

**THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREER FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE MOVED INTO
SUPERVISORY AND MANAGEMENT ROLES IN A SOCIAL SERVICE
ORGANIZATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study looked at the lived career experience of seasoned supervisors and managers in social service organizations. Research indicates that career choices are generally imbedded in skills, abilities, interests and values. For those who work in the human service field, altruism frequently is among personal values that prompt such a career choice. While altruism, action that is motivated by a desire to benefit another even at a cost to oneself, may contribute to one's work, other motivations such as a desire for career success also drive one's behaviour in the work place. The emphasis in this study was on how supervisors and managers in social service organizations make meaning of their experience over time in their work environment, an environment experienced by many as stressful. Through qualitative, phenomenological interviews with 8 supervisors and managers in social service organizations, the researcher explored how participants describe their values, beliefs and motivation in their work, how they experience their work environment, how they make meaning of their experience and how their values, beliefs and motivation have been impacted by the environment in the immediate and over time. Findings suggest that people move through career in a holistic, manner and that values, beliefs and motivation are integrated both longitudinally and across their experience in the present. Career is experienced as imbedded in their broader life experience with the work environment providing opportunity to enact one's values

and beliefs. Motivation is sustained and balance in work is maintained through an ongoing process of weighing the positives in the work environment against the negatives. For those who experience the work environment as stressful, being part of a supportive organization that holds values and beliefs that are congruent with one's own can provide a buffer from the negative impact of the broader environment.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Mark, and my son, Jorge, this would not be complete without expressing my gratitude for your love and patience and at times tolerance with my pressing on towards the goal. May it return to you; “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” (Luke 6:38)

Gratefully yours,

AMS

Chapter 1: Introduction

The last several decades have seen a progressive shift in the meaning given to “career” from that of a sequence of occupations or job roles in one’s life to recognition of the integration of one’s work with other aspects of life such as family, social life, education and training (Brott, 2001; Carr, 1996). “The view that career issues can be treated separately from personal issues has become too simplistic (Brott, p. 305). Consistent with the belief that work is integrated with other roles in one’s life one would expect congruence in values, beliefs, and motivation across roles.

People who decide to enter the social service field as a career choice frequently do so because it is congruent with their values, particularly altruism (Hanson & McCullagh, 1995). For the purposes of this study, altruism is defined as action that is motivated by a desire to benefit another even at a cost to oneself (Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Wakefield, 1993). Coupled with this motivation of “other interest” is typically a desire to succeed in one’s career, thus self interest. However, when the work environment is stressful and the demands of the environment put pressure on people to compromise their values and lower their standards or expectations for themselves and others, how do people who are motivated by values such as altruism and a desire for career success make meaning of their experience? When the stress becomes chronic do values, beliefs and motivation change over time and if so how? What enables people to manage well in this context of work?

Having spent twelve years working in social services and nine and half of those years in supervisory and management positions, I experienced first hand the struggle to remain true to my values and to sustain motivation in an environment which I

experienced as characterized by frequent change and unpredictability. I became curious about how other people in middle management positions coped, made meaning of their experience and how their motivation, particularly of personal values such as altruism, and a desire for career success changed or remained stable over time.

For several decades theorists have argued as to whether altruism as a value can exist or and whether in actuality it is not, at its core, egoism (Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Wakefield, 1993). On the other hand a number of studies have looked at values identified as important to human service workers and altruism, in most cases, can be found among the top several values chosen (Hanson & McCullagh, 1995; Knezevic, 1999). While people may believe in altruism as important to human service, people also pursue success in their career. A number of studies have looked at what factors contribute to career success particularly in today's changing work environment (Arthur, Claman, & DePhillippi, 1995; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; DePhillippi & Arthur, 1994). Finally the literature speaks extensively to factors that contribute to making the social service context a stressful environment in which to work and to coping mechanisms people use to manage the stress.

Very little research has been conducted on specific values of human service workers and how these change over time. Though some studies have highlighted altruism as an important value for human service workers (Hanson & McCullagh, 1995; Knezevic, 1999; Wakefield, 1993), they have not looked at how altruism and other values are impacted by a stressful environment. Studies that have looked at career success have tended to focus on the corporate world rather than the human service world (Arthur, Claman, & DePhillippi, 1995; DePhillippi & Arthur, 1994; Inkson & Arthur, 2001;

Parker, 1994). Studies that have looked at the impact of the work environment on human service workers have tended to look broadly at how people are affected and how they cope rather than looking specifically at how their desire for career success is impacted (Erera, 1991; Erera-Weatherly, 1996; Heinonen, MacKay, Metteri & Pajula, 2001). No studies were found that looked at how people in social services make meaning of their experience over time particularly in terms of values, beliefs, and motivation.

Given that the work environment for human service workers is frequently characterized as stressful (Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Baines 2003; Erera, 1991; Erera-Weatherly 1996) it is important to know what enables people to work successfully in this environment. Understanding whether people maintain a commitment to their values, beliefs, and to career success over time and how these evolve will add to the ability of individuals and organizations to attend to the needs of employees, to make informed employment decisions, and to increase the likelihood of individual and collective success in human service endeavours.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to seek to understand the lived career experiences of supervisors and managers in human service work in the present and over time. According to McLeod (2001) "rather than accept a description or account of a phenomenon at face value, a phenomenologist would consider it from all angles and perspectives in order to be able to separate off those aspects of the phenomenon that were contingent on particular circumstances, and those which remained constant (the essence)" (p. 38). Thus, though this study looks at values, beliefs and motivation, to approach the study with definitive constructs in mind could potentially steer the interviewer away from understanding the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Beebe and

Masterson (2006) define a value as “an enduring conception of good and bad” (p. 211) and a belief as “what you hold to be true or false” or “the way you structure reality” (p. 211). Though these are commonly understood to be the meanings of values and beliefs, in this study I chose to leave it to participants to define and describe core values, beliefs, or motivating factors that influence their work so that the meaning of those values, beliefs, and motivating factors as perceived by the participants would be retained. In like manner, how career success was defined was dependent on the participant’s own perceptions of what career success meant personally to them as well as whether a desire for success was important to them. How the environment was experienced was explored from the perspective of the participant as it was entirely possible that for some participants the environment was not experienced as stressful but rather as stimulating or challenging or as relatively neutral.

Accepting the notion that career is holistic and integrated with other roles in one’s life, I sought to understand how people conceptualize their experience in social services without assuming their experience is integrated. The phenomenon of interest was people’s experience of career in social services. As stated, I avoided defining constructs for participants, however, I did ask specific questions about values, beliefs, motivation, and their experience of the environment to ground the dialogue in reality and to balance tangible language with pursuing understanding of their broader experience of career.

The method of inquiry was qualitative interviews with individuals who work as supervisors and managers in the social service sector and who have worked in this field for at least five years. As no research has been located that speaks specifically to the phenomenon of interest, a qualitative approach was merited. The intent therefore of this

study was to allow the values, beliefs, motivation and how supervisors and managers think about their experience to emerge through the data collection during qualitative interview rather than to specify the information sought beforehand (Creswell, 2003). Thus open-ended questions specific to the phenomenon were used to draw out participants' meanings and values within their context. Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to look at multiple meanings in the experience of supervisors and managers with the intent of developing themes from the data.

The central research question is; how do people who have moved into supervisory and management roles in a social service organization experience their career over time? Sub-questions which could be explored to further illuminate the phenomenon were:

What are the core values that were important to individuals when they chose to work in the social service sector?

In what ways have their values changed over time?

Have they found that other values have become more important?

What motivating factors in their work have contributed to their choice to remain in social services?

How do they describe the environment in which they work?

What environmental factors have most influenced how they have changed over the years?

How has the environment impacted their motivation?

How has their work changed as a result of changes in values or motivation?

What does success mean to them? Has this always been the case or has this changed over time? What led to those changes?

The paradigm of how knowledge is gained which formed the basis for the research methodology used in this study is constructivism. The set of assumptions underlying this approach include reliance on the complex and layered views of participants of the phenomenon to be studied. Participants have constructed subjective interpretations of their experience in their world. The meanings that take shape are often “negotiated socially and historically” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and form through processes of interactions with others (Creswell). The type of research involved in this qualitative study is phenomenology. The paradigm and methodology are covered in greater detail in the methodology section which follows the review of the literature.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The review of the literature will first look at work values for human service workers, particularly altruism, followed by a review of literature that looks at the nature of career success. The impact of working in a human service environment that is experienced as stressful will then be looked at with particular attention given to how the work context interplays with individual and collective responses and the meaning individuals make of their experience

Altruism as a Value for Human Service Workers

Career development theory from its beginnings has included abilities and interests as important variables in career exploration. More recently values have also become important in determining career choice and job satisfaction (Zytowski, 1994). Donald Super, beginning 50 years ago, greatly influenced career theory in his perspective of occupational choice as a gradual, developmental choice which he supported empirically through longitudinal studies. He described the concept of career adaptability as “the ability to cope with developmental and adaptation tasks, while recognizing that the capacity to do so is not curvilinear and that it may have many peaks and valleys” (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordan & Myers, 1988, as cited in Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown & Niles, 2001, p. 75).

Super developed a number of instruments for measuring career maturity and other career traits and constructs such as work values (Hood & Johnson, 2002; Sverko, 2001). The Work Values Inventory which he developed in 1970, for example, was designed to be used by vocational researchers and counsellors (Zytowski, 1994). In 1979, Super’s Work Importance Study (WIS) explored people’s life roles and values they seek in their

careers and life in general across cultures (Niles & Goodnough, 1996; Sverko, 2001). The study involved 10 countries and used two inventories, the Values Scale (VS) and Salience Inventory (SI), both international, psychometrically sound multi-scale inventories (Hood & Johnson), with samples from secondary school, higher education and an adult sample. The importance of any role was viewed to depend on whether the individual perceived there to be opportunities to attain their salient values through that role (Sverko). The hierarchies of values were similar across the countries with the fulfillment of one's potential or self actualization standing out as a significant life goal for most subjects. The VS reported on 21 scales, one of which was altruism (Hood & Johnson).

In the years following Super's work, values were more commonly incorporated into career counselling applications with the number of values included ranging between 10 and 20 and often being grouped into themes such as intrinsic or extrinsic values (Zytowski, 1994). In spite of the incorporation of values into career theory, the development of instruments to measure them, and their inclusion in several career exploration programs, Zytowski (1994) claims that little empirical research has been done to determine "the function of work values in behaviours of interest, such as occupational and educational preferences, career maturity, self-efficacy, and the like" (p. 30). Zytowski also states that there is considerable lack of agreement as to how to assess the work values of an individual. However, having established values as playing a significant role in career choice and satisfaction, for the purposes of this study, the value of interest is that of altruism, and the role it plays in career for people in human services.

The values of social work students specifically have been looked at in the Eastern European country of Croatia by Mladen Knezevic (1999) as part of the previously mentioned Work Importance Study led by Donald Super. Among the 19 values which were postulated as associated with work, Knezevic found that altruism was ranked third among 19 values for social work students compared to 14th for students of other faculties. Among the countries included in the survey, demographic features did not significantly affect the hierarchy of values, nor did culture as the value of altruism was ranked eighth by European, North American and South African respondents, and 9th by Japanese respondents.

Using a survey distributed to first year social work students at a Midwestern university over a 10 year period, Hanson and McCullagh (1995) gathered information on what factors were important to them in their choice of social work. The results indicated that there were two major factors, service to others and job self interest that led to social work as a career choice. The authors concluded from their study that interest in helping others and personal concerns are not incompatible, that altruism was the most common motive, and that these two motivations did not change significantly over the ten year period.

Before looking at the context of social work practice and its impact on altruism and career success, theory and research relating to altruism as a value will be looked at in order to define it as used by this author and to embed it in empirical literature. In the studies reviewed thus far, the existence of altruism as a value in work is assumed. However, a debate has long existed over whether actions can truly be motivated by altruism, that is, acting with the goal of benefiting another, or whether all acts under

further scrutiny are motivated by self-interest or egoism (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Wakefield, 1993). According to Wakefield (1993), virtually all theories held by social scientists "explain apparently altruistic behaviour in non-altruistic terms" (p.409). However, he dismisses the either/or approach to resolving the debate by adopting a belief that behaviour can simultaneously be motivated by both altruism and self-interest. Wakefield does emphasize the importance of defining altruism by the motivation and not the act and states that in order for an act to be altruistic its ultimate motive must be to benefit someone else regardless of whether or not the cost to oneself is factored into the decision to act. Wakefield addresses what he states are the three essential conceptual-theoretical challenges to altruism.

The first challenge, "that acting altruistically yields pleasure, so the egoist motivation of obtaining pleasure explains apparent altruism" (p. 437), Wakefield refutes through pointing out that there can be more than one motivation for an action. Gaining pleasure from an act does not therefore make it the ultimate goal of the act. The second challenge is that the altruist acts out of empathy with the plight of those in need (Batson & Shaw, 1991), but empathy with someone in need is itself an uncomfortable and distressing experience, so the altruist acts out of the egoist motivation of reducing empathic distress. To this Wakefield responds that the distressing feelings arise *after* the altruistic impulse, that the awareness of the need of something to be relieved creates an altruistic desire which gives rise to the empathic feelings. The third challenge is that the altruist chooses to help because he/she wants and desires to help, and that acting on personal wants and desires is inherently egoistic. Wakefield refutes this by clarifying that

the desire to help involves first the desire for another's welfare and second, a desire to satisfy one's desire for the other's welfare and that only the second of the two is egoistic.

Researchers have also looked at whether one can have an "altruistic personality" or whether altruism appears to be a situational response. Psychologists though often not agreeing on a single definition of altruism do emphasize two factors of importance, intentions and the amount of benefit or cost to the actor (Krebs, 1991).

Piliavin and Charng (1990) reviewed literature which indicated a causal link between empathy and prosocial behaviour, and specifically an empathy-altruism prediction. Their conclusion was that when empathy is aroused altruism motivates one to act prosocially. Further, Piliavin and Charng found that research consistently supported affect as central to helping, that in particular a positive mood promotes helpfulness and that the effect of mood is "influenced by and influences cognitive processes" (p. 38).

As summarized, the validity of altruism as a value of other interest rather than self interest has been debated intensely. Though there is not agreement in the literature as to the exact nature of altruism, authors such as Wakefield (1993), Piliavin and Charng (1990) and Batson and Shaw (1991), have argued convincingly that altruism motivated by selflessness can be one motive for acting to benefit others. The importance of altruism for people who choose to work in the human service field has also been reviewed. We move now to look at the broader goal of career success and its place in the motivation of people who work in the human service sector.

Career Success as a Motivation for Human Service Workers

Building on the premise made by Wakefield and others that behaviour often has multiple motivations, career success, the desire to succeed in one's work life, is

commonly sought by people in all professions. As career theory began by looking at the skills, abilities, and interests of individuals and later on, values, researchers continued to study what brings people satisfaction in work as people negotiate their way through career. Michael Arthur and Robert DePhillippi (1994) speak to the shift in employee experience as the market has shifted. The traditional model of employment “emphasized stability, hierarchy and clearly defined job positions for promotion (sic) Alternative ideas emphasize continuous adaptation of the organization-and so of careers- to a rapidly changing environment” (p. 308). Part of this has been due to pervasive organizational change and restructuring which has led to a change in the notion of working for “the company,” that essentially the company owned the careers of its employees (Inkson & Arthur, 2001).

Arthur and DePhillippi (1994) looked at the shift in organizations towards a competency-based view of the firm, that is, the collective employee competencies and uninhibited interaction with partners, suppliers and customers, contribute to the firm’s success in the marketplace. They then extended this view of the “intelligent firm” to the individual employees proposing a model for competency-based, boundaryless careers. In their review of strategic inquiry into what makes firms successful they saw three core firm based competencies, knowing why, knowing how and knowing whom. The knowing why has to do with identity, values and interests of the firm. The knowing how addresses the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for success. The knowing whom focuses on intra-firm, inter-firm, professional and social networks that contribute to the firm’s success

In adapting the intelligent firm to the individual, the knowing-why competencies relate to one's career motivation, meaning making, and to the integration of work into one's identity. Knowing-how competencies reflect relevant skills and job-related knowledge and the search for jobs that will accommodate these. They also include both formal training and experiential learning. The knowing-whom competencies reflect "career relevant" networks which individuals develop and access both to further their own career as well as to contribute to inter-firm communication. Arthur, Claman and DePhillippi (1995) point out that the accumulated personal career competencies do not need to depend on any single firm. In addition, the three areas of competency interact with each other as complementary forms of career capital (Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Parker, 2002) and operate within a system that is more flexible and project oriented, often short term in nature, with reliance on specific competencies. The shift is one from loyalty-based to discrete exchange career principles (Arthur, Claman, & DePhillippi) with the company viewed as an opportunity system in which the individual may act (Inkson & Arthur).

The idea of Inkson and Arthur (2001), that both companies and individuals benefit from giving employees ownership of their careers and reducing the company's role to supporting "individual self-development and learning," while increasing individual employability will in turn lead to "employees adding greater value to their present company" (p. 50). They viewed the accumulation of career competencies as accumulating career capital and proposed that at root careers are personal property, that people are energized more by self-interest than company interests and that the principles

of knowing-why, knowing-how and knowing-whom are central to success as career capitalists.

In linking the literature on career development and the inclusion of values into career theory and counselling to the work of Arthur, DePhillippi and others, Polly Parker describes the shift in paradigm as one from objective to subjective career emphasis (Parker, 2002). The objective career measures success by externally defined work roles and attributions of status. The subjective career, however, requires people to take greater personal responsibility for career development. According to Parker “this necessitates unlocking and eliciting internally ascribed criteria for career success. It is through these subjective criteria that people enact their values, beliefs, and authenticity and integrate multiple roles into a holistic view of life” (p. 85). Parker goes on to propose the intelligent career as a model that integrates the individual agency of subjective career without losing “the constraining or enabling aspects of the social context” (p.85) of objective career.

As the nature of career as understood and enacted by society has shifted significantly, the human service field has not been isolated from the changes. Having reviewed the literature on the value of altruism in career choice and satisfaction and the literature on career success and theory about how this is achieved, we will now look at the context of this study which is the social service sector. The emphasis will be on the nature of the environment, contributors to stress and the impact on employees, with particular attention to those in middle management positions.

The Social Service Environment: Experienced as Stressful

Radical restructuring of social services is a process that has taken place not just in British Columbia and most other parts of Canada in recent years, but also in the U.S. and in parts of Western Europe. Typically the movement has been part of a response to shifts in economic and political conditions. In Canada, the 1990s was a period of recession and fiscal restraint (Baines, 2003; Heinonen, MacKay, Metteri, & Pajula, 2001). The Budget Implementation Act of 1995 cut \$6.389 billion from federal money transferred to provinces for health care, post-secondary education, social assistance, and social services (Day & Brodsky, 2000). Most provincial governments responded to the federal cuts by cutting or reducing funding to programs for the most socially and economically vulnerable, which led to a loss of work by those who provided those services. Alberta, in spite of running a surplus for a number of years, has continued to downsize its social services (Baines, 2003).

In England and Wales, the Children Act of 1989 was meant to radically restructure children's services in order to identify and meet the needs of families. In 1990, the National Health Service and Community Care Act and the expectations subsequently laid out by Audit/Social Service Inspectors left "departments struggling to meet externally imposed criteria focused on particular interpretations of the nature of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the public sector" (Huntington, 1999, p.241; Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna, 2004). As Heinonen, MacKay, Metteri and Pajula report (2001), Finland faced a recession similar to Canada's during the 1990's, which also resulted in significant changes in the human service sector.

Most research that has followed the responses of human service departments and organizations to forced change has focused on how organizations respond to change and management strategies for implementing change (Becker & Greer, 1995; Ezell, Casey, Pecora, Grossman, Friend, Vernon, & Godfrey, 2002; Lawler & Hearn, 1997; Riley & Guerrier, 1993; Zunz, 1998). One of the factors that influences the ability of an organization to manage change has to do with whether the change was unexpected and radical or whether the change was planned as a result of organizational assessment of weaknesses. Some studies looked at the impact of changes in social services on line workers. Studies that have focused on the experience of managers have primarily looked at response strategies rather than their personal experiences of the environment created by the change process and how it has affected and influenced their commitment, investment, and capacity to respond effectively to change strategies. At the practitioner level, one's job description may remain relatively stable though one may be constantly overshadowed by the threat of program closures or cutbacks. At the supervisory and management level the direct impact is intensified, as individuals try to balance providing constancy to the service providers and clients with absorbing and responding to changes and expectations that come from government and upper management (Erera, 1991; Erera-Weatherly, 1996; Huntington, 1999).

Organizational Change in the Human Service Sector

In an environment with stressed and stretched employees, organizations may find their current management models are no longer effective or at times even feasible. A common management strategy adopted in response to change has been to set clear objectives from a fiscally oriented approach; this typically results in a focus on

techniques and evaluative processes to measure effectiveness and efficiency (Heinonen et al., 2001; Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna, 2004; Zunz, 1998). This can create tension for workers feeling that sticking to inflexible eligibility criteria for services can conflict with professional judgement (Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna).

Much of the literature speaks to a shift in social service provision from a non-market, non-profit approach toward a market and privatization approach (Riley & Guerrier, 1993; Seifert & Jayaratne, 1991) or a quasi-marketization (Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna, 2004). The emphasis in service provision is *results*, the achievement of performance targets, clearly defined measures of efficiency and effectiveness that managers and supervisors are required to meet. For those segments of the social service system that remain public or non-profit, this leads to a necessary increase in management control, to redefinition of management roles, to changes in management style and to the implementation of strategies that are effective in such a context (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). While workers complain of standardization and deskilling as they experience increased workplace stress, the outcome is a loss of worker control and integrity (Baines, 2003), a picture that is quite distinct from the intelligent career envisioned by Arthur, DePhillipi and others (1994).

A primary shift for managers is from responsible autonomy in social work practice to direct control from outside the agency, which proscribes “good” social work practice while imposing tight budgets (Huntington, 1999). As stated by Martin, Phelps & Katbamna (2004),

the constant spectre of restricted budgets, combined with the transformation of social work into a managerial role of correctly carrying out bureaucratic

procedures, has given rise to organizational environments where the needs-led, client centred approach of professional social work as envisaged in the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act is at best subsidiary to the core objective of minimizing cost. (p. 484).

The response of many social service departments to change has been to create a piecemeal model for service delivery due to a lack of effective means for the integration and coordination of services (Adelman, 1996; Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna, 2004).

In Canada, the government's vision for restructuring includes the idea of a one-stop, seamless service provision, so that clients can have all of their resource needs met at one location. Baines (2003) speaks to the current rationalisation of services in which agencies are larger and more specialized and competition to provide service is essentially eliminated. Problems that arise include fragmentation of services between different workers, lack of alternatives in orientation and quality of service, and fractured knowledge base of workers as they increasingly become specialists, not generalists (Adelman, 1996, Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Heinonen et al. 2001).

Impact of Change on Line Workers

The impact of the changes in the social service system on social workers has been enormous. In a qualitative interview study with 14 social workers in Ontario who had experienced the impact of the cuts of recent years, Aronson and Sammon (2000) found that workers consistently spoke of the change in their work as having shifted away from good practice to an environment marked by rapid change and high staff turnover with less time and fewer resources with which to meet the needs of people who are in more complex and demanding situations. Other researchers have reported similar findings

(Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Baines, 2003; Heinonen et al., 2001; Huntington, 1998; Seifert & Jayaratne, 1991).

In a qualitative study of hospital social workers in Canada and Finland, Heinonen et al. (2001) used surveys and semi structured interviews of 15 social workers in each country to determine the impact of restructuring on their roles since 1990. Similar to the findings of Aronson and Sammon (2000), social workers described more job uncertainty, increased stress in the work place, higher case loads, less time with clients, more client crises requiring their attention, and a requirement of more time for advocating and networking on behalf of clients. On top of the added demands and resulting stress the media has been quick to draw negative attention to social work mistakes (Huntington, 1998; Riley & Guerrier, 1993).

Leiter (1991) looked at burnout, a term used to describe “an emotionally depleted state among people in helping professions” (p. 547), as a syndrome experienced by some human service workers in response to environments characterized by unrealistic expectations, bureaucratic constraint rather than professional autonomy, seemingly unnecessary extensive paperwork, clients experiencing major life problems who are rarely grateful for help received, workload issues and conflict with people in the workplace. Leiter reports that as workers experience a decrease in personal accomplishment, exhaustion increases. These findings were similar to those of McLean and Andrew (2000), who explored the relationship between job commitment, satisfaction and stress with a sample of 451 managers and 512 field social work employees. The authors found that commitment is lower “among employees who have lower satisfaction, lower control, and higher stress...regardless of which variable is taken as the ‘outcome,’

implying that commitment, satisfaction, stress and control are interdependent aspects of work experience, and should not be considered in isolation" (p.113).

Staff Perspectives of Management

The unique role in which managers are placed in implementing the expectations that result from shifts in government demands and funding often contributes to an "us and them" environment in the work place between social workers and their supervisors and managers. Huntington (1999) describes the experience in England in which departments have seen an increase in adversarial relations between management and staff and a decrease in the commitment of staff to the goals of the organization. In addition, the emotional resistance to change from social workers may be based on fear that as the organization changes, its original values will be lost and with them the desire of employees to participate in the change (Riley & Guerrier, 1993). With relations strained within work sites, a staff can lose the supportive environment and management/staff relations necessary to good decision making when dealing with complex client needs. In addition, when problems arise, a climate of blaming easily develops (Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Riley & Guerrier).

In an empirical study of the largest Departments of Human Resources in the State of Texas, Russell, Lankford, and Grinnell (1983) surveyed supervisees' attitudes toward their supervisors using the Management Evaluation Scale for Social Workers. In terms of management style, social workers viewed their managers as using a style of leadership that has a low focus on concern for people and a low focus on concern for production, a style which the authors state, supervisors turn to in a stressful environment characterized by resistance, frustration, or threat. In the years following these findings a significant

shift towards productivity with emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency has become central to service provision and with it a style of leadership, as described by other researchers, having a low focus on concern for people but a high focus on concern for production (Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Heinonen et al.2001; Huntington, 1999; Riley & Guerrier, 2001). Neither style is considered to be an effective style of leadership (Russell et al., 1983).

The Role of Supervisors and Managers During Reorganization and Restructuring.

With workers facing increases in demands and expectations, strained budgets and tense relationships within organizations, how have organizations proceeded with change and what roles have managers and supervisors adopted? Riley and Guerrier (1993) studied the response of one organization in the U.K. to restructuring in which the focus of change was not only in terms of budget autonomy but also a shift toward recruiting managers with a wider range of skills and experience and redesigning the current role of managers. Other studies present a similar approach to management in the public sector in emphasizing the central role of management development in maintaining the effectiveness of the organization (Lawler & Hearn, 1997; Russell, Lankford & Grinnell, 1983). A study by Ezell et al. (2002) focused on a Seattle-based private operating foundation. The authors researched the impact of a management redesign that aimed to develop decision-making closer to the point of service delivery through changes in the management structure and the way the work was processed.

Management Reactions to Change

Little research has been done on the experience of people in middle management positions whose task it has been to implement new approaches to service provision. Many managers have found the work to be increasingly piecemeal as efforts to provide care for less has led to a shift towards hiring part-time and casual staff to perform tasks that require less training. Supervisors in the study conducted by Aronson and Sammon (2000) found that families faced a greater number of professionals who provided “pieces” of the former service, and staff members ended up having a larger caseload but with only a fragmented client knowledge base, which impacted their confidence. Lawler and Hearn (1997) found that the lack of training among managers was reflected in reported experiences such as a lack of confidence to carry out the tasks required of them when they were new managers, a lack of training in management to be in the position, as well as a lack of preparation for the post.

Sharyn Zunz (1998), in a quantitative study using a sample of 180 human service managers looked at protective factors employed to mediate between the risks of burnout encountered on the job and the resilience they seek. Zunz drew five potential social-environmental, protective factors which she found to be commonly mentioned in the resiliency literature: social support, problem solving skills, sense of professional purpose or mission, receiving recognition for a talent or skill and sense of self efficacy. The results of the study indicated that some of the same protective factors which contribute to resiliency in other populations could to varying degrees work for human service managers facing job-related burnout as well.

Though the literature speaks more to the experiences of line workers than of managers, there is reference to the struggle of managers to meet expectations placed on them while not ignoring the individual needs of clients (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). Some supervisors spoke of efforts to resist the organization's attempts to routinize the work or efforts to provide workers with a more holistic picture of their clients while others appeared to support the fiscally driven mandates which gave direction to their work.

The literature addressing the three elements of this study, values, particularly altruism, career success and the work environment of social services have been reviewed. Studies have looked at the interaction of different variables for human service workers such as commitment, satisfaction, stress and control (McLean & Andrew, 2000), burnout (Leiter, 1991) or job satisfaction and burnout (Seifert & Jayaratne, 1991). As discussed in the introduction, though the literature has to some degree begun to address coping skills used by supervisors and managers in social services, no studies have looked at the impact of the environment over time on values such as altruism and one's motivation for career success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology: General

I was from the start of this study interested in the career experience of supervisors and managers in social services and particularly how values, beliefs, and motivation were impacted over time in the work environment. As the review of literature indicated, no studies were found that addressed this phenomenon either specific to social services or in other human service fields. The decision to do qualitative research was therefore based largely on the inaccessibility of my particular study to quantitative methods. To address the fit of qualitative research for this study I will look at the knowledge claims that underlie research, then briefly review the nature of both quantitative and qualitative research. Following this, I will look specifically at the role of phenomenology in qualitative research, cover the reasons for my decision to use phenomenology for this study and finally, I will discuss the decision made to conduct interviews as the method of data collection.

Knowledge Claims Underlying Research

Underlying any study are assumptions about how and what knowledge will be gained through the study. My theory of knowledge or epistemology in this case is very much dependent on the inquiry I am pursuing. Creswell (2003) suggests four alternative means by which people make knowledge claims. These are postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatic.

Postpositivism, also called the scientific method, claims that absolute truth can never be found. Postpositivist researchers, however, through quantitative research seek to “advance the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2003, p.8). All methods

whether observations of participants or measures completed by participants adhere to standards of validity and reliability.

Constructivists claim that knowledge is gained through reliance on the participants' perspectives of the situation being studied. Participants are believed to make subjective, individual, meanings of their experience. Meaning making is believed to be negotiated socially and historically through processes of interaction with others. Researchers also recognize the impact of their own background on how they understand the responses of participants and acknowledge this impact by "positioning themselves" within the research (Creswell, 2003).

Those who hold to advocacy/participatory knowledge claims weave inquiry with political agendas believing that "the research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (Creswell, 2003, p 10). They move beyond what they believe to be the inability of postpositivist and constructivist approaches to address issues of social justice and needs of marginalized peoples.

Pragmatists focus on the problem and use pluralistic approaches, both qualitative and quantitative, aimed at understanding the problem, finding solutions to it and applications of results. Researchers do not hold to any one body of truth, or system of philosophy and see the purpose of research as a means to the end of what they want to do with it.

In this study of the phenomenon of the experience of supervisors and managers in social services the methodology selected came out of my exploration into how best to understand the experience of the participants. My particular interest was in how values

and motivation are impacted by the environment over time and as the review of literature indicates previous studies of this phenomenon had not been conducted. As I am not building on the foundation of previous research it made sense to begin by exploring the subjective experiences of supervisors and managers with the intent of understanding their individual, subjective perspectives. My assumptions about how knowledge of this phenomenon will be gained fit within constructivism.

Strategy of Inquiry

Once it has been established how one will learn and what one will learn through the research a decision is made about what research approach will best facilitate the process. To illustrate the reasons for my choice to do qualitative research I will first briefly describe the three approaches most commonly used in the social sciences. These are quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Strategies described.

Quantitative research is used within a postpositivist perspective, that is, the intent is to expand understanding of the relationship between variables. It is also called the scientific method. Strategies of inquiry used in quantitative research include true experiments in which subjects are randomly assigned to treatment conditions, quasi-experiments in which assignment to treatment conditions is not random, and correlational studies. More recently experiments have become more complex with many variables and treatments (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative research in the social sciences frequently use surveys such as questionnaires or structured interviews to collect data for cross-sectional

and longitudinal studies. The intent is to generalize from the sample to the population (Creswell).

Qualitative research uses more flexible methods than quantitative research to extend meaning in areas of social life that cannot be easily understood through quantitative methods. According to John McLeod, “the primary aim of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of how the world is constructed” (McLeod, 2001, p.2). The world is viewed as a social, relational context which is constructed and experienced from an individual, multi layered perspective. Thus qualitative researchers seek to understand how the world is constructed and choose methods that will facilitate this process. Common methods include ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, narrative research and phenomenologies.

Ethnographies are studies carried out in the natural setting of a cultural group over an extended period of time with particular attention given to ritual and social practice. (Creswell, 2003, McLeod, 2001). In grounded theory, the researcher attempts to “derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). Case studies are in depth, detailed studies over an extended period of time of one or more individuals, a process, activity or event. In narrative research, the research collects the narrative stories of one or more individuals, shapes the stories into chronologies and then forms a collaborative narrative that combines the views of participants with those of the researcher. In phenomenology, the researcher strives to understand the lived experience of a small number of participants in relation to a particular phenomenon. Phenomenology will be discussed at length further on as it is the methodology to be used in this study.

Mixed methods research uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies to allow multiple approaches to data collection. This decreases the likelihood of bias in the methodology and allows for triangulation by comparing the different data sources used (Creswell, 2004). The three general strategies of mixed methods studies are sequential procedures in which the research begins with one method and then uses the other to expand understanding with the other method, concurrent procedures in which the data from quantitative and qualitative are collected at the same time, converged and analysed together, and finally transformative procedures in which the researcher begins with an over arching theory or lens that governs what research design and methods are used.

The choice to do qualitative research.

The decision to do qualitative research was largely a result of the review of the literature which gave me an overview of what research had already been done specific to the area in which I was interested. As the literature review indicates many studies have been done that look at the human service environment in general and the social service environment in particular. Most of these studies however looked at what contributed to creating the environment, how the organization responded to the environment and how it impacted on people's work experience. I did not find any studies that looked at what happens to people over time in terms of how they make meaning of their experience and whether this impacts on their values and motivation. In order to look at this I looked at studies about values of people who choose human service work especially focusing on social service workers. Most common among these was altruism. In the search for studies on motivation I found none that related to how social service workers define

success. I then looked at current theory about how individuals and organizations succeed in today's world. What really interests me about the topic of my research is for those workers who do find the environment stressful do their values and motivation remain stable over time? Do they change as the person matures? Does the environment impact values and motivation either by eroding them or causing them to become even more entrenched? How do people think about their values and motivation? As each participant's personality, experience and process of meaning making would be unique I considered how best to draw this out. In qualitative research, "rigour rather than numerical precision is maintained" (Sadala & Adorno, 2002). Consistent with qualitative research I was not looking for generalizations so much as the individual personal dimensions of lived experience of participants. Phenomenology seemed to provide the best fit as a strategy of inquiry.

Methodology: Phenomenology

Phenomenology Defined

The philosophical basis of phenomenological research will be discussed here followed by a discussion of the methods used to carry out phenomenological studies. "Methodology in research refers to the philosophical framework that must be assimilated so that the researcher is clear about the assumptions of the particular approach, whereas method refers to the research technique and the procedure for carrying out the research" (Caelli, 2001, p. 275). During the last several decades researchers in psychology have voiced concern with the philosophy and methodology of the positivist, natural science approach (Klein & Westcott, 1994). Phenomenological psychology, one perspective proposed as an alternative, came out of a recognition that truth is not always stable and

absolute and that individuals have a unique perspective. Husserl is considered to be the founder of the phenomenological method, a method which he and Ponty, another early thinker in phenomenology viewed as one means to gain knowledge of a phenomenon through the study of lived experience (Giorgi, 1997; Sadala & Adorno, 2002, Wertz, 2005). Using the phenomenological approach one seeks not so much to explain the phenomenon as to understand it (Sadala & Adorno). Husserl saw the tendency of positivists such as psychologists to use the methods of the natural sciences which for him could not adequately address the lived experience of people. "In its most comprehensive sense, it refers to the totality of lived experiences that belong to a single person" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 236). Husserl was concerned that scientific knowledge must be free of bias in description of its subject matter (Wertz) and used two procedures to achieve this, epoches and abstentions. These are discussed further under bracketing. Phenomenology acknowledges the role of consciousness in how one perceives. It focuses on how one perceives something more than the actual state of the thing itself. As Giorgi states (1997) "the analysis often requires that the 'phenomenal meaning' be related to the 'objective meaning' in order to attain greater clarity, but it is always the meaning of the object precisely *as given* that is the focus" (p. 236). In relation to this study, it is the meaning made of the experience of the participants in their environment that I am seeking rather than an objective understanding of the environment itself and how it impacts people in a scientific way. Though some have questioned the reliability of human ability to access their own consciousness about phenomena, the phenomena itself is viewed to be real and objective yet knowledge about the nature and structure of it can only be accessed through expression of subjective experience (Klein & Westcott, 1994).

Further in understanding phenomenology is the subject-object relationship which is a relationship of intentionality. As Giorgi points out consciousness is “intrinsically relational” thereby implying intentionality. This *intentionality of consciousness* is “the direction of consciousness towards understanding the world...the agent that attributes meaning to objects” (Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 283). The “relationship” of any individual with their environment is endlessly multifaceted because of all that is distinct about them and their experience that they bring to the relationship. In phenomenology the goal is to see the object through the eyes of the participant, from the perspective of their consciousness or intentionality. Consciousness is “open to that which is not consciousness itself, but also to itself” (Giorgi, p.236).

Phenomenology as a philosophy and practice finds its roots in Husserl in the latter part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century, however, as a research approach in psychology it has developed considerably in the last fifty years into four types of methods: empirical, hermeneutic, traditional and experimental (Klein & Westcott, 1994). All four methods have their philosophical basis in Husserlian thinking though differ considerably in methodology. The approach used in this study will be empirical. Klein and Westcott reviewed 29 psychological studies that had employed phenomenological methodology and categorized the studies into the four types of methods previously mentioned. According to Klein and Westcott, characteristics of the empirical method include:

the researcher’s use of the subject’s accounts to help define the experience under consideration, the importance of articulating or questioning the researcher’s initial

assumptions, and the question of the extent to which suspension of these is possible, the use of free imaginative variation, the need for mutual respect and cooperation between the researcher and the volunteer, the possible value of particular instructions, or contexts such as experimental settings, for eliciting descriptions, the extent to which the volunteer ought to be invited to interpret his or her own experience and the role of validation. (p. 138)

Primarily what makes the method I have chosen empirical is the use of interviews to explore and discover the shape of the phenomenon of people's experience over time of moving into supervisory and management positions in social service organizations. The focus is on the participant's expression about the phenomenon through the interview rather than on the experience or phenomenon itself (Klein & Westcott, 1994). Klein and Westcott note "that in empirical phenomenological psychology the participants themselves have not been trained to carry out the process of phenomenological reduction, free imaginative variation, and the analysis of the constitution of the experience" (p. 144). The researcher then takes on the primary role in interpretation of experience. A further difference between Husserlian phenomenological methodology and current approaches is the shift from the focus on the experience of the researcher to focus on the experience of participants (Klein & Westcott, 1994).

The phenomenological method according to Giorgi (2002) includes three steps, the phenomenological reduction, description, and the search for essences. Sadala and Adorno (2002) present the steps as offered by Martins (1992, in Portuguese), which are description, the phenomenological reduction, and the phenomenological interpretation. Phenomenological reduction is the step of moving back from assuming the nature or

essence of a thing so that one does not state that the object is as it presents itself to be but rather that the object presents itself as such and such an object (Giorgi, 2002; Sadala & Adorno, 2002). This is also called the epoche of the natural attitude. In the case of this particular study, I am interested not so much in an objective account of the impact of the participant's experience in social services so much as their account of what they were present to and how they understand the impact. The reduction also includes bracketing of one's own experience and knowledge of the phenomenon so that it can be viewed as it is presented without influence from one's own lens.

Description is the act of articulating "the objects of consciousness to which one is present, precisely as they are presented" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 238). What is important in phenomenological description is the faithfulness to the perspective and conscious experience of the participant free of the interpretation or explanation of the researcher, hence a pursuit of essences and actions of consciousness of the participants. The researcher uses what is called intentional analysis to analyze the intricacies of meanings within psychological life by reflecting on the psychological processes that constitute them (Wertz, 2005).

The search for essences is the search for the most fundamental meaning of the phenomenon, those identifying features that give the phenomenon its identity. This includes the biases and errors of each participant and is a search for the essences and actions of the consciousness of participants. According to Merleau Ponty, who further developed Husserl's thinking, because there is no absolute truth, there are no certainties. Therefore, "the question and the investigation remain open, always in transformation"

(Sadala & Adorno, 2002, p. 286). This is what Ponty termed as the *dialectic without synthesis*.

Phenomenology for this Study

Bracketing in research: theory.

For some researchers the terms phenomenological reduction, epoche and bracketing are interchangeable (Gearing, 2004). "Bracketing as in a mathematical equation, suspends certain components by placing them outside the brackets, which then facilitates a focusing in on the phenomenon within the brackets" (Gearing, p. 1430). In phenomenological research one brackets one's own experience, knowledge or theoretical concepts of the phenomenon so that it can be viewed as it is presented without influence from one's own lens. "One...brackets past knowledge about the phenomenon encountered, in order to be fully present to it as it is in the concrete situation in which one is encountering it" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 237; Klein & Westcott, 1994).

As stated earlier, Husserl identified two procedures or epoches as he called them, used to prevent bias in description. According to Wertz (2005), in describing Husserl's early work, "the first is the 'epoche of the natural sciences' (Husserl, 1939/1954, p.135 as cited by Wertz, 2005, p.168) and requires that the researcher abstain from incorporating ("brackets") natural scientific theories, explanations, hypotheses, and conceptualizations of the subject matter. This epoche involves setting aside prior scientific assumptions in order to gain access, in Husserl's famous phrase, 'to the things themselves.'" This process does not suggest that prior knowledge is false but only suspends it to allow a fresh perspective of what is to be investigated. In the first epoche, the researcher

discovers the natural world as it is experienced in everyday life without reflection.

Husserl recognized (Wertz, 2005) that people:

live straightforwardly toward the world, whose existence we assume. For the most part we do not notice the unconscious and experiential processes through which the world is objectively given, do not reflect on its meanings, and do not attend to the subjective performances that constitute the world's meanings (p.168).

In the second epoche, the epoche of the natural attitude (Wertz, 2005), the researcher suspends the assumptions that what presents itself in the world exists and attends rather to the world as it presents itself through the meanings, descriptions and subjective performances. As Wertz states "this reduces the investigative field to the psychological" (p. 168).

Gearing (2004), in describing the process of bracketing suggests three phases of bracketing: abstract formulation, research praxis, and reintegration. Abstract formulation includes an orientation standpoint which is made up of the researchers' epistemological position and their ontological perspective and theoretical framework which is the qualitative theory guiding the research in a specific study.

Research praxis according to Gearing (2004) consists of "five fundamental elements: foundational focus, internal (researcher) supposition, external (phenomenon) supposition, temporal structure, and parenthesis (boundary) composition" (p. 1433). The main foundational foci include "the process of setting aside, suspending, or holding in abeyance presuppositions surrounding a specific phenomenon..., the process of focusing in on the essences and structure of the phenomenon to describe the immediate

phenomenon or to understand the underlying universals of that phenomenon,” (Gearing, p. 1433) or a combination of aspects of both processes. Internal supposition refers to what personal suppositions of the researcher are bracketed out. External suppositions refers to what suppositions about the phenomenon are bracketed out. Temporal structure speaks to the need of the researcher to clarify when bracketing begins and ends within the specific study. Parenthesis is the researcher’s determination of how “rigid, specific, or porous the bracketing boundaries are to be in keeping out and/or suspending the suppositions” (p. 1434). Gearing further describes types of bracketing used in qualitative research. In order of historical development these are ideal (philosophic) bracketing, descriptive (eidetic) bracketing, existential bracketing, analytical bracketing, reflexive (cultural) bracketing, and pragmatic bracketing.

In reviewing the literature there appeared to be variation in discussions of who it is that brackets in phenomenological research. In the view of Caelli (2001), all those involved in the research process, both the researcher and the participants must bracket in order to discuss the phenomenon as it is experienced. Groenwald (2004), in a summary of a phenomenological research design which he conducted, also describes bracketing both on the part of the researcher as well as the participants and provides a rationale for this.

Validity.

In qualitative research, as in quantitative research, the quest is a pursuit of truth. Bracketing of one’s own knowledge and theory in conducting the interviews and in transcribing both contribute to a design that will stand up to scrutiny of validity in methodology (Groenewald, 2004). This is spoken to further under role of the researcher

in the methods section. Going back to the participants with any questions about the accuracy of the presentation of their perspective also adds to the validity of the resulting report of findings. This has also been built into the procedures of the study to ensure the meaning from the perspective of the participant is captured.

Method of Inquiry

All qualitative methods go through similar steps that include data collection, reading of the data, breaking the data into logical parts, organizing and expressing the data and synthesising or summarizing the data (Giorgi, 1997).

Interview

Within the phenomenological approach to qualitative research, the data collection includes description and interviews. The interviews use broad, open-ended questions to allow the participants to present their views thoroughly and from their perspective. According to Wertz (2005) “interviews are useful when the phenomenon of interest is complex in structure, extensive in scope, and/or subtle in features that participants are not likely to offer spontaneously in response to questions or instructions at the outset” (p. 171). The intention is to gain a detailed description of each participant’s experience and actions. For this study, interviews were conducted, as understanding of the phenomenon can best be gained through their own self report. The settings in which they work are described only to the degree that the description sheds further light on their experience over time. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

Method of Analysis

Much of the credit for the development of rigorous scientific methodology in phenomenological research goes to Amedeo Giorgi, who founded and edited the Journal

of Phenomenological Psychology in 1970 (Wertz, 2005). Because the phenomenological approach is holistic, all of the data are read through before analysis is begun. The researcher approaches this step from the perspective of a discipline, in this case psychological. The researcher's attitude is free of value judgments, leaving his own perspective behind and using the phenomenological psychological reduction to discern the meaning of the situation as it is given by the participant. Once the researcher has read through the data, it is then divided into parts based on meaning discrimination (Giorgi, 1997). This is done as the data is read again more slowly with each transition in meaning or spontaneous shift noted in the text (Giorgi; Wertz). It is important to note that the discipline of the researcher and knowledge of the phenomenon influence the discriminating of the meaning units within the data while at the same time the data is approached with an open mindedness that allows the data to speak for itself. Caelli (2001) comments regarding this stage, on the possibility that what is said by the participant and what is meant may not be the same thing and that care must be taken in trying to understand the participant's meaning to pursue accuracy of interpretation through analysis.

The meaning units once determined are then examined and described again to reflect on what it reveals about the phenomenon in question and to more explicitly reflect the language of psychology or whatever discipline from which the researcher is working (Giorgi, 1997). One begins to find commonalities in perspectives among participants which allow the researcher to begin to "identify common meanings, general constituents, themes, psychological processes, and organizational features" (Wertz, 2005, p. 173). The transformed meaning units or units of significance are then reviewed again to draw out

those units most relevant to the phenomenon, thus those units that answer the researcher's question, that reflect the holistic context (Groenewald, 2004; Sadala & Adorno, 2002). This is done using what Husserl called intuition of essences or the eidetic reduction, a procedure which "descriptively delineates the invariant characteristic(s) and clarifies the meaning and structure/organization of a subject matter" (Wertz, 2005). The method used to do this, Husserl termed "free imaginative variations" (Giorgi; Wertz, 2005).

Giorgi offers a description as follows:

As the name implies, the method means that one freely changes aspects or parts of a phenomenon or object, and one sees if the phenomenon remains identifiable with the part changed or not. Ultimately, the use of the method depends upon the ability of the researcher to awaken possibilities. Whatever is given factually becomes one example of a possible instance of the phenomenon, and by multiplying possibilities one becomes aware of those features that cannot be removed and thus what is essential for the object to be given to consciousness. (p. 239)

Eidetic insight enables one to see those features that are essential to any instance of the phenomenon (Klein & Westcott, 1994; Wertz, 2005). It must be noted here that the phenomenon in the end reflects the participants who were part of the study and therefore cannot exhaustively provide one with an objective understanding of the phenomenon itself but at best the phenomenon through the experience of those who participated. In addition, language is a vehicle through which the experience is described and is limited in its ability to completely reflect the experience (Klein & Westcott).

The researcher attempts to arrive at a single structure from the data though with multiple participants this is not always possible. The structure represents a synthesis of the reflections and insights, the essences of meaning and the relationships between them. It is the common meanings among the participants which when synthesized give shape to the psychological structure of the experience and enable us to understand the phenomenon (Sadala & Adorno, 2002; Wertz, 2005). Common language used by individuals to communicate their experience helps form a collective meaning of the individual subjective experiences.

The findings in phenomenological research are reported in a number of ways. In general, the presentation is longer than it would be in quantitative research. The methods used to collect, organize and analyze the data are reviewed. Reports may contain raw data such as verbatim excerpts taken from the interviews, first-person narratives that are drawn from the interview transcripts or samples of the procedures of analysis, in order to allow verification of the rigour and soundness of the methodology. Reports are written as abstracts, in bullet points or in extended essays (Wertz, 2005).

Summary of Methodology

In summary, the epistemological position of this study is subjectivism. This is based on a theoretical perspective of constructivism which given the lack of previous studies on this phenomenon would allow deeper exploration of the structure of the phenomenon. The methodology used is empirical phenomenology and the method of inquiry is interview.

Chapter 4: Method

Research Question: what is the experience of working in a social service organization over time for people who have moved into supervisory and management roles?

Bracketing in Practice

As noted in the introduction, I have personal experience as a supervisor and manager in the social service sector and have personal interest in how people in this field make meaning in their work when the environment is experienced as stressful. This immediately brings to mind that aspect of phenomenological research which requires that the researcher suspend or bracket their own experience, knowledge or theoretical concepts about the phenomenon in order to view the phenomenon as it is presented without influence from one's own lens. I completed the review of the literature before I conducted the interviews. Several areas that I reviewed influenced my understanding of aspects of the phenomenon beyond my own experience. One of these was the nature of work in social services in the western world and the impact of the work environment on employees. I found that the literature tended to confirm my own experience in several ways.

The first way in which the literature and my own experience influenced my thinking was in the area of values. The literature speaks to common values held by people who choose to work in the social service sector. The research that I found on values was predominantly quantitative research which led participants to focus only on those values presented by the researcher. This enabled the researcher to isolate values from other motivations and to draw out relationships between particular values and specific roles. Because the identification of values that were characteristic of people who

work in the human service sector were largely consistent with my own values I found it influenced my expectations of what I would find in the interviews. During the interviews I intentionally left the discussion about motivation and values open and non directive in order to avoid moving the conversation in any way toward the outcome I expected to see. I was also very aware during the interviews of my own reactions to their stated values and worked to respond as neutrally as possible to their statements.

The second way in which my experience was consistent with current research on social service employees was the common experience of the work environment as a stressful environment in part due to ongoing cutbacks and restructuring leading to greater demands on people often with less support. This rang true with my own experience in the social service sector. I became acutely aware that I could not allow the assumption that participants experience their work environment as stressful to enter the interview process. Nor could I assume if they did present it as stressful that their reasons would be consistent with those commonly provided in the literature or with my own experience.

The third consistency between my experience and the research had to do with the changing approach to service provision. The literature noted a shift in the last several decades away from the stable company with long term employees toward a market approach to business in which employees are more in control of their own careers and approach their work with more flexibility, choice and preparedness to negotiate with their employers to best meet their own needs as well as those of the employer. I considered this western societal change in terms of the impact on the human service sector and it brought greater personal understanding of the transitional stage the sector is in with regards to how to provide services in today's environment. Again I was aware during the

interviews as participants spoke to their own decision making about job roles and changes that I needed to listen without bias and capture their perspective of how and why they acted and how they processed their experience.

As stated previously, part of my interest in conducting a study of the experience of supervisors and managers in the social service sector had to do with my own curiosity about how they manage when they experience the environment as stressful. My curiosity arose out of my own experience of finding it difficult to deal with the stress of working in a chronically changing and unpredictable environment. I was aware of my own thought processes and strategies that had enabled me to continue to work in the environment. In the end however, I made the decision to leave the environment and to become self employed so that I was less bound to the constraints of the sector and had more control over my role in it. I was very interested in how people who did not choose to leave the environment would talk about how they experience it and then negotiate and navigate their way in it. In terms of bracketing this was the area in which I had to be the most careful to not allow my own thoughts, feelings and conclusions about working in this sector to influence the direction of the interview. This included being highly aware of my non verbal communication as well as wording of questions.

The Researcher's Role

The research was conducted in Greater Vancouver. Thus the possibility existed that people I know personally would express interest in participating in this study which could be an asset in terms of understanding their context or a problem in terms of my own personal bias based on my assumptions about them. To avoid bias in the data I chose not to select any participants whom I knew other than as a professional acquaintance. By

this I mean, I may have attended meetings with participants but did not have an on-going social relationship with them outside of work. I also chose not to interview employees from the organization with which I was formerly employed.

I see the experience I have, specifically within the social service system in B.C., as a strength in that I have clearer understanding of the social service system and of significant events of the last decade that have impacted the social service system. The steps discussed under data analysis in terms of triangulation also helped to ensure objectivity. My central role in this study was as a graduate student and not as a social service employee. This was made clear to each participant both in the initial contact letter and during the interview process.

The research was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board before I could proceed with the study. In order to gain entry to the settings and to secure permission to conduct interviews with potential participants, I sent a letter to the Executive Directors of social service organizations within Greater Vancouver to briefly review the study, and to ask for voluntary participation from supervisors and managers within their organizations (see Appendix A). The letter speaks to purposes for the research. I offered to meet with management teams of agencies to further explain the study if this was something that interested the Executive Directors. I also assured the Executive Directors that I was only interested in the subjective experience of individuals in terms of meaning making over time with regard to values and motivation in the context of social services.

The issue of confidentiality was addressed in the letter by explaining that the identity of any participant would not be evident in the data. I then explained how the

results would be reported and benefits to the organization and to the individuals for participation. I clarified that my role as a researcher was as a graduate student and that the research is my thesis and part of my degree. Information regarding how to contact me should anyone be interested was also included in the letter. The letter stated that I would follow it up with a phone call one to two weeks after the letter had been sent. Benefits to the organization which I noted might include a summary of my findings which may enlighten strategic planning of the organization, the opportunity for individual supervisors and managers to explore their own career choices, values and motivation and how these have changed over time, and the opportunity to compare their own experience to the general findings of the study. The letter also gave assurance that the summary of findings would not identify participants in any way.

Participants

The population of interest in this study is people in supervisory and management positions in social service organizations. Those included have worked in the social service system for at least five years with at least the last three years in a supervisory or management capacity. This ensured that their exploration of the environment could be linked to their work context in concrete ways and over time. As it turned out, all participants had worked in social services for a minimum of ten years.

I selected this level of worker due to the unique role they play of standing between the direct service providers and those in upper management who have the decision making power. An assumption is also made that people in supervisory or management positions have generally worked in the field longer than line workers and therefore have been exposed to changes in government and the ensuing changes in the

social service system. I attempted to draw participants from agencies that have at least fifty employees. The larger the agency the more central the role they play in decision making during restructuring of services. Because the larger agencies represent greater numbers of employees and greater variety in types of programs they offer they tend to have a stronger voice in government discussions about changes. If I was not able to find 8-10 participants from these organizations, than I would have looked at smaller agencies. Fortunately, seven of the eight participants were employed by large organizations with over fifty employees. One participant worked for an agency with between 40 and 50 employees.

My intention was to exclude from the study supervisors and managers who are employed directly by the government as their role tends to be more specialized and differs from that of supervisors and managers in contracted agencies. In addition, as most contracted agencies receive the majority of their funding from the Ministry for Children and Family Development, who then manage the contracts, government employees are in a position of power that is distinct from that of employees in contracted agencies. I was concerned that they may not understand the uniqueness of the role I was studying. One of the participants had worked for most of his career for the government and then had recently moved to working with an agency. The perspective of this participant added to understanding the phenomenon because of the ability to contrast their experience in an agency with that of working for the government.

In defining supervisor or manager, participants needed to have responsibility for overseeing at least one program. The types of programs supervised were not important as long as the programs provide some type of social service. I attempted to have a fairly

even split among supervisors and program directors/managers and between male and female participants. I was able to interview four supervisors and four managers. However, the number of women working for social services is greater than the number of men. In the end I interviewed six women and two men. Names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. In addition participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained when interviews were conducted with more than one individual in an organization.

The research was conducted at a site that was convenient for the participant. Possible locations for interviews included their work site or an office within the UBC Counselling Psychology department. All participants chose to be interviewed at their work sites. How many agencies were involved depended on the number of responses obtained from sending out the cover letter asking for participation in the research. An attempt was made to involve as many agencies as possible to facilitate broader perspective both in terms of agency culture and environment and individual experience. Fortunately, seven different organizations responded which allowed for diverse experiences and perspectives.

Risks and Benefits

One of the potential risks of participating in this research was that a participant who has experienced their work life in social services as distressing could find the interview to be stressful and taxing. In this case I had options for referral services for counselling available to them though none of the participants indicated any interest in obtaining support. Participants could also have been concerned that I would not be able to keep their identity confidential inspite of my commitment to do so. They could be

concerned about their frankness in the interview jeopardizing their work situation. I was prepared if this came up to offer to review the written report with them before submitting it to UBC.

One of the benefits to the agencies for allowing me to conduct this research with supervisors and managers may be increased self awareness of the impact of their environment on the management team. The results may also be used for strategic planning and team building. The individuals who participated in the research received a summary of the research findings and for those who requested it I met with them when the study was completed to discuss my observations and insights.

Procedures

Data Collection

The study included interviews of each participant of approximately one hour in length. All interviews were audio recorded. Though phenomenological research often includes description I only included it to a minimum extent as the phenomenon of interest is the experience of the participants over time and I felt description would not add a great deal to understanding this. My intention was to write field notes after each interviews to capture my own thoughts or observations during the interview. The interviews were scheduled so closely together that it was difficult to keep up with the field notes. The recorded interviews were transcribed. In keeping with the phenomenological approach, analysis did not begin until all of the interviews had been conducted, audio-taped, and transcribed. This was to facilitate a holistic perspective of the phenomenon.

Instrumentation

A form was given out after the interview which included the following demographic information:

Gender: Male _____ Female _____
Age: 25-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ 56+ _____

Years of experience in Social Services _____
Years of experience in a supervisory capacity _____
Years of experience in a management capacity _____
Years employed by this agency _____
Current position: _____
Years in current position: _____
Size of employing agency: 0-50 _____ 50-100 _____ 100-150 _____
 150-200 _____ 200+ _____

Research Questions

To determine questions used to guide the inquiry it is important to recall the phenomenon the study was intended to illuminate; how do people who have moved into supervisory and management roles in a social service organization experience their career over time?

An opening, orienting question or statement was used in each interview to provide consistency in terms of the direction the interview would take. The orienting statement used was: I would like to talk today about your experience of working in a social service organization from the time you started until today.

In order to explore the phenomenon, the interview involved exploring broadly what led the participant into social services and some of the values and beliefs that underlay their work. From here the interview became more focused to explore how they personally experienced the work environment and how the environment impacted personal values and motivation over time. Following is a list of some of the questions

that were asked in the interviews. Note that the line of questioning depended on what each participant brought forth and that these questions offered guidelines only. The questions could then be used to go deeper into areas of importance particularly relating to values and motivation over time.

Could you tell me a little about your work history?

What led to your decision to work in social services?

What are the core values that were important to you when you chose to work in the social service sector?

In what ways have your values changed over time?

Have you found that other values have become more important?

What motivating factors in your work have contributed to your choice to remain in social services?

How do you describe the environment in which you work?

What environmental factors have most influenced how you have changed over the years?

How has the environment impacted your motivation?

How has your work changed as a result of changes in values or motivation?

What led to your choice to move into a supervisory (or management) position?

What does success mean to you? Has this always been the case or has this changed over time? What led to those changes?

Has your choice to take on a position as a supervisor or manager affected motivations of personal values or career success in terms of how they play out in your life at work?

Analysis

The process of analysing the data was left to the end when all the interviews had been conducted in order to avoid influencing the data in each subsequent interview. The steps used in analysis follow those suggested by McLeod (2001) and Miles and Huberman (1994). Before I began the analysis, I developed a provisional, tentative start list of codes or meaning units which had a clear structure and rationale. The codes “are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, p. 56). The emphasis here was on what a statement might mean to the participant rather than to the researcher (McLeod). The codes were given clear operational definitions and were used to “chunk” information into categories of “meaning” with emphasis being placed on the research question I was seeking to answer and the conceptual framework of this study. The list of codes changed and developed as the analysis continued and my understanding of the phenomenon grew. I attempted to keep the list to one page that could be used as a quick reference. I considered using computer software to do the coding but in the end found it was easier to do it by hand as it was easier to manipulate the chunks and the codes that were clustered together.

After each interview, I intended to create a brief write-up that would incorporate my own observations, personal reflections and commentary of the interview while avoiding judgmental evaluation (Groenewald, 2004; McLeod, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The write-up would then be converted into a contact summary, a form which I would develop to summarize the main points of the interview. The contact summary would be no longer than two pages and would include pertinent information such as name

of the contact, researcher and the date and location of the contact. The intention was to do this within two days of each interview. What I found in actuality was that people quite readily volunteered to participate in the study and the interviews took place so close together that there was not time to do the write-ups as intended. I did make some notes from the interviews as I begin to see consistencies between interviews immediately. These notes were very preliminary thoughts about the data and were included in the code list. The audio tapes from the interviews were transcribed. I was not aware that the batteries in the recorder went dead near the end of interview #6 which meant that I lost the last few minutes of the interview. Dependent on the schedule of interviews, my intention was to begin transcribing during data collection and if possible between interviews. Again the close proximity of interviews to each other left little room in between to transcribe.

Initially, the responses to the open ended questions from the interviews were divided into domains for each participant (McLeod, 2001). I then constructed core ideas or brief summaries for all the material within each domain. At this stage, I then looked for consistencies in the core ideas within domains across interviews from which I could create categories. (Hill, Thompson & Nutt-Williams, 1997, p. 523 as cited by McLeod, p. 147). I was looking for three to five themes or “pattern codes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that would tie the data together and which might be interrelated. The result of my analysis was that I found five themes emerged from the data. I recognized that these larger groupings would take tentative shape and needed to be subjected to cross-checking and reconfiguration as necessary. This turned out to be very true. In writing up the analysis I found that though the themes remained the same, I often grouped several codes

together that shared common meaning. The pattern codes that emerged became a part of the code list and were reviewed for fit throughout the process of data analysis to determine whether the pattern continued to fit, whether the language used was accurate, and whether the categories fit in all cases etc. (McLeod).

In addition to write-ups, coding and pattern coding, memos were used to capture conceptual ideas, things that surprised or puzzled me, or seeds of thoughts that arose during coding. At times these seemed almost to be shadows of ideas which over time took tangible shape. These were used to make connections between ideas, to clarify concepts and to make distinctions between the idea and already existing codes. These memos were jotted down on small pieces of paper.

At this point I met with my advisor to have a “case analysis meeting”. Issues addressed at this meeting included the code list I had developed, the thematic form I was drawing from the data, speculations and explanations I was considering, and the steps I was taking for data analysis. In response to suggestions made at this meeting I transferred the code list onto index cards in order to easily be able to manipulate them to aid in ensuring the codes were placed where they belonged in the categories or themes that had emerged from the data. I also followed through on the suggestion that before proceeding with the write up of my analysis I review the code list, the themes, and the outline for the data analysis with at least two professionals who would have some understanding of the content of the study. Notes were taken at this meeting.

I selected three people to review the analysis thus far. One of the reviewers is a supervisor in the social service sector who works for an agency contracted by the government. The second reviewer is a professor in the Social Work and Family Studies

Department at the University of British Columbia. The third reviewer is employed by Trinity Western University in the Career Development Centre. There was almost complete agreement for each reviewer with the codes I had developed from the data. Two of the reviewers had questions pertaining to the logic of the order in which I had placed the themes in the outline I had developed from the emerging themes. Their advice made sense and I rearranged the outline in accordance with their recommendations. One of the reviewers also had questions about how I had distinguished between values, beliefs and motivation in very definitive ways in categorizing the codes. The discussion which ensued highlighted my own struggles in analyzing the data regarding this particular issue. I realized that I was having difficulty with my own beliefs about distinctions between these variables. As the research I had reviewed in the literature tended to be quantitative research in which variables were isolated I was continuing to perceive values, beliefs and motivation as distinct entities and was approaching the data with this in mind. As will be seen in the write up of my analysis the participants did not themselves tend to make these distinctions and so the lines between them are presented as quite blurred. I therefore, in keeping with the phenomenological approach present their perspective as they experience it.

I was interested in whether participants would see themselves as acting on personal values and motivation, whether they would see these as having changed over time and how this perception impacts their current role and possible future career plans. During analysis I was prepared to contact participants again by phone if there was any concern that their perspective had been misconstrued. I was also prepared to meet with them in person if this would allow more useful discussion. I did not find I had any

concerns about whether I understood the perspective of the participants that would merit a phone call and in the end did not contact any of them during data analysis.

In traditional phenomenological research the expectation is that the phenomenon is common to the experience of a group. Contrary to this, in analyzing the findings, I found that though broad themes expressed common experience of all participants there was also variation in how each participant described their experience within each theme. This led to some lack of specificity of the phenomenon which can in part be explained by the diversity of the sample.

Chapter 5: Study Findings

Having described the methodology and method of research, the participants of this study will now be introduced with brief relevant biographical data. Following this the themes that emerged from the interviews will be discussed and analysed. As noted earlier, in phenomenology the goal is to see the object through the eyes of the participant, from the perspective of their consciousness or intentionality. I am interested in how they make meaning of their experience in their environment. Thus, I have endeavoured to allow the perspectives of the participants to give voice to the themes as they are presented.

Participants

The eight participants who offered to be interviewed for this process have all worked in the social service sector for at least ten years and as many as thirty five years. Among this group four of them were managers and four of them were supervisors. Six of the eight participants were females and two of them were males. In terms of age one of the managers was in her early thirties, one manager and one supervisor were between the ages of 35 and 45, two supervisors and two managers were between the ages of 46 and 55. And one manager was 56 or older. I will begin by giving a brief biography focusing on the professional backgrounds of the participants.

Lori is between 36 and 45 and has worked in the social service field for 11 years. Nearly all of her experience is with one agency. She began working with people with special needs primarily in a residential setting. After three years in this position she became the supervisor of the program and continued in this position for another three

years. At this time the position was split so that she continued her supervisory responsibilities and worked half time in an administrative capacity. A year and a half later she applied for a full time management position and was promoted. She has held this position for three years and states that she continues to find it challenging and that there are new things to learn. She is currently completing her Masters. The agency for which she works has between 100 and 150 employees and provides a variety of social service programs to children and families.

Don is between 46 and 55 and was born and raised in Hong Kong. He completed his social work training in Hong Kong and worked for several years doing community development work and work with youth at risk. As a young man, Don immigrated to Canada and has continued in social service work since then. In Canada he began working in employment services and then worked as a social worker for the government in Child Protection and Family Services. He then moved to the agency he currently works for where he supervises family counselling and social work services. He has been in his current position for three years and finds the agency and position to be a good fit for him at this stage in his career.

Ellen is between the ages of 46 and 55. She completed a Bachelors degree in Psychology but then worked as legal secretary until she was in her thirties. She decided at that time to make a career shift and completed a counselling certificate in addictions during night school. The first position Ellen held as an addictions counsellor was in a residential treatment facility. After two years, she applied for and attained a position with a consulting company as coordinator of mobile addictions, non-residential intensive group programming. Ellen held this position for eight years. At that time she was

finding the job to be quite administratively focused and began feeling that her training was not really being used to the degree she might like. She took a position as the supervisor of an outpatient clinic for people with addictions in the agency where she is currently employed. Ellen has held this position for five years. The agency has just under 50 employees including volunteers.

John is between 46 and 55 years old. He began his career in social services when he was twenty as a child and youth care counsellor. John continued in this occupation for several years at which time he was hired on by the government as a child protection social worker. He held this position for four years and then moved into a position as a court worker still within social services. In the ensuing years John continued to be promoted into new positions first as a supervisor of a social work office, then to take on responsibility for all of the Ministry's foster homes, group homes, and contracted services for one of the regions in a large urban area. From this position he moved into a management position managing the Ministry's programs for one of the regions of BC. John spent the next eight to ten years in management in several parts of BC doing a variety of jobs for the government. Eventually he returned to Vancouver where he worked in several high level positions until a year and a half ago when he took early retirement through an offer of the government as a part of downsizing. After a brief period of time off John was asked to take the position he currently holds which is managing a large youth service program for a non profit organization. His perspective is distinct from that of others who were interviewed in that most of his career was spent in government social service roles rather than in the non profit sector. The agency where John works has between 150 and 200 employees.

Lauren is a supervisor for a drug and alcohol treatment program for youth. She has held the position for five years and during this time has also been acting manager for other programs. She is between 36 and 45 years old and has worked in the social service field for ten years. Lauren's experience began in another province where she worked in residential settings, drug and alcohol treatment and women's shelters. In BC, aside from her current position her experience has included working in group homes, addictions counselling at an out patient clinic with people of all ages, prevention work in the community, and one to one contracts through Mental Health. Lauren spoke extremely positively about the work she does. "I could go on and on about it too but I won't...cause I love it." The agency in which she works employs between 150 and 200 people.

Shelley is between the ages of 46 and 55. For many years she worked in sales for a retail company until she began to feel an increasing motivation to move into more meaningful work somehow involved with the community. She was just finishing her undergraduate degree at the time and began working with children with behavioural difficulties. From there she took a position as a Family Support worker doing in home work. During this time she completed a Masters degree in Counselling. Following this she became the supervisor of community living and youth workers under contract to the Ministry. After a couple of years in that position she moved into her current position as supervisor of child and family services for her agency. Shelley has held this position for five years. The agency for which she works has between 150 and 200 employees. Shelley finds the work challenging and speaks about ongoing learning that never stops.

Claire is in her early thirties and has worked in social services since she was nineteen. She began her career in a clinical hospital setting leading groups for adjudicated youth and working with families. She has also worked in school programs, women's shelters, outreach programs, and employment programs. She has worked for the agency where she currently works for the last 10 years beginning in the addictions field. She soon moved into a supervisory position also in the addictions field and remained in that position for five years. During the following several years she moved between supervisory and management positions, again in the area of addictions. This included overseeing a program for which she had written the proposal and facilitated the development of the program. She moved into a senior management position approximately one year ago. Claire is completing her MBA and is motivated to continue to find positions that challenge her and allow her to use her skills and abilities. The agency Claire works for has between 50 and 100 employees.

Elizabeth is age 56 or older and has worked in social services for 34 years. She works for a large organization that has more than 200 employees. She began her work in social services in the 1970's when she completed a practicum working with youth at risk while completing her undergrad degree. From there she worked with youth at risk through a grant and then was hired by the government as a child protection social worker. Elizabeth was asked to join an elite team of social workers who worked as consultants to the social work field. She stayed there until she was let go as part of government cut backs in the 1980's. After several years in private practice and consulting she became the program manager of a program providing services for women and children. The program was run using grant money and as it became apparent that it would be more viable within

a larger organization it was taken under the umbrella of the agency where Elizabeth currently works. When the grant money ended as the research was completed the government provided funding to continue to provide the services and so Elizabeth continued working as a child and family therapist. After many years in this capacity she became the supervisor of the program. She was asked several years later to take on supervision of a second team of therapists and in the last year had several other programs added to her responsibilities.

Common Themes

Overall in reflecting on the data, what surprised me was the common tendency of participants to describe the present in terms of its place in the ongoing journey of their lives, connecting past to present to future. I was also struck by how dynamic people's experience is, that it is fluid and constantly changing. I found that the data clustered into five themes that reflect how participants see their values, beliefs, and motivation changing or shifting over time as long term employees in a social service environment.

The five themes were:

I. Interaction between values, motivation, and beliefs

II. Relationship with the environment:

Taking from the environment

Giving to the environment

III. Navigating the environment

How the participants experience the environment: government and agency

Participant understanding of the environment

Participant negotiating of the environment

IV. Values, beliefs, and motivation change within a life-span development process

Connects present to growing up

Values remain stable over time but change in how they are acted out

Changes in over time in beliefs, understanding, behaviours and motivation

V. Relationship between ambition and life span development

Interaction Among Values, Beliefs, and Motivation

The first theme that emerged in the data collected was the relationship between values, motivation, and beliefs. In theory one would think that the distinction between values, beliefs and motivation would be clear. What I found emerged in the interviews were very grey lines among these three. Without giving participants a direct measure which would provide a list to choose from that distinguished values from beliefs and from motivation all participants spoke naturally of them in holistic ways, revealing how integrated they were in their own thinking. The other thing that emerged is that participants grounded their values, beliefs, and motivation in their experience. All had a continual tendency to tell stories, provide examples and express their feelings about things. Though the purpose of this study is to look at how values, beliefs and motivation change over time it is important to begin by indicating what values, beliefs, and motivations participants talked about. Rather than force distinctions on this theme that are artificial those values, beliefs and motivations that were commonly expressed will be discussed as they were described by participants making distinctions only where they made distinctions. The words of the participants will be used to illustrate the ways in which they spoke about their values and beliefs.

Respect.

Six of the eight participants spoke about the importance of respect. Participants spoke of respect both in terms of how they relate to clients and to expectations they have for how they want to be treated. There were also differences in whether they spoke about respect in theoretical terms, thus more of a value or belief or in operational terms, thus more of a behaviour. For all participants, there were high levels of congruence between

values, beliefs, and behaviours. For two participants respect was coupled with a belief in the intrinsic dignity of man.

Claire described in behavioural terms the role of respect in how she relates to the clients

just really basic sort of dignity and respect for the people that I was working with and an understanding that okay, you know, between the two of us, I'm sure we can figure something out cause you know, I've managed to get this far here so I've obviously got something. I'm not sure what that is but we can, you know, sort of figure that out. And I think it was just a belief that if um, yeah just around dignity and respect and take time.

Interesting for this participant was that she also noted later on the power of being respected in her own work life. "I think the respect and trust and autonomy that my employers give me to just do my work has been instrumental in, in driving me to keep wanting to do better and do more." Her own experience of being respected is integrated with her belief in the importance of respecting others.

Shelley talked about how she related to families in a respectful way without specifically using the word respect. "I've always been interested in that aspect of not trying, not undermining the families but trying to find out how you can be a resource to them and how you can share information with them in ways that worked for them versus undermining them." Shelley had observed the tendency of social service providers to be directive or "do for" clients rather than respect their own ability to act positively. She later speaks to beliefs that are very congruent with the value presented here.

John was another participant who also spoke about respect in terms of behaviour and broad beliefs about the rights of people to be treated well.

You know, it's not okay. It's not okay to pick on those people. And uh, you know we gotta just, we have to do stuff where, where people aren't picked on and where people are valued. And we value diversity and we um, and we welcome input from all perspectives even when it's stuff that we don't believe in.

This value related to beliefs he spoke of relating to social justice.

When asked what core values led her to work in social services, Ellen stated "um, respect for people. Um, acknowledgement that they have inherent strengths and can overcome them if they have the proper skills and support." Like other participants she without thinking spoke of respect in terms of the beliefs that were integrated with her values. "I think they can do it for themselves and I think that people just need uh, information so that they can make really good, informed choices. And that they'll make the best choice for themselves at the time that they're able to do."

This was very similar to Don who stated "so that for me that respect of people's right to choose and choose their own pace for themselves is a value that has shifted for me." Another participant also noted the importance of respect in conjunction with integrity and spoke of being respectful in her relationships with staff when confronting issues. "So I think that integrity and um respect. And I think if the other person feels that they've been respected."

Altruism, caring, or empathy.

A second value that was mentioned by five of the participants had to do with altruism, caring or empathy. This is also discussed in the second theme under the sub-

theme of what participants want to give to the environment in which they work.

Participants made connections between the desire to help and the specific needs they hoped to meet. Several spoke of it as a life long tendency. In the words of Lori "it's the giving, and the caring part of it, and I've always seemed to be like all my life, a caregiver in some respects." She later gave a specific example of how empathy is aroused in her by the clients and how closely this relates to her desire to help.

I have to check for quality control and that kind of stuff. So I go into some of the programs and um like an emergency receiving home that we have and I look through a client's file and I like, that hits home when I see, 'oh, my gosh. This kid, he's 14 and he's been in twenty eight foster home placements and his Dad killed his mother and his Dad's in jail.' (sic) I think that's the hardest part.

John related altruism to motivation for choosing to work in social services stating "Well, why do we, you know, we come to work because kids are abused or because women are abused, or because handicap needs, you know whatever your piece of the work is." For him the motivation to help was clearly related to beliefs about social justice. Another participant reflected saying "I think I always wanted to be a helper without knowing that. You know, um, you sort of do that with your friends and everything. You just follow, you become that, you are that person." Similarly, Elizabeth noted "And in working with other single Moms and with kids who had experienced abuse it just was something I really enjoyed doing." For Shelley, the desire to help others was there though she expressed it in more cognitive terms. "I've always been interested in community and families and trying to sort of figure out what, what helps individuals in general."

Social Justice and fairness.

The third sub theme that emerged related to values, motivation and beliefs had to do with social justice or fairness. Four of the participants commented on this as important to them. They tended to speak passionately about this value. Further to this, the four who held social justice as important were the four oldest participants that I interviewed. They related the value to early experiences in the 1960's and 70's. Don spoke of this both on a societal level and on the level of working with individuals. "We need to have a more you know, um balanced allocation of societal resources so that people's um, different sectors of the society can enjoy the prosperity of the society."

Similarly, John recalled this passion early in his life stating "I also was very political as a young man, extremely political and had a firm belief in the need for social change, and social justice and those kind of things and uh so that's the kind of stuff that led me into the work and also kept me in that kind of an area." He later voiced in more tangible words what this means in practice. "And how come these people have power and these people don't have power? And what do you do to change it? And whether those people are kids or Aborigines or Chinese immigrants or farm whatever, all those kinds of things." This value of social justice remained a theme throughout his career as he noted towards the end of the interview. "The issues of social justice that are coming forward, I couldn't have done it as an individual social worker. I couldn't have that power." In this case his value of social justice was very integrated with his beliefs. It was also a strong motivating factor for him in his work.

Shelley also noted this life long passion about social justice.

And so I think I've just always been passionate about social justice issues. I mean I was ten years old and you know, going to protests. (sic) I just always felt I had the heart for it. I did. I just always had a heart for those social justice things. (sic) I was like you know, always um, irritated by the fact that some people had a louder voice than others and often that louder voice wasn't that they were a better person or it was about the context of their lives and that often didn't get highlighted.

This participant also noted a shift occurring in her agency in which clients were viewed more as equals than as recipients of service. "I think we've moved from viewing clients as clients to clients as potential partners." She was very pleased with this shift as she felt that it was consistent with her beliefs about equality among people.

Elizabeth was another participant who also held social justice as a value similarly to other participants recalled this as a life long passion that has continued in the present. "And social justice and social influence and political influence. You know, I think there's some exciting things happening in the field." In practice Shelley noted the recognition of equality between the worker and the client that was also noted by the last participant mentioned. "Clients, like really, we're, we're more the same than we are different, you know, so it's that kind of common thread."

Honesty and integrity.

The fourth value that was spoken of by four of the participants was honesty and integrity. Lori spoke about honesty and integrity in regards to how she deals with staff when she needs to confront people and at times fire them. In speaking to this she talked

about the struggle between acting with integrity when she knows the result will be difficult for someone.

And even if, at the end that means that I have to let them go. Because there's still my job to do. And um, I think, I mean I've had to do that and that's hard too but if it's the right thing to do it's not as hard. It's always hard to tell somebody 'I have to let you go.' Um, but, I'm, I don't' feel regrets about if it's been the right thing to do. (sic) So I think that integrity and um, respect.

She then added "So, that's how I try to handle situations. Not playing dirty. Being honest and forthright. But, at the same time respectful." Lori also spoke later of how she had grown in this area and that in the past she had a tendency to avoid the directness. She noted her own frustration when she sees supervisors avoiding confrontation and honesty and spoke of how this leads to greater problems.

John spoke of integrity in terms of the discomfort of living with himself as he found himself having to represent the plans and positions of government when they were becoming increasingly less defensible for him. "At first you go well maybe, it's, that's just how it is. But after awhile your, your, belief in me as your colleague you know, that goes and you start to doubt." He described the progression in his disillusionment. "You know, you put yourself, for, me, you put yourself on the line so often after awhile, (sic) I'll just walk cause I'm no longer feeling at peace with myself. I don't feel, I feel my integrity is really going." Again, we see the integration of his values with his beliefs, his motivation and his experience.

For Lauren integrity was framed as congruence or behaving ethically.

So part of that was being able to walk my talk, that I felt strongly about some of these issues and that um (sic) and ethics, ethically, you know, when you hear some, some things that do happen it would make me cringe, you know. We need to be so ethical around this work, you know.

Elizabeth spoke about her commitment to being true to herself and modeling to clients the values and behaviours we are promoting as healthy. "So a lot of my own work has been to personally try and stay centred and grounded and, and real and um true to myself. Because that's exactly the work we're doing with other people. Right? It's living. It's walking the walk and talking the talk."

Beliefs that underlay the work.

In addition to values and motivations six of the participants stated beliefs they held that underlay the work that they did and how they did it. Four of those participants spoke of a belief that if people are provided with factors such as opportunity, support and skills they will make good choices. Don stated it as "if people are given the chance you know, and sufficient support you know, they are able to make choices that will be good for them and for others as well." Similarly, Ellen identified respect as a personal value and then described it as "acknowledgement that they have inherent strengths and can overcome them if they have the proper skills and support." She noted that people do the best they can with the skills that they have at any given time. "People will always do the best thing they can in the situation based on the resources they have at the time."

The third participant who stated this belief was Elizabeth, who related it to how parents parent their children.

I also believe that most parents want something better for their children than they had for themselves. They just don't know how to get there. So I always felt like that, my job was a bit of a guide. If I could get in touch with what happened to them and how they felt about it, empathy, and could strengthen the empathy and if they had the capacity for insight then that was sort of my formula for change.

This belief was related to belief in people's innate tendency toward growth, something mentioned by two of the participants. Elizabeth spoke of the innate tendency towards healing and the belief that this can be facilitated by others.

There's a natural, always a natural leaning towards healing, very Jungian, that concept, (sic) to get well and that if we can remove some of the obstacles and help facilitate that people do it on their own. Their, the relationship helps, but it's mostly the individual. If you just get out of the way and provide the right environment."

Ellen spoke of the tendency toward growth by relating it to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. She stated "I think human beings really do have a forward motivation to um well basically to, going back to Maslow's, to take care of the environment or take care of um, the basic needs that people have." She generalized about human nature as positive and self-actualizing. "I think I still have a belief in the positiveness of human nature and that people are trying to better themselves and just get their needs met and they don't always know how to do that."

Another belief expressed by three of the participants was the belief that people are more likely to respond positively when you build on their existing strengths and resilience. Shelley stated it this way "not undermining families but trying to find out how

you can be a resource to them and how you can share information with them in ways that worked for them versus undermining them.” She also applied similar values and beliefs in how she approached her relationships with other social service workers. She found she struggles between seeing them use power in ways that she is not comfortable with and yet believing that the best way to approach them is through compassion and a strength based approach.

That’s the other place is that it’s harder I think for me because they do have real power. They make decisions and then it’s hard for me to remember the compassion part and strength based part and all that kind of stuff, and context of their job. So, because if you can unpack the context of anybody’s job history then it’s easy to understand why they are where they are.

Claire also spoke of finding an addictions program for working with youth that would tap into their resiliency and strengths.

It showed the most resilience in young people and uh, and just overall survival skills and I thought if you can tap into that you can pretty much do anything. Much more than sort of, just finding a job, or having challenges in school. If you can sort of survive this aspect than you pretty much can survive anything.

She also applied this belief to a program with which she was involved at the beginning of her career working with middle aged men, “a belief in that they’re, we can find something amongst this mess that will, you know you’ll be able to hold onto and start figuring out a way to make that massive pile more manageable.”

The third participant who spoke about building on existing strengths was Elizabeth. She related it to working with people who have experienced traumatic events.

They may come and say 'I need to do this.' Before we go there I need to know what, what your skills are right now. How do you manage? How's your eating, your sleeping, your you know, what is your ability to handle your own affect? Can you self regulate? Can you handle the unexpected? What are your personal strengths? What are your social strengths? What's your connection to the community?

Two of the participants stated a belief that people don't change unless they choose to. Claire stated

I think change happens from them. Um, I think that uh, that we may be able to, as people that impact their lives or kind of come in and out of their lives, provide different opportunities or experiences. But um but I think change comes from the client (sic) and at times we're sort of just there to guide the process or witness the process or support it and encourage it. But, but I think the change comes from them.

Ellen who also spoke to this belief stated "I think you have to be a change agent in your own life and that's what I would impart to people now. It's like, nobody's going to do it for you. You have to do the work. You have to figure out what works for you and you have to decide what your goal is and, and take action towards it." She later contrasted this belief to her perception of the government's belief that change in people can be mandated. "It's partly that the system just doesn't understand that you can't mandate change in people."

Finally two people stated beliefs about the role of spirituality in human growth. Don stated

I have maybe come to terms with the limit of human intervention. There are things that we can see that no matter how best your policy would be, no matter how best you know, those people have been educated or, or, been empowered you know, or whatever, you know. Still there's a gap there to this so-called actualization okay and um and that intervention may have to come from above. (sic) Now I see it's not just providing uh, so called from a Christian perspective secular you know, uh social work or clinical counselling you know, but more try to integrate their spirituality, whether it's from a Christian perspective or people's other Christian, other spiritual beliefs.

Ellen was the other participant who spoke of a belief in spirituality as a natural aspect of human development stating "I think a lot of different theories recognize that now, that there is a spiritual call, like is this all there is? Is this what I'm supposed to be doing?" She spoke of this in relation to her own experience that after years of hard work she experienced a spiritual searching "It took me far and it's not all the be all and end all in life so then you start getting that spiritual knocking on the door and I think that's where some people ignore it." She later called this a crisis of faith.

Give and Take Relationship with the Environment

As presented in the first theme, the values and beliefs held by participants were very integrated and often indivisible. They gave direction and life to the work of the participants. A second theme that became evident with all participants was the context in which they lived out their values and beliefs and how it related to their motivation. Though initially I had included motivation with values and beliefs it became evident that motivation was more flexible than values and beliefs and was very dependent on the

environment in which they worked. Further to this, it also became evident that participants experienced the environment as dynamic and that their motivation was very dependent on the give and take relationship with the environment. All of the participants spoke in specific terms about what they expected the environment to provide for them and what they wanted to give back to the environment. I chose the word relationship because of the sense that the perspective was not static but fluid and evaluated in an ongoing way whether consciously or unconsciously. None of the participants appeared to approach this in a passive way.

What people want the environment to give to them.

There were a number of sub-themes that emerged within this larger theme of having particular expectations of the environment.

Fulfillment.

One of these sub-themes was the sense of fulfillment in one's work. Participants did not describe fulfillment as an expectation though six of the participants clearly distinguished peak experiences when they found the environment to be particularly fulfilling. For example, John described his experience in his new position "They took advantage of me in a weak moment and it's fabulous to be here." Lauren said of her work "I love what I do." Later in the interview she said "you don't have to feel happy, you know, but feeling satisfied." And again Shelley stated "I loved that job. So I did that job for a long time and they practically had to move me out of there because..." Claire commented "It's been an interesting ride to say the least but I thoroughly enjoy where I'm at now." Lauren talked excitedly about the program that she supervised saying "I could go on and on about it too but I won't, cause I love it. It's a great program." Claire described it this

way "I'm lucky cause I get to be here and see clients change over a six month period from being incredibly resistant to being here and to actually being you know, quite comfortable." Finally, Elizabeth stated "but people do change, you know, people do feel they've gotten something out of it. And I guess that's, that continues to be the motivation." She also described the pleasure she attains from her work environment in the following words; "it feels like a gift to be happy about going to work....it is a gift to be able to do something that you actually really enjoy doing. Yeah, it feels like a blessing."

A desire to work with people.

A common theme for what participants expected from the environment was the opportunity to work with people, both as colleagues and as clients. In regard to work with clients, five of the participants couched the desire to work with people in terms of the impact they could have, that they also wanted to make a difference in the lives of people. In addition, the desire to work with people also influenced decisions about positions participants accepted particularly promotions and whether they were satisfied in those positions. This latter aspect is discussed later under the relationship between ambition and life-span development.

Elizabeth in reflecting on what led her into social services commented "I think I just have always liked people and working with people. And um, and kids. I've always liked children....I like being around kids." Shelley related the desire to work with people with her desire to make a difference in her community. "And then found out still can be working with people and I guess making a difference, impacting my community and yeah, I think, contributing." This was similar to John who reflected on what led him into

his career in social services saying “there was this thing that was in my head which was I want to be a personnel officer. I want to be involved in that kind...I was interested in working with people.” He reminisced about his first job working at a camp for disenfranchised youth saying “and when I got my first job working with kids in the summer camp it was just...it was magic for me....you could see the ability to have an impact on people.”

For other participants the desire to work with people was related to pleasure attained through knowing and understanding people at a deep level and linked to wanting to help people. As Lauren stated “When I was teaching and I went ‘I love interact...I want to work with people.’ I knew I wasn’t going to be behind a desk. I just always knew that. But I wanted to do more of um, just getting into the person, not just the academic part and that’s when I made the shift into social services.” She expanded on her desire adding later, “I always wanted to be an advocate.” Shelley along a similar vein stated “I figured out that what I wanted to do was to be in some kind of um, service where I was involved with the community...I’ve always been interested in community and families and trying to sort of figure out what, what helps individuals in general, like all of us.”

A need to be challenged.

Though most of the participants described times in their career that they experienced as fulfilling they also described other elements that they expected to be there as contributing factors to fulfillment. One of these elements expressed by seven participants was a need to be challenged by the environment. This could be seen both in

the fact that virtually all of the participants had held multiple positions over the years though there were variations in the motivations for choosing to climb the ladder.

John, who had held many positions over the years, spoke of what he wanted from the environment almost like it was a source of adventure. He described one position that he had held as “exciting, challenging, demanding.” The desire to be challenged for Claire, who had also quickly risen through the ranks of her organization to a management position, could be heard in her reflecting back to the beginning of her career recalling her struggle in making a career choice. “I was scared that would be um...stagnant.” In describing her movement from position to position she commented several times on her need to move on if the challenges waned.

I hadn't been in management before and I ended up quite liking it...so I'll stick with this for a few years. And again, after about three years of managing, again I started to think, okay, everything I can, I've learned this job, and you know, know everything there is to know about this particular job. It's time to find something else.

In reference to her current position she states “I don't know how long I'll stay right now. There's always something else to learn. I've been in the position for three years.”

This motivation to be challenged linked to learning new things was similar to the experience of Ellen who stated, “I like learning new things, and new challenges” and again in reference to her experience of working in the environment said “challenging...for one thing, and exciting. Challenging and exciting. Because it's a learning opportunity and it's also a challenge.” Claire who also linked the need to be

challenged with the desire to learn new things commented “I did them for my own interest and I mean I can’t just sit and do this. Like I needed to be doing something else as well and constantly growing and learning and being challenged.”

Another aspect of the need to be challenged was an intention to move on if the environment ceased to provide challenge. Claire stated “I think just anything that has to do with like growth or building programs or those kinds of things would be of interest to me. If that stops, I would move on. Cause I would just get bored.” John made it clear that room to make decisions and work creatively were a necessary part of the job. When the environment became too confining the choice was made to move to a different environment. “So, it just, they just, they just squeeze down your creativity and you spend so much time trying to fight your way around them and ...that takes a lot of time and energy and sometimes you know after awhile it’s like, I just can’t do it.”

For several participants the challenge included being able to succeed in spite of the environment. As one of the participants stated “They didn’t even think this would work. They didn’t think Day Treatment would fly and we did it. And maybe it’s the challenge too, for me, maybe it’s the personal challenge.” This was very similar to Claire who also took on a challenge of starting a program in spite of discouragement from colleagues. “my...colleagues or my supervisors were just saying at the time ‘No, we just can’t possibly pull that off.’ You know, versus me saying, ‘No, we can do this. We can definitely go for this. And we should go for it and I’ll do the work and figure it out.’”

Opportunity for personal growth.

A second expectation that four of the participants held in regards to what the environment should give them was the opportunity for personal growth. John expressed

exuberance about his current position saying “it gives you all kinds of opportunities to, to reinvent yourself in the sense of your skills and uh, be aware of your weaknesses. And then if you’re weak at this, then how do I get better at that?” Ellen used similar language to describe the drive to grow, stating “just because of my analytical thinking and you know, trying to, trying to always better myself. I always wanted to know better ways to improve myself and how to be a better person so...” Elizabeth expressed it by linking it to her personal life, “being a single parent, I think I was looking for answers and I wanted to be in a field that would give me knowledge you know. So it was great.” Later in the interview she commented on her ongoing commitment to working on being true to herself. “So a lot of my own work has been to personally try and stay centred and grounded and real, and real and um, true to myself.” Similar to this Ellen related it to examining her beliefs “there’s something about you have to examine your beliefs, and get down to the core beliefs and whether they’re serving you or not and whether they’re what you want to keep or not.”

Opportunity for creativity and flexibility.

Another common theme spoken of by four of the participants of what they wanted to get from their environment was the opportunity to be creative and flexible in their work. John expressed his appreciation for the freedom he had in his work to adapt the program he managed to what most fit the needs of the clients. “Go!! Do it! Yeah. Yeah. Figure it out. What makes sense?...What makes sense from a client’s perspective, be that an individual client or the community?....That’s the nice thing about it.” Lauren described it in similar language. “I got to do all the things I wanted to do. I got to create everything I wanted to create....So I got to do all the things I wanted to do and hook the

kids in and, basically I got to be as creative as I wanted and again I got to incorporate...I get to do everything I want with the graduates now...I get to create everything.” In reference to the direction given by her supervisors she described their approach by saying “I’ve been really lucky where, where I work they’ve been like, ‘Do what you need to do. You have this much money, but do what you need to do.’ So I haven’t had a lot of confinement around.” For this participant creativity and flexibility was important enough that she made it clear she would leave if it was not a part of her work environment. “I get to be creative. If I’m not able to be creative and do things, different things with the clients I’d go somewhere else and do something else. So being able to always you know, make changes and be creative.”

Claire echoed the same sentiment that she specifically wanted the freedom to be creative and flexible in her work. She described the approach of her agency as “risk taking” and stated that she selected her agency for this reason. She repeated language she had heard her boss use with her saying “If you have an idea, run with it. If you have something that you want to do and you know, it’s ethical and safe and it fits within our mandate and you want to put in the extra work to apply for it or find the funding or...Go for it.” Elizabeth also expressed the importance to her of creativity, something she saw as a more universal need. “I think for me as long as I can be creative.” She also saw abuse as relating directly to the inability to be creative. “What abuse does is abuse stunts creativity and spontaneity....I think as long as you can still use that part of yourself, that’s what keeps us alive and energetic.”

Other aspects of what participants expected to get from the environment are discussed under the third theme of navigating the environment.

What people want to give to the environment.

Aside from expectations of what participants wanted from the environment they were also very specific in terms of what they wanted to give to the environment, how they wanted to affect their environment. Again within this theme there were a number of sub-themes that were commonly expressed. These included a desire to help people, a desire to be change agents in the lives of individuals or more broadly the environment, and a desire to pass on skills and knowledge. These are each discussed in more detail.

Desire to help others or advocate for others.

All eight of the participants spoke of wanting to help others. For some there was a particular focus on wanting to help those who are vulnerable. This was discussed earlier to some degree under the first theme as a value of altruism. In general this seemed to come from a place of compassion and passion about the needs and rights of people. In articulating this, all of the participants spoke of this changing over the years in terms of what helping looks like and what beliefs underlie it. These aspects of change are discussed under other themes related to life-span development. For Lori the aspect of helping others that was important was caretaking. "It's the giving, and the caring part of it and I've always seemed to be like all my life a caregiver in some respects." She saw this aspect of her work as very integrated into who she was and as a life long tendency and desire. This was echoed by Shelley who said "I think I always wanted to be a helper without knowing that." Other participants were motivated by a desire to help in the sense of empowering people to manage their environments. As Ellen described it in her earlier days "I think I was even out to you know, save my own family from their own foibles and save other people's families from going through the same thing."

For some the drive to help people was directed very specifically toward a particular population that they saw as vulnerable or for a particular issue that they saw as important. For these participants they seemed to see their role as that of advocates. As John identified, "my passion was Aboriginal child welfare." With regard to the importance of influencing society to provide a voice for vulnerable groups he said "a need for youth to have voice, a need for the disenfranchised to have voice." Later he stated

all my career I've seen that we pick on the poor. We pick on youth. You know, it's not okay. It's not okay to pick on those people. And uh, you know we gotta just, we have to do stuff where, where people aren't picked on and where people are valued. And we value diversity." Later he added "you know we come to work because kids are abused or because women are abused, or because handicap needs.

The idea of advocacy was also voiced by several other participants. Lauren stated

I always wanted to be an advocate, you know, didn't have one when I was growing up. And really strongly about that now, how just, how huge that is, how huge it is to have an advocate for you, a voice that's, that will be heard. So I think that was what really drew me too, that you can actually do something, you need to use your voice, you know, especially for those who can't.

She spoke about this value as influential in deciding whether she would move from a supervisory position to a management position. "You know, maybe if it's a certain position that does allow me to advocate for certain things." This was also articulated by Shelley who said

I was... irritated by the fact that some people had a louder voice than others and often that louder voice wasn't that they were a better person or, it was about in the context of their lives and that that often didn't get highlighted. So, I think that when I came here I highlighted poverty a lot. I saw that poverty wasn't ever put on the table or it wasn't often put on the table. And yet it has huge impact on everything.

Shelley also reflected on the discrepancy between herself and others who are vulnerable remarking, "I always think how people would treat me differently if I say I'm a single Mom on welfare uh, versus a supervisor of a Child and Family Services program."

Several participants articulated the desire to help others, particularly vulnerable populations in terms of influencing society's broader response. Elizabeth looked at the current climate as positive in the opportunities there are to influence. "And social justice and social influence and political influence... You know, I think there's some very exciting things happening in the field." Other participants were not as hopeful. In the words of Don "we need to have a more you know, um, balanced allocation of societal resources so that people's um, different sectors of the society can enjoy the prosperity of the society."

Particularly for those who had entered the field in the seventies social advocacy took the form of a drive to fight for social justice on a broader scale. John stated "I also was very political as a young man, extremely political and had a firm belief in the need for social change, and social justice and those kind of things and uh so, that's the kind of stuff that led me into the work and also kept me in that kind of an area." Shelley recalled

a similar experience saying “I think I’ve always been passionate about social justice issues. I mean I was ten years old and you know, going to protests.... I just always had a heart for it. I did! I just always had a heart for those social justice things.”

Desire to be a change agent.

A second sub theme of how people wanted to impact their environment was the desire to be a change agent. For most of the participants this was expressed as a desire to influence others, to make a difference, or to facilitate change. Like the motivation to help others this motivation was also in reference both to individuals and to the broader environment. In speaking about influencing people, John described it in this way; “You could see the ability to have an impact on people... You have an impact and so whatever it takes to make some changes you make those changes.” Later in the interview, John spoke of his desire to mentor others. He expressed a lot of passion in his desire to see the young people with whom he worked succeed.

And like I say to these guys, the kids; ‘you know what? Sometimes you got to do the same thing three or four times, or ten times before it works out. Don’t give up. You know, ‘just keep at it. You know be patient.’ It’s like ‘Do it this way. Do it that way.’ And I get to mentor young people, young staff... so my interest is mentoring people.

Lori recalled her desire to impact the environment when she began in social services. She stated “and then found out still can be working with people and I guess making a difference, impacting my community and yeah, I think, contributing.” She spoke of helping those she supervised reach their potential as “helping them...making them the best that they can be.” Similarly, Shelley spoke about helping those she

supervised value the work that they did “Youth workers didn’t feel very valuable... so my conversation was ‘well, what would happen if you valued yourself?’ And it was true, I think, over time, once they began to know their value.” Don in reference to clients, described it as being able to “help the person to be able to you know... tap into their potential and be able to develop the positive sides of uh, human nature.” Lauren focused specifically on helping young people formulate their values. “Helping them create their values too, you know, is really huge. Cause they seem to flounder with their values sometimes... And helping them focus in on whatever it is for them. I like that too.”

Claire expressed her desire to impact the environment through program development. “I’m really interested in, in program development and looking at alternative programs... And so I’m trying to take what I know and like shift it over a little bit to uh, to do more um, development stuff and project management stuff around new buildings and new programs and new sites and those kinds of things.”

Along with the desire to impact the environment four of the participants mentioned their recognition that they could provide an environment for change to occur but that the actual change came from the client. Elizabeth explained it in the following way. “If we can remove some of the obstacles and help facilitate that people do it on their own. Their, the relationship helps, but it’s mostly the individual. If you just get out of the way and provide the right environment.” Claire described it thus; “we may be able to, as people that impact their lives or kind of come in and out of their lives, provide different opportunities or experiences. But um, but I think change comes from the people that we work with and, and, at times we’re sort of just there to guide the process or witness the process or, or support it and encourage it.” Shelley emphasized the

importance of tailoring what you bring to the client to their particular needs. "Trying to find out how you can be a resource to them and how you can share information with them in ways that worked for them versus undermining them." This is similar to Ellen who said "sitting in the room with the person I want to be able to have something for them that works if they want to change and if they don't want to change then everybody's wasting their time." This same participant spoke of the importance of timing, that people change when they're ready. "You pick that window of opportunity and help them change what they're willing to change today."

In terms of impacting the broader environment, Lori identified this as the thing she liked most about her job. "I like the most is um, when I feel like a difference has been made." She seemed genuinely surprised that she had been able to influence government decision making. "And I'm just amazed that what I, my suggestions, like they followed it. A lot of it." and identified having such an impact as the thing she most enjoyed in her work. "When your ideas come to fruition and you see a need and you figure out some way to solve it. Um, so I guess that making a difference thing is what I like the best." John also spoke proudly of the role he has had in improving the system.

I work in a place which has been given an award by the city of Vancouver for best practices in youth engagement. I'm responsible for this place which will have the only youth, the only youth art gallery in the city of Vancouver....I am part of a team of people who are making opportunities for youth by keeping doors, by opening doors and keeping doors open for at risk youth.

He later stated "That feels good. I'm making the changes that I was railing about when I was twenty years old."

Claire spoke proudly of the considerable expansion of programs in her organization since she had joined the agency. "So it's grown considerably in the ten years and it's pretty much been me and my supervisor throughout the, the process."

Pursuing high standards in work.

Other participants spoke of impacting the environment in terms of pursuing high standards in their work. For example Claire stated "I have, and probably have the highest expectations for my staff in their performance than anybody else on the management team so I think that that's still in me in terms of if you're going to do it do it well and be brilliant and excellent and always, you know, strive to do better I think." Lori spoke of impacting the environment in reference to a specific role. "I'm going to manage it the best it can be. And yes it's just a little group home... I'm going to make it the best group home that it can be... I feel like I did make it one of the best group homes because it was... the first group home in the province to be accredited." The outcome of seeing that one's input impacted the environment was important enough to participants that several spoke of it as essential to their staying in the position. In the words of Claire one participant; "If I'm not contributing than I'll go somewhere else."

Desire to pass on skills and knowledge.

The third sub-theme of how participants want to impact their environment is a desire to pass on skills and knowledge both to clients and to colleagues. This seemed to be positively correlated to the age of the participant and to the latter years of their careers. Five of the eight participants spoke specifically about their desire to pass on skills and knowledge. Elizabeth stated that as she gained meaningful knowledge she felt motivated to pass it on to others. "It was very engaging and interesting and personally satisfying

and also I think I just felt a need to share the knowledge.” Shelley spoke of it as trying to find out how you can be a resource to them and how you can share information with them in ways that worked for them. Lauren recalled a past teaching position stating, “I taught at Child and Youth Programs...for a couple of years. And that was exciting too because I got to take what I was doing into the college and say ‘this is what we do’.” Another participant described the process of helping youth develop skills and experience success and then later choose themselves to pursue a career in helping other youth. “That’s the piece that I think is so big like about success and that. What am I able to do for myself and to give somebody else? And when I see the kids that want to do that? Wow! That’s pretty huge.”

John spoke of his drive to pass on skills and knowledge in the following ways, “Hey, I’ve got this information. Look, take what you can out of me. Use it. You know, cause you’ve got these fabulous skills now. You encourage more young people, more staff.” Ellen spoke of it in terms of her vision of how success in the future would look to her “If I were able to have my own company say, where I did consulting and I was able to do some of that stuff with people and do some training that they would need in order to do their jobs better I think I would consider that successful. Cause then I would be using what I know.”

Thus we see the common patterns that emerged out of the relationship that each participant had with the context in which they worked, both in terms of what they expected to get from the environment and what they expected the environment to give them. One of the issues not addressed here is how the desire to impact the environment

relates to ambition. This is looked at under the theme of the relationship between ambition and life span development.

Navigating the Environment

A third theme in the experience of the participants was their common experience of the environment and means used to navigate their way through it. This section has been divided into three areas that seemed to fall naturally from the data. The first is their experience of the social service environment which includes both their experience of the government's role in social services and their experience within their own organization. The second sub theme is their understanding of the environment. The third sub theme is how they negotiate their way through this multiple level system within which they work.

How participants experience the environment: government and agency.

The environment experienced as changing and unpredictable.

Although participants used different language to articulate their experience of the environment the commonality of their experience was very evident. All eight of the participants spoke of the environment as changing and unpredictable and that this was difficult to deal with. They spoke of this both in reference to the government and to their own agency although they saw the environment of change within their own agency as being a result of government changes filtering down. John stated "the Ministry's always going through changes, always, always, always going through changes." Shelley stated "we've just been through so many changes" relating this directly to government decision making. "We're so attached to the Ministry. All of our funding comes from the Ministry and so we're, every time they change, we change. And so we've had contract changes. So we've had, I've had to lay people off. People have left." She spoke of the stress of

dealing with this. "So we had a time where all this change was happening and we didn't meet for three weeks. Well, the shit hit the fan. I'm not kidding. People were angry, oh it was, we're back on the road now, uh, one person actually left. It was tough."

Lori spoke of her observation of the line workers within the Ministry "the Ministry doesn't keep them secure. They're constantly being bumped around. Now you go here. Now you go there. Oh. We're redoing this and restructuring that and we're going to move this team to here and...". Elizabeth reflected back over her career in social services describing it as "constant change. I've been in one place working for one agency but it's just been constantly changing....certainly in the last ten years I can't imagine anything not changing." Lauren described her own agency in the following words "people have been shuffled around. They're commuting where they don't want to commute. It would be really easy to let it get to you right now." I don't believe it's going to stay like this forever. Nothing ever does anyways." She reflected on the impact of recent changes in her agency by saying "Yeah, it's a tough time right now. It really is. Like we lost group homes, we lost...a lot of positions we lost and we gained in areas that were not normally, we don't normally do."

The environment experienced as stressful or difficult.

A second thematic experience talked about by all eight participants was their experience of the environment as stressful or difficult. Often this was related to the clients with whom they work. Lori described the work environment at certain times as an environment

that can be highly stressful and intense because especially because there's people involved. And it's not just that your product got crushed on the distribution line.

There's lives at stake and um...that's a huge uh, I was going to say burden but....it's a huge pressure.

John spoke of the difficulty of working within the rigid expectations of the government in social services, "Sometimes you know after awhile it's like, I just can't do it. I can't deal with the bullshit and the crap." Later in the interview he spoke more broadly about his experience stating; "It's not easy work. It's hard work. It's sad. You lose a lot. You know, kids die. Clients die. Staff burn out....I've made many, many mistakes in my clinical work, in my management work. You know, but you have to go 'okay, well,' you come back and you do it again."

Lauren reflected on her agency as a whole saying "It's been a really tough time. Morale has been horrible." Later in the interview she added

as an agency it's been really difficult. Cause there's been other programs where staff have been really unhappy, um, just with their situation, you know, being moved into something they didn't plan to move into. Um, the cuts and things like that and different positioning and that. So morale hasn't been as good.

She continued shortly after saying "So they're feeling these heavy case loads, 'do more, do more, continue. We're going to cut your program back. We're going to take...' It's really hard and I think, I do think it's really hard to stay afloat." Lauren spoke of what it was like to have a program cut that was very successful but was still in it's infancy. "I had letters from parents, grandparents writing in, 'this was so good for my kid.' So (sighs) to do that, that was my biggest, sort of kick in the teeth that I felt. Um...they made this decision without considering the kids at all, not at all."

This negative experience was similar to Shelley's experience as she spoke of the government making changes in her program without consultation.

And so it was no consultation, no nothing. It was just this is the way it's going to be....And it feels hard. It was hard for our team. It was hard for me. Um, I mean I was sitting at the table crying with everyone. It was sort of like so I could have maybe done something different but I just felt such sadness because it's where we're going.

Lauren described dealing with the changes as "it's been tough. It's been a grind." She spoke of the difficulty of continuing to provide ongoing service while coping with changes. "I think it's hard. I think change is tough for people. Uh, I think that we're trying to change at the same time as carry everything that we always did."

Claire spoke of what it was like to see people with whom you work, lose their jobs. "I think it really does have that family mentality, that you're cutting your family. Like it's not just a worker. This is you know, a person that you've worked with closely for a very long time." Elizabeth recalled hitting a breaking point. "Last year...I went to my... I just went to her and said 'you know, I'm doing too much, I'm doing too much and I'm doing too much not well. And I don't like, I personally can't work that way.'" She spoke about the struggle to succeed in the current environment "I think still now my struggle is how do I stay centred with all this you know, with stuff flying at me?"

The environment experienced as challenging.

A sub theme spoken of by six of the eight participants was their experience of the environment as challenging. Sometimes this was expressed as a positive experience other times as a negative experience. Ellen described the work environment as

“challenging, for one thing, and exciting. Challenging and exciting. Because it’s a learning opportunity and it’s also a challenge.” John spoke of the “frenetic pace” of the work and looked back over the years saying “I’ve always found it challenging. Um, often I found it very rewarding. Um, I’ve also, I’ve also had lots of tears and lots of hurt, you know, through the work. You know, important things that have failed.” He compared having worked for the government to working for a non-profit organization. “It’s really challenging. And is it more challenging in this world than it is in the government world? You know, I don’t know if it’s, more different. It’s a different kind of challenge.”

Shelley talked about the constant learning. “Some days I want to come to work and not learn something.” This was similar to Claire who described her role in learning the ropes of being in management. “It’s challenging...Moving into the senior management level it’s hard too. I’m constantly catching up. I don’t necessarily have the history that other people have or the understanding or expertise and so that’s, constantly learning and trying to figure it out.” She distinguished between her experience within the agency and within the broader political framework. “The external’s challenging and a bit frightening. Um, internal’s just, I’m somewhat used to it.”

Participant understanding of the environment.

Another cluster of responses that reflected how participants experienced the environment were evaluative and explanatory statements about it, statements that indicated how they made sense of their environment. These comments were primarily directed toward the government though to some degree at their own agencies. Comments

about government restructuring and cuts were made by all of the participants accompanied with varying degrees of frustration and other emotions.

Government decision making viewed as not rational.

Six of the eight participants spoke specifically about their experience of the decisions being made by the government for social services as not being rational. In the words of Lauren, "I don't know where they're coming from for a lot of these decisions that they make." The comments of participants were usually made about decisions about a specific program with which they were involved. Shelley stated "I think the hardest one for me was um, the Ministry just made a decision without any consultation at all that we would no longer be able to take self referrals. Well, we've been taking self referrals from the community forever." She commented on the Ministry's implementation of changes to their service delivery. "That's the model we're heading toward. And at the same time, this is what is happening. And in my brain, I just couldn't figure it out...like we're working with systems that are incongruent."

Lori stated

We're mostly government funded and um, just, just the changes that occur that are not necessarily positive changes and seem to be from an outsider's perspective in government the changes that occur that effect us so much that they seem like they're pointless. There doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason to them. It's just a lot of shuffling around.

Don, along a similar vein, stated "Somehow, you know we have to, uh gear our practice to meet certain expectations of the funders whether those expectations have any legitimate base or not. It seems to be, you know, irrelevant."

John spoke about the constant changes in the government's decisions and having to support the decision as a manager in government when he himself didn't trust the decision making.

And uh, you know, you start to feel your credibility's at stake. Well, they're doing this Alison. When I come back to it, well you know, we're not doing that anymore. We're now doing. We now have a super improved... At first you go well maybe it's that's just how it is. But after awhile your, your, your belief in me as your colleague, you know, that goes and you start to doubt. So yeah, there's issues and that's a concern.

Government viewed as controlling.

Seven of the eight participants commented on the government's tendency to control decision making and to do so without consultation or with consultation that they experienced as futile or meaningless. John spoke of the government as being "rule bound" and rigid. "The government only wants you to spin things a certain way. 'So you're asking us to do something which has never been done before. Then give us, give me the flexibility to, to make the mistakes.' but 'no, no, you must do it this way.' " Later in the interview he described them as perceiving themselves as "the boss" saying "it's like they want to control everything. They don't want you to be innovative."

Similarly Shelley in reflecting on the impact of a government decision on her agency stated "And so it was no consultation, no nothing. It was just 'that's the way it's going to be.' " Don also expressed a similar sentiment "and really without a lot of consideration, and thinking, and consultation, you know, prior to that exercise, you know, that's, that's the thing I found... I feel very frustrated in a way."

Lauren spoke about the government's unwillingness to try to listen to and value the perspective of the agencies and people who provide services. In reference to a program that had been shut down shortly after it was established she stated "So, they don't get it and they don't bother to get it. They don't bother to really find out." This participant also saw how this filtered down to agencies in that management did not always have answers to provide staff with about why decisions are made. "There's some ways where people don't feel heard but they express their concerns. On the other hand the agency can't do anything. So they can't offer anything."

This perspective was similar to Don who had formerly worked for the Ministry and observed the experience of line workers. "The practitioners seem to have no freedom to really say, that doesn't seem to be you know...compatible with these other services...or has that been well researched?" This participant also spoke about how the government expects agencies to compete for services and at the same time attempts to have agencies work together to provide input to the government. His sense was that what results is a tendency to be "territorial." "People are a bit protective of their own territory and, and, really not wanting to share too much about what they are doing, you know, how effective it is." Don spoke about the process of how government made decisions and his perception that they tended not to seek input from professionals specialized in providing care for particular populations. "I don't see any truly professional people really being invited to, to help you know, formulate those policies." His view was that this contributed to an approach to service provision that is "very piecemeal...fragmented."

John, similar to Don, commented on the government process of encouraging the service providers to work collaboratively and yet using a competitive process for

determining who gets funding. "We're going to have a competitive process. If you want the money you have to bid against each other.... Well, how can we be partners when you make us fight with each other?"

Lori commented on how her perspective changed as she moved into management. And now in this position and working more directly I see the big picture and I think, whoa, it's like way more screwed up than I thought (laughing).... It's very dysfunctional... when I speak to managers about stuff and when they say the same things that I used to say. 'Well, why not? Why can't we just do that?' I think 'You don't understand.'... It's a mess. You know, you have an idea but until you get into it. You think, wow! This is severely dysfunctional.

Lori expressed the same frustration with how closed she found the government to be which she saw as being more characteristic of the middle management level of people. "It's that you can't, you can't be open. You can't share, they can't share the information."

Ellen spoke about observing government's decisions about what services to offer. She described the government as being self serving but hiding behind the stance that their intention is to help people. "I get lost with this stuff because I don't know who they're serving. I think they're serving the government. So I don't know if you're really serving the people. They make all kinds of very emotional arguments that you're serving the people and I just don't know."

Government decision making is funding driven.

Another area that six of the participants spoke of in terms of trying to understand the environment was their perspective that part of what directed government decision making

was pressures to provide services with very limited funding and that this negatively impacted the system. Ellen commented on the impact of making decisions from the starting point of available funding. "Then you reach the point of it being government funding and they're not willing to go where they need to go." When I asked why she thought this was she stated "Oh, it's too expensive. It's usually about cost, yeah. Yeah, when you get to that level its' about cost." This same idea was articulated by John;

more and more the people who are making the funding decisions are not, in my opinion, are not looking at things from a social work perspective. They're looking at a...accountability perspective. They're looking at a cost benefit analysis, the cheapest thing.

He later added "this is the cheapest. At the end of the day it'll come down to the cheapest price because there's a maximum amount of money available and you're gonna, you weight a significant amount of it onto the economics of it."

Lauren commented on the inconsistency of how the government appeared to direct funding. "Even where they want to put their money. They don't seem to be consistent at all.' Don spoke of the struggle to stay true to his commitment to his faith with a government that he experienced as biased against faith based organizations and less willing to fund their services for that reason.

They don't want to associate too closely with a religious organization, you know, of a particular faith. (sic) They want to work with agencies who downplay or say, who claim they have no affiliation to whatever political or religious faith you know. That's just my impression. (sic) How to be true to your commitment to a faith orientation and yet not be cut off from the government funding.

Several participants commented on how being tied to government funding directly impacted their experience of the environment as a result of decisions made. Don noted "If you are mainly looking into the non-government, non governmental organizations I think there's a problem that is also related to you know like, whether it's stressful or relaxing or that kind of ...because now it's more, it's driven by your funding sources, you know, and that's...the challenge I think." Shelley related the constant changes to being tied to government funding. "We're so tied to that funding. Then I think there's always changes but I think our team has experienced lots." Finally, Elizabeth commented on the strain of trying to provide needed services but not having the funding to do it. "We have always had trouble finding money for our adult program. Nobody wants to fund grown ups who have experienced sexual abuse as children....They only fund .8 of a position. That's all the funding we have in Vancouver for women who have experienced sexual abuse."

Others perceptions of the government.

Aside from participants finding explanations for their experience that related to the irrationality of government decision making, the tendency of the government to over control decision making or the pressure to provide services with very limited funding, they also found other explanations for the state of the work environment. Don interpreted the expectations that the Ministry gave to agencies as being motivated by a desire to prevent being blamed when things did not work out well. "A lot of these exercises, I call, you know...like a device to cover your butt...and that mentality is killing the industry, killing the profession. Because if you are always just trying to make sure that you are not, not getting the blame, you know, then you are not really helping the people."

John saw the government moving towards a business orientation for providing services. "The Ministry was for me becoming more and more corporate. It wasn't really about social work to me." Elizabeth observed a shift that to her seemed a move towards a medical model for service provision. "We've also moved from a very social kind of perspective in treatment to a, back to a more medical model. I think we're being quite influenced by the American system of managed care....I don't like it at all."

While these participants saw the shift as negative Claire saw the shift as more positive. She explained the shift as a move more towards valuing education and applying business skills to this sector. "People are coming in with their Masters and in management and in business and not necessarily in social work and, and just a different, a different way of looking at social services."

Participant negotiating of the environment.

As all of the participants had worked in the social service system for at least ten years they had well thought through modes of thinking about the system and had each found their own way to manage the environment and find success. All of the participants expressed both positive factors within the environment that were congruent with personal values, beliefs and motivation and other factors that were incongruent. While they all found the environment to be a challenging place to work the degree to which they found the negative factors impacted them varied. All of the eight participants talked about their experience in their own agencies as largely positive. For all of the eight participants this was in contrast to varying degrees of negative experience of the government. This positive experience within their own organization seemed to create a means by which they could cope with what they found to be negative in the broader environment.

Environmental challenges provide impetus for growth.

For several participants having an environment that stretched them, challenged them and gave them opportunity to grow, to learn new things or try new things was important. This was also discussed under the theme of things that participants expected the environment to provide for them. The consideration under this theme is how the challenges in the environment relate to how participants negotiate their way through the environment and particularly how they provide motivation in their work. Ellen described her overall experience as “challenging and exciting. Because it’s also a learning opportunity and it’s also a challenge.” She gave the specific example of going through the process of becoming accredited. “There’s challenges that are, that are exciting like uh, we were just accredited in the last three years....that was interesting and exciting and challenging.”

John spoke about his experience in a particular role similarly, describing it as “exciting, challenging, demanding.” He described the experience of moving from working for the government to working for the non-profit, contracted sector. “It’s hard, you know. It’s also very exciting...it gives you all kinds of opportunities to, to reinvent yourself in the sense of your skills and uh be aware of the weaknesses.” Claire praised her agency for providing opportunity to try new things. “I also think this particular agency because they’re, they’re big believers in ‘if you can do this work and you want to take it on. Go for it.’ ” She described the impact of this on her personally as “I think the respect and trust and autonomy that my employers give me to just do my work has been instrumental in, in driving me to keep wanting to do better and do more.”

One of the elements that was important to several of the participants was the freedom to be creative. Claire, who spoke the least negatively about her experience with the government, spoke excitedly about the opportunities within her own organization. She was also the youngest in the group of participants and seemed the least jaded by working in social services. In reference to being given opportunity to create she stated

So it was sort of interesting and I think that that's the part that I find exciting is getting in there and doing the work and seeing that it is possible and it can be done differently and, and uh, and I think that um, it, it, uh, having young talent right out of school creates for amazing dialogue around there's different ways we can do this.

John also spoke about the importance of creativity as a motivating factor. When I asked specifically about the shift from government to non-profit he stated, "fabulous. What's fabulous about it is that um in government everything is rule bound....and it's hard to be creative." He later reiterated "In a non-profit, hey, it's a small organization. 'Go. Go. Do it. Yeah. Figure it out. What makes sense?' And that's what the work that we do is. What makes sense from a client's perspective?" Lauren stated "I think the other thing is I get to be creative. If I'm not able to be creative and do things, different things with the client's, I'd go somewhere else and do something else."

Supportive agency provides a protective sub-environment.

Several of the participants commented on their experience of their agency being supportive of them in their work. Claire stated "I think at the management level there's lots, there have been lots of rewards and um, support and encouragement and opportunity as a result of uh, you know, respect for the work you do so there's lots of benefit to keep

going.” This experience of the agency providing a positive environment within the larger, more conflictual social service environment was similar to that of Elizabeth. She recalled when the program she supervised was brought under the umbrella of the agency where she works. “And they were wonderful. They were just terrific.” She later commented in general about her agency saying, “Yeah. This is an agency that I find very supportive of staff. Very, you know, an agency that really put staff um, first and when they make decisions they often come to staff and ask for feedback.” She provided a specific example of support in saying “There’s always lots of consultation. I can pick up the phone and talk to the ED if I need to. And if I’m grappling with something I can grab my AED (assistant executive director) and say ‘we need to talk to the ED.’...It feels very good, very supportive.”

This experience is in contrast to the common experience of many participants discussed in the last theme in which they felt that government decisions appeared to be irrational at times and made without consultation. Elizabeth described the very deliberate approach her agency was taking to provide support as the need was felt. “And the other thing we’ve done in the agency is even though as managers we are all so busy we have started to, I’ve connected with other managers and we’re starting to meet together to talk about personnel issues and program issues....So that feels good.” Lauren described the support she felt within her own team and that this helped her to stay in her position. She stated “I do think it’s really hard to stay afloat and I do think if I didn’t have a healthy team I don’t know where I’d be.”

Finally, a means of managing the environment that was mentioned by several participants was having a voice at least within their own agency, speaking out about

things they disagreed with. Elizabeth commented on dealing with the changes “I think there’s lot’s of times I resisted it and um, wasn’t sure, didn’t trust that it was going in a, you know a healthy direction. I still have that critique about how we’re going in terms of uh, the controls.”

Agency values consistent with those of participants.

One of the elements that stood out for six of the eight participants was that they felt their agencies’ values were consistent with their own. This was another factor that appeared to enable participants to negotiate the inconsistencies between their negative experience of the government and their more positive experience within their own agency. The overall effect was that it seemed to enable them to sustain their motivation and sense of fulfillment in their work. Shelley commented on her agency saying “I think they have just been wonderful... so, so it’s exciting. It’s exciting to work for an agency that has that lens... whose values mesh.” Elizabeth similarly stated “I’m also working with people that share certain values.” She later reiterated “I’ve stayed with this agency seventeen years because it feels like a really healthy place to work.”

For Don the importance of spirituality motivated him to choose an agency that was congruent with this value. “Coming to (names organization) is also, maybe because of this realization about the spirituality in life.” He later expounded saying “and also my own faith journey, Christianity, you know,... does dictate my movement towards this job. Now I see it’s not just providing... social work or clinical counselling you know, but more try to integrate their spirituality.”

For Claire the congruence with her own values had to do with what she described as an overall shift in the approach to providing social services from a social work

perspective to a business orientation. She stated "Now it's more outcome based than it's been before, you know. Before it's been reputation and track record. Now you actually got to prove what you're doing and there are different bench marks and things like that." When I asked if she believed in the shift, if she thought it was good she said; "Absolutely. Absolutely. It's also just what I've grown up in and know."

Managing negative aspects of the environment.

While some of the positive aspects of the environment such as a supportive agency within which to work and an agency that held values consistent with their own made it possible to work successfully within the system, participants also spoke about some of the more negative aspects and how they dealt with these. Again they generally expressed this in terms of values, beliefs and motivation. For the most part participants did not distinguish between these. They seemed to be very intertwined.

A number of the participants commented on the importance of being realistic about what you can accomplish. One of the ways that Lori spoke about coping with the environment was by accepting some of what is difficult, things such as the constant change and restructuring. "I think it's contributed to some degree of resignation but not necessarily in a negative way. Like I was saying about you can't change everything. I don't see that as a negative, like as me giving up or... I see that as realistic and rational... I can only do what I can do."

Don stated "I know that there are certain, there are certain, there are limitations, and even til you try different ways, you know, like whether you start from the person or whether you start from the societal level there are still limitations in terms of how best you can address the social problems." He later spoke about how over time he has been

introduced to new theories, new ways of working but emphasized the limit of these to be effective. "I've been through a few different theories. You go to different work shops, conferences, you know, after...you find there's always that limitation there....Societal problems are too complex to be put into very you know easily understood frameworks or theories."

The recognition of limitations was also stated by Ellen who noted "It's just been tempered by reality of funded programs and administration, the red tape and, and what seems to be possible considering that the society has such a denial factor around addictions in general." Another participant commented on coping with the ongoing cuts and restructuring by saying "I think it's the grim reality."

Lori described being influenced in making decisions by a sense of obligation to clients. "You know I felt really um, obligated to the residents because I felt like of anybody else I knew them...and I felt that I needed to um, I needed to be there for them." She stated that part of how she succeeds as a manager is by trusting the skills and abilities of others especially when this was in an area in which she did not have the skill. "I don't have expertise in the area that they are managing, like downstairs for example. I oversee the manager for addictions services. Well I'm not a counsellor. Like I trust that we have the right people." This participant also described a number of values or beliefs that related to good communication. One of these was the importance of speaking openly and clearly "Being honest and forthright. But, at the same time respectful. And being forthright is definitely something I've had to get past too is dancing around difficult situations...and I think calling people on things and holding them accountable."

John spoke about resigning to work in a less than ideal situation because of outside pressures. "After awhile you're sucked into pension and you have family obligations and those kind of things." He also commented that familiarity can lead to willingness to tolerate a less than perfect situation. "You keep on doing it. It's a world that you know well." Part of what enabled him to manage in the system was to keep in sight those things that are important to you. "You gotta find things that make you come back. And why do you want to do that? And yeah, it'll take a piece of your soul... Okay but are you going to get something that, will more come out of it that's good?...and then you have to question, are you rationalizing it? Have you made a bad decision?"

Thoughts about leaving the environment.

Three of the participants commented that if the environment ceased to provide what they needed they would move on. Lauren stated

If you spoke to me while I was working in one of the other places where the environment was bad it would have been different... What you would have seen, my resume going out to other places. Like I won't stay. You see a lot of people that stay and they complain and complain and complain... I couldn't do it.

She spoke about coping with the environment by bracing herself for the unexpected. "Since then we've had just such an upheaval that I think the only way you can get through it is to know that anything could be around the corner, and you're just going to deal with it when it gets here." She later added "If it stays like this long enough that I get frustrated then I will go and do something else. So I'm prepared for either. I think you need to just prepare yourself for, for whatever," Claire, like Lauren, also commented about leaving if the environment did not provide opportunity to contribute

and to learn. "If I'm not contributing than I'll go somewhere else. If I'm not learning than I'll find that place too."

Shelley, who also contemplated leaving, spoke both about how tiring she found working in the environment to be and about her desire to see improvement in her work place. "I guess I always feel hope that what keeps me here is I feel like I can't leave until it's at least into a little bit of a better place. And I do have a big picture of what that will look like in my head." She acknowledged how important mutual support was to continue in the work. "I think we're stretched all the time. But you can do it, it seems, if you are meeting regularly. If you have, if you've got that solid foundation and you've got support of each other you can do it but once that leaves."

John spoke about coming to the point where he no longer felt he could tolerate the environment while working for the government. This participant chose in the end to leave that environment. "You know, they just, they're lying. They have no commitment. It's bullshit. It's bogus. It's crap. I'm not going to be a part of this any longer. I've had it with them. I can't do it."

Values, Motivation, and Beliefs Change Within Life-Span Development

In reviewing where we have come from we looked first at themes around values, motivations and beliefs that influence and direct the experience of supervisors and managers in social service organizations. The overriding characteristic was the integration of these three areas so that they became essentially indivisible. We then looked at the give and take relationship that people have with their work environment. This included both elements that they wanted from the environment in order to find satisfaction. We also looked at things that were important for participants to be able to

give back to the environment. We then looked at the process of how people navigate their way through the environment. Included in this were ways that people made sense of the environment and the balance of negative and positive experiences within the environment. In general people had a largely negative experience of the government's role and this was mediated by their more positive experience within their own agency. We then looked at how people negotiate the environment in order to have an experience of success.

The theme that will now be covered is the common experience of all of the participants to experience their work at any given moment as a freeze frame within a life long, dynamic process of growth and change. The overarching theme is that values, motivation and beliefs change within a life-span development process. A hallmark of this process is that it is an integrated relationship between what is innate to the person, their manner of relating to their environment and their experience within their environment. The sub-themes within this broader theme are the tendency to connect the present to the past as far back as childhood, the perception that values remain stable over time but change in how they are acted out and changes in beliefs and understanding, behaviours and motivation.

Connects Present to Growing Up

In looking at how beliefs and understanding changed over time for participants a connection that all participants made was to relate their present experience and their past experience. For seven of the eight participants these connections went all the way back to growing up. Claire, the youngest of the group, went only as far back as her late teens

when she first began working in the human service field. Beliefs and understanding were integrated into all aspects of their lives, private and professional.

Elizabeth in thinking about what led to her decision to work in social services commented that it went back to enjoying working with kids even in babysitting as a teenager. "I think I just have always liked people and working with people and um, and kids. I've always liked children, you know as a babysitter. I did a lot of babysitting when I was young." She later connected her early values to growing up in saying

I think I was a single parent and that you know, certainly um, and I think in my family I was a middle child so I was always worrying about you know, so there's that, the whole family systems influence I think around how, how to kind of balance and hope that there, things will be, you know, happy in your family. Um, and being a single parent, I think I was looking for answers and I wanted to be in a field that would give me knowledge, you know.

In looking at whether and how values change over time, Elizabeth reflected how early values were very related to the work she was doing. "But I think that's more of my youth, was youth, you know, so it's kind of like you had to have that to work with some of those gritty, scary, sometimes scary situations." She thought back about whether the source of her early values and beliefs were more related to her personality or to learning and then commented on how they had shifted over the years as she matured.

I don't know if it was so much my personality as, well it's part of my personality in terms of, you know, pleasing your teachers and working for a system and sort of, sense of duty and a sense of, you know, carrying out my job in the way that was expected... You know I didn't see it. I saw it through just one lens. That's

why I, I think it was just youth. You know, wanting to do a good job and that's how the system trained me. And then as I did the work over the years, started to, I mean stood up.

Finally, Elizabeth connected her surprise in her enjoyment of creating forms, an activity she would have thought outside of her interests, to her childhood. "I keep having these flashes of myself as a child, you know, when I used to play with the atlas and sell properties and write down all the different worlds that I would buy. (laughs)

Claire spoke of her current practice of preferring to hire people right out of school with fresh perspective and creativity rather than people with years of experience and know how. She related this to her first years in practice as a late teen and how it impacted her. "I think part of it is I had a really good experience in the field when I first started and worked under incredible people that had amazing talent and were brilliant in what they did, and really believed in giving people opportunity. And you know, I shouldn't have been there. I didn't know what I was doing." She later added "I mean I was able to, to move through my career fairly quickly from having those opportunities." She later spoke about her ease with the current trend in social service toward relying on accountability measures and related it to her early experience. "It's also just what I've grown up in and know."

Shelley tied her passion for social justice to her early childhood.

So I think I've just always been passionate about social justice issues. I mean I was ten years old and you know, going to protests so, you know, I was just one of those kids... So I think I just brought that from my childhood right through. I was just like you know, always um, irritated by the fact that some people had a louder

voice than others and often that louder voice wasn't that they were a better person.

Later she connected her experience of growing up in a close community and how this influences her awareness of the impact on people when they are isolated. "So I was fortunate enough to grow up in a community where people were connected to each other. And I know that from day one um, many of the families that are referred to us are very isolated, don't have that connection. And so I think that I paid more attention to that."

Lauren related her interest in psychology to her experience growing up. "

When I was younger I always wanted to be a child psychologist. I don't know what that was, probably because my upbringing was really the typical dysfunctional family. Right. Crazy Saskatchewan families....I think I always wanted to be a helper without knowing that.

Later in the interview she again related her adult motivation to her childhood. "Also, I always wanted to be an advocate, you know, didn't have one when I was growing up. And really strongly about that now, how just, how huge it is to have an advocate for you."

Ellen, who directly related her current work to her upbringing, stated I'm pretty analytical and I, and I came out of a family that had addiction problems, like uh mostly alcohol. But I was always wondering you know, I didn't know anything about it up until my thirties and then when I took a course...I was interested in what had gone on in my own family. But I didn't really see it as looking at that at the time. It was just I was drawn to it and I've always been a

psychology type of person. Even when I was, you know, fourteen or fifteen I was reading the psychology books.

Don expressed his belief that people are drawn to the helping profession through volunteer work or through their own upbringing. He then related his own experience.

So I was pretty much like that you know because of my life experiences you know. When I was younger you know, I lived in a uh, kind of a ghetto in Hong Kong. It's poor the area. So that poverty and also very difficult you know, living environment it kind of you know, provided me with a you could say with a social environment where I could see a lot of suffering.

He commented on then gaining self understanding through his social work training. "I think that my first training, undergrad training you know, gave me a lot of insight into where I have been in my childhood you know... So it all kind of provide me, some kind of continual you know interest in different areas of my work."

Lori related how she is drawn to giving to and caring for people to early childhood experiences. "I've always seemed to be like all my life, a caregiver in some respects. You know, I think about right back to grade one..." She then recounted different early relationships in which she was in a care giving role for peers. "I remember later on in grade four or five I was also matched up. The teacher came to me. There was a little girl my own age that was troubled basically...so they transferred her into my class and asked if I would be friends with her and sit next to her."

John described how he continually worked with vulnerable populations as directly related to his experience growing up. He noted that he chose to manage in stressful roles

with the government that others didn't want and that this was directly related to his early years.

There I was working in the downtown eastside. I was left you know, it's like 'just do care for the downtown eastside,' and as long as you manage that the organization leaves you alone because they don't want the downtown eastside coming to them....He's still there years later. Everybody else keeps leaving when they can't handle it....You know, it's, you know, cause like those are the worlds that I can, that I'm comfortable in. I've never worked in...I mean I'm an eastside kid. I'm comfortable in those worlds. I've never worked the west side of Vancouver, ever in my whole career.

John went into detail about the impact of growing up in Montreal in the sixties. He described specific events that impressed him and then related it to his current values. "I mean, there were so many things that took place. You want this stuff without changing society, changing values, a need for youth to have voice, a need for the disenfranchised to have voice, all that kind of stuff."

John related the present beyond his own upbringing to his heritage and multi generational influences.

The other thing is there was also personal stuff around um, uh, part of my own family history. My father's a concentration survivor. So I was dealing with stuff around you know, his describing who made it through the concentration camps...so there was a personal piece there for me. My mother is um...a...comes out of Scotland, of Glasgow and uh, and you know, you know clearly there's a history of the Scots and how the English came in and kicked the shit out of them.

You know, so I come from...from two cultures where people put boots to them....But it's not like I just went to it because that made sense to me on a lev...it's also inside myself....And I grew up in post war Germany. Um...I then spent time living in the far East.

He continued to relate the values and beliefs that resulted from these experiences. One of the ways that John linked his present to his past was to note the common themes that connected the beginning and latter years of his career. Common themes included working with at risk youth in large city centres. What stood out for him was the change in his power to influence the environment. "I think that I do a better job now than I did then because I have learnt I can, I can make things happen in a way that I couldn't make things happen as a twenty year old."

Values Remain Stable over Time but Change in How They are Acted Out

A second characteristic of how beliefs and understanding changed over time was a perception that while behaviour and beliefs may have changed there was an essence, usually stated as values that seemed to remain constant over the years. The participants commonly viewed the change in how values are acted out as related to personal growth and maturity, increased wisdom and understanding. Six of the eight participants identified this.

Don identified values that were intrinsic to his work. He noted that he had not developed new values over time but had become more realistic about how he lived out his values. "I don't think any new values but maybe new realizations you know, like I say maybe now I maybe, maybe, I have compromised to reality....I've come to realize you know um, that there is always a limitation you know in our effort to try to address

you know social problems” For this participant one of the limitations was the lack of integrating spirituality as part of working with people. “So that’s why you know, coming to (names organization) is also maybe because of this realization about the spirituality in life.” Don also spoke of changing in how he acted out his value of respecting people’s right to choose. “So that for me that respect of people’s right to choose and choose their own pace for themselves is a value that has shifted for me. So I’m wondering if, if, and I think that when I began years ago I was too immature to see it.” When asked if his values or motivation shifted when he moved into a supervisory position this participant replied “No, I don’t think so. Yeah. No shift. No change.”

Ellen thought out loud about her values. Her understanding was that the healthier the environment and possibility to have one’s needs met the more likely it is that values remain stable.

I don’t know if people really ever, I don’t know if I changed my values. I don’t know that I did change my values. I don’t know that values change over time.

I’m not sure. They’re almost hardwired I think sometimes, once you, if you have had a chance to examine your values and then make appropriate choices about what you’d like to keep and what really isn’t yours. I don’t know if they really change that much over time. I think I still have a belief in the positiveness of human nature and that people are trying to better themselves and just get their needs met and they don’t always know how to do that.

Ellen later added that while values remained stable the way that they were acted out changed with experience. “My values would be the same and they wouldn’t be

applied the same way anymore.” She also added the notion that while values remain somewhat stable we can change our beliefs over time.

I’m not really sure where I feel the difference is between values and beliefs. I know that your values are going to drive your beliefs. It seems logical. But I think it’s the beliefs, that’s the place where you can make changes... There’s something about you have to examine your beliefs and get down to the core beliefs and whether they’re serving you or not and whether they’re what you want to keep or not.

Lauren also saw values as being stable but changing in how they are acted out.

I think actually, I think what has happened is I have um, I’ve been able to do more with my values. I have been able to not just shake my head or go ‘oh gee, that’s unfortunate’ but do something about it. I think that’s more what has happened... And having the confidence and the courage to do that also... I think the more experience you get, the more knowledge you get, the more comfortable you feel about what you know and what you see. And I see that as more, not so much a value shift. I think like I said there was a method to my madness, I think it just went in this direction. It was meant to be because of my values and who I was... And I think the values were pretty much there. I probably expanded on them a bit but just being able to actually voice them more and uh, enhance them and the confidence to, to do something with them. Yeah, I think that’s what, that’s what’s changed.

Shelley did not name values as values and yet spoke of holding onto fairly stable principles of behaviour throughout her life.

I think that I didn't have language for it at the time but I remember um, being very frustrated that people's, the context of people's lives were not understood. So I think I just brought that from my childhood right through I was just like you know, always um, irritated by the fact that some people had a louder voice than others..."

She then reflected "So I think that I've often well, I think I just was probably born that way."

The two other participants who stated that their values had not changed both responded to a question about what they considered success by describing outcomes of interventions that they felt good about. When asked if this had changed over the years they both adamantly insisted that those basic values of what was important had not changed.

Changes over Time in Beliefs, Understanding, Behaviours and Motivation.

Though participants saw values as remaining stable over time they all described changes in beliefs and understanding, behaviours and motivation toward their work. While there may have been themes in terms of career interests there was also a recognition of ways they had grown and matured in the work.

John observed that when he began working in social services more than thirty years earlier he started out working with adolescents and here at the end of his career was again working with adolescents. The differences he noted had to do with changes in who he was in his work.

It's like thirty years ago I started out working with adolescents. And here I am thirty three years later working with adolescents again. I have come completely

full circle. I started out working with at risk youth in Montreal. And thirty five years later at the end of my career I'm working with at risk youth in Vancouver, in a city...I started out being a naïve twenty year old care worker. I'm a not naïve manager at fifty five years of age. So uh, I think that I do a better job now than I did then because I have learnt I can make things happen in a way that I couldn't make things happen as a twenty year old. What I could make happen as a twenty year old is I could be a mentor.

He later reiterated in the interview "I'm making the changes that I was railing about when I was twenty years old."

Participants spoke about how they had changed in their relationships with colleagues and clients over the years. Several participants spoke of becoming less judgemental. Lori noted that not only was she less judgemental but she had also learned to appreciate different perspectives. "I've become less judgemental for sure. Cause I've seen so many different situations and so many different people and everyone had kind of a different, uh coming from a different situation." Elizabeth stated "Yeah, I'm much more forgiving and much more, much less judgemental. But I think that's more of my youth, was youth, you know, so it's kind of like you had to have that to work with some of those gritty, scary, sometimes scary situations. You had to develop a certain defensive posturing, you know."

Other participants spoke about changes in how they communicate. Lori noted she had changed in that she had learned to confront issues directly rather than to avoid the issue due to discomfort with confrontation.

And being forthright is definitely something I've had to get past too, is dancing

around difficult situation... And I've learned to just get that out on the table a lot faster. Um, I think you just drag it on for too long and then if you don't address the issue right away and put it on the table you and say 'this is the problem. It's your attitude or it's your work or whatever. Then um, that person can go on forever thinking that it's something else or um... that 'you don't have, you don't have the guts to say that my work is poor quality or whatever.' Um, and I think calling people on things and holding them accountable. Accountability is really big for me.

She related this to ensuring that you communicate clearly so that there is no misunderstanding.

Shelley found that she had learned to tone down her communication in that when she expressed too much passion about an issue it appeared to her to sometimes offend people.

I think sometimes my passion hasn't worked though. I mean I think I've had to look at that too... I think sometimes my passion and excitement hasn't worked. It's gotten in the way... Sometimes when you come across with your passion about things that you can leave the other person feeling 'less than.' (sic) It can come across as holier than thou, I think.

For Elizabeth, the change in communication had to do with a shift towards a less authoritarian, softer approach with clients.

I think that probably early on I was more authoritative. I think I had to really work hard at letting go of the, the sort of police officer in me around child protection. Um, (sighs) yeah, I have some sadness when I think of, you know,

some of the kids that came into care. (sic) They had to work way too hard to get him back. And then when you sometimes see then, the home that they find to place the child and you realize, you know, how much better is the system?

Another change that participants noted was their ability to deal with stress. Lori recognized that with a higher position came increased responsibility for what occurred on the job but that she also learned to manage the stress better.

In this position I've really learned and even in the management, the middle management position, really learned to let things go and you know, pick your battles. (sic) I found when I first started managing at the group home, I started for the first time, I'm like gritting my teeth at night and stuff, I felt so responsible....I'm responsible for these lives, you know, and I again, learned to let that go.

She later noted "I've learned to accept the things I can't change."

One of the changes noted by participants was a movement towards being more flexible in how they approach people and the work. One of the things Lori saw change was her expectations of what can be achieved. She noted

I learned that you can't always make it the way that you want it to and you have to and now instead of things being perfect, now I think I try to make things the best they can be. You know within the context of the situation. I'm more able to accept things now. Okay, that's not perfect. It's not necessarily how I would do it but I can't do everything.

She later added "Now I've learned that people don't need to do it my way." The change towards increasing flexibility also showed itself in terms of giving those she supervised

room to grow in their own roles. "If for example there might be somebody, even us, the managers, who's really good with their programs very creative great with their clients, but their administrative skills are really poor, well, you know, I find that I have to let that go sometimes and help them, support them in that area because they're so strong in the other areas."

Another way that Lori saw herself as more flexible was the recognition that people change because they choose to not because you offer wise advice.

I thought I had all this great advice (laughing) and um... I thought, yeah in counselling I'm just going to tell them what to do and they'll just go off and you know, fix their lives all over the place. You know, and then I realized, after awhile, that um, yeah, that doesn't really work that well.

Don who also noticed a change in flexibility in his work with clients stated "Really there are human behaviour and societal problems are too complex to be put into very you know, easily understood frameworks or theories. Kay, that's the reality. So I try to be more open now you know, in my working with you know, people using different ways, you know, more flexible."

Claire, who had previously worked in a hospital setting, related becoming more flexible in terms of what it means to look like and relate like a professional.

Everyone on the team other than myself either had a PhD or at a Masters level. And it was that sort of you know, business suit, clip board kind of counselling format. And we're right and you're here to listen (laughs). That sort of thing and I, I think I went into believing that this is the best. Okay, if I'm going to do it I might as well start off with those that are brilliant and doing the best work and I

sort of believed in that, that uh, and that you needed to have this look in order to be right. And I don't have that at all anymore. Um, so I think that that's different.

Another change that several participants spoke about was the change in their vision to a more realistic and tangible vision of what can be accomplished. For several participants the shift was one from impacting in a large way to impacting in a more realistic specific way. Don stated

This means okay, so now the shift is more towards empowering the individual to exercise their rights in a way that will uh, uh, induce changes in the establishment. So in the past it's more from a macro level trying to uh you know, establish you know fairer, fairer policy uh, you know, maybe through legislation, through social movements.

He later commented "When you were younger you feel that you can make a bigger impact...but when you are older you are adjusting...like I said you're comfortable with yourself, with others." Ellen similarly commented

So I think at the beginning it was more save the world kind of stuff and I think I was even out to you know save my own family from their own foibles and save other people's families from going through the same thing and then I really got a reality check on that, you sort of as I went through and my values would be the same and they wouldn't be applied the same way anymore. So I'm not applying a global I'm going to save the world anymore.

Lauren, who also noted the shift from a desire to have a big impact to a more realistic goal, described it this way,

And I used to think well, that's not enough. You get even in the shelter you get one person off the street but how many are back out there? And they go back again. But that part of their life is still better. So that, that counts. So I think maybe that that's been a shift for me too is every little piece is really important. It doesn't have to be this big. I think when you start out in the field you have these big ideas too.

Don spoke of realism in terms of recognizing the limitations of what can be done with clients. He stated "I've been on this twenty some years you know. You've been through a few different theories, you go to different work shops, conference you know, after and you're studying. You find there's always that limitation."

Several participants spoke of changes in underlying beliefs and how they had changed over time. Ellen spoke about going through a particular period of crisis when she re-examined her beliefs. "Well, I think I've changed some of my beliefs but I don't know, I think just like the, the um, the sort of crisis of midlife thing sort of, and spiritual call sort of more uh, brought me to examining my beliefs. And then changing them is a whole other matter." For Don, the approaches that ignored spirituality were inadequate. This led to moving to an organization that would allow the incorporation of spirituality into his work with clients. "So I would say the spirituality because maybe cause I have maybe come to terms with the limit of human intervention." He added "And also my own faith journey, Christianity you know, um, also somehow you know, does dictate my movements towards this job."

Ellen talked about having more rigid beliefs in her early days about how change occurred and that some of these beliefs had changed. One belief was the notion of there

being a smooth chronological process towards healing. She had come to recognize that the process may be unpredictable and really depends on when the client is ready.

I guess it's kind of changed my hope that there, that somebody would come out from outside and say 'this is what you do. This is what you do in this situation and it'll be okay' and that people can be in therapy for ten years and then be done with it. But it doesn't seem to work that way. I don't know if that's just experience or if that's um, my belief changed. You know, I'm not sure. But people can change at any time, you know. They'll walk out the door, having gotten nowhere with them for five years and then they'll just have something happen and they don't know what it is and they'll change their whole life. So it really makes you feel like you're (laughing) not really much of a change agent. I think you have to be a change agent in your own life and that's what I would impart to people now. It's like nobody's going to do it for you. You have to do the work. You have to figure out what works for you and you have to decide what your goal is and, and take action towards it.

This belief that change needs to come from the individual was also a belief that Claire spoke of developing through experience. "I think change happens from them. Um, I think that uh, that we may be able to as people that impact their lives or kind of come in and out of their lives, provide different opportunities or experiences, but um, but I think change comes from the client." When I asked if this had always been her belief she stated "I think I respect it more now than before. I think before I probably thought that uh, it came from someone else showing 'this is the way to do it. This is the...and the

only way to do it. (laughs) If you want to be successful, do this. Um, not so much anymore.”

This was very similar to Don who spoke about a shift in recognizing that change comes from the client, at their pace and the importance of respecting that.

One of the things that shifted for me over time was that if it isn't their value then I'm putting my own value on them. And so that I've more and more learned to stand back and hold back and give room for them to make personal choices. So that for me that respect of people's right to choose and choose their own pace for themselves is a value that has shifted for me.

Several participants spoke about changes in your sense of your own knowledge, that with age came increasing awareness of how much you don't know. Don stated it this way; “Like I said to my sons you know like, when you finish your bachelor training you feel you know everything. And then you finish you Master training and then you know a few things. But if you finish a higher degree, a few more higher degrees, you find that you know nothing.”

Another changed that several participants remarked on was a shift from pursuing material things to a pursuit of meaning, a way of being. Don stated “success for me is more of relations now.” Ellen spoke about a shift from gaining material things to finding fulfillment in the process.

I think fifteen years ago I thought success was going to be just having the car I wanted, you know, getting into a job where I could have a month or two vacation a year and uh, be comfortable. And now I think success is having goals and achieving them on an ongoing basis. So I don't think it's static anymore. It used

to be um, a destination.....It's more in the day or in the moment or in the situation. Am I successful this time? And it's more of a process as you go along. Evolving into whatever makes sense.

For Lauren gathering material things had never been a strong drive for her. She had always been more interested in a career. What she found over the years was that this was confirmed repeatedly and she came to accept it and embrace it.

I always wanted a career. I wasn't worried about the house and the family and not that it, it's not that it's a non issue, maybe this is getting personal but my priorities was always that, was getting into a career and just doing it really, well. Um, I don't think a lot, I don't, I don't think it has changed a lot. I think I realize more how much that's always who I was but again I've just been doing it more and more, uh, confirming it more and more, you know. And material stuff has never been huge.

Along with positive changes and changes toward growth several participants also described more negative changes. Ellen spoke about her experience of becoming more disillusioned as a result of not experiencing the changes in service expectations of the government to be rational.

I hate to say I'm getting a bit jaded but I think I am getting a bit jaded that they keep doing the rounds on, 'this'll work. We'll do these programs. We'll fund these programs'...basically in addictions if you, if you study it long enough, you kind of figure out, this is what it's about. This is what it, you know, what it looks like. This is what the family system deal looks like. And there are ways to

address that. Then you reach the point of it being government funding and they're not willing to go where they need to go.

John also talked about disillusionment while he worked for the government and increasingly found himself having to defend positions that were incompatible with his values and integrity. "The down side of it was that I was a person who was now starting to say to people, control people, their practice, or um, or I was ma... as a person who's selling government." He later added "for me, the compromises you make with yourself and the change in your sense of values." He stated following this "And uh, you know you start to feel your credibility's at stake," later adding, "Initiatives that didn't get off the ground. Broken promises." He finally came to the place where he had reached the limit of what he felt he could tolerate. In his words, "I said I can't buy this anymore. I just cannot swal... it's too bitter a pill to swallow."

Relationship Between Ambition and Life-Span Development

The last section provided a review of common patterns related to the theme of ways that values, motivation, and beliefs change within a life-span development process for participants. This section will look specifically at the relationship between ambition and life span development. All of the participants were in roles as supervisors or managers and expressed values, beliefs and motivations that were directly related to the choice to pursue promotions to positions of greater responsibility and authority over others. Participants also spoke of how values, beliefs and motivations changed over time in relation to ambition.

Opportunities for Promotion Present Themselves

Pursuing leadership roles seemed to be a natural inclination for all participants. All spoke of positions they had pursued and obtained although reasons given for pursuing positions were varied. Surprisingly, six of the eight participants spoke of moving into supervisory or management positions almost as if the opportunity presented itself rather than their actively pursuing it. Though they realized that others may have seen them as ambitious people they did not tend to view themselves that way. Claire, however in contrast, was very clear that her intention was to at some point become an executive director.

In terms of opportunities for promotion presenting themselves, Lori, who had applied for a number of positions most of which she succeeded in attaining, described it this way;

I got the position and I've been in the position for three years so.. It's just happened so, a lot of people have said 'you know you're ambitious.' I thought, really? (laughing) It just sort of all has fallen into place. I didn't start out with thinking I want to be here. (sic) I'll try that and I'll try that and when I'm done with this I'll try that. It's just all worked out so...

She later added

as far as the group home work, the stuff that I did well there's nothing else and might as well and it sounds a little callous, a little cold and it turned out to be um, a great experience. It turned out, obviously it turned out great. So um, but you know I might have just said I fell into it not knowing what I was getting into and I might have hated it but it turned out that I really liked it.

Shelley similarly stated "I figured out that I, what I wanted to do was to be in some kind of um, service where I was involved with the community. So, it was a broad picture and then I sort of just you know, fell into different things."

Several participants spoke about being asked to move into leadership roles rather than pursuing them. John noted several role changes that were initiated by the government while he was employed by them in social services. "Then I transferred or was reassigned to work out of Coquitlam... And I guess I did that for four years maybe. And then I took on my first management job.... Then I was asked to go to Prince George... Then I came to Vancouver. I was a manager again. Um, I was then reassigned... And the last two to three years of my career with the Ministry I was asked to take on the job..."

Shelley stated "once I got my degree I was then convinced to move to supervising um, community living and other youth workers." Ellen described interviewing for a position at her agency and during the interview finding out that the program supervisor had given notice. She was asked if she wanted to interview for the supervisor position, which she did and succeeded in getting. "So I went and I switched at mid stream there and did the interview for the supervisory position and I got that." This was somewhat similar to the experience of Elizabeth who recalled pursuing involvement in a society that was providing services for women and children and then being asked to manage the program.

And then they called me back and said 'well, we really need a program manager.'
(laughs) And I knew some of the women on the board. And they had, they knew of my reputation. They interviewed me. They said 'you know, you...' And I said

'Look, I can't do this. I don't have a treatment background. My background's all investigation and assessment as social work.' And um, they said 'Well, you know, we'll support you. You know the system.' And that's really important. She again had a similar experience many years later in being asked by her own colleagues to become their supervisor. 'We had a contracted supervisor and the staff asked me if I would take on the supervision.'

Claire, the one participant who was clear about her interest in promotion, recalled entering the field in a happenstance sort of way. When asked why she chose social services she stated "I have no idea. I think I sort of fell into it. It wasn't actually something I wanted to do. But uh, but an opportunity presented itself and it was interesting and I uh, yeah, I don't really... It just sort of happened." She has taken very definite steps towards working in upper level positions. Claire noted "I am looking at um, moving into the ED position. So that's, that's of interest and I'm working towards that now. Whether or not that happens I have no idea." She recalled an earlier promotion stating,

And so I think, I think staff would probably say 'not surprising, because she's kind of been on this path since the day she arrived. She really wasn't on our side from the moment she came.' Um, but uh, but yeah it's created challenges. And it also, I mean, if I'm completely honest, it came at a point that I said 'you either promote me or I go somewhere else. I'm young enough that I can start over and make it to where I want to be or I can make it here.'

Promotion Pursued to Broaden Influence

Five of the participants noted being motivated to take a promotion by a desire to broaden their influence on people and on the environment as they moved through their career. This appeared to be related to the age of the participant in that the older participants were more likely to describe this though given the small sample size and type of research a conclusive statement cannot be made. As Don described it "For myself there's one additional kind of push for me to do this because you're getting old you know, and you realize that even if you spent twenty four hours of your day to help people it's uh, it's not as big as the impact that you can have when you have four other people trained by you who are doing maybe eight hours per day."

Ellen noted

Well, I know the addictions piece so I can do private counselling for addictions and help people. It's just that I think I'd be more useful talking to people that are doing the work and helping, helping people that are doing the work get to another level of thinking about what they're doing so that they are more useful in a situation because I think there is a graduated sort of a step of evolvement.

John spoke about motivation for ambition first in a broad sense. "What shifted for me was I became aware that as you climbed in organizations you are the decision maker, the more capacity you had to have good influence. And that was the difference for me." He then commented on the opportunity to influence more people. "As a supervisor I had the ability to have impact on a bunch of staff who would also have impact on clients. I could put services in place that I felt, were more meaningful as

against just being able to say, to you as a client, 'these are the kinds of services that are available to you.' ” He continued along this theme

So as a supervisor, and as a manager you have, you have more and more influence....here I have the capacity to influence fifteen hundred children and you know, three hundred families and organizations that connect with them.” He reiterated on this theme again much later in the interview commenting “I get to mentor young people, young staff.

Lauren also spoke about the ability to have more impact and to influence more people.

So that's why I worked so many jobs because I wanted experience in everything I possibly could even if it was auxiliary, get some shifts and yeah so it's...there was a purpose to my madness, I think. You know? That I just took everything, did everything I could to get me, which is a supervisory position I love. Um, because I get to direct all of that.

For Claire ambition was related to her desire to impact in a way that was better suited to her skills than line work. She spoke of beginning to identify these skills as a late teen and then spoke about her preferences in management today.

Which was probably how it originally started, because at nineteen I was even designing programs that I thought were...and it just came out in this field. Um, but I think my interest is not so much that the, I mean the people side of course, but, but not the direct service as, I'm more interested to kind of parachute in, fix a problem, design a program, then leave, go onto the next thing. I mean, I think

that's where the excitement comes from the actual work cause I think there's better suited people to do that work than, than me.

Don didn't believe that he had much choice about moving into a supervisory position. "As you grow older there's no way to go. People kind of expect you to do something more okay, so I think it's basically uh, it's kind of put upon myself, you know, that I were to do that. As time goes by you know, uh they don't see anyone who's willing to do that or qualified to do that? So why don't you do that?"

Desire to Stay Connected to Line Work

One of the things that two of the participants noted as a consequence of moving into a supervisory or management position was that they missed the direct work with clients and that this sometimes influenced their decisions about taking promotions. Ellen stated

And then I, um, decided I wanted to make some changes in my career and I wasn't, I was really more in supervising and management and coordinated contracted facilitators. So I was more on the admin end of things. And I decided maybe that you know, my training wasn't really being used in the one to one area...for line, for direct line work.

Lori talked about losing sight of what it's like to work at the line level. "I hope that I can still keep in touch with that. I try to do that by visiting the programs that I oversee, by visiting them and by hanging, I still go over and visit the guys at [] House you know, the residents, um, I go to their birthday parties."

Four of the participants had found positions that allowed them to continue to supervise or manage and yet also stay connected to the line. Don described it this way;

If a hands-on type of experience is needed I go for that. And uh, I think for people who've been in the field long they, yeah, it's their preference. Some people prefer to go to more administrative stuff than the supervisory stuff you know. Uh, some people want to continue with clinical practices, you know. For me this job is good, you know, because both, I can try both. I'm allowed to have this, this you know, uh, you know, opportunity.

Lauren held a similar perspective stating "But I have to have hands on front line and the agency knows that. I'm not going to supervise without doing some front line work so I'm doing prevention work in Surrey at this point." She also spoke about how this involvement enabled her to maintain perspective.

Staying front line, yup, being able to still do the hands on stuff. Being able to hear what the clients are, what's going on for them, what they need. Um, that's always my motivator. Always when I go to meetings, when I go to things, you know, um, site meetings and people are frustrated and adults are being ridiculous with each other and not managing to, to get along and then I go back to the kids and I go 'that's exactly, exactly why I'm staying with this.'

During one of the interviews while discussing promotions Elizabeth spoke of her decision to take on a management position. When I asked about whether she saw herself as ambitious she stated,

No. I don't have ambition....It's a senior position but it's really close to the field. Um, you know, the, the more up you go the less you know, you're much more removed. I don't want to do money and budgets. I don't want to do um, work in

the community and committee meetings, and things like that. That doesn't really interest me. I'm not good at it.

In reference to the work with clients she noted "It's also what I feel better at. You know, I just thing I'm better at that."

Shift in Skill Focus from People to Systems

In contrast to those who desired to stay involved with the direct work, two participants discovered that it wasn't working with people that actually interested them the most but rather program development and working with systems. Ellen noted,

Well it isn't actually people. And when I started off as an addictions counsellor I guess I thought it was and I did that for a long time and then I was missing it.

And at that point when I came here I was thinking I'll go back to the people thing.

That's, and it is. It's a wonderful thing that you can do for, for, forever and be perfectly happy with. And then when I moved on from that and learned different things now I think I'd be more useful um not necessarily even as a supervisor but at a more um, at a more program development level.

She also commented

Well, I like learning. You know, I like learning new things, and new challenges, and I think when I got into certainly in more management, then I thought there's a whole piece I could learn (sic) It's um, that's organizing. That's um, uh, steps and procedures and systems and I like systems but I more like developing systems then I do being in them.

Claire, the other participant interested in work at the systemic level, noted

I'm interested in the project management aspect of things. And I'm interested in building." She later expounded, envisioning the type of position that would interest her saying 'less front line...I think just anything that has to do with like growth or building programs or those kinds of things would be of interest to me. If that stops, I would move on. Cause I would just get bored.'

Responding to Levels of Hierarchy

Another area commented on by participants had to do with their experiences that come with choosing to be in supervisory or management positions. Six participants spoke about aspects of being in roles that required navigating and mediating between levels of position within a hierarchical system. They also spoke about the struggles to represent a system that they could not wholly support. Lori described how greatly her perspective changed once she got into a management position, that she was surprised by how unhealthy the system was.

I had heard about it but before this position, I was in this position, I hadn't really worked directly and I used to... I was more definitely isolated and buffered from it and didn't have to have a lot of direct interaction but now (sic) and this as a senior manager um, yeah as a supervisor I knew that things were a little wacky, you know, but I didn't really know. (sic) And now in this position and working more directly I see the big picture and I think whoa, it's like way ore screwed up than I thought (laughing).

John, who had many years of experience of working with government, described his own struggle with balancing ambition with a system with which he was not comfortable.

We can make significant changes here. So uh, though once you do that, for me as I did that kind of stuff as I was able to manipulate changes here, manipulate's a good word, manipulate how monies and decisions were made that was a real positive. The down side of it was that I was a person who was now starting to say to people, control people, their practices, or um, or I was a... person who's selling government.

He later added "the compromises you make with yourself and the change in your sense of values." As a result he chose to leave the government and took a position with a non-profit organization that allowed him to operate in a manner that was more consistent with his values.

Lori spoke about finding herself caught between the perspective of line workers who are focused on the immediate needs of their program and the government who is not always able or willing to respond to the concerns of individual programs. She stated "We need more infant development consultants and they're overworked and they have a waitlist and that a group that takes very personally, they're working with babies...and you know, we can't do anything....So I guess reassuring them um, listening to them. We've gone to a few staff meetings." She later added "Nobody's listening in the Ministry or the big picture or the world kind of thing. Um, so the best I can do is listen and we, you know, take their problems and then continue to advocate." Lori also commented on the inability of supervisors or managers to understand the perspective that the senior managers have of government because they are buffered from it. "When I speak to managers about stuff and when they say the same things that I used to say, 'well, why not? Why can't we just do that?' I think, 'You don't understand. It's a mess.' You

know, you have an idea but until you get into it. You think, wow. This is severely dysfunctional.”

Lauren reflected on the role of supervisors being accountable both to the line workers and to management.

When you're front line and I'm working with a client, this is what I'm working with uh, whereas as a supervisor, they'll come into you about a client and we're talking about the impact and just how do staff feel about doing, carrying that through and how is my manager going to see it, you know. There's just so much, so much more to be aware of and I do think that you have to be prepared to take more of a stance. You know, I think that not only now are you advocating for clients but you may have staff now um, that you may need to stand up for, advocate for, encourage or whatever, so it expands what you're doing and how you do it and to different types of people.

Similar to this, Elizabeth also spoke about the shift from being a line worker to being a supervisor or manager, focusing on how she thinks through how best to communicate to staff without causing undue worry or concern.

When I moved from therapist to manager or supervisor (sic) I would try to be optimistic because I was, it was clear that I would have such an influence on people. And so I needed to be pretty creative and talk about what can we do and how can we do this together and, what's possible? (sic) If I had a negative or if I was scared about something I know I'll be scaring staff. You know, if I'm worrying about something they will worry.

Don acknowledged the inability of line workers to impact the system. "The practitioners seem to have no freedom to really say 'that doesn't seem to be you know um, you know uh, compatible with these other services, you know or has that been well researched?'"

Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications and Outcomes

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of career for supervisors and managers in social service work in the present and over time. In discussing the findings of the research I will first summarize how the findings from the interview relate to the purpose of the study. I will then discuss how the findings relate to the review of the literature.

The Relationship Between the Findings and the Purposes of the Study

From the data analysis, five themes emerged in relation to how supervisors and managers make meaning of their experience. In this section I will look at how the themes that emerged from the data relate to the original intent of the study which was to explore how participants describe their values and motivation in their work, how they experience their work environment, how they make meaning of their experience and how their values and motivation have been impacted by the environment in the immediate and over time.

The first theme that emerged was the integrated manner in which participants spoke about values, beliefs and motivation in their work. During the interviews I attempted to tease out distinctions between values, beliefs and motivations. However participants repeatedly integrated them, often as though the distinction was negligible. This was a clear indication of the unconscious yet holistic, integrated style the participants used to approach their work life. An example of this was the value of respect. In describing respect, participants told stories, provided examples, linked respect to other values and beliefs. They often spoke with passion about values that were

especially important to them such as social justice and then linked it to experiences that illustrated the value. Some of the illustrations went all the way back to childhood experiences. For participants their motivation was in some ways a product of values and beliefs. The choices they made in the work place, the things that motivated them were congruent with their values and beliefs and when there was dissonance they made choices to change roles or were considering it. Don, Ellen, John, Lauren, Shelley and Claire all spoke specifically to this without my soliciting it.

The second theme looked at the dynamic give and take relationship that each participant had with their work environment. They spoke clearly about expectations of what they wanted the environment to provide for them and what they wanted to be able to give to the environment. Overall with regard to this theme, participants were very clear about the importance of working in an environment that enabled them to act out their values, and beliefs and to do this to the degree that their motivation to carry on was sustained. Examples of peak experiences when this experience of congruence was particularly salient were described in animated terms by six of the participants. For all participants the underlying factor appeared to be the desire for an environment that provided opportunity to live out values and beliefs and to challenge them towards growth in a dynamic way. Values mentioned included the opportunity to work with people, challenge, opportunity to learn and grow, and freedom to be creative.

In addition to expectations of what the environment would give to them, participants were also clear that it was important for them to be able to give to the environment, to impact the environment. All of the participants spoke about wanting to help people though they varied in what shape this would take. The ways in which they

wanted to help people seemed to be interconnected with their personality, experience, and the roles they chose to take on which again draws attention to the holistic, integrated manner in which the participants engaged with their work environment. Participants also spoke of wanting to be change agents, to somehow impact their environment. Five of the participants spoke about their desire to pass on skills and knowledge. A core of this theme is related to the theme mentioned later of the interview providing a freeze frame or snap shot of their experience within a life-span process of development. Again this highlights the dynamic, fluid, living process of career.

The third theme looked at how supervisors and managers navigate their way through their environment. I chose the word “navigate” because all of the participants described environments that were highly challenging, in some respects unpredictable and changing. They spoke candidly of ways in which the environment was difficult and burdensome and spoke also of ways in which it was rich and fulfilling. The sub-themes that emerged within this theme included the individual experience of the environment, both the government context and the context of their own agency, the participants’ understanding of their environment and the participants’ negotiating of their environment. With regards to the experience of the government, seven of the eight participants described relatively negative experiences of the government’s role in the social service sector. All of the participants spoke of the environment in terms of constant change usually initiated by the government. All eight of the participants also spoke of the environment as stressful or difficult. Various perspectives were provided in terms of the sources of the stress or difficulty. Common sources included government cutbacks and resulting program closures or reshuffling, the lack of consultation or

rationale for changes, limited funding or a competitive process for obtaining funding that conflicted with the government expectation that agencies work together to provide services.

Six of the eight participants spoke of their experience of the environment as challenging. I was struck by the tendency of all participants to see the challenge as both positive and negative as though to be challenged was important unless it crossed a limit after which it became a stressor. This was also true of the participants' experience of having to constantly learn new things. It was a challenge they seemed to enjoy unless it passed a limit and became unmanageable.

An experience described as negative by seven of the participants was the lack of consultation in government decision making. The general sense was of powerlessness, of being excluded from decisions that could greatly impact their lives and of seeing the government as controlling and autocratic. In spite of this participants found they had to be careful how they communicated with staff about changes and expectations so as not to be seen as aligning against the government and thereby adding more stress and conflict to the system.

In terms of how participants negotiated the environment all of the eight participants had remained in the environment for at least ten years, had taken promotions and described positive feelings and thoughts about their work history. This suggests that they had found ways to negotiate the environment in spite of the difficulties and stressors they described. The common factor with all of the participants that enabled them to succeed in a challenging environment was a positive experience within their own agency that seemed to counterbalance the more negative experience of the government. A

primary mitigating factor was their ability to influence their situation, to have a voice. It would be interesting to compare their experience in this regard to that of line workers who have not chosen to take promotions. Other mitigating factors included opportunity to grow, learn, try new things, and to be creative. All of the participants spoke of feeling supported by the leadership in their organizations. Elements of support included being rewarded for work well done, being trusted to take on new projects, and being emotionally supported. Participants highlighted the importance of working in a place that was congruent with their own values and beliefs. While participants were for the most part positive about their experience in their own agency they were also realistic and seemed to be in a constant position of monitoring the overall balance between positives and negatives. This was evident in the declaration of the majority of the participants that they would leave if the negative aspects of their work outweighed the positives. Again this was described as an ongoing fluid experience as though there was a passive internal observer looking over their shoulder monitoring their well being and job satisfaction.

The fourth theme that emerged had to do with how participants looked at their roles in the context of life span development. Within this theme, three sub-themes emerged. These were the tendency of all participants to connect their present experience to their past experiences, the perspective that values were somewhat essential and tended to remain stable over time, and their perspective of how beliefs, understanding, behaviours, and motivation change over time through experience and growth.

The hallmark of the first sub-theme, the connection between present experience and past experience was the sense that the span of life is a continuous whole. Participants thought this way without any direction or drawing it out from me. They described

experiences from childhood and youth that set the course of their lives and connected those experiences to career choices they had made and to personal interests, beliefs and values.

The second sub-theme of the notion that values remain stable over time was expressed not as an empirically based belief but more from an intuitive sense that there is something essential about what is important to people that stays with them through life and finds expression in different ways as we grow and learn and develop. Without being given any prompting or definition of a value as distinct from a belief or motivation, participants seemed to struggle with how to distinguish their values from beliefs.

In contrast to the perceived stability of values, participants described continual and progressive change in beliefs, understanding, behaviours, and motivation. Participants described ways that they had matured, insights and understanding they had gained, and changes in what was important to them. The changes were usually a result of personal experience though they also seemed to be a natural process of moving through stages of life. Changes described included becoming more realistic, communicating more openly and directly, and becoming more flexible. Flexibility also became evident in the beliefs of participants. For example, several participants spoke of becoming less directive, as they came to believe that change for clients comes from themselves rather than from an external source such as a counsellor.

The final theme that emerged was the relationship between life-span development and ambition. Participants also connected changes in ambition to maturing over time. I was surprised at the self perception of seven of the eight participants that their promotions were almost more due to opportunity knocking than to personal ambition.

Though they recognized that others perceived them as leaders and at times encouraged them to take on positions of leadership they did not tend to see themselves as ambitious. Several participants talked about appreciating the breadth of influence leadership positions afforded them. One of the factors that seemed to become more important with age was the desire to mentor others and to pass on one's skills and knowledge. Several participants noted shifts over time in ambition in that what was important to them had changed. With age, relationships and satisfaction with who they were as people seemed to be more important and achieving material or status measures of success were less important.

The Relationship Between the Findings and the Literature Review

As noted at the beginning of the study Donald Super spoke of occupational choice as a gradual developmental choice which he supported empirically through longitudinal studies. He described the concept of career adaptability as "the ability to cope with developmental and adaptation tasks, while recognizing that the capacity to do so is not curvilinear and that it may have many peaks and valleys" (Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Jordan & Myers, 1988, as cited by Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown & Niles, 2001, p. 75). The findings of this study were consistent with those of Super et al. Participants spoke of their perception that values were somewhat stable but that the manner in which they acted them out had changed over the course of their career. They did not articulate the changes as relating to life-span development yet did speak frequently to ways in which they had changed over time such as in level of maturity, becoming wiser about what can be accomplished, and later in their careers wanting to move into more mentoring relationships in which they could influence greater numbers of people.

The results of Super's Work Importance Study (WIS), a cross cultural exploration of people's life roles and values they seek in their careers and life in general (Niles & Goodnough, 1996; Sverko, 2001) indicated that the importance of any role was viewed to depend on whether the individual perceived there to be opportunities to attain their salient values through that role (Sverko). The study which involved 10 countries and used two inventories, the Values Scale (VS) and Salience Inventory (SI) also found that the hierarchies of values were similar across the countries with the fulfillment of one's potential or self actualization standing out as a significant life goal for most subjects. While the Work Importance Study used inventories to measure life roles and values people seek in career and life in general this study used a phenomenological approach which allowed exploration of more of the intricacies and subtleties of how people make meaning of relationships between life roles, values, motivation, and beliefs. What emerged was the congruence between values, beliefs and motivation and that dissonance among these often motivated choices to make changes such as decisions to pursue promotions.

Consistent with the work of Super and others, opportunity to live out one's values within the work role of participants was clearly important. Participants also focused on their dynamic relationship with the environment in that they were very clear about what they needed from the environment and what they want to give to the environment to experience success. Again, the failure of the environment to satisfactorily allow give and take often influenced decisions to make changes. Even in an environment which they experienced as quite stressful participants were able to maintain a positive focus. The mitigating factor appeared to be their more positive experience within their own agency.

In relation to whether fulfillment of one's potential was indeed important to participants, it was clear with all participants that it was highly important as they commonly used language that spoke to the drive to grow, to be what they could be. What was interesting was how their perception of fulfillment changed over time. The person they wanted to be changed with maturity and life experience.

An overall finding among participants was that while there was commonality in terms of values that underlay their work, they thought about values in very tangible, behavioural terms. For example rather than use terms such as altruism or caring, participants gave examples of what they do and why they do it, such as coming to work to prevent abuse of children or to advocate for youth. As Zytowski (1994) noted, there is a lack of empirical research to determine "the function of work values in behaviours of interest, such as occupational and educational preferences, career maturity, self-efficacy, and the like" (p. 30) In relation to this study, the use of qualitative methodology allowed participants to explore how their values related to occupational choices, self-efficacy and on a more immediate scale to daily decisions in the work place. It also allowed exploration of how values interact with the environment, the work context. As was stated earlier the general experience of participants was that while values seem to be more stable, changes occur over the life span in terms of how they are acted out as people mature.

Michael Arthur and Robert DePhillippi (1994) have looked at the market shift in which jobs have moved from being stable, clearly defined and existing within a hierarchical structure to flexible, changing, and designed to meet a specific but often temporary need. Within this change they speak to how this has altered the notion of

career success. While the focus of their research is on the corporate world, I was interested in the implications of this market shift for the human service field. As all participants have worked in the human service sector for a minimum of ten years I was able to explore with participants their perceptions of how the work environment has changed and how this has impacted their own choices and experience. Given that the age range of participants was from early thirties to mid fifties there was considerable variation in terms of their willingness or ability to embrace the changes in market. All participants noted that the social service sector has become increasingly marked by change, and instability in terms of guarantees of funding or services. Seven of the eight participants experienced this as stressful and difficult. The eighth participant, who was also the youngest, expressed little distress over the changes and rather appeared to view it as opportunity. She also noted that this approach to the work was more typical of what she had grown up with and in which she had been educated.

Inkson and Arthur (2001) attributed part of the shift towards a rapidly changing work environment to the pervasive organizational change and restructuring in companies. This is consistent with environment in the human service sector as well. One can surmise that the adaptations to such an environment to enable success would be similar for both sectors. While the participants all noted the rapid change within their environments they had all also chosen to remain committed to organizations for lengthy periods of time in the midst of the change. What was constant was the experience of support from their agencies and passion about the work that they did. This did not fit with the theory of career success presented by Arthur and DePhillippi (1994) in which they talk about the "boundaryless career." The participants in this study had all made long term

commitments to particular agencies. They spoke of congruence between their own values and those of their agencies and indicated that they planned to stay in their own organizations as long as the work environment continued to provide an environment in which they could succeed. What was not clear in this study was to what degree this was a function of the social service sector and how it differs from the corporate world and how much it was a function of the participants, that I had specifically chosen to interview individuals who had made a long term commitment to work in this field with specific organizations and had chosen to take on leadership roles within them.

A number of aspects of working for an agency that is contracted by the government distinguishes it from what one might experience in the corporate arena. This includes being part of an enormous system that provides services to people. Arthur and DePhillippi (1994) propose that the successful company moves towards a competency-based view in which the collective employee competencies and uninhibited interaction with partners, suppliers and customers contribute to the company's success in the marketplace. The magnitude of the social service system, the continually changing political arena, the low ceiling on potential funding for programs and the degree to which agencies are tied to government funding all restrict an agency's potential for competing in the social service arena to the degree that they are limited in their freedom to provide services autonomously. All of the participants expressed visions and a desire to be creative in how they provide services and at the same time expressed frustration with the limitations and restrictions of being part of the larger system. In this respect, applying the boundaryless career as described by Arthur and DePhillippi to the social service

sector requires some rethinking of how to strive for a competency based approach in a restrictive environment.

In looking then at how the three core, firm-based competencies, knowing why, knowing how and knowing whom, fit with working in the social service sector, the knowing why has to do with the identity, values and interests of the firm. In adapting the intelligent firm to the individual, the knowing-why competencies relate to one's career motivation, meaning making, and to the integration of work into one's identity. All of the participants spoke of how difficult the larger arena of social services is to work in and were particularly negative in their descriptions of the government's role. In contrast, all participants spoke of belief in the identity and values of their own agencies and described a commitment to the missions of their organizations. There was a very clear integration for all participants of their work into their own identity. This could best be seen in the tendency of all to make references to their childhood experiences and how these related to career choices, values and beliefs.

The second core competency, knowing how, addresses the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for success. Knowing-how competencies reflect relevant skills and job-related knowledge and the search for jobs that will accommodate these. All of the participants felt that they had found a place within the larger system in which they could use their particular knowledge, skills and abilities to function successfully within their workplace. This was particularly noticeable in how they explained the choices they made to advance to supervisory or management positions. Where they would differ from the successful career of Arthur and DePhillippi would be in how they might define success and the values that guide their choices.

Finally knowing-whom competencies focus on intra-firm, inter-firm, professional and social networks that contribute to the firm's success. The knowing-whom competencies reflect "career relevant" networks which individuals develop and access both to further their own career as well as to contribute to inter-firm communication. Participants in this study appeared to be much less deliberate in terms of developing and accessing social networks to further their own careers. The concern appeared to be more with the service that is being provided, with social networks being viewed as a means to the end of providing good service. In the social service sector, the survival of organizations is largely dependent on building relationships. The nature of the work is about relationships. The importance of this appeared to increase the higher the position the participant held in their organization.

Polly Parker (2002) describes the shift to the new market "successful" career as a shift in paradigm from objective to subjective career emphasis in which career success is no longer measured by externally defined work roles but by internal, subjective criteria for success that allow the integration of values and beliefs into a more holistic approach to career decision making. This paradigm fits well with the data collected from the participants. As the themes which emerged indicated, all participants approached career from a holistic perspective of integrating values and beliefs into their work and viewing the development of their career identity as spanning from childhood to the present.

The studies that reviewed the experience of employees in the social service sector found widespread frustration with environments of change and unpredictability, restructuring and cutbacks (Huntington, 1999; Martin, Phelps, & Katbamna, 2004). While the participants in this study expressed similar experiences the existing literature

focused more on how organizations respond to the environment (Becker & Greer, 1995; Ezell, Casey, Pecora, Grossman, Friend, Vernon, & Godfrey, 2002; Lawler & Hearn, 1997; Riley & Guerrier, 1993; Zunz, 1998). This study looked at the impact of the environment on values and motivation over time.

The participants in this study, similar to previous studies, found that their experience of the environment and response to it changed as they moved into supervisory and management positions. As noted in the review of the literature, at the supervisory and management level the direct impact of the environment is intensified, as individuals try to balance providing constancy to the service providers and clients with absorbing and responding to changes and expectations that come from government and upper management (Erera, 1991; Erera-Weatherly, 1996; Huntington, 1999). This was consistent with the experience of participants in this study. While participants found that values were relatively stable, they all spoke of how they had changed over time in how they dealt with the environment. This seemed to be a function both of life-span development and of learning how to succeed in the environment. Again of paramount importance to success and well being was that participants found an organization that was congruent with their own values and beliefs.

Sharyn Zunz (1998), in a quantitative study using a sample of 180 human service managers, looked at protective factors employed to mediate between the risks of burnout encountered on the job and the resilience they seek. Zunz drew five potential social-environmental, protective factors which she found to be commonly mentioned in the resiliency literature: social support, problem solving skills, sense of professional purpose or mission, receiving recognition for a talent or skill and sense of self efficacy. The

results of the study indicated that some of the same protective factors which contribute to resiliency in other populations could to varying degrees fit for human service managers facing job-related burnout as well. Though this study was not looking at protective factors or resiliency it did look at the factors that contributed to the long term commitments of supervisors of managers all of whom had worked in this field for a minimum of ten years and as many as thirty five years. What emerged was the manner in which they made meaning of the environment and how this related to their sense of success or failure. The social environmental factors mentioned by Zunz were certainly acknowledged by participants as important though in keeping with the direction of this study they were presented in terms of how they related to values, beliefs, and motivation.

Limitations/Delimitations

As with all research, this study was limited in the scope of what could be uncovered by using the selected methodology and methods. One of the limitations of this study was the selection as participants, supervisors and managers in social service organisations in Greater Vancouver, a large city. With only 8 participants it is very possible that the participants did not represent supervisors and managers even in Greater Vancouver. In addition, the participants were not representative of human service managers outside of the targeted area and cannot represent participants taken from other human service fields. As Vancouver provides a large, urban context, the experience in the social service system may be quite different from that of people in smaller, rural areas.

Social services tend to be highly political and dependent on government funding and control. The findings therefore may relate to people in other human service fields

such as healthcare or work with mentally handicapped where again the government tends to provide funding for services and to give direction to how service is provided. The findings would less relate to people who work for organizations that are independently funded and provide services out of a sense of mission for a particular group.

A third limitation is the choice to interview people in supervisory and management positions. This will make the results most relevant to people in similar positions of leadership. They will be less relevant to people working in direct client-service positions although given that they also have chosen to work in the social service sector, there may be common values, beliefs, motivation and experiences of the environment.

Implications for Research

The most significant finding in this research was the holistic manner in which participants approach their work. In the present there was significant integration of values, beliefs, behaviours, and motivation. In terms of life span development there was constancy of personality showing in connections made from childhood to the present in areas such as interests and values. There were also changes in maturity, wisdom, and understanding, as stated by a number of participants, changes in how they act out values and interests. The results of the study draw attention to theories of personality and how they relate to life span development and career path. Further study on particular aspects of personality development would enhance understanding of who succeeds in highly stressful human service fields and how that happens. Examples of this might include the work of Julian Rotter on Locus of Control (Schultz & Schultz, 2005), the work of Marvin

Zuckerman on sensation seeking (Schultz & Schultz) or the work of Martin Seligman on positive psychology (Schultz & Schultz).

Further research on how the intelligent career as defined by Arthur and DePhillipi (1994) fits with the social service sector would clarify whether the model can be transferred to this sector or at least which aspects are useful to understanding how one succeeds in the current social service context. In keeping with the work of Arthur and DePhillipi on the intelligent career, what is applicable to the social service sector is the notion that human service providers can most productively provide service as they simultaneously foster both organisational success and individual career success of supervisors and managers. The findings in this study may add understanding of how better to do this in the human service field.

The findings of this study suggested that supervisors and managers who experience the environment as stressful find motivation in working for an organization that shares their values and beliefs, that allows them to act out values and beliefs through their work and that provides a supportive environment which can act as a buffer against the broader stressful environment. This study looked at the experience of individuals within organizations. Future research may look at how organizations as a whole respond to the stressful environment specifically in terms of the relationship between the values and beliefs of organizations and the needs and motivation of individual employees. How do organizations resist the erosion of values, beliefs, and motivation of the organization and its employees in order to thrive in the environment and avoid losing talented, loyal employees.

As I stated several times in the data analysis section, participants thought about values, beliefs, and behaviours in a very holistic, integrated way. They also viewed these from a life-span perspective that demonstrated a continuous, ongoing experience in which any given moment is part of a life-long journey that is coherent and linked from step to step. However by choosing a phenomenological approach I became limited in the ability to isolate values, beliefs, and behaviours and to look at distinctions in a more empirical manner. A quantitative approach targeting specific variables would allow questions to be more direct and specific and could provide greater clarity about values, beliefs, and behaviours of supervisors and managers. Finally, further quantitative research with broader populations of human service workers may identify and clarify results that can be generalized to human service workers in a variety of fields such as healthcare and education.

Implications for Practice

As research indicates that core values such as altruism contribute to the decision to work in human services, understanding how values are impacted by the environment over time may contribute to addressing how to sustain one's commitment to their values in a stressful environment. As Donald Super noted, values hold a central place in job satisfaction. It can be expected that values such as altruism will continue to be high on the list of values that lead people to choose social services as a career choice. The study suggested that it is important for supervisors and managers to work in an environment that holds similar values to their own and that allows them to act out their values in their work. This study may provide insight for individuals and organizations as to reasons

why people are dissatisfied in their work and what can be done to ameliorate the situation.

Given that people are more likely to be satisfied and motivated in their work if the environment is consistent with their values and beliefs and provides opportunities to act out values and beliefs, organizations could benefit from paying attention to this in hiring supervisors and managers. Identifying the values and beliefs of prospective employees may aid in placing people in positions where the organization will be more likely to benefit from their contribution and the individuals will be more likely to be satisfied in their work. Agencies that pay attention to matching employee values and beliefs to positions are more likely to succeed in a competitive and unpredictable environment.

Though the study focused on the experience of supervisors and managers, the likelihood is that the importance of values and beliefs to motivation and behaviour in the workplace is equally applicable to line workers or people at other levels. Supervisors and managers will also find those they supervise are most effective and most satisfied in their work as well when the environment is consistent with their values and beliefs and allows them to act on them. It is important for agency management teams to understand the mitigating role of the agency environments in influencing the level of job satisfaction and commitment of employees.

The insight gained from this study may also be useful to organizations as they go through strategic planning efforts. An organization that pays attention to and attends to the needs of its employees can greatly impact the organization's ability to succeed in its goals. The relationship between ambition, life-span development and values and beliefs was one of the themes that emerged in this study. In terms of practice, a common

motivator for supervisors and managers in this study, particularly further along in their careers, was the desire to mentor others. This relational motivator is important for organizations to understand so as to benefit from promoting mentoring relationships between supervisors, managers and those they supervise or between line workers who are from different age groups.

Another motivating factor for taking promotions that emerged in this study had to do with people wanting to have greater impact on the environment. Organizations will benefit from isolating the type of impact that interests people and providing opportunity for them to exercise their abilities and skills. For some employees their interest was in relationships while for others they had discovered over time that their interest was more in systems.

The study highlights the complex relationship between individual values and beliefs, pursuit of career success and a supportive agency environment as a buffer in a stressful, larger social service context. In addition the environment is dynamic and changing and experienced by many as unpredictable. The study illustrates the difficulty yet importance of identifying and isolating which aspects of the global picture are most problematic and deriving solutions adequate to resolve the problems.

As values play a central role in satisfaction and success in one's career and certain values such as altruism are common to people who choose human service work, the study may increase knowledge and understanding of career counsellors as they work with people who lean towards choosing to work in the human service sector. This study reemphasizes the early work of Donald Super in his acknowledgement of the importance of values in the work place as a constant over the length of career. For people who are

unhappy in their work, the study points to the importance in career counselling of exploring the fit between the individual's values and beliefs and the environment in which they work.

The correlation between career path and life-span development which emerged in this study is important for career counsellors in terms of recognizing the need to take a holistic and life long approach to facilitating career decision making. Insight into how the environment impacts values and motivation over time for supervisors and managers may add to a more realistic perspective for those who have not yet entered the field or who are new in the field.

Finally, including training related to values and motivation of employees who work in a stressful human service environment may provide a forum for employees to identify, acknowledge, and make decisions about their need to work congruently with their values and motivation, and to clarify how they can be successful in their current context.

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Contact for Information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact the co-investigator, Alison Stevens, at 604-583-3921 or Dr. Norm Amundson at 604-822-6757.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your identity, employment or confidentiality.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant signing above.

Appendix C: Demographic Information

Interview #: _____

Date: _____

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Age: 25-35 _____ 36-45 _____ 46-55 _____ 56+ _____

Years of experience in Social Services _____

Years of experience in a supervisory capacity _____

Years of experience in a management capacity _____

Years employed by this agency _____

Current position: _____

Years in current position: _____

Size of employing agency: 0-50 _____ 50-100 _____ 100-150 _____

 150-200 _____ 200+ _____