INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600
A QUALITATIVE STUDY
OF THE EMOTIONAL REASONS FOR STUDENTS
TO PURSUE AN MSW DEGREE

DISSERTATION

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

By
Thanislas Swaminathan, B.A., M.S.W.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1996

Dissertation Committee:
James E. Lantz, Ph.D.
Beverly G. Toomey, Ph.D.
Celeste A. Burke, Ph.D.

Approved by
Advisor

College of Social Work
ABSTRACT

This study inductively and qualitatively explored and described some of the emotional reasons that guide MSW students in their selection of the social work profession as their life work and therefore to pursue an MSW degree. A purposive snowball sampling was used. Through the process of an in-depth phenomenological interview, data were collected from eleven self-selected research participants, who were currently enrolled MSW students at The Ohio State University, College of Social Work. The data were analyzed using constant comparative method, content analysis, and inductive analysis. Then, the emergent themes were identified, described, and discussed. The main themes that emerged are: (1) Private troubles; (2) Experience of abuse; (3) Experience of matrimonial failure; (4) Experience of therapy; and (5) My reasons to pursue an MSW degree. The study revealed that the students have emotional reasons and motivations to pursue an MSW degree. Furthermore, the emotional experiences of MSW students are a valuable part of their history and their personhood. The study also revealed that not all people who have had private troubles and abusive, exploitative, and cruel experiences in their past
remain passive victims of outside forces but that some become self-reflective
and pro-active agents of society. The study subjects’ emotional experiences and
emotional reasons and motivations to pursue an MSW degree were found to be
comparable with the four paradigms, namely (1) "The Wounded Healer,"
(2) "Shamanism," (3) "Death Imagery," and (4) "The Concept of Fidelity and
Otherness." Implications for social work education and practice were also
discussed.
Dedicated to

Rev. Fr. Vincent Durairaj SDB

with gratitude
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I give thanks to Almighty and Gracious God, Our Lady of Velankanny, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. John Bosco, late saintly priest Rev. Egidius Sola SDB and my late saintly dad, Mr. Matthew Swaminathan for my life, health, and for my success in religious life, pastoral work and studies.

With great pleasure I record my deepest appreciation to Dr. James E. Lantz, my advisor and chair of doctoral committee, whose knowledge, expertise, and graciousness made the completion of this research possible. He was extremely kind, always understanding, giving his time, unconditional availability and total support.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Beverly G. Toomey for her great compassion, encouragement, support, and in-depth sharing of knowledge and experience; to Dr. Celeste A. Burke for her ever-willing and joyful support, encouragement, and sharing of knowledge and skills; and to Dr. Nolan J. Rindfleisch, the former director of the doctoral program, for his love, concern, and encouragement.
I am grateful to Rev. Vincent Durairaj SDB for his kindness and generosity; to Rev. Edward J. Cappelletti SDB for his powerful legal, professional, and financial support during my stay and studies in the USA; to Rev. Timothy Ploch SDB for his loving concern and encouragement; to Rev. Dennis Donovan SDB for his kind and noble ways of help and support; to Rev. Frank Wolfram SDB, Rev. Dr. Steven Shafran SDB, and to all the Salesians of Columbus, Ohio for their love, kindness, and generosity.

To the eleven MSW students who participated in this research: Thank you for your openness, trust, and cooperation. Your participation in this project uncovered your strong emotions about the theme and helped shed light on the research problem.

My sincere thanks go to Dianna Barrett and Sharyn Talbert of the OSU College of Social Work for their encouragement and cooperation at various stages of this project.

I am grateful to Rev. Dr. Roy J. Shelly SDB and Dr. Claudia L. Moreno for peer debriefing, technical advice, and sharing of their resources.

My very special thanks go to Dr. Dennis M. Doody M.D., Bret and Anne Casey, Gregory and Tricia Speicher, Fred and Marianne Schoen, and Doug and Janice Bean for their love, care, and prayerful encouragement and support.

Finally, I record my thanks also to Sandy Strider for her word processing service and technical advice undertaken with cordiality and precision.
VITA

August 15, 1950 .............................................................. Born at Madras, India

1971 ................................................................. Entered Salesian Society,
................................................................. a Catholic religious order for men

1971-1973 ................................................................. B.A., Philosophy
................................................................. Salesian College, Yercaud,
................................................................. Universita Pontifica Salesiana, Rome, Italy

1973-1976 ................................................................. Educational Practicum
................................................................. Don Bosco Seminary High School,
................................................................. Pannur, India

1976-1979 ................................................................. B.A., English Literature
 ................................................................. Loyola College
 ................................................................. Madras University, India
 ................................................................. Associate Director of Salesian Boys Club
 ................................................................. Madras, India

1979-1981 ................................................................. MSW
 ................................................................. Sacred Heart College
 ................................................................. Madras University, India

1981-1984 ................................................................. B.A., Theology
 ................................................................. Kristu Jyoti College,
 ................................................................. Universita Pontifica Salesiana, Rome, Italy

1984 (December 15) ...................................................... Ordained a Catholic Priest
 ................................................................. for the religious order of Salesians of St. John Bosco, Madras, India

1986-1987 ................................................................. Graduate Diploma in Youth Ministry
 ................................................................. Universita Pontifica Salesiana, Rome, Italy

vii
1985 - present .............................. Associate Professor of Social Work  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1985-1986 .............................. Director  
.............................. Jyoti Nivas Undergraduate Student Center  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1986-1988 .............................. Director  
.............................. Murphy Undergraduate Student Center  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 .............................. Director  
.............................. Rinaldi Graduate Student Center  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 .............................. Vice-Principal  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 .............................. Chief Superintendent of University Examinations  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 .............................. Member  
.............................. Board of Management,  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 .............................. Member,  
.............................. Governing Body,  
.............................. Sacred Heart College,  
.............................. Madras University, India
1988-1991 ......................................................... Member,
................................................................................. Academic Council,
................................................................................... Sacred Heart College,
.................................................................................. Madras University, India

1988-1991 ........................................................ Member,
................................................................................. Board of Studies,
................................................................................... Sacred Heart College,
.................................................................................. Madras University, India

1991-1996 ........................................................ Clergy Member
........................................................................... Salesian Boys and Girls Club
.................................................................................. Columbus, Ohio
...................................................................................... USA
FIELDS OF STUDY

Major field: Social Work

Studies in Human Behavior:
Dr. James Lantz
Dr. William Eldridge

Social Policy:
Dr. Salvatore Imbrogno
Dr. Keith Kilty

Social Work Practice:
Dr. James Lantz
Dr. James Billups

Social Work Research:
Dr. Beverly Toomey
Dr. Virginia Richardson
Dr. Celeste Burke

Socio Moral Development:
Dr. John Gibbs
Dr. James Lantz
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELDS OF STUDY</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Introduction ................................................................. 1
- Statement of the problem ............................................. 3
- Significance of the problem .......................................... 5
- Purpose of the study .................................................... 6
- Research questions ...................................................... 6

### II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ............................................. 8

- Introduction ................................................................. 8
- Emotional motivation .................................................... 9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for selection of social work as a profession</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics of the social worker</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiatory illness</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why a qualitative study?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biases in methodology</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Design</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordings</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data reduction</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive analysis</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data interpretation and report writing</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for Trustworthiness</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Participants</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. STUDY SUBJECTS AND MAIN THEMES</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A brief description of the subjects</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. PRIVATE TROUBLES</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It happened to me&quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Times of crying&quot;</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It had impact on me&quot;</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It was a sink or swim time&quot;</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ......................... 77
"Physical abuse" ................................................................. 78
"Emotional abuse" ............................................................... 80
"Sexual abuse" ................................................................. 86
Summary ................................................................. 88

VII. EXPERIENCE OF MATRIMONIAL FAILURE .................. 92
Introduction ................................................................. 92
"Parents' separation/divorce affected my life" ..................... 93
"My own separation/divorce: painful and difficult" ............. 94
"Traumatic time" ............................................................... 97
Summary ................................................................. 99

VIII. EXPERIENCE OF THERAPY ................................. 102
Introduction ................................................................. 102
"The reason why I needed therapy" .............................. 103
"My experience of therapy and therapist" ..................... 106
"This is what I learned from therapy" .......................... 109
"I want to be a better therapist" .................................. 112
Summary ................................................................. 113

IX. MY REASONS TO PURSUE AN MSW DEGREE ........ 116
Introduction ................................................................. 116
"I am gonna be for others" ............................................. 116
"I have something to offer" ........................................... 119
"It gives me meaning" ..................................................... 122
"My goal is" ................................................................. 125
Summary ................................................................. 128

X. DISCUSSION ................................................................. 131
Introduction ................................................................. 131
Discussion of the themes ............................................ 132
Theme I: Private troubles ............................................. 133
Theme II: Experience of abuse .................................... 135
Theme III: Experience of matrimonial failure .................. 137
Theme IV: Experience of therapy .................................. 138
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Main Themes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Characteristics of the Participants</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social work is a profession dedicated to helping individuals, couples, families, groups, and communities to improve their social functioning (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). This difficult task requires knowledge, skills, values, and emotional commitment (Lantz, 1987). Schools of social work throughout the country have long struggled to define the criteria that makes good incoming students and determines who will be successful in the MSW program and subsequently become outstanding professionals.

Social work scholars and educators understand that doing a good job as a social work student and becoming a good social worker requires intelligence, commitment, and social work values (Reamer, 1992). What is not well understood is why students make an emotional commitment to such a profession, why students make a commitment to the rigorous challenges of social work education, and why some individuals seem to develop a "feeling"
for social work. Numerous studies suggest that high grades during the first two years of undergraduate school are consistent indicators of success in both the BSW and MSW programs (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). Nevertheless, social work educators do know that some students with really good grades make less than adequate social work students and practitioners, and that some students with poor grades become highly successful. Social work educators report a basic lack of understanding of the emotional reasons that underlie social work students’ choices to become social work practitioners and why they engage in the social work profession. In spite of the fact that students’ emotional reasons for pursuing social work education may well be an important source of information as to why students succeed or fail, little research can be found in the social work literature about "emotional reasons" for social work students’ choice of educational and professional direction.

The purpose of this study is to inductively and qualitatively explore some of the emotional reasons that guide MSW students in their selection of the profession of social work as their life work and to understand what impact such emotional reasons for choosing the social work profession may have on students’ progress in an MSW program. If social work educators had a better understanding of the emotional reasons for students’ choice of social work as a career, they might be able to do a better job of selecting students and educating them after they arrive in the program.
Statement of the Problem

The knowledge base of social work practice is expanding rapidly. Technical understandings also seem to be growing rapidly. Social work educators strive to identify and define competencies that social work students and practitioners must master in order to become good social work practitioners (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). Learning technical competencies, however, is not enough to make a good social worker. A good social worker exhibits an interesting blend of technical competence and emotional concerns for other human beings.

In the words of Gabriel Marcel (1973), "otherness" seems to be a major and helpful concern of many social work practitioners. Why is it that social work practitioners and social work students often are concerned with "otherness" and "self-transcendence"? Why do students in social work seem to consistently experience a need to be of help to others? Is this an important ingredient in social work education, and how can social work educators understand this motivational component that affects social work students and the educational process?

Very little is understood about the emotional motivations of social work students and practitioner members, and we also lack information about the emotional qualities that motivate students towards membership in the social work profession. The purpose of this study is to explore and to inquire the
emotional reasons for students' selection of the social work profession. It is hoped that a better understanding of the emotional reasons of students who select and engage in the social work profession could be of assistance in terms of providing better education to such social work students and a better base for social work practice in the future.

Although many social workers recognize that social work students need an emotional and affective commitment to the social work profession and the helping process, it has been noted by some scholars and researchers that the emotional scars and emotional problems that provide some students with motivation to be good social work students may also overwhelm them in their capacity to do their job (Lantz, 1993). It is important to discover and discern whether the emotional reasons for choosing the social work profession can be counterproductive or even destructive.

This process of understanding both the positive and the negative components of the emotional reasons for selecting the social work profession is also considered exceptionally significant in terms of the gatekeeping process within social work (Moore & Urwin, 1990). Again, the focus of this qualitative, inductive study is to explore the emotional reasons why students pick the social work profession so that social work educators can develop a foundation to work with students in an "affectively aware" manner.
Significance of the Problem

The growth of a person is always related to their social environment, developmental experiences, the opportunities presented to them in their ecology, and to the emotional motivations for growth that the person develops from a variety of different sources (Bern, 1957; Lantz, 1987; & Mayeroff, 1971). Social work students are no exception. They often seem to be highly motivated to become good practitioners and to use the personal experiences of their past in a positive way to channel their learning and motivation for the good of their practice-expertise and for the good of their practice skills. Social work educators need to know more about the emotional reasons that students pick the social work profession and need to know more about the emotional reasons they utilize to develop their skills and competence.

With a better understanding of students’ emotional reasons for choosing the social work profession, educators may become better informed in terms of how to present educational materials and to conduct the educational process in a more effective way. Understanding the emotional nuances of human growth has long been a primary part of the social work knowledge base (Lantz, 1987), but we have apparently failed to spend a great time and attention to understand the same aspects of students who aspire to join the ranks of professional social workers.
The significance of emotional motivations and emotional reasons for social work education is that social work educators need to know more about the affective and emotional life of the students they teach so that they can do a better job of helping them master the intellectual, behavioral, and emotional demands that are placed on them by this difficult and exciting profession.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the emotional reasons that students report as the basis for their decision to pursue an MSW degree, to trace the personal experiences in life that contributed to the shaping of these emotional reasons, to understand the social and psychological nature and intensity of these experiences, and to determine the emerging themes that have implications for social work education and practice from the standpoint of understanding the emotional life of MSW students.

**Research Questions**

This dissertation focuses on the following basic research questions which emerge from a review of literature in the area of social work education:

1. In what ways have the student’s own growth and development, including family relationship, contributed to his/her emotional reasons for pursuing the social work profession and social work education?
2. How do the emotional reasons that motivate a student to choose a career in social work enable and limit them in their work with people?

3. What are the physical, psychological, social, and other reasons that affected the life of MSW students and have influenced their decision to pursue a social work education?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Emotions and emotional motivations for human behavior are an extremely important part of human life. Understanding the emotional motivations of social work students for choosing their profession is critical in social work education. Social work is a field of practice having to do with human relationships and human service. Its main purpose is to help individuals deal effectively with difficulties experienced in relating to others in their families, their communities, and their social environments. The social work practitioner and the social work student should have a keen conscious awareness of their emotional reasons and motivations for being a social worker in order to manifest "conscious use of self" in their practice efforts.

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the emotional motivations or emotional reasons that MSW students report as the basis for their decision to pursue an MSW degree from the standpoint of understanding the emotional life
of social work students. In order to frame this exploration, it is important to understand what is known about the concept of emotional reasons or emotional motivations. This literature review offers some perspectives for understanding the emotional motivations or reasons of MSW students who have chosen to study to become a social worker.

**Emotional Motivation**

Let me sketch briefly the descriptions of emotions, emotional motivations, and emotional reasons, which are terms used interchangeably in varying contexts of human behavior. Emotion is an active component of the motivation of a person (Tallent, 1967). The Latin root of the term *l'emotion* indicates: "exmotus," the past participle of "exmovere." An unchangeable consequence of human nature is that a person is always stimulated to move toward his/her concrete good and away from the "not good" or displeasing aspects of life.

In the social context of an individual, "emotion" refers to their consciously perceived feelings and the objective manifestations of those feelings. Emotions are often generated secondarily to permit and support what the subject’s goals and intentions (Hensie & Campbell, 1974).

Emotions are subjective experiences which are phenomenological. They vary from individual to individual. Each person has a distinctive way of reacting emotionally. As subjective experiences, emotions can sometimes be
Motivation is understood as the force or energy that propels a person to seek a goal and satisfy a need. There are "conjunctive" and "disjunctive" motivations. Conjunctive motivations which are strivings directed to long-range satisfaction of real needs. Disjunctive motivations refer to those strivings which seek immediate gratification (Hensie & Campbell, 1974). We do know of instincts, drives, and motives in human beings. We tend to perceive actions or behavior related to instincts and drives as emotional and irrational actions and behavior. We describe actions prompted by motives as rational, goal-directed actions or behavior. Bindra (1959) states that emotional behavior and motivated behavior are not distinct classes of behavior, though they appear to be so. In terms of goal direction, we can not distinguish between emotional and motivated behavior. It helps to bear this in mind in order to understand the meaning of my study subjects' narrative of emotional experiences.

Abraham Maslow's (1968, 1970, 1987) theory of motivation is a great contribution to human sciences. Having tested Maslow's theory of motivation, Onyehalu (1983) concludes that a dose of Maslow's prescription is an imperative for social work educators just as it is for teachers and school
counselors. According to Maslow (1987), people are always in a motivational state, but the nature of motivation is fluctuating and complex in relation to their exposure to experience. Of the seven outstanding human needs classified by Maslow (1968), the need for achievement, the need for self-esteem, and the need for self-actualization are probably most closely associated with students’ emotional reasons for pursuing an MSW degree.

The need for achievement is manifested in the human being’s tendency to strive to accomplish particular tasks in order to generate personal satisfaction and contentment (Maslow, 1990). It involves continued struggle for knowledge and skills, and for exploration and mastery of the environment (Maslow, 1970). There is a need for self esteem by way of recognition and respect, to exercise one’s influence, to get emotional satisfaction and stability. It makes the person feel useful to the work (Maslow, 1970). The need for self-actualization consists in the person wanting to be extraordinary. The self-actualizing person is filled with the feeling of ecstasy (Maslow, 1970). Education and socialization activities can become extremely rewarding in the long run when students are thus motivated, for such motivation may be the key factor in teaching and learning.

In the life of a human being, emotional response involves a cluster of psychological components. Therefore, it is essential for us to know which emotion we are actually experiencing. It is due to this interpretive component
that the human emotion is distinct and different from a basic stimulus-response
instinct or reflex. Thus, human emotion comprises of both the physiological
and the psychological or rational (Malone, 1994). The characteristic of
"emotional meaning" is both social and individual. It is an emergent product of
social life (Lutz, 1988). Social motivation provides primary focus for the
practitioner both personally and professionally (Lantz, 1978a). Emotional
expressions can be explored in order to describe educational and career choices
and cultural characteristics (Rosaldo, 1980; Tavris, 1992). Based on the
emotional factor, self can be effectively tutored for ultimate occupational
achievement (Hochschild, 1983).

Several studies demonstrate how an emotional experience in an individual’s
life leads to motivation which effects a change or option in what the person is
and does. Cowles and Rodgers (1994) in their qualitative study traced how a
life threatening condition can give rise to high emotional motivation to
unconditionally accept and be supportive of the significant other with AIDS.
Ryan, Stiller and Lynch (1994) have shown how the emotional experience of an
improved and secure adult-student relationship triggered and heightened
motivation in adolescence for a better academic performance. Lantz (1987) has
explored how emotional motivations can be used by social work practitioners to
enhance client growth. From a family system perspective, the framework can
be used to determine underlying emotional motivations, identify curative

De Young (1982) reports that sexually abused children overwhelmed by emotional entrapment of the abuser resorted to self-injurious behavior. The respondents of this study are reported to have said that their emotional entrapment motivated them to resort to self injurious behavior as a punishment. The findings of their research have led Moos & Fuhr (1982) to stress that parental neglect aroused emotions of resentment and rejection in an adolescent and emotions had a detrimental influence on motivation and school performance. In sum, every person has a history of emotional motivations and emotional reasons for what they are and what they do! This aspect of life should be explored as it relates to social work education.

Reason for Selection of Social Work as a Profession

While trying to understand the emotional reasons for students’ selection of the social work profession, let us take a look at "expectations" in social work education and training. As early as 1952, the Council on Social Work
Education stated that the knowledge base of social work consists of facts, theories, skills, and attitudes which can be separated into three major areas: Social services, social work practice, and human growth and behavior (CSWE, 1952). In the year 1985, the Council on Social Work Education established standards in its Policy Statement that state that the graduate of a master’s degree program "should have the capacity to anticipate human needs in a rapidly changing society, to protect and offer programs to meet those needs. . ." (CSWE, 1985, p. 2). Wodarski (1981a) suggests that the methods and techniques used to educate social work professionals must be examined to identify deficiencies and potential solutions. Therefore, to ensure the quality of the professional education of social work and the quality of the professional education of social work and the quality of the social work student, the Council on Social Work Education and the schools of social work are engaged in an ongoing process of evaluation.

Based on the accreditation standards set by the Council on Social Work Education, social work schools are conducting evaluation research to outcome measures. Of these outcome measures, three are related to the affective area of the personality of the social work student. "Ascription of Responsibility for Another’s Welfare" is one such instrument. It is directly related to social work values and ethics and measures the socialization process of students in an MSW program (Schwartz, 1968). "Recognitions Assessments-Empathy" is a second
such instrument that measures empathy necessary as interpersonal skill for the implementation of social treatment models (Lambert, DeJulio & Stein, 1978). "Social Attitude Questionnaire" is a third such instrument used to measure attitudes of the worker in this helping profession (McLoead & Meyer, 1967).

A number of studies have reported reasons for individuals’ selection of the social work profession. Pins (1963) has reported in the findings of his exploratory study the reasons for students’ choice of social work. They can be listed by rank as follows:

A) Makes important contribution to individuals and society
B) Enjoy work with people
C) An interesting and exciting profession
D) Think I can succeed in this kind of work
E) Can help me become a better person, parent or marriage partner
F) Job opportunity and job security are very good
G) Was offered job in social work
H) Salaries and working conditions are good
I) Will give me social status and prestige (p. 87).

By the year 1966, it was presumed that there was greater public awareness about social work, and so the Council on Social Work Education made a study of the reasons for student’s choice of social work. Based on that study, Golden et al. (1972) list the reasons reported by social work student of 1966:

A) Work experience
B) Relative or friend in social work
C) College course
D) Undergraduate social work course
E) College and community organization
By the year 1987, a trend was noticed in the motivations for students’ choice of social work. Altruism and social commitment were becoming secondary motivations while psychotherapy for profit took the first place as a motivation (Land, 1987). Falck (1984) observed that the desire of beginning social work students to practice psychotherapy was an unrealistic expectation for their future practice. However, Abell and McDonell (1990) showed in their study that the motivations compatible with the traditional social work values have considerably changed in the students of 1990 compared to the earlier cohorts. However, a majority of the students of the 1990’s still placed high value in working for the disadvantaged and chose social work because it is committed to the traditional values (Abell & McDonell, 1990).

MSW students who come from well functioning families are often found to have been subjected to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. There have been cases of students who lived at home with problematic parents and siblings. Russel et al. (1993) state that such students enter social work on the one hand because their perception of dysfunction in their family of origin gave them a baseline in interpersonal facilitation. On the other hand, they also selected
social work so that they could work through the problems that originated in the family of origin. Those from well-functioning families often enter social work to seek leadership role fulfillment. They tend to be overly responsible and seemingly appear to be self sufficient (Lackie, 1983).

Bogo et al. (1993), in their study of social work students' interests, activities and self identification, concluded that there were four groups of students with distinct characteristics. Group I was oriented towards developing a leading role in policy, administration, community organization, and supervision. Group II was oriented towards direct practice and private practice. Group III was interested in traditional social work with an interest in child protection, service to chronic clients and to multicultural clients. Group IV was interested in direct practice with voluntary clients.

Personal orientations and values are found to be associated with the career decisions of social work students (Black, 1978). Empathy and personal warmth are reasons for studying social work for many students (Black, 1978). Early helping habits within and outside the family of origin predispose an individual for a career choice in social work (Chudnof, 1988). Woititz (1987) traces females of dysfunctional families of origin as being overrepresented in the counseling profession. Lackie (1982) concludes that children of the dysfunctional family of origin are more likely to enter private practice, avoiding public and leadership roles in agency administration and public policy. The
study of Black et al. (1993) shows that social work students reported high
frequency of family trauma. In a number of cases, early painful experiences
had become a motivator in career selection of the social work profession

**Personal Characteristics of the Social Worker**

Personal Characteristics of a social worker have tremendous importance in
social work education and social work practice. Personality is comprised of
fairly consistent patterns of responses to situations. While some people see
threatening situations as dangerous, others respond to them with excitement
(Berger & Federico, 1982). Learning about life occurs in interaction with
others through the process of socialization.

In the study on "Who chooses social work, when and why?" Pins (1963)
reports the characteristics of students choosing social work. Social work
students represented an upwardly mobile group. They came from large cities.
They had considerable organizational and professional social work experience.
Compared to other graduate students, social work students had low socio-
economic backgrounds, and low undergraduate academic records. Among them
was a high proportion of women and African-Americans.

There has been a change in this trend over the years. Golden et al. (1972)
found that in 1966 the graduate social work student group was younger than in
previous years. Three-fifth of the students were women. Ninety percent were white and only ten percent were black. Most came from urban but not highly metropolitan areas. Male social work students tended to come from middle class families; but women social work students were from higher socio-economic levels.

Holland and Kilpatrick (1993) suggest that sensitivity and integrative ability are noteworthy characteristics in social work students. For Holland and Kilpatrick (1993), students should be trained to develop greater sensitivity to themes and issues arising in their practice and through reflective examination of the stories people tell, and should integrate the understandings produced by such themes and self-reflexivity into practice.

Attitude, intention and behavior have an impact on the commitment of a social worker. Levithan (1993) conceptualized that an intrinsic reward-value model enhances attitudes, intentions, and behavior of the social work graduate and raises their level of commitment. Professionalism, engagement, and emotional exchange are important aspects of culturally diverse students. Cohen (1994) reports that professional attitude and emotional involvement constantly surfaced through the culturally diverse methods that students used to express themselves in a variety of different ways. Expressions such as "The client was just like myself," "She locked her emotions in the box," "You don’t go into social work for money," "Old hand" (expert), and "professional mantle"
(Degree) reveal their professional and emotional attitude. Regardless of cultural affiliation the students alluded to the humanitarian purpose: "help people."

Hanson and McCullagh (1995) examined major factors involved in choosing to enter social work for 746 undergraduate students studied over a 10-year period. They report that altruism remains the foremost reason. However, motivations for choosing social work have significantly changed over the last 10 years. Students are equally motivated by job self-interest as well as service to others.

An overview of social work literature reveals that by their profession the social workers are in an excellent position to initiate changes in the people they serve. They are expected to have been prepared to identify needs, to diagnose problems, to work at a treatment plan, to counsel, to enhance self-esteem, to foster self-acceptance, to provide support, reassurance, and resources that the clients need but lack (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993). Social workers can effect community change by serving as advocates for prevention of certain social evils and the promotion of remedies at local, state, and national levels (Turner, 1979). Authentic responding, understanding the dynamics involved in problems and client behavior, empathic response, creative problem-solving strategies, and self-disclosure for building confidence, understanding, and rapport are salient characteristics of a social worker (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993).
"Assertiveness" and "Locus of control" factors are effectively handled by MSW students who have strong emotional commitments and motivations shaped by intense positive or negative influences in their life. When explored, described, and redefined, such motivations have great potential for enhancing commitment and practice (Levin & Leginsky, 1990).

Reamer (1992) pointed out that the social work profession's ability to inspire an enlightened view of the public good will depend on the motives of those admitted to and comprising its ranks. There are other studies about graduate social work students that focus on "Self Reflectiveness of MSW students" (Dean, 1988), "Working and non-working students' roles, support and well being" (Koeske & Koeske, 1989), "Student learning outcomes in MSW programs" (Kameoka & Lister, 1991). As of this time, no qualitative study has been conducted that explores the emotional motivations or emotional reasons for student choice of an MSW program and the social work profession.

Initiatory Illness

My review of the literature suggest that there seems to exist a kind of relationship between emotional motivations and initiation into the healing professions. The profession of social work is one of many disciplines that provide health and mental health interventions to individual families and communities in the western world. In the context of cultural healing,
traditional social work practitioners might be categorized as belonging to the
genealogy of the healing professionals grouped by Torrey (1986) as witch
doctors, shamans, healers, medicine men, espiritistas, and folk
psychotherapists. Psychiatrist and anthropologist Torrey (1986) has identified
four common curative factors utilized by nontraditional healers. They are:

1. The therapist's level of warmth
2. The therapist's ability to stimulate the client's sense
   of hope
3. The therapist's ability to help the client develop a
   sense of mastery
4. The therapist's ability to respect and utilize the
   client's cultural worldview
   (p. 138).

The rite of initiation is a common factor in the preparation of healing
professionals, both folk and western. Eliade (1958) described a rite of initiation
in which some Shamans became healers because they felt called for the
profession after a personal "near death" encounter. Such a calling was often
signalled by a dream and was accepted by the tribe when the future Shaman
tells the dream in a community Rebirth celebration (Eliade, 1966). The
western initiation ritual consists of the training program, and often extends to
the experience of a psychotherapy ritual. It involves symbolic death and
movement to rebirth.

Shamanism brings the person, family, community, society, and environment
into harmony and mutual fulfillment. Such also is the aim of social work.
Shamans are prepared by the rite of initiation to enter the profession of "healing." Shamanistic treatment focuses on the facilitation of successful passage through critical transition. In western therapeutic terms it is oriented towards crisis intervention and problem solving (Canda, 1982).

The initiatory ordeals are reported to be both spontaneous and ritualized in shamanism. An initiatory "illness" is essential to the shaman. Through the initiatory illness, the shaman learns to integrate his suffering and near-death experiences in a healing manner and shares the special knowledge of this powerful experience in the healing profession with his or her clients (Canda, 1982). There is an element of transcendence through surrender and an element of immanence through mastery (Canda, 1982). The experience of the "initiatory illness" may also be a consistent part of the development of emotional motivations to enter the social work profession. The concept of the "wounded healer" (Maeder, 1989) is similar to the idea of initiatory illness. The concepts of "initiatory illness" and "wounded healer" are further explained in Chapter X.

Why a Qualitative Study?

Qualitative research seems to be the best way to conduct a study of the emotional motivations and reasons for students choosing the profession of social
work. Qualitative methods were chosen by this researcher because they allowed me to explore and describe the phenomena under study in depth (Epstein, 1985; Leiter, 1980; Patton, 1988). Qualitative research and inductive logic help the researcher organize and discover subjective data in a systematic way.
"Science becomes the creative search to understand better, and it uses whatever approaches are responsive to the particular questions and subject matter addressed" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 3).

Paradigm

A paradigm is a conceptual scheme or structure that could explain the relationship of the variables under consideration. Paradigms function as guides to research (Nielsen, 1990). In the process of research, the paradigm influences not only what a researcher sees but also what he chooses to see (Patton, 1990).

All human science research involves thinking, assumptions, concepts, problems, procedures, and theories. These are logically held together and epistemologically presented by paradigms (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Maguire, 1987). In my post-positivist approach to explaining and describing the emotional reasons for students pursuing the MSW degree, my research
methodology derives from the qualitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which emphasizes phenomenological, inductive, and contextual approaches to inquiry into the subject’s human experience.

The research traditions of qualitative study are quite different from the canons of quantitative science. The special powers of the qualitative paradigm are in those differences (Locke et al., 1987).

Qualitative Research

A qualitative study is a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a bounded social context. It is a means for describing and attempting to understand the observed regularities in what people say and report as their experience. The qualitative researcher seeks to capture the context and the meanings (Locke et al., 1993, p. 99).

Qualitative research uses broader paradigmatic framework rather than testing specific theory. "Qualitative" has several aliases, for example, the post-positivistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, subjective, case study, naturalistic, hermeneutic, and humanistic. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) note that "qualitative research" is an all encompassing term. This style includes field research, naturalistic inquiry, or ethnography and may refer to everything from symbolic interactionism to phenomenological study to case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).
Qualitative terms are used by researchers according to their own view, depending on the nature of the study they undertake. This kind of freedom gives opportunity to create new knowledge, and this approach never views knowledge as static but strongly believes that knowledge is a continuously emergent phenomenon (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) list several important characteristics of the qualitative paradigm: (1) natural setting, (2) human instrument, (3) purposive sampling, (4) inductive data analysis, and (5) grounded theory. This study possesses all these characteristics.

Qualitative inquiry is an inductive mode of research that is set in a specific socio-historical context; the meaning of the data is derived from capturing perspectives accurately and they are conveyed through norms, values, or meanings related to human behavior (Mickunas, 1983). A better understanding of human behavior and experience is the main aim of the qualitative research. It does not try to identify and collect facts in numerical and reductionist fashion. Human behavior is too complex for the collection of facts. Neither does it look for causes and effects. Qualitative data are descriptive data displaying the experience of the day-to-day reality of the subjects under study. Therefore, the qualitative researcher's primary goal is not to pass the judgment on the data, but to acquire more knowledge.
Phenomenology

A phenomenon is any fact or experience that is apparent to the senses and can be scientifically described. Phenomenology is a branch of science that classifies and describes its phenomena without any attempt at explanation. According to Polkinghorne (1983), the aim of descriptive or existential-phenomenological human science is to uncover the basic structures of human existence and to describe the schemata or themes that constitute experience. The beginnings of the phenomenological method revolutionized the field of research in human sciences. The first phenomenological scholars and researchers believed that no problem of ultimate principle can be solved until they go back to the source of their concepts. This led to the use of the phenomenological method, the qualitative analysis of experience (Van Kaam, 1959).

Phenomenology attempts to make explicit what is spontaneously and implicitly experienced. It is not concerned with hypothesis testing, confirming or disconfirming, but rather to manifest what is present in human experiences. Phenomenology does not convince us of propositions by means of logical arguments or scientific experiments. Phenomenology helps us before we start to reason logically or experimentally. This priority of phenomenology also applies to our understanding of human encounter (Van Kaam, 1966).
In qualitative research, the focus of attention is on the perceptions and experience of the participants. What individuals say they believe, the feelings they express, and the explanations they give are treated as significant realities. "The working assumption is that people make sense out of their experiences and in doing so create their own reality but a shared one" (Locke et al., 1993, p. 99).

Focus

Qualitative research requires that the subjects seek out the depth of their experiences, relationships, and interaction which form the foundation of the observable activity. This is especially true when the subject of the research perceives in the way individuals see themselves and others in certain situations (Van Maanen, 1990). The study of a life story is essentially the quest for the understanding of a person’s emotions. From the outset it must be recognized that the story is, in itself, an interpretative rendering of real life events.

Qualitative research depends on the informants’ desire, willingness, and ability and effort to give out their personal life story in all detail and with all accuracy. Studies have shown (Buckout, Fox & Robinowitz, 1989; Conway, 1990; Hart, Coleman & Russell, 1987) that subjects may not always recall events of their past life with accurate detail. Retrospective recall has the built-in limitation of possible inaccuracies in the events. However, what is actually
sought here is data about the subject’s life experience as they live it, and as they perceive it. In a post-positivist approach, there is little distinction to be made between a fact and its interpretation (Riessman, 1993). This is both a limitation of the study and an advantage. It is a limitation in that I (the researcher) have no independent means of verifying that the narrated facts actually took place in the manner that the subject relates. It is an advantage in that it will give me data based on the informants’ own construction of the events and their interpretation of their value in their own life story.

In this qualitative study of the Emotional Reasons for Students to Pursue an MSW Degree, I have developed the required sense of perception by my studies, training, and practice. In addition, I have the ability to differentiate and interpret the relationship between persons and events, and can pinpoint how participants seek to build perspectives for their future. This is the interplay that characterizes the qualitative research relationship (Eisner, 1991).

Eisner (1991) refers to the need for a researcher to become a connoisseur. The connoisseur has the ability to recognize how experiences are both similar and different. What is it about an experience that makes it like another? We researchers determine similarities by grouping data together and labeling them as categories. At the same time, it is the ability to see what is different in each experience that enables the researcher to differentiate between categories and
groups. Looking for what is different, in the experience, and therefore unique and interesting, is at the heart of this form of research.

While quantitative studies identify, calculate, and report measurements that are taken during a particular experience, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of that experience for person or persons reporting the experience. It investigates the meaning for those who were actually involved in the experience itself. Through a qualitative paradigm, I have attempted to create empathy with the informant by standing in their shoes. As Eisner (1991) would say, it is through this endeavor that I gained access to the heart of the original experience. Because this study will be devoted to asking subjects to retrace their experience with persons and events through a period of their life which shaped their emotional reasons and motivations to study social work, it is appropriate to make use of qualitative methods.

"An interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people... that is directed by one in order to get information from the other" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96). Since the goal of this study is to discover the nature of relationships and events that shaped a person's process of emotional reasons and the choice of MSW degree, it is necessary that I have access to aspects of the subjects' self disclosure. Therefore, a study based on the process of in-depth interviewing was deemed most appropriate.
Bogdan and Biklen (1992) point out that a good interview is the one where the subjects are at ease and talk freely about what is important from their point of view. Therefore, during the research interviews, I employed maximum flexibility on my part as researcher, since I could not know in advance the directions that the subjects' reflections and responses would take.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that qualitative research designs require flexibility since the researcher may have to adapt to a multiplicity of realities or directions, all of which may become important to the process of the research. Flexibility allows the researcher to pursue ideas generated by the subjects themselves, rather than sticking to a predetermined script. Qualitative research is also best adapted to the sensitivity that is needed when addressing complex personal issues. The nature of a person's relationships, incidents, accidents, and the influence that occurred in the process of their own educational and professional choices will be revealed in the interview as a matter of personal critical reflection. During the in-depth interviews, I found that such self-disclosures were indeed sensitive, and I had to adapt my approach and my timeline to the needs and concerns of the subjects.

Finally, since the study will rely on the readiness of the human subjects to communicate values and relationships through interviews, a fixed and rigid set of procedural steps might hamper or impair the process of discovery and data collection. Qualitative research does possess an overall framework with which
to guide the work of data collection and then be interpreted by the researcher. However, there is also a level of flexibility which means that the framework does not have to be followed in a step-by-step straight linear progression.

**Biases in Methodology**

Every researcher has interests and values which bias them as they engage in the qualitative inquiry. Therefore, "objectivity" is acknowledged as an unrealistic goal. As such, the scientific investigation begins with observer's biased curiosity (Locke, 1987). As a minister, a faculty member in the social work discipline, and a person from the Asian Pacific region, I have my own values and ideas which may influence the outcome of the study. For instance, as a minister, I believe in the Christian meaning and value of any suffering. Suffering has a salvific value, cathartic value, and penitential value for me. I believe in the doctrine of love for the enemy and unconditional forgiveness for those who hurt me by physical violence, abuse or other unjust acts. Culturally, I believe in the meaning of suffering as nurturing sympathy and empathy in human beings based on the saying "the eyes that wept are those that see clearly." Being an Asian Pacific Islander, my values like those that are related to family, for instance marital fidelity, joint family system, and patriarchal family system are quite different. As a social worker and social work educator, I might have my own set of values, judgments, and frame of reference based on
my experiences. On the one hand, these are strengths as they have helped me to identify with the research subjects and understand their life stories and themes as accurately as possible. On the other hand, they are a weakness that may lead readers of the analysis and discussion of this research to believe I am projecting my own sentiments and judgments. I took constant care to guard against my own bias by peer debriefing at the stages of interview, transcription, and analysis of the data. A minister and educational researcher, a social work practitioner and researcher, and a social work practitioner, researcher, and my own mentor were the debriefers ensuring investigator and data triangulation.

Since this is a qualitative inquiry, there is no grounds for generalizability of the results of the study, which is conceivably another limitation. Application of the study’s results can only be made to the persons involved. Any other application of the results requires that the persons and the situations described are comparable with their own (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, it is hard to assure trustworthiness in this inquiry (Riessmen, 1993). Ultimately, what is sought here is not an empirical rendering of facts, but an interpretation of the experiences perceived, recalled, and "reacted to" by the subjects. Thus, the stories discovered may be said to be incomplete and biased to some extent. Still, each story is that person’s rendering of their own experiences. Whether and how the experience took place "in reality" is not my
concern; the fact that the subject said that they went through those experiences is the matter of my research (Van Kaam, 1959).

**Design**

This study utilizes an exploratory, qualitative, and descriptive design best described by Wrightsman and Cook (1976). This design is also derived from the qualitative paradigm of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which emphasizes the importance of the phenomenological, inductive, and contextual approach to inquiry for research into human experience. This design of the qualitative research is valuable for dealing descriptively with issues of interpersonal relations, values, processes, meanings, and subjective experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

**Emergent Design**

In general, qualitative methods of inquiry are viewed as emergent. Design decisions depend upon issues such as time, place and human interactions. Methods can only be clarified as the research emerges (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Flexibility is the essence of the emergent design in the qualitative paradigm; it provides an opportunity to maximize the participation of the population being studied. The way things are and the way things work depend upon the input of
the human subjects and human constructors (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).

When people start to think and speak about their experiences, they try to express awareness. In this process, awareness becomes conceptual knowledge. That is a necessary preparation for any communication concerning subjective phenomena. The process of expressing and formulating into explicit terms by a complex subjective phenomenon its components is called "explication" (Van Kaam, 1959). In this study, the primary method of explication is the analyses of transcripts of the in-depth phenomenological interviews of the subjects under study.

**Sampling**

In the process of qualitative research, sampling is purposeful rather than random. A qualitative study aims for in-depth scrutiny of a particular issue. This is often with a relatively small sample that is purposely chosen because the sample promises to be an information-rich resource for the study. According to Patton (1990), purposeful sampling is used in the qualitative research to describe a particular group in-depth. The subjects of this study are homogeneous in that they are all currently enrolled MSW students of The Ohio State University. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that an information-rich sample can become the source of future direction for the study as the design
adapts to the needs and concerns of the subjects involved. The information-rich samples are those who the researcher determines will be able to yield a high level of information about the research question or the purpose of the study.

A letter, soliciting participation in this research, was sent to all "currently enrolled" (Autumn 1995) MSW students at The Ohio State University, College of Social Work (see Appendix A). Another information flyer was also sent to all of these students explaining the nature of the research, assuring confidentiality and stating that participation is voluntary. I utilized the expertise of Professor James E. Lantz as a key informant (Seidman, 1991) for the MSW student community. The first two participants in the in-depth interview felt positively about the experience. They asked me if I had enough volunteers and offered to identify a couple of their peers to participate in this research. I accepted and utilized their networking activities.

Purposive and snowball sampling were used in this study. In order to allow in-depth work with each subject and the time needed to follow through with the interviews with each subject, I limited the size of the sample initially to seven subjects. However, as the themes emerged, I continued with four other subjects until I made sure that the themes dried up. The sample has a characteristic of diversity: male, female, American, Hispanic, white, and African-American. This characteristic of the sample is presented with the results of the interviews.
Data Collection

Based on the methodology developed by Seidman (1983) and Sullivan (1982) the process of an in-depth phenomenological interview was used in this study. This process is open but focused. I did not use an interview schedule but neither were the interviews as casual as conversation or indefinite in length. The procedure was meant for the participants to review the constitutive factors of their life, to reflect on their past and present experience and talk about the meaning the MSW education experience has had for them.

The purpose of this method of research is to trace the emergent themes and to describe them. My task was to listen to the students as they narrated and reflected aloud on their past and present experiences and considered them in relation to significant factors in their life as a person, member of the family, member of society, worker, and MSW student.

Interview

The time and place of this interview was established by mutual agreement between the informant and the researcher. This was done to allow informants to communicate their own reflections and memories of their life experiences in a manner that could be comfortable and supportive. The interview was semi-structured in nature in an effort to set the subjects at ease and to enable them to be open, flexible, and effective.
The data I sought to collect was not an objective rendering of facts but the story of their own personal life experiences. Therefore, I attempted to create an environment of trust which allowed the subjects to freely share their story. Stories are in themselves interpretative reconstructions of personal events (Riessman, 1993). Since it is the subjects' own recollection of events and their perception of how those events impacted their emotional reasons for studying social work, the interview was guided only to the extent that questions were needed to clarify issues, define terms, and probe for further understanding of emotional reasons. Van Maanen (1990) points out that the interview "needs to be disciplined by the fundamental question which prompted the interview" (p. 66). As a qualitative researcher, I made sure to guard against letting the interview method dominate the experience rather than letting the research question determine the course of conversation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that an interview process may be structured or unstructured. Patton (1990) describes a continuum of interview types ranging from the "informal conversational interview" to the "closed, fixed response interview." In the middle of the continuum is an approach Patton (1990) calls the "interview guide approach." Here the topics to be discussed are determined and known in advance in an outline form. The interviewer decides the sequence of the questions as the interview progresses. The interviewer or the subject are also able to alter the flow of the questions based
on topics of special interest as they arise. The "interview guide approach" is the technique that I used in this interview process, allowing for the necessary flexibility in interviews with participants who were professionally focused but experientially diverse.

**Recordings**

With the consent of the subjects, all interviews were recorded on audio cassette tapes to facilitate the process of transcription and to allow me to dispense with manual notetaking and direct my primary attention to the process of the in-depth interview. Tape recording ensured that the subjects' narratives were recorded in detail for an accurate and complete collection of data. In the process of self-disclosure through the interviews, it was necessary to maintain eye contact with the subject in order to encourage the flow of the interview. Focusing attention on the participant shows the researcher's interest, and implies that communication with her or him is valued. This technique helped to provide insight into the subject's thoughts and feelings. After every interview I made reflective notes, documenting some of the non-verbal (paralinguistic) communication that occurred, such as sighs, tears, blank looks, smiles, tone of voice, sitting postures; I also noted some insights related to the contextual information before they vanished from memory. This is a technique used by
many qualitative researchers to record important information, non-verbal cues, code themes, and to write ideas and hunches.

**Data Analysis**

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) indicate that "data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (p. 127). In addition, they (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) suggest analysis of the impressions recorded in the personal journal of the researcher after each interview as well as of the researcher's first impressions while transcribing the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that in qualitative studies, the process of data analysis is an ongoing affair. The analysis should not be postponed until after all the data has been collected. Rather, it should begin with the initial collection of the data. It is through this ongoing analysis that emergent themes are recognized. Following Lincoln and Guba's rationale, the transcription and analysis for this project was initiated immediately after the interviews. As discussed, a level of flexibility was maintained in order to address issues that arose as the interviewing process developed. Ongoing evaluation and interpretation during the interviews and beyond characterized this process.

Therefore, the "constant comparative" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) method was used in this research. The constant comparative method consists of the
analysis of the data from the beginning of data collection until its conclusion (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method is essential for the development of grounded theory. This method involves: (a) the comparison of data within each conceptual category; (b) the integration and linkage of categories; (c) the definition and specification of emergent theory; and (d) the writing up of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105-115).

Data Reduction

Collected data needs to be transformed into an intelligible arrangement of information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This involves careful selection and meaningful grouping of information. Esiner (1991) sees this as an aspect of connoisseurship. It is a way to simplify and transform the information by looking for those details that render an information-rich reading of the data.

The initial codes were used to identify persons and events which the informants identified as significant in their life. The stories of the subjects were identified as a descriptive narrative of emotional experiences. The coding process began by selecting out those portions of the stories around which all other experiences were oriented (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These focal points were the experiences which had emotional impact on the subjects and influenced them in their desire to pursue an MSW degree. All other categories
of codes which may arise from the narrative were to be coded as they related to
the central or core category.

Additional codes were developed as the data were reviewed and the
similarities and relationships began to emerge. As a qualitative researcher, my
own journals about the interviews and my reflective notes were used as
transcripts in much the same way as the interview transcripts were used. Every
single part of an interview, be it a word, phrase, or sentence, has become a
part of a code.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is the process of identifying, naming, coding, and
categorizing data. This is seen as the editing part of the analysis according to
Data identification, examination, comparison, conceptualization, labeling and
categorization is known as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categorizing
follows coding and assists in the grouping of concepts (Strauss & Corbin,
1990). Based on differential meanings the data are placed under different
categories.

Unlike in quantitative data, the transcriptions, journals, and reflection notes
did not contain numerical data and formulae. As the constant comparison
method was used, the data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed following
every interview, enhancing the manageability of the data for the researcher.

Because it provided proximity of data for the researcher, the process of analyzing the data was done manually. The researcher used his own labels that evolved from the data themes.

**Inductive Analysis**

In this qualitative study what is important is the understanding of the human subjects being studied. As Patton (1990) states, "The point of analysis is not simply to find a concept or to label in order to neatly tie together the data."

Based on this principle, all the labels and codes were listed on sheets of paper. From the whole mass of the data, each label was read and placed into categories that emerged from the labels. Following that procedure, themes were generated from those categories. Themes were verified using the constant comparative method (Jorgensen, 1989). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, there is a constant interplay between proposing and checking data from data themes. The "cut and paste" technique was utilized and the transcribed data were read again. "Pieces" of labels were gathered and grouped under each category and then placed into each theme. This process helped to "trace" the data themes faithfully.
Data Interpretation and Report Writing

When data are open to the researcher's interpretation, it is difficult to find a style of language that precisely conveys the data to the readers and to communicate the themes, patterns, and processes. However, the researcher knows the data best, and the right and responsibility of conjecture, speculation, and some interpretation belongs to him or her. Therefore, a researcher needs to reflect constantly on his/her own subjectivity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

According to Patton,

"Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the validity of an interpretation" (p. 423).

When writing up the report, the researcher needs to select from the data the excerpts that best tell the story of the participants, and construct the text (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As much information and raw data as possible must be provided to the readers in order to let them make their own connections (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on these principles, I organized the data, identified the themes, made the linkages, described and interpreted their origin, nature, and relationships.
Plan for Trustworthiness

In the positivist paradigm, trustworthiness is measured by internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Such criteria are opposed to the axiomatic system of qualitative inquiry and are considered inappropriate to measure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Kvale (1989) challenges the concept of validity as used in the positivist paradigm and states that the concept ignores the multiple individual experiences of reality that all have their own unique truth.

There is a difference between the words truth and trustworthiness. Truth implies there is an objective reality to which our data should correspond. Trustworthiness moves the process into the world of social construction (Reissmen, 1993). Qualitative research is concerned with understanding. It does not embrace the same rigorous activities understood by quantitative research as necessary for the understanding and interpreting of data (Wolcott, 1994). Trustworthiness of the qualitative study has been "paralleled" with the validity and reliability and objectivity of quantitative research. As such, internal validity parallels with credibility; reliability with dependability; and objectivity with confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Credibility is established in this study by the methods of Triangulation, Peer Debriefing and Member Checking. Triangulation is a way in which the researcher can see the inquiry from a few or many perspectives. Information
gathering of different kinds were used in this study for the collection of data. I obtained data by the use of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, audio tape recordings of the interviews, and telephone conversations. Triangulation of the investigators utilizes more than one investigator to collect and analyze data. In this qualitative, phenomenological research, I was the only human instrument who did in-depth interviews. Therefore, triangulation was not needed and was not done in this research. Triangulation utilizes multiple designs and methods of data collection. In this phenomenological in-depth interview, multiple designs and multiple methods of data collection were not required. Triangulation of sources implies information from different sources. In this study, direct in-depth interview and direct verbal narrative of life stories by study subjects was the only source of information. Therefore, triangulation of sources was not possible. However, as I explained under the title "Biases in Methodology," I implemented data triangulation by the use of peer debriefing and member checking during the main interviews and the final follow-up interview (Appendix F). By the use of four paradigms from existing literature, I have done theoretical triangulation of data which I have explained in Chapter X: Discussion.

*Peer Debriefing* with three other disinterested but competent peers, who were outside the context being studied, helped me to clarify perceptions, develop insights, and plan analysis. One debriefer was a minister and
researcher in education, the second one was a professional social worker and researcher, and the third was a social work practitioner and professor. They also helped me to clarify interpretations, to refine and redefine the inquiry process and to understand meanings (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Member Checking is very important for the credibility of the qualitative inquiry as it clarifies the information previously provided by the participants, helps identify what is significant in the transcript, and informs the judgment of the interviewer-researcher. In this study, I conducted member checking both formally and informally. During the second interview, the verbatim transcript of the main interview was shared with the participants. They reviewed and clarified words, phrases, concepts and added precision to some of the details. Lincoln and Guba (1985) see this kind of "researcher-researched" collaboration as contributing to the trustworthiness and credibility of the project. Informal member checking was done during the conversation of the first interview, at the end of that interview, and by telephone during the process of transcription.

The role of the human interviewer, the so-called "human instrument," is vital in the phenomenological in-depth interview. With my educational and practice background, and using Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a guide, I attempted to maximize my skill, tact and understanding as I interacted with the study participants. By recognizing the participants' interactions and affirming their possibilities (Patton, 1989), I was able to minimize distortion. The
process of member checking helped to ascertain the precision of the
participants' wording, their analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions.

Transferability of this qualitative inquiry is facilitated by the strategies
known as "Thick Description" and "Purposive Sampling." As researcher, I
have made attempts to describe in detail the participants' personal experiences,
their interrelationships, and the general characteristics of the contexts
(Erlandson et al., 1993). Shared characteristics of participants open the
possibility of transferability across contexts: though qualitative research is not
interested in generalizations, it is interested in the application of its findings
across contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability is achieved in a qualitative study through consistency in the
tractability of the data, interpretation, analysis, and reporting of the inquiry.
To achieve dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest "developing and
maintaining of an audit inquiry." The audit trail consists of raw data
(transcript), the coded transcripts, the data analysis steps and the self-reflective
journal. All of these were maintained to determine the dependability of the
themes that emerged and the presentation of the findings. The participants were
debriefed during the interview by providing insights I had.

Confirmability is another method of accuracy in which the focus is not on
the researcher but on the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is
established in this study through the use of confirmatory audit, triangulation and
reflective journaling. One of the dissertation committee members listened to the audio tapes on which the interviews were recorded. The collected data, the researcher's data analysis, and the journals are all kept in chronological order and open to the external reviewers for making judgments about the procedures that accompanied the inquiry.

Protection of Participants

Participants in this qualitative inquiry participated voluntarily. The information flyer stressed that participants could withdraw from participation in the research at any time and at any stage during the study process. I reiterated this information to each participant verbally at the time of the first interview.

The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants before and during the interviews. An informed consent form clearly explaining that their participation was voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw from this project at any time and at any stage was signed by the participants before the interviews began.

Participants' confidentiality was maintained at all stages during the study. Pseudonyms were given to the participants to ensure their anonymity and at the same time to identify them in this study. Interviews were audio tape recorded with their consent. The tapes were, and are, kept in a locked safe. In the process of research, the participants were protected against physical and
psychological harm. Prior to the interviews, the researcher had established an emergency network of therapists that could assist research subjects if the research questions triggered any psychological pain. This facility was not utilized as no need arose in any case of the study subject.

I closed the interview session with debriefing. The participants were asked if they said everything they wanted to say, if they felt certain about confidentiality, if they felt physically and emotionally comfortable, and if they needed any counseling, therapy, or consultation. When all the above aspects of the participants were found to be satisfactory, I gave them my address and phone number and told them to contact me if they had any questions. I also assured them that I would be available to them if they needed to speak to me again. I told them that they would be given their interview transcripts for their review and feedback, and agreed to make all modifications and changes they might want.
CHAPTER IV

STUDY SUBJECTS AND MAIN THEMES

Introduction

The findings of this study represent the realities of eleven MSW students’ lives involving emotionally significant events and emotional reasons for their pursuing an MSW degree. Although each subject’s personal experiences was unique, common themes emerged from their stories. The MSW students in this study spoke of their personal experiences, explaining the impact of these experiences on their life and shaping their emotional reasons for the choice of an MSW degree. As they described their stories, common theme emerged. Table 1 presents the main themes. This study has attempted to project the essence and context of the personal stories of the eleven MSW students who participated in it. The following brief description of the subjects provides the context and information that are relevant to the themes that have emerged in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme I</th>
<th>Theme II</th>
<th>Theme III</th>
<th>Theme IV</th>
<th>Theme V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Troubles</td>
<td>Experience of abuse</td>
<td>Experience of matrimonial failure</td>
<td>Experience of Therapy</td>
<td>My Reasons to Pursue an MSW Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* &quot;It happened to me&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;Physical abuse&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;Parents’ divorce affected my life&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;The reason why I needed therapy&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;I’m gonna be for others&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* &quot;Times of crying&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;Emotional abuse&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;My divorce: painful and difficult&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;My experience of therapy and therapist&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;I have something to offer&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* &quot;It has impact on me&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;Sexual abuse&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* &quot;It was a sink or swim time&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>* &quot;Traumatic time&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;I want to be a better therapist&quot;</td>
<td>* &quot;My goal is&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1: MAIN THEMES**
A Brief Description of the Subjects

Matilda is a 27-year-old female. She is a first-year MSW student. She was raised in Columbus, Ohio. She has lived in different parts of the same city since then. She is unmarried. She is financially independent. At present she is not regularly employed. She has a "Traineeship Grant," which includes a monthly stipend.

Marina is a 31-year-old African-American female. She is a second-year MSW student. She attends graduate school part time because she has a full time employment, though she says she is "officially MSW II now." She is financially independent. Currently she is "in between jobs." Marina is unmarried. She is the single mother of an active 2-year-old son.

Jasmine is a 44-year-old white female. She is in her first year of the MSW program. She is married but has no children. She is financially dependent on her husband. She is not employed. She is in school full time. Currently she is involved in her field practicum in an agency that provides "counseling services."

Sheila is a 39-year-old female. She is in the Advanced Standing Accelerated Program ("ASAP") of MSW. She was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona. Her mother is a Mexican and father is of Italian and German background. She is financially independent. She is employed at "Family Visitation and Mediation Services." She is married (her second marriage). She has three
children by her first marriage: a 15-year-old daughter and 13-year-old twins, a boy and a girl.

Ashmi is a 42-year-old female. She grew up in a small town in eastern Ohio which is considered an Appalachian region, located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. She is married. She has three children. She is financially independent. Ashmi is in the first year MSW program. She has just completed a doctorate in family relations and human development. She has been in administrative positions in many human service agencies.

Mirny is a 41-year-old white female. She is in the first year of the three year MSW program. She was the only girl and the third of six children. She was raised on a farm in Appalachia in a fundamentalist home. Her father worked for Columbus Southern Electric Company. Her mother was a homemaker. Mirny is divorced. She has three children, 19, 17, and 12 years of age. All three are still at home. She works in a Mental Health Center and is financially independent.

Tina is a 31-year-old white female. She is in the first year of the part time MSW program. She grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. Her father was a blue-collar worker. Her mother was a housewife. Tina is now married and has two children. She is employed in an agency called "Directions for Youth." She is financially independent.
Jonathan is a 34-year-old white male. He is a student in the Advanced Standing Accelerated Program of MSW. He was born in Columbus and has lived in the Columbus area all his life. He is married and has two children, a 5-year-old son and a daughter, 18 months old. His parents are still married and have a good relationship. Jonathan has three sisters; he is the third of four children. He works in an agency called "Directions for Youth" and he is financially independent.

Bendy is a 29-year-old white female. She is a student in the Advanced Standing Accelerated Program of MSW. She was born in German and has dual citizenship: American and German. Her mother is still a German citizen. Bendy’s dual citizenship seems to color her feelings about her nationality. Her dad grew up in Appalachia, and was a law enforcement officer. Her mother was a social worker. Bendy is single and financially independent.

Kelly is a 41-year-old white female. She is a first-year MSW student. She described herself as a little white girl from rural America. She grew up in a southeastern town in Ohio, very Appalachian and very blue-collar. Now divorced with a 14-year-old son who has cerebral palsy, she is financially independent.

Jane is a 53-year-old white female. She is in the second year of a four year MSW program. Jane’s father was an itinerant construction worker. Her family lived in a trailer and moved from one trailer park to another over the eastern
United States. She went to about twenty-four schools before she graduated from high school. She saw a fair amount of the country but always managed to keep her grade up in school. Jane is legally separated, with two daughters and two granddaughters. For 17 years she has worked as a legal secretary. She is financially independent. She says she enjoys her job and her family. Table 2 and Table 3 present the characteristics of the research participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Financial Status</th>
<th>Year/MSW Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single-unmarried</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single-unmarried</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>MSW - ASAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Single-parent unmarried</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>II MSW Part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married - 2 children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW Part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married - 2 children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>MSW - ASAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White Mexican American</td>
<td>Married/2nd time - 2 children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White Appalachian</td>
<td>Divorced - 3 children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW Part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White Appalachian</td>
<td>Divorced - 1 child</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White Appalachian</td>
<td>Married/2nd time - 3 children</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married - No children</td>
<td>Dependent on husband</td>
<td>I MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Legally separated - 2 children 2 grandchildren</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>I MSW Part time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 &amp; above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARITAL STATUS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE MSW PROGRAM ENROLLED IN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW Regular</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW Part time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW ASAP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS**
CHAPTER V

PRIVATE TROUBLES

"Private troubles" is the first common theme identified as the initial perception of the concept of "emotional reasons" by the research participants. The meaning emerged in the recall and narrative of the situations, conditions, incidents, accidents, places, persons, relationships, attitudes, pro-actions, and reactions contained in their personal stories. The theme is organized into four categories using the participants' own words. They are: "It happened to me," "Times of crying," "It had impact on me," and "It was a sink or swim time." Here is how the participants describe their experiences.

"IT HAPPENED TO ME"

Matilda:

"...My father had a heart attack, a very serious heart attack, and very serious surgery and my reaction to such personal trauma is usually to function and just do what I need to do."
"...emotional responses sometimes come later. But having to function for my mother and for my family yet maintain myself in graduate school and maintain my own life proved very difficult. And, I feel that during May there was a period of two weeks that I feel that I was depressed in a way that I never felt depressed before. Overwhelmed and felt a lot of pressure. I came out of that and then I looked back and recognized it."

Jasmine:

"...The most significant memory that I have was my first memory when I was 1 1/2-years-old and my 3-year-old sister dropped a lighter on her dress and set her dress on fire. So she had third degree burns on her stomach and on her leg, and I remember them taking her away on this stretcher and having the fire engine outside. My sister and another older sister, she would have been 3, the three of us were just screaming because we didn’t know what was going on."

"...I was one of ten children, I have a twin sister and we were part of the youngest. We were kind of raised in two different groups, and I was one of the youngest groups. Probably had a little problem with getting attention in the family."

"...When I was real young, 1st- or 2nd- grade, I had a speech problem so people did not understand me. My sister would speak for me, so I very willingly took the back seat."

"...When I was in the 6th-grade, I attended a new school. And that was the year that my brother molested me. He is about 7 to 8 years older than me... He came and tried to do it again almost ten years later... I guess the thing why I remember it so much is no one in the family remembered because when I was 21 I told my mom, I told the family, but everyone forgot that I told them. So non one remembered that this ever happened. Especially my mom. And she just said, 'Well, he was probably drunk.' I said, 'Well, I don’t know if he was.' So she just kind of excused it."

"...Well, what happened was, much later when I was in my 30’s I started having panic attacks."
Sheila:

"...My father worked for the phone company and we traveled from small town to small town in Arizona."

"...The fact that we moved all the time I always felt like we didn’t belong anywhere, and I was always the new kid in school. New kids in school and in neighborhoods get targeted and they get beat up and people pick on them and stuff. So it was hard."

"...Most of the people really didn’t understand me very much. In 9th-grade I was really, really searching for where I belonged, because I really felt very out of place, very insecure."

Ashmi:

"...I remember there was a big fire in my hometown when I was probably 7 or 8, and my parents woke me up in the night and said, 'Put your clothes on. We have to go downtown. There's a fire.' I remember being confused and kind of frightened about that. We went downtown, and because it was a little town everyone was there. The whole town turned out to see this fire. A whole block was in a blaze, and it was a hardware store so there were a lot of paints and chemicals there. Our little town fire department wasn't able to contain it before help arrived. So this was quite an event for the town."

Mimy:

"...Well, when I was 15-years-old, I had a tractor accident out on the farm, and I didn’t breath for maybe 15 minutes. It was sort of a life changing situation. I had like a near-death experience. I saw what I’ve heard people describe as a light and warmth. And a feeling that everything was okay. My father gave me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and brought me back. I was out for so long that I had red splotches all over me from being deprived of oxygen, and I think that's something that certainly took away a lot of fears. It’s like death is not something that scares me because of that experience."
Tina:

"...My father was a blue-collar worker, actually never graduated high school. He was illiterate up until I was later in my elementary school years. He and I learned to read together. As I got older my father became a functional alcoholic. My parents would have these incredibly difficult arguments where they would throw things and scream at each other. My mom also went through a period of being an alcoholic. She was violent. He was emotionally abusive; he was violent in that he would throw things and hit the wall when he was angry. My mom threw things, used abusive language, things like that. My sister says that my mother was sexually abusive to her. It's just what happened. I survived it."

"...My parents had separated just before he (my father) died. We were going through a period of time where they were going to dissolve their marriage. They were going to go through a dissolution, I think they call it. I remember there was a lot of emphasis placed on my sister and I and the things we had done. It was really stressed that we contributed to the failure of their marriage. I bring it up because it's something that I've addressed recently with my mom finally saying, 'Wait a minute, I don't think this was really fair.' As a kid I didn't realize we didn't feel like we could stand up and say this doesn't make sense to me. So, it's taken me...all this time to be assertive enough and say to her I didn't agree with this and it didn't feel like it was fair that so much of your garbage got put on us."

Jonathan:

"...I have a sister who's 15 months older than I. I am very close to her. From a very early age she sort of stood out, and it didn't always make it very easy to get along with her peers. I think that's a lot of it, that she had a very rough time with some peers. She experienced non-acceptance. I felt that was unfair. Unjust."
Bendy:

"...One thing I do think that affects my emotional life right now is that I’ve put on quite a bit of weight, and I don’t feel really good about that. But, I’m working on that. I think that kind of affects me, puts me down a little bit."

Kelly:

"...My grandfather died when I was 9. I was very close to him. Very, very close. That was a real loss for me."

"...I have a brother 9 years younger than me. But we are very, very much alike. He has a drinking problem and drug problem."

"...I have a son who’s 14. He has cerebral palsy and is real limited in his physical capacity, so I lift him all the time."

Jane:

"...My childhood was very traumatic. I moved around a lot. My father was an itinerant construction worker. We lived in a trailer. Moved around to different trailer parks all over the eastern United States. I went to 24 schools before I graduated from high school. My family was not supportive of me, I didn’t feel."

"TIMES OF CRYING"

Matilda:

"...I was somewhat overweight as a child. In elementary and junior high school kids harassed me for that. On such occasions. "I do remember times of crying, of things being unjust."

"...my dad’s serious heart attack, then his very serious surgery, my having to function for my mother, to maintain
myself in graduate school, and to maintain my own life made me realize it is hard."

Jasmine:

". . .So after I started having panic attacks, I worked for 2 years with the panic attacks. Because right after high school I went right to work, so I kept working with the panic attacks, I mean while I would have them but my life was getting more narrow and narrow, like I would just go to work and go home. That was all I would do. And then 2 years later I just couldn’t even work anymore. So I stayed home, and I decided I was going to cure myself. I was going to get over these panic attacks myself. So each year it got worse and worse and worse. And so, for about the next 5 years, I basically stayed home and did not leave the house."

". . .So I think the combination of my brother molesting me and my father’s drinking, which was never acknowledged in the family. I just think there was a lot of combinations and being a twin and then - always being so close - being separated from her. I just think there was a bunch of combinations of stressors."

Sheila:

". . .My father, on the other hand, was an alcoholic and very abusive. I’ve come to understand now that all of my uncles and most of my aunts were alcoholic. I just knew that everybody in my life drank a lot when I was coming up, and that when they drank people tended to get out of control and fight and people got hit and people got angry. I remember being scared most of my young life. I was abused physically, sexually, and emotionally for my whole upbringing until I left home as a teenager."

Ashmi:

". . .It was real scary for me, and I was disappointed in one of my committee members, in their behavior. That was real hard for me, because I felt - I’m struggling for a word here -- that they hadn’t represented themselves accurately before the process. I kind of felt during the generals when this person’s turn came, I
felt sort of attacked. They asked me questions out of the blue that weren't even terribly relevant to my questions. After that was real hard for me. I struggled with that because I hadn't anticipated it. Then I had to reconcile my perspective of this individual and change that. Generals are hard enough, but when something like that happens it makes them even more difficult. So that was a rough time. I felt betrayed; that's the word. I felt this person betrayed me in that setting."

Mimy:

". . .Also I grew up with a mentally handicapped brother which has given me, I think, a real understanding about people who are different, and that you don't need to fear people who are different. And I saw the way people treated him, and I didn't like it when they treated him like maybe nastily. So I think that gave me some empathy."

Tina:

". . .My parents had said all these problems were a result of us (me and my sister) being inadequate somehow. So I could never figure out what wasn't I doing enough of. I was a good student and my sister was a real athlete. We each had strengths, but those weren't pointed out; those weren't acknowledged at all. As kids, we had this huge set-up to be rivals and competitive. So, it all just played into us being really, really nasty to each other throughout the years. We'd go through periods of just being awful to each other. Then feeling guilty for it and wanting to be close again, but not being sure how to be close. It was awful."

". . .I think I go through periods of depression. . . .before I would call it depression, now I think I would probably be diagnosed with periods of depression. There's been . . .because of the emotional and physical abuse I think that affects a. . .I go through periods of. . .See, I'm going to get emotional now. I go through periods of feeling inadequate. Feeling less confident, and I don't always realistically view my abilities."
Bendy:

"...Two years ago, my grandma, she lives in West Virginia, she had a bad heart attack, a massive heart attack. My family, we’re close in like the nuclear family. I’m close with my grandmother. I think with my grandmother getting sick that kind of shook me up a little bit, because all I really have are my parents and then my two grandmothers. So that kid of scared me in a sense that I felt maybe a little afraid."

Kelly:

"...I have been married twice. Both times were very, very physically abusive marriages. And, that’s how they ended. They first one was really violent, very violent."

"...People in my family were not always supportive. That was another hurt for me."

Jane:

"...It was in 1979. I think I just started becoming more independent. At my husband’s suggestion and encouragement, I learned to fly. He was a pilot, and I was flying small planes. I wanted to please him and have him be attentive to me, and so I did that. Then, that gave me a lot of confidence, because I never thought I could do that. Then, there’s lots of other reasons, but we just kind of didn’t, couldn’t do it anymore. That was a very big failure to me. So, that was very, very hard. I don’t really think I had a mentally...but it created, I had such emotional needs, that it created emotional instability."

"...When I had problems, felt rejected, depressed, I drank too much. Alcohol soothed the pain. But that passed after a couple of years."
"IT HAD IMPACT ON ME"

Matilda:

"...I think that maybe my sense of justice and fairness has come from watching [my sister] interact with my parents. Every since I was little, she has always had some problems. She was hyperactive when she was younger and was on medication for that. She has -- my whole life -- taken advantage of my parents. And I've watched my parents suffer from that, and I've gotten angry because of that. I have suffered some myself; she has mistreated me. Most of my anger, I think, was from how she mistreated my parents. Watching the effects of that. It bothers me."

Jasmine:

"...I was suffering from agoraphobia. I went to a therapist to be treated for that. I didn't understand why I was having it. I knew that I had a serious problem. But I wanted to deny that I had a problem."

"...Because at the same time I was having ear infections. The doctor would say, 'Oh, it is because of your ear infection.' Rather than me taking on somewhat alcoholic behaviors like my dad -- he was always going to cure himself of drinking -- I was going to cure myself of the agoraphobia. It just so happened that I would just think I must have an ear infection, that's why I'm dizzy, I can't go out and do these things. He just accepted my reasoning. Even though I knew I had a problem, I didn't think I could tell him what was really happening."

Sheila:

"...In my elementary school if you were caught speaking Mexican, you could be expelled or could be suspended. English was the language here, and my mother was very aware of the discrimination that we faced and so my mother emphasized we weren't allowed to speak Spanish at home. We weren't allowed to have an accent at home. We were not allowed -- we were raised basically on two paths."
"...a lot of what happened in my neighborhood -- the Mexican-American community is very clannish. They tend to live in the same areas. We tend to stick together by family. But we also struggle with the fact that most of our parents were alcoholics. So when we got together as families there was lots of people there. But we struggled with my mother. In high school we were not allowed to date Mexican boys. I mean she really frowned on it. She didn’t want us to be Mexican, and she didn’t want us to marry Mexican men. So we really didn’t fit in. The high school I went to was primarily Mexican, and when you’re trying not to be it means that you’re kind of an outcast in some ways. And we had a feeling of not belonging. You can look at all kinds of psycho-social issues now, and I can understand why I didn’t belong, but most of my life I felt that I didn’t really belong."

"...Even though people told me I was smart, I knew that I was real stupid because my dad told me that a lot."

Ashmi:

"...When I was very small, and I don’t have a real clear memory of this, I contracted a mild case of polio. It was thought to have come from the vaccine that came out at that time. It didn’t leave me with any residual effects. I didn’t suffer any lasting kind of limitations as a result of that, but I do remember that during the treatment phase I had to wear corrective shoes. I remember struggling to keep up with the other kids. The frustration of being different and of not being able to keep up with them in play, or they would take off running and I would be left behind because I was much slower. So I suppose that’s also had some impact on my decisions to be in a helping kids of profession."

Mimy:

"...I had a crisis point at the time when I knew my marriage was failing, and I had to decide whether I was going to give up or whether I was going to go on and just keep on paddling up stream. And, I decided I was going to go on. Everything that I do and accomplish makes me feel that I can accomplish more."
Tina:

"...I didn't have a real good self-image. I still don't all the time. Things trigger it. You know what I mean? Things trigger it. I'm more aware of it now, and I work harder. Things will happen that will trigger me to feel small and stupid and inadequate again. All those things flood back. It takes some work on my part to remind myself of all I have accomplished and all that I've done. Because those things never leave you." (Cries.)

Jonathan:

"...I have a sister, who is only -- not even -- a year and a half, 15-months-older than I. We've been very close most of our lives, although she moved to Florida a couple of years ago. We've always been very close and always were able to talk and do things together. We had most of the same friends through high school. She's had a lot of problems in her life, and it just brings home to me the statement that they make about each child grows up in a different family, because she certainly doesn't have a lot of fond memories of childhood. She had a lot of problems relating with some other people in the school and what not. She's attempted suicide several times. She's been in psychiatric hospitals a couple of times. It has had a very big effect on me."

Bendy:

"...I think sometimes at my house when I go back, with my dad having some problems now, and my more working a lot, and a lot of times the role of caretaker gets put on me, and while sometimes I like it, sometimes I really resent it. I feel really like they are putting a lot of burden on me. I get tired and angry."

Kelly:

"...There's lots of negative things that have happened in my life."

"...I am a recovering alcoholic. I have been in recovery for six years now. It's the reason why I came back to school."
"...It took a lot of years to put the pieces together. And, then when I get done saying all that, what I have to say is that I learned a lot of things from all that stuff."

Jane:

"...My father and my mother, whom I do not remember, my biological mother, they were divorced. Then I went to live with my step mother and my father. I just assumed that I was adopted. I feel I was taken advantage of as a child. So I didn’t grow up with any pride or self-esteem or anything like that very well."

"...My daughter developed anorexia nervosa, which she still has. She’s 32 now, and it’s a touch and go situation. So, that had some leftover emotions."

"IT WAS A SINK OR SWIM TIME"

Matilda:

"...Recalling and reflecting on the stresses and efforts to cope with them especially having to deal with the reality of my dad’s heart attack, surgery, home chores, care of my mom, school deadlines... I think this is probably the most stressful time, and it was a time when I learned about my mental limitations; whereas before I don’t think that I ever felt limited mentally or emotionally, but I realized what my needs are and that I was not able to meet them while doing everything else. When I deal with someone else, I think that I may be more aware of that. I may give more attention and more affirmation pointing out, 'Look at this stress that you are going through. How can you possible do this while you’re doing this?' I think having learned this for myself..."

"...It was quite challenging, and I think I learned about myself."
Jasmine:

"...It may sound kind of corny, but I really would not -- knowing what I went through the many years of hiding my health not thinking I could ever leave -- I would never want anyone to go through that. So, that's one thing. I would like to work with people with panic attacks and agoraphobia. Also, I would never want to give up working with children. Because, once again I hate to see any child suffer or be hurt. I guess what I see my goal is just I can't take away the bad things in the world, but I can only help people through them."

"...My father is deceased. He died about 12 years ago. He was drunk and he fell and fractured his skull, and so he died. And with my mother, my mother I've been angry at for many, many years. Probably within the last few years, because I've been able to express my anger -- I even told her at one point, I told her that I was very angry at her."

"...I would like to be a woman who can talk about her feelings who can show emotions, can come up to be a nurturer as opposed to my mother who never hugged, never cried, never did that."

Sheila:

"...when I was pregnant with my first daughter, I began being extremely fearful there would be a nuclear war. I mean I was terrified. Iran had just been taken over by Khomeini, and there were rumors of nuclear weapons and all that. I was just terrified that I would bring this child into the world and she would die in a nuclear holocaust or that there would be nothing here for her. There was an advertisement of some parenting education classes in the paper, and I decided that I wanted to take some parent education classes because I knew I didn't want to raise my kids the way I had been raised, but I didn't know how to do it."

"...I knew that I had to move away from my parents or I was gonna die. That's how I felt. I didn't know why at that time. I didn't realize that I had been abused at that time."
Ashmi:

"...The only thing I can think of right at the moment is general exams. They were a real big struggle, a real challenge. I was terrified of the idea of going in front of all these people."

Mimy:

"...My parents are both dead now. My mother died in 1988, and then I got a divorce in 1990. My father died in 1991; my grandmother also died in 1991. So, it was just one thing after another for awhile. So, I found myself on my own, and it was sink or swim time. I've been swimming ever since."

Tina:

"...I applied for a new position. I got turned down. It doesn't start out well always. No. I have to get to that point. I see myself as a survivor. I come out of a struggle feeling like I learned a lot."

Jonathan:

"...I had a job for a long time at a place. There was a large conflict within the organization, and the people that I knew, or not people that I knew, the people that I worked with and I like and I worked well together with, over a period of a year all left the organization. I was in a position since I hadn't completed my degree, and I was in a supervisory role, I was making a good amount of money and I had just been married and couldn't afford right then to leave. So I ended up having to stay and work with a bunch of those with whom I really had very deep philosophical differences. It was a really unpleasant experience."

Bendy:

"...Recently my dad's been pretty sick. That's kind of emotionally draining right now. At first I thought maybe it is just better to drop out of the program right now and go back."
But, then I thought, no, I don’t really want to do that. I feel like instead of being one to give up when I really want something, I’ll work it out."

Kelly:
"...I have some real not-real-good feelings about growing up in my family. There was a lot of shame and guilt while growing up. We are much better now together. I think that has a lot to do with the fact that I’ve done a lot of work for me."

Jane:
"...I am trying for a life of positive thoughts. The struggle with my daughter’s anorexia is the most negative, pervasive daily thing that I have had to overcome. Her setbacks devastate me."

SUMMARY

Chapter V "Private troubles" takes us immediately to the personal emotional world of the participants. Their personal stories present the experience of participants with the unpleasant, shocking painful realities that occurred in their life, impacted their emotions, and left behind lasting memories which have significant relations to the participants as to "who they are, where they are and what they do, now."

This first theme situates the participants, the researcher and readers in context to perceive things in the right perspective. The participants’ own words have been used to describe each category under this theme. They are: "It happened to me," "Times of crying," "It had impact on me," and "It was a sink or swim time."
"It happened to me" reveals initial awareness of the emotional events. Mostly this section is characterized by first unpleasant experiences, shocks, and surprises. It clearly states that the individuals were totally unprepared, what happened was out of their control, and the happenings leave a lasting emotional scar on the individuals. This section gives an idea of who and what were involved in the incidents and accidents, and provides information about the historical and physical components of these situations.

"Times of crying" describes in the very own words of the participants how painful, unbearable, and frustrating their experiences were. Also, it highlights how confused and helpless they participants felt during unpleasant experiences, such as being emotionally harassed by peers by their non-acceptance, the fear of being molested again, the accumulation of stresses at home and school, the alcoholic and abusive parent, and betrayal by college faculty.

"It had impact on me" tells us how painful events not only cause suffering but emotionally make or mar a person. This category informs us how the personal emotional experiences of the participants led them first of all to an awareness of a particular kind of troubles; secondly, such experiences create victims directly or indirectly, partially or totally; thirdly, negative incidents may also present challenges, openings, opportunities, and know-how for greater success in functioning in society and handling problems. For instance, the
participants report having acquired a sense of justice and fairness, empathy, courage, and the decision to go into the social work profession.

"It is a sink or swim time" describes, in the participants own words, how troubles experienced at home, at school, at work, and in society were cruel, unreasonable, unjust, and unmanageable. However the participants describe that they endured, persevered, challenged from the silence of their hearts deep down, survived, and emerged victorious. This is a great contribution to their own future and to that of society.
CHAPTER VI

EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE

The participants of this research who are currently enrolled in MSW programs narrate their life story highlighting unforgettable experiences of having been abused. As students of social work, as would-be social work practitioners, and as individuals of significant life experience they review those incidents and describe them as the source of or essentially related to their emotional motivation to pursue an MSW degree. The data gathered through the in-depth interview, the strategy for fostering the most accurate descriptions of personal experience stories, provides information to these questions:

1. What are the kinds of personal abuse?
2. What does it mean to have an experience of abuse?
3. When, where and how did the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse occur?
4. How is such an experience related to being a social work student and practitioner?
5. What are the subjects' proactive and reactive thoughts and reflections about the experiences?

The theme "Experience of abuse" is organized into three categories, namely, "Physical abuse," "Emotional abuse," and "Sexual abuse," and described in the participants' own words.

"PHYSICAL ABUSE"

Sheila:

"...My father was an alcoholic and very abusive. I remember being scared most of my young life."

"...My father continued to be very, very physical abusive. I can remember going to school at one point he was very angry at me for something and he beat me with a 2 x 4. My sisters and I -- it's one of those things where you think that no one is aware, although I know the neighbors had to have known because he would do this in the backyard and so there would be screams, I guess. I don't remember a lot of it. I just remember it starting and I remember the bruises, but I don't remember a lot in between. My sisters, especially my younger sister, remember a lot in between. My sisters, especially my younger sister, remembers it a great deal and how my mother would just watch and do nothing. So I think that impacted my decision to go into social work."

"...I have twins -- a boy and a girl. My son was born with asthma and some neurological impairment. My daughter was born with central nervous system damage. I was taking them for therapy. It was hard work for three years. And during all of that time we were going to self-help groups and my husband had become very physically abusive to me. But I didn't leave then until he threatened to become physically abusive with the two little ones because he just didn't like
them. And so there was that threat and there was also real rejection of them as people. It's real odd how that battered woman syndrome works."

Mimy:

"...I was spanked as a child, we were all spanked with belts. But that also was a situation where my parents... I got to the point where I said, 'I don't care if you spank me. I'm still...'. I guess I told them what I was going to think and do what I was going to do even though they spanked me. My ex-husband hit me a couple of times."

"...I have not ever spanked my children because of the... I knew it didn't do any good, because it didn't really do any good with me. Later on I knew my sons would get about this tall and if I controlled them by spanking them what were they going to do to me?"

Kelly:

"...I have been married twice. Both times were very, very physically abusive marriages. And, that's how they ended. The first one was really violent, very violent."

"...Well, I have been physically abused. I've been a battered wife. Been beat up pretty good, actually. And, how has that affected my life? Well, I know I don't want it to happen again. That was real shameful for me. I never shared that for many years. And I went through a lot of therapy for that one, too."

"...You know when you're in that place and you're very afraid... you are a victim. When you're in it, it's very hard to see out of it. That's why it makes my hair stand on end when I hear people say, 'Why do people stay?' Well, you stay because you don't know how to get out. You stay because you don't tell, so no one knows to come and help you. And, you stay because you're isolated from other people, and you're too ashamed to tell. And, I understand that. It's not about being bad. I think the general public

79
especially when it comes. . . this is an awful thing that happened with O. J. Simpson, but I think it may have opened somebody's eyes up to how people are victimized. It has nothing to do about being weak. It just doesn't."

"EMOTIONAL ABUSE"

Matilda:

". . . I look back and I think of the emotional effects of being overweight and being harassed because of that. . . It was an 'injustice' done to me."

". . . I have an older sister. The whole of life she has taken advantage of my parents. I've watched my parents suffer from that. I have suffered some of it. She mistreated my parents. She mistreated me. I've gotten angry because of that. . . As a social worker, my sense of justice, my desire to advocate for people has maybe come from that in my family."

Sheila:

". . . My marriage was very shaky. We moved to a bigger house. I decided to go back to college. I went. It was very difficult. My husband did not want me to go to college. He put every obstacle in front of me that he possibly could. It was very hard. It was very difficult. I realize now that he was threatened by that.

". . . I had to quit the job I loved most because my boss was emotionally abusive. These are things she told me in supervision. You have a swelled head. You remind me of someone who was here before and I had to get rid of them because they just got too big for their britches and I'm gonna nip it in the bud right now because you are nothing. You are nobody. Anybody in this agency could do what you do. You have no special teaching. You have no skills. You don't know how to write. You don't know how to communicate. You don't know how to ask questions. You don't know how
to work with people. You have no social work skills. It was week after week after week, and this was at a time when I was finishing my degree, going to school full time, doing a 15-hour placement at another agency because they had messed up my placement. She had deliberately messed up my placement and said I've decided I don't want you going to school. It was a nightmare and I ended up in the hospital because of my heart valve, which had never bothered me my entire life. I had never had a problem with it. But I ended up having a spasm in my heart because of the stress."

Ashmi:

". . .When I was in high school, I was harassed by a male teacher. Initially I felt fear and later anger. I think that was in retrospect that probably was an impetus for learning more about feminist issues and supporting feminist issues."

Mimy:

". . .I think that growing up in a male dominated, fundamentalist home was probably . . . and told that men are the head of the household, and that's just it. And women can't make the choices that they make. I think that's some sort of emotional abuse. I guess it made me angry enough to just sort of go on and show them that it wasn't true. In my marriage I feel like I was emotionally abused. It didn't seem like I could -- especially at the end it didn't seem like I could do anything right. No matter how hard I tried."

Tina:

". . .My parents had separated just before my dad died. We were going through a period of time where they were going to dissolve their marriage. They were going to go through a dissolution, I think they call it. I remember there was a lot of emphasis placed on my sister and I and the things we had done. It was really stressed that we contributed to the failure of their marriage. It was really . . . I bring it up because it's something that I've addressed recently with my mom finally saying, 'Wait a minute I don't think this was really fair.' As
a kid I didn’t realize -- we didn’t feel like we could stand up and say, 'This doesn’t make sense to me.' So, it’s taken me, you know, I’m 31 now, it’s taken me all this time to be assertive enough and say to her, ‘I didn’t agree with this, and it didn’t feel like it was fair that so much of your garbage got put on us." And there were times when my mom would get into these deep discussions with my sister and I and ask us what should she do. Then the next day her and my father would have this talk where they would go in the room and they’d shut the door. My sister and I would be on pins and needles 'cause we didn’t know what was going to happen. There was this huge conference that was going on that would decide the fate of the family. They would get us around the kitchen table. It would usually be very early in the morning because we would always be in our pajamas, I can always remember this. We would have this discussion in which the focus ended up being on my sister and I. It would be we needed to pull together as a family which means you guys need to start doing more chores around the house; you guys need to be helping out. You guys need to do well in school. We had this huge set up to be rivals and competitive. So, it all just played into us being really, really nasty to each other through out the years. We’d go through periods of just being awful to each other. Then feeling guilty for it and wanting to be close again, but not being sure how to be close. It was awful."

"...My parents were overly sexual in front of us and my... this is a strange thing to talk to somebody about...I usually don’t talk to people about this. But, I have been thinking about it a lot recently. My mom was very big breasted. When I was growing up there was a lot of emphasis put on that. I was a late bloomer I didn’t really develop... I didn’t go through puberty."

"...There was a lot of you know dirty jokes, that kind of stuff. My parents... my dad would come in and touch my mom and be real physical and talk a lot about in front of us. There were comments made... where you know I was a carpenter’s dream, flat as a board. Those kind of comments were made. My mom always talked about how I probably
wouldn't develop until after I had kids, because she didn't. My mom had me at 19 and so she actually was a parent pretty young. And so I don't know necessarily if having children is why she developed, but that was in my mind, always linked. That I wouldn't get my breasts until I had kids. God, help me if I waited long to have children. I remember a lot of difficulty when I did hit puberty and my adolescent years. My parents were really uncomfortable with me dating. Really afraid of me getting involved with a guy and being sexual. My mom, the first guy that I ever brought home, my first boyfriend, my mom threatened to castrate if he touched me sexually. [laughs] I remember being so embarrassed and the guy didn't know what it meant, so we looked it up in the dictionary together. [laughs] Oh my God, it was really embarrassing. Actually, he and I stayed together all through high school. So I guess he hung in there with me for a long time even though my mom tried to scare the hell out of him. They were real uncomfortable with that. It was kind of tough.

". . .there was abuse in the family, emotional and physically. And how it made me feel, um. I don't know much at the time, all the feelings, I mean I think, I remember being scared. I remember fear. I remember feeling responsible, and very misunderstood. There were a lot of times that my mom would misunderstand something I had said, and I remember being really frustrated by this too. That she would misunderstand and totally take it that I was putting her down or that I was being rebellious. I can't think of the word I wanted. I just remember being really frustrated that I couldn't explain myself clearly to her. I mean there are some other things. With my dad being alcoholic, I remember being held up as kind of a like the hero of the family, you know? Everybody's hopes for the future depend on me. My parents talked about I was going to go to college. I wanted to be a veterinarian for a very long time, and my parents were really focused on the fact that I would make a lot of money and take care of them in their old age. So I was supposed to be the responsible one. I was supposed to be. . . I've had all those messages, I've had all those tapes in my head for a long time, of what I'm supposed to be. It was very devastating for my
mom when I told her I was going to be a social worker and not a veterinarian. I mean, it was a major, major fight. She thought I had sold out the family. She didn’t have a very clear idea of what a social worker was, and at that time I don’t think I had a real clear idea either. It was kind of an interesting path that brought me here and she couldn’t respect at that time. Now she’s proud of everything. I’m a social worker. She tells everybody her daughter’s a social worker, and she just thinks it’s the neatest thing in the world."

"...I was in a situation where I was supposed to be tutoring a kid that was...back then they were EMR classes, Educable Mentally Retarded. Now they would be considered Developmental Handicapped class. This was probably in ’84. Yea, in 1983-84. I was tutoring this young lady named Thomasina who was considered like this awful, awful kid in the classroom. Nobody could control her and so she got thrown into this EMR classroom. And in tutoring her, she ended up telling me about being abused. Middle of spring she was wearing a turtleneck and a vest and all these really heavy clothes. She showed me bruises and scars. Obviously, it had been a long term event. She showed...had her hair down over her face, and I had said something to the effect of you know, you’ve got such a pretty face why don’t you pull your hair back. She had a huge bruise down her face, real fresh. And in talking to her about it, there had been a fight at her house and she got hit with a telephone by her mom."

"...I didn’t know back then all the signs and all the things, now looking back she clearly held the indicators of abuse going on and nobody was asking her about. She told me about it. I didn’t know what to do. I was a student. Hadn’t had the training to know what to do. Didn’t know that my instructor who was the teacher, I didn’t know she was a mandated reporter at that point. I went to her and she yelled at me for not doing the math tutoring that she had sent me in to do. Told me that wasn’t my place to ask her those things, and basically said (someone is in the hallway) and basically chewed me out that I had even gotten involved in this whole thing. I said, ’Are we going to do anything about it?’ She said, ’No, that’s not our problem. I’ll mention it to the
guidance counselor or whatever.' The next day in class I mentioned to the instructor here and they said we have to make a report. I was failed from my FEEP experience. The teacher gave me a failing grade. My instructor went and had it changed and had something put with my record, I guess, because he felt like this whole abuse incident was what had motivated. . . because I had good reports up to that point. She said in my final evaluation that I over stepped my bounds. I didn’t follow the protocol for making a report and all that. I got really dissatisfied. I said I kind of like some of the things I’d be able to do. I really liked the connection with the kids. I really liked the relationships and all that. So I went to a career counselor and did some stuff over at Ohio Union and social worker was one of the things that kept coming up over and over. I came over here to talk to somebody to find out what this was all about. Then I applied and got in social work the following year. It’s kind of been a lot of different incidents that brought me here."

". . .I’ve also been sexually harassed at work. Although it’s a very subtle thing. The position I hold, there’s another person that holds the exact position. All the responsibilities are exactly the same. He’s an African-American male. We went through some problems where the program wasn’t meeting its expectations, wasn’t going down the contract. I was pulled in for a meeting and chewed out. This other person wasn’t. I mean, this is documented. Their rationale was that I had been in the program longer, but we shared equally the responsibility. It was a male worker who was doing this and this person was also very. . . this was the person who I said triggered me, this whole authority unfairness, triggered the emotional response. I felt very vulnerable and powerless with him."
"SEXUAL ABUSE"

Marina:

"...I did suffer some sexual abuse from people outside the family... One was a cousin, but there were several incidents, the others who were, they were like children of friends of the family, but they weren’t related... It was in those days... now that I have done some studies in graduate school I understand 'the power differential.'"

"...In one situation, which I didn’t even remember until later, it was when we were in Ashland and it was the first time. It was a family that had four kids and they were friends of ours and what had happened was we were at their house and they had taken me upstairs to one of their rooms and they had just fondled me type of thing. And there were definitely too many of them to do that. Another situation occurred with a friend of the family. It was a situation where he was older, 3 maybe 4 years older than I was. It was a type of situation where he says, 'Come, let’s do this.' It was similar to playing doctor but there was too much of an age difference and I was too young I was only, I think I was 7. It was more than just looking, he was touching. I understand it now that’s too young for any kind of consent or anything... It did have an effect on my later interaction with boys and men."

Jasmine:

"...my brother molested me. So that was... to me I felt like, I always felt like it was my fault. I felt well I always had such a terrible year that year because of that because I was always afraid he would come back again, because I didn’t tell anyone. He came and tried to do it again almost ten years later. Then I was 21.

I guess the thing why I remember it so much is no one in the family remember because when I was 21 I told my mom, I told the family, but everyone forget that I told them. So no one remembered that this ever happened. Especially my mom. And she just said. Well, he was probably drunk. I
said well. I don't know if he was. So she just kind of excused it.

Well, what happened was, much later when I was in my 30's I started having panic attacks. So after I started having panic attacks, I worked for 2 years with the panic attacks. Because right after high school I went right to work, so I kept working with the panic attacks, I mean while I would have them but my life was getting more narrow and narrow, like I would just go to work and go home. That was all I would do. And then 2 years later I just couldn't even work anymore. So I stayed home, and I decided I was going to cure myself. I was going to get over these panic attacks myself. So each year it got worse and worse and worse. And so for about the next five years I basically stayed home and did not leave the house. I just think there was a bunch of combination of stressors.

"...After my brother molested me, I was afraid of men. That continued on until probably just a few years ago."

Sheila:

"...I divorced my husband. In that time I had to face the fact that my children, although they were not physically abused by my husband, that after we split up he did sexually abuse them. I guess there were some indicators prior to us getting divorced that something was going on with my oldest daughter, but I caught it immediately and confronted him. Even though I didn't really know what was going on, something wasn't right and I confronted him and it didn't happen again with her. But after the divorce when he finally started having overnights and stuff, then he sexually abused the two little ones, who he basically felt were vegetables, and they aren't, and they wouldn't be able to tell, and that they didn't have a whole lot of worth as people. We went through hell in the justice system with that, you can imagine. He had supervised visits for about four years. It was a very, very difficult, traumatic time for the kids and I. Very difficult."
Tina:

"... Depending on what definition you use for sexual abuse, I've been kind of wrestling with that. The fact that my parents were overly sexual in front of us. We had access to pornography materials and things at a pretty young age and some things like. I would define that as having been sexually abused. Okay? Legal definitions and all that aside, I think those things have affected me. I think it's affected how I view myself and put expectations on myself. It has affected sexual relationships I've had with people. It has affected, I don't know if you want to know how, but just to tell you that it has."

Jane:

"... In the past, I have I think. In the long ago past. And, it affected my life because it made me a victim. It made me a victim, and I didn't even know it. I just read something recently, and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, that's what happened to me.' I had a suicide attempt at one time... It made me a victim and it made me, oh gosh, I can't even hardly explain how small it made me feel... It was between my age of 7 and 13. One in my family did it."

Jane felt very uncomfortable to elaborate on her experience of sexual abuse.

There were tears in her eyes. He voice choked. Her feelings and confidentiality were respected and with further elaboration on the topic we moved on.

SUMMARY

Chapter VI deals with the physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse experienced by the subjects. In their attempt to trace emotional reasons
for pursuing an MSW degree, the subjects pulled out from the storage of their memory their experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In essence, these experiences are closely related to their emotional reasons to be in MSW now.

The first of the three categories, "Physical abuse" evidences how the subjects were abused physically by their parents, spouses, siblings, teachers, and bosses at work. The physical abuse resulted in the participants’ fear, insecurity, self-disdain, and divorce. Sheila mentions being beaten by her dad with a two-by-four, and remembers screaming and being scared. She also narrates how her husband physically abused her twins who were disabled from birth, because he hated them for their disability. Mirny described being spanked by parents, and speaks of the resistance and stubborn attitude generated in her by spanking. She also spoke about her husband’s abusive relationship, and finally their separation. Mimy also added what it meant for her never to physically punish her children. Kelly described her experience of physical abuse by her husbands in two marriages, both of which ended in divorce. She called the event as "very violent" and "shameful."

The "Emotional abuse" describes the experiences of being emotionally abused in being teased by peers for being overweight. Matilda talked about that as being "unjust."
To Matilda one other fact was the emotional abuse: her sister taking advantage of her and her aged parents and mistreating them. She characterizes it as unfair.

Sheila reported emotional abuse of her by her boss at work. It consisted of fault finding, false accusation, yelling, discouraging words, bad reports of her personality and work. Her emotional abuse caused her physical illness. She calls it unjust, and a nightmare. Ashmi reports that in her high school a male teacher harassed her for being a woman. While Mimy's reports of emotional abuse by her fundamentalist parents, Tina reports her parents and dynamics of their family have been emotionally abusive. The result has been that she gets confused and suffers from low self-esteem.

"Sexual abuse" describes the trauma and emotional scar left in individuals when they experience sexual abuse at an early age, as in the case of Marina. Secondly, it presents the facts of sexual abuse as incest, lack of support of well-meaning family members. Jasmine reports her panic attacks were due to incestuous sexual abuse. Sheila reports a form of sexual abuse that is different. When her husband and she separated, one of the reasons was her husband's molestation of her oldest daughter. After the divorce, during visitation, her husband sexually abused her twins. Although this case is not the subject's direct experience of sexual abuse, the incident certainly manifested itself as
emotional abuse. The impact of the experience on Sheila was thus possibly greater than that of direct sexual abuse.

In the case of one participant, the experience of sexual abuse has had such a negative impact that she shed tears, her voice choked, and she felt so embarrassed that she could not and would not elaborate on it beyond just mentioning it.
CHAPTER VII

EXPERIENCE OF MATRIMONIAL FAILURE

Introduction

It is commonly held that separations and divorces affect 50 percent of all marriages (Boyer, 1989) and they are being accepted as a normative life transition leased on the crisis paradigm and accompanying developmental tasks (Fisher, 1994). Several studies investigated into the family structural and functional consequences of separations and divorces as well as the nature and effectiveness of the existing professional approaches for prevention, coping, and remedy of problems related to separations and divorce. But, in this post positivistic, evaluative, phenomenological inquiry, we have the theme of separation and divorce reported by the subjects in a narrative mode. As the participants, the MSW students, describe the separations and divorce in their family, the unique nature, the emotional content, and the special impact of their human experiences unfold as hitherto unexplored reality and truth. This
chapter reports in their own words the experiences, the perceptions, and reflections of the participants about separation and divorce.

"PARENTS' SEPARATION/DIVORCE AFFECTED MY LIFE"

Marina:

"... I had a very good childhood... but my parents did divorce when I was in the 7th grade. That was one of the traumatic experiences."

"... It was a shock because I'd never heard my parents fight or anything. Back then I had a few friends whose parents weren't together, but I always thought that it came because the parents were fighting. So it was a real big shock when my parents called me and my sister down and said, 'Well, we're getting separated.' There was some enmity between my mom and my, later, stepmom later when I was in later junior high and senior high. A lot of conflicts about where the kids would be for the holidays."

Tina:

"... My parents had separated just before he died. We were going through a period of time where they were going to dissolve their marriage. They were going to go through a dissolution, I think they call it. I remember there was a lot of emphasis placed on my sister and I and the things we had done. It was really stressed that we contributed to the failure of their marriage. It was really stressed that we contributed to the failure of their marriage. I don't think this was really fair. As a kid I didn't realize, we didn't feel like we could stand up and say this doesn't make sense to me. So, it's taken me, you know I'm 31 now, it's taken me all this time to be assertive enough and say to her I didn't agree with this and it didn't feel like it was fair that so much of your garbage got put on us."
Jane:
"...My father was divorced while I was very, very young. Then I was with Children's Services, and he came to get me and remarried. Of course my mother... he married my mother in 1945 and she was very young, but she is the only mother I remember... My father was very domineering and very controlling. All my siblings are divorced at least once."

"MY OWN SEPARATION/DIVORCE: PAINFUL AND DIFFICULT"

Marina:
"...I was never married. I wasn’t married to Tom’s father. We had sort of discussed it but I quickly realized that... I never regret having Tom, I do regret the way that I handled the whole relationship. I did realize... it was after I was pregnant I said, this is not... there’s too many issues and problems here. Then he kind of decided to back out of the situation. So, he really hasn’t seen... He actually hasn’t seen Tom in over 2 years."

"...I think for him having children is kind of a notch on the belt in a lot of ways. It sort of... my prediction is that if he ever gets to a point... it’s probably going to be within the next couple of years... it’s going to be in the next couple of years as Tom gets older and a lot more fun. It will be sort of so he can take him around and say this is my son, because that’s what he did with his other child. That’s what he did with his other child. He was married before and has a son from the previous marriage. He’s sort of on and off with that. It’s sort of like if it’s what he wants to do then he’ll have the contact, but if he doesn’t then he doesn’t. In terms of being like my parents, I’ve had... especially with my mom, a lot of the same struggles because of just finances and just dealing with the emotional thing."
Sheila:

"...After my first daughter, when my twins were born our marriage was already shaky. Of the twins my son had asthma and my daughter had central nervous system damage. ... I was struggling hard to see them through therapy. ... My husband wished that they were not born. They were too much of a bother. ... He became physically and emotionally abusive to me. There were indicators that he was sexually abusing my older daughter. ... Then I filed for a divorce."

"...the day that I kicked him out I said to the kids, and it was interesting because the kids said to me, I was so scared, but the kids all looked at me and said, 'Who's going to take care of him. Who will take care of him and make sure he's okay?' They never once asked who's going to take care of us. They just, you know, mom'll do it. I remember being just terrified and my mother saying, you've been doing this all along. You can do this. My mother has vacillated back and forth from being very supportive and abandoning me."

"...In my divorce when I was going through, and it was hell -- you have no idea how the justice system can rake women over the coals -- and I can remember these horrible feelings of revenge, of just wanting to kill him for what he had done to my kids and being unable to protect them the way that I wanted to."

Ashmi:

"...Well, trying to speak of emotional experience and emotional reasons, the first thing that comes to mind, of course, the divorce. That was a negative. But, boy that's been, that was in 1987. So that was a long time ago. But, interestingly divorce is always painful and difficult, but in retrospect when I look back on that that was also a very important event in my life because it changed my focus. Caused me to get to know myself better, who I am. Helped me to identify my own strength because I had to go out for the first time in my life and live on my own and be self-
supporting. At the time, it is negative and very painful. In fact, I think that I grew a lot through that experience."

Mimy:

"...Okay. In the past, I guess, oh about, I got divorced in 1990, it's been five years now, and that was really awful. I felt depressed; I felt that maybe I was going to end up in a hospital, I was so depressed. I had known my ex-husband since we were kids. I had known him since we were sixteen years old. And we were divorced twenty years after that. So it was a real strong experience, a really emotional experience."

Kelly:

"...I have been married twice. Both were very, very physically abusive marriages. And, that's how they have ended. The first one was really violent, very violent. ...It was real hard to accept. It took a lot of years to put the pieces together. ...I learned a lot of things."

Jane:

"...My separation from my husband... that was probably the biggest emotional... well... It was in 1979. I think I just started becoming more independent, at my husband's suggestion and encouragement. I learned how to fly. He was a pilot, and I was flying small planes. I wanted to please him and have him be attentive to me, and so I did that. Then, that gave me a lot of confidence, because I never thought I could do that. Then, there's lots of other reasons, but we just kind of didn't, couldn't do it anymore. That was a very big failure to me. So, that was very, very hard. I don't really think I had a mentally... but it created -- I had such emotional needs -- that it created emotional instability."

"...Around the same period my daughter developed anorexia nervosa. She is now 32. But she still suffers from that disease... When her father first left... somehow she used that episode of her father leaving as just another blow on her
self-esteem. Anorexia is a hard disease to deal with. Family
dynamics are so important in it."

"...Well, for a long time I could not even speak... I could
not even go to church, because hymns would make me cry. I
was so emotional... it is stressful... I used to hide it but
now I don't.

"TRAUMATIC TIME"

Marina:

"...My parents did divorce when I was in 7th-grade. But
that was one of the traumatic experiences."

"...I never married. But I was involved in relationships. I
got pregnant twice and had an abortion both times. I have a
two-year-old son, Tom. I wasn't married to his father. I
never regretted having Tom. I do regret the way I handled the
whole relationship... After I was pregnant I told Tom’s
father...there’s too many issues and problems here. Then he
kind of decided to back out of the situation... He hasn’t seen
Tom in over 2 years."

"...In terms of being like my parents, I’ve had especially
with my mom, a lot of the same struggles because of finances
and dealing with the emotional thing."

"...It was sort of... I was never... I was always from the
beginning because I felt and feel that it’s very important for a
son to have father. It was sort of like his father did what he
wanted to do. Initially he was there and then he kind of got
into a snit. A large part would be when I was very sick. I
was not that responsive. I was very ego-centered, and I was
very frustrated on my own experience of throwing up all the
time. After that he was like, you, you changed. A lot of it
was because I was starting to become centered about the fact
that I was now I was a mother. I was carrying a child. My
goal was not to make him happy and everything, or to make
sure that everything was fine. And, that was very important
to him. He needed to feel important. I know this now from history and the things I found out. That’s something he thought was important. He kind of drifted away then he came back. He, about midway into the pregnancy, and then he dropped out again. So then I didn’t see him probably about the last...he dropped out about the end of August. So, I didn’t see him for about the last two months of the pregnancy. When I was in the hospital after Tom was born he said, ‘Well. . .’ So he came by. . .he did call while I was in the hospital with Tom, and he did come over and he did come over sometimes after that. Then he dropped out again.”

Sheila:

"...My divorce. . . It was the first time in my life that I leaped off of a cliff and said, 'I am here hanging on my own.' I can remember the feeling, a very clear feeling when I filed for divorce, of almost being in outer space, and I’ve cut the life line and I’m going to float off here and I don’t know where I’m going."

"...I remember just getting chills. My gosh, this is all my decision. I was single for eight years. No one was ever willing to tell me what to do again. In that time I had to face the fact that after we split up he did sexually my twin children. . . We went through hell in the justice system with that, you can imagine. He had supervised visits for about 4 years. It was a very, very difficult, traumatic time for the kids and I."

"...I remember when I kicked my husband out I was so pleased. I talk about that now. It was very traumatic. But the kids and I were sitting in the car and right after they asked me, 'What’s going to happen to him and who’s going to take care of him,' they said, 'What are we going to do now?' I said, 'I don’t know. But I will tell you this, I don’t know where we’re going, kids, and I don’t know what we’re going to do, but we will be better people on the other side of this. And I don’t know what we’re going to do, but somehow we’re going to be better people. And, whatever we need to do that, that’s what we’re going to do.’ So it has been a process."
Ashmi:

"...it was a very painful experience. I think it took me... the first year was very difficult, very traumatic. By the end of two years, I was doing really well. I was doing okay. So it took me a good year to get over the really hurt, and struggling and searching for direction and repairing my damaged self-esteem and self-image. It's like you are building a new one. So the first year was really tough."

Mimy:

"...I had a bad divorce and I don’t get along too well with my ex-husband. We don’t fight, but we don’t talk either. We don’t talk very much. We just talk as much as we have to with the kids. That’s something I have avoid... Being of the Appalachian culture I think that affects my entire being."

Jane:

"...Divorce affected my emotional life. I suffered a kind of mental disability. When my husband left, that was a very traumatic time for about two years, and I would say it took me five years to become somewhat stable. I went to counselling for the first time. For about two years, I was in counselling. A place where I never thought I’d be. I guess my mental disability being depression, rejection those dealing with marital strife. Those types of things."

SUMMARY

Chapter VII on the "Experience of Matrimonial Failure" describes the incidence of separation and divorce, their nature, extent and emotional dimensions in the life, growth and development of the participants studied.
"Parents’ separation/divorce affected my life" describes that the separation/divorce of the parents are still fresh in the memory and emotions of the subjects being studied, and indicate that there is an influence of them in their education, career and goal choices. In some cases, parents’ separation comes as a shock. In the family, the subjects who were children of the family at the time of their parents’ separation saw the dwindling of economic support, the lessening of emotional interaction, the geographical distancing of parents, and the division of children’s care and support based on economic resources. The children are the co-victims of such conflicts as "Where do I belong," "What’s the guarantee of my economic, social and emotional security?" "Who am I?" "What’s my future?" "Why do I not deserve a peaceful, cooperative, healthy and joyful family?" These conflicting thoughts and reactions occur at the emotional level of the subjects under study at the time of their exposure to the catastrophe, and influence their later lives.

In other cases, such as Tina’s, parent’s separation result in the emotional abuse of children. Adult children are accused of being the cause of divorce. Divorces, as described herein, spark confusion, estranged relationships, and hatred. They have an impact on the children’s personal identity, integrity, and career choices. In still other cases, parents’ separation and divorce cause psycho-somatic illness like anorexia.
"My own separation/divorce: painful and difficult" reports how the subjects' experience of separation, though sought as a remedy or a solution, turns out to be painful, difficult, and prolonging the family's distress. Separation and divorce influence the subjects' future plans, goals, and career choices. They create anxiety in plans for dealing with personal survival, and often result in economical and emotional devastation. The care of the children is another issue spawned by divorce. Separation/divorce are often concurrent with emotional and physical abuse, as was clear in the cases of Mimy and Kelly. Sometimes separation/divorce is the most important incident in a person's life, causing changes in directions in life, as in the case of Ashmi.

"Traumatic time" presents the bewildering, painful time before, during, and after, and long after, the intended, less-intended, unintended or unexpected separation/divorce as experienced by the subjects of the study. In some cases, the separation/divorce leaves one of the spouses, often the female, single ever after, with "love's labor left" for disabled or otherwise dependent children. In Jane's case, the damage to self-esteem causes emotional disability or other psychosomatic illness.

In sum, in all cases, the experience of separation/divorce seem to have affected the emotional motivations for degree and career choices in social work.
CHAPTER VIII

EXPERIENCE OF THERAPY

Introduction

"Experience of therapy" is another major theme that emerged from the qualitative data of this study of individuals' emotional reasons for pursuing an MSW degree. The subjects in the interview described their "experience of therapy," how they happened to go to a therapist, what was/were their therapy experiences, and what they learned in their experience of therapy. They also indicated that they wanted to be in a helping profession based on their experience of therapy, in so far as they got what they wanted from therapy or failed to get what they want from therapy. The data from this theme is organized and presented in the following categories: "The reason why I needed therapy," "My experience of therapy and therapist," "This is what I learned from therapy," and "I want to be a better therapist."
"THE REASON WHY I NEEDED THERAPY"

Matilda:

"...My father had a heart attack, a very serious heart attack, and very serious surgery. ... I had to function for my mother and for family yet maintain myself in graduate school and maintain my own life. ... It proved very difficult. ... I was depressed in a way that I never felt depressed before. ... I felt a loss of direction. I was very involved in the church, but the church changed structures. ... I got separated from my friends. ... I moved out and moved in alone. ... I started to see a therapist."

Marina:

"...In my senior year I had been involved in a relationship with a fellow student and I ended up getting pregnant and didn't really... I remember feeling kind of like well there is no choice except to have an abortion and where I went to get the pregnancy test there really wasn't any counseling so I did. And then after that I got into a really deep depression. I did seek some counseling."

Jasmine:

"...When I was about 36 years old (now I am 44) I went for therapy. I was suffering from agoraphobia and panic attacks. ... I needed to be treated for them. I went to a psychotherapist. I went for 3 years. Then stopped for about 9 months... went back for like 2 more years. ... I didn't understand why I was having agoraphobia and panic attacks. Rather, I knew that I had a serious problem, but I wanted to deny I had a problem."

Sheila:

"...I started the parent classes and I went to two or three series of them and I thought, you know, I went through the first series,- and at the end of the series, the counselor who was doing the classes said, 'I don't want to embarrass you, but
I don’t think you’re afraid of a nuclear war, I think you’re afraid you’re going to hurt your baby. I think you’re afraid because some of the stuff you talked about in your childhood doesn’t make sense. Although you claim that your parents were wonderful, I suspect you have some baggage you’re bringing along with you.’

I got into counseling then and I stayed in counseling for about a year to try and figure out some things and that was where I started realizing that I had been physically abused and that I had been sexually abused cause prior to that, no, I mean the memories are always there, but every time they come up you shove them down. I’m not going to think about that. So I just started to deal with just a little bit of it.”

"...And again when my children were sexually abused we were in therapy for probably three years, the kids and I.”

"...I got divorced with from husband. I had three children dependent on me: my oldest daughter and my twin son and daughter both disabled... I had cancer then and got surgery for that. Then we got evicted. Altogether it was a big blow. I went through the healing process with the kids. The kids and I did in therapy. It took several years to heal from that.”

Ashmi:

"...around the time of my divorce. I initially went thinking that it would be marital therapy, but my first husband was not comfortable in therapy, and he refused to go. I continued realizing that this was a very emotion-laden, tumultuous period. That I had to make some decisions about whether I was going to get a divorce or not and how I was going to cope and restructure my life. So, I continued during that period and afterwards for a while to help make the adjustment. I wanted to make sure that the decisions that I made were not based on emotion alone. Because those would have been poor decisions. I had to be more realistic. I needed some help in making decisions and in adjusting and just getting through it.”
Mimy:

"...When I was going through the divorce, my ex-husband and I went to speak to a marriage counselor. It didn’t work. But my ex-husband thought that I was the person with all the problems, so he wanted me to go so I could change, and he wasn’t really willing to work on things together. He wouldn’t even stay in the same room with me. When I was in undergraduate school I saw a therapist a couple of times at Ohio University."

Tina:

"...I went to a therapist. He wasn’t very good. I went because I was having trouble in a relationship. Just prior to the one I’m in now. I was engaged to a man who had a really difficult time expressing emotions. It was getting really difficult to figure out why I was in the relationship, why I was staying. I went to somebody a friend of mine was seeing."

"...I saw another therapist recently. She was a licensed master hypnotherapist. ... I went to her because I wanted to deal with this whole authority crying issue. I wanted to have a little more control over my emotional responses and to be more assertive and communicate my feelings when I felt like I was in powerless situations."

Kelly:

"...Therapy?... Whew, how many times? I’m thinking. I think growing up because I’m so unsure of myself that when I got put in situation where I had to make decisions, I was real unable to do that. That’s been a lesson for me. Is still learning to trust me. That’s what I learned, I guess, when I’ve gone to therapy. Most often that’s occurred when I have had real disruptive relationships."
Jane:

"... Well, I needed a therapist. Once I called suicide prevention, that was that night. Then... I was 35... Then... of course I went to a community mental health center for therapy. It was for recovery from a ruptured marriage."

"MY EXPERIENCE OF THERAPY AND THERAPIST"

Matilda:

"...After my first abortion experience I felt very depressed. I did seek counseling for a while, but it was sort of...their kind of attitude was like to get you to accept that was a good decision, that that was what you had to do. So, the next year I just got very depressed. I was very suicidal at certain points, and then ended up getting pregnancy again... I was still down in North Carolina and at that point my parents were really pressuring me to have to go ahead and come home because I hadn’t been about to find a really good job. So, I ended up having an abortion, again."

"...And, then I briefly went last year just to kind of make sure that I had healed as much as I though I had as far as the sexual abuse, because I was starting to get into some of that in my studies where I was dealing with some of those issues. And I was cognizant of transference and some of the other issues that you need to look out for if you’re working in an area where you have some kind of trauma yourself in."

Jasmine:

"...I’ve seen three different psychologists for the same problem, panic attacks, agoraphobia. Right now I’m seeing a LISW. I always said I would continue in counseling until I no later had any panic attacks... Now I am seeing an LISW, and it’s wonderful. She went to Ohio State. She can remember back what it feels like to be in the master’s
program. What you have to know and having to do all this. She is very supportive and I can go and I can say "I don’t know if I can do this." She understands more of what I’m talking about. It’s very comforting just knowing that she’s a social worker. Knowing what I’ve seen in myself and other students. You know, the concern for people, their whole environment - family, where they’re living. So you take those into consideration. To me, social workers have definitely proven that they are very concerned about people. So it’s nice that I’m seeing one now."

Sheila:

"...I really believe in survivors groups. And that’s it for formally. During the time that I went through the process with the job last year, if I’d have had the time and money I would have been in counseling again. And I really think I should have got to counseling because I think I really needed it. Again, it might have made the transition easier. I survived it, but there’s still... I go and you have someone else’s perspective."

Ashmi:

"...I’m sure my therapist helped me make the right decisions, to refocus, to get direction to keep going."

"...It was a very sad time. I was depressed. It was a good decision. I went into therapy. I felt energized."

Mimy:

"... I felt like the therapist that my husband and I went to was a good therapist. But you can’t work something out when one person wants to work on it and the other person doesn’t. I have read many self-help books. My ex-husband, he was an adult child of an alcoholic, and I didn’t understand a lot of things that were happening when he started acting what I thought was strange or weird. The therapist gave me a book about children of alcoholics by Claudia Black, I think. And it just made me see that I wasn’t inadequate, that I wasn’t crazy,
that there were some forces here that I had no control over. And I think that’s the most important thing that came out of the therapy, me reading that book and seeing that I could look at my ex-husband’s family and see that all the roles were there from the adult . . ."

_Tina:_

"...I went to a therapist... because I was having trouble in a relationship. Just prior to the one I’m in now. I was engaged to a man who had really a difficult time expressing emotions... I went to a therapist a friend of mine was seeing. And this person, I found later, was having a sexual relationship... I was really uncomfortable with the guy. He kept want to focus on things that, at the time, I couldn’t figure out why he was focusing on... He kept wanting to talk to me about my sex life, and he kept wanting to talk to me about just issues I didn’t think, I couldn’t see the relevance, and I didn’t feel comfortable. So, I quit seeing him.

"...I saw another therapist recently. She was a licensed master hypnotherapist... She did some neat stuff. I thought it was real helpful."

_Kelly:_

"...Therapy... Well, I think it’s real relevant. One thing that I know that I’m not real comfortable with - group situations. I, personally, have never been in a group. I’m not real sure how that works. On a one-to-one, I’m very comfortable because I’ve had that experience. I know what was good for me. Do you know what I mean? When I had that experience... There have been people that I’ve met with that have been better in my mind than others. And so I guess I think of that when I’m working with someone I’m real comfortable on a one-on-one, but in a group situation I’m really learning that process."
Jane:

"...I was in counseling. A place where I never thought I'd be. I guess my mental disability being depressed, rejection those dealing with marital strife. Those type of things. . . valuable experience. I guess that has a connection with why I am in MSW now."

"THIS IS WHAT I LEARNED FROM THERAPY"

Matilda:

"...It made me think about what therapy is. It made me think about how it occurs, what the goals are, what the roles are in each person. . . Feeling like where we are going."

Marina:

"...as I got into my clinical courses, I really began to understand the ramifications of what was done or what was not done, especially in the abortion experiences I had. There was no counselling, and, to me, no matter what your opinion is on abortion, that's too big a decision not to have . . . The problem is that children are not acknowledged. The fact that an unborn child is a child and does exist is not acknowledged. And so, that was minimized. We got no counselling, literally. They made no effort to see where we were. And especially when I was coming for the second time, there was no effort to say, 'Well, wait a minute. This is the second time this person is coming in a year. Maybe we have some kind of responsibility to see what's going on.' That's something that even when I went into counselling . . . Now, I realize that when a person says there's a problem then you acknowledge that there's a problem. You don't try to minimize and say, 'Oh, that's OK.' But if someone comes in and says that they feel something, then acknowledge that, acknowledge that that's the way they feel. And then, of course, you move from that.
But if someone comes into you and says, 'I had an abortion, and I feel really horrible about it,' then I would not try to say... You know, you start where they are. And that wasn't done when I had the abortion. And so that's going to have a big influence about how I approach my practice."

Jasmine:

"...I found when I was in therapy, I also was in group therapy, and the first group therapy was for adult children of alcoholics, and I found I loved being in the group..."

Sheila:

"...I've been very careful to pick therapists that I thought could help. You know, that I thought had a lot of integrity and were focused on me rather than on a program."

"...You can't just pick a theory. I went to... I took the kids to a therapist who had a theory, and tried to fit my kids into it, and we didn't last very long with him. It just didn't work. We ended up going someplace else and she was wonderful."

"...I think all of it adds. The counseling, I mean I went through all of these things in my life and some of them I overcame. But the counseling was integral to me overcoming the baggage. I often think, what if I hadn't applied for that parenting program? What if I hadn't applied for that and dealt with the physical abuse and begun to look at the sexual abuse? What if I hadn't gotten into... because then I wouldn't have been as open to getting into that group therapy thing when my husband and I were having trouble...What if I hadn't gotten into that? I learned group skills in that program over 5 years that have never left and have been the most valuable things I've ever gotten."

Ashmi:

"...I guess if anything it wasn't a hard decision. For a lot of people it's a hard decision. Do I want to go see a
therapist? Because they feel this carries some kind of negative connotation, but I didn't perceive it that way."

Mimy:

"... The therapy was a good experience. I can help people with it, so someone won't be like me and feel like... I have always thought that hard work and imagination and creativity that a person can do just about anything. But I found out that I couldn't do anything about saving my marriage, because it wasn't something he (my husband) wanted it or that he was able to do. So, that was a lesson, and I'd like to help people that are in the same situation.

Tina:

"... When I went to the hypnotherapist... She did some neat stuff. I thought it was real helpful. It was like a one-session deal. She didn't actually end up hypnotising me, but we did some age regression and re-framing and that was real helpful and she let me tape it. So, I have the audio tape that I can listen to. That's been really helpful. That's probably been the most productive thing somebody else has done for me... it's just really interesting how certain themes come up... There's just been some interesting themes running through my life... that I have become more aware of."

Kelly:

"... I think it takes a lot of courage for people to do that. To go to therapy. I always think that's real important to convey that. I just know it's been a positive experience for me. I know that I've grown because of doing that, personally without any thought about a professional kind of growth. That was a real personal growth for me."
"I WANT TO BE A BETTER THERAPIST"

Matilda:

"... I was also maybe dissatisfied with lack of direction in therapy. ... I feel like there is something I would like to accomplish. ... I think that my own frustration to that is challenging to me because I think, how I will respond to someone else's frustration with how tangible therapy is."

Marina:

"... As I said, twice I had abortions and became very depressed. I did seek counseling. ... after that I began to see both from my actions but also things that had gone on in terms of the lack of counseling and the lack of really acknowledging that an unborn child is still a child. ... Later I began doing some volunteer work with Pregnancy Distress Center which is a pro-life counseling and referral service in town. Actually, I started training at one point. ... And there was a lot of bad experience in being an office volunteer which is what got me thinking about being a social worker."

Jasmine:

"... During the therapy the counselor always said to me, 'Jasmine, you should become a psychologist. You have a lot of intuition, good insight.' which I had never realized about myself. After she said that, I thought that, maybe, it would be possible -- could do something like that. Even though I didn't go to school right away, after being in groups I decided that, that was something I would like to do. Just work with people."

Sheila:

"... The fact that I can work in groups, and I do a lot of group work, is because I was 5 years in that program, which was excellent in skill building and understanding group dynamics, and got a lot of education from it. You know, we didn't do just groups. You could move beyond that and
become a model and get all sorts of training and stuff. And then going into the healing from the sexual abuse and the battering through Cindy. She did a lot of motivating with helping me finish that undergrad degree. A lot of motivating with giving me faith in myself, saying you can do this and you will triumph. You will overcome. You have good instincts about kids. You understand why you're kids are feeling. You've been able to use your horrible experience that happened to you in order to help others. It helped in finding meaning in what had happened to me. And if you can't find meaning, you can't triumph over it. If you can't find a meaning and a focal point and say, okay, this happened, this is what I'm going to learn from it."

Kelly:

"...to identify what I'm responsible for and what others are responsible for and to separate that. And, in that, know who I am and set boundaries with people. This is what I learned, and this is what I would use in my practice."

Jane:

"...Therapy saved my life. It was a time when I hadn't learned to use class therapy."

"...But for practice I don't want to enter marital therapy. I'd like to work for the elderly."

**SUMMARY**

In Chapter VIII, the "Experience of therapy" is the fourth common theme that emerged in study. The MSW student subjects narrated their experience of having been in therapy as part of their emotional reasons for pursuing an MSW degree.
"The reason why I needed therapy" describes the context, the problem, and the emotional aspect in which the subjects felt the need of therapy and sought it. In one case, it was felt therapy was needed to relieve stress and acquire a sense of direction; in another it was a reactive decision based on depression resulting from two abortions; failure in relationships with significant others was yet another reason for seeking therapy, as were the desires to treat a panic attacks, to treat fear and hurt as a result of to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of the participants and their children. In four other cases it was to deal with the after- effects of divorce.

"My experience of therapy and therapist," highlights the positive and negative experiences of having been in therapy. One found the benefits of therapy intangible, as it lacked direction; another found counseling for women who have had abortion, inadequate, a third found an LISW more effective than a psychologist; the fourth found the therapist unhelpful.

"This is what I learned from therapy," describes the subjects’ therapy experiences, how their treatment made them think, how it gave them satisfaction and feelings of hope and self-worth. This category also explained in the subjects’ own words what they perceived and the skills they learned during therapy. This section highlights different kinds of therapies and therapists.
The "I want to be a better therapist" category reports the subjects' feelings and motivations based on their own therapy experience, what they have perceived, what they have learned, what they feel, and what they want to do as a result. While some want to learn more, others want to use their experiences and skills learned in therapy as soon as possible. Others want to evolve better therapeutic approaches and a more committed service approach for their own clients.
CHAPTER IX

MY REASONS TO PURSUE AN MSW DEGREE

Introduction

The final theme of this study, in which the research participants in this study finally report how and why they decided to pursue an MSW degree, marks the completion of the inquiry. The theme carries that singular message in a variety of sentiments. The participants' words richly articulate this message, which seems to summarize all their accounts of previous experiences. This final theme is reported under the following categories, "I'm gonna be for others," "I have something to offer," "It gives me meaning," and "My goal is."

"I AM GONNA BE FOR OTHERS"

Matilda:

"...I care about others quite a lot. I think I care about everybody. I find myself looking at people on the street wondering what their lives are like and wondering what their problems are. But, personally the people that I care about are
my parents and a few close friends. People that I care and invest in, spend time with, and get to know them.

"...I think that I could have compassion, I could see, I think I have a keen sense of justice and when an injustice occurs I'm displeased. I'm not satisfied with injustice. I think that I may have greater resources emotionally."

Jasmine:

"...I feel it gives me outlet to just accept people however they are. To maybe help them through some problems, ... most of all to have unconditional positive regard. That's what I would like to extend to anyone that I meet."

Sheila:

"...I survived childhood abuse. I triumphed over it and my higher value is, I'm gonna be there for other kids and for other women."

Ashmi:

"...When I was very small I contracted a mild case of polio. ... I do remember that during the treatment phase I had to wear corrective shoes. I remember struggling to keep up with the other kids and the frustration of being different, of not being able to keep up with them in play. ... being slower and being left behind. So I suppose that's also had some impact on my decisions to be in a helping kind of profession."

Mimy:

"...It is important to me to do something that I feel is going to make a difference. For instance, the mentally disabled. ... they don't have a voice. And I can sort of be their voice."
Tina:

"...I want to tell you that this whole awareness... I thought that I was probably the only... this is how I thought about things. When I first got into the program, and you know you have to write that autobiographical statement, I thought, 'Oh my God. These people are going to read this and say,' 'She shouldn't be working with kids because she's been through this stuff, and she's... ' You know what I mean? I didn't realize that that's why so many people gravitate to this field... who have been through these experiences. And actually, a lot of very unhealthy people gravitate. And I mean I've found some of my colleagues are not real healthy folks, and there are periods of time when I haven't been real healthy. But I've been entrusted to do all this stuff, to help other people."

Jonathan:

"...I think that's why I've gotten into it. Ever since I had that one teacher that I spoke of in the 5th-grade, I think that every career choice I've ever thought of or made was kind of based on the idea that I wanted to do something that was useful and helpful to society. And, especially to those who have been less fortunate or more oppressed in society. So, yea, it does fill a real need that I have to feel that what I'm doing is more useful than making widgets or...which is a pretty obnoxious point of view but..."

Bendy:

"...As far as me choosing social work, I think I'm really concerned and care about other people. I'm kind of a highly emotional person. Which is something I have to work on, because I have an ability to cry very easily with other...And, I'm trying to work on that. I think that's definitely something that concerns others probably..."

Kelly:

"...I love being with people, and I love being with kids especially. I've always enjoyed working with people."
"...My brother and I are very much alike in terms of caring about people. One of our difficulties, I think in... it's a little better today, but I feel like he has a drinking problem and a drug problem."

Jane:

"...The whole social work, I mean, that's what it is, caring about and standing in their place for whatever they need."

"...If it is a child or an elderly person, I know what it's like not to have somebody to speak for you no matter what. So when I use that background of emotional experience, when I use that to apply it to my social work, I stand in their place. It's like I stand in their place. And so my emotional past makes me able to do that."

"I HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER"

Matilda:

"...it looks like I'm involved with other people and that I'm helping them. I realized that it was something that I could do. I knew that I needed to get further education."

Marina:

"...In the society I have a big care for people who are weaker -- the unborn and the elderly and people who have disabilities, because I see a lot of the policies and things that are being made... I definitely see a change and more a looking at... you know, we're going to choose who's going to live and who's not going to live and that can be made for a lot of different reasons disregarding who people are individually and valuing them. I see that with the move toward euthanasia and beginning to look at well, maybe... Instead of looking at some of the positive things we can do. And to me, a country is only as strong as its people, and if we
start. . . if we continue not really taking care of our people then our country is going to have really serious problems."

Jasmine:

". . .It’s like the more you give, the more you receive. That’s what, I hope that that’s something will continue the rest of my life. That I will never get too tired to give, because I know that I’ll receive so much more."

Sheila:

". . .There are people I know who straight through the process because they want the credential. It’s emotion. It’s an emotion to succeed because they want the credential and they set out from the beginning saying I’m going to get this credential. And then there are some of us who say, 'I have this passion for what I do. I have this passion for wanting to teach and wanting to empower people and wanting to change lives. And I have something to offer, but in order to offer it I need the credential.' But in addition to that, the reason I came to the master’s program, was that, yeah, I can work with people. I’m very aware of my own limitations, and the master’s program for me is adding to skills and knowledge so that then I can then help from up here, that I have this much more to give to people. . ."

". . . I feel. . . social work in many, many ways saved my life and now I owe something back to the profession."

Mimy:

". . .Sometimes I feel like I’m going because I’m an Appalachian. I think that the Appalachian voice should be heard."

". . .The reason that I want to get an MSW is so that I can have a stronger voice and work for the oppressed."
Tina:

"... I want to make sure that kids are heard. I want to make sure kids are protected and given opportunities so I feel very responsible. I feel somewhat protective of the kids I work with, but I also get really frustrated with the limitations of the system and some of those kinds of things. Yeah, there's a lot of stuff that ties in to..."

"... I need to give to the world, not just to my home. Although giving to my home gives to the world."

"... the philosophy that I adhere to, and it goes into believing that if I work on my corner I affect the larger whole, it's like you know, the ripples in the pond."

Jonathan:

"... I think people need to be able to recognize that most people who come into social work come into it with their own needs... well, all people do, come into it their own needs. But, you have to learn that the goal is to fulfill other people's needs or to help them fulfill their needs and to make that fulfilling to yourself."

Bendy:

"... When I see a lot of people who really didn't have that, I somehow feel guilty. I feel bad. I just feel like if for some reason I had the luck to grow up like that somehow I have a duty to try to make others a little bit."

Kelly:

"... I feel like now I'm here because I know who I am. And I really have something to give. It's not that I don't know that I'm not going to be changing and growing in a lot of areas emotionally and all that kind of thing. I think as I get older I see myself going through some real passages in my life."
"...I know everything that’s happened in my life has brought me to this place. Now I feel like I have something to share with someone else that might be of help to them in healing."

Jane:

"...In social work I have a know-how of how to serve humanity. That’s a good way to put that, because that’s how I really felt. Years ago I looked at the Peace Corps. Sent for the brochure, because I wanted to do that. To me, a life of service is like... but I didn’t realize that when I was younger. I just was caught up. I was socialized for so much other stuff. I never really was free to pursue anything intellectually or anything by myself. And with church and retreats and medication and reading, mostly. That’s expanded to where I see... It’s the only real meaning to life is to serve others. Really. But, you have to live a long time before you realize that, maybe."

"IT GIVES ME MEANING"

Matilda:

"...Using my natural gifts with my mental abilities I think that social work is the discipline that ties them together..."

"...Being persistent and being willing to advocate for justice, so I think some of it depends on situations and if it is a situation or if it is with a person who I think has power over me if it’s more of a personal situation I think that’s where I tend to become more passive, but when it affects other people I’m less passive."

Jasmine:

"...I realize that all of my, most fears are based on lack of information, lack of education about other people, the way they live. So, working, I mean, that has been pointed out, I need to recognize that people have been raised differently, you
know. But to me, we’re all people, and that, we all should be treated the same."

Sheila:

"...Social work gives meaning to my life in many ways. If I don’t have social work and I can’t use what’s happened to me to help other people to survive and triumph, then my life has no meaning. And social work has so much more meaning in my life than counseling or the psychology, the formal psychology, those types of things, because it’s so holistic.

It gives me the opportunity to work with people that would not have an opportunity to come into some kinds of centers and some kinds of treatment situations. Social work has given me the opportunity to go into the home and to help people where it starts. It gives meaning to my life and it allows me to give meaning to other peoples’ lives. So, yes, it does. The profession of social work is... I still don’t understand why it’s not paid more highly than any other field because we impact people more than any other individual professional. We just do."

"...If you really want me to be a good practitioner with integrity, then emotion is the only thing that keeps you through here. It’s a gamut to go."

Ashmi:

"...Why I want to be in human services... I guess, if it wasn’t fulfilling, if it wasn’t intrinsically rewarding... I wouldn’t be there."

Mimy:

"...My marriage ended up in divorce. I tried to fix it by therapy. I didn’t succeed. I’ve always thought that with hard work and imagination and creativity that a person can do just about anything. But I found that I couldn’t do anything about saving my marriage... That was a lesson for me, I would like to help people that are in the same situation."
Tina:
"...I chose the clinical concentration and my specialization is in child welfare which makes an awful lot of sense, because I thought I was so misunderstood and not protected as a child. It makes a lot of sense that I want to work... Actually I love working with adolescents. I think there are some real strong emotions that come to play in my work everyday."

Bendy:
"...I think my meaning in life is that I am...I really enjoy feeling helpful. I enjoy feeling like I am able to give back to others and also, I'm hoping that the more I get out of social work that maybe it will help my own emotional health. A lot of times when I'm reading stuff I think, "Well, I do that." I try to analyze myself. So, I'm hoping that maybe emotionally it might make me a stronger person, too."

Kelly:
"...I'm also a recovering alcoholic. I've been in recovery for six years now. My area...the reason why I came back to school...I was 38 when I started school... I had a few years of college just a few hours course work. I became involved in some volunteer work with kids through a treatment center, and I loved working with them so much that I thought this is what I want to do and so that's when I decided to come back to school."

"...Most people don't have the opportunity to venture into that population. The kids that are mentally retarded and disabled. And they are so much fun. They are so real...I don't know I just...like Tim friends, Tim, my son with cerebral palsy I love them being at our house. I love seeing him interact with them. I guess I also have this sense of... and part of this is part of my social work... is the difference with people. A lot of time others' inability to accept him, to feel threatened by him, to be afraid of him because he's different, when really the only thing he is a kid. And, what I run into with school administrators and a lot of teachers and
stuff is the first thing they see is his wheelchair and they don’t see him. I’ve had to deal with that with people forever, as long as I can remember. I think that because of that... I hope because of that I’m more sensitive to that difference in people. That I’m not afraid of that."

Jane:

"...I perceive emotional reasons play a... very large part, because it’s a driving force, I would think in pursuing it. Because, if you don’t have the passion for whatever you want to do even if it’s microbiology or something like that. It’s my understanding that people who pursue scientific or the one’s that you read about they’ve been passionate about their pursuits -- emotions drive the passion, right? And make you single minded about the pursuit of it. You must have that same experience in what you are pursuing. I think... well, probably that’s the only thing because emotions can even overcome your inadequacy and maybe your academic or intellectual capabilities. If you are passionate enough about it, you can overcome those obstacles. You might have to study harder and longer. You know. But, yeah. I perceive them as the driving force."

"...after my husband left and emotional problems, I started college... I looked at law... at other human sciences... and I looked at social work. There were some negative images, but then when I got involved in it I just, you know. I just laugh sometimes. I walk out of class and I think, 'Oh gosh. This is wonderful.'"

"MY GOAL IS"

Matilda:

"...I think that if I can help the client understand their value and their worth where they are right now and help them facilitate the change that they would like in their life -- the change and the improvement -- yet accepting where they are I
think that's what I have learned about myself, is that I may have some ideas or areas for improvement but I need to feel somewhat satisfied with where I am right now."

**Marina:**

"...in terms of the decision to go into social work and even the possibilities I was thinking about before I chose social work, it was very emotional because it was based not on cold hard facts or how much money I was going to make or what would be best, but rather looking at happiness -- where do I think I could be happy?"

**Jasmine:**

"...knowing what I went through the many years of hiding my health not thinking I could ever leave -- I would never want anyone to go through that. So, that’s one thing. I would like to work with people with panic attacks and agoraphobia. Also, I would never want to give up working with children. Because, once again I hate to see any child suffer or be hurt. I guess what I see my goal is just I can’t take away the bad things in the world, but I can only help people through them."

**Sheila:**

"...My goal in social work is to be that person for as many kids that can be. You know, you deserve better. And the battering situation is to help women. My feeling is you can only do this from a social work perspective. I have friends who are therapists. I see what therapists do in the counseling or psychology field. It’s only a little, small piece of the puzzle because you can’t separate the person and their emotions from their environment, which is why social work is the only common sense way to deal with people. You deal with the whole social environment, with everything that goes into it."
Mimy:

"... I have always wanted to make a difference; to have a meaningful life. That means more to me than money. When I study social work therapy especially the theories of caring and of being equal and of sharing equal power, understanding where a person's coming from... that's just a perfect fit."

Tina:

"... I think my career choice comes from having experienced being a victim and now wanting to deal with and actually... I probably am a little more prevention focussed like I said before. So because I know what it is to be victim. That probably has influenced why I want to focus on a certain population and why I want to focus on..."

Jonathan:

"... I think that's one thing that I do have a concern about in social work. That there are people who... and I think all of us struggle with it but finding that balance of meeting our own needs while professionally working with clients."

Bendy:

"... I think a big thing as far as growing emotionally, is when I'm working with others, and I'm seeing them cope. It kind of teaches me ways that might be beneficial. Sometimes, too, it sounds kind of bad to say, but sometimes when you see people going through so much you can kind of look at yourself and think well you don't really have it that bad. You need to deal and move on. That's kind of how I feel as far as growing emotionally."

Kelly:

"... I want to think of myself as a liver. I mean as a person who is really living and not just getting through. And, there
have been times in my life when I was just getting through. I just feel like I really know what fear is about and hopelessness when you’re in situations. In my marriages... when I left I didn’t have anywhere to go. I didn’t know how that was... You know what I’m saying? So, I get that feeling with someone and I certainly have empathy for that and want to be someone that’s supportive."

"...I would think you would want to be involved in something that you were satisfied in. I think that probably one reason why I didn’t go to school when I got out of high school is that I really didn’t know what I wanted to do."

Jane:

"...Well, it (social work) gives me that avenue, that vehicle by which I can accomplish those helping services. It gives me an opportunity for a licensed service in such a broad area. I know there’s always missionaries and the church and those areas. Social work is more powerful, because you can change the policy.

SUMMARY

The final theme reported by the research participants in this study described in "My reasons to pursue an MSW degree" stands out as the crowning part of the study of "emotional reasons" and motivations for the choice of study leading to an MSW degree. The variety of experiences narrated by the subjects showed how personally involving and emotion-packed they were. The final theme appears to be a converging point for all emotional experiences.

"I am gonna be for others" explains that the subjects of this study very personally and deeply care for others. It speaks of compassion born out of
personal experiences of neglect, cruelty and injustice. Subjects express positive motivations in spite of negative experiences. They take the sides of kids and women. They narrate that their experience of helplessness fostered their own helpfulness and thus their decision to choose social work. What stands out as most significant is that their decision to study social work was based on "emotional reasons."

"I have something to offer" describes the thoughts, sentiments, and definite purpose in the articulate message of the research participants that they have something to offer to humanity and society. The participants feel that they need to reach out to society appropriately, an avenue that requires knowledge, values, and skills. They find social work compatible with these emotional motivations. This "giving" to others is perceived as the "joy of giving," as "gratitude," as "challenge," as "care of the weak," and as the "prevention of abuse, cruelty, neglect, and injustice."

"It gives me meaning" reports meaningful use of personal gifts and abilities for the service of humanity, committing the self to justice for the benefit of the segments of the community, efforts to maximize the life and opportunities of others, finding an opening for personal fulfillment through professional service, the intrinsically rewarding nature of social work, protecting and promoting marriage and family, and rediscovering meaning in life and in service.
"My goal is" is the section of the study that highlights emotional reasons and motivations, and the concrete plan leading to a choice of the MSW program. Some of the goals specified by the subjects are "to facilitate change in individuals, communities and social policies," "to open increased opportunities and possibilities for people to develop," "to achieve more happiness than more money," "to work to prevent psychosomatic illnesses caused by personal abuses," "to care for kids, youth and elderly," and "to prevent history from repeating itself in the way of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and matrimonial failures."
CHAPTER X

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to explore, discover, and describe the experiences that currently enrolled MSW students related to their emotional reasons and motivations for pursuing an MSW degree. As the subjects described their life stories and interpretations, five common themes emerged from the context. Each theme and category was named using the participants' own words, and concepts. The participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentiality. The interpretation of data themes began with the participants' words and was accomplished by peer de-briefing, member checking, and self-reflexivity.

The study strives to allow the voice of the participant students to speak for themselves about what they think and feel about the MSW program, to give voice to their emotional reasons and motivations are for pursuing the MSW
degree and to speak about those experiences in their lives that contributed to their emotional motivations for choosing an MSW program.

The commonalities that emerged from the participants' stories were grouped into five themes: "Private troubles," "Experience of abuse," "Experience of matrimonial failure," "Experience of therapy" and "My reasons to pursue an MSW degree." The summary of each theme is presented at the end of each chapter that incorporates the theme. The study is not comparative in any way, rather, there is natural and holistic integration of the psycho-social and cultural context and general world-view. The phenomenological approach to research is adapted to observe data but the study does not attempt a phenomenological analysis. It aims for an understanding of the individual stories.

This chapter will further discuss the themes that emerged in this study, in sections entitled Conclusions and Implications for Social Work Education and Practice, Reflections on Methodology and Research, Protection of the Participant, Implications for Research, and finally the Limitations of the Study.

DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

Five major themes emerged from this research namely: "Private troubles," "Experience of abuse," "Experience of matrimonial failure," "Experience of therapy" and "My reasons to pursue an MSW degree." A summary of each theme is briefly discussed at the end of each chapter.
Theme I: Private troubles

"Private troubles" is the most common and immediate response that emerged in the personal life story that the research subjects narrated. What is phenomenal is that the moment subjects heard the two concepts "emotional reasons" and "pursuing an MSW degree," their personal narrative began with emotional experiences in life, especially "troubles" of one kind or another. "Private troubles" represents emotional pain, physical pain, pain that lingers in memory even now, pain that triggered hatred and bitterness for some persons and events, and reactive and proactive reasons and motivations. All the participants of this research who narrated the "Private troubles" theme told the story of childhood events or events of the remote past. Therefore the roots of the participants' emotional reasons for studying social work go deep. According to Hensie and Campbell (1974) "emotion refers primarily to consciously perceived feelings and their objective manifestations." In that sense the principally emergent theme "Private troubles" evidences precise grasp and appropriate response to the qualitative inquiry.

The theme takes one immediately to the personal and emotional world of the participants. Their narratives present their experience of the unpleasant, shocking, and painful happenings in their lives in childhood and remote past (in all cases), and also to the more recent past and the present (in some cases). The thematically retrieved and presented data bits are presented in the words of
the research participants; they evidence the context, the "dramatis personae," and the magnitude of the emotional content of the painful incidents and their relation to the subjects’ emotional motivations for social work study. Such data bits give us a perspective of "Private troubles" in relation to the research participants in order to understand.

"It happened to me" refers to the reported experience of suffering and trauma. Such events were beyond the participants’ control. The bare exposure to such events leaves an emotional scar (if not also physical injury). The sudden heart attack and surgery of Matilda’s father and her having to take the burden of the care of her father and mother while she juggled challenging graduate studies; Jasmine’s experience of a fire accident, sexual abuse at age 11, and suffering child neglect herself; and Mimy’s tractor accident are good examples of "It happened to me." In later years these subjects demonstrate their empathy of and care for the suffering of other people.

"Times of crying" describes painful, unbearable, and frustrating moments of suffering. In their narratives, the participants make it clear how they have been emotionally harassed: by peers; when they were not accepted; by the fear of being molested again; by accumulating stresses at home and school; and by alcoholic and abusive parents. Though these were helpless and hapless moments in the subjects’ lives, later in life they show great strength, courage, and determination, especially in the aspects of caring for others, preventing
pain, and counseling others. First-hand experience of personal pain seems to be the reason why they seek the "helping profession," for it is clear that "The eyes that wept see clearly. . ."

"It had impact on me" reports that suffering affected significant physical, psychological, developmental and even career decision changes in the research subjects. The sufferings that the participants experienced increased their awareness of the experience of "social evils." They have been presented with challenges, opportunities, and the know-how to function better in society and handle problems effectively. The participants report to have "acquired" a sense of justice and fairness, empathy, courage and a decision to go into the social work profession.

In "It is a sink or swim time," the participants describe how their suffering at home, at school, at work, and in society helped them learn to endure and persevere. This gives evidence of the tenacity that is reactive to their emotional motivation for studying and becoming social workers.

Theme II: Experience of abuse

The research participants narrated "unforgettable" experiences of abuse. "Physical abuse" reports incidents of physical abuse experienced by many of the participants. The places where such abuse occurred were at home and school. The persons involved included parents, teachers, spouses and siblings. The
results of physical abuse reported by study participants were: chronic fear, insecurity, self-disdain, low self-esteem, and divorce/separation. The study also shows that the physically abused research subjects did not remain victims forever. In the process of life they avoided abusive situations and people, sought legal solutions where necessary and underwent therapy as needed. The whole experience is viewed by the participants to have offered them a package of effective coping skills, and have influenced their emotional reasons for entering the MSW program.

"Emotional abuse" is reported by subjects as having taken place with parents and spouses at home, at school and at their job. The subjects observe their experiences to be unfair; such experiences are viewed as an aspect of why the subjects went into social work. The subjects seem willing and able to handle such situations in practice, with prevention techniques, modeling coping skills, and providing empathy from their storage of valuable experience.

"Sexual abuse" describes a terrible feeling of unpleasantness, emotional scars and lasting trauma when the subjects report to have had the experience of being sexually abused as a small child. This section also presents facts of incestuous sexual abuse, and lack of support by family members to the victim.

"Sexual abuse" is one area in which the subjects' narratives were far less detailed and the researcher acted in a much less "questioning fashion." When sexual abuse was being described the subjects were often emotionally charged.
Thus, the experience of sexual abuse seems to have been a strong catalyst for working towards an MSW degree for some of the participants.

Theme III: Experience of matrimonial failure

Separation/divorce is a commonplace state of affairs in American society. Numerous research studies have pointed to the legal, economic, and social consequences of separation/divorce. In this qualitative inquiry, the theme "Experience of matrimonial failure" explores and describes the unique nature, emotional content, and the particular impact of divorce and separation on the personal life of the eleven MSW students under study. The subjects as co-investigators report in their own words their experiences, perceptions, and reflections about separation and divorce.

The theme of "Parents’ separation/divorce affected my life" reports the impact of parents’ marital failure on participants. The research subjects in this study describe the event’s effect as "Surprise," "Shock," "Mom got children," "Dad got visits," "We were miles apart -- hours apart -- at times poles apart," "We became poorer and helpless," "History repeated in my life, too," "It was an emotional abuse on us children," "I didn’t know where I belonged," and "I lost my sense of direction." Subjects also reported that "My parents’ separation/divorce had a tremendous impact on me, and on who I am today -- a social work student."
"My own separation/divorce: painful and difficult" describes some research subjects own experience of matrimonial failure as painful and difficult. The divorced subjects also report these experiences as painful and difficult, stressing that economic, family, and social life become extremely difficult after separation and divorce, and that their experiences added to their emotional reasons and motivations to become social workers.

"Traumatic time" describes the stinging effect, lasting pain, and spasmodic memories of separation and divorce. The subjects reported that they found it very difficult to handle. In some cases, they felt a need for counseling and/or therapy. One participant described it as "I leaped off of a cliff and... hanging on my own." Another described, "I remember I was getting chills... gosh is this my decision? ... I was single for eight years." A third one described, "It was very traumatic... I am struggling searching for direction and repairing my damaged self-esteem." With this emotional experience they find a meaning in helping others who are facing such problems and concerns.

**Theme IV: Experience of therapy**

Emotional motivations for studying social work seem to take the research participants to the realm of emotional problems in their life and the experience of reacting to those problems. Many subjects responded to such problems by "getting into therapy."
Some of the subjects in this study needed to get into therapy to handle pain, to heal stresses, to handle restore relationships, to find a direction and even to make a decision to choose a discipline of study. "The reason why I needed therapy" highlights those aspects of experience related to therapy. "My experience of therapy and therapist" describes the positive and negative experiences of having "been in therapy." Some subjects found therapy unhelpful because it was misdirected. Some described their therapy experience as insensitive to the "nature and needs." Both the positive and negative experiences of therapy are reported to have influenced the emotional motivations of the subjects to become social workers.

"This is what I learned from therapy" describes the actual therapist, therapy, and therapeutic situations, the follow-up treatment, and the effect of therapy. Some subjects report that their problems were resolved, others said they learned skills for social work practice. Still others reported their determination to improve clinical social work practice based on the negative experiences they had in therapy. However, the therapy situation was an opener and motivational springboard which is presented in the section "I want to be a better therapist."
Theme V: My reasons to pursue an MSW degree

"My reasons to pursue an MSW degree" is the culminating theme that emerged in this study. There is a history, there are events, there have been experiences, and in all those there are common threads, similar emotional reasons for becoming social workers. From childhood on, the MSW students who participated in this study have had chains of experiences. These experiences are interlinked with one another, influencing the emotional reasons and motivations of the participants for embarking on an MSW program. While the subjects in this study narrated their life story, they expressed in clear terms their emotional reasons to pursue an MSW degree. Their expressions have been organized under the theme entitled "My reasons to pursue an MSW degree" and described under the categories, "I am gonna be for others," "I have something to offer," "It gives me meaning," and "My goal is."

"I'm gonna be for others" brings out the decisive statements of the research participants that their experiences of suffering, of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, of marital problems, and of therapy have led them to commit themselves to the social work profession and to the clients of the social work profession.

"I have something to offer" describes the participants’ decision to choose social work as having historical and emotional reasons. Those reasons imply that "I have suffered. I know what it is. I do not want others to be a victim. I
must prevent such suffering. I will protect children, youth, elderly from this kind of evil. I have the know-how to handle it. Therefore, I have something to offer."

"It gives meaning" brings out the emotional satisfaction that the social work profession has in store for those who have suffered, been the victim of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, who had suffered matrimonial failure, undergone therapy, and now have decided to use their experiences to give to the world.

"My goal is" reports the emotional reasons built in the resolve of the subjects to influence social policy, to protect children, uphold justice, and to provide compassionate service.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

The rich data of this qualitative inquiry, the emergent themes and their relationships to one another yield a number of conclusions.

1. This study revealed that students have emotional reasons and motivations to pursue an MSW degree. Furthermore, the emotional experiences of our MSW students is a valuable part of their history and their personhood.
2. This study revealed a potential storehouse of data that is available in the taken-for-granted world of social work students' emotional experiences. Such data "awaits" the scrutiny and consideration of social work educators.

3. This study revealed that not all people who have had abusive, exploitative, and cruel experiences in the past remain passive victims of outside forces but can become self-reflective and pro-active agents of society.

4. This study revealed that home and social environment have played a key roles and made tremendous impacts on the research subjects.

5. This study revealed that people search for meaning in life and they can find such meaning in suffering.

6. This study revealed that the emotional experiences of the participants is similar to the spontaneous and ritualized "initiatory ordeals" of Shamanism and the participants' decisions to become social work practitioners correspond to that of the Shaman who integrates his sufferings and near-death experiences in his healings. As such, "initiatory illness" may also be a consistent part of the development of emotional motivations to enter the social work profession.
7. This study revealed that the subjects who report to have been victimized by many sufferings and yet choose to be social work practitioners demonstrate to the concept of "wounded healer."

This study is expected to contribute to the social work education and practice in several aspects. This study benefits educators and employers of social workers by helping them understand the "origins" of social work practitioners from their own historical perspectives. To schools of social work, this study presents a "scenario" for incoming students, their emotional expectations and hopes, their potentials for learning and becoming outstanding professionals. This study brings home a somewhat "different understanding" to educators about why and how social work students develop motivation to become practitioners and engage in the social work profession.

This study on students' emotional reasons for pursuing social work education might be an important source of information for educators who are interested in why students succeed or fail. It might help educators in their admissions decisions, and may offer educators insights in the development of curriculum for such students. For advisors of social work students, this study can be a valuable resource for orientation at the beginning, to monitor progress, and to guide for successful completion of studies and training.

This study can help social work educators to be better informed and to present educational material and the educational process in a more effective
way. To field educators, this study provides good information about emotional motivations of social work students to be utilized to help them develop greater skills and competence. To students, this study could be of great help to rediscover themselves, to place their own emotional motivations in "context" as they enter this difficult and noble profession.

The study subjects reported difficult experiences that led them to want to practice social work or helped to motivate them towards the social work field. The fact of the matter is these troubling experiences that lead to these emotions can be either positive or negative. For some students, "having trauma" has led them to have empathy for other people and to believe that the helping process works. It has led them to believe that they have special skills and special understanding of clients and their problems, which they can use constructively to serve other people. This is the "up" side or the "good" side. The bad side is that there is a great potential for students not to listen, because when they attempt to listen they hear their own stories that they project onto the client. The fact that so many of the subjects had traumatic or painful experiences in life that they worked through or worked on and led them to want to help other people has both a potential for "good" and a potential for "bad". As social work educators, it is very important to be cognizant of this potential in the aspiring students.
Since numerous students come to social work programs in one way or another based upon some emotional reasons resulting from trauma or pain, social work educators and professionals need to spend more time examining carefully their motivations for entering the program. It may be that they all need therapy, or it may be that they do not need therapy. They may need more intense supervision, or they may need confirmation that it is alright that they want to give to the world because they experienced pain in the world and experienced being helped in the world. It is not a bad thing.

The Freudian concept of counter transference, being bad, would suggest that traumatized students would lead to nothing good. Recent works on counter transference by psychoanalysts suggest that all people have pain and all people have trauma; the good counselor and good therapist learn to use their pain, monitor their pain, control their pain, and use their pain for both assessment and empathic understanding.

The fact that so many people who have been hurt have come into the MSW program and are hardly out of their pain experience requires that educators need to facilitate learning to use their pain constructively and not destructively. For instance, it is very difficult to do this in a class of thirty or forty students. It is very difficult to give them intense supervision. Another implication is that social work educators ought to bear in mind that social work education is primarily a "training for practice." Therefore, they need to individualize
training experience to meet specific needs. This may mean a requirement of smaller number of students in a class or larger resources. They may need more suitable study materials and services. All the students' personal statements would need to be closely reviewed, and routine screening of students might be required. Certainly, social work educators and professionals need to start paying attention to this issue and need to be doing more for these students.

There are some interesting paradigms in the literature which are used for theoretical triangulation of data themes in this study. One is called the "wounded healer" paradigm. This is a paradigm that originally came to the researcher out of experience in pastoral care. Henri Nouwen's (1972) work The Wounded Healer suggests that people who have had difficult situations, pain, and trauma in their lives are frequently the best helpers in the healing process. They also frequently turn out to be the worst helpers. The Wounded Healer paradigm suggests that persons who have experienced psychic wounding with trauma have developed special interests and skills in being helpful to other people through identification and empathy. And so, a person who has been physically wounded and who has good supervision and training can frequently use his/her woundedness to help him/her become a better practitioner. On the other hand, if the woundedness is not worked with and monitored, the person frequently becomes a less effective helper.
The second paradigm for theoretical triangulation is Eliade's (1954, 1958, 1966) "Shamanism" paradigm. Marcia Eliade (1954) is one of the persons who first used the term "initiatory illness." As reported in the studies on Shamanism throughout the world, what happens in classic Shamanism is that most Shamans come to the profession of Shamanism because they have had some sort of physical or psychic illness. When they experience healing and help from a Shaman, very often, but not always, they discover their illness and their problems, and they become what is called an "initiatory illness." And the illness is discovered to be in part "a call" for that person to become a Shaman, to become a healer. Eliade (1958, 1966) suggests that not all the people who had illness are "called" to become a Shaman. But a percentage of people who have psychic illness, woundedness, and physical illness that in the Shamanic tradition, some times this means the person is called to become a Shaman, and the initiatory illness is a signal for that person to go into Shamanic training. Eliade (1966) also suggests that this "initiatory illness" helps the Shaman (1) to become more empathic, (2) to believe in the Shamanic healing process, and (3) it serves as a symbol for that person and the community that he/she is called to the profession of healing and Shamanism. The study subjects in this research seem to demonstrate "I got hurt, I got help, and now I want to give to the world." Their pain, the same as in Shamanism, is almost "a call" to them to
find and learn ways of giving to the world. And, they enter the social work program.

The third paradigm is called the "Death imagery" paradigm. This paradigm has been described by Victor Frankl (1959, 1969) in his Nazi death camp experience and Robert Lipton (1976) in his study of survivors of the Hiroshima tragedy. Both Frankl and Lipton have discovered that when people have near death experiences, life sometimes becomes more precious to them. And they discover that life is serious and that one must honor one's own life by finding a way to give to the world in honor of those who are dead. In this research, the study subjects narrate that they have been cruelly abused, violently treated, got close to suicide, but that they came out of it all and value life. There seems to be a thread connecting the meaning behind it all. They feel they had horrible experiences. Now they should learn to do something constructively in their life because they did not die. For them social work is one way of doing it.

The fourth paradigm is Gabriel Marcel's (1964, 1973) concept of "Fidelity" and "Otherness". Marcel believes that some people who are traumatized end up basically self-centered and constricted; whereas other people who have been traumatized learn to manifest "otherness" -- compassion and concern for others, and "fidelity" -- the ability to stick with others, stay with others and really not give up on others, as they are experiencing pain. Marcel's writings were philosophical rather than psychotherapeutic. Marcel was a Red Cross worker
in World War I. His job was to tell families that their children had been killed in the war. He was facing the near death experience when he was carrying out his duties. This experience brought home to him the concept of "otherness" and "fidelity". In some sense he is close to Victor Frankl. In this research, the study subject reported themes of pain, trauma, and near death experiences. Those experiences could have led them to become self-centered and constricted. However, the themes they reported reveal their sense of "otherness" and "fidelity" which are their emotional reasons for pursuing an MSW degree.

As a researcher, I studied eleven currently enrolled MSW students. There is a good chance that they are representative or there is a chance that they are not representative at all. It might be that they just came to tell their own stories. This might be only one part. We need all other parts to make the "whole". I collected enormous data about the phenomenon of emotional reasons. The participants were self-selected. It is possible that these are the only eleven students in the MSW program with these experiences. It is doubtful. But I did this study with snowball sampling. Certainly, I did not and could not have done any other sampling. As such it is both the sampling strength and sampling weakness.
REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The conduct of a qualitative phenomenological inquiry with an in-depth interview with participants of professional status and representing homogeneous group memberships demands flexibility. A reflective journal was kept through the entire process which helped the researcher monitor his own biases during the interviews. The reflective journals helped to keep track of my judgments, concerns, and problems and to make necessary adaptations in the inquiry process. For instance, almost every interview required change of place, time duration, privacy and recording facility as per the subject’s requirements. In some interviews more passive listening was needed. In some other interviews, explanations, interpretations and summarizations were used. In still other cases, there was a need to respond appropriately to emotions such as tears and sobs.

Protection of the participant:

As a researcher, I was aware that the subjects volunteered to disclose some of their private experiences, sensitive areas of their life, and personally significant information. All efforts were made to protect their personal identity and safeguard the information they chose to divulge. The participants were protected against physical and psychological harm, as I had established an
emergency network of therapists that research subjects could use if research questions triggered any psychological problems.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

Emotional motivations and/or reasons for the choice of social work education and practice is now open for further research from where this study has arrived. More culturally diverse student populations could be studied. Every theme that has emerged in this study can be deeply researched from both inductive and deductive perspectives. The concepts of "initiatory illness" and "wounded healer" could be further explored in light of this study in the populations of social work students entering into practice. Similar research may be useful in the areas of gatekeeping, curriculum formation, field education, and advising in social work education.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study reflects some limitations of the human instrument engaging in the study in the areas of perception and understanding of the concepts. Differences between the researcher and the subjects of research might be a significant factor and/or limitation. In spite of the researcher being a social
worker and social work educator, the fact that he is from a different culture may have distorted some of the data and data themes.

The researcher attempted to overcome such limitations through purposeful sampling, snowball sampling, and other research triangulation methods. In this study, the subjects were volunteers and so can be viewed as "wanting" to tell their stories. The biases in study methodology have already been discussed in Chapter III.
APPENDIX A

FLYER
A STUDY OF THE EMOTIONAL REASONS

Hi!

Are you an MSW student?

Are you currently enrolled in the OSU College of Social Work?

You are the person I am looking for!

I would like to talk to you. I am a doctoral student in Social Work doing a study on the emotional reasons for students pursuing an MSW program. This is NOT a clinical study or therapy. It is simply a chance to express yourself, share your experience with a peer, and contribute to the knowledge of the emotional reasons for individuals to pursue professional Social Work studies, such as an MSW program.

A Face to Face interview of one to one and a half hours will be conducted. The interview will be audiotaped and notes will be taken. You will be asked to do a second interview and be given a chance to review all "data" (transcripts and notes) in order to provide feedback to the researcher. The tapes and the written words will be stored in a locked cabinet. Thanislas Swaminathan, the research investigator, is the only person with a key to this locked cabinet. This data will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the dissertation.

You will also be asked to sign a consent form prior to participation and fill out a brief biographical survey. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality will be assured throughout your participation. Likewise confidentiality will be assured in the final dissertation/report that is expected to be completed by March 1996. In taking part in this research project, you will be contributing to the knowledge about the making of a Social Worker.

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact "Stan" Swaminathan at 292-0399 (leave a message so that I may get back to you). You do not have to leave your full name and you do not have to provide any information until you agree to participate.

******************************************************************
APPENDIX B

INFORMATION/SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE INQUIRIES
INFORMATION/SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE INQUIRIES

This is a study about emotional reasons of MSW students for choosing the MSW program. I am doing this study for my dissertation. The principal investigator is Dr. James E. Lantz, Associate Professor of Social Work at the College of Social Work here at Ohio State University. I am a fourth year doctoral student at the College of Social Work. You are being asked to discuss your feelings and thoughts on how your early life experiences and your current daily experience influences your feelings about working on an MSW degree. You may discuss any topic related to your emotional reasons for getting an MSW. If the discussion becomes too personal or painful for you, you are not required to continue with that topic and you have the right to refuse to answer any question without justification. I am, however, interested in listening to anything that you wish to say about your experiences.

This face to face interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours. The interview will be audiotaped and notes will be taken. You will then be asked to do a second one to one and a half hour interview at your convenience and you will be given a chance to review all "data" (transcripts and notes) at a later date in order to provide feedback to the researcher. The tapes and written words will be stored in a locked cabinet. Thanislas Swaminathan, the research investigator, is the only person with a key to this locked cabinet. This data will be destroyed seven years after completion of the
dissertation. Again, participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality will be assured on my part throughout your participation. Likewise confidentiality will be assured in the final dissertation/report that is expected to be completed by March 1996.

You will be asked to fill out a brief biographical survey and consent forms. In taking part in this research project, you will be contributing to the knowledge about the making of a Social Worker. Please feel free to ask any questions at any time.

**************
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This study seeks to investigate the emotional reasons of individuals who are pursuing an MSW degree. Participants in the study will be interviewed about their early and current life experiences and personal stories that contribute to their emotional reasons for working on an MSW degree.

Information obtained in the interviews will be confidential. Confidentiality will also be assured in the final project report/dissertation. Measures will be taken to prevent information from being linked with a specific respondent by coding all items. The researcher will keep the codes separately from the interview transcripts and other information provided by the participants.

The undersigned participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer questions without justifying the action. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

The signature of the participant below signifies that he or she is in agreement with the above statement of conditions of participation for this study.

I hereby authorize Thanislas Swaminathan to utilize my interview for the use in his dissertation and possible use in journal articles, presentations instructional purposes, or a book based on the dissertation.

Date ___________________________ Signature of Participant ___________________________

Principal Investigator: __________________________________________________________
Dr. James E. Lantz
College of Social Work
The Ohio State University
(614) 292-9189

Research Seeking Consent: ______________________________________________________
Thanislas Swaminathan
80 South Sixth Street
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 464-4030
APPENDIX D

BIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY
BIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Please complete this brief biographical questionnaire. You are guaranteed complete anonymity. This information will only be used to describe general characteristics and backgrounds of those who participate in the study in the final dissertation/report. Thank you.

Name ________________________________

Age _________________________________

Phone _______________________________ (used only to contact participants for interviews by the researcher).

Marital Status _________________________

Financial status: Independent ___

Dependent (Parental Support) ___

If independent, what is your yearly income?

0 - 3500
3550 - 5000
5050 - 6500
6550 - 8000
8050 - 9500
9550 - 11000
Over 11050

Place of employment ___________________

1st yr MSW ___ 2nd yr MSW ___ Part time ___ ASAP ___

161
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Opening question:

What are your emotional reasons for pursuing an MSW degree?

2. Reserved questions (to provide structure for material not generated by opening question):

- For instance, can you please speak about whatever happened in your childhood which made an emotional impact on you?

- What are your experiences regarding physical abilities or disabilities?

- How was it for you growing up male/female?

- What are the positive/negative things that happened in your life that affected your feelings?

- How was/is your relationship with your parents, siblings, spouse, or significant other?

- How would you describe your relationships at work?

- How would you describe your relationships at school?

- What are your feelings about your studies now?
APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPT
PARTICIPANT REVIEW OF TRANSCRIPT

From: Thanislas Swaminathan (Researcher)

To: ........................................

Date: ........................................

Dear Research Participant,

Attached to this is a copy of the transcript of my interview with you. Please go through it and find out if you believe I have heard what you had to say. In other words, did I get it right?

Also tell me if you left out anything else that might be important for us to know.

I thank you for your cooperation.
LIST OF REFERENCES


167


173


