PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS
- THOSE WHO STAY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy in
the Graduate School of
The Ohio State University

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* * * *

The Ohio State University
1990

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To the Public Child Welfare Professionals of Ohio Who Made this Research Possible
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express sincere appreciation to Dr. Roberta Sands for her guidance, insight and support throughout the research. Thanks go to the other members of my advisory committee, Dr. Stanley Blostein and Dr. Nolan Rindfleisch for their suggestions and comments. Gratitude is expressed to Dr. Salatore Imbrogno for his support and scholarly expertise. The technical assistance of Daniel Schneider, Director of PCSAO, Clyde Crabtree, Director, Holmes County Department of Human Services, Jeffrey Felton, Director, Belmont County Childrens Services and Isaac Palmer, Director, Montgomery County Children Services is gratefully acknowledged. To my husband, Dennis, I offer sincere thanks for your faith in me and your willingness to share with me the trials of my endeavors.
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PREFACE

This research is an outgrowth of my personal development as a public child welfare professional. As I have developed as a person, the practice of public child welfare has also changed. When I began to practice in public child welfare twelve years ago, there was little in the way of external control and accountability practiced in the field. Practice decisions were made on a case by case basis and there was more room for personal worker discretion. Laws and mandates were scarce at that time, especially in Ohio, which has characteristically been lagging in implementing laws pertinent to child abuse and neglect. As time has passed, public child welfare has fallen under increasing governmental regulation. Over the last five years, public child welfare practice has been directly monitored by external sources under federal mandate. These changes have greatly altered the complexion of public child welfare practice as it was once known in Ohio.

The increased complexity of service delivery in administering the letter of the law is only one difference experienced by public child welfare professionals. We know from a practice level that the quality of life experienced by clients has gotten
increasingly worse, during the Reagan years in particular. The problems of child abuse, neglect, family homelessness and overall dependency are compounded by increased poverty, unemployment and an overwhelming sense of despair. Caseloads are higher than I can ever recall, and the severity of family dysfunction is alarming.

New workers coming to us with boundless enthusiasm are quick to leave the field, sometimes within a year of employment. Often they leave with their confidence and enthusiasm shaken. Yet, my personal experience and observations over the last ten years have revealed that many professionals stay. It is the phenomenon of staying, of beating the odds, that I came to explore in this research.

For me, staying was a conscious decision that was made at several junctures in my professional life. I can trace the thought process involved in each of those decisions. Frequently it became impossible to separate the personal and professional issues because they were so enmeshed. When I shared my experiences and thoughts with colleagues, I came to understand that my stories were also theirs.

The intricacies of stories about staying bear further exploration and illumination. They have the
potential of adding new knowledge to the field of child welfare. In bringing these stories to light, I hope to give recognition to and understanding of the people who are engaged in daily efforts to protect the interests of children at risk. I am indebted to the child welfare workers who shared their experiences with me. Without them there would be no stories to tell and no lives to understand. As their perspectives reveal, career child welfare workers are committed individuals who realize their concern for children in their personal and professional lives.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Public child welfare is a highly specialized field of social work practice, organized to protect and promote the interests of children in society. The 1987 edition of the Encyclopedia of Social Work describes the child welfare system and child welfare workers as follows:

In general, the child welfare social work service system undertakes to help in the prevention, amelioration or maintenance without further deterioration of the social situations affecting children...

...Child welfare social workers are sanctioned functionaries charged with performing social work activities in behalf of and with the children who are social agency clients... (Kadushin, 1987, p.266)

The actual practice of public child welfare encompasses the dysfunction which can occur primarily in the daily interactions between parents and children. Characteristically, problems confronted by child welfare workers are those involving the absence of the
parents or children, the condition of the parents or children (e.g., mental illness, chemical dependency) and/or the conduct of parents or children which leaves the child(ren) at risk of abuse, neglect or dependency.

Public child welfare services have typically been secondary or tertiary services offered to predominately involuntary clients after an incident of abuse or neglect has occurred and been substantiated. These services are provided through the public agency's own services or through contracted purchase of service subsidies through the private sector. Intervention occurs only after a family has experienced dysfunction that is serious enough to provoke public identification. Most often this recognition entails the report of alleged child abuse or neglect to a legally sanctioned entity, i.e. public child welfare or police. Public child welfare services then become a reactive force sanctioned by public law. The public child welfare worker acts under the authority of the law to investigate these allegations, substantiate or unsubstantiate them and to provide interventions to correct the presenting problem.

Historically, the state has been called upon to act in loco parentis for children who have been victimized in some manner. In 1982, the American Humane
Association reported 929,000 cases of abuse and neglect that were referred to protective service agencies. During the same period, the American Public Welfare Association reported 273,000 children in substitute care, such as foster care, adoption and institutional care (Kadushin, 1987, p.270). In 1984, the Child Welfare League of America classified child welfare component services as services to children and families in their own homes, day care, homemaker services, foster family care, adoption, group home care, residential center care, protective services for children, and services to unmarried parents (Kadushin, 1987, p.270). Child protective services include intake/investigations, case planning, crisis intervention, client advocacy and case closure.

Within the last ten years, the emphasis has changed from focusing only on the child to focusing on the family and the sanctioned responsibility of the field has grown accordingly and been defined under public law. Whereas the focus was once on "repairing" parents so children could return home, the current emphasis is on servicing the child and family "in-home" before the removal of a child becomes imminent. The goal is to establish a permanent placement for every child, either with biological parents, adoptive families, or some
other family configuration.

The demands on public child welfare professionals have also increased and have become more varied with different types of children coming into the system. While public child welfare has always had a broadly defined service population, current legislation affecting children has broadened that population even more. Increased public awareness has brought more children into the system. The national efforts to deinstitutionalize status offenders and to divert delinquent youngsters from the formal juvenile justice system have brought children to the child welfare system who have characteristically been served elsewhere. Similarly, medical advances have enabled the survival of children who previously would have died and have resulted in legal regulations such as the Baby Doe legislation. In cases in which children are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, the ultimate responsibility for their care is placed on the state.

In addition to increasing service demands, public child welfare has also been affected by new legislation and review of its own services to children and families. Legal actions against agencies and workers have grown in the areas of confidentiality and the privacy of parents, substitute care of children, and worker liability for
inadequately protecting children in their own homes. Workers frequently provide courtroom testimony and are questioned by medical professionals on abuse cases. Although this activity is not necessarily negative, greater external control has contributed to the decreased authority of the individual worker in delivering services. Government, in its public laws and policies, is establishing a relationship between the quality of administration and the quality of professional practice.

At the same time the field has experienced these changes in the delivery of services, there has been a simultaneous change in public child welfare personnel overall.

There has been a decrease in employment opportunities for child welfare workers in general and an increase in the percentage of workers without previous training in social work. Civil service positions have in many cases been reclassified to delete the requirements of educational credentials for access to entry level positions. In implementing the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, federal government regulations recommended, but did not require, the BSW as the minimum qualification for line workers and the MSW for first-line supervisory positions. Few states have in fact set up such requirements... (Kadushin, 1987, p.273)
Standards and policies for practice by child welfare professionals are also promulgated by Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), The American Association for Protecting Children (AAPC), a branch of American Humane, and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Collectively, these standards recommend that child welfare administrators and supervisors have an MSW degree. Similarly, they suggest that line workers have a BSW degree. These standards are not realized in practice, as states have not accepted this professional self-regulation.

During a time in which workers have a need to be knowledgeable about child development, family systems, dysfunctional behavior, clinical assessment, interviewing techniques and other related social work skill areas, the majority of workers do not have social work degrees. This fact is supported by a 1988 study conducted by the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Management and Administration, University of Southern Maine.

...The educational backgrounds of more than 5000 child welfare personnel in a stratified sample of 16 states were analyzed and compared with a similar study conducted by Shyne and Schroeder in 1978. This study was undertaken to determine the trends of
educational preparation in child welfare and the relatedness of the degree to the overall preparedness for child welfare work. The study showed that only 28% of the child welfare staff had a BSW or MSW degree. (Lieberman, Hornby and Russell, 1988, p.487)

Public child welfare professionals are concerned with maintaining professional credibility and proficient staff at the time of increased need. Yet the "routine" demands of the job make it difficult to take vacations, "flex time" and time away for training. During the 1970's focus on burnout in human services, public child welfare received a great deal of attention for these reasons.

...Admittedly, child welfare social work makes a number of egregious demands on the emotional lives of its practitioners. Handling intractable situations with limited resources, being in contact with demanding, often unwilling clients and having responsibility for significant aspects of children's lives can erode the idealism, conviction and enthusiasm of many workers... (Kadushin, 1987, p.274)

This is a particular concern for entry-level practitioners with little prior experience.
Concern about burnout has been complicated over the last decade by four key factors: (1) professionalization of social work, (2) privatization of services, (3) declassification/reclassification of public service positions and, (4) absence of inducement to enter the public sector. More and more, it seems social workers are moving away from their roots in helping the disenfranchised and poor, of which children are just one population. Perhaps they have even abdicated to the state a function of which they previously had more control.

In spite of these factors -- even in combination with adverse working conditions, increasing liability and high caseloads -- some practitioners do not leave the field. In a University of Southern Maine study, workers were asked to designate the number of years worked at their current and previous agencies. These data were collapsed into three categories: 0 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years and more than 5 years. "Results reveal that nearly half of the sample (N=2438; 46%) have worked at their current agency for 5 years...When the work experience at both the current and previous settings were combined, respondents have worked an average of 9.13 years; the median is 7.5 years..." (Lieberman, Hornby and Russell, 1988, p.487) Obviously some of them
find satisfaction in what they do, make a career of it and find ways to cope. It is this group on which this study is focused. Their experiences and reasons for staying provide valuable information which is currently lacking at a crucial time for the field of public child welfare. This study seeks to provide information on the behavioral dimension related to the social institutionalization of public child welfare workers. In a sense, those who stay present a unique "problem" population in light of the overall picture of public child welfare. Why do they persevere?

Focus and Potential Worth of the Study

This is a qualitative study of public child welfare workers who choose to remain in the field. The questions that provided focus to the research undertaken were:

1-What led participants to public child welfare? Who are the workers who stay?

2-What experiences have had an impact on their lives? What have their lives been like as public child welfare professionals?

3-How have the participants seen themselves in the organizational context? How has this affected their staying in the field?

4-Do workers stay out of commitment to families and children, or do they stay because they have evolved into professional bureaucrats who subscribe to the values and norms of the structure?
5-What experiences contribute to the process of staying? What is the relationship between burnout and staying?

Continuous refinement of the focus occurred as the study evolved due to the type of design chosen (see Chapter IV - Method). The research questions were designed to evoke the telling of life stories and work experiences of these professionals and, ultimately why child welfare workers stay in the field. The focus is important to the field of public child welfare as it changes, not only in the scope of its practice, but also in the expertise required of social workers practicing within its realm. Public child welfare professionals on many organizational levels need to know what factors contribute to professionals staying. Public child welfare administrators can use the information gained from this study to enhance staff training programs, develop updated hiring and retention policies, and to make structural changes, for example. Direct service managers and supervisors can use the information in developmental supervision with workers and to avert job stress or burnout for some workers while helping others make the decision to leave the field. Line staff can use the study results for self exploration, personal development and even career planning.
The greatest value of this study may lie in the telling of important personal histories. These are life stories of individuals that sometimes wind and weave, that sometimes are shocking and sad, and other times reveal the vagaries of being an ordinary person. These are the stories of the people who make a difference to families and children in Ohio.

Key Terms

The major terms used in the course of this study have been defined as follows:

1. Public Child Welfare - The field of social work practice charged by public law with the protection of children against abuse, neglect or dependency. Public child welfare practice deals with the absence of parents or children, the condition of parents or children and the conduct of parents or children which places children in an "at-risk" state of being. Public child welfare encompasses practice in the public sector and the limitations and complexities therein. Public child welfare differs from private child welfare in its direct linkage to carrying out legal mandates related to investigation and service provisions. It typically is performed within formal organizations which are bureaucratic, public entities.
2. **Burnout** - Burnout appears to comprise a number of affective and behavioral phenomena which may not be identical with the more conventional construct, job dissatisfaction. Pines and Maslach refer to burnout in terms of a worker's emotional disengagement from clients and the job as well as such symptoms as physical and interpersonal problems and feelings of worthlessness. The most telling sign of burnout in professional social workers appears to be the switch from caring about one's clientele to indifference or negativism. It can be thought of as "...an arrest or regression in the social worker's growth process. Rather than becoming better able to do an effective job, the workers find themselves feeling increasingly apathetic and beset by futility..." (Harrison, 1980, p.31-2).

3. **Professional Socialization** - "refers to the process by which individuals selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge current in the groups to which they seek to become members...socialization is the process by which an individual achieves his/her identification within a particular group...The end product of successful professional socialization is the attainment of a professional identity..." (Valentine, Grandy and
Weinbach, 1986, p.27). Socialization also takes into account prior experiences, peer socialization, education, and overall life experiences, and is a dynamic process which continues throughout the duration of work experiences.

4. **Staying** - For the purpose of this study staying refers to a professional remaining in the field of public child welfare for a defined period of time (See Chapter IV - Data Collection), and which also takes into consideration longevity in the field, socialization to the field, and the individual's role in the formal organization and bureaucracy.

5. **Epiphany** - For the purpose of this study, epiphanies will be defined as interactional moments or experiences which leave marks on people's lives. They are often moments of crisis, that may be positive or negative in their impact. According to Denzin (1989), there are four types of epiphanies: major, cumulative, minor and relived. Epiphanies alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life. (The use of Epiphanies in the analysis will be explained in Chapter IV)
Assumptions Made in Preparing the Study

In this study, some basic assumptions have been made which have a bearing on the research itself. They are provided here as a reference point to where the researcher will begin.

1 - Professionals practicing in public child welfare have similar experiences and understanding of the field itself.

2 - Public child welfare practitioners in this study have already experienced exposure to professional values and knowledge through the educational process.

3 - Participants have an awareness of what experiences led them to their career choice.

4 - Participants have chosen to remain in the field of public child welfare despite the peaks and valleys of everyday work. They possess an ability which enables them to persevere.

5 - Participants can verbalize the experiences and the thought processes involved in making the decision to stay.

6 - The process of staying may be inversely related to the phenomenon of burnout.

7 - Participants have experienced personal and professional epiphanies related to their career choice and ultimate longevity in the field.

8 - Public child welfare workers evolve on a continuum of extreme values - whether to stay in the field, or whether to leave it.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature was approached in the broadest possible way, eliciting information related to the research topic but in a way that would not cause bias while the theories grounded in the study emerged. The approach was multi-level, examining the literature on child welfare; professional socialization of individuals into organizations; and burnout in the human services.

Very little was found in the child welfare or professional socialization literature related to the longevity factor of workers in the field. Most of the information related to topic-specific material on the educational process of professional students and intervention issues in child abuse and neglect. The burnout literature was most helpful in that it specifically documented the processes involved in leaving - the converse of the issue under examination. Additionally, it examined personality characteristics which lead to burnout and coping strategies to deal with burnout. These issues have implications for the
retention of child welfare workers and may have a bearing on why seasoned professionals have stayed. As previously mentioned in Chapter I, the complexion of public child welfare has changed dramatically over the last decade. While public child welfare workers have always been asked to perform complex and demanding roles, the expectations and intensity of service delivery are expanding each day. Not only is public child welfare practice becoming more complicated, but the context of social work practice in general is becoming more complex as the environment around us changes.

In a discussion pertaining to social work roles in general, Carel Germain (1980) makes a statement which reflects accurately the expansion of worker roles in public child welfare.

Roles performed by workers include those of program developer, organizer, therapist, group leader, researcher, administrator, team member and educator. The tasks they carry out involve enabling, facilitating, supporting, referring, instructing, influencing, mobilizing, negotiating and mediating... (p.485)

The diversity of tasks and the demand for performing sometimes unrelated roles lead to confusion
over what the professional's job really is. These aspects of public child welfare have been concentrated on most in relation to job stress and burnout. Role conflict and role ambiguity are common problems in the public child welfare specialization:

Much of the role strain associated with protective services work appears to originate from the difficulty connected with integrating the general social work roles of advocate, broker and enabler and the specific demands of a setting in which the social worker operates under the authority of the law, usually with involuntary clients. This integration of demands is theoretically possible, but in reality the law and agency policies and practices often produce a set of contradictory expectations which the worker is expected to fulfill simultaneously. Many practitioners see the problem of integrating these demands as an example of role conflict and the lack of clarity as to just what they are supposed to be integrating a matter of role ambiguity...
(Harrison, 1980, p.32)

A group of researchers (Kahn, 1980, Harrison, 1980, Pines, 1981, Maslach, 1982) have supported the general notion that role conflict and role ambiguity are associated with lowered levels of satisfaction and ultimately job stress and burnout. Harrison's (1980) research has shown that role ambiguity (lack of clarity
in what behavior is expected, valued or effective) has a
heavy impact on job satisfaction. He suggests that
workers seek ways to feel competent and that if such
opportunities are not available, there is little room
for growth on the job. One might interpret that the
important message this research has for looking at why
people stay is directly related to the ability of
workers to see clear meaning and purpose in their
various roles and to feel competent in performing them.
One could raise the questions that those who stay quite
possibly have found some method of finding purpose,
perhaps through rewards, clear job definitions,
autonomy, or perseverance that has gotten them past the
ambiguity and conflict experienced in the field. The
whole area of professional socialization could also have
a bearing on this phenomena of longevity.

Socialization into the profession plays a key role
in the "making" of a child welfare professional. As
Valentine and others (1986) point out, this
socialization involves more than the mastery of
knowledge and technical expertise:

...It also includes the acquisition
of norms of professional behavior
and an acceptance of the values on
which professional activities are
based. These occur as part of, and
sometimes in conflict with, the
general process of socialization to which an individual is exposed during his/her life... The end product of successful professional socialization is the attainment of a professional identity... (p.27)

The professional identity includes the development and adoption of the values, attitudes, skills and expectations of the chosen profession. It would seem that a key process in staying would be the resolution of the conflict in personal/professional identity with the ambiguity which exists in the field. Socialization is really a process of learning, growing and assimilating what the individual believes and what the profession believes. A meshing or a "fit" between person and profession must exist for a professional identity to occur.

Bucher and Stelling (1977) suggest that socialization into a profession occurs at a social psychological level. Individuals do not simply react to events in the field, but carefully evaluate and construct responses to them based on what (s)he has adopted as personal practice. Professionals construct their identities based on judgment, external cues from peers and administration, validation, expectations, structural and situational variables and self-evaluation. Change can occur at any point in the
process of socialization based on those factors and how well they mesh. Socialization occurs not only on the professional level, but also in the realm of the total organization where the professional practices.

In Perspectives on Behavior in Organizations, Feldman (1983) sees socialization as a continuous process which involves both the individual's and the organization's expectations. It is a process which involves change on the part of the individual to assimilate into the organization. Feldman sees the general process as concerning the development of work skills and abilities, the acquisition of appropriate role behavior, the adjustment to the work group and norms, and the adoption of organizational values. As socialization occurs, the individual becomes less concerned with the universality of the organization and more concerned with particular responsibility and individual performance. According to Wexley and Yukl (1984) employees are motivated to perform by a combination of achievement, affiliation, esteem, independence, power and security. These needs are distinct, but not independent. Individuals perform to their needs, values, beliefs and the intricacies of their work situation. Professional socialization and socialization into the work setting are ultimately based
on these performance determinants, which also can be viewed as the components of the professional mystique.

Cherniss in *Professional Burnout in Human Service Organizations* (1980) talks about the disparity between what people believe about the professional mystique and the reality of professional work in public settings. He suggests that the initial entry into a field of practice is characterized by stress, strain and burnout. This occurs as a result of expecting too much from and idealizing professional practice. Cherniss discusses five elements of the professional mystique that are particularly involved in these expectations through the professional socialization process. They are competence, autonomy, stimulation/fulfillment, collegiality and attitudes of clients.

Cherniss suggests that job dissatisfaction and burnout result when incoming professionals have been exposed to an unrealistic picture of practice. Often young professionals confuse credentials with competence. When they experience that first moment when they do not have the right answer, they feel guilty and doubt their abilities. Similarly, they expect that professional status will give them freedom and control over their work. When practicing in public institutions, many things stand in the way of autonomy, such as serving
involuntary clients and bureaucratic red tape. New workers (and old) derive a sense of powerlessness in these situations. New professionals expect that they can make a difference and find stimulation and fulfillment in doing so. Often they are inadequately prepared for the routinization they find, as well as the standardization of practice demanded in public institutions. Cherniss also believes collegiality is another mythical attribute of professional life. New professionals enter the field assuming respect and trust among professionals and find instead distrust and competition in many cases. Just as they expect collegiality, they expect that clients want their help and will accept it willingly. Workers in the non-voluntary sector find quite the opposite.

Cherniss is critical of the professional socialization process and the unrealistic expectations it creates. His points, though dismal, are congruent with what is known at a practice level in child welfare. Unrealistic expectations mixed with the role ambiguity and conflict in the field are a lethal combination for new professionals. Those who stay may have found a way to counteract the disappointments and incongruities found in the field. The personal characteristics which lead to burnout can illuminate what it takes to remain
in the field. Those considerations that make professionals leave could reveal answers to the question of why they stay.

As Pines (1981), Maslach (1982) and other "burnout" specialists have found, the special characteristics of helpers play an important role in burnout. In 1979, Perlman wrote *Relationship: The Heart of Helping People*. The book concludes with a chapter entitled "The Heart's Reasons," in which Perlman discusses what factors bring individuals to helping. For some it is an occupational commitment. For others, it is a personal commitment, borne of individual experiences. For yet others, it is both.

The pervasive sense of wanting to help people that young people bring to the human service professions is probably made up of a number of internalized values and ideals. One is a sense of social-personal obligation, of reciprocity. A second is an ego ideal, an offshoot of our conscience...Another is a need in us to mean something, to "matter" to somebody else...We cannot always disentangle these mixed motivations... (Perlman, 1979, p.206)

However powerful the motivation to help may be, one must be constantly aware that helping has its costs as well as its rewards. Sometimes there is a balance, but
at other times, helpers pay far more for helping than they receive in intrinsic satisfaction.

...A person who characteristically relates with compassion and consideration for his others may find himself at times feeling drained, find himself in need of supports...But we make our choices, repeatedly struggling to find in ourselves the answer to the ancient rabbi-scholar Hillel's questions: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am for myself alone, what am I?" (Perlman, 1979 p.211)

It is this balance between self and others that is hard to maintain.

Pines, Aronson and Kafry (1981) in *Burnout: From Tedium to Personal Growth* propose that job stress stems from our personal attributes. They, like Perlman, see that people who choose to help are particularly sensitive to the needs of others. Helping professionals are essentially humanitarian and value themselves as sympathetic, understanding and unselfish. These are admirable qualities that also make helpers vulnerable to burnout. For those who believe that helping is a calling and that the reward is inherent in the act, disappointment cannot be far away.

Pines and others (1981) assert that helpers learn
on a cognitive level to attain "detached concern" with clients. There is a difficult balance between involvement and detachment that is difficult to achieve.

...the most idealistic and highly committed "social servants" are the ones who have the greatest difficulty detaching themselves and as a result tend to burn out relatively soon. They end up detaching too much as defense against the power of their own emotions...(p.55)

Christina Maslach (1982) in *Burnout - The Cost of Caring* discusses the situational aspects of burnout - the intensity of working with people, lack of positive feedback, poor peer contact and how they factor into burnout. She also points out that what a person brings to the situation is critical.

...And what a person brings are individual characteristics such as motivations, needs, values, self-esteem, emotional expressiveness and control, and personal style. These internal qualities determine how someone handles external sources of emotional stress...They are also implicated in an individual's original choice of a helping profession as a career... (p.57)
Life experiences and personality play a large role in who burns out and who does not. Maslach developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to look at these specific issues and tested it on a wide range of human service professionals, including 1,538 social service workers (social workers and child protective service workers).

The MBI or the Human Service Survey (as it is described in the course of this study) assesses three aspects of the burnout syndrome, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Each aspect is measured by a separate subscale. The frequency with which the respondent experiences feelings related to each subscale is assessed by a six-point, fully anchored response format. Burnout, as measured by the MBI, is a continuous variable rather than an absolute (or nominal). The scores for each subscale are considered separately and not combined into a single score. Three scores are completed for each respondent.

A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (DP) scales and low scores on Personal Achievement (PA). An average degree is reflected in average scores on the three subscales. A low degree is reflected in low scores on the EE and DP subscales and
high scores on the PA subscale. Maslach (1982) found
the following:

1. Men and women are fairly similar in their
   experience in burnout. Women experience more
   emotional exhaustion. Men experience more
   depersonalization and distancing.

2. Blacks experience burnout with less intensity
   and frequency than do whites.

3. Burnout is greatest when workers are young and
   lower when workers are older. Burnout is more
   likely to occur in the first few years of a
   person's career.

4. People who are single experience burnout more
   intensely than people who have significant
   others. Similarly, childless professionals are
   more vulnerable than those with children.

5. Burnout is greater for those with no
   postgraduate training.

   (p.55-62)

Maslach also found that burnout does not occur for
all people all of the time. There are clearly
variations in the patterns, largely due to personality
differences. One's interpersonal style, ways of
handling problems, expression and control of emotions
and self concept have much to do with burnout. Maslach
developed from her work a personality profile of a
person bound for burnout.

...The burnout prone individual
is, first of all, someone who is
weak and unassertive in dealing with people. Such a person is submissive, anxious and fearful of involvement and has difficulty in setting limits within the helping relationship. This person is often unable to exert control over a situation and will passively yield to its demands rather than actively limiting them to his or her capacity to give. It is easy for this person to become overburdened emotionally and so the risk of emotional exhaustion is high. The burnout-prone individual is also someone who is impatient, intolerant, lacks self confidence, has little ambition and is more reserved and conventional... (Maslach, 1982, p.62-63)

Maslach carefully points out, however, that the profile is a composite. Not all pieces need to be present for the problem to arise. All helpers are at risk. Those with the personality styles mentioned above are more vulnerable, just as Pines and others (1981) have pointed out.

Maslach (1982), Pines, Aronson, Farber (1981) and others have elaborated in great detail the elements and proof of burnout in the human service professions. They have shown that helpers pay a heavy price for being their brothers' and sisters' keeper'. The emotional exhaustion and cynicism associated with burnout are often accompanied by deterioration in physical and psychological well being. This deterioration becomes a
heavy personal price to the individual helper, the employer and all those in contact with the helper.

Maslach (1982) and Pines (1981) discuss the physical and psychological costs of burnout as including irritability, tiredness, physical illness, substance abuse, depression/withdrawal, loss of self esteem, poor job performance and lack of self worth. The personal costs are reflected in costs to others: change in work performance; absenteeism; depersonalization; withdrawal from clients and ultimately the loss of the employee.

In a chapter on interpersonal coping strategies, Pines (1981) suggests that burnout is not caused by malevolent or incompetent professionals, but rather by stressful situations. Just as stressful situations induce burnout, there are personal coping strategies and positive environmental conditions that can ameliorate burnout. Pines established six strategies that can be pursued in the work environment to reduce the likelihood of burnout and increase the likelihood of personal growth. These approaches are directly related to factors that make workers feel their jobs are meaningful and appreciated. The positive work environment should:

1) Promote learning and growth, providing workers with new experiences and information.

2) Allow workers to see meaning and significance in
their work.

3) Reward workers for success and achievement and allow them opportunities to meet with new challenges.

4) Provide variety, minimizing the routine.

5) Encourage creativity and allow workers to experience it.


Maslach (1982), Pines (1981), and others suggest similar ways to deal with burnout. Workers need to be aware of the problem, do something about it, and develop new tools to deal with it over again. The majority of researchers suggest some variation of the following strategies for individual workers:

1- Examine individual coping strategies. Know yourself and broaden individual responses to stress.

2- Set clear and realistic career goals, distinguishing between what can/cannot be changed. Know when to leave.

3- Acknowledge personal vulnerabilities and take care of yourself. Emotional, mental and physical supplies are not endless.

4- Acknowledge the need for change and variety. Do the same thing differently.

5- Know the difference between personal and professional and when to separate them. It is important to keep a balance.
6- Provide your own reinforcements. Know what makes you feel good and when to relax.

7- See yourself in situational, not dispositional terms. Cut through the labeling.

8- Take time to laugh and work on a positive attitude.

Choosing new strategies requires going beyond what one currently knows. It requires energy and desire to change:

...Although burnout can be a traumatic and depressing experience, it can also be the beginning of greater understanding and increased awareness in an individual's life...if people are provided with adequate tools for coping with stress, they often emerge wiser, stronger and more insightful than if they had not burned out in the first place..." (Pines et al., 1981, p.167).

The creation of strategies and tools for coping with stress and burnout may be the key to worker longevity and retention. The personal experiences and attributes of those who stay may be closely related to positive coping strategies. In examining the significant life experiences and turning points in the lives of child welfare workers, this study attempted to clarify the relationship between coping with life experiences and continued employment in child welfare. This study was
also done in an effort to shed a positive light on child welfare workers as a professional group.

The significant research done to date has focused on leaving, the reasons for leaving and the high costs of caring. The studies have been quantitative and numerical in their approach. Surprisingly, no one has gone to the workers themselves, inquired about their stories, their viewpoints and what keeps them going on a daily basis. This research sought to hear these stories in the context of the person in the organization. To do so, the problem had to be conceptualized as having to do with the adult development of individual workers and the formal organizational structure of the public child welfare agencies where they are employed.
CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ultimately, man should not ask what
the meaning of his life is, but
rather he must recognize that it is
he who is asked. In a word, each
man is questioned by life, and he
can only answer to life by answering
for his own life; to life he can only
respond by being responsible. (Frankl,
1959, p.31)

One does not think of the ordinary person as
preoccupied with such profound questions as "What is the
meaning of life?" "How does my life affect the world in
which I live?" "Am I living responsibly?" Yet to ask
oneself these questions and to reflect on one's answers
is more than a mental exercise. One's answers shape the
way one sees the world, the way one lives, the choices
one makes and one's sense of reality. They affect one's
definition of "self," the way one interacts with others,
one's personal and professional images and one's
perception of life experiences as they occur.

This study examined how these questions intertwined
with significant personal and professional experiences
of child welfare workers. Most of what was found
was based on extensive written life history materials
and oral interviews with these workers. Not all that was found was clear cut. Many informants were life-long searchers, always making meaning of the experiences life offers, always evolving and experiencing crises which they integrated into their personal realities. Many crises were personal, others were professional, and still others were the crises of being caught in difficult conflicts between professional values and the demands of the formal organization.

Influence of Theory on Research

The integration of theory into this research was a subconscious process. Before she articulated her conceptual framework, the researcher identified the questions she wanted to ask, knowing that they had not been asked before, and commenced to find the answers. Simultaneously, the researcher began to study adult development theory as it relates to the life cycle. Prior to analysing the data, the researcher realized that she had been using adult development theory together with organizational theory to guide her in the research process.

This study was not only theory driven; it was a personal process as well. The researcher struggled, personally, with her own adult developmental issues as
they unfolded during her employment within the environment of public child welfare. She was personally concerned about how adults could grow and be challenged in a formal organization, bureaucratic in nature, and how the staying phenomenon took place, considering organizational constraints.

The goal of this study was to give meaning to the idea that the life cycle unfolds through an evolutionary process that is the culmination of all prior experiences, with special attention to personal and professional life crises and turning point events. These pivotal experiences give direction to individuals' future choices in personal and professional lives. The individual adult who is always evolving and the constantly changing organization merge, conflict and change as significant experiences transpire. For those participating in this study, something in the mix of the personal and professional had an effect on their longevity in the field. To conceptualize this fully one must consider theories about the two facets separately - the developing adult and the formal organization.

1. The Developing Adult

This research was greatly affected and driven by three theorists pursuing a similar line of thought.
Sometimes it became difficult to separate original thought from its derivatives in established theory. The works of Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson and Robert Kegan greatly influenced not only the researcher's thinking, but also her questions and her interactions with the study participants. The theme unifying the theorists was the concept of crisis as the transformation of meaning into growth. This common thread became the lens through which the research process was viewed. A full discussion of the ideas of these theorists follows.

**Erikson - Eight Ages of Man**

Erik Erikson suggests that to understand growth, it is well to remember the epigenetic principle which is derived from the growth of organisms in utero. This principle is that

> ...anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole. (Erikson, 1959b, p.53)

At birth, the infant leaves the womb for the social exchange system of society, where his or her gradually increasing abilities meet the opportunities and
limitations of his culture.

Erikson's epigenetic diagram (see Figure 1) signifies both a sequence of developmental stages and a gradual development of component parts; "in other words the diagram formalizes a progression through time of a differentiation of parts" (Erikson, 1959b, p.54). According to Erikson, each aspect of the healthy personality is systematically related to all the others. They all are dependent on prior development in the proper sequence, and each aspect exists in some form before its critical time arrives, for every act requires an integration of all. Each component comes to its ascendance, meets its crisis and finds its lasting solution towards the end of a given stage (Erikson, 1959b, p.56).

Erikson's theory of development describes the relationship between biological and psychological aspects, together with the resulting psychosocial crisis for each stage. Each stage becomes a crisis because growth and awareness in one function is paired with specific vulnerability in another function. Each progression, then, is a potential crisis or conflict because of a radical change in perspective that results. Different tasks require the availability of different opportunities that foster the development of the
Figure 1

Erikson's Stages of Adult Development
personality at a particular stage. Erikson does not consider all of development a crisis, however. He claims only "that psychosocial development proceeds by critical steps -critical being a characteristic of turning points, of moments of decision between progress and recognition, integration and retardation" (Erikson, 1950a, p.270-71).

Erikson indicates a sequencing of stages, but does not adhere to a tight achievement schedule. The epigenetic diagram indicates that the sequence of stages makes room for variation in timing and intensity. It lists a system of stages dependent on each other, beginning with the development of trust.

A lasting ego identity cannot begin to exist without trust of the first oral stage; it cannot be completed without promise of fulfillment which from the dominant image of adulthood reaches down into the baby's beginnings and which creates at every step of childhood and adolescence an accruing sense of ego strength. (Erikson, 1950a, p.245-46)

Although the adult stages of Erikson's model are those most related to this research, the first five stages of childhood and adolescence bear brief discussion, as they have a heavy impact on all subsequent stages. These stages, as well as the next
three, are described in two of the theorist's works (Erikson, 1950, 1959).

Stage 1, characterized by the crisis of Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust, occurs during the early life of an infant. In this stage, the mother or the principal caregiver is the key person to whom the child relates. Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by administering sensitive care to their progenies' needs. This forms the basis for children to develop a sense of identity in which they see themselves as "all right." In receiving love and care, one also learns how to give. The social institution related to Stage 1 is religion. Erikson sees the virtue of hope, as compared with dependency, emerging in this stage.

In Stage 2, the crisis of Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt occurs. This crisis takes place around the ages of two and three. During this stage, both parents become important to the child. The child learns how to stand on his/her own as well as the ability to discriminate and understand the limits of behavior. Simultaneously the child experiences the concepts of "loss of face" and self doubt. This stage becomes decisive for the ratio of love and hate, cooperation and willfulness, freedom of expression and suppression. "From a sense of self-control without loss of self-
esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame" (Erikson, 1950a, p.254). The social institution related to this stage is that of law and order, giving rise to the virtue of willpower vs. impotence.

In Stage 3 (generally ages 2 through 4), the crisis of Initiative vs. Guilt is experienced. The child's group of significant others expands to the immediate family. The social institution relating to this stage is economic order or mutual regulation. The child develops a sense of moral responsibility which permits his/her responsible participation in play. The virtue developed in this stage is purpose vs. passivity.

Stage 4 occurs prior to adolescence, during the school years, ages five through twelve. During this stage, the crisis of Industry vs. Inferiority is faced. The child becomes concerned with relationships in the neighborhood and school environment. (S)he must begin to be a worker and a potential provider, learning to win recognition by producing things. The social institution of significance is technology, the realm in which industry is encouraged and rewarded. If a child fails in using his/her tools or skills, the potential of feeling inadequate or inferior is created. The virtue
fostered by this stage is competence vs. the inability to make things.

Most critical to the developing person is Stage 5, the adolescent stage. The crisis encountered at this point is **Identity vs. Role Confusion**. This is the period in which the peer group becomes equal to or more significant than the family. Erikson sees the emergence of identity and the sharing of oneself as the mode of being in the world. Adolescence is characterized by a state of moratorium, as it is in between childhood and adulthood, and between childhood morality and adult ethics. The societal institution corresponding to this stage is that of ideology, with the emerging virtue being fidelity vs. the vice of apathy.

**Erikson's Three Stages of Adulthood**

When childhood and youth come to an end, responsibilities associated with adulthood loom ahead for young adults. They begin to work or study for a specified career, increase sociability with the other sex and in time perhaps marry and start a their own family. Only after a reasonable sense of identity has been established can real intimacy with oneself or another person occur. Relationships are focal at this point and are the task of Stage 6, with its crisis of
**Intimacy vs Isolation.** Intimacy in this stage means giving oneself to another while finding oneself at a new level in this intimacy. The counterpart of intimacy is distantiation, the readiness to isolate and destroy those forces or people whose essences seem dangerous to one's own. The virtue emerging at this point is love, in contrast with withdrawal and isolation. Stage 6 is a critical stage for "helpers" such as child welfare workers to traverse. Without completion of this stage, the individual becomes incapable of truly caring and investing in the common good of society.

In adulthood, the mature person needs to direct energy to the next generation. In Stage 7, the crisis is **Generativity vs. Stagnation.** The concept of generativity is meant to include productivity and creativity as well as nurturing others. Those persons of importance to the mature adult are those with whom labor is shared and divided, as well as the next generation. Care is the virtue which develops with generativity. When generativity fails, regression to total self interest occurs, with stagnation and personal impoverishment being the results. Education is the social institution by which adults provide for the development of future generations. Education can be interpreted as the social institution that cares for and
perceives children as the trust of the community. The majority of this study's participants are in this period of their lives. Interestingly, their career focus is on the protection of children.

The final stage of Erikson's developmental theory involves the crisis of **Ego Integrity vs. Despair**. In Stage 8, which usually occurs during old age, the whole world is significant to the developing older person. Ego integrity implies an emotional integration which permits leading, following or just being. It is an acceptance of one's life cycle and the people who have been significant in it and is propelled by the drive to defend one's dignity against threat. The inability to attain ego integrity leads to despair, disgust and fear of death. The social institution which fosters integrity is that of philosophy or wisdom. The virtue of this stage is wisdom vs. futility.

Erikson's theory of life cycle development has had a direct impact on a number of subsequent adult development theories. Although primarily concerned with Erikson's life stages 5 and beyond, Levinson's theory, which will be described next, recognizes that the crisis/conflicts of earlier life stages have a direct relationship to successful completion of adult stages.
Levinson - Life Cycle and Its Seasons

Daniel Levinson and his colleagues (1978) who wrote Seasons of a Man's Life built on the concepts of Erikson. They agreed theoretically that development occurred in a stage-like fashion and that it began in childhood. Although Erikson's work on life cycle and adulthood was recognized by Levinson for its impact on his theory, Erikson's theory was by no means felt to be complete. Levinson believed that an adequate approach to adulthood must consider both the nature of the person and the nature of society and should proceed at an intuitive, metaphorical level. He and his associates describe the life cycle as a process or journey from a starting point to a termination point which follows a basic sequence. During the life cycle, a person experiences a series of periods/stages which Levinson and others (1978) explain in terms of seasons. Each season is qualitatively different, each with a distinctive character, yet each has something in common with the other seasons.

There are seasons in the year:
spring is a time of blossoming,
winter a time of death but also
of rebirth and the start of a new
cycle...To speak of the seasons
is to say the life course has a
certain shape, that it evolves
through a series of definable forms. A season is a relatively stable segment of the total cycle... relatively stable, however, does not mean that it is stationary or static. Change goes on within each, and a transition is required for the shift from one season to the next. (Levinson, et al., 1978, pp.6-7)

Levinson suggests that no season is better than the next and each contributes its special character to the whole.

The main focus of Levinson's theory is on the years from the late teens to the late forties in a man's life. He asserts that the life cycle evolves through a sequence of eras each of which lasts approximately 25 years. The eras are partially overlapping so that one is ending while a new era is beginning. Each era has to do with the character of living -- the biological, psychological and social aspects of life. The sequence of the eras composes the macro-structure of the life cycle. The sequence follows:

1. Childhood and adolescence: age 0-22
2. Early adulthood: age 17-45
3. Middle adulthood: age 40-65
4. Late adulthood: age 60-?
   (Levinson, et al., 1978, p.18)

Each era has an average age of onset and completion which can vary around five or six years.
The move from one era to another requires a basic change in the essence of a person's life. It can take 4-5 years. This transition is the work of the developmental period which provides continuity between the eras. The transition creates a zone of overlap consisting of a termination for one era and initiation of the next. The zone of overlap bridges two eras and is part of both.

Levinson and his associates (1978) discuss three basic eras and cross-era transitions in their theory of development. The Pre-Adult era includes childhood, adolescence and the Early Adult Transition. Although the transition into childhood occurs between 0-3, the major work of childhood occurs as the child grows outward (ages 5-6) and becomes less dependent and vulnerable. This occurs as the child relates to peers, school and the wider community. Puberty (ages 12-13) provides a bridge from middle childhood to adolescence, which is the culmination of the pre-adult era. The Early Adult Transition occurs roughly between 17 and 22 and serves as a critical turning point in the life cycle. During this period, the child terminates his pre-adult self and begins to establish his membership in the adult world.
Early Adulthood is the second era, beginning around 17 or 18 and terminating at about 45. Early Adulthood may be the most dramatic of all eras and is the time span which encompasses all of this study's participants. Early in the era, the young adult is experiencing peak biological and psychological functioning. At the other end of this era, as the adult passes 40, a new season makes its presence felt. The period between 20 and 40 is a time of great satisfaction and stress. The now adult person is forming a preliminary adult identity, establishing a place in society, marrying, and establishing a niche in the adult world of work. This is a time of paying societal dues, raising a family and contributing labor to the economy and to the welfare of society. In all of these major tasks, a basic sequence of "novice" to "senior" position is observed.

As compared with later eras, then, early adulthood is distinguished by its fullness of energy, capability and potential, as well as external pressure. In it, personal drives and societal requirements are powerfully intermeshed, at time reinforcing each other and at time in stark contradiction. (Levinson, et al., 1978, p.23)

At or around age 40, Early Adulthood comes to an end and Middle Adulthood begins. The Mid-Life
Transition between ages 40-45 is devoted to this passage and paves the way for the years up to age 65. Levinson views Middle Adulthood in terms of changes in biological/psychological functioning, the sequencing of generations and the evolution of careers and enterprises. If conditions/transitions are favorable, Middle Adulthood is a time of personal fulfillment, social contribution and reviewing the child and elder in oneself. (This is also Erikson's period of generativity). Culminating or turning point events during this time period generally instigate the Mid-Life Transition, during which time, a person begins to reappraise his life and the direction it has taken.

In the early sixties, Middle Adulthood ends and Late Adulthood (ages 60-85) begins. This is a time of fundamental change and is a distinctive, fulfilling season of life. The Late Adulthood Transition lasts from about 60-65 and exists basically for the same purpose as the Mid-Life Transition. During this period, a person can no longer occupy center stage and is constantly called upon to alter the relationship between society and self. This is a crucial task of Late Adulthood and corresponds with Erikson's stage of Integrity vs. Despair.
When Levinson discusses adult development, he is referring to the evolution of "life structure" through a standard sequence of periods. "By 'life structure' he means the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (Levinson, et al., 1978, p.41). A person's life has many components: relationships, career and roles, for example. According to Levinson, life structure evolves through a series of periods. Everyone lives through the same periods, but in radically unique ways. The life structure can be considered in terms of three perspectives: (1) The individual's sociocultural world as it impinges upon him, (2) Some aspects of a person's self are lived out while others are inhibited or neglected, and (3) man's participation in the world (Levinson, et al., 1978, pp.41-42). The life structure consists of alternating structure-building and structure changing periods - eras and transitional periods. Figure 2 illustrates the developmental periods in Early and Middle Adulthood.

The specific developmental tasks of Early and Middle Adulthood fall into basically three sets, which are essential to understanding adulthood. The first set involves building and modifying a life structure according to its specific place in the life cycle. The second set of tasks has to do with forming and modifying
Figure 2
Levinson's Developmental Periods and Transitions in Early Adulthood
single components of the life structure, such as occupations, dreams, love-marriage-family, mentoring relationships and mutual friendships. The third and final set of tasks has to do with adult individuation. These tasks involve the basic polarities of Young/Old, Destruction/Creation, Masculine/Feminine and Attachment/Separateness. In transitional periods, the task is to reiterate each polarity in a form appropriate to the new season in the life cycle.

Like Erikson and Levinson before him, Robert Kegan (1982) utilized the same concept of the person's ability to unify his experience and action in an adaptive manner. For Erikson, the concept was ego development. For Levinson, it was adult individuation. In the third and final theory, Kegan views the evolution of meaning.

Kegan - The Constructive - Developmental Framework

Kegan begins The Evolving Self (1982) by stating that "the most fundamental thing we do with what happens to us is organize it. We literally make sense. Human being is the composing of meaning, including, of course, the occasional inability to compose meaning" (p.11). The heart of Kegan's constructive-developmental framework does not lie so much in its account of stages, but in its capacity to highlight the on-going process of
evolving or meaning-making.

The constructive - developmental framework suggests that

"rather than understanding issues of differentiation and integration in the context of infancy, the phenomena of infancy are better understood in the psychological meaning of evolution, a lifetime activity of differentiating and integrating what is taken as self and what is taken as others." (Levinson, et al., 1978, p.76)

Kegan posits that the person evolves by setting terms on what is self and what is other. Evolutionary change involves a process of differentiation of self from others as well as a process of integrating self and others. These stage-like domains and the movement from one to the other are described. Growth or movement always involves a process of differentiation or "emergence from embeddedness" (Kegan, 1982, p.31), out of which one creates out of the former subject a new object; the loss of the "old me" and emergence of the "new me" in relation to self as other. In creating this new self, a natural emergency or experience of evolution occurs, and a new balance or equilibrium occurs. Kegan calls this process an evolutionary truce with the former domain. Each truce is a temporary balance between the
need for inclusion and distinctness. This process is about the development of knowing, striking a balance between subject-object, and making meaning of the world. In experiencing this activity, a person gets in touch with the source of human emotion. Kegan (1982) considers

...the meaning of each evolutionary truce for the basic organization of the psychological self - a lifespan developmental approach to object relationships which describes a sequence of emotional, motivational, and psychodynamic organizations as well as the now familiar cognitive and sociomoral ones. (p.74)

Each qualitative change from one domain to another is a response to the complexity of the world, a recognition of how the world and self are distinct, yet more related. Each change produces greater differentiation of self from the world and a greater integration of the former self. Kegan refers to these changes as the creation of balances, beginning at birth and ending in later adulthood. He also suggests that to move through each change, a person must perform three functions: confirmation (holding on), contradiction (letting go), continuity (staying put for reintegration).

Stage 0 or the Incorporative Self is embedded in reflexes, sensing and moving. The primary caretaker is
the focus, and in Function 1, the infant literally holds on, depends upon the other. In letting go (Function 2), the young toddler is encouraged to emerge, become less dependent. The caretaker stops nursing, reduces carrying and recognizes the toddler's independence. In creating continuity (Function 3), the young child becomes part of the larger culture, that is the family. High risk is created in this stage when the primary caretaker and the infant experience prolonged separation.

Stage 1, the Impulsive Balance, is characterized by embeddedness in impulse and perception. The parenting culture is the focus. During confirmation (Function 1) the child is permitted to fantasize and have intense attachments to parents, which sometimes results in sibling or other rivalries. As the child experiences contradiction (Function 2), (s)he is encouraged to let go of fantasy and impulse. The child is held responsible for feelings, and is excluded from the home as (s)he experiences school. The child is recognized for self and other sufficiency, and in Function 3 (Continuity) becomes part of the wider culture of school and peer relations. At this stage the child is exposed to high risk if there is a dissolution of the marriage or the family unit, especially during the transition
stage (ages 5-7).

Stage 2, the Imperial Balance, sees the creation of a self concept (what I am). The child has a private world, needs, interests and wishes. (S)he recognizes school and family as institutions of authority and role differentiation. The peer group requires role taking, self sufficiency and competence during the confirmation function. As the preadolescent and adolescent grows and lets go (Function 2) of the embeddedness in self-sufficiency, (s)he recognizes and demands mutuality and trust-worthiness in relationships. During Function 3 (Continuity) school and family become secondary to shared internal experiences, friendships. The period of high risk in this stage is between the ages of 12-16, when family relocation can cause great difficulty.

In Stage 3, the Interpersonal Balance, the self is embedded in mutuality and becomes conversational. Personal conflicts are in choosing between two realities. In Function 1, the young adult orients him/herself to the internal state, shared experiences, feelings and moods. There is no "self" to share with others; instead the other is required to bring the self into being. In letting go during Function 2, the young person is interested in association, demands that the other assume responsibility and asserts the other's
independence. In Function 3, interpersonal partners permit relationships to be placed into a bigger context of ideology and self definition. A transitional period of high risk occurs when interpersonal partners leave during Function 3. While in Stage 3, the other is how one completes him/herself and creates the context for self definition. In Stage 4, the adult person recognizes this and claims both sides as his/her own, bringing them to the self. In Stage 4, the **Institutional Balance**, the person gains a sense of self, self reliance and self ownership. The adult moves from "being relationships" to "having relationships". Typically, the person is embedded in a career, and admission to the public arena. During confirmation (Function 1), the adult acknowledges his/her capacity for independence and self definition. The adult exercises personal enhancement, ambition and achievement and chooses a "career" vs. a "job", a "life partner" vs. a "helpmate". During contradiction (Function 2), the person emerges from embeddedness in independent self-definition. (S)he will not accept non-intimate, subordinate relationships. In Function 3 (Continuity), the person experiences the limits of the form, surrendering identification with the form while preserving the form. A period of high risk occurs
during the Function 3 transition, when one loses ideological supports. In the final stage, Interindivual Balance, a self that can reflect upon, or take as object, the purposes which were formerly the subject of one's attentions is created. There is a self to be brought to others, rather than derived from others. One has a career, rather than being the career. The adult is embedded in the culture of intimacy and is capable of genuine adult love. (S)he acknowledges the capacity for interdependence and for self-surrender.

Kegan sees the tension between the Self in Stage 3 and the Self in Stage 5 as a life long tension. Of the multitude of hopes people experience, these two seem to subsume the others.

One of these might be called the yearning to be included, a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied. The other might be called the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience one's distinctiveness, the self-choseness of one's directions, one's individual integrity. (Kegan, 1982, p.107)

This tension creates the notion of life itself.

In resolving the lifelong tension for inclusion and distinctiveness, an evolutionary truce for each balance is created. A continual moving back and forth in favor
of autonomy at one stage, progresses to inclusion at the next stage. With this motion, Kegan creates a conception of development depicted as a spiral or helix (see Figure 3). The model does not assume that one yearning is better than the next and makes evident the way people revisit old issues, but at a whole new level of complexity. In the danger or crisis of growth, one experiences opportunity. People do not go back, but come through to a new integration and direction.

The majority of this study's participants are in Stage 4 or are just beginning to deal with the transition to Stage 5. They are struggling with a self in relation to career, marriage and family. As adults, they are engaging in self exploration, information-gathering and the reconstruction of personal goals.

Synthesis of Adult Development Theories in this Study

The developmental theories of Erikson, Levinson and Kegan gave focus to the lives of the child welfare workers interviewed in this study. (See Figure 4 for a comparison of stages evident in study participants). They clarified developmental tasks, crises and perceptions which were clear in the biographical data. From Erikson, Stages 6 and 7 provided guidance for the understanding of the life tasks the study participants
Figure 3
Kegan's Evolutionary Truces
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Erikson</th>
<th>Levinson</th>
<th>Kegan</th>
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<td><strong>Intimacy vs Isolation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Early Adult Transition to Age 30 Transition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Interpersonal and Early Institutional</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
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<td>Accepting/Rejecting Life Structure</td>
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<td><strong>Generativity vs Stagnation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Settling Down Mid-Life Transition Entering Middle Adulthood</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
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<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Developing identity</td>
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<td>Career</td>
<td>Struggle with the value of life</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Generation</td>
<td>Questioning/Searching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Figure 4**
Comparison of Stages Evident in Study Participants
were experiencing at the point of the study.

In Stage 6, Intimacy vs. Isolation, the participant would be facing the choice of entering the profession of child welfare, choosing a marriage partner, and perhaps starting a family. The successful completion of Stage 6 allows a person to achieve intimacy with others, which can be viewed as a condition for helping others as a professional. Stage 7 places emphasis on productivity, creativity and care. The work place and colleagues are important in this stage, as is the perpetuation and care for the next generation. Children are viewed as the trust of the community. Successfully passing through Stage 7, Generativity vs. Stagnation creates the potential for fostering the development of others, as well as productivity and creativity in the work place. Failure to master the demands of this stage results in stagnation, total self interest and possibly burnout. Together Erikson's Stages 6 and 7 provide a framework for understanding how career selection and longevity in that career occur developmentally through the accomplishment of intimacy and generativity.

From Levinson, this study draws on the eras of Early and Middle Adulthood. Like Erikson, Levinson stresses the emergence of the adult person who is establishing him/herself in terms of career selection,
personal identity and relationships. Levinson stresses that this is a time of paying societal dues through raising a family and contributing to the economy and the welfare of society. These are basic tasks of Erikson's Stages 6 and 7. Intimacy and generativity are implied in Levinson's description of Early Adulthood. Middle Adulthood is nearly identical to Erikson's period of generativity. It is a time of personal fulfillment, societal contribution and commitment to future generations. The young adult progressing through Early Adulthood advances from being a novice to a senior and begins to evaluate the events of his/her life in preparation for the Mid-Life Transition. Using Levinson's theory, this study's participants would be in the process of building and modifying their life structures and creating an adult identity for themselves.

Drawing from Kegan's theory, one can place the study participants in Stage 4, the Institutional Balance. This stage incorporates the majority of developmental tasks defined by Erikson and Levinson, but moves beyond the tasks into the realm of making meaning of the tasks for the individual. Kegan suggests that the adult moves from "being a career" into an independent sense of self and self ownership. The adult
begins to emerge from total self definition by others to
definition of self by self, in preparation for Stage 5
or Interindividual Balance. During Stage 5, adults
bring a self to others, rather than deriving themselves
from others. This is an important task to accomplish in
a helping field like child welfare. Successfully moving
into the Interindividual Balance allows professionals
to be intimate and interdependent without having their
identities defined by others whom they may serve or with
whom they work.

The developmental theories of Erikson, Levinson and
Kegan inform understanding of the child welfare
workers interviewed in this study. The participants are
involved in creating and refining their identities as
individuals, parents, mates and employees. They are
struggling with issues related to societal contributions
and their commitment to future generations. At the same
time, they are involved in the lives of the community's
high risk families and children and are working in
formal, bureaucratic organizations which on some level
may cause them conflict. It is, therefore, impossible
to understand the lives of public child welfare workers
without discussing the organizational context of its
practice and the impact of the bureaucracy on the
professional.
2. The Formal Organization

When discussing public child welfare, one must examine some specific elements of the formal organizations in which workers practice. The specific elements can be conceptualized as a mutually interactive model. The elements of the model operate in the general environment which incorporates everything from the broader society down to the individual's personal piece of reality.

Within the environment is the organization in which the individual is employed, with all of the special traits and idiosyncrasies specific to it. Within the organization, the individual employee constantly interacts with the administrators and peers/co-workers, and the organization as a system. Each one of these elements possesses its own characteristics and reality within the broad environment and within the organization. The Mutually Interactive Model is illustrated in Figure 5.

The conceptualization of this model is supported by many current organizational and management theorists. According to Giddens (1987),

[t]here is no social system which does not mingle presence and absence in respect to interaction.
Figure 5
Mutually Interactive Model
That is to say, no particular context is entered de novo, but exists in conjunction with an indefinite string of other contexts influencing current interaction...(p.146)

In a discussion of formal organizations, Blau and Scott (cited in Shafritz, 1987) make a distinction between formal and social organizations, which supports the interactive concept. They explain that social organizations are constituted by social relations among individuals who ultimately join to form a group. Organizations are characterized by shared beliefs and orientations, common values and norms, which become the social structure and the culture of that type of organization. Formal organizations, on the other hand, have been created for a specific purpose. In every formal organization, there arise informal organizations which create their own values, norms and social relations. The roots of the informal organizations are embedded in the formal organization and are emphasized through interaction. There is also an effect on the formal organization through interaction with the social organizations in the outer environment.

The school of theorists interested in organizational culture have also examined what occurs within organizations as a result of multiple
interactions inside and outside of the organization itself:

...Organizations are not easy to define in time and space. They are themselves open systems in constant interaction with their many environments, and they consist of many subgroups, educational units, hierarchical layers and geographically dispersed segments...
(Shafritz, 1987, p.384)

This school of theorists believe that culture exists in an organization. It is comprised of values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts and patterns of behavior. Culture is an unseen and unobservable force behind activities that can be seen and observed in organizations. Culture, in a sense, is like the personality of the organization, and as such, can control organizational behavior. Like personalities, every culture is different and is shaped by the societal culture, technology, markets, competition and the personalities of its leaders. Cultural meanings are believed to be established by and among the people in those organizations. According to Schein (cited in Shafritz, 1987) in "Defining Organizational Culture", 
...Culture is...a deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define... an organization's view of itself and its environment... These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problem of survival in its external environment...Culture is...a learned product of group experience...(1987, p.384)

Schein also found three basic elements of organizational culture:

a- artifacts (the physical and social environment)
b- individual and group values
c- theories and assumptions that guide behavior and learning

Clearly a key to the culture of an organization lies in the personalities and socialization of the individuals of which it is comprised. One might say that individual perseverance is contingent upon the degree of interaction and assimilation an individual has with small groups sharing the same values and norms within the organization. One could then review burnout and perseverance as system concepts.

For professionals working in public child welfare systems, organizational and professional socialization have a special caveat. Public child
welfare is a governmental entity that is generally practiced in complex bureaucracies. Because of the legal constraints, politics and the changeable nature of government, the field is always in turmoil.

Bureaucracy, in Weber's ideal sense, consists of the following characteristics:

- Strict division of labor
- Well-defined authority hierarchy
- High formulation of roles
- Impersonal nature
- Employment decisions based on merit
- Established career tracks for employees
- Distinct separation of organizational and personal lives
  (Robbins, 1987, p.233)

Weber intended for the ideal bureaucracy to be the ultimate efficiency machine, with the behavior of people to be predetermined by the standardized structure and process. The goals of the bureaucracy were intended to be clear and specific and the authority structure was to operate along a single vertical line.

Weber's ideal bureaucracy did not anticipate the inefficient dinosaur it has sometimes become. Bureaucracy itself is not intrinsically negative and inefficient. It is a structure that, depending on its operation, can be highly efficient or inefficient. The dysfunctional consequences of bureaucracy include:
1. Goal displacement where rules are more important than ends and therefore people will do the minimum to get by.

2. Inappropriate application of rules and regulations where the organization responds to unique situations as routine.

3. Employee alienation as a result of feeling like a cog in the wheel instead of an individual.

4. Concentration of power at the top.

5. Non-member frustration in the outer environment as a result of the "red tape" of complex rules and regulations. (Robbins, 1987, p.235)

Unfortunately, public child welfare has been implemented within dysfunctional bureaucracies that are characterized more by rules than by helping. This is especially disconcerting to professionals trained to help and not to attend to complex organizational details. This dysfunctional bureaucratic picture suggests that workers must settle for mediocrity because bureaucracy can do no better than that. Routinization appears to be the only way bureaucracies can live. Workers may appear to have professional autonomy and choice, but only as much as the hierarchy allows.

Anthony Downs (1967) discusses additional characteristics of bureaucratic organizations in Inside Bureaucracy. Downs suggests that the older the bureaucracy is, the less likely it is to degenerate or
die. Leaders become more willing to shift major purposes to keep it alive. The older it is, the more integrated into society it becomes. It serves more social functions and, as such, becomes more diversified to protect itself from fluctuations in demand. Looking back to Chapter I, one can see that this has been the case with public child welfare, especially over the last decade. The definition of public child welfare practice has gotten broader and broader, thus keeping it a viable entity in the social environment.

Downs (1967) goes on to define the organization as "a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons explicitly created to achieve specific ends" (p. 24). According to Downs, an organization is a bureaucracy if it is large and a majority of its members are full time workers who depend upon their employment for most of their income, thus creating commitment to the bureaucracies and; if the initial hiring, promotion and retention of staff is based on an assessment of the way they have performed their organizational role. Downs asserts that Weber's characteristics of bureaucracy are subsumed under this definition and become secondary characteristics. Downs does not view bureaucracy as a pejorative term. A bureaucrat is merely a person who works for a large
organization on a full time basis and who is evaluated for his/her role performance.

Bureaucracies, however, do take on lives of their own, sharing internal characteristics common to them all. Downs (1967) discusses seven internal characteristics:

* A hierarchical structure of formal authority
* Hierarchical formal communications networks
* Extensive systems of formal rules
* An informal structure of authority
* Informal/personal communications networks
* Formal impersonality of operations
* Intensive personal loyalty/personal involvement among officials, particularly in the highest ranks of the hierarchy. (p. 49)

With close examination, one can see not only Weber's influence, but also a description of public child welfare as it exists today.

Downs (1967) goes on to discuss how specific people act in bureaucracies. He classifies them into three types; climbers, conservers and mixed motive. If Down's types are accurate, the study participants perhaps fit the descriptions. Climbers are people who seek to maximize their own power, income and prestige.
They always desire more and pursue their ambition through promotion, aggrandizement and jumping to other jobs outside. (p. 92) Conservers live by holding on to what they have got. They maximize security and convenience and maintain their level of power, income, and prestige. Conservers maximize convenience which means they reduce their efforts to the minimum possible level. Conservers have an asymmetrical attitude toward change. They do not want to lose and do not really desire more. They do not want to change the status quo, and are the opposite of climbers. Conservers may differ from climbers in their basic personality, their expectations or both. Their personalities tend to be self-effacing and cautious. They feel inferior or indifferent to change and growth. (p. 94) Mixed motive workers seek goals connected to the public interest. They are partly driven by altruism, but also by how they individually perceive the public interest. Mixed motive workers can range from being aggressive loners to being optimistic advocates and everything in between. Outside observers may see them as espousing broad views, but taking very little action. (p. 101)

A different conception of formal organization was developed by Blau and Scott in their 1962 text. They classify organizations according to the primary
beneficiaries of the structure. There are four basic types of organizations: mutual-benefit associations, business concerns, service organizations and commonweal organizations. The primary beneficiary for each organization is different. Mutual benefit associations benefit the membership. Business concerns benefit the owners. Commonweal organizations benefit the public at large, and service organizations benefit the client group they serve. This study dealt with service organizations.

According to Blau and Scott (1962) there are also four basic types of persons in any formal organization: members of the rank and file; owners and managers; clients and people outside of the organization who regularly have contact with it, and; the public at large who are members of the society where the organization operates. Primary beneficiaries are not the only beneficiaries of organizations. Each of the above mentioned groups also makes a contribution to the organization in return for benefits received, that is, employment, advancement, and so forth. This study focused mainly on the members of the rank and file who serve the clients and people outside of the organization in service oriented organizations.
Blau and Scott (1962) define service organizations as those

whose primary beneficiary is the part of the public in direct contact with the organization, with whom and on whom its members work—in short, an organization whose basic function is to serve clients. (p. 51)

Crucial problems exist for service organizations when there is conflict between service to clients and administrative procedures. If a service organization becomes overly bureaucratized, it becomes preoccupied with procedures, and therefore, administrative rigidities which impede professional services to clients develop. If members of the professional staff lose interest in their clients as a result of administrative rigidity or self interest, services suffer because the energy of the organization is directed away from the primary beneficiary. This phenomenon occurs in the interface between professional service provision and the welfare of clients.

the client is vulnerable subject to exploitation, and dependent on the integrity of the professional to whom he has come for help... the professional's decisions are expected to be governed not by his own self-interest but by his
judgement of what will serve the client's interest best. The professions are institutionalized to assure, in the ideal case, that the practitioner's self-interest suffers if (s)he seeks to promote it at the expense of optimum service to clients. (Blau and Scott, 1962,p.51)

The dilemma of the professional in a service organization is that (s)he must not lose sight of the welfare of the client through self interest or preoccupation with administrative problems (such as adherence to procedures) but must also not become a captive of the clients by relinquishing professional decision-making power. For public child welfare professionals, these issues become more complicated because of the publics they are associated with: the public at large, representing society, funders and regulators and the public served representing the client population. Society has very clear expectations about the protection of children, which sometimes clash with what organizations deliver through the bureaucratic structure. Blau and Scott indicate that the publics addressed by service organizations are one and the same. This assertion is validated in public child welfare organizations who do serve both publics. Child abuse and neglect cut across all socioeconomic and cultural groups, and public entities are mandated by law to serve
all public citizens.

*Formal Organizations* (1962) is perhaps most well known for the discussion by Blau and Scott on professional and bureaucratic orientations. Their discussion is a crucial underpinning of this study as the study participants are professionals functioning in complex bureaucratic settings. Blau and Scott (1962) see many similarities and contrasts in the underlying characteristics of professionalism and bureaucracy and focus on some basic principles:

1 - Professional decisions and actions are governed by universal standards which are derived from a body of specialized knowledge and training. Practice then consists of applying that knowledge to particular cases. Bureaucratic administration does not vary greatly in this respect. According to Blau and Scott, it is also governed by principles and specialized, technical training. Training in the bureaucracy tends to be shorter than professional training.

2 - There is a specificity of professional expertness which makes no claims to generalized wisdom. The same is true of bureaucracy where "specialization is the key to expertness and the essence of bureaucracy is circumscribed authority" (p. 61).
3 - Professional relations with clients are characterized by affective neutrality, professional distance and reasoned judgement. Relationships between bureaucrats and clients are marked by detachment also.

4 - Professional status is achieved by performance. Success is determined by performance which is judged by colleagues. Similarly, bureaucrats are appointed to positions because of technical qualifications rather than connections. Their career is guided by objective, expert criteria.

5 - Professional decisions cannot be based on self-interest. Professionals are interested in advancement, but client welfare outweighs self interest. "Structure of a profession tends to make the practitioner's own interests dependent on his serving the interests of his clients to the best of his abilities..." (p. 62). Services are rendered without attention to the ability to pay and are based on need. Similarly, the bureaucracy embodies the same tenets as a result of the focus on the primary beneficiary. This principle applies only to service organizations where the publics are not differentiated.

6 - Professions have a distinctive control structure which is very different from that of bureaucracies. Professions are controlled externally by professional
associations who are a collegial group of peers. Bureaucracies, on the other hand, are controlled through a hierarchy of authority where performance is controlled by the directives of superiors. This principle is the major factor distinguishing professionals from bureaucrats.

As one can see, the professional in the bureaucratic setting could be subjected to a good deal of role conflict. According to Blau and Scott (1962) these dilemmas are handled differently depending on the orientation the worker adopts. If the individual adopts the professional orientation, (s)he will maintain the professional identity and get support primarily from colleagues outside the formal organization. If the individual adopts the bureaucratic orientation, (s)he will show less commitment to specialized skills and identify more with the organization in which (s)he is employed. This individual is more concerned with the approval by superiors inside the organization. Finally, the individual can adopt the mixed orientation which pulls pieces from both professional and bureaucratic. An individual with this perspective may maintain connections with external collegial groups, but also operates within the confines of the formal organization.
The crucial underlying factor

... is not so much the visibility of performance as the nature of the limits of professional opportunity. If there is little opportunity for advancement within the profession, regardless of the organization by which a professional is employed, a commitment to professional skills comes into conflict with aspirations for advancement. (p. 70)

If there is good opportunity to advance in the profession but the opportunity is more restricted in some organizations than in others, professional commitment will conflict with loyalty to the organization. If the professional stays due to loyalty to the organization, professional affiliation is weakened (Blau and Scott, 1962). Following Blau and Scott's reasoning, professionals in bureaucracies may

... surrender their professional ambitions in favor of administrative aspirations, or simply restrict their level of aspiration and remain content to carry on their work in ways defined by the organization. (p. 71)

Similarly, if their identification with outside reference groups is strong, they become less reliant on the bureaucracy for their professional identity and are
less affected by organizational pressures. In such cases, the professional will be more prone to deviate from administrative standards in the interest of the client (Blau and Scott, 1962). Those fundamental conflicts between professional and bureaucratic orientation have an impact on two other areas of formal organizations: coordination/communication and bureaucratic discipline versus professional expertness.

The free flow of communication contributes to problem solving through the exchange of ideas, criticism and advice throughout the organization. According to Blau and Scott (1962), this free flow communication is important because social support relieves the anxiety associated with decision-making and provides an error correction mechanism through the utilization of individual viewpoints which challenge and support one another. Communication also encourages competition for respect, which increases individual incentives for making and challenging conflicting suggestions.

Communication can become an impediment to system coordination, however, when competing interests create a battleground of ideas and alternatives. Coordination requires one consensual plan. Free flowing communication can make the group superior to the individual when looking for the best solution and vice
versa when the task is coordination. Professional interests may become very conflictual in the scheme of bureaucratic coordination, because professional interests may not be for the good of the whole organization.

According to Blau and Scott (1962), organizational decisions must be governed by universalistic standards which are independent of personal considerations for both the professional and the bureaucrat. As stated previously, both orientations are similar on professional distance, require highly specialized training and rely on an achieved rather than an ascribed status. Yet, they are very different in three major respects that set them up to be conflictual. First, the professional has a norm of service and a code of ethics to guide him/her in addressing the needs/interests of clients. The bureaucrat, on the other hand, represents and promotes the organization. In service organizations these coincide to a degree but they also often conflict. Service organizations are oriented to the good of the whole, not each individual client. At times the good of one must be sacrificed for the sake of the other. Secondly, the bureaucrat and professional relate to different lines of authority. The bureaucrat is sanctioned by policy, mandates and law. The
professional, on the other hand, is rooted in expertise and specialization. Lastly, bureaucratic decisions are governed by compliance with directives from superiors, whereas professionals are governed by internalized professional standards. When the two are combined, bureaucratic management must base its decisions on administrative considerations, which sometimes conflict with professional considerations. (Blau and Scott, 1962)

Professionals in bureaucracies resolve those issues in different ways (Blau and Scott, 1962). Some adopt management as their reference group; others relate to their professional colleagues. Those oriented to the profession are less attached to the organization, more critical of it, and less confined by bureaucratic procedure. They perform well professionally, but are not standard bearers for the organization. This is a constant dilemma for professionals in formal organizations, such as public child welfare agencies.

Conceptually, this discussion of adult development and formal organizational theory provides the lens through which this research viewed the public child welfare professional, as an individual and as a member of an organization. It looked at them individually, struggling with identity and meaning making issues and organizationally struggling with professional identity
issues while practicing in the confines of a bureaucracy.
CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Rationale for Naturalistic Inquiry

In selecting a research methodology to answer the research questions delineated in Chapter I, it was important that the paradigm fit the humanness and sensitivity of the topic. It was desirable that the research be a process as well as a product and that the process be defined and redefined as the research progressed. Because human behavior is dynamic, the research paradigm could not be finite, nor ever complete. Furthermore, this research called for a methodology that allowed the researcher to be the instrument used to gain knowledge. The naturalistic paradigm met these criteria.

The Human Instrument

The method employed in this research is based on assumptions which flow from the propositions put forth by Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985). The major assumption is that naturalistic inquiry must be carried out in a natural setting and
demands a human instrument, "...one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered..." (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.87). This is the basic tenet upon which most qualitative research rests. Little can be understood about a phenomenon without attention being paid to the time and the totality of the context that created and supported it. Because of the focus on the context, the researcher must become so much a part of it that (s)he no longer can be viewed as a disturbing element.

The use of the human instrument is not a new concept. Certainly, classical anthropology and modern sociology have relied heavily on its use. Yet, it becomes even more important as a tool in naturalistic inquiry where the human is the only tool that has the flexibility and characteristics necessary to deal with the indeterminacy of the social phenomena being studied.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that there are specific characteristics that uniquely qualify the human as the appropriate instrument in qualitative studies. They are as follows:

1. Responsiveness
2. Adaptability
3. Holistic emphasis
4. Knowledge base expansion
5. Processual immediacy
6. Opportunities for clarification
and summarization
7. Opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses...
(p.193-4)

These characteristics are exactly those which make the use of the human instrument most valuable in the current research.

The human instrument can respond and sense the many personal and environmental cues that come to light in the study of human behavior and social problems. A human being can adapt to and collect information at many levels all at one time, which is necessary in studying the quickly changing interpersonal world. In addition to its adaptability, the human instrument is the only instrument that can process a complex, holistic picture all at one time and be able to generate and test hypotheses immediately in the very situation in which they are created. The human instrument also has the unique capability of summarizing data on the spot and feeding them back to the respondent for clarification and explanation of any atypical or idiosyncratic responses that might have occurred. The human instrument is capable of learning from experience and refining itself quickly as necessary and is geared towards everyday life, incorporating methods that are extensions of daily human activities, such as
observation, listening and speaking.

According to Norman Denzin (1989) in The Research Act, the naturalistic researcher is also committed to other methodological considerations integral to this study:

1. Combining a native's symbolic meanings with ongoing patterns of interactions
2. Adopting the perspective of the other and viewing the world from the subject's point of view while maintaining a distinction between every day and scientific reality
3. Linking the native's symbols and definitions with the social situation
4. Recording behavior settings of interaction
5. Adopting methods capable of reflecting process, change and stability
6. Viewing the research act as an instance of symbolic interaction
7. Using sensitizing concepts (p.70-71)

Naturalistic interaction demands that the researcher actively enter the worlds of local people so as to render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of a theory that is grounded in the behaviors, languages and definitions, feelings and attitudes of those studied. These were important correlations for the current research. In asking workers extensive personal questions about themselves, their decision-making and
their experiences, a great deal of introspection and individuality of information was expected. For all of the previously mentioned reasons, naturalistic inquiry and the human instrument were the most responsive methods for this type of research.

Grounded Theory

In utilizing the qualitative research methodology which focuses on elements such as the human instrument, experiential knowledge, purposive sampling and analytic induction, a different approach to theory development must also be taken. Grounded theory, or theory that is developed as the data are collected, is an essential piece in making sense of the multiple realities encountered in field research. Grounded theory has particular relevance for social work because it captures the intricacies of everyday life on the micro level. It develops a holistic view of phenomena and explains occurrences through a systems perspective. Grounded theory is open-ended and contextual. Its usage also allows the researcher to adjust the theory as the data indicate.

It is important to note that using grounded theory means making an assumption that existent theory is not entirely useful to explain the phenomena under
investigation. That assumption was made in this study, because existing theory has only looked at the "leaving" phenomena of public child welfare workers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a distinction must be made between investigators who know by existent theory what they must find out (conventional research) and investigators who do not know by existent theory what they must find out (naturalistic research). The two situations require very distinctive forms of theory utilization and research design. This study falls in the naturalistic category, because there is no specific existent theory to give meaning to the personal staying experiences of child welfare workers. There have been many attempts to look at the bureaucratic setting of public child welfare practice, burnout and the professional's exodus from the field. These have been quantitative encounters with the phenomena and lack the personal explanations that only individuals can give.

A naturalistic inquirer relies on an emergent design to develop grounded theory. A qualitative study would be suspect if the initial design was fully developed and explicated. This is not to say, however, that the researcher starts out empty-handed. Existing theory, literature and previous related studies may be
useful in providing orientation and guidance about what phenomena are relevant to the research question. As such, prior theory provides a lens with which to examine data as described in the conceptual framework. In naturalistic research one must make certain that prior theory is a good "fit" to the current context under investigation. Furthermore, one uses existing theory more flexibly in qualitative research than in other kinds of research. (Zaharlick and Green, in press) Accordingly, the theory that constitutes one's conceptual framework is subject to criticism if the data do not support the theory.

In addition, the naturalistic researcher must possess a great deal of field knowledge about the phenomena so as not to overlook the intricacies of the multiple realities represented. As the research proceeds, it becomes more focused; elements begin to emerge, insights grow, and theory begins to be grounded in the data being gathered. It is at this point that interpretations can be formed and elements tested out within the research setting. A product of this testing will be negotiated outcomes, hypotheses, interpretations or theories that can be agreed upon by the participants of the study.
In Interpretive Interactionism, Denzin (1989a) outlines six phases or steps in the interpretive process. These steps are closely aligned to the steps used in developing grounded theory and were used in this study.

1-framing the research question
2-deconstruction and critical analysis of prior conceptions of the phenomena
3-capturing the phenomenon, including locating and situating it in the natural world and obtaining multiple instances of it
4-bracketing the phenomenon, reducing it to its essential elements, and cutting it loose from the natural world so that its essential structures and features may be uncovered
5-construction, or putting the phenomenon back together in terms of its essential parts, pieces and structures
6-contextualization, or relocating the phenomenon back in the natural social world... (p.48)

The interpretive process assumes the inquirer works from his/her own experience. It requires the ability to think biographically, historically, reflectively and comparatively about the phenomena under investigation. Through the above steps, the inquirer seeks to give meaning to the people studied. The interpretive process puts the inquirer and the subject in the center of the process.
Selection of Study Participants

The participants in this study were recruited from a pool of child welfare practitioners actively working in public child welfare agencies in the state of Ohio. The participants were identified through several methods. The first and predominant method was identification through the Public Children Services Agencies Organization, which is the statewide network of Children Services administrators. Participants were recruited through a written request sent to agency executives and through informal networking with the administrative office of the organization. (See Appendix A for letters) The second method of identifying participants was through formal and informal networks available to the inquirer, who has practiced in several capacities in the field of public child welfare during the majority of the last ten years. The inquirer was and currently is active in several formal committees in the field. She has also practiced in two different counties and has done regional training in Central and Southwestern Ohio. Both experiences assisted in providing an extensive informal network of colleagues who were potential participants/informants. The final method of identifying participants was through "word-of-mouth" identification by other participants. Utilizing
these different methods of identification in the study provided the broadest possible range of information, and a maximum variation sampling. In this type of sampling, the inquirer expanded the sample until informational redundancy was reached. At that point, sampling was terminated.

The participants met the following criteria:

1 - They attained a BSW or related degree (i.e. Social Services, Psychology, Family Development) in the course of their career, or were license eligible in the State of Ohio.

2 - They practiced in the field of public child welfare for a minimum of five years.

3 - They currently performed some degree of direct service.

4 - They had not practiced in an area outside of child welfare for a period exceeding two consecutive years.

5 - They had not recently (within the last year) returned to the field after practicing in another area of social work.

These criteria were selected to yield a group of participants who had social work or related training and advanced experience in the field of public child welfare. They also were selected to assure that
the participant had direct service experience in public child welfare, was currently practicing in public child welfare and had not recently returned to the field after practicing elsewhere. Additionally, the criteria were selected so as to not eliminate participants who had left the field and returned to it at some point in their career. The 18 informants represented three rural, three mid-size and two metropolitan counties across the midsection of Ohio. Their personal characteristics will be discussed more fully in Chapter V.

Data Collection

Prior to the consideration of entering the field to collect data, several procedural issues were considered. The inquirer established an oversight committee composed of three skilled social work academicians. The oversight committee was the inquirer's dissertation committee and, as such, were involved in finalizing the study design, assisting the inquirer in the protection of human subjects, and in acting as impartial observers in the study process. In addition to the oversight committee, the inquirer established a panel of experts consisting of three other professionals. Two members met the preliminary criteria for the study, and one was
a faculty member in an undergraduate social work program. The panel of experts acted as a sounding board for the inquirer in developing the questions for the guided life history format and also acted as a final member check as the data were collected, synthesized and refined. The panel of experts reviewed and concurred with the findings. The panel of experts was actually a reality check for the researcher so that the truth value of the data could be tested and assured. In addition to the panel of experts, member checking was employed throughout the study and again at the termination of the study.

The researcher adopted a primarily biographical inquiry for this study. This method fit all of the important considerations previously discussed. The biographical method assumes that human behavior can be understood from the perspectives of the people involved.

The researcher was also interested in working at the relationship between the participants' personal experiences into the total child welfare experience. The participants' individual stories and interpretations were the central data for this study.

The researcher collected data from participants in three different ways: a written, guided life history, completion of the Human Services Survey (MBI), and a
follow-up, audio-recorded interview. The written life history was used to guide the oral interview which followed. The Written Life History captured biographical data in five areas: general background information, self-description, relationships, education and professional experiences. The purpose of the oral interview was to refine the life history information and to explore the issues involved in the relationship between current employment and the life history. The interviews were audiotaped and further supported by the inquirer's field journal notes. Transcripts of the interviews were used to corroborate and integrate the data and for the final report. The life history format and interviews were piloted and refined in collaboration with the panel of experts before the actual process was initiated with participants. (See Appendix B for question formats). A major change occurred through the pilot phase. A set of questions related to organizational culture, professional mentoring and career decisions was added to help organize the oral interview process and to give it more continuity.

The life history data collection methods were geared to assist the inquirer to use "thick description" when writing the accounts of the participants' experiences. Thick description contextualizes these
experiences and allows the reader to share them vicariously. It further built on the multiple, triangulated, biographical methods employed. Using these methods allowed for both cognitive and emotional understanding of the participants' life experiences.

The MBI (Human Services Survey) and Human Services Demographic Sheet (HSDI) were administered to add additional credibility to the qualitative data collected in the life histories and oral interviews. The HSDI elicited basic demographic data on the participants. The MBI instrument was designed to measure three aspects of the burnout syndrome. It was selected to triangulate the biographical data and to measure the presence/absence of burnout in the study participants. This is a twenty-five item form written as statements about personal feelings or attitudes. The nine item Emotional Exhaustion scale describes feelings of being overextended and exhausted. The Depersonalization scale contains five items describing unfeeling and impersonal feelings towards service recipients. The eight item Personal Accomplishment scale describes feelings of competence and achievement in one's work with people.

The MBI has been developed and refined over the last ten years to its present form. Internal consistency and reliability have been established for the MBI by
repeated use on over 9,000 human service and education professionals.

Convergent validity of the MBI has been demonstrated in several ways: 1) correlation with behavioral ratings made by an individual (spouse or co-worker) who knew the study participant well, 2) correlated with job characteristics expected to contribute to burnout, and 3) correlated to measures of various outcomes related to burnout (job dissatisfaction, family dysfunction).

The data collection proceeded as outlined below:

1. The potential participant was contacted by phone. An appointment was made with the potential participant to discuss the project and to deliver the participant packet containing the project description and consent forms.

2. At the first appointment, the inquirer discussed and oriented the interested party to the project, seeking a voluntary agreement to participate. If the agreement was achieved, the participant signed an informed consent form, which was retained by the participant and the inquirer. The participant was permitted to terminate the agreement at any time during the course of the study. After attaining the signed consent, the inquirer explained the guided life history format to the participant, and left written directions for its completion.
3. The participant completed the guided life history and returned it to the inquirer within a negotiated time frame for analysis.

4. Upon receipt and analysis of the life history, the inquirer scheduled the oral interview at a location designated by the participant.

5. The oral interview was used to develop the inquirer-participant relationship through discussion of the life history and personal experiences. It was also used to clarify life history issues and to ask new questions.

6. The inquirer immediately recorded her perceptions, impressions, etc. in her field journal.

7. Data recorded during the interview was transcribed promptly. The inquirer analyzed the data and planned for the second interview, when needed. Steps 5 through 7 were repeated until the participant and inquirer determined a conclusion. Each consecutive interview was used as an opportunity to member check previously collected data, and to reach closure and termination.

Steps 1 through 7 were repeated until maximum variation sampling occurred and informational redundancy was reached. Redundancy occurred after the fifth participant, but the decision was made to proceed with more informants to obtain wider representation and opportunity for variation and
verification. The panel of experts was used as an additional member check as the data were categorized and the process concluded.

The data, consisting of the life histories, MBI survey results, interview transcripts, the inquirer's journal, and observations from member checks were reviewed using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) until a pattern emerged. The findings were consistently checked against reality through consultation with the oversight committee, the panel of experts and the participants. In this type of methodology, data analysis really begins while the data are being collected. Each participant's information was analyzed as it was returned and compared with each previous set of data to ascertain the existence of data patterns.

Drawing from the work of Charles Pierce, Denzin (1982), discusses these processes as stages of inquiry. Denzin describes the first stage as abduction. This occurs after a body of data has been collected. Abductive insight forces the inquirer to stop and think about the substance of the existing data base. Stage two is deduction. During this phase, the inquirer must systematically define the critical concepts and the multiple instances of the behavior in question. In the
deductive phase, the inquirer can begin to explicate the tentative hypotheses formed in the abductive stage. The last stage proposed by Denzin is induction. This stage is dependent on successful reasoning in the deductive stage. How well does the process/hypotheses fit reality? The inquirer must see if the causal processes are operative and that they can be explained by the hypotheses. Negative cases force the inquirer to examine the causal process again. This examination is termed analytic induction.

Analytic induction really focuses on agreement and difference and conforms to the following abstract steps:

1- A rough definition of the problem to be explained is formulated.
2- A hypothetical explanation of that phenomena is formulated.
3- One case is studied in light of the hypothesis, with the object of determining whether or not the hypothesis fits the facts in that case.
4- If the hypothesis does not fit the facts, either the hypothesis is reformulated or the phenomenon to be explained is redefined so that the case is excluded.
5- Practical certainty can be attained after a small number of cases have been examined, but the discovery of negative cases disproves the explanation and requires a reformulation.
6- This procedure of examining cases, redefining the phenomenon, and
reformulating the hypotheses is continued until a universal relationship is established, each negative case calling for a redefinition or a reformulation. (Denzin, 1989a, p.166)

Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research has four major components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. (Lincoln and Guba, 1982) Credibility concerns the belief that reality has multiple constructions. It is the duty of the inquirer to assure that reality has been represented in a way that is correct with the participants. Credibility was assured through several methods in this study. The first was through the use of multiple data collection methods elaborated in the previous section. A second, and very important method was through the prolonged contact with participants in the field. An additional aspect of the prolonged engagement is the inquirer's familiarity and extensive experience in the field of child welfare. She has the ability to understand the culture and phenomena represented by the participants because she has experienced it herself. The last method used to assure credibility was the triangulation of the data through member checking, and the use of the panel
of experts. They provide a further reality check to ensure the research findings say precisely what the participants said. The MBI results provide a further point for data triangulation.

Transferability emphasizes the inquirer's intent not to generalize the study results beyond the given sample. It also assumes and allows for the growth and change that will take place for individuals as a result of the study. The inquirer considered this component and allowed for it by incorporating extended interviews into the data collection. This method ensured that the inquirer captured the growth and insights experienced by participants as a result of the study and normal maturation.

Dependability is related to the replicability of data as it relates to change in the participant during the course of the study. The inquirer was very concerned about this component because this study focuses on personal change and evolution. It assumes that change will occur as a part of the study and the introspective processes involved therein. The inquirer considered this component by adding the audit aspect to the design. An independent auditor can examine both the inquiry process and the product to attest that findings are supported by the data and are internally
coherent.

Confirmability relates to whether the data are logical, reliable and confirmable. Does the data explain what it should? The inquirer has considered this component and deals with it by the use of data triangulation (through the verification methods explained under "credibility"), and through the use of the reflexive field journal. These methods force the inquirer to look at the incidence of inquirer bias, the explanatory power of the data and the inquirer's efforts to take into account negative/unrelated cases.

Protection of Human Subjects

The inquirer has the responsibility of not only protecting the health and welfare of the study participants, but also the professional groups represented by the participants. It must be assured that unwarranted conclusions are not made that inadvertently reflect on them and their field of practice. Careful consideration was given to this aspect of the study as the inquirer is, indeed, a colleague and committed professional in the field of public child welfare.

Every consideration possible was made to protect the study participants. From the outset of the study,
participation was completely voluntary. If at the point of initial contact, the individual determined (s)he was not interested in involvement, no further contact by the inquirer was attempted. The second assurance was the informed consent process the participant engaged in prior to commencing the life history portion of the study. The design of the study, the purpose and activities were fully explained to the participant verbally and in writing. Prior to participation, the participant signed a consent form indicating understanding of the study and voluntary participation in the study.

Confidentiality of the participants was assured at all times. Members of the oversight committee and the panel of experts were not able to identify participants other than by fictitious names given to them for the purpose of the study. No one was given information which could be used to identify the participants. Life histories and interview tapes were identified by numbers.

During the course of the study, the tapes and files were stored in a locked file cabinet at all times when they were not in use by the inquirer or her transcriber. The list of names corresponding to the numbers were kept in a separate location. Within
five years of the termination of the study, the interview tapes will be destroyed by the inquirer.

If a participant experienced emotional distress at any point in the interview process, the inquirer was prepared to stop immediately and assist the participant. The inquirer is a credentialed clinical social worker, capable of intervening in a difficult emotional situation. If the distress was clearly problematic and beyond the scope of the inquirer's ability, the plan was to refer the participant to a mental health center for assistance. This plan never had to be utilized.

Data Analysis

As previously discussed, analysis was an on-going process in this study. The final analysis addressed the "how" and "why" question of the staying phenomena. Meaningful "staying" experiences appeared to occur in epiphanies or interactional episodes. In these epiphanies, personal and professional lives were shaped and decisions were made. The "turning point" model was developed by Denzin (1989a) as part of the elaboration of interpretive interactionism.

According to Denzin, there are basically four experiential structures, moments or epiphanies in the lives of individuals. In them, personal
experience is manifested. Epiphanies can occur in times of crisis. They may be positive or negative, yet they will alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life. Epiphanies are poignant existential moments. Some are ritualized and routinized and some are totally emergent. Meaning is only given to these turning points in retrospect. The life history questions in this study gathered retrospective data which focused on the participant reliving and re-experiencing selected life events which had affected them personally and professionally.

Denzin discussed four types of epiphanies in *Interpretive Biography* (1989a) and *Interpretive Interactionism* (1989b).

...First, there are those moments that are major and touch every fabric of a person's life. Their effects are immediate and long term. Second, there are those epiphanies that represent eruptions, or reactions, to events that have been going on for a long period of time. Third are those events that are minor yet symbolically representative of major problematic moments in a relationship. Fourth, and finally, are those episodes whose effects are immediate, but their meanings are only given later, in retrospection, and in the reliving of the event...The following names are given to these structures of experience: 1) The major epiphany,
2) the cumulative epiphany, 3) the illuminative, minor epiphany, and 4) the relived epiphany (of course, any epiphany can be relived and given new retrospective meaning). These four types may of course, build upon one another. A given event may, at different phases in a person's or relationship's life, be first, major, then minor, and then later relived. A cumulative epiphany will, of course, erupt into a major event in a person's life...(Denzin, 1989a, p.129)

In analyzing the life history data, it was important to remember that the stories told were not necessarily the stories heard. Every participant had a unique biographical position that was, in a sense unsharable. The inquirer also had a similar position. These positions merge and create a multiplicity of stories. The stories told were only as complete as the parameters of the story permitted. No life story is ever without input from the larger societal experience. To understand a life, these larger structures had to be penetrated and integrated through an understanding of the impact of culture. As culture changes, individual stories change also. Life stories are continuous and ever changing. This study captured them at one moment in time around one particular setting.
CHAPTER V

WHO ARE THE CHILD WELFARE WORKERS WHO STAY?

"...The process of becoming a child welfare professional takes time. It is a title you pay your dues to earn, and it takes more than a college degree. You learn by trial and error and one day it all settles in, comes together, the book knowledge with the application and you understand the mission. Then, you become a child welfare professional..."  
- Protective Service Worker 5

Child welfare workers do not obviously ask themselves why they stay in the field. They especially do not think of the answers to such questions as "What stands out for you about your life?" "How would you describe yourself in terms of who you really are?" "What things have motivated you or caused you to stay in child welfare?" In fact, they are taken aback when asked why they stay. They are accustomed to hearing about why people leave and not to accounting for their continuance. Yet they have interesting, provocative and special experiences to share.
This study examined the staying phenomenon, the life and work experiences of the professionals practicing child welfare in the trenches everyday. It examined self descriptions and types of turning points or epiphanies the workers experienced in their lives. Responses reflect the daily struggles and dilemmas of child welfare practitioners.

Demographics and Information

The child welfare workers who were interviewed described themselves as ordinary. At the time of the interviews, all 18 informants were employed in public child welfare agencies across the state of Ohio. They were equally distributed among metropolitan (N=5), mid-size (N=7), and rural counties (N=6). Eighty-three percent were white (N=15) and eighty-three percent were female (N=15). The mean age of the informants was 37 years with the youngest 28 and the oldest 43. The majority of the informants considered themselves to be moderately to very religious. Fifty-six percent (N=10) were Protestant and forty-four percent (N=8) were Catholic.

At the time of the study, 71 percent of the informants were married, 29 percent were single or divorced. The average length of marriage was 13 years
and 98 percent of the informants had two children living with them. Two percent had no children.

All of the informants had attended four years of college and had attained a bachelor's degree. Forty-one percent had pursued some level of graduate education with 18 percent holding a Masters degree in social work (MSW). Seventy-seven percent were direct line workers, with another 13 percent working as supervisors who also performed direct service functions.

On the average, informants worked 40 hours per week, but the range was between 24 and 50 hours. The mean number of years informants were employed in their present position was seven years, but the mean number of years spent in the child welfare field was eleven. The least senior worker had worked six years in the field; the most senior had been in the field twenty years.

The informants of the study make life and death decisions about children's lives everyday. They make assessments of the level of risk of children in crisis situations. They reunite families, place children in foster care and make decisions to sever parental rights and place children for adoption. Public child welfare workers are prime candidates for burnout, "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment...It is a response to the
chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings..." (Maslach, 1982, p.3)

Results of the Maslach Burnout Inventory

The informants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) which measured the level of their emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion typically results from emotional over-involvement and is explained as feeling drained and used up. Depersonalization or detachment results in callousness, coldness and even dehumanized responses to clients. This negativity eventually affects the individual's self concept. Burned out workers feel guilty, inadequate and like a failure, feelings that are translated into a perception of reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout, using the MBI, is viewed as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced feelings. A high degree of burnout is reflected by high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization (DP) subscales of the MBI, and low scores on the personal accomplishment (PA) subscale. A low degree of burnout is reflected by low scores on the EE and DP subscales and high scores on the PA subscale. According to Maslach (1986), "[s]cores are considered high if they
are in the upper third of the normative distribution, average if they are in the middle third, and low if they are in the lower third..."(p.2).

Table 1 shows how the informants in this study compare with the 1,538 social workers, 730 mental health professionals and almost 9,000 other professionals who participated in studies using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Clearly this study's informants fell in the average range on every dimension of the inventory. One could speculate that the study participants feel a level of exhaustion, depersonalization and accomplishment which is common among the helping professions. The difference between the study participants and other helpers may be in the way they manage their feelings over time.

Table 2 shows a comparison of Maslach's respondents' mean score and the standard deviations in comparison with those of this study's informants. The mean scores for the child welfare workers in this study were slightly lower than Maslach's respondent groups on all dimensions except Personal Accomplishment. This study's informants' mean score was from 1 to 5 points higher than that of other respondent groups on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. This difference is interesting to note. This study's informants obviously
### Table 1

**Range of Experienced Burnout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MBI Subscales</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th>Social Services</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Lower Third</td>
<td>Middle Third</td>
<td>Upper Third</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EE = 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DP = 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PA = 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE*</td>
<td>≥16</td>
<td>17-26</td>
<td>≥27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>≤6</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>≥13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>≤39</td>
<td>38-32</td>
<td>≤31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>≥16</td>
<td>17-27</td>
<td>≥28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>≤5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>≥11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>≤37</td>
<td>36-30</td>
<td>≤29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>≥13</td>
<td>14-20</td>
<td>≥21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>≤4</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>≤8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>≤34</td>
<td>33-29</td>
<td>≤28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*EE - Emotional Exhaustion
DP - Depersonalization
PA - Personal Accomplishment
### Table 2

**MBI Subscale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*EE</th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>PA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Sample (n=11,067)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>20.99</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>34.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Services (n=1,538)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>21.35</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health (n=730)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>30.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>6.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This Study (n=18)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>35.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*EE - Emotional Exhaustion  
DP - Depersonalization  
PA - Personal Accomplishment
feel rewarded by what they do in their jobs; nevertheless they also feel a modicum of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion in performing their daily tasks. One could speculate that they experience enough personal accomplishment to outweigh the other elements and therefore remain in the field. The life history and oral interview material will provide more insight into this interpretation.

Self Description

Informants were asked within the context of the Written Life History to respond to the question: How would you describe yourself in terms of who you really are"? Their responses reflect the humanness and uniqueness of each individual participant. Several general categories of responses emerged.

The majority of informants described themselves in terms of their "personal goodness," "hard work," and "sensitivity". As one worker said,

At this time in my life I think I would describe myself as sensitive and energetic. Seems like I am more relaxed and content with myself now. Sensitive, but rather compulsive...
- Foster Care Worker 1
Some describe themselves in terms of their loyalty and unwillingness to give up on anyone:

I am a personable person, and often do not meet strangers. I don't require much...I am very sensitive, and can sense other's pain...I am open and honest and am not a quitter. Sometimes I feel like quitting, but my insides won't give up. I am an industrious person, but not ambitious. I am faithful, dependable and loyal. When given a task, I put my whole heart into it...
   - Protective Services Worker 1

I really am a good person. I try to be a good friend and honest person. I reflect on my behavior a lot. I tend to throw myself into things...
   - Adolescent Worker 1

This self proclaimed goodness, industriousness and commitment to work often leads these individuals to talk about their over-involvement and getting emotionally involved with their work. They exhibit a deep sense of selflessness.

I really care about the children I work with and I know I would do almost anything for my families...
   - Protective Service Worker 2
Often the "almost anything" phrase turns into too much closeness for workers.

I am honest but am too trusting.
I get too close to people - give too much...
- Intake Worker 1

I guess I'm still prone to be too serious, but I'm working on being less serious in my relationships, striving to overcome my need to be perfect and make things perfect for others. I tend to feel selfish when I do something for me. I often compensate for this by doing something else for others...
- Protective Service Worker 2

Often these workers give a great deal of themselves to their clients and border precariously on the brink of giving too much, or becoming emotionally exhausted.

I will go the extra mile for anyone whether it is an inconvenience to me or not. I would never hurt anyone's feelings intentionally and I usually support the underdog!...
- Protective Service Worker 3

Many of these same workers also categorized their work and themselves in terms of being able to leave a mark on the world and leaving the world a little better than the way they found it. They did not talk of
recognition or reward for their efforts, but talked of what could be characterized as a "quiet contribution":

...I am a person who needs to feel useful and helpful. I am a very giving person - when I feel my support or efforts will be appreciated or make someone else's life more pleasant. I don't need the person to know who the help came from, but I do need to know that it was useful or needed. I do not expect reciprocation from the person(s) I help, but feel that there may be someone else here to lend a hand when I may be in need. I guess I could be described as the eternal optimist, as I always look first for the good in people and in situations, and can always find blessings to count...

- Foster Care Worker 2

I think my contribution to the world is for me to be a decent human being. If I can do that, I can impact people positively...

- Adoption Worker 1

I tell my children constantly to be kind to the underdog and go upward and outward rather than inward. I am an individual who strives to make a mark in the world mostly through the children I am raising, through example and through my dealings with my clients...

- Foster Care Worker 1
The remaining workers discussed themselves as being "in process," "at a crossroads" in their lives. They explained this phenomena as a need to not stagnate, a need to know themselves in a deeper way, and accepting themselves for who they are. As these workers said:

It has taken me awhile, but I like myself. To get to this point, I had to come to terms with and understand my personal preferences. I have learned to accept and deal with myself. If I don't like something, I work to change it...I am working on opening up to others even realizing the hurt that may be involved ...I never want to stagnate; I always want to grow.

  - Placement Worker 2

I am at a crossroads in my life, trying to understand my past and present in order to understand myself and to plan for my future.

  - Placement Worker 1

In this process of "becoming" and accepting themselves, two workers discussed what they wanted for themselves in terms of establishing a balance in their lives.

I'm the person between the person I want to be and the person I don't want to be ...I just want to be "one of the boys." I want
to be regarded as just a common, good guy. I have a tendency, no matter where I am at, a party, a dinner, at work, a ballgame, on vacation, to seek out the janitor, the cook, the waiter, the street cleaner to talk to, to make friends with. I don't want to be viewed as being part of the "ruling class". It's ironic though, its those folks who I am most able to share and explore my ideas, ideals, perceptions and opinions with.

- Adoption Worker 4

There really isn't a major distinction between who I present myself as being and who I actually am...I am interested in many things...I come to work listening to "Morning Edition" and go home to "All Things Considered", the net result being that I am neither stewing with anxiety before I get to work nor pre-occupied with the day's problems while driving home...I try to maintain a clear distinction between my life as an employee and my personal life...If there is a different me from the facade presented, it would be a less outgoing, more private and reflective person and then only for abbreviated periods for recuperative purposes. Other than that, what you see is pretty much what I am.

- Intake Worker 1

These acts of achieving a life balance and self acceptance allude to the need for resolution of previous life experiences. They call for balancing the personal
and the professional. They demand a recognition of what experiences have gone into the definition of self. The study participants had important life experiences that helped define them personally and professionally. They share these experiences in subsequent sections.
CHAPTER VI
PERSONAL EPIPHANIES

This chapter will present categories and examples of major, minor, cumulative and relived personal epiphanies. Informants were asked within the context of the Written and Oral Life Histories to respond to a series of personal questions which focused on significant life experiences they had undergone. The questions concentrated on significant relationships in their families, friendships, important college experiences and significant events which they felt had either changed them or influenced them over time. (See Appendix B for the complete list of questions.) These questions elicited responses which fell into "turning point" experiences or epiphanies as defined by Denzin (1989a p.129). (See Chapter IV for complete discussion of epiphanies.)

Personal epiphanies are being defined as those turning point experiences which occurred in the lives of participants outside of the workplace. Examples would include experiences in childhood and adolescence such as illness, disability, abuse or alcoholism. The
experiences relayed by participants were then
categorized into major, minor, cumulative and relived
epiphanies. (See Table 3 for the categorizations). The
end result of this analysis provides a representation of
the intricacies of participants' personal lives. All
participants seemed to have had major epiphanies in
their lives, but due to sharing them in retrospect may
have represented them as cumulative or minor
experiences. All epiphanies most certainly were relived
and interdependent.

Major Personal Epiphanies

Major personal epiphanies are defined for the
purpose of this study as personal experiences that touch
every fabric of a person's life. These experiences
caused great physical/emotional change in the
participant's life. Undoubtedly these crises have given
the informants a reason to stop and take pause to
reassess the meaning of their lives.

Major epiphanies fell into two broad categories;
1) Family Dysfunction and 2) Death, Disability and
Illness. The nature of the epiphany was categorically
deefined by the participants as "changing my life
forever", "an experience that stands out", "a turning
point", "a major crisis", and "most significant
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<th>EVENT</th>
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experience". The major epiphanies were described almost completely in the written life history data. One could speculate that sharing them orally may have been too threatening in the context of a time-limited research based relationship.

In the area of family dysfunction, the participants discussed dysfunction in their families of origin as well as in their own present family structure. Almost half of the participants identified themselves as coming from a dysfunctional family. "Dysfunction" encompassed issues such as parental alcoholism, mental illness, domestic violence, and physical, emotional or sexual abuse. The stories they relayed were heart-wrenching. Yet they were written and told with a sense of matter-of-factness, and an acceptance that they had had these experiences. Several participants had received or were receiving therapy for their childhood issues.

One worker relayed her experience of growing up with a mentally ill, physically abusive father.

In the history of my life, the part that stands out in my mind is the fact that I grew up in the dysfunctional family where my father physically abused my mother, sister and I, not to mention the emotional abuse involved. I was very afraid of this man, knowing that no matter what I did, he would say I did wrong and beat me. It was just expected
that if he were home, sooner or later, I'd be called into the (master) bedroom and get beat with the belt and/or buckle. I knew that I couldn't please him but it didn't stop me from trying to please him. While he had no future expectations of me, he expected too much from my sister, who I wanted to be more like (or so I thought at the time), but learned later that his expectations of her produced stress for her comparable to my stress due to lack of self-esteem. At the time, I thought it would be "better" to be like my sister as she was beat less often.

When my Dad made my mom, sister and I leave, it was a scary time, but a turning point due to a safer environment with maternal grandparents. I witnessed as a child my Dad's hallucinations/irrational behavior and police placing him in car to take him to a mental hospital. The behavior is etched in my mind as well as his visits from the mental hospital. I remember a special Christmas without him (when in hospital; i.e. better/easier times).

-Protective Services Worker 3

Two other participants discussed their experiences in marriages where domestic violence was a primary problem. One explained:

I had a child before I married. My parents and friends were supportive to me through this time. I wanted to keep my baby and was able to. I made up my mind I would make her the kind of mother and home that she would be proud of.
I married B. 32 years ago. We grew up a lot after marriage. He accepted my child and loved and raised her as his own. We had 4 more children. Due to money problems and the habit of eating, I worked in between pregnancies as a waitress or took in ironings and alterations. B. and I used to fight a lot when we first married (physically). We quit when I became pregnant with our first baby. He started being physical again when angry probably 4 or 5 times over the next 2 year period until I made up my mind I would not tolerate any more and would get a divorce if necessary. I did take the children and leave (went to my Aunt's home). B. knew I meant business. We talked things out and he has never raised his hand since.

- Protective Service Worker 2

For the other participant, the abuse did not stop and actually continued into another relationship.

My common-law husband became physically abusive, so I got him to move out. We continued to see each other, but his behavior became more bizarre so I tried to completely break up with him. When I did that he assaulted me at work.

He "dropped" out of school, became heavily involved in drugs/alcohol, spent all my savings and ran me into debt. But the worse thing was that he was extremely abusive. Most of it was emotional abuse, with some physical. He left me a year later and I was 1 1/2 months pregnant at the time.

- Placement Worker 1
For this same participant, the first significant relationship she had with a man brought her pain as well as enrichment.

One year after we married I found out he was unfaithful. We stayed together for 4 more years, but this always ate away at me. We separated because I finally got concrete evidence he was having an affair. I have to say I still love him because I really felt attached to him. Because of him, I really experienced black life. I was accepted by his family as a black person with white skin. This experience had a major influence on me professionally, too. I think it has caused me to be able to have more insight into people from different cultures and life styles than some of my colleagues have because I partially lived in a different culture.

- Placement Worker 1

Other participants mentioned parental alcoholism in a passing way, almost as a stopping point in a journey.

As a child, I recall my parents' divorce and alcoholism... My disgust for drinking is constant... I married a drinker!

- Foster Care Worker 1

I have begun to change as I have repeatedly been hurt by being too needy and vulnerable. I can see my weaknesses as I see others experiences and learn from theirs. My changes have not been accidental -- they have
been thought out and almost planned. Turning points have been going to college, using my musical talents, beginning therapy for ACOA issues and standing up for myself. And beginning this job, which gave me much confidence. My therapy is what's changed me most though.

- Intake Worker 2

Another spoke of her father's alcoholism in the context of her parents' divorce and his subsequent death.

When I struggled through adolescence my father passed away from a massive coronary. I am sad to say the marriage was a constant battle of lifestyles. My Dad was an alcoholic and my mom sought a lawyer. When my Dad died, he had moved back to Grandma's, was sober and in recovery for 2 years. Interesting how he grew and suffered while returning to his home. During the separation I was the only child who preferred to travel home to stay with Dad.

- Foster Care Worker 3

Several participants shared difficult things happening in their own families with their children. One worker shared the following:

Our lifestyle changed with the birth of our fifth and youngest child. The shop where my husband was employed closed its doors. He tried taking over a service/gas station, putting in 12 to 16 hours per day, 7 days a week. Our baby had constant
throat and ear infections. I was a nervous wreck, trying to work while worrying about the baby. Our fourth child was almost 11 years old when our fifth child entered the scene. I had forgotten what all you do with a baby, yet this was my fifth child and I should know what to do. I felt very dumb. After all, isn't a mother supposed to know by instinct what to do for her baby when it cries and it's full, burped and dry? My doctor used to assure me the baby was fine, not to worry. I also felt this baby would be lonely without a sibling close in age, but due to having had major kidney surgery two years prior to her birth, my doctor advised against any more children. I hit post-partum big time! I felt panicky when any one of my children were not home within five minutes of when I thought they should be or if my husband was five minutes late getting home. Our oldest daughter, then 16 years old, was taking a psychology course in high school. One day she looked at me, gave me a hug, and said, "Mom, you have a phobia and you can get over it with help."

I knew I had to get help before I caused my husband to leave me or mess up my children's lives, so I called the local Guidance Center, told them my situation, got an appointment, and started into counseling. It was during this course of counseling that I realized I needed, really needed, to follow my heart's desire. I entered school attending evening classes, three nights per week while working full time. My husband and children were very supportive of my doing this. If I saw the need to spend more time with one of the four older children, I would take that one to school with me. It was an hour's drive each way, so it gave us time to talk on a one-to-one. The child would go to
the library and study while I had class and then we'd stop and eat out on our way home.

During my junior year of college, our third child, then 15 years old, became involved with a wild crowd and started using drugs. I spent many nights sitting in a chair by our front door in order to prevent her from sneaking out. It took a lot of one-to-one time with her and luckily I was then working where I had the summers off. That summer I did not attend school either and we were able to help her quit. There weren't any drug abuse programs around then as there are now, but I did get her into counseling along with the rest of our family. At one point, I went so far as to take her to see a juvenile probation officer so he could tell her first hand what course of action we, her parents, could take and what the consequences would be. She didn't speak to me for a week, but it helped her. Today we are close and she has made a good life for herself.

- Protective Service Worker 2

Yet another worker shared a difficult personal decision regarding a planned abortion and her subsequent miscarriage.

I was so disappointed in myself. I left the doctor's office feeling like a freak or something. When we decided on an abortion, I acted like an idiot. When I was alone I would talk to myself and I would try to explain to the baby why I was doing this. On the day of the abortion D. asked me to marry him. Then I
miscarried.
- Protective Service Worker 4

Those were difficult, deep experiences to share. One may even assume that for each of the experiences shared, there may have been family experiences further below the surface that were not safe enough to share.

An equal number of participants shared other difficult epiphanies in their lives involving death, illness and disability. The death experiences were primarily with significant parental figures while illness and disability experiences were with self, spouses or siblings.

Two participants had a parent die in late childhood and early adolescence. One shared the experience of her mother's death.

As far as what stands out to me is when my mother died. At the time I was ten years old. I knew she was sick but really didn't understand the seriousness of her illness. She died from cancer and had been ill for a few years prior to her death. I can remember mom picking us up from school and then going to her doctor. The last time I saw her was January 1. My father had sneaked all of us into the hospital to see her. I remember all of these tubes hooked up to her. But what I remember most is that she didn't recognize us. I know now that she was on a lot of medication which could be why she didn't recognize us.
Mom died a week later. After mom died we spent a lot of time at our grandparents. My dad was working a lot at the time and my grandparents only lived two houses away.

- Placement Worker 3

Two other participants were particularly close to their fathers and shared the loss they felt when their fathers died.

My father was the biggest influence on my life. He never said a mean word to anyone. He was good hearted and would give anyone his last dime if they asked. He was taken advantage of but he kept giving. His pride was his family. He had asthmatic bronchitis and died a slow, painful death. My mother cared for him day and night and never left the house for 3 years so he would not be afraid of losing his breath. I miss my father and even though I don't talk of him much -- a part of me died with him. He always had time for me and we had fun. I would give up everything I own for 5 minutes with him now to tell him that I love him and I miss him.

- Protective Service Worker 4

I lost my father in September 1986. That was a tremendous loss for me. My father was my all time support system. Overprotective, he followed me to a grape boycott at a grocery store when I was in college. I got a lot of my love of life from my father.

- Placement Worker 4
Interestingly, both of these workers identified their fathers as individuals who provided them with significant personal guidance and positive regard. One worker had the experience of both parents committing suicide, four years apart, but did not elaborate on its impact beyond it being a crisis period in her life. It was still a difficult issue to discuss.

Finally, another worker had a child die at birth. He explained:

I'll admit that it took a crisis for me to really start to see the importance of family. In 1968 my first son died at birth. I'm not very emotional, I've always been able to accept most any "bad thing" in my life. But the utter helplessness you feel when your spouse grieves and grieves really got to me. I think at that time I made up my mind that if I ever got the chance to be a father again, I'll do it right.

- Adoption Worker 4

Three participants had significant experiences with disability and illness. One participant relays her early experience at age 5 as a caretaker for her older sister.

I was the youngest of four children, being six years younger than my youngest brother. We all were raised to work along the sides
of our parents on their truck farm. My sister, eight years older than me, became very ill when I was five years old due to a head injury received at school. I remember many nights of all of us rubbing her arms and legs to keep the circulation moving. She used to pass out and be out for hours at a time, sometimes she was delirious and sometimes she'd have convulsions. The doctors found her problems at Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio when I was eight years old. She now lives a normal life. From age five to eight years old, I often was left in the house with her while my mother went to the fields to work. It was my responsibility to go out and blow the car horn to get my parents if my sister passed out, when delirious or went into convulsions. Needless to say, I was a very serious child.

- Protective Service Worker 2

Another participant shares the impact of an early in life disability on his total existence.

Probably the most significant of my life experiences would be the fact that I had polio at age 3 and subsequently lost, permanently, the use of my left arm. It is not so much the singular issue of the illness itself, or even the resulting physical impairment, but rather, in retrospect, the alterations, compromises and nurturing of new or other skills and techniques that have occurred as the consequence of my being handicapped which make me select this as the most significant of my life experiences. Suffice to say that my life, post-polio, has been a series of modifications... adjustments, self-assessments and re-assessments. My handicap has been the
well spring for most of what I am -- the good, the bad, the strengths and weaknesses. It is perhaps silly and maybe a little sad, to state at age 42 that an event which occurred when I was only 3 has had so profound an impact on my entire life.

- Intake Worker 1

And finally, a participant shared his near death experience.

In 1980 I nearly bled to death from internal hemorrhaging. I lost massive amounts of blood. It happened again in 1986 or 1987. I've had every test known to man done on me. Really a scary time. But the tests showed "nothing." Both times I was given a clean bill of health. I was literally told that I was in "excellent physical condition" and the bleeding was "a mystery" to the doctors. To be honest, I worry about the bleeding happening again. It just starts and stops on its own. I worry that if it starts again maybe it won't stop. But then again, I'm pretty thankful that I've "pulled through," so to speak. And I don't have any diagnosed terminal disease. But it, the experience, makes a mark on you. I would like to think that it helped me put my priorities in place and that I quit worrying about the small things. The truth is, I think that the way I was born I don't seem to be able to take life very seriously. I believe problems are solvable. And that most crises exist mainly in our heads.

- Adoption Worker 4
These shared experiences make clear the trials and periods of anguish that tested the resiliency and character of the study participants. Certainly they were the kind of experiences that would touch every fiber of an individual's life. The intensity of these experiences can also be illuminated through their symbolic representation in minor epiphanies.

**Minor Personal Epiphanies**

Minor personal epiphanies are defined as enlightening representations of major epiphanies, which create symbolic understanding of the participant's major life experiences. In the analysis of the life history data, the participants may or may not have disclosed the major epiphanies symbolized by the minor epiphanies discussed here. The examples I have selected were also discussed as major epiphanies. In a sense, the minor epiphanies become a vehicle of explanation and understanding for major life experiences.

One participant who experienced two physically violent relationships with men thought she had lived an almost perfect childhood until she became an adult. She shared the following about her family and childhood:
As an adult, I realized that the reason they didn't argue was because Mom always let Dad have his own way. (Mom buried her feelings about this and became an alcoholic after I moved out of the home.) I mainly recall the painful things. I was not a happy child. I was extremely shy and overweight. I can always remember feeling "second class" due to my weight. (My sister and parents were thin.) I also never felt loved for just myself, but felt I had to earn people's love by doing for them. I was always concerned about pleasing others.

When I was eight years old, we moved from X Michigan, a working class, blue collar neighborhood, to Y, Michigan, an upper class, snobbish, "we are all rich" community. My parents moved partially because Y's public school system was excellent. And I did receive an excellent education there, with little or no effort on my part. But the move was one of the single most traumatic experiences of my life. I already had little self esteem, and this move almost destroyed it completely.

- Placement Worker 1

This participant also experienced the double suicide of her parents. Her recollection shed light on the whole process of her involvement with abusive men, but also illuminates her understanding of violent families. A second participant shared the way in which he perceives clients and others after growing up "different."
On the bright side, I am pretty much devoid of prejudice against groups or types of people. I have been stared at by people because my arm is deformed. I have worn a sleeveless basketball jersey, stood at the foul line and had someone in the stands yell "miss it, skinny arm" in front of 800 people. I know what it's like to be ridiculed or put down for something beyond my control so as the song suggested, I've walked a mile in those shoes. I do not blame people or treat them differently because they are of a different race, sex, religion or even mentality and it's simply because I've known personally the sting of rejection and scorn.

- Intake Worker 1

This perception of others was tempered over the years by his major turning point experience. In his becoming a social worker, one can only speculate about the daily symbolic experiences this participant has calling up his own previous experiences.

A third participant shared a death experience that touched her family's life and perhaps created the understanding and preparation for her father's painful death discussed previously.

My mother was the one who always cared for the sick in the family. My maternal aunt lived with us until her death from cancer. She died in our home - in fact in my bedroom. I can remember all of us kids lined up around the bed when she died. A
priest was praying and giving her
her last rights. We learned not to
fear death but trust in God. My two
cousins lived with us after my aunt's
death. They are like a brother and
sister to us. Close sibling ties even
now.

- Protective Service Worker 4

Similarly another participant discusses her father's
remarriage and its impact on her which could be symbolic
of her mother's death experience as well.

After my father remarried, it
was difficult. There were a lot
of adjustments to be made getting
to know each other. There was a
lot of fighting in the home. At
the time there were 9 kids at home.
About a year later my stepbrother
and brother got married so they moved
out. A lot of the fighting centered
around this is mine and that's yours.
There was also a lot of name calling.
This constant fighting lasted for
about six years. When this all
started all kids were in or about to
enter adolescence. Right now I feel
as close to some of my stepsisters as
I do my natural brother and sisters.
- Placement Worker 3

Her experience speaks of resolution and peace after many
years of struggle.

Not all significant life experiences can take on
immediate, symbolic or life changing meaning as in major
and minor epiphanies. Some experiences leave a mark or
have a meaning that is not immediately felt or known. Those experiences can be understood as cumulative or relived epiphanies.

**Cumulative Personal Epiphanies**

Cumulative epiphanies can best be understood as eruptions or reactions to events that have been going on over time. The experiences accumulate over time and then take on meaning of a sudden; an "a-ha" experience of sorts. This is the characteristic that separates them from major or minor turning point experiences. The cumulative experiences shared by the study participants were less traumatic than the major and minor experiences. They appeared to fall into several general categories: (1) experiences that shaped personalities, (2) religious experiences and (3) college/volunteer experiences that affected the future career choice of the participant.

One participant shared a series of events that she felt culminated in the acquisition of a personality trait that she is still working to change.

In looking back, the thing that stands out in my life is a series of events that occurred over several years. These events helped create an almost impenetrable defense
mechanism which has taken many years for me to even begin to dismantle.
In my elementary school years, I had an absolute best friend. We did everything together. Then, in the fifth grade, she moved away. I felt lost and definitely abandoned. Just prior to this there was another loss of a different type. My father, with whom I was and am still very close, had arthritis even before I was born. This, however, did not stop him from romping, wrestling and playing with me. He taught me sports which have always been an important part of my life. One day he came home and, as was the usual routine, I went to roll him off the couch to wrestle on the floor but he was too "sick" to do that. The arthritis had begun it's devastation of his body and never again would we be able to play and wrestle like before. Here, too, I felt a loss and knew things would never be the same. The year after my best friend moved, I found a friend in the school principal. He helped me through some of the typical sixth grade stuff and I thought he was the greatest thing since sliced bread. When I moved on to the Jr. High, I popped in on him once in a while and still found his guidance helpful. At the beginning of the seventh grade, my only sibling (a brother - six years older) left for college. Again, I felt abandoned and confused - confused because I thought I hated this person more than spinach. I took great delight in terrorizing him and, in my mind, making life miserable for him. I discovered I really felt otherwise and didn't know what to do with that feeling. I began to consciously question relationships, closeness and the pain that goes with those. Then in the eighth grade, my principal friend died. I knew he had been ill but his death was
totally unexpected. It was at this point in my life I made a conscious decision to never allow anyone so close to me that the pain would be so great when they left, no matter how they left. Even though I am an introvert, I have always been viewed as an extrovert because I can play a good game. This decision drew me into a shell that was rock solid but I still played a good game of what I call "the friendlies." I could be friendly but no one but no one really knew me or was allowed to get close.

These events shaped my response to relationship issues for many years to come. If I did develop a friendship, it was not so deep that I could not withdraw with little pain. I seemed to always have one foot in the relationship door and the other foot outside ready to make a quick getaway. I am putting a lot of energy into this response.

- Placement Worker 2

One can see a progression of events leading to a change. Meaning was not made of these events until the participant began to recognize a need for personal change. Then the events took on a cumulative meaning. Several participants noted the importance of religion in their lives. Several "grew up" in the church, private parochial schools, and Bible colleges. Many noted religion as a coping mechanism to deal with job stress. Some recognized religion as a search for something meaningful in their lives.
Another experience that has changed me (by change, I mean development) is my relationship with God. I grew up in the Quaker faith but was not "satisfied." I searched other religions, made some mistakes and finally decided to stay a Quaker and search within myself for the answer to my dissatisfaction. To make a very long story short, I figured out (surprise, surprise!!!) the problem lay with my unwillingness to develop meaningful relationships, including one with God. I remain a Quaker but, for me, the important issue is not my religion but rather my relationship with God. This relationship scares me to death but is vital in my life. I intend to continue to grow into this and work to develop a meaningful relationship.

- Placement Worker 2

Another participant shares:

I went to a small Christian college. The things that stand out to me, is again, my involvement with people. I was loved there, accepted and respected. I also learned to "tap" into me during my college years and developed my ability to know and understand people. I was intensely spiritual at that time and was very close to God in a personal way. I was at peace. God was the major influence in my life. My Christian friends and surroundings were a part of that.

- Intake Worker 2
And finally, a participant shares the impact of religion on the rest of her life.

The day that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior stands out among all the other experiences of my life, because it has been in accepting Him, and His acceptance of me that I have found the essence of life that has brought joy to all of the other great experiences of my life.

- Protective Service Worker 5

One gets a sense of "journey" and development in the description of these cumulative experiences of religion. The same theme is present in the experiences shared from participants' college years and volunteer experiences. One participant shared a series of events which ultimately solidified her social work career choice.

During my junior and high school years I did volunteer work between school and part-time work. I volunteered for Meals on Wheels, doing chores or errands for house-bound seniors, was a day care volunteer at a local camp for handicapped children and volunteered as a teacher's aide in high school at the local elementary school. All of these jobs were service oriented in nature. Traditional positions for women. During this time I found out that I enjoyed the interaction between people. It was very satisfying for me to know that I was helping someone and making life a
little easier... What I decided to do was to be a social worker and work with abused children. I received loud opposition, not from my parents but from my guidance counselor in the 9th grade who pointed out every conceivable negative about the profession including low pay and no respect (all of which are true). However, I stuck to my decision and for the next couple of years set my sights on attending college to become a social worker. Only once did I waiver. Since I enjoyed children so much I was volunteering as a teacher's aide at an elementary school during my free periods my senior year. During that time I thought I might want to go into teaching. But a "chance encounter" influenced my decision to think social work and refocused my attention to helping others. I had been working as an aide in the 6th grade class. Coming from a fairly middle class neighborhood, the children and teenagers attending my school district were all white and middle class. There were very few ethnic groups that were different and only a few "poor" kids. One afternoon I observed several of the 6th graders mercilessly hounding another child because he was poorly dressed and did not fit into their group. The little boy did nothing to stand up for himself and quietly endured their teasing. At that point I decided it was those kids, the one with economic or family problems, that needed the most help and decided to pursue my original plan of social work and working with abused children.

- Protective Social Worker 1
Another shared her early volunteer experience, college experience and career choice.

My college experience was a very enjoyable one. I am glad I had the opportunity to attend college because it has helped to develop my intellectual abilities, social skills and made me a more well-rounded individual. Cramming for the final exams was one of the things that stand out in my mind, taking No Doz, however what stands out most is the day I marched through the Sunken Garden on graduation day to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance. This was a great moment, a high time. The feeling was one of great euphoria, achievement, and pride. I feel for people who have never experienced a high moment in their lives.

The major influence in my life at that time was politics and social issues. I was involved in politics and social issues and belonged to revolutionary groups. The major learning experience did not come when I was in college but when I was 13 years old. I worked at Camp Variety as a volunteer for the retarded. I knew then I wanted to help people. When I went to college I knew I wanted to work with people, but I didn't know what field. I just chose the field of Social Welfare.

- Protective Service Worker 5

Finally, a participant discussed college in the context of his life's journey. A journey which started in a
factory as a blue-collar worker and which has taken him
to the world of child welfare. He describes a series
of events leading him to college and ends with the
following:

I was hungry for knowledge and I
would bring back my new ideas
and revelations to the factory
where in that forum, many of these
ideas were stillborn. When put
to the test of reality, a lot of
the academics, the theories and
postulations about people and
society, were no match for the
real life experiences and observ-
vations of folks from the hills
of Tennessee, Kentucky, West
Virginia and poor black communi-
ties. It seemed as if there
were two worlds. The one I had
to work in. The world that
demanded my sweat and energy in
exchange for food, clothing and
shelter. And the idealistic,
intellectual never never-land
of college that promised a
better way of life. But for most
of us can not really create.

Let me explain a bit. College,
to me was the great equalizer. A
place where ideas and opinions
were currency. And I felt rich.
But I lacked something then and I
still do, that could successfully
bring learning and education
together with the real world.
What mechanism triggers the
integration of knowledge, ideas,
the enthusiasm of learning and
creating with the cold hard facts
of seeking a job, getting hired
and actually working?
I enjoyed college. The experience
exposed me to a world that I
never knew existed. And I'm the better for it.
- Adoption Worker 4

The participant shares cumulative experiences which led him to where he is today. Similarly, others shared important life events in retrospect that perhaps did not take on any specific meaning until they were shared. Those events were revisited in response to this study.

**Relived Personal Epiphanies**

Relived epiphanies are events whose effects are immediate, but whose meanings are given in retrospect and in the reliving of the event. Many participants would think of these events in relation to other stories they were telling, or would share them as an illustration. Once told, the events took on a meaning of their own. If the experience was shared in an oral interview participants would remark about how they had not thought of the experience in a long time, but "now" it made sense. It was an important piece of their life experiences. The relived experiences shared by participants were predominately about their college years with an interesting mix of Vietnam and Civil Rights Movement experiences added in. This mix can be attributed to the age group (mean age 37 years)
represented by the participants. The majority of them were in high school or college during the 1960's. One participant shares the impact of the times and her experiences:

I graduated from high school in 1956 and went to college immediately. My roommate had a lot of influence, Gracie. Gracie was a different type; a sort of hippie. She wore different kinds of clothes that she would buy at Goodwill. They were wild, long and she always wore hats. Gracie was a neat gal who was a very loving woman. She just had a different way of expressing herself through her music. She just dressed differently and thought differently, but she was good for me because I needed to think different. My roommates from Cleveland were much more preppy, a lot more sorority-type girls. That wasn't my style either. I just sort of bounced off things because I really didn't fit either way, but I learned a lot from them. They were into dating the jocks and were really beautiful girls. They had popular parties and all the stuff they were in to; they were much more self-centered that way. I think I had an influence from them. I liked them and I think they got to know me, too. I guess the thing is, the basic thing that I learned in college is to meet people for who they are; not really what they look like or what they act like sometimes, but to really get to know them as a person. I think that's the best thing that I learned out of there.

- Adoption Worker 1
Another writes of living in California.

I was in California to see the sixties culture at its forefront. I saw all the bands – Doors, Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, you name it – at my leisure, smoked dope, surfed, went to the mountains, Mexico, Catalina, Seattle -- the works! I was "on the road" and loved it. Then, in 1968 I saw the whole thing change abruptly. The Hippies moved on and the cultures (bikers, drug pushers) moved in. Assassinations, riots -- when a 13 year old kid shot and killed a 15 year old pusher over a ten dollar dope deal rip-off in San Francisco, I loaded my VW at midnight and drove straight through to Ohio, stayed at home one night and then took off for college where I stayed until finishing my degree. Enough was enough.

- Intake Worker 1

Yet another talks of "growing up" in Vietnam:

I was 19 years old and wanted to go to Vietnam. I was then, and remain now, very patriotic and idealistic. I had visions of becoming a war hero, special forces, air borne ranger type of macho man.

A combination of poor vision (eyesight) and the U.S. doing with you pretty much what they liked, kept me from achieving my goal of becoming a hero. I was assigned to Vietnam, after I had volunteered for duty there 5 times, as a company clerk in a 15 man signal corps detachment. There was no real
easy duty in Vietnam, but my tour came as close as possible. You could not escape the war, but I was only 20 years old and I was having a good time drinking, chasing women, traveling ... just growing up. It was a once in a lifetime experience. I really had no idea how important or significant that period of time (1965-1967) was for me. I shudder sometimes when I think of the risks I took and danger I was in at times. And I kick myself for not taking advantage of the situation. I should have traveled more, saved more money, learned how to speak Vietnamese, etc.

But you know what was so significant about that time? I felt at home, in charge, comfortable, and I guess pretty smug all the time. Not arrogant -- just secure. Don't get me wrong. I was full of anxieties and I was scared a lot. But I always felt that if I "did the right thing," morally, ethically, everything would be OK. And of course, when you are 19 or 20 years old, what do you worry about?

~ Adoption Worker 4

All of these were significant experiences at the time, but their meaning only became clear as time went on. This was the case too, for those involved in significant, racially based events. One participant was teaching school in Chicago when Martin Luther King was assassinated. She recalled that experience:
Frightening; the day was frightening. That particular immediate time was frightening. There were a lot of black and white folks that were really supportive of each other. Seeing how the black people at school responded and dealt with the kids in talking with them was a valuable experience. I will never forget that day and that time, seeing parents come running to the school. Parents were literally running across the street to the school wondering what happened. It was brought around to the rooms that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. Then, being told as a handful of white teachers that as you leave this neighborhood today (gangs had already started running loose in the neighborhood) to turn your headlights on as a sign or signal to the black lone rangers that you were in sympathy and they won't bother you. They told us just to leave quickly. School wasn't held for another week. Here we were in Chicago and Hyde Park wasn't one of the greatest neighborhoods. We were going to get on an expressway during that week and as you drove along you saw different pockets in neighborhoods with smoke rising from the looting and stuff going on. You don't forget that stuff.

- Adoption Worker 3

A second participant was living in California when the Black Panthers were active. He remembered:

I was renting an apartment in the basement of a black family's home out there and had some exposure... They had a son that
was four years older than I was and this kid was into strange groups of some pretty radical blacks. I remember Gary would take me places and he'd want to impress me. One time we were walking back from the bus station one night. There was a little tiny commercial district to get to his house near San Francisco State. There was some stores there and Gary said, "Watch this, man." He picks up a brick. I said, "Gary, what in the hell are you doing?" He said, "I'm going to throw this brick through this window and get that ghetto blaster, man." I said, "Gary, no you're not; not while I'm here." But this is how he was even though this was a nice family that he belonged to. But this was a kid that would have been a middle class black kid and he was going to show me how tough he was by ripping off this store. So I did talk him out of that that night. We'd go places and I do remember there were a lot of kids that were black and were much, much younger -- fourth and fifth grades -- and they were all calling me the "devil." I was white and I was the devil. Their influence was Moslem, but at that time there was a pretty heavy stake being driven between blacks and whites even in San Francisco; especially over in Oakland where the Panthers had their power base.

- Intake Worker 1

These were difficult times, historical times and times that gained meaning as they were relived.

The majority of the participants shared some college experiences as they related to their development as
young adults and beginning professionals. They shared stories of independence:

It was my first time away from home, that alone caused a lot of independence. I met up with different kinds of people which made me decide I had to be my own kind of person; I couldn't follow all these people and I had to decide who and what I was going to be. That caused a great deal of independence. It was a time that I learned to stand on my own two feet.

- Foster Care Worker 1

They shared stories of independence and fear:

Another turning point in my life is when I started at college. I had always wanted to go to college but had never been away from home. The first quarter was awful. I was never one who really studied. It just came somewhat naturally. I had a rude awakening that first quarter. I almost flunked out (3 D's and 1 C). I was so embarrassed to show my grade card to my father. I had been an honor student all through high school and to almost flunk out of college was frightening.

- Placement Worker 3

They shared stories of disappointment and resolution:
It was mostly a political motivation behind it. I was going to save the world. That's how social work was defined. I was in sociology and I didn't know what I was going to do with this degree so I took some courses in education because that's what everybody does, just in case. But then that's when I, in talking to a professor, geared me into it. Also, my mom said she wanted me to be a pharmacist or social worker. She had so much influence on me that I didn't want to deal with chemistry so I chose social work. Social work was just a built-in step in sociology. So when I applied to the school of social work they denied my application and I think it was mostly political. At that time I was so militant that I went to the school and made them explain to me why. They refused yet I was so persistent that the lady finally looked at the papers and told me that I wasn't ready for the school and that I had to grow up and mature.

Looking back I remember how I was dressed for the interview and realize she was probably right. She gave me that explanation, but I knew some of the other people that were going to that school and I knew their work was not as good as mine. I wasn't modest about that. My father had some connections with the school and let me know he could get me in. I refused and said I wanted to do it my way.

- Adoption Worker 2
The experiences shared as relived epiphanies were reflective of an era. The times were exciting, revolutionary and chaotic. They were occasions of importance to young people and those that got woven into their very existence.

The personal experiences shared here as turning points, crises, or epiphanies shaped the lives of this study's participants. In these experiences, the fundamental meaning structures in the participants' lives were altered. As seen in the accounts shared previously, a given event could have at one point been major, then minor and then relived. In the next section, the reader will see how personal epiphanies weave their way into the individual's professional life. It will also be demonstrated how epiphanies occur in the professional lives of child welfare workers as they did in the personal lives.
CHAPTER VII
PROFESSIONAL EPIPHANIES

Informants were asked within the context of the written and oral life histories to respond to a series of questions which focused on important work experiences in their lives. The questions concentrated on their first significant work experiences, subsequent experiences, career highlights, mentoring experiences and important client experiences. (See Appendix B for the complete list of questions.) These questions elicited responses which fell into turning point experiences or epiphanies as defined by Denzin (1989a, p.129). Professional epiphanies are being defined as those major crises or turning point experiences that occurred in the lives of participants within the workplace. Examples would include experiences with memorable clients, career disappointments, promotions and major changes in the workplace. The experiences relayed by participants were then categorized into major, minor, cumulative and relived epiphanies as they were in the previous section. (See Table 4 for the categorizations). The end result of this analysis is a 161
### Table 4

#### Frequency of Professional Epiphanies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>TYPE OF EPIPPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAJOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Death</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Custody Case</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Physical Abuse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Threatened Suicide</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Spiritual Experiences Led to Career Choice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Models</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Successes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
representation of the professional turning points in the participants' lives. All participants seemed to have experienced major epiphanies, and certainly shared relived experiences. The minor and cumulative experiences were far more difficult to define in the professional area. In fact, no cumulative experiences were identified. It seems that experiences were of the major, life changing type or were given meaning as they were relived.

**Major Professional Epiphanies**

Major professional epiphanies are defined for the purpose of this study as professional work experiences that touch every aspect of a person's life. They also gave the participant a way to make meaning in their professional experience.

The major epiphanies were predominantly related to traumatic career experiences, disappointments and client cases. The nature of the epiphany was categorically defined by the participants as "standing out," "significant," "close to my heart," and events they "learned from." The major professional epiphanies were equally split between the written and oral interview data. One could speculate that they were easier for the participant to share than were the major personal
epiphanies. Yet, the experiences shared were also
difficult and sometimes painful. One participant shared
a particularly hard experience involving a child's
death. For anyone in child welfare, such an occurrence
is always possible due to the abuse and neglect that are
prevalent on caseloads. One always dreads the
possibility of a child's death. For this participant,
the experience did not end with the child's death, but
resulted in the worker's eventual demotion and a
complete structural reorganization of the agency where
he was employed.

During my tenure as administrator
of the Children's Services Division,
a three year old child who, along
with her siblings, had been removed
from her 17 year old mother in March
of that year was savagely murdered
by her natural father. She was in
our temporary custody at the time
and had been placed with her father
by our agency. ...it was a three-
ring circus and soon became a political
theatre wherein a commission seat
changed and allegations of conflict of
interest, untrained and unprofessional
children's services staff, mismanaged
and finally "cover-up" were made. In
November, the director informed me
that she wanted me to self-demote and
return to supervisor level. I told
her I would not do that voluntarily
and that she'd have to come at me in
the open if she thought she had
sufficient grounds. In February
I was summoned to her office and
informed that I was to meet with her
and the Commission in two days to
"resolve our problem." I came to the meeting and listened to her 45 minute barrage against me, replete with over two years of every memo or summary of any contact we had had professionally since I had assumed the job. My response, with no chance to prepare, was simply that I was now the fourth Children's Services administrator with whom she had been displeased, that she had no background in Children's Services personally and assumed that it could be run problem-free, that I had near perfect attendance, was liked by my staff and would defy any of them to furnish the name of any party who felt mistreated or dishonestly dealt with by me during my 14 years with the department. Finally, I told them that I personally resented any implication that I had in any way borne any responsibility for the death of the child in September. I asked the county personnel officer when I would learn of the results of this session and was informed by him they would let me know the next week. That afternoon, the DHS director called me to her office and informed me that her decision was that I would exchange jobs with one of my supervisors or, if I chose to fight it, she would "progress in a series of disciplinary actions against me which could result in termination." In fourteen years at this agency, under three directors and six supervisors, I had never been reprimanded and had consistently good evaluations. I know that she violated procedural policies and I have been advised by two attorneys that I could have easily backed her down or beaten her in a DAS proceeding. The problem was, what I would have won would be the continual opportunity to serve under her. I returned to supervision. The one prime lesson, among many, that this entire experience has taught me is simply that Children's Protective Services is tough enough without
politics and impossible to conduct in even a mildly political atmosphere. I would not wish what I went through on anyone. I still believe, very strongly, that things have a way of settling themselves.

- Intake Worker 1

Despite all of this, the worker stayed.

Others relayed additional stories involving clients. They may not seem as traumatic as the previous example, yet for each worker the experience had a major impact and perhaps changed the way they saw child welfare and their practice in the field.

I had some good experiences with clients, and some bad ones. I had one PCC [permanent court custody] case where we got three toddlers PCC'd and placed in adoptive homes. One child had Cerebral Palsy and went to an out-of-county home. I later discovered she was being physically abused, and had to remove her from the home. She was suffering with bruises all over her body, and diarrhea. I got her on Friday and got permission to keep her at our house rather than the Receiving Center. Her previous foster parents got her back and adopted her. We still maintain contact. Another case that has stayed in my mind, I still question how the child came out. "Mom" was in town because of her boyfriend's incarceration at the correctional institution. The children had to be placed because "Mom" had no where to stay initially. They were returned home later after "Mom" had housing, and then she left with them for Cincinnati
without permission when the boyfriend
was placed in a half-way house there.
We requested supervision from
Cincinnati and got word that the two
year old was hospitalized due to
physical abuse. Her front teeth were
knocked out, and she lurched for my
arms when I got there. The older
brother could not be brought back
because the police wanted more than
the TCC [temporary court custody]
papers to remove him. "Mom" wound up
back in Detroit with a lawyer friend,
and the agency there eventually
recommended the girl's return. I was
heart-sick, as the mother had a long
history of child abuse of 4 older
children and infant deaths of
twins.

- Foster Care Worker 2

Another worker shared a case with which she had had a
long history, which culminated in a tragic event.

One that was close to my heart
was a family that I carried from
1981. It was a case of three
brothers and one was slammed into
the wall by his mom who was a CSB
[Children's Services Board] graduate
and had a crazy grandmother. That
one boy is still severely retarded
and in a wheelchair. The oldest
one was taken by his father for
about a year and has been in many
different foster homes. The middle
one was taken by his grandmother.
They tried to place the older and
middle boys both with the grandmother,
but she couldn't handle them. I've
been through it with them all the way
trying to reunify when their mother
served time in Marysville and then
lived in Cleveland. I tried
reunification but it didn't work and
she put them on the bus back to us. When the oldest one turned 18 years old he went into the Reserves but was killed in a crack accident 1988. It's been a real struggle with the middle boy this year. He did a suicide attempt; he shot himself in the stomach before Thanksgiving. That's been really hard, but we've been a lot closer since that's happened. Then we couldn't get him an inpatient bed... because they were being assholes. He tried to tell me that he wasn't trying to kill himself even though it was the year's anniversary of his brother's death. He said he was just trying to see who in his family cared about him. I think there was an element of truth to that, but I do think he was doing a suicide attempt. I think he will make it through but that was a real crisis.
- Placement Worker 4

Yet another informant shared several cases that have had an impact on her practice or that are currently troubling to her.

One case that stands out was one of my first cases. I had tried everything to get his mother to do something. About a year later I ended up having to remove the child -- she had abandoned her. We had the child in foster care for about a month with no idea where the mother was. I was driving to another client's house and I see her walking down the street. I pull over and she gets in my car and I take her for a drive and tell her that her child is in foster care. She asked why, saying she had left her with relatives. It turned
out the mother needed medical
treatment and we ended up with custody.
It took another three years. She
wasn't doing anything and every time
we came close to bringing the child
back home, something would happen.
Eighty percent of the time it really
was something that wasn't her fault.
I remember one time we had made all
these plans to put the child back
home and then the landlord decided
to switch furnaces so she had no
source of heat. It finally got to
the point that we ended up with
permanent custody of this girl. When
she was first placed in foster care
we thought she was mentally retarded,
but by the time we got permanent
custody she was tested and she was
one and half years ahead of her age.
She's doing great in her adoptive
home, too. That sticks in my mind
because it was one of my first cases.

Another case (and it's happened
several times that I can't say it's
one particular case, but it's always
kind of sticks in my mind and it's
really frustrating) is when you think
you've done some good and you get the
kids back home and then six months
later they are back. It's usually for
the same reasons and you go through
the same process again and again.
This doesn't do the kids any good.
But the laws that we have to adhere to,
we do, yet we know they are going to
be back. That why I think it's so
frustrating.

One case that is really getting to
me right now is an eleven year old.
We are not making any progress with
him. It's not a behavior problem.
When he takes his tests at school
he will get A's and B's, but he
doesn't turn in any of his homework.
I've tried everything from taking
things away to giving him incentives.
I'm worried about the kid right now
because about a week ago he
threatened suicide and actually had
gotten a knife. His psychologist
doesn't feel that he's suicidal, but
all of a sudden he's turning in all
of his homework. My fear is that
there is a reason he's doing this
now. I think this could be the
calm before the storm and am really
worried about him. The school has
been made aware of the situation.
- Placement Worker 3

Even though the workers chose these specific examples to
share, one could speculate that there were many, many
more that were not shared. Cases such as these seem to
be in the back of a worker's mind and perhaps come up
again as minor epiphanies along with other symbolic
events.

Minor Professional Epiphanies

Minor professional epiphanies are defined for the
purpose of this study as experiences that symbolically
represent or illuminate major epiphanies. The minor
professional epiphanies were difficult to identify and
seemed to blend into relived epiphanies. All the minor
epiphanies identified in this section were
representative of experiences leading to the
participant's professional career choice. For two of
the participants, the major epiphany related to the
minor epiphany was a personal turning point experience and not necessarily something that happened professionally. Unlike the minor epiphanies shared in the previous section on personal turning points, the minor professional experiences were not directly related to the major professional epiphanies; instead they were related to personal experiences.

For two participants the minor epiphanies they shared illuminated religious experiences that they felt "led them" to social work. One of these workers remarked:

I am right in the center of God's will working with people hurt, depressed, impoverished -- these are people that God loves. I have been entrusted with a caseload, and I pray diligently over each client at home, and I sit back and watch God work miracles in the lives of my clients. I have seen relatives surface for children where there were no relatives before. I've seen parents kick crack habits, I've seen housing become available when there was no housing because there is nothing too hard for God. It's really fun to see how the Lord will work next on behalf of my clients. My faith in God keeps my job interesting and enjoyable.

- Protective Service Worker 5

The second shared the following:
I felt called to be a Social Worker at age 12 but didn't know its name or how to do it. I read different things and tried to help neighbors and friends -- always a vague desire but not daring to dream about it as I know I had no money for college for me. When I got the chance to move toward it, I was scared I couldn't do it but trusted that God knew what He was doing with my life and asked His help and He has, every bit of the way (when I let Him). I was on cloud nine and elated to get the opportunity to do it and worked very hard to make it.

- Protective Service Worker 2

Another participant shared an experience that illuminated her career choice of social work.

I began to assess what I really wanted to do and talked with several social work majors. I never really thought about it before but, even though I don't get my energy from people, I had always enjoyed working with people. My mind kept going back to an incident that happened while I was a grocery cashier in high school. An older lady, probably 60-65, came through my checkout and saw a pamphlet at the end of the counter. She told me she couldn't read and asked if I would read it to her. I was dumbfounded. It never occurred to me someone that old couldn't read. I took it for granted. Coincidentally, the pamphlet was about illiteracy and where classes were being held to teach reading. She was so excited and said she was going to attend the classes. I never forgot this and, when trying to decide what career
to pursue, I realized that experience had started me thinking of a helping profession. I have always enjoyed working with kids so I decided to go into social work. Then came the biggest hurdle of all -- my parents. Changing majors that late (2nd quarter of my junior year) meant an extra year of college. Plus, my mother looked at social workers as little old ladies who snatched babies for no reason at all. I had to do my homework to present my case to them. By the time I finished I had not only convinced them of the validity of my choice but also myself.
- Placement Worker 2

One could assume that every participant had experiences that affected his or her career choice, but a few were described as "callings" or outcomes of dramatic events. None of the respondents indicated "falling into" the helping professions, but only a few shared crises that led them there. Perhaps through relived professional experiences, understanding can be developed for what other experience motivates child welfare professionals.

Relived Professional Epiphanies

Relived epiphanies are experiences whose effects are immediate, but the meaning of the experiences are given in retrospect and in reliving the event. In looking at the professional experiences of child welfare workers, one must also take into account the fast paced
lives that they live when on duty. They deal with
difficult decisions on multiple cases every day. In
doing so, one could speculate that major events or their
effects do not take on immediate meaning until they can
be relived outside of the fast-paced yet routine work
day.

Participants shared a number of relived,
professional epiphanies. Logically, they were all
related to on the job experiences predominantly with
clients, yet some with role models. Some of the client
experiences dated back to the participant's first days
on the job, whereas others referred to long term cases
they had handled. One worker indicated that there were
small successes, that were cumulative.

The highlights of my career were
the little successes along the
way, helping parents to "get things
together" and provide the support
and care to their children that it
was felt they could not provide. It
is discouraging to find that some of
the successes come back into placement
a few years down the road. Highlights
have been clients from years ago
contacting me just to say "hello and
the kids are doing well."
- Foster Care Worker 2

Other participants shared case experiences that they
grew from.
During my Senior year I also did my internship at the county Children Services where I am now employed. Working with families who abused or neglected their children was an experience that a naive, 21 year old gained much insight from. The people and living conditions I encountered that school year were situations I had only read about in textbooks or seen in the media. It was difficult to believe that people could live under such conditions permanently. One family, an older couple with two retarded sons, were amused that a young girl from Cleveland, Ohio was attempting to give them ideas and suggestions on how to live. That particular relationship continued after I was hired in the Spring and lasted until their deaths in 1985 and 1986. They taught me a lot about respecting people from different cultures and being flexible and patient where change is in order.

- Protective Service Worker 5

There is one client that I've had for a long time; I think since I started. I got permanent custody. I talked her mother into permanent surrender of her first daughter. I've taken two more of her kids also. One she just got back and the other she trusted my opinion that I didn't think she could handle yet and she was okay with that. That makes you feel good that she trusts you and also that maybe she recognizes something. There have been special people that you think about. There was one who used to yell at me for everything; if I came five minutes late or stayed in his driveway too long. But then I figured out that his yelling meant he liked me otherwise he wouldn't have bothered.
I think they have all been special in their own way. I think any time someone tells you things about themselves like they do, knowing how could you understand since you have a job, etc., I think that makes an impact. They tell you things not knowing what your reaction will be.

- Protective Service Worker 4

The most and my greatest success was such a tiny little thing. I had a girl who was a senior in high school. She was in a foster home and nobody in her family had ever graduated from high school. They are all really a bunch of losers and alcoholics. They would tell her that she was no good, that she would never graduate, that she might as well drop out and all that. I got ticked off and I told K to show them. I really encouraged her to finish school and she did. She sent me a graduation notice. I'm real proud of her. She came real close to dropping out and I spent a lot of time with her trying to get her to make it through school and she's the first one in her family to graduate from high school. Even her sister ended up dropping out. So she made it and she graduated. It's such a tiny little thing.

- Protective Service Worker 1

Yes, there is one girl that sticks out in my mind. I knew her as a teenager and her whole nuclear family was on my caseload. I got to know her as an unwed mother, then a mother and she still calls me every once in a while. Even though she didn't always agree with what we said or with the rules we had for her, she can look back now and say that some of the things we were trying to do were
positive. As far as I know at this point, she is able to take care of her two kids and doesn't need our services. In a way that makes me feel good. Not that I was a super caseworker, I wasn't, but maybe we gave her enough to try and manage her own life to some degree. She knows that somebody cares. She came from a family that never spoke about their feelings and everybody was just going at each other all the time. She would express sometimes that it was easy to talk to me. Sometimes it's the little things like that when you think maybe you are doing some good even though sometimes everything seems so traumatic. You usually don't get much positive response from clients. Generally they don't want you there to begin with.
- Protective Service Worker 4

Others shared successes and disappointments, emphasizing again the ups and downs that are everyday experiences in child welfare.

But then I look at the kids that we kept in custody through the summer that L and I took to Chattanooga to college. I run on those kind of highs for a long time. Or the seven year old after we had her for four years in custody, we finally got permanent and then go through all the appeals crap. She was placed for adoption and she's doing great. Obviously, that was a long time ago because I don't have seven year olds on my caseload any more. We have a lot of success stories when you really look at it. Graduating from high school is not a prerequisite for me to be a success. I'd like to see that happen, but if
they can be successful adults they don't have to graduate. I've got one I'm trying to send home now because she's what you would call a failure. She's not willing to participate in counseling. She's not willing to make any changes. All we're providing is a $300 a month per diem to provide a babysitting service. She wouldn't be considered a success. Whether anything I said to this kid rubs off or not, I'll never know. I think what we do is important and yes, I want to leave the world a little bit better than when I came into it.

- Placement Worker 2

The role model experiences shared by the participants were not earth shattering, life changing experiences. They were stories about relationships with friends, co-workers, supervisors and college professors. They were stories of quiet influence which took on meaning as they were told again. One participant shared the influence a co-worker had on her when she was a new child welfare worker.

Mary never really was a child welfare worker. She did work one summer, when she went back to get her master's degree, for the agency in protective services and for the schools as a social worker once she got her master's degree. So she worked, obviously, with kids and parents, but it was in a school situation. She was a real social work ideologist. Her whole thinking was as a social
worker. She was very much geared into more of traditional social work -- quite an advocacy kind of social work. Not that you're forcing services on clients, but you're really getting in there and trying to get them to appreciate and improve themselves from inner motivation. She was a real positive person. She worked very well with women. She was very much a woman's advocate. She worked well with women who were in situations where they are being used by men and was good at motivating them. She helped them to recognize that the guy was no good and that they could improve their lives. She got them to believe in themselves just because she was so positive. I was always kind of motivated to be the kind of social worker she was.

- Placement Worker 1

Another shared the influence of a college professor who challenged her to grow and to think differently than she ever had before.

In college, he was a big influence for me. He was the sociology professor and I had him the very first quarter I went back to school. I walked in the sociology class and he said there was no such thing as truth. That people don't marry for love, but for companionship and I thought he had really been hurt bad in his life. I felt like I'd been asleep and he woke me up. It jolted me awake. The first class I got a C, the second time around I got a B and I was bound and determined I was going to pull an A from him somehow. So I kept going back. The last two times were for research and I did get
an A and one was a real big project. Then he did write me a letter of recommendation. He really made my brain start wanting to learn and to realize and know the world isn't just peaches and cream.

- Protective Service Worker 2

And finally another participant shared the importance of a special friendship with a co-worker that has influenced her life.

I think my dearest friend who has probably more insight into herself and to other people than anybody I have ever met in my life, has influenced me. She is an incredible woman and she looks at relationships. We discuss relationships. We take relations apart, we analyze. We analyze why we get into relationships, the way we do and why she was into this and about her marriage and about things that were going wrong in there, and how she perceived her kids and why they were doing what they were doing. That kind of insight, that kind of analyzing relationships helped me be able to do it and the acceptance of it. You know we all have weaknesses in our relationships. Why we are attracted to a certain kind of guy or whatever. Let me give you an example. I remember saying that she is always attracted to a situation where she is the one that takes care of them and she knows this about herself. She doesn't like it because she ends up resenting it, but she gets into that situation because you don't want to take care of anybody. She attracts this. This is the kind of brainstorming and analyzing we have done over the years and that has always helped me put it in perspective about
where I'm going and it's good to grow and it's good to change, and that you don't need to be stagnant with relationships. Sometimes relationships end because you have stopped growing or you have gone your separate ways or you realize that you are really a bad match or whatever, but assessing and natural maturation and my friend, are good things that have helped me with that.

- Adoption Worker 1

Once again, the stories are very special and the turning points are significant. Perhaps they take on significance because they are poignant accounts of children and families struggling and being assisted by other human beings, the workers, who have struggles of their own. Perhaps the professional epiphanies do not number as many as the personal, because the working world of the child welfare professional does not allow for those experiences to penetrate the consciousness of the worker. As one can see in the next section, the participants had much to say about themselves in the working environment. In fact, although the information was not identified as epiphanies or turning point experiences, the long-term effects of the working environment could very well take shape as cumulative epiphanies at a future point in the lives of these professionals.
CHAPTER VIII
THE PROFESSIONAL IN THE BUREAUCRACY

Informants were asked within the context of the written and oral life histories to respond to a series of questions which focused on real and ideal organizational environments and experiences. The questions concentrated on positions within the organization, a description of the organization in which they were currently employed, opportunities for growth within the organization, frustrations with the system, and ideas of what the ideal organization would be like for them. (See Appendix B for the complete list of questions.)

These questions did not elicit responses that fell neatly into epiphany or turning point experiences, as described in the previous two chapters. What the questions did elicit, however, were personal responses about the long-term effects of the working environments of public child welfare professionals. As workers discussed their experiences as part of the public system, they clearly separated their responses into two categories; 1) what they currently have in the
organization and 2) what they want in the future from the organizations in which they are employed (See Table 5 for frequency of themes). Although the experiences were not identified as being turning points at the time of the interviews, it was clear at a later time, that the frustrations, emotional exhaustion and turmoil they experienced in the organizational environment took their toll on each individual's life. These experiences perhaps would take on meaning as cumulative or relived epiphanies as the informants looked at them in retrospect, with some distance between themselves and the every day work world of public child welfare. However, for the purpose of this study, they are not being viewed as epiphany experiences.

**What They Have**

Informants were very quick to point out the positive aspects of their work. They did so as described in Chapters VI and VII when informants discussed the impact of particular cases on their personal and professional lives. They repeated that pattern when discussing different aspects of their work environment.

The majority of the informants mentioned in at least one part of their written life histories and again
### Table 5

**FREQUENCY OF THEMES THE PROFESSIONAL IN THE BUREAUCRACY**

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<td>Outside Own Agency</td>
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<td>- Change from Casework to Case Management</td>
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<td><strong>What Informants Want to Experience</strong></td>
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<td>Policies\Parameters for Practice</td>
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in their oral interviews the camaraderie they felt with
other public child welfare workers. They mentioned it
first when this researcher explained the study to them
and in giving them her credentials. Informants
displayed no reluctance in sharing information with the
researcher because she had "been there." Several of
them even mentioned being "part of the club," as if only
insiders could understand the inner workings of child
welfare. This theme was repeated again when the
informants spoke of their work environments and the
importance of their colleagues. One informant shared:

I think that probably one of the
things that does keep people from
burning out, one of the strongest
factors, is the camaraderie in the
office. We were talking one time
about the different sick "in" jokes
that people have. Somebody was
telling me about their friend or
relative that worked in a burn unit
in a hospital and they refer to their
patients as crispy critters; which
might sound really cold to some
people, but that's a way of coping.
We do that a lot here. We joke about
clients, we make little "in" jokes
about situations because we are dealing
with some really grotesque stuff. Some
things that, if you didn't emotionally
remove yourself that way, you wouldn't
be able to cope. You have to rely on
people who are doing similar types of
work who really know what it is like
to expect that kind of humor and give
you the strokes. You may get some
strokes from your clients, but most of
your clients give you one stroke for
two stabs. They'll give you strokes when they want something from you. When it's an issue of trying to face up to something that they need to change in themselves, they would rather see it as you that caused the problem so they are going to try to make you feel crummy about yourself. You really don't get your strokes from your clients. You have to be able to accept it as long-haul change. You have to get your strokes from your coworkers.

- Placement Worker 1

Another informant mentioned the need for humor as a survival mechanism in the field:

The "kinds of things" that are important to me or that seem to stand out in retrospect are pretty varied. One thing that I have always appreciated and have come to understand as being absolutely necessary to survive in my field is a sense of humor, up to and including so called "dark" humor and a healthy appreciation of the absurd. Simply put, if you're going to survive working in children services for the state of Ohio, you darn well better be able to appreciate the humor in frequently absurd situations.

- Intake Worker 1

Another mentioned camaraderie in the context of what has kept her in the field.

One of the things that I think was interesting in child welfare was that there was a real camaraderie
amongst the coworkers. That's probably one of the things that really kept me in the field. Plus, I really like working with the clients. It was real meaty social work. It wasn't just filling out forms and referring people to programs that didn't do anything with them anyway. This was something I could really sink my teeth into and it was interesting.
- Placement Worker 1

Yet another discussed the camaraderie as the agency's technique for stress reduction:

One of the things that we started here that I think is important, because I notice a difference when we don't do it, and even though there are times when you need to get away from this building totally, we all have lunch together and we'll play cards or we'll play Trivial Pursuit or something. The game changes, but the object is the same. Or we'll just all get up and call the operator and tell her we're out to lunch and the whole staff leaves. We have a tendency to kind of clump. Protective Services and Placement are else where so it takes more effort. We sit around at lunch and we don't laugh with our clients, we laugh at them. We sit down and make fun of them. I don't think I'm rationalizing doing that, but I think sometimes it's needed. We get some people that do stupid things. We laugh at them and it's a release for us.
- Placement Worker 3
And finally, an informant discussed the importance of support from her supervisor and her coworkers:

I think part of it goes back to the feeling comfortable with my supervisor and the respect I get from the confidence she has in me. There's been times when the morale has been pretty low and you wonder why you are here, but for the most part the people get along. It's just a matter of understanding how the different systems work. There's not always going to be an easy working situation among everybody so you accept what there is and for the most part I feel like I get along with everybody.

- Protective Service Worker 3

As indicated by the informants, support, humor and camaraderie is essential in order to survive in the system. They become ways to cope with the stress and strain of serving clients in a bureaucratic organizational environment, which as one can see from the following discussion, is one of the biggest stressors and frustrations for the informants. They had a great deal to say about where their stress came from on a personal and an organizational level. The majority of the informants identified the organization as the focus of their stress, with the identified stressors ranging from organizational expectations to paperwork.
One informant said:

The frequent "stressor" I've observed occurs when people come here and marry themselves to the job. They work tons of overtime, volunteer for on-call, give up weekends transporting kids, eat lunch with co-workers of similar ilk, date co-workers, have affairs with co-workers (or strangely, cops). In short, they never get away from other people's problems and, in that process, never devote time to their own. Suddenly, the marriage fails or the child is having problems or individual health begins to suffer and they wonder "why?" And, you know, our system promotes this. The "dedicated worker." Our commission recruited candidates for executive secretary of the CSB by stating they wanted someone who "goes to bed a night and gets up in the morning with children foremost on his mind."

- Intake Worker 1

This dedication is expected, but not supported by the system, as indicated by the reply of another informant to the question of what (s)he would tell a new worker entering the field:

I would say; it's going to be a lot of hard work, but you are going to work for the rewards. You plant your own garden. Don't expect anyone to bring you flowers, because this is the system. It's not the way it should be, but that's the way it is. They need to understand that. They need to understand exactly what's expected of them and how to go about that. The workers are scared. They
don't know what to do. They are willing to do anything you want them to do and what happens is the administrators and supervisors don't know how to train them. They don't know how to teach them and then, the easy thing, because it's human nature, something goes wrong, it's the little guy down here that gets the blame. Not that the administration hasn't done his job, it's the little guy down there and that's unfair. Until we've done our job up there, don't come down on somebody down there.

- Adoption Worker 1

This gets emphasized again in the following comments regarding the system:

I have rarely felt stress because of the people. Periodically when I'm swamped I will. But usually my frustration comes from the system and the unfairness of it. Perhaps that can be found anywhere, but I can only comment on my 6 years experience with the system I'm in.

- Intake Worker 2

Our system has evolved into one which discourages in-depth casework and promotes superficial evaluations and investigations. One result is often chaos down the line -- a case closed too soon or transferred with inaccurate assessment.

- Intake Worker 1

Another informant indicated that workers become overwhelmed with the lack of organizational and
administrative support and feel a level of "burn-out" that in some ways gets acted out against their clients.

People act out burn-out by not coming to work. One person would go home at 1:30 and you couldn't say anything to them about it because they are your friend. They can be irritable, restless. They can be real snippy with people. They remove kids or do not investigate because they don't care. They can go off to themselves. I think when they're burned out (myself too) they don't put 100% into it because you really don't care. That's the same thing I've seen people do here. You can tell by the cases that are being accepted. I've gone after people and removed kids and wondered what the other worker was thinking. In one case it made me angry because a child wasn't pulled and I got her on a call. I couldn't see how anyone couldn't have seen it. What had happened was when this other person investigated a home where the hose had been tied to the hot water heater. This little boy was sprayed with hot water because the mother used to imagine that these kids did things. So when I got it on call she was trying to clean his penis off and she made him hold frozen meat that night and the kid did it because he was so afraid of her. She kicked him out and I asked him if anyone came down last time. He told me who and I asked him if he had told her about this and he said yes. I asked him if he told her it left scars and he said he told her it hurt and she didn't do anything. That made me mad because it wasn't a case of someone losing their temper or just overextreme punishment, but it was calculated. To me a flag should of went up to her that if someone would think of things like this, how could you trust them?
They are not even rational so why would you leave two kids there? I got mad and said something to this person and they just laughed and said, "Well, (X) pulled the kids for you guys." That really made me angry.

- Protective Service Worker 4

Another level of stress develops when workers feel undervalued. One informant shared her imminent plans to leave her place of employment:

I am ready for a change and something different so my plans include a change in the very near future where I can work with people and use my skills in another way. I expect that where ever I am I will continue to develop myself and be organized but this system (at least this particular one) has used me up. I have given and given with little support or gratitude. I am too valuable to stay in this type of environment. I am sorry for this because I believe in kids and protecting them, but I feel child welfare systems don't treat their people fairly and after 6 years I don't wish to fight any more battles. I want to go somewhere I'm encouraged and appreciated. I'm not naive and know some of their problems happen everywhere. But I have seen a number of other people I respect leave this system and go into other types of social work where they are respected and fulfilled. My present plans are to do the same.

- Intake Worker 2

When informants were asked specifically to talk
about the stress of public child welfare practice, some indicated they felt stress was healthy and required personal perseverance and coping strategies. One worker indicated:

It's the stress that keeps you on the cutting edge, the creative stress that challenges the mind to create new ways for families to live together in harmony, new ways for families to be preserved, or reunified. However, the frustrations come also when the master plan so earnestly developed becomes not the master plan but the not so master plan and your heart is discouraged and you feel guilty; however, you bounce back with the goal of making the best plan when the opportunity presents itself again.

- Protective Service Worker 5

Several other informants shared their personal coping strategies for times of stress in their professional lives:

Job stress is there most of the time. Some is healthy -- a motivation to keep moving. I cope sometimes by talking a lot. Mostly though, I no longer "take the job home" to the extent I once did. I take "comp time" and vacation time. The most stressful times were when the agency was in chaos during forced resignations of directors and the closing of an antiquated children's home.

- Adoption Worker 3
I really don't have job stress. At times, when I'm lazy, I may not do my job. And when that happens I feel pressured or under the gun. But I truly enjoy the work. What does cause some anxiety is losing documents, not doing a good interview and generally breaking the rules. I hate confrontations. And I don't like to be criticized. So I work hard at doing at least a "good job" to keep supervisors off my back. Any stress I feel is self-imposed. Then again, I can and do get angry. I don't like being "attacked." I'm not perfect. I've got a lot to learn about social work, but I always give the job my best and if I can't, I'll admit it. Perhaps I should clarify several of the above points. I'm a sloppy worker. I tend to be very unorganized in my work. And when it's time to put all the pieces together, I'm frequently trying to catch up. My style of working creates a type of stress and I handle it by getting "professional." I have to ask direct questions, quote rules, make demands and push. For me that's stress.

- Adoption Worker 4

I feel the most stressed before a big hearing (and dream about it) or if everyone I've seen that day has been upset and screamed without making any progress in the end or if the day was 100% non-stop. If it's so bad, I go to sleep when I get home. These times are few though. Talking to co-workers, having time at home to myself, taking comp time -- helps to get me ready for another day. Every once in a while, I wonder, "What am I doing here?"

- Protective Service Worker 3
Yet none of them ever felt that the stress went away. In a sense, they regarded it as a part of the job and presented an attitude of acceptance. Perhaps the greatest frustrations for public child welfare workers revolve around meeting the demands of a system that feels "over-bureaucratized" at the same time they are addressing the demands of very needy clients. On one hand, systems emphasize service to clients, but not to the detriment of system maintenance and preservation. One informant shared frustration over the lack of internal policies to guide workers' practice and the unrealistic expectations of the system for workers:

I see a lot of flaws in this system. I see caseloads way too high. Expectations are way too high. I think they play into that of not keeping workers. They don't know how to keep workers because the expectations are too high, people get frustrated and they leave. So I think as an agency they play into people not staying. They always say they can't get enough people, can't get a full staff, etc. They are absolutely right and part of it comes with the job and the territory. Some of the people are not made to do some of these jobs, but I don't think we've helped them with that. I think training is very poor in that area. I think that we don't help new workers know what is expected. Workers want to do a good job, at least from the start, and we don't help them do that. What it means is that it is on-the-job training. We
don't explain to people why certain things are important, why certain forms are important, why it's essential to do that. People won't do it if it doesn't make sense to them. We miss some of the basics here. We don't flatter enough, we don't give positive strokes enough. You sure hear about it if you made a mistake, but you sure don't hear about it when you made a good assessment call and a good job. People need this. These are basics. Particularly in this agency, one of our administrators hates for us to take vacation time. People need vacation, they deserve vacation, they need breaks and they should not have to fight for that. So I struggle with that. I struggle with the kids who are stuck in the system because it's a lousy way to be. How we transfer cases--they'll transfer and sit on them. There must be a better way to do that. We don't have very many good guidelines set down or policies and procedures set down. We have lots of rules from the State but we don't have internal policies that make things smooth. That's probably a poor administration because that's their job to get procedures smooth. Supervisors should never fight among themselves; they should never permit that. That should never come about because what happens with the Intake supervisors is that they think I'm going to do that, but Intake should do that. That should never happen. Administration should determine who does it. That kind of pulling it together could work better for administration. I think that's where it's got to get better because you are not going to get a good caseworker any better until you have good administration who is doing their job making things run smoothly
and seeing that 85 cases is too much for any worker to carry.

- Adoption Worker 1

Another informant reiterated the same theme regarding caseloads and administrative pressure, while another traced the problem to changing from a casework model to a case management model.

Too many cases and not being able to provide the services that they want to provide. Ten or twenty years ago that may be what was said, but the frustration is having to deal with all this worthless paper when you should be out there working with people. Always there with the thumb down on you pressuring you to get done; it can't be real crucial to what the family is going through right now.

- Foster Care Worker 2

And,

The major change in CSB that I've observed is the re-definition of roles of our social work staff from actual social workers to case managers. I think that has taken a great toll on our ability to attract and retain "career" people in the ODHS (Ohio Department of Human Services) system. The liability of these jobs in conjunction with the volume of work demanded makes them unappealing and even overwhelming to people who can earn much much more in the education or private business
communities. Many who do survive become cynical about their work and are often callous to clients.
- Intake Worker 1

The end result may be cynicism, callousness and burn-out, but for the study informants, there is an overriding feeling of never being able to do enough, well enough for the clients. They shared:

I think the worst part of the work is always feeling bad about yourself because you can never get enough done. You are really running around with bandaids and you rarely get a sense of doing a job or task well. In fact, the system only reinforces the negative -- the late list, what you didn't get done. As a matter of fact I don't think I had ever gotten any feedback from anyone at CSB that I worked well with teenagers until they started the extended foster care unit. In my mind my teens were being completely under-served. I only saw them when they were kicked out of a foster home or suspended from school.
- Placement Worker 4

I think one of the things that bothers me the most as a worker is the gaps. I find that really frustrating. They'll burn me out faster. I've always said that when I get to where I don't care about the families, that is when I need out of here. One of the things that really stresses me out where it's really hard to get up in the morning is trying to find the right kind of placement for a child.
- Protective Service Worker 2
And,

Probably the most frustrating is not being able to do the job right the way the system is set up. Everything's hard, such as finding a form. Your caseloads are so high. They changed the counting system so it looks low, but really if you have one family with many siblings you can barely do anything. I think in social services you can't assume anybody is really going to do anything for you like a case aide should. You can't just say you want a kid picked up each week and have them there at a certain time. You really can't assume that somebody's not going to call in sick that day or say they forgot. I don't trust delegating in a bureaucracy because I think you know who you can trust. You learn that and you can drive yourself crazy over the case aides. So a lot of times the caseworker will just do it themselves. There's always that frustration of not having enough time to do it right. I think that's why I couldn't stand to be a supervisor. I was always reluctant to take on supervision because there would be much more work. There's a lot of poor services and you can't keep kids in a home by doing poor service. We had people that were stealing from clients. I would send a homemaker out to a limited client and she'd be stealing money from them. So I wasn't using homemaker services at all. There were really no services for PS (Protective Services); that got almost disgusting at the end. By the time you got protective day care you couldn't get the other services in the time you needed it. There's no in-home services for clients. There's just one person out there trying to teach people to clean their houses, etc. and I just don't think it can be done
the way they are structuring it.
- Placement Worker 4

This feeling of "unfinished business" gets further complicated with the paperwork demands placed on the caseworkers by the administration of their agencies. The paperwork is mandated in large part by the State Department of Human Services to assure agency accountability and compliance with state and federal laws, and is then directly tied to funding. Although caseworkers understand the need intellectually, on a practice level, paperwork conflicts with client needs and direct service. One informant shared:

I think one of the things that causes people to leave is that they get real frustrated about the balance between people and paperwork and the expectations --they feel overwhelmed. They feel too pressured. One of the things I think that would be helpful would be to try to get staff to buy into the importance of some of the paperwork like case plans. A lot of people really don't see the value in that. They are trained in how to do it, but they are not trained on why it needs to be done from a practice level. They feel they are just bogged down on forms and paperwork and see absolutely no value in the paperwork. I think one way could be that they could see how it benefits them and their clients to do the paperwork. Some of it you can't; it is just busy work that some bureaucrat has decided needs to be
done. Basically, the case plan and the narrative has good purpose. It does cause you to reflect and pull together the facts and figure out what services need to be done. It helps you figure out whether you are doing all that you need to be doing for your client and whether you are headed in the right direction. I really do see value in paperwork and maybe that's one of the reasons why I don't get all that uptight about it. That's my impression of one of the biggest frustrations with most caseworkers. Most people come into this field and all they want to do is peoplework. I guess because I've been in child welfare so long, I don't think that much about the paperwork. I just figure that's part of being a social worker, but really it's not. There's a lot of other types of social work jobs that don't have this degree of paperwork.

- Placement Worker 1

Another informant sees the paperwork requirements as creating a constant state of crisis on her caseload.

Some of the kinds of things you're seeing going on in the families -- the emotional drain of the dysfunctional families. The emotion is sometimes destroyed in the process. And the work -- it seems like you never have enough time in the day. You can never plan, anticipate and know ahead of time how much pressure you're dealing with in one day. The amount of paperwork that is constantly demanded. They keep coming up with new ways to do the paperwork -- to feed into the computer or whatever. It makes good sense. You have to be methodical and do a certain amount of
paperwork. It is really essential to be able to refer back to documents. Many times you have those days when you have so many people and phone calls coming at you that all of a sudden the paperwork is backlogged again. I'm one that needs to be organized by getting paperwork done. It's one of my biggest pitfalls and also I think the frustration of knowing I have all this paperwork that is due and I'd rather be working with the people. I find that very frustrating. In fact, if I was better I'd whip it off and get it done, but I get a mental block about sitting and writing a study or something instead of just getting it done. Ever since I've been at the agency I think I've developed kind of a crisis mentality where if I have a quiet day or something, I don't even push myself to get some of that caught up. But all of a sudden you have a crisis.

- Adoption Worker 3

Not only is the paperwork demand high, it is also complicated. With the passage of Amended Substitute Senate Bill 89 into Ohio law, caseworkers had to learn a whole new system of standardized case planning. Case plan documents are now the same from one agency to the next, where they previously had been different. The document itself is lengthy and the caseworker is the responsible for developing the case plan with the client. One informant shared the complexity of explaining the case plan to the client and her resulting frustration:
One frustration is the paperwork; you can't get out to see your clients. The other is that when you're taking that case plan document out to your clients, it's real difficult for them to understand. You have your goals, objectives and services and you're constantly flipping back and forth and showing them what goes with what and they don't understand it. I spent at least two and one half hours one day just going over one plan with one client and it was fairly a short plan. I'm not sure she still understands it. Every time I ask her if she's done these things, I have to point out other things she has to do. I'll tell her it's on her plan and she'll say, "What plan?" Clients will do that, but I think it's real frustrating and think that they could have come up with a better format for the plan itself because clients just do not understand it.

- Placement Worker 3

The constant tug of war between the system's needs and the service to clients leaves workers feeling overwhelmed and undervalued. Even those workers who have stayed reach low points and question their professional value. One informant shared the stress of the two demands.

The most difficult stress is that applied by the agency who expects workers to be able to meet all deadlines, etc., with an over-loaded caseload. I used to have a wonderful supervisor, who when she saw her workers overwhelmed would ask for ways she could help with
paperwork, phone calls, etc. That gave the extra boost to get things in order again. The stress from clients is really easier to deal with. One particular client called daily, initially to harass, but when she saw that I did not respond with anger and hatred she became more in control in her dealings with me. Most clients began with hatred for the caseworker and learned that I could be trusted at my word. That level of trust does not seem to exist within the agency.

- Foster Care Worker 2

Another shared how he has chosen to change the way he copes with the system over his tenure:

When I began 8 years ago, I was an open book. I shared everything I had; ideas, contacts, opinions, etc. I gave everything I could to the clients. I made my job the top priority of my life. Everything else was secondary. And I trusted completely the "system." Now I'm more reserved, more cautious. And if I can, 8 hours is all I put in on the job. And I keep clients at an arm's length. Why? Because all of us would like a measure of success in our work. More money, positions, etc. And idealistically success comes from hard work. Well, hard work certainly helps, but being able to operate in the political arena certainly helps. And I detest politicking. I know it's a reality. And I probably only detest it because my skills are limited. But it's still difficult to see virtual incompetence rewarded and hard work ignored. Reality is brutal. So in order to maintain a balance, for me
to come to terms with my values vs. the values of the system, I've started to be selfish. I give to the system in relation to what it gives me. I'm at a stalemate. I won't ask for anything and it offers nothing. So I follow the rules, do what is necessary and stay out of the way.

- Adoption Worker 4

Although frustrated the with demands of practice in a highly formalized system, the informants were not without hope for systemic changes that would improve their ability to function for the system and to meet the needs of their clients. They offered their recommendations for change in the next section.

What They Want

The informants offered many creative ideas for agency-based change that they felt would have an immediate impact on staff morale and, therefore on the retention of seasoned staff. In a general way, their recommendations fell into three broad categories: 1) "mental health", time off and personal safety, 2) job variety and challenge, and 3) training and recognition. The majority of their recommendations fell into the third category.
An immediate need identified by the informants was for a more flexible use of compensatory time and personal days. One informant identified this need in the following statement:

One thing that we don't have here that's become almost a nightmarish problem is that we don't have any personal days. You have vacation which you accrue. I think there needs to be some ability to accrue vacation within the first year. There is a push on people that if you work overtime, save your comp time because you can use it. I don't know how it is where you work, but here people build up comp time... I quit saving comp time. I get paid for it. I earn four weeks of vacation a year, but I can't take that because if I do I pay for it. This desk is up to here when you're gone for one week let alone four. So I don't need any comp time. I just add it to my paycheck. But I think there needs to be allowance for personal days. It would have a very positive impact on our situation here.

- Intake Worker 1

Another raised this issue in the form of a question related to flexible use of time:

Could we allow the worker a little bit more flexibility? This is another thing, people always want control in their lives. Some flexibility like giving them three personal days a year. You can take
it out of the sick time for them. You get so many sick days, but we need that flexibility. You shouldn't have to account for a personal day you want off. Another thing would be a fill-in, a floater for a person who goes on vacation. People hate to come back from vacation because of all the work that builds up.

- Adoption Worker 1

Again, the compensation for time spent beyond working hours was raised in the context of being "on call." This particular informant worked in one of many Ohio counties where emergency duty is not voluntary or compensated for in a monetary fashion.

The other major drawback to this work is the on-call responsibility. I thoroughly resent having to carry a beeper on weekends or evenings for no pay. To me (and just about all of my peers) this responsibility is a message from the State that my life and time are less significant than that of others. If you ask someone to work for you, you should expect to reimburse them for their effort. We feel a little bit like second class citizens.

- Intake Worker 1

Obviously, the immediate need defined by the participants was for the administration's recognition, through the use of designated personal days and compensatory time, of the job's demands on workers'
mental health.

Two other informants recognized that casework is becoming far more demanding on caseworkers' physical safety.

I think probably it would be a good idea if staff could be comforted by the fact that there is a security agent in the building. Right now, we have none. I am driving a (vehicle) right now that has key marks down the side. There is no cop out there. I know who did it... I can't prove it. We had a guy shot out here at the edge of our parking lot last year, right in front of half a dozen people. Didn't kill him, but... we had two people who took extended leaves because they were in shock from that. So I think some security provisions are needed.

- Intake Worker 1

Another metropolitan informant shared her belief that personal safety influences the decision of staff to stay in the field or leave. She followed up her remark with a suggestion for how to improve staff safety.

I think a lot of people today that don't stay may not be staying because they fear putting their lives on the line. I know when I went back and visited a smaller agency that two of the workers were leaving. They said this man had pulled a knife on them. They said when it got to that point, that was it. Everybody had to really evaluate how far they want to risk
their lives. I think that today you're risking an awful lot; seeing people coming in and out of the homes that they're in and maybe something's going on in the next room. I think, like I said, that another person going out with the worker, maybe having additional people with them. It's always in the back of my mind that it's on that schedule where I last was and if they have to track me down to find my body they will know where it's at. Just keeping the office informed and not to confront situations, how to be aware, not confront somebody.

- Foster Care Worker 2

The next area of improvement suggested by the informants was the creation of opportunities for change, variety and challenge for long term staff. One informant shared that challenge and variety is something individuals can create for themselves if the agency has the resources available to do so.

It's still a challenge even though the job gets old to me. I create the challenge. The benefits count a lot, but at the same time I think you need to be a strong person in order to survive with this agency. I think that somebody weak of mind is going to buckle or is going to have trouble here sooner or later. But I think it's good to work with an agency who has the resources. When somebody needs something there's a matter of justifying it, but recognizing the possibility. Part of it is the job security and with this agency I can move around and create variety. I
like to create challenges and there's room to do that here.
  - Adoption Worker 2

Another informant, who is a supervisor, shared her perception that creating the opportunities were the agency administration's job.

It's our job to make them feel like a winner. How that one person, with their own weaknesses and their own characteristics, you have to make them feel good by getting the job done, too. I think you can only do that by individualizing. People who have been in this system for a number of years need some change and they need to understand that it's okay to change from job to job. When you recognize that, again getting back to not being stagnant. This damages our children because when you have that attitude your workers have that attitude. So make some changes in your lives. Look at your stress, look at what you can do well and see if you can find a job that can meet those needs. That adds like a shot in the arm. It gives you that incentive to get going. Again, some good training is always good even for a long-term worker. Maybe a different way of coping, maybe new material. I always appreciate when we have good administration where we can challenge them. I really think that it's a way of really communicating. Some people are much too threatened by that. The only way we really grow and not just accept it, is communication.
  - Adoption Worker 1
Along with creating opportunities for challenge and change, the informants felt that administrators needed to create parameters for agency practice and to train and recognize staff for their perseverance. One informant summarized the feelings of the study participants in the following statement:

We are getting an average of 60-80 families a month for each supervisor which is three of us. It's just stacking up and the pressure is mounting. And so workers just look elsewhere. The pay might be good, but it's not that good to put up with that. So with that kind of internal stuff, we are not building a program to keep workers. Until we change that we are not going to keep them. What you are going to get, unless this is what administration wants, is if you want to hire somebody for two years you can pick up your little college kids and hire them for two years and if that's all you want out of them that's just what you're going to get, but you have to take the responsibility that you are hurting the kids. You are not building the expertise and the change is terribly hard for families as well as caseworkers and supervisors. So if they don't invest heavily then why should we. Administration has got to come to grips with the fact that we want long-term employees; we will train them, but we do want them. So then they have to learn how to keep them. Until they get that, I just don't think the system is going to get that much better.

~ Adoption Worker 1
They all agreed that the designation of parameters for agency practice is an absolute necessity in order to keep workers. In a sense, this requires agencies to take a public stand on very volatile public issues such as what cases they will consider and refuse to screen for investigation.

What we are responsible for, who does this, who does that. If those are spelled out, everybody can accept their jobs and have very few problems. I think this is where poor management comes in when you don't get that. I think that they really don't have an understanding or maybe they don't have the money, I'm not sure, of really appreciating the line worker out there. And when you don't have that, you don't keep your staff. When you don't have that, because they are emotionally drained anyhow -- this is tough, tough work and it's probably one of the hardest work in the business -- and if you don't have that respect for them that they have the toughest job, if you don't make some concessions, if you don't given them some breaks ...

It all boils down to the fact that you don't respect them and you don't respect the work they do. This kind of public agency does not do this. Caseload size is so high it's impossible. When you make a task so damn hard, so impossible, you are setting someone up for failure. Why not work with people on this? What I've seen is that either we have to do better screening and say we're not going to take certain cases; that they aren't our business and it belongs to another agency. Either we have fewer cases come in here or
we take everything and we have more manpower out there. But you have to have one or the other and management needs to make a decision. They want the best of both worlds and they can't have it. So I see that as one of the major problems and what I can see in Intake is either we learn to screen better and we take your referrals, or we get more manpower to handle it out there. But we have to take off the load from this little worker out here because this little worker won't stay unless we make it manageable.

- Adoption Worker 1

The informants also suggested that parameters need to be developed, trained on and enforced in a supportive fashion, recognizing workers' inherent individualism and their desire to perform adequately in serving families.

One thing that I think everybody needs is some general idea of what the rules are. A new worker needs to have a lot of training as far as how to interact with a client, what are the minimum standards for child care, etc., so that they know how to go into a home and, even though it's pretty dirty and chaotic, know if they are meeting minimal standards so you're not removing kids and doing more harm than good. One thing that's needed from a supervisor is being told what you're doing right. They should give a lot of feedback on that and encourage positively. Obviously, a supervisor has to tell you if you are making an error and they should attempt to do that in an educational rather than a punitive approach. I think a supervisor needs to give you the freedom to adapt your
We all want to do a good job, but if you don't know what a good job is and you don't know the guidelines, you can't do it. It's real, real hard and you spend years trying to figure out what in the hell you're supposed to be doing up there in the home visit. They tell me to go for a home visit, but what does that mean? What am I supposed to do, what am I supposed to ask? This is where the average worker comes in. They want to do a good job. I do not feel anybody is hired to do a lousy job. I think management screws up continually by not providing them the training and the guidelines that they need to do a good job. That is what they need. They need, again, basically to have an internal support system for the workers. Until they do that they need some break emotionally from this place. What I mean by that is they need that people understand them. The most wonderful thing in the world for us as human beings is to have someone to listen to you and
really hear what you're saying and understands. It's one of the best things in the world because it takes the burden off of us and that we are understood, are appreciated, are heard and are valued. Out there without that support, they don't know if they are making the best decision since they don't hear that support and they don't feel that value. They get burned out and they can't get out of here fast enough. We've got to change that if we are to have any real importance. We've got to get better in how we treat people. We're going into people's lives telling them what to do and we don't know how to treat our own social workers.

- Adoption Worker 1

In a similar vein another informant shares her image of the ideal supervisor:

My ideal supervisor is one that is supportive to the workers, who knows what's going on in the field and knows what the new laws, rules and procedures are and is able to be supportive to her staff. If they have a question, she knows the answer. She also would be someone who would understand the stress of it, too, and maybe would be open to looking at ways to cut down on some of the time we have to spend at things that really stress us, like paperwork. I think there would be at least monthly meetings that are scheduled times with each worker in her unit. At first, once a week for several hours to go over all the cases and make some case decisions. And then after a while I think it could go down to once a week maybe
for an hour or once every two weeks depending on what's going on. I think she would be fair to all humans under her and she would see that they would have all chances for training and development to better themselves. She would also be able to delegate and be supportive when she passes out cases. I know it's hard for them to pass out cases, but to go ahead and pass them out because it has to be done, yet be supportive enough to feel bad that's she's having to do it. I think she'd be part of the team of the administration and leadership in the community. Maybe also serving on some committees within the community doing PR for the agency and trying to be part of the team of the community informing and the figuring out how to fill in some of the gaps of the services that we have. She'd be our liaison, the workers' liaison, and be able to show discipline. She'd be able to help us with the tough clients. We have some clients that are really difficult, but if they hear it from a second person that doesn't have to deal with them on a regular basis, it kind of eases it for us where we can continue to work with them without these huge signs of anger to deal with.

- Protective Service Worker 2

The themes of support, recognition and appreciation are apparent in the previous recommendations. One informant sums these up cogently:

Everybody wants to recognized.
The newest worker is full of self-confidence and good, positive images about themselves and I think structured into our staff
development should be ways for
development. The ideal agency
would have tuition reimbursement.
We have this now and I hope to take
advantage of it myself. You need to
courage folks to build up their
own self-worth and value by offering
them opportunities to go to school,
workshops, regional training centers,
etc. Folks need to feel good about
themselves. Staff recognition dinners
and picnics don't do it. They add to
it or enhance it, but the bottom line
is that you'll never be able to
separate the personal from the
professional. Folks go home and they
have their own problems to deal with
such as losing their husband or wife
through divorce, their kids in trouble,
etc. Then if they see their job as a
burden and especially these types of
jobs that take so much out of you.
We help people cope with crisis,
dysfunction, man's total inhumanity
toward children and then have to go
home and try to put our own families
together. I remember once talking
with X and I was overdoing it I'm
sure about how great I felt social
workers were, and she told me
basically to be quiet because that's
their job. I think we assume that
that's what it is -- just a job. If
you know anything about the
camaraderie of policemen and firemen,
you know they are proud of who they
are. They have status and prestige
in the community. I don't think
social workers have that feeling.
They need something very concrete.
We don't have the money to do the
ideal things. An agency needs to
somehow heighten that they have
worth. Social workers work under a
cloud of anonymity. Because of these
folks you can sleep better at night
because they are on the job 24 hours
a day, 7 days a week. I love them
and respect them and because of these
folks the quality of your community
is better, but I have one problem with them -- they never tell anybody. I'm not that way. I want people to know that we have one of the best agencies in the state, maybe in the country. The community needs to know. This low profile does not help to make the community aware of the hard working professional that are there helping them. People like compliments. They want to feel good. This can be a terrible world. There's a lot of pain, misery and heartache. I try to see how much good I can do. The best thing I can do is to touch people and tell them I like them, that I support them, etc. I think all of this is needed to balance some of the misery and pain in our lives. If your job doesn't do it for you, it's got to be from some other source. But I think staff development and incentives on your job would help.

- Adoption Worker 4

The majority of the previously mentioned recommendations do not involve changes in state laws or policies. They do not involve large monetary investments. They involve, quite simply, "starting where the worker is" and building on the basic humanitarian values that are the cornerstone of child welfare practice.
CHAPTER IX

DISCUSSION

What we do, that is what we are trying to accomplish and why we exist in the first place, has always made sense to me. Therefore, I've never had any internal conflict over values or feelings of low self-worth. I like people, enjoy working with them and derive personal satisfaction from being helpful and affecting positive change. For X years, I've never left home for work with the feeling that the coming day's activities would not be purposeful or meaningful. I certainly knew that there could be problems, that I could expect to be overwhelmed with the volume of work and that there was potential for frustration within our system and with others, but the one has managed to outweigh the other to date.

- Intake Worker 1

Although much attention has been given to why public child welfare workers burn out in the field, little has been given to the reason why they stay. This study provides documentation on the life and work experiences of eighteen public child welfare professionals from across the State of Ohio. The turning points in their life experiences, their commitment to families and children, their need to be
needed and their places in the formal organization become clear in the retelling of their stories.

This chapter is organized around the main research questions this study sought to address. The major findings will be discussed and highlighted under each question area. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the major implications of the research for social work, and the field of public child welfare and recommendations for future research needed to further this knowledge base.


The data obtained from the participants' written and oral life histories provided a very clear picture of how these professionals came to the public child welfare field, and what experiences, personal and professional, affected their lives. The majority of these professionals came to the field directly from undergraduate school. Public child welfare was their first job and for many, will be the job from which they will retire. In reviewing Chapters V, VI and VII, one gets an overriding sense of altruism from these professionals. It appears that they came into the field to give of themselves. They exhibit a strong feeling of
kindness, benevolence and concern for others. They describe themselves in terms of their personal need to be needed, to make a difference and to be quiet contributors. These professionals did not come to child welfare for public recognition. In a sense, working in public child welfare fulfills a psychological need for the participants.

Many of the participants in this study experienced crisis or turning point experiences (epiphanies) in their childhoods. As Chapter VI reveals, about half of the informants experienced victimization, death, illness and physical disability that led them into this field. As child welfare workers, participants can attempt to make it "better" or at least "different" for other children and families who have difficult experiences. It may be that participants are dealing with their own issues of separation, abandonment and attachment by trying to protect children from the hurt they experienced personally. In a sense, they see themselves as rescuers.

Participants in this study have incorporated the field of public child welfare into their personal identities. They view themselves as professionals who have expertise in the specialized field of child welfare. The connection between their work, their life
histories and personal identities makes it problematic for these workers to leave the field. One participant explained leaving as a type of identity crisis.

Several participants came to the field as a result of a religious or spiritual calling. Many of these child welfare workers had pleasant childhoods in which they felt valued, supported and encouraged by strong parental and family figures. For these participants, religion and the organized "church" played a major role in shaping their lives. Grateful for all they had received, and propelled by religious values, they felt a need to carry out their spirituality through serving others.

Regardless of their experiences in childhood or their sense of calling or the need to be needed, these are people who clearly find meaning in their work. As indicated by their scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (see Chapter V), they feel a strong sense of personal accomplishment in what they do. The successes, whether they are major or minor, outweigh the effects of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion resulting from the job. To the outside observer, the experiences the participants shared about their professional lives may seem overwhelmingly negative. But for the participants, the successes they experienced with
extremely demanding cases, "made it all worthwhile."

On the basis of the aforementioned information, it is apparent that a major force in their career selection and longevity is the way they have made meaning of their lives. Their meaning making is certainly influenced by where they are in their adult development at this point in time, but also is influenced by how the participants integrated their turning point experiences into the texture of their lives.

Looking through the lens of adult development theories, one can see where the participants were in their life journeys. Using Erikson's theory, one can view the study participants as people who have been able to achieve intimacy and who are now invested in generativity. Their work, safeguarding the future through the protection of children is the epitome of generativity. Their jobs reinforce the Eriksonian concept in Stage 7 of the child as the trust of the community, and certainly plays itself out in their personal need to care for children.

Levinson's theory related to early and middle adulthood gives structure to the study participants' stages in life. In Chapters V through VIII, one sees clearly that the participants define themselves in terms of the stress and satisfaction, personal and
professional, that characterize their lives. They are continuing to redefine their identities as adults, as they find their places in society and their niches in the work world. Many of the participants are moving in the direction of finding personal fulfillment, making societal contributions and undertaking a review of their lives, as indicated by their characterizations of being on a life journey or at a crossroads in their lives in Chapter V.

Perhaps the most useful of Levinson's concepts for this study is that of life structure, or the underlying pattern of a person's life at a given point in time. One can note from the participants' stories that their life structures consist of and are affected by their roles in the external world, relationships, and experiences related to several key developmental questions. These questions relate directly to how the participants made meaning of their lives at the point in time during which they were participating in this study. Levinson suggests that life structure answers the questions: "What is my life like now? What are the most important parts of my life and how are they interrelated? Where do I invest my time and energy? Do I want to change my relationships?" (Levinson, 1986, p.6). The participants organized their answers to these
life structure questions through the turning point experiences in their personal and professional lives.

The primary component of the life structure consists of the person's relationships with others in the external world. One can assume that each unique life structure can change when there is a change in one or more of those relationships. A significant relationship for the participants, as reflected in their histories, might have been with a client, a co-worker, a parent or spouse and so forth. These relationships were shaped by the social context surrounding them, which became part of them.

According to Levinson, and borne out by the participants' experiences, these relationships and contexts shaped the participants' life courses and perhaps influenced their decisions first, to choose child welfare as a practice arena and second, to stay in the field. Seemingly, each change in life structure related to these significant relationships reinforced the participants' need to choose to remain in the field.

Robert Kegan (1982) may have classified these changes as the participants' creating a new self, evolving from the old to the new conception of self, during which time they got in touch with the source of human emotion. In examining the participants' life
histories, one could identify different moments when these changes in life structure could have occurred. Kegan suggests that for change to occur, a person must confirm the old personality, let go of it and reintegrate the new personality. This appears to be the process set in motion by the participants' epiphany experiences.

In examining the participants' experiences in relation to Kegan's theory of adult development, one sees the participants struggling to define themselves as separate or different from their jobs. They want to have careers, but do not want to be their careers. They are beginning to emerge from defining themselves totally by an institution to defining themselves by themselves, connected by their relationships with others. Using Kegan's stages, the participants are struggling to move from the Institutional Balance (Stage 4) to the Interindividual Balance (Stage 5). For the study participants, this is a difficult transition because helping is ingrained in their personal identities, either from a spiritual calling to help, from a need to be needed, or a personal need to make it "better" for someone else.

The adult development theoretical constructs of transitions, evolution, life structure and meaning
making confirm and give credence to the life experiences of the study participants. One can see clearly that turning point experiences guided the participants to seek out the field of public child welfare. Similarly, those experiences coupled with new ones assisted the participants in making meaning of their life structures and in altering them.

2. How Do Participants See Themselves in the Organizational Context? Do They Stay in Child Welfare Out of a Commitment to Families and Children or to the Bureaucratic Structure?

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this study for the researcher was hearing and experiencing with the participants the frustrations they feel in trying to practice a helping profession in bureaucratized, formal organizations. As described in Chapter VIII, participants had difficulty trying to balance the needs of the client(s) the requirements and needs of the organization. With the increase in legislated accountability, organizations are inadvertently converting caseworkers into casemanagers. Caseworkers feel that paperwork is driving the system instead of service to children and families. Increasingly, they are practicing in a system that exists on a dichotomous continuum that consists of bureaucratic values at one
pole and social work values at the other. In order to maintain an equilibrium, the individual is constantly trying to balance the roles of caseworker and bureaucrat, while the environment is in a constant state of chaos. The chaos is endemic to the field of public child welfare. An extension of the government, the field is always at risk of unplanned change through legislative mandate, public outcry or change in federal or state regulations. Activity in the public domain has a direct bearing on the culture of the organization, including its values, beliefs, behavioral norms and patterns of behavior.

It appears, upon review of the participants' comments in Chapter VIII, that the agencies in which they work have tried to respond to the needs of the staff as well as the needs of the system. Nevertheless, they have succumbed to becoming more bureaucratized, just to cope with the external chaos. Rules appear to have become more important than people and deadlines more important than relationships.

Looking through the lens of formal organizational theory, one can see public child welfare organizations as service organizations, as defined by Blau and Scott. As such, clients, or the primary beneficiaries, receive services from the organization, but employees also
receive benefits through employment and advancement. A crucial problem is created when the values of the two constituencies are placed in opposition with each other. The dilemma occurs at the interface among service provision, client welfare and self preservation within an organization.

It is pertinent to note here that the study participants, while definitely experiencing conflicts between the roles of bureaucrat and professional, have not chosen to leave the field as a way to cope with the frustration. On the contrary, they have chosen to cope within the system. Blau and Scott (1962) would characterize this selection as choosing the bureaucratic orientation over the professional. Indeed, the participants' remarks support this concept. They see themselves as getting their support from colleagues in the system, and seek to carry out their functions as creatively as the formal organization will allow them. One could perhaps even say that the participants are given just enough choice or control over their professional decisions that they feel valued for their expertise and seek to perform their practice functions in keeping with organizational standards.

Applying the tenets of Down's (1967) theory from Inside Bureaucracy, one can view the participants as
conservers of the bureaucracy. They appear to be holding onto what they have by maximizing their security and maintaining their level of power, income and personal prestige. They also tend to dislike turmoil and would prefer to maintain the status quo for their clients over fostering or accommodating to change. They feel that the latest changes in child welfare policies and procedures, while helpful, have been disruptive to clients.

The majority of the participants do not see themselves as risk takers, even though their jobs require that they make risky decisions every day. They do not perceive themselves as "stand outs" but rather describe themselves as "quiet doers." As such, they draw on the intrinsic rewards that come from working with children and families. Some believe that remaining with the system will keep it honest. Others believe that longevity with the organization affords them expertise and vision. Even when extremely frustrated by the system, there is fulfillment and comfort in serving clients and using professional skills.

Clearly the participants in this study have a strong commitment to children and families. They discover meaning and reap rewards in knowing that they were instrumental in helping a single client experience
success. One must admire their ability to cope in systems that other professionals would find intolerable. Their inner reserves for self reward and their ability to make meaning out of chaos are strong personal assets.

3. What Experiences Contribute to the Process of Staying? What is the Relationship Between Burnout and Staying?

This research indicates that people have a variety of experiences, personal and professional, that contribute to their being and staying in the field. These experiences were noted in Chapters V through VIII, and again in the two previous sections of this chapter. If one could take a snapshot of the study participants, they would look like mainstream Americans. Almost without exception, they exude a caring and commitment to children and families that really can only be explained through their personal identification with childhood victimization, their "callings" to serve this population, and their commitment to their organizations.

The experiences they have had and continue to have with clients point to the fact that their jobs will never be done. For many, this fact in and of itself, as well as the impact they can make on clients' lives, is enough to keep them in the field. As one participant said: "there is never going to be a point where the job
is not here anymore because everyone is taken care of. There's always going to be something happening that shouldn't have been happening." (Protective Service Worker III).

Accepting change on a small scale, or incrementally over a period of years, is also important to these professionals. They do not need to see radical or dramatic changes to accept that their clients have done something positive. They believe a child welfare worker can make a difference in clients' lives in ways that are not especially recognizable or obvious to the rest of the world. Motivated by a desire to help children and understand family situations, they accept clients as they are, where they are. This attitude toward clients is consistent with some of the most basic tenets of social work practice - the non-judgmental attitude and starting where the client is.

Many of the participants experienced the 1960's as part of the "front line troops." In a sense, they still espouse the values of that era -- peace, love, protection of human rights and service to fellow human beings. They describe themselves as people on a journey, sometimes at a crossroads in making meaning of their lives. They see themselves as constantly growing and learning. Although the government was viewed as the
perpetuation of injustice during the 1960’s, the participants in this study have chosen to carry out their journey within the system. They have chosen to carry out their callings in a setting where significant social problems converge and where they feel constantly challenged to make a contribution.

Along with the aforementioned experiences, the staying phenomena seems to be reinforced by a sense of identification with the formal organization that the participants expressed. If they do not experience this with the system itself, they at least identify with their informal supports. As mentioned previously in Chapter VIII, these professionals have a very strong allegiance to their collegial peer group. The camaraderie they experience, the dark humor they display with each other, and the unspoken understanding of the stresses and strains of daily practice create a sense of professional identity and support that is not easily explainable to outsiders. It could almost be viewed in terms of survivorship.

The child welfare workers studied here stay out of a commitment to families and children, to their colleagues and to their organizations. They also stay because they are survivors. These people know how to take care of themselves in practice, in the system and
in their personal lives. They cope with burnout and stagnation by focusing on the little changes, and trying to maintain a balance between practice and paperwork. They do not expect miracles from their clients and they are not disappointed when their clients do not make monumental changes. When they get overwhelmed by difficult situations, mountains of paperwork and too many cases, they lean on each other, take some time off and put things back into perspective.

This research pointed out that there really is a very fine line between staying and burning out. The study participants had all experienced burn out at some level in their experience. They have somehow maintained that delicate balance between survival and vulnerability, personal involvement and professional detachment. Perhaps they learned to establish that balance early in their careers and coped well enough to beat the odds on burning out then. With maturity, coping has become easier, as has being in the system. The participants obviously get something for themselves from the work they do, yet they must remain ever vigilant lest they lose sight of the meaning and significance in their work and tip the balance to the other side. Burning out is just one small step away from staying. Instead of being opposite, it is really
only different in terms of the way the individual processes his/her daily experiences within the system. An experience that would burn a worker out one day, may be the very thing that would keep him/her in the field the next day. Each new experience could be viewed as a crisis or a challenge and is very dependent on the worker's frame of mind that particular day.

Implications and Recommendations of this Study

In some ways, this research raised more issues than it was ever expected to. By using the naturalistic approach, the researcher left the door open for a flood of data. And so it occurred. With the amount of data accumulated, many implications for social work policy/administration, education and research emerged. The following discussion will touch on these implications and suggest some possible recommendations for changes.

Social Work Administration/Policy

The most significant implications arising from this study concern the whole area of effective agency administration and responsible policy making. The study participants had a great deal to say about what would
make it easier and more attractive to stay in the field of public child welfare.

The first and most obvious recommendation is for state and federal legislative and regulatory agencies to look at the impact of proposed policies and rules on the direct service function before they are mandated for implementation. Even though the policy changes have appeared to be positive for children and families, their implementation in Ohio has created confusion for clients and has been overwhelming for practitioners. Systematic, integrated change would be more manageable at the direct service level.

On a similar note, public child welfare agency administrators must be challenged to create systems that balance "paperwork" with "peoplework", a balance that would appear to contribute to the retention of seasoned, committed professionals. Furthermore, agencies should have clear parameters for child welfare practice at the community level and provide the supervision and training to explain and reinforce the parameters. Staff members gain a feeling of support and guidance from agency policy that indicates to them, and to the community, what is expected as a standard for service.

The participants indicated a very strong need to feel valued, rewarded and appreciated in their
positions. They felt this could be done in monetary or intangible ways. For the most part, their suggestions did not require direct cash outlay. The participants felt recognition and appreciation could be accomplished by promoting learning, creativity and growth within the organizational setting. Examples included creating new programs that use the workers' specialized knowledge, job rotation, and the provision of specialized learning opportunities. Participants felt this would give them an opportunity to feel success and achievement on a different level than service provision and would offer a welcome diversion from the daily trials of public child welfare. The participants also indicated that direct line supervisors who encouraged and supported them in these efforts and maintained high standards of practice challenged them and gave them the incentive to achieve at a higher level.

The final area acknowledged by the participants as needing attention could be categorized into recruitment/retention issues. The data suggest that agencies may be erroneously seeking out younger, less skilled workers to fill their child welfare positions. Although youthful energy and enthusiasm are desirable, a critical balance needs to be maintained between youth and maturity. Mature workers have accrued experience and wisdom that
give them vision and perspective. These workers can serve as mentors and supports for the younger, more impressionable workers.

To further support their line workers, agencies need to start looking at ways to safeguard workers' mental health. Many of the study participants are responsible, in addition to their caseloads, for "after hours" duty without direct or indirect compensation. This addition to their already demanding caseloads encroaches on their personal lives which are a source of respite and vitalization to many workers.

Administrators could head off burnout by looking at ways to compensate staff for their emergency duty time, either through paying them for it or by not having to do it at all through the use of an "after hours" staff. That feeling of protected time can go a long way to maintaining staff stability.

Finally, with the increase in family violence, drugs and general unrest in the community, caseworkers need to feel physically safe as they do their jobs. Many participants felt that knowing they could request another worker or supervisor to accompany them on risky cases would help them feel more protected and supported on a daily basis, which in turn would possibly keep them in the field for a longer period of time.
As one can see, the majority of the implications and recommendations for social work administration and policy concern direct service at the agency level. These recommendations can be accomplished in even the smallest agency. Participants in some ways are asking for simple recognition for their endeavors, reprieve or indirect compensation for their hours of field work, and protection from unpredictable clients.

Social Work Education

This study elicited data that suggested some enhancements might be in order for social work educational models. The following discussion will focus on undergraduate social work education, as the field of public child welfare is still striving to attract social work graduates into its ranks. The majority of the points in this discussion are also related to increasing the student practitioner's self awareness and coping skills.

At a very early point in their undergraduate social work studies, students must critically confront their own vulnerabilities and assess themselves in relation to their life experiences. This process must focus on how students have processed or resolved their personal issues, especially their own victimization. One
can see from this study that childhood experiences play a major role in how professionals carry out their social work practice. Early recognition of these vulnerabilities can convey to students the need to resolve their own issues before they try to act them out in relation to clients. In this study, it was not clear whether study participants were playing out their personal issues in their work or whether entering public child welfare forced them to confront and master their own issues.

A second area of importance to social work education is for faculty to present a realistic picture of public sector practice, especially as it relates to public child welfare. Young students need to be made aware of the **benefits** of public sector practice, but also be presented with the **challenges and obstacles** that exist therein. They must be presented with the severity of the dysfunction of families and children that are several, as well as the reality that they will not change at the pace a young social worker may expect. Young professionals need to understand people and the limitations of their environments, as well as the fact that clients may only progress in small increments towards their goals. At the same token, social work students need to understand public
policy and how it relates to organizational change so that they will not feel or act like victims when policy mandates a change in agency practice.

In order to combat stress and burnout before they occur, students must learn realistic and concrete coping strategies. They need to be aware of what triggers stress for them and how to develop a plan to reduce it. They need to know how to safeguard their personal physical and mental health by developing coping strategies during school that can be generalized to the field. Students can begin to learn to juggle that space that exists between the personal and professional and learn what happens when it gets out of balance.

Finally, students need to be encouraged to look inside themselves for rewards. On the basis of this study, it appears that those who get intrinsic rewards for their practice can accept small changes from clients and the ambiguity of bureaucratic organizations better than those who rely on others for validation.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study sought to tell the life histories and work experiences of public child welfare professionals who stayed in the field. Participants were overlooked in previous research, which focused on why people burned
out and left the field. In using the naturalistic method of inquiry, the researcher was able to get close to the participants, to not only observe them in their settings, but to experience with them how they made meaning of their personal and work experiences. In the course of this study, several areas for future research emerged.

First, there is a great need to examine the organizational environment of the agencies that have a high level of caseworker retention. This study alluded to the importance of the agency atmosphere to the worker feeling valuable, recognized, challenged and secure. More needs to be known about how organizations and their administrators create and maintain an atmosphere that encourages growth and learning. Exactly what happens in organizations in their everyday work lives with clients, peers, and their superiors? Another aspect related to organizational atmosphere that bears further investigation is how the longevity of agency administrators affects the stability of the staff. Do administrators that stay share any common experiences with caseworkers who stay? Do these administrators create an organizational environment that is unique from other agencies of similar size and composition?
Follow-up is needed to examine what happens to the study participants longitudinally. Do they continue in the field? Will they move up the ranks or stay in their direct service positions? What impact will further accountability and paperwork requirements have on committed helpers? How will they continue to juggle paper and people? Do they see themselves as conservers of the organization?

Future research also needs to focus on whether there is any relationship between the personal life experiences of caseworkers and their ability to persevere in the system. From the current study, there appears to be some indication of a relationship between personal and professional crises and the ability to maintain a perspective on the chaos of the public child welfare system. Should child welfare organizations recruit individuals with similar personal characteristics and work toward retaining them in the system? What recruitment techniques could be used to bring long term employees into the organization? Is there a difference in how new workers and those who have longevity see their functions?

Public child welfare has long been researched as a field of practice. Much has been studied and researched regarding how the system affects its clients.
Information exists on the trials, the triumphs and the dysfunction of its services and its personnel. It is hoped that with studies such as this one, more energy will be put into examining the reality of the system from inside the system. More needs to be known about the daily experiences of child welfare social workers, how they make sense of their experiences and how they integrate their experiences into their personal functioning. This study offered the springboard for such research to occur, with emphasis being given to seeing the field through the eyes of its participants.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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SAMPLE LETTER

Dear ______________;

Thank you for expressing an interest in the research project I am currently conducting in order to complete my doctoral dissertation. The research is being completed through affiliation with the Ohio State University, College of Social Work, and under the supervision of Dr. Roberta Sands, Principal Investigator. The study focuses on the life and work experiences of Master's prepared, child welfare professionals who have been in the field ten years or more.

In order to participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:
1. Have attained a BSW or MSW in the course of your career.
2. Have practiced in the field of public child welfare for a minimum of five years.
3. Currently perform some degree of direct service to clients.
4. Have not practiced in an area outside of child welfare for a period exceeding two consecutive years.
5. Have not recently (within the last year) returned to the field after practicing in another area.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a written life history, a written Human Services Survey and approximately two to four hours of oral interviews concerning the life and work experiences which have led you to remain in the field of child welfare. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without further contact at any time during the process. The information gathered as a result of your cooperation will be kept confidential. Your life history and interview transcripts will have your name removed from them. Your identity will be protected in the final report through the use of a fictitious name.
I will be contacting you within the next few days to determine your interest in participating and to schedule an initial appointment.

Sincerely,

Rhonda R. Brode, MSW, LISW
SCRIPT FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW

Hello! My name is Rhonda Brode. I am a doctoral student at Ohio State University in the College of Social Work. I am also a practicing public child welfare professional with eight years of practice experience. As previously explained to you, I am conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Roberta Sands, Principal Investigator in order to fulfill the requirements for my doctorate at Ohio State University. I am also conducting it to contribute to our mutual field of practice. I want to thank you for helping me in this endeavor.

This study involves looking at the life and work experiences that have led you to remain in the field of public child welfare. I hope to gather information from you through a guided life history, a short Human Services Survey and through a series of follow-up, oral interviews.

The life history and survey would be used to guide the oral interviews which would follow. The purpose of the interviews would be to refine the life history information and to explore the issues involved in the relationship between your current employment and your life history.
I will be taping the interviews as well as keeping field journal while we talk. The interviews will be transcribed and I will use them to guide the additional interviews and to corroborate the data for the final report. I expect that I will do no more than two, two hour interviews.

As I explained to you in my previous letter, your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. Your life history and interview transcripts will be kept confidential with all identifying information removed.

I expect the data I gather from you and others like you will teach me something about typologies of work experiences and life histories of public child welfare professionals. I also expect to find commonalities regarding the reasons people stay in child welfare. Do you have any questions?

If you have no further questions and would like to participate, would you please sign the consent form? I will leave you a copy for your own records.
SCRIPT TO DETERMINE INTEREST OF PARTICIPANT

This script is to be used after the participant has indicated initial interest in participation. This will have occurred through, 1- response to the researcher's general solicitation in related state organization newsletters or meetings, or, 2- through "word-of-mouth" referrals by participants or others acquainted with the research.

Hello! My name is Rhonda Brode. I am a doctoral student at Ohio State University in the College of Social Work. Several days ago you received a letter from me in response to your interest in the research I am conducting. I believe you heard about my research (through the _______ newsletter), (at a _______ meeting), (through _______ personal referral). I am calling to follow up on my letter, to answer any questions you may have, and to see if you would like to participate in the study that I detailed in the letter.

At this point, the individual may indicate interest and set an appointment for the initial interview or may decline to participate.
SOLICITATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The study participants will be solicited in the following manner through the Ohio Welfare Conference and the Public Children Service Agencies Organization (see attached letters of support):

1- The researcher will announce the opportunity to participate in the study at the annual conferences, both held in the fall.

2- The researcher will announce/explain the study at every membership meeting until the sample has been accomplished.

3- The researcher will solicit participants through organization newsletters and any other appropriate communication modes.

4- The researcher will accept any "word-of-mouth" referrals from other study participants.
June 20, 1988

Behavioral and Social Sciences
Human Subjects Review Committee
The Ohio State University
Research Center, Room 205
1314 Kinnear Road
Columbus, Ohio 43212

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of our organization for the doctoral research entitled "Public Child Welfare Professionals - Those Who Stay" being conducted by Rhonda Brode through Ohio State University. The anticipated results of this research will be very beneficial to public child welfare and other human service organizations as we all struggle to retain committed professionals in these times of high turnover. Ms. Brode will have access to this organization through its newsletters, annual conference and other selected meetings for the solicitation of study participants.

We look forward to the study results.

Sincerely,

Dorcas H. Claytor, Jr.
President

DHC:ame
June 20, 1988

Behavioral and Social Sciences
Human Subjects Review Committee
The Ohio State University
Research Center, Room 205
1314 Kinnear Road
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We look forward to the study results.

Sincerely,

Dan Schneider, Director
PCS AO

Mary Ann Palonecy, President
PCS AO

DS:MAP:ame
APPENDIX B
Background

1- What stands out for you about your life experiences?
2- What kinds of things have stood out or been important to you?
3- Describe your life as it is right now. What are your priorities?

Self-Description

Having talked generally about your life experiences, now look at yourself across your life span, thinking in terms of specifics and tell me about yourself.

1- How would you describe yourself in terms of who you really are?
2- What experiences have led you to change over time? What have the turning points been in your life?
3- How do you see yourself in the future?

Relationships

1- Looking back over you life, what relationships have been meaningful to you?
2- Describe those relationships.
3- Have you had a relationship with a person who you feel helped shape the person you have become?
4- How would you describe your parents or parent and your family of origin?

5- What are the significant relationships in your life right now?

Education

1- What things stand out to you about your college experiences?

2- What were the major influences in your life at that time?

3- Share a major learning experience which influenced the course of your life.

4- At what point did you make the decision which led you to the field of child welfare? Describe your memories of that time.

5- Discuss your perceptions of and experiences with professional socialization during your education.

Professional Experiences

1- Describe yourself in relation to your first real job. Where did you fit in the organization? How did this experience affect you?

2- What types of work experience have you had since that time? Describe yourself during those experiences.

3- What changes have you experienced as a professional during your work experiences?

4- Describe the highlights of your career so far.

5- Describe your experiences with job stress. How have you coped? Describe your feelings and yourself during those difficult times.
6- Describe the process of becoming a child welfare professional. Who and what influenced you? How has that affected you in the course of your career?

7- Describe the organization in which you work. Where are you located in the structure?

8- What things have motivated you or caused you to stay in public child welfare?

9- How have you progressed through the ranks in your organization? What are your opportunities for change?

10- What advice would you have given yourself as an entry level child welfare professional?

Conclusion

1- Describe your future plans and expectations of yourself.

2- Are there any other things you would like to mention related to your life and work experiences and the phenomena of staying in the field?
ORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personal Influences

1- Talk about your mentors. What were they like?

2- Talk about your significant professional relationships currently. Who are they, and why are they important?

3- What would an ideal supervisor be like? What is your supervisor like?

Perceptions of Child Welfare

1- What are your biggest frustrations?

2- Describe the child welfare agency that would not have a retention problem.

3- If you were a person recruiting social workers into child welfare, what sort of person would you look for?

The "Staying" Phenomena

1- What aspects of your job and your agency help you to stay?

2- Why do you think people stay in child welfare?

3- Describe the people who do stay.