Security Administration, 1956).

6. Tollen, William H., Study of Staff Losses in Child Welfare and Family Service Agencies (Wash., D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1960), p.65.

7. Witte, E. F., "Recruitment and Retention of Personnel," Journal of the National Probation and Parole Assc. Vol. III, No. 2 (April, 1957), p. 155.

8. Closing the Gap in Social Work Manpower, op. cit., pp. 69-76; Tollen, op. cit., pp. 105-107, 165-180.

9. California Separation of Social Workers, op. cit., and Tollen, op. cit.

10. Ginzberg, op. cit.

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APPENDIX

I Table A

II Questionnaire

TABLE A

Students	Committed	Not Committed	Single	Married	Male	Female	Economic Factors	Extra Agency Variables	Employment Conditions	Opportunity for Advancement	Type of Agency
1	x			x	x		3	7	4	9	7
2	x			x	x		5	9	3	2	11
3	x			x	x		2	5	4	11	8
4	x			x	x		2	8	8	3	9
5		x	x			x	2	7	7	7	7
6		x	x			x	6	6	4	6	8
7	x		x			x	3	6	8	4	9
8	x		x			x	6	6	7	3	6
9	x		x			x	5	8	7	1	9
10		x	x			x	1	6	8	9	6
11	x			x	x		6	8	4	8	4
12	x			x	x		9	4	4	6	7
13		x		x	x		2	4	10	6	8
14		x		x	x		5	8	3	5	9
15		x		x	x		5	3	7	8	7
16		x		x	x		1	6	6	10	7
17		x		x	x		0	8	5	7	10
18		x		x	x		3	8	6	5	8
19	x			x	x		3	7	6	3	11
20	x			x	x		3	5	6	4	12
21		x	x			x	4	5	4	5	12
22		x	x			x	1	10	4	8	7
23	x			x	x		7	6	6	0	11
24		x		x		x	2	11	10	6	1
25		x		x		x	2	8	3	10	7
26		x		x		x	2	10	1	9	8
27		x		x		x	2	5	5	7	11
28	x		x		x		6	7	5	1	11
29		x	x		x		3	9	9	8	1
30		x	x		x		2	6	11	5	6
31	x		x		x		2	6	4	9	9
32		x		x		x	2	9	6	7	6
33		x		x		x	6	9	4	4	6
34		x		x		x	2	7	9	3	9
35		x		x		x	0	9	8	6	7
36		x		x		x	4	8	7	4	7
37		x	x			x	4	7	8	2	9
38		x	x			x	1	4	6	9	10
39		x	x			x	1	10	3	8	8
40		x	x			x	3	8	3	6	10
41		x	x			x	3	4	6	9	8
42	x			x	x		8	10	2	2	8
43		x		x		x	1	11	8	3	7
44		x	x			x	2	10	7	3	8
45		x	x			x	1	10	2	7	10
46		x	x		x		2	7	3	8	10
Totals	15	31	20	26	21	25	145	335	261	266	370

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Do you plan to receive an M.S.W. Degree in June? YES_____ NO_____

II. MALE_____ FEMALE_____

III. MARRIED_____ SINGLE_____

IV. Are you committed? (For purpose of this study, you are committed if you have received money and/or materials from a specific social work agency for purposes of obtaining an M.S.W. and for which you must work for a specific length of time or pay the money back.) YES_____ NO_____

V. If you are committed, what type of agency are you committed to:

1. Child Welfare_____
2. Adult and/or Child Psychiatric setting_____
3. Family Service _____
4. Corrections_____
5. Public Assistance_____
6. Other (specify)_____

VI. If you are committed, do you plan to work or pay the money back?

Work_____ Pay back_____

VII. Please read the following choices and under each pairing place an "X" next to the variable which would be most important to you in selecting a job.

1. _____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   _____ Salary.

2. _____ Friendly and cooperative staff.
   _____ Adequate supervision and training.

3. _____ Work Focus (i.e. in the office or in the field).
   _____ Salary.

4. _____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   _____ Friendly and cooperative staff.

5. _____ Adequate supervision and training.
   _____ Work Focus (i.e. in the office or in the field).

6. _____ Salary.
   _____ Friendly and cooperative staff.

7. _____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   _____ Adequate supervision and training.

8. _____ Work Focus (i.e. in the office or in the field).
   _____ Friendly and cooperative staff.

9. _____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   _____ Work Focus (i.e. in the office or in the field).

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Do you [illegible] an [illegible] YES_____ NO_____

II. Name_____ Age_____

III. Address_____ Date_____

IV. Are you currently [illegible] [illegible] you are committed if you have received a [illegible] [illegible] for a [illegible] social work agency for purposes [illegible] and for which [illegible] work for such the benefit [illegible] the agency [illegible] YES_____

V. If you are interested [illegible] accept [illegible] you committed to:

1. [illegible]
2. [illegible] Family Planning [illegible] counseling_____
3. [illegible] Parent Group _____
4. Counseling _____
5. Public [illegible] Dance_____
6. Other (Specify)_____

VI. If yes, [illegible] do you plan to work on day the proxy back?

[illegible] _____ [illegible] _____

VII. Please [illegible] relative [illegible] each pointing [illegible] in the [illegible] African [illegible] [illegible] to you in relation [illegible]

1. ____ Geographic location [illegible]
   ____ [illegible]

2. ____ Friendly and cooperative staff.
   ____ Adequate supervision and orientation

3. ____ Work focus (i.e. in the office or the field).
   ____ Salary

4. ____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   ____ Friendly and cooperative staff

5. ____ Adequate supervision and orientation.
   ____ Work focus (i.e. in the office or the field).

6. ____ [illegible]
   ____ Friendly and cooperative staff.

7. ____ Geographic location and cost of living.
   ____ Adequate supervision and orientation.

8. ____ Work focus (i.e. in the office or the field).
   ____ Friendly and cooperative

9. ____ Geographic location [illegible]
   ____ Work focus (i.e. in the field).

10. _____ Salary.
_____ Adequate supervision and training.

11. _____ Fringe benefits
_____ Family ties.

12. _____ Fringe benefits.
_____ Caseload size and working hours.

13. _____ Fringe benefits.
_____ Opportunity to obtain A.C.S.W.

14. _____ Fringe benefits.
_____ Clientele (child or adult).

15. _____ Family ties.
_____ Caseload size and working hours.

16. _____ Family ties.
_____ Opportunity to obtain A.C.S.W.

17. _____ Family ties.
_____ Clientele (child or adult).

18. _____ Caseload size and working hours.
_____ Opportunity to obtain A.C.S.W.

19. _____ Caseload size and working hours.
_____ Clientele (child or adult).

20. _____ Clientele (child or adult).
_____ Opportunity to obtain A.C.S.W.

21. _____ Job security.
_____ Community facilities (i.e. recreational, cultural and educational facilities).

22. _____ Job security.
_____ Office space and equipment.

23. _____ Job security.
_____ Opportunity to supervise students or caseaids.

24. _____ Job security.
_____ Work method (casework, group work, C.O.).

25. _____ Community facilities (i.e. recreational, cultural and educational facilities).
_____ Office space and equipment.

26. _____ Community facilities (i.e. recreational, cultural and educational facilities).
_____ Opportunity to supervise students or caseaids.

27. _____ Community facilities (i.e. recreational, cultural and educational facilities).
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