

RUNNING HEAD: SOCIAL WORK AND ME

How Social Work is the Career for Me

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I am a senior at the University of Mississippi and, throughout my time as an undergraduate, I have been preparing to be a psychologist. The field of social work occasionally crossed my mind and I wondered if I should change my major, but I never did. I am going to graduate with a bachelor of arts in psychology, but I want to switch gears and take the knowledge I've learned and apply it to a master's in social work.

I am in an Intro to Social Work class this semester and it has been the foundation for my understanding laid out by my wonderful teacher, Dr. Kristy Durkin. Social work is like psychology in a lot of ways, but less formal. Both fields know how to diagnose mental illnesses and both fields know how to help someone with a specific mental illness, but they can go about it differently. For example, music therapy. In social work, a social worker would use music therapy for their client if the music was a strength for that client and would help them. In my clinical psychology class, it was said that music therapy is not empirically supported, so it wouldn't be used in therapy. This is one of the reasons why I have leaned closer to social work and farther away from clinical psychology. I know social workers do empirically supported research and therapy for their clients, but they also go deeper and find what will benefit their client. Dr. Durkin told us a story about a man who would not leave his house for anything. He was depressed, agoraphobic, socially anxious, etc., but he loved music and he loved listening to the radio. His social worker knew this and got him a job interview at a radio station, which he got, and he began to leave the house, he made friends and was happy again. That is social work to me.

Social work is not just being a counselor, but working towards social justice. Society is a part of this profession. A social worker would not be able to just sit by and watch someone be treated wrongly or with injustice. I'm that kind of person. I do not want anybody to have to live

life being treated inferior, if I can help it. I remember when I found out the difference in pay for women and men. My job is mainly comprised of women, but we had one man working with us at the time I found this information out. I knew it was very unlikely that he would be paid more than us just because he was the only man and I was right. He was paid the same as I was, but I was ready to fight against that. I brought up my thoughts to my manager and she told me that he was not paid differently. This was not just for my benefit, but all of the other girls at my job.

I have a heart for people and for helping people. If I can help that person, then I will try my very best to help them. I will be committed to every future case I handle. I want to help children. I want to help women. I want to help members of minorities. My Christian background and growing up in the church helped create this heart for people. Jesus tells us to take care of the widows and orphans and to take care of the people that cannot take care of themselves. My time as a youth leader at the church has helped me do this. We've gone on mission trips in the community and help our elderly neighbors or neighbors that just need a helping hand. I help the youth with their problems that they come to me with.

I have not had any professional experiences with social work, but I met a woman who is a social worker at the MS Regional Center in Oxford, MS. I was telling her how I was a psychology major, but social work had crossed my mind for graduate school. She told me to take the road for social work because psychology would only take me to research. That was the door for me with psychology, but I did not want that. I wanted to be with people. I wanted to help people. She told me that I had many doors available for me if I chose social work. This information was confirmed in my class and, by the second day of the semester, I was hooked. I knew this was the profession for me. I knew social work was where I needed to be in my life.

The brain has always fascinated me. I have always been a scary movie person, because it is interesting to see how a person acts the way they do. Why does Billy from *Scream* do what he does? Why did Bundy, Dahmer, Gein? These are the questions that I asked that took me to psychology. I say this because I have learned a myriad of information concerning mental illnesses and applying it to people, kids, groups and I can bring this to my career as a social worker. I am a great listener. I hate being ignored, so I know that other people do not like this either, and they just want someone to listen to them. I am a dedicated person. This can get me into personal trouble, because I tend to put other's needs above my own and take care of them and not myself. This only happens because I sincerely care about them. I can help myself when I have helped them. It helps me that I have helped them.

I'm also scared that I will not be good enough. I'm scared that I will not be able to relate to the kids I want to help. When I was planning to get a master's in psychology, I wanted to be a child counselor, then an adolescent counselor, then a marriage and family counselor. I did not know what field I wanted to go into. With social work, I know that I want to work with children, most likely foster care children. I'm scared that I will not be able to help them as much as I could because I, myself, was not in foster care. I tell myself that I know what a loving family looks like and so I can help the kids learn what that looks like. I am not terribly scared about grad school. I'm scared about getting in, but, once I'm in, then I'm really scared about the future. I am nervous about the taxing work that grad school will put me through, but I know that I can do it.

As stated earlier, I want to go into childcare. I may have a heart for people, but children are at the base of my heart. My church only allows 18+ to watch the children in the nursery. To me, it seemed to take forever to turn eighteen because I wanted to help take care of the kids in the nursery. I started teaching dance and music during Vacation Bible School when I was only

eleven, because, even though I was still a kid, I was in the youth group, so I had to set an example for the kids and I could do that with music. I am going for the position of youth pastor at my church this year and I cannot describe how excited I am about that. It is not just a volunteer position anymore, but I can go out and talk to other youths and show them the love of Christ and the love that I have for them. I talk a lot about my church and my faith in this paper, but it has impacted my life immensely and I will give credit to it. Away from church, in my friend group in high school, they called me 'mom'. This was because I was always taking care of everyone. If something was wrong, then I asked about it and comforted them. I made sure they were eating or made sure they weren't hurting themselves. I did this throughout my primary education years. I was always 'mom' in my friend groups from first grade to freshman year in college and beyond.

I wanted to go to graduate school because I had to. That's the truth. There was never a moment where I said, "I'm **not** going to Grad School". I knew that to be able to do any psychology work that I needed at least a Master's to get my license. Grad school was always the path, but Ole Miss was not. I have grown up in Taylor, and by extension Oxford, my whole life. My grandmother on my father's side and my grandparents on my mother's side all worked at the University. My maternal grandfather still does. The University has been present in my life, but Ole Miss was 13th grade to most of us Oxford High kids. We had all grown up together and we knew we would see familiar faces, but most of us chose Ole Miss. I took a different path.

After Northwest ended, I was going to transfer to Mississippi College. I went to all of the MC events, I was enrolled, and I was ready for registration when finances came in. I did not have enough money, so I had to quickly enroll at Ole Miss. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I have thrived at Ole Miss. I am more confident, bolder, just more than I used to be. The

University of Mississippi has helped me and I want to continue my education at the graduate level so that I can help others.

I know how hard graduate school will be. My best friend has burned out from graduate school because the path she chose was not the one that she wanted to be in. I have heard her horror stories and other horror stories. I went through a time where I wanted to take a gap year before I went to graduate school because I was afraid that I would not be able to step up to the challenge. That is one of the reasons this application is coming in late. I was sure that I would be taking a gap year until the middle of February, but I finally took a deep breath and told myself that I could do this. I told myself that I could do graduate school and I knew where I wanted to go in life. I wanted to go into social work.

Am I scared that I will not be able to do social work since I have been studying psychology for four years? Yes and no. I'm scared because I know that I will be learning new material and I may have to play some catch up, but I also know that I already know a lot of information regarding groups, therapy, mental illnesses, etc. I know that I can do graduate level work because I have managed to keep a 4.0 G.P. A throughout my undergrad years for every single semester. I am a hard-worker and I am responsible to what I commit myself to. I have worked at the same job for four years because I am committed to it. I love the people there and that is a factor as well. If I love something, then I know that I will do whatever it takes to make something out of it. If I did not love psychology, then I would have changed my major a long time ago. I would have made English my major instead of my minor, but I love psychology and I love helping people. I know that social work will take me to where I want to be.

Am I scared that I will lose focus or burn-out in graduate school? No, I'm not. I have been a full-time student at Northwest and Ole Miss every single semester and I have been

working each semester. My semesters have been 15-17-hour classes and a 15-20-hour work weeks. On top of school and work, I do a lot of church related activities. The first half of my week is dedicated to the church: Sunday I have church in the morning and evening, Monday is the church's rec night where I am with the youth group, Tuesday night is BSU night, and Wednesday is kids' club at my church where I lead worship. I do this and complete my homework in time. I have never missed a homework assignment and the scores on my tests are good.

I am a dedicated worker in everything I do. I am not scared of graduate school. I know that I can handle the challenge that is being set before me. I hope that whoever reads this statement will give me the chance to prove to the department, the university, and myself that I can become a social worker and my dream of helping people can be a reality.