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ON BECOMING AN ECOLOGICALLY CONSCIOUS SOCIAL WORKER:
EXPLORING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES THAT INCLUDE A RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL
CRISIS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Creator, my God, who breathed life into me and all of creation, and who gave me a heart for justice and desire to care for creation, both humans and non-humans alike. I hope through this work I can inspire others to also become more ecologically conscious.

I also dedicate this work to Kevin and Kaia who have encouraged me to dare to dream and helped me to enjoy life while we have been on this long, winding journey together. Certainly, the fastest path isn't necessarily the most fun. And, to my Mom and Dad who not only gave me roots, but helped me to stretch my wings. And, to my amazing in-laws, Pa and Gigi whose love and support have also been a blessing. And to my brother, Keenan, I'm finally not in school anymore; well, at least not as a student. And to my brother, Bee, thanks for cheering me on through this epic adventure, on to the next.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Mounting scientific evidence about the global environmental crisis has created an urgent call to action for all people to promote sustainable environmental practices that enhance the well-being of humans and the ecological systems in which they live. Despite the increasing body of social work literature or the recent social work leadership's emphasis on this call to action, the social work profession as a whole has been slow to embrace an "*expanded professional identity*" that includes a response to the environmental crisis. Further insight is needed from individual social workers who have expanded professional identities. Knowledge is needed from their specific experiences of professional socialization in order to develop theories for educators to use to help students and practitioners develop an expanded professional identity.

A grounded theory qualitative research study was conducted with social workers (N=17) using their professional skills to address the environmental crisis. The study aimed to explore their reciprocal process of professional socialization including: 1) how they developed an expanded professional identity, and 2) how, if at all, they influenced others in the profession to develop an expanded professional identity. This study found that social workers may not need expanded professional identities in order to situate themselves in roles to work on environmental issues. Of the participants (n=14) who were found to have expanded professional identities, it was discovered that they had

two pathways of professional socialization. Emerging factors that contributed to and hindered their development of an expanded professional identity were analyzed and are presented in the findings of this study. Based on results of the study, I developed a grounded theory of reciprocal professional socialization. These new findings contribute to the current literature on professional socialization, and provide crucial insight on professional social work identity. The discussion highlights key supportive factors that could be used to promote an expanded professional identity across social work education, research, policy, and practice. As more social workers develop an expanded professional identity the profession as a whole could transform and potentially become a leader in an era of global environmental crisis.

Keywords: *qualitative research, grounded theory, professional socialization of social workers*, *social work professional responsibility*, *social work education, environmental crisis, ecological crisis, ecological justice*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With mounting scientific evidence about the global environmental crisis, an

urgent call to action exists promoting sustainable environmental practices that enhance

the well-being of humans and the ecological systems in which they live (Besthorn, 2013;

Besthorn, 2002; Coates, 2005; CSDH, 2008; Dewane, 2011; Dominelli, 2012; Gray,

Coates, & Herrington, 2013; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Humphreys & Rogge, 2000; IPCC,

2014; Weber, 2012). Over the past few decades, social workers have given increasing

attention to approaches humans can take to answer this call and respond to the

environmental crisis, including the social and ecological injustices that are inextricably

linked to each other (Besthorn, 2013; Besthorn & Meyer, 2010; Coates, 2005; Dominelli,

2012; Estes, 1993; Gray, Coates, & Herrington, 2013; Hoff & Rogge, 1996; Humphreys &

Rogge, 2000; Mary, 2008; World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987).

Examples of these approaches are eliminating the production and use of toxins that

contaminate soil, air, and water, causing insufficient and/or unsafe access to food and

water for humans and non-humans alike. Unabated, these environmental issues can

lead to additional ecological problems such as loss of species, mass migration,

displacement, and overcrowding (Besthorn & Meyer, 2010; Dominelli, 2012). Ecological

degradation disproportionately affects vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed client

populations, making it an issue of social and ecological injustice (Besthorn, 2013;

Bullard, 1994; Gray, Coates, & Herrington, 2013; Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2012; Hoff &

Rogge, 1996; Norton, Holguin, & Manos, 2013; Weber, 2012; Zapf, 2009). As a result,

social and ecological justice issues related to the environmental crisis are an increasing

concern to current social work leadership, as evidenced in recent national and

international professional agendas (e.g., inclusion of environmental justice in the new

Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for the Council on Social Work

Education, 2014; tenth Grand Challenge of the American Academy of Social Work and

Social Welfare, "Create Social Responses to a Changing Environment", see Kemp &

Palinkas, 2015; third agenda item in Global Agenda for Social Work and Social

Development: Commitments to Action, "Working Toward Environmental Sustainability",

see IASSW, ICSW, & IFSW, 2012).

However, the profession as a whole (e.g., practitioners, educators) has been slow

to embrace the global call to action in the environmental crisis because work on

environmental issues has typically been considered outside of the "professional

identity" (i.e., boundaries and responsibilities) of social work. Some social worker

scholars believe this is due to the underlying human-centric paradigm which has led to

the operationalization of a narrowed person-environment framework primarily focused

on the social environment (Besthorn, 2013; Besthorn & Meyer, 2010; Coates, 2005;

Dominelli, 2012; Gray, Coates, & Herrington, 2013; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Humphreys, &

Rogge, 2000; Jones, 2010; Mary, 2008; Weick, 1981; Zapf, 2009). These scholars make a

strong case for the profession to shift to an eco-centric paradigm, meaning that humans

are not operating outside of the environment, but are a part of the environment.

Therefore, environmental well-being and human well-being are inextricably linked. Using an eco-centric paradigm, social work could operationalize and expand the person-environment framework to include the physical environment and social environment, and thus, recognize and embrace a role and responsibility in the global response to the environmental crisis.

Increasingly, individual social workers are responding despite challenges encountered from tensions around whether work on environmental issues lies outside the professional identity of social work. Social workers who work on environmental issues represent the current leadership's vision for the profession, but also challenge the profession because they promote an expansion, or transformation, of the current profession's identity. Currently, the social work literature includes few voices from these individual social workers' perspective (Dominelli, 2012; Gray, Coates, & Herrington, 2013; LeBourbeau & Ledlie-Johnson, 2013). Also, this literature does not explore the processes of professional socialization related to the development of an expanded professional identities that include responding to the environmental crisis. As such, a study on how and why social workers respond to the environmental crisis may inform the development of such a professional identity. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

The social work profession in the United States emerged to meet the needs of people impoverished and suffering because of injustices related to industrialism and capitalism in urban areas (e.g., overpopulation, poor working conditions, unsafe housing) (Addams, 1970; Kelley, 1970; Levy Simon, 1998). Some pioneers in social work,

such as Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, exhibited a professional identity in which they sought to change communities by intervening at a systems level to address environmental as well as social, political, and economic problems that led to individual suffering. They focused on community practices that involved environmental issues such as waste management, sanitation improvements, park development, and reducing the spread of communicable diseases (Addams, 1970; Kelley, 1970). This type of systems-level thinking developed into the ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As applied to human development, this ecological perspective puts forth a "person-in-environment" framework which acknowledges that individuals are affected by their environments at different system levels that impact their growth and balance (Germain & Gitterman, 1980). Despite the fact that the ecological perspective drew from the natural sciences' model that assumed the interdependence of organisms and system as a whole, this eco-centric paradigm was lost in translation to the social sciences as the person-in-environment framework has been operationalized using a human-centric paradigm focused on helping individuals, families, and communities to improve or adapt to the sociocultural environment (i.e., political, economic, social) and operating under the assumption that humans are outside of and governing over the environment, rather than part of the environment. Thus, a broader framework with reciprocal human and environmental interactions actually aligns more closely with the original meaning of the ecological perspective, and with the professional identities that many pioneers in social work exhibited in their work on environmental issues.

Several social work scholars have offered alternative frameworks that are shifted from a human-centric paradigm to an eco-centric paradigm. Some of these alternative frameworks include "person and environment", "person-environment", and "people as place" (Coates, 2005; Mary, 2008; Zapf, 2009). Along with these, an increasing number of social work scholars are calling for a paradigm shift to embrace more eco-centric frameworks which would reshape and expand the professional identity to also respond to the environmental crisis (Besthorn, 2013; Besthorn & Meyer, 2010; Coates, 2005; Dominelli, 2012; Gray, Coates, & Herrington, 2013; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Humphreys, & Rogge, 2000; Mary, 2008; Zapf, 2009).

For more than a decade, some professional social work leadership, such as the National Association of Social Workers via their Statement on the Environment (Humphreys & Rogge, 2000), has promoted the need for the professional identity to also respond to the environmental crisis. Gray, Coates, and Herrington (2013) offer a comprehensive overview of the social work literature related to environmental issues from the past four decades. I concur with Gray, Coates, and Herrington (2013) that while the growing literature is promising, the authors are simply reinforcing each other's theoretical points and not making the connection to social work education or practice in ways that educators or practitioners are embracing and applying it in their work. Perhaps this is due to limited literature on practitioners' views about whether and why they became involved in work on environmental issues as professional social workers. LeBourbeau and Ledlie-Johnson (2013) briefly described how they began their social work practice with environmental issues, but did not delve into the process of

professional socialization. Additionally, Gray, Coates, and Herrington (2013) offered several examples of what practitioners are doing to respond to the environmental crisis such as social work with recently incarcerated youth who learned environmental preservation as potential employment options to reduce recidivism (Norton, Holguin, & Manos, 2013); social work with community gardens as community intervention and field education sites for social work students (Shepard, 2013); social work in drought-affected areas (Stehlik, 2013); social work with animals and the natural world (Ryan, 2013); and social work assisting corporations with sustainable environmental practices (Ross, 2013). Although these recent additions to the literature are promising case examples, they fail to describe the processes of professional socialization to understand how these social workers developed a professional identity that also responded to the environmental crisis. There is a paucity of social work literature on professional socialization in general as well as related to this specific area of professional identity. If social work as a profession is to find ways to remain relevant, and also potentially become a leader in an era of global environmental crisis, we need to learn from such social workers who have successfully found ways to engage with work on the environmental crisis. Knowledge is needed from their specific experiences of professional socialization to develop theories for educators to use to help students and practitioners develop an expanded professional identity that includes a response to the environmental crisis.

Specific Aims

The social work profession could become a leader in the multidisciplinary response addressing the urgent conditions of the environmental crisis. Individual social workers are using their professional skills to address environmental issues in their work, despite the fact that the profession as a whole has not embraced an "expanded professional identity" that includes a response to the environmental crisis. An expanded professional identity is defined in this study as including both expanded boundaries that allow for social work roles with environmental issues and an expanded responsibility that creates an obligation to address environmental issues. The few case examples in the current literature of social workers who responded to the environmental crisis do not include research about the process of how they developed an expanded professional identity. This study aimed to explore each participant's reciprocal process of professional socialization, including: 1) how they developed an expanded professional identity, and 2) how, if at all, they influenced others in the profession to develop an expanded professional identity. Based on results of the study, I developed a grounded theory of reciprocal professional socialization. The grounded theory contributes to the current literature on professional socialization, and provides crucial insight on professional social work identity. The discussion highlights key supportive factors that could be promote a response to the environmental crisis across social work education, research, policy, and practice, potentially transforming the profession.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout their academic and professional careers, social workers are

socialized to develop knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and a professional identity with

certain norms and boundaries (e.g., professional social work roles, problem areas,

practice approaches). Two predominant perspectives have emerged about how

professional socialization takes place — the structural functionalist perspective (Merton,

Reader, & Kendall, 1957) and the symbolic interactionist perspective (Becker, Geer,

Hughes, & Strauss, 1961). The following paragraphs briefly explore these two

perspectives. A recent social work scholar, Miller (2010, 2013), offered a conceptual

framework that extended these two perspectives by combining aspects from both. The

current study supplements Miller's work with an additional model by Reinharz (1993) —

the dynamic interactionist model of professional socialization. Although not as recent,

Reinharz offered an alternative model in the symbolic interactionist perspective that

substantially contributed to understanding the professional socialization of social

workers. Reinharz originally applied this model to her field of sociology, although it was

written with all social sciences in mind. After careful review of the limited literature on

professional socialization (Barretti, 2004; Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961;

Clouder, 2003; Landau, 1999; Miller, 2013; Miller, 2010; Merton, Reader, & Kendall,

1957; Reinharz, 1993; Weiss, Gal, & Cnaan, 2004), I found that Reinharz offered the best

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fit for a conceptual framework to guide my data collection and analysis for this dissertation. An in-depth exploration of her model is discussed below.

Merton, Reader, and Kendall (1957) described the structural functionalist perspective in a seminal study on the professional socialization of medical students. The authors believed the structure of the social environment in educational programs (i.e., social relationships between students and peers, between students and supervisors) to be key in shaping students' professional identities. These structures act as "monitors of medical practice" during medical training and reinforce the "right way" to practice medicine (Merton et al., 1957, p.77). Merton and colleagues asserted that personal decisions to become a medical student, and the type of medicine to practice, were more about the pressures and influence of the structure rather than the individual's personality or agency. Thus, the social structure of the educational setting served the function of socializing students into the medical profession. In the structural functionalist perspective, socializers (i.e., peers, supervisors) mold novices by a non-reciprocal, one-way transfer of norms and boundaries to these novice members (Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957). This perspective also holds that professional socialization is a linear, progressive academic process of molding novice members (i.e., students) until they graduate and are deemed to have conformed to and adopted a professional identity consistent with their profession (Barretti, 2004; Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961; Clouder, 2003; Miller, 2010).

Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss (1961) presented the symbolic interactionist perspective as an alternative to the structural functionalist perspective in a groundbreaking study that also focused on the professional socialization of medical students. Becker and colleagues agreed with Merton and colleagues (1957) that professional socialization in the academic setting included the structure of the social environment in educational programs. However, Becker and colleagues additionally asserted that professional socialization was interactive and reciprocal rather than simply a one-way transfer of professional identity. They asserted that professional socialization continued beyond the academic setting. In the symbolic interactionist perspective, an individual develops a professional identity as a result of the ongoing group interaction or reciprocal process, not by assimilation and adoption. Group interaction is a combination of the social environment with peers and supervisors, as well as individual factors (e.g., personal agency). Individual factors include the possibility of conflict in the way novices' interpret and reject what the academic institution offers, and that novices experience elements of professional socialization that are inconsistent and vary by context (e.g., school, job) (Barretti, 2004; Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1961; Clouder, 2003; Miller, 2010). In addition, Becker and colleagues believed novices continue to develop a professional identity over time and across stages of their careers, and do not merely adopt a professional identity upon completion of an academic program.

Miller (2010), a social work scholar, offered a conceptual framework combining these two perspectives; she described the process of professional socialization as "neither entirely orderly nor entirely conflict-ridden" (p. 929). Miller noted four

interrelated outcomes of professional socialization as "(1) knowledge and skills, (2) values, (3) attitudes, and (4) professional social work identity" (p.930). This multidimensional framework has three stages — pre-socialization, formal socialization (i.e., education) and practice after formal socialization. Miller noted that although these stages are temporal, professional socialization is not a linear process; instead, outcomes are developed over the life or career of a social worker.

Although Miller (2010) has moved the profession of social work forward in the study of professional socialization, her model can be expanded by applying two key aspects explained by Reinharz (1993). First, Miller did not incorporate the key aspect of personal agency as Reinharz did by making explicit the extent to which novices themselves become socializers. Miller allows for the setting itself to be a socializer, yet the individual novice him/herself is not indicated as a socializer. Second, Miller did not include Reinharz's attention to the problems novices have conforming to a field of inconsistencies, which is true of the social work profession. The following paragraphs explain in detail what the Reinharz dynamic interactionist model of professional socialization offers in general, and to social work specifically.

According to Reinharz (1993), professional socialization is a dynamic, continual process with three components — "the private resolution of dissonance, the intimate interaction with significant others, and the public confirmation of the new self through various ritualized events" (p. 374). In her model, individuals question the assumptions and practices of the professional identity they are learning and either accept and

identify with them, or reject them. Reinharz asserted that professional socialization begins before one's academic program and continues during one's academic program and beyond into one's professional career as it involves an iterative process of formation, not merely an achievement of adopting a professional identity upon induction into a profession (i.e., graduation). Thus, this model fits well as a conceptual framework for my research question of how study participants have developed an expanded professional identity. This research question is implicitly about the process of supports to help them develop their expanded professional identity. However, Reinharz also caused me to explicitly examine the conflicts or hindrances in their process of developing an expanded professional identity.

Reinharz explained that throughout their academic and professional careers, individuals experience internal struggles or conflicts, and question ambiguities in what is taught related to the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and professional identity they are developing. They may embrace, reject, synthesize, revise and/or modify norms and boundaries as they seek to resolve these internal conflicts and ambiguities. The conflicts may not rise to the level of crisis, but could be a simple ambiguity or anomaly one encounters in a professional setting. However, the conflicts may be more significant as some professions have ambiguous norms and boundaries, or may even have competing models of practice; thus, individual must choose which model to incorporate when forming his or her professional identity. Reinharz thus challenged this notion of conformity because professions often have ambiguous norms and boundaries; I will discuss Reinharz's position on this more in the following paragraphs. Reinharz suggested

the need to explore what internal conflicts or ambiguities individuals experience during socialization.

Finally, Reinharz (1993) proposed a definition of professional socialization as a "system of reciprocal impact" between the profession and the individuals being socialized (p. 379). Reinharz emphasized that the individuals themselves are to be considered socializers in addition to the typical socializers in the academic and professional settings (i.e., teachers, mentors, professional associations, peers). Reinharz claimed that individuals become additional socializers themselves when they assert personal agency as they interpret, question, and/or disagree with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and professional identity of the profession into which they are being socialized. As they resolve their internal conflicts, they may feel they need to stretch, redraw, or push the norms and boundaries, thereby constructing a new, alternative professional identity, which in turn may eventually reshape the profession. According to Reinharz, it is in this reshaping of a profession by those who compose it that a profession can be transformed and enlivened. Thus, Reinharz caused me to explore my second research question of how study participants have influenced others to develop an expanded professional identity.

I will now expand on my earlier mention of Reinharz's challenge to the notion of conformity in professions. Reinharz (1993) critiqued what she termed the "consensus models" of the functionalist perspective which assume that a novice can conform because there is consensus in their academic disciplines about the professional

socialization being transferred (p.373). Reinharz (1993) declared that such consensus

models present professional socialization as something that can be transferred which

"presupposes a profession or occupation into which one is being socialized where

compliance is possible because there is unanimity, uniformity, and consistency in its

norms and visibility in its activity" (p.373). Many professions are indeed inconsistent in

their norms and boundaries, especially in the social sciences (Reinharz, 1993). This has

been true of social work with its history of long standing debates about the core mission

of the profession, leading to continual redefining and renegotiating of the profession's

identity through its norms and boundaries (Abbot, 1995; Domenilli, 2012; Weiss, Gal, &

Cnaan, 2004; Levy Simon, 1998). As Levy Simon (1998) noted, "social work, a century

after its birth, remains much as it began—diverse in focus and method, rich in vision and

commitment, and factious in its internal relationships" (p. 317). Thus, it is part of the

professional culture that the social work profession is dynamic and can be shaped by its

members as they redefine professional norms and expand professional boundaries to

transform the profession. This flexible, porous boundary of professional identity is

considered by some to be a positive attribute of the profession as it allows social

workers to situate themselves in a variety of roles, allowing them to respond and draw

upon their large repertoire of capabilities (Abbott, 1995; Levy Simon, 1998).

The profession of social work has had to negotiate norms and boundaries with

not only its members but also with other professions to delineate its professional

territory (Abbot, 1995; Levy Simon, 1998). In so doing, the profession is constantly

struggling in a sea of other professions to establish its legitimacy and status, as well as

its norms and boundaries regarding the types of clients, types of roles, problem areas, and practice approaches it encompasses. Abbot (1995) argued that social work is a profession of crossing boundaries to help clients navigate systems in their lives. In addition, he notes that it is also about crossing professional boundaries that are negotiable amongst other professions.

Over the years, the social work profession has encountered much reshaping with the broadening and narrowing of the profession's norms and boundaries. In general, lines have been drawn more narrowly around casework practice with individuals and families (Abbot, 1995; Levy Simon, 1998). However, there have been and still are schools of social work and professionals who steadily and wholeheartedly include social reform and activism in their path-breaking or boundary-crossing work (Abramovitz, 1998; Levy Simon, 1998). While in general, schools of social work in the USA ascribe to standards set forth by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), they often have differences, subtle or evident, in their perspectives on professional identity and thus their emphasis on certain norms and boundaries (Landau, 1999; Weiss, Gal, & Cnaan, 2004). For instance, their emphasis may be on generalist or specialist social work practice, individual or community practice, directive or participatory practice, narrowly or broadly defined person-in-environment frameworks (i.e., social work practice involves only social environment vs. social work practice also attends to physical environment). Therefore, individuals may have struggles related to their interpretation, and acceptance, synthesis, or rejection of norms and boundaries being presented within as well as across their various contexts (e.g., school, job). These conflicts may be due to

discrepancies between norms and boundaries learned in training and needs

encountered in practice settings (Reinharz, 1993). Other times, these conflicts may be

due to personal understanding of what individuals think their professional identity

should be versus what their job description allows them to be.

Examples of these internal conflicts may include instances such as, "I should

refer this client presenting this issue to another professional, but there are no others

available or affordable, so should I try to help even if beyond the normal scope of

professional boundary/identity?" Or, "I visited my client's home, and noticed a roach

problem. I asked if the landlord provides pest control, and they said no. Do I help

advocate for this because I realize that roaches can lead to diseases such as asthma,

which in turn could lead to more financial and social distress? Or should this be another

profession's issue to address?" Novices faced with such internal conflicts may in turn

discuss with classmates, professors, and colleagues their thoughts and practice

experiences and operationalize these in field internships. Upon graduation and entrance

into the workforce, social workers who are continually forming their own professional

identity will shape the profession of social work and transform it as they continue to

challenge norms and push past boundaries to encompass social work on the edges.

Some social work settings where professional social workers have served on the

edge of generally accepted social work norms and boundaries include congregational

social work, military social work, school social work, and medical social work. Although

now considered normal forms of social work practice, social workers in such settings at

one time had to challenge norms and boundaries of social work and other professions. They found ways to successfully situate themselves in those settings to address issues often overlooked by other professions, thereby expanding the norms and boundaries of the social work profession. Thus, what was once considered work on the edges has since been infused into the generally accepted social work norms and boundaries.

The concept of working on the edges of or in-between normally accepted professional boundaries is not unique to social work. Rather, many other professional disciplines have struggled with this; some have even emerged to fill the gaps, such as queer studies, feminist studies, and transdisciplinary science (Freedman, Jones, & VanHooser, 2008; Gehlert, 2012; Stokols, 2006). These areas of scholarship, research and practice have all achieved a certain degree of success operating in-between or in the liminal spaces between false dichotomies (i.e., in or outside of a discipline). Thus, social work on the edges may be considered transdisciplinary work in that it occupies space outside of traditional professional boundaries (Freedman, 2004; Kirby, 2008). Indeed, the boundaries are less firm than many think them to be, even porous (Abbot, 1995).

It is also noteworthy that social work may face a similar conflict to that within feminism around defining "woman" (Pomerleau, 2008); when the boundaries of social work are expanded to include work on the edges, the lines are redrawn to claim what social work is and is not. These lines invariably leave other work which remains on the edges and, thus, are perpetuating the cycle of false boundaries between professions.

The powerful social structures of the academy and professional associations perpetuate

this preferred conciseness of disciplines. Queer, feminist, and transdisciplinary scholars

promote an alternative which allows professions to be more permeable,

comprehensive, and transdisciplinary to better serve the complex social and ecological

issues within and between professions (Abbot, 1995; Kirby, 2008; Gehlert, 2012).

Work on the edges offers exciting potential, but comes with potential risks, too

(Freedman, 2004). On one hand, those who work on the edges and are dissatisfied by

the traditional boundaries find alternatives that are more congruent with their own

professional identities. On the other hand, there may be the risk of being devalued or

considered an outsider. Social workers have successfully operated on the edges and

overcome the risks of pushing beyond traditional social work professional boundaries in

many ways, including a response to the environmental crisis.

As Dominelli (2012) poignantly notes, "while the [social work] profession is in

crisis over its identity and professional status, so are the social and physical

environments in which it is embedded" (p. 20). She, along with many other social work

scholars (Berger & Kelly, 1993; Besthorn, 2003; Coates, 2005; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Hoff

& Rogge, 1996; Jones, 2010; Humphreys & Rogge, 2000; Mary, 2008; McKinnon, 2008;

Park, 1996; Soine, 1987; Zapf, 2009) note that an expanded professional identity will

allow social workers to work in transdisciplinary spaces while meeting the core mission

of social justice and progressive social change. The resulting insights from this

dissertation will advance the current body of knowledge by providing a description of

the professional socialization processes that lead individual social workers to develop an

expanded professional identity. In addition, findings of this study will contribute to the limited body of literature on professional socialization in social work, and may offer new insights to expand upon earlier models.

In summary, professional socialization literature is very sparse in general, and even more meager within social work, despite Miller's (2010, 2013) significant contribution. The structural functionalist perspective and the symbolic interactionist perspective had points of agreement in that they both considered the relationships during academic training settings to offer professional socialization. However, they differ in a few ways. The structural functionalist perspective considers professional socialization to be a unilateral, top-down, and linearly progressive process in which novices are molded until they conform and adopt a professional identity upon completion of their academic program. Alternatively, the symbolic interactionist perspective views professional socialization of novices as an interactive or reciprocal process with novices themselves possessing agency to interpret and accept, synthesize, or reject various norms and boundaries being presented. In addition, this perspective allows for professional socialization to take place within and beyond the academic setting as professionals continue developing a professional identity throughout their career. Miller (2010) combined aspects of both perspectives, but left out key aspects that Reinharz (1993) offered in her model. Thus, Reinharz's dynamic interactionist model of professional socialization provided a conceptual framework for this research study as it guided me to explore the following research questions:

(1) How have these social workers developed an expanded professional

identity?

    a. What, if anything, facilitated their response as a social worker to the

    environmental crisis?

    b. What, if anything, hindered their response as a social worker to the

    environmental crisis? How have they overcome these hindrances?

(2) How, if at all, have these social workers influenced others to develop an

expanded professional identity?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

As noted above, this study aimed to explore the professional socialization experiences of social workers using their social work skills to address environmental issues. Their perspectives are lacking in the scholarly literature. Thus, a qualitative design was used to generate detailed accounts that are not easily captured with quantitative methods, and are not reducible to numbers (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). By eliciting their stories, we can better understand their experiences in context. In addition, a modified grounded theory approach as delineated by Charmaz (2006) was used to allow for both deductive and inductive data collection and analyses. Thus, I have used the Reinharz (1983) professional socialization model to deductively frame my data collection and analysis, as well as allow my data to inductively guide me in analysis and direction for further data collection. Grounded theory was originally developed to study the process of dying (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and is well suited to study social psychological processes, such as professional socialization. Thus, a grounded theory qualitative research study was conducted with social workers who use/have used their professional skills to address the environmental crisis. In-depth interviews (N=17) explored the process of professional socialization. Further methodological details are delineated below.

Research Questions

The dissertation study was guided by the following research questions:

(1) How have these social workers developed an expanded professional

identity?

    a. What, if anything, facilitated their response as a social worker to the

       environmental crisis?

    b. What, if anything, hindered their response as a social worker to the

       environmental crisis? How have they overcome these hindrances?

(2) How, if at all, have these social workers influenced others to develop an

expanded professional identity?

Target Population

When I first began planning my study, there were no known sampling pools (e.g.,

networking groups for social workers who address environmental issues). Thus, these

individuals were challenging to find, but with some networking I was able to recruit a

sample of social workers who used their professional skills to address environmental

issues. These individuals were ideal to answer the research questions in-depth because

they were able to speak to their own experiences and perspectives, offering real life

examples. A purposive sample of 17 social workers from the target population was

interviewed for this study. This smaller sample size allowed for greater exploration with

each participant and yielded a greater depth of discovery.

Selection Criteria

Eligible participants met the following qualifications as noted on the pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix A): (1) age 18 years or older, (2) held a social work/welfare degree (i.e., BSW, MSW, PhD, DSW), (3) currently/previously used their professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment (i.e., built and/or natural), (4) were willing to share their time to participate in the initial and any follow-up interviews (approximately 2 to 2.5 hours), (5) had access to a phone or internet connection to use during our interviews, (6) were comfortable with being interviewed in English. No individual was excluded based on race/ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation, though race/ethnicity and gender were inquired about for purposes of descriptive data only. All participants completed the brief screening questionnaire with me as a way to ensure that participants met selection criteria before I conducted the full interview.

Sampling Process

Because the study focused on the process of professional socialization over time, I initially sought to diversify the sample on the amount of time they had been responding to the environmental crisis in their social work practice (i.e., 0-5 years, 6-10 years, beyond 10 years). These categories were somewhat arbitrary as, for example, it was possible that someone who had been responding for only one year, may have had rich experiences in that short amount of time which may have led to more interesting findings than someone who had been working on environmental issues for over 10 years, but had only dabbled in environmental work. However, as an exploratory study,

there was no way of knowing if these categories would be relevant, but I believed they were a good starting point. Exploring experiences of participants at different time intervals was supported by the Reinharz (1993) model of professional socialization as she noted the that the development of professional identity is a dynamic process that occurs over time. Ultimately, my findings showed that the amount of years practicing social work with environmental issues was not a key factor in the development of their expanded professional identity. Rather, the findings showed that those who had shorter amounts of experience did not vary in their expanded professional identities from those who had many years of experience. Alternative factors were explored to see what may contribute to any variances in participants' expanded professional identities. This, along with a more in-depth description of the participants, will be discussed more in the following chapter on findings and results.

Recruitment

A brief recruitment letter describing the study (Appendix B) was emailed with a cover letter to approximately ten social work professors who had authored pertinent literature in social work related to the physical environment or who I knew from personal interactions were open to the connections of social work and environmental issues. I briefly explained to them my research study, the target population, and asked for referrals of graduates from their programs that they remembered as having an interest in environmental issues. From these recruitment efforts three professors referred me to four potential participants who were their former students. Additionally, one professor referred me to a social worker who had not been her student, but had

contacted her with environmental interest related to food security. I contacted them, and all five agreed to participate in my study.

During recruitment, I also gave several presentations on ecological social work at social work conferences and invited audience members to volunteer or refer others who used their professional skills to address environmental issues. After one conference presentation, an audience member told me about two social workers. I contacted her by email and she forwarded my recruitment letter to them. They both contacted me and agreed to participate; one of these additionally referred me to one additional social worker, who I recruited in the same way and she also agreed to participate. At another conference, one social worker introduced himself to me after I presented, and volunteered to participate in my study. He then suggested three other potential participants and I contacted them by email and sent my recruitment letter and his referral; they all agreed to participate. In addition to these recruitment efforts I contacted two social workers from my own social work network and they both agreed to participate. Finally, two participants emailed me when they learned about my study and volunteered to participate.

I easily established rapport because I either already knew the participants or were referred by someone they knew, or they themselves reached out to me from my recruitment efforts. In addition, as we progressed through the interview, we found that similar interest in the topic built rapport and a sense of solidarity. All 17 participants willingly agreed to enter the study and no one withdrew.

Researcher Perspective

As a qualitative researcher, I am the primary tool for data collection. Thus, it is important to be open and honest about my personal lens through which I collected data and viewed results. I am a 37-year-old, married female, and mother of one. I was born, raised, and currently live in the United States of America (USA) in a middle-class, Christian family and culture. I place a high value on education and preventative well-being practices. Even before I became a mother, I valued and sought sustainable solutions to the environmental crisis for the sake of future generations; this was primarily due to my Christian faith values. I had experiences in childhood which led me to consider environmental science as a career choice in my undergraduate program; however, I switched majors to social work where I found an instant fit. As a social worker, I value social justice, ecological justice, and approach the world with a strengths perspective. I prefer to use community-based, participatory research approaches and, as with this interview study, through semi-structured interview style, I sought to be participatory, and I viewed the participants as experts on the research topic. My bias as a researcher is to inform the social work profession so that social work instructors can incorporate the findings into their curriculum, and practitioners and researchers can use the findings to increase and sustain their involvement in responding to the environmental crisis.

I did not always have my environmental passions and social justice passions united as one in my professional identity as a social worker. Rather, I held the environmental passions as personal, and the social justice passions as professional. I

originally made the explicit connections between social work and environmental issues during a course in graduate school on sustainable development. This course, the professor, and a few classmates all culminated in an epiphany for me and it was the major source for my development of an expanded professional identity. After that class, I often felt that I had to push beyond the norms and boundaries set forth by my academic institutions and professors to include my interest in environmental issues. In addition, in my own journey of becoming a social worker who is passionate about the environment and the interrelated injustices for both people and planet, I encountered few other social workers who understood these connections. This often made me wonder if I was alone, but I never questioned that I was a social worker or that my work on environmental issues fell outside of the social work profession. Rather, I simply assumed others just did not see the linkages as I did.

At times, I encountered others who challenged me, saying that work on environmental issues is not social work and should be left to the Environmentalists. I disagreed, and tried to convince them that working on justice for the planet and for the people are inextricably linked and appropriate to address as a social worker. Thus, in recent years during my doctoral program I set out to find others like me. What I found was: 1) social work emerged as a profession addressing environmental issues such as sanitation, and needs for parks and recreation (Addams, 1970; Kelley, 1970); 2) there have been social workers calling for a paradigm shift to eco-centric and an expanded person-environment framework for decades (Estes, 1993; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Hoff & Rogge, 1996; Mary, 2008; Weick, 1981); and 3) I myself was an example of what

Reinharz (1993) had explained in her framework on professional socialization as a novice

in the profession encountering conflicts and dissonance in what I thought was social

work, and what was being taught, then accepting, synthesizing and rejecting concepts as

I pushed against what I was being taught as the norms and the boundaries of the

profession. In pushing back, as a social worker with an expanded professional identity, I

have thus become part of reshaping the profession through this research process.

Finally, this research study has very much been a self-reflective journey, as I

explored other social workers' journeys as they too developed their own expanded

professional identities. As Reinharz titled her work "on becoming a social scientist" I

also titled this research "on becoming an ecologically conscious social worker" to

represent the dynamic process of professional socialization that is reciprocal, dynamic,

and continual.

Data Collection

I collected data by conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with participants

who volunteered and met selection criteria. Supplemental data included field notes I

wrote during interviews, and my process memo log written throughout the entire data

analysis process.

Research Setting.

Data collected via interviews were conducted in locations that promoted the

best environment for open, honest discussion. The majority (n= 13) of interviews were

conducted by telephone with me in my private home office. Four participants lived near

me and we arranged to conduct these interviews in-person at the convenience of the participant either in their private office, on campus in a private space, or in their home.

Interview Data.

I collected data primarily from individual, in-depth interviews. I recorded the interviews with a digital audio recorder. Interviews lasted on average of one hour and forty-five minutes with the range being from approximately one hour and fifteen minutes to three hours. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions; slight adjustments were made to the interview guide over the course of the study as guided by grounded theory and as approved by the dissertation chair (Appendix D). Questions on the interview guide allowed me to engage the participants in exploring the topic as I asked them to give examples from their experiences and perspectives. I transcribed some recorded interviews, and hired a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the others I did not have time to do myself. I listened to each recording and compared it to the transcription to ensure that each one was correct. In addition, each participant gave permission to contact them later, if needed, to clarify anything from our interview. The few follow-up contacts I had included sending participants their own typed interview transcript, and asking them to check it and let me know if there were any edits. Only one participant asked that I remove a statement, which I did, and noted that it was not essential to the research topic.

Field Notes.

By audio recording each interview, I could focus on participants' responses and attend to our discussion as it progressed without delays to make copious notes. Immediately after each interview I typed any field notes so I would not forget what my short-hand notations in the field notes meant. In these field notes, I began to also write memos noting when I saw concepts emerge that warranted further exploration in subsequent interviews, or if comments made by participants could be connected to concepts emerging from previous interviews. I attached each field note to the corresponding transcript in the data analysis software.

Process Log.

Using the data analysis software memo feature, I kept a detailed process log with memos on analytic decisions and thoughts I made on the research design. I reviewed this process with my dissertation chair as needed. Additional memos were created based on his feedback as it further guided my process. The data analysis process is further explained in the following section on "Data Analysis".

Data Collection Strengths

With my letters of support and previous research recruitment skills, I easily recruited a sample of interview participants. I utilized my interpersonal skills and experience in conducting interviews to help me recruit, build rapport, and interview these participants. I sought to use a collaborative, participatory approach during interviews. For example, I allowed participants to direct the interview as they provided answers; I skipped around the interview guide to ask questions on the same general

topic they were currently discussing. This allowed for a more natural flow during interviews. I reviewed the interview guide at the conclusion of each interview to ensure we covered all the questions, asked any we had missed, and asked participants to offer anything they wanted to contribute in addition to what was already discussed. Finally, after each interview, I provided participants with a copy of their typed interview transcript and asked if they would like to change or elaborate on anything. By conducting this type of data collection, I incurred minimal costs which included only my time and transcription service fees.

Data Collection Limitations

Interviews for qualitative research require a significant amount of time from study participants. Each interview took approximately one hour and forty-five minutes; however, participants did not indicate they were in a hurry to be elsewhere, and often lingered in our conversations after the official interview concluded to excitedly inquire about my study and how they were eager to learn results. The main limitation to this study is the inability to interview more participants due to time constraints, and the additional challenge of sampling for participants that had not developed expanded professional identities, even though they worked on environmental issues (see Chapter 4).

The interviews provide only a glimpse of the lived experiences of my participants, but I attempted to present them with as much integrity as possible. There are limits to transferability of findings to populations beyond my sample; however,

findings led to the development of grounded theory that could contribute to existing

models of professional socialization (Reinharz, 1993; Miller, 2010).

It is possible that participants were more alike than those who would not

volunteer for such a study; this was anticipated because the target population was a

more homogeneous subset of the larger, general population of professional social

workers. The purposive sample ultimately only included social workers trained in the

USA and was intentionally limited to English-speaking social workers due to financial

and time constraints. It is possible that non-English speakers and/or social workers from

different cultural contexts and professional trainings could offer very different

perspectives. It is on my professional agenda for future studies to find broader samples

to add greater depth than interviews which this sample alone could not capture.

Data Analysis

I used a constructivist, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) which

allowed for both deductive and inductive data collection and analyses. I deductively

applied the Reinharz (1993) theory of professional socialization to frame my data

collection and analysis, primarily by using her framework to develop my interview guide.

I also allowed the data to guide me inductively through a systematic process of coding,

categorizing, and memo writing, especially as emerging concepts varied, or were absent

from the Reinharz framework. For example, a memo I wrote included:

As I looked for conflicts based on Reinharz's framework what I found was much

more mild, sort of "a different kind of tension". These tensions were mainly were

from lack of education, and not really from people challenging their work on

environmental issues, though a few did indicate very mild versions of that as well.

Thus, I allowed emerging data to drive my research and analysis and it ultimately led me to develop a grounded theory of professional socialization (see Chapter 4). The contributions of my grounded theory to other models are discussed further in Chapter 5.

As grounded theory requires, I began my data analysis immediately upon collecting data. By using this method, the ongoing and concurrent data analysis and data collection informed my research related to what data I still needed to collect (i.e., interview questions I needed to change or add) and from which sources (i.e., potential participants). I used Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software for data management and analysis; to develop a codebook with codes and definitions; and for the memo feature to document a process log with memos about my observations and interpretations (Maxwell, 2005). Coding allowed me to unpack transcripts into smaller, discrete chunks, while memo writing allowed me to compare the chunks and speculate about the meanings and relationships between them. I followed the coding and memo writing techniques described by Charmaz (2006), and periodically returned to her book to ensure I appropriately adhered to the method. I regularly reviewed my data analysis process with my committee chair.

I began data analysis immediately after the first interview by making initial memos in a Word document. I added these memos to Atlas.ti and linked them to the

corresponding interview. As I received each transcript from the transcriptionist, I read it while listening to the audio recorded interview to check for accuracy, and made memos about significant thoughts, or emerging categories I noticed. For interviews I transcribed myself, I made a few memos as I transcribed, and after I inserted them into Atlas.ti, I copied and pasted them into the memo feature and linked them to the corresponding transcript. I sent typed transcripts to participants for their edits and approval.

Upon finalizing my first interview transcript in Atlas.ti, I read it for a second time and began the process of initial or open coding of words, phrases, lines, or sections considered to represent the same concept. I wrote a definition of each code as I created it, noting the date so when I revised it, I could keep track of my chronological thought progression.

As I read each subsequent transcript and applied codes, I determined whether I was applying codes consistently, or needed to revise codes. I constantly revisited my codes, made memos about them, looked to see whether the definitions held true or needed to be modified, and whether codes were discrete or needed to be merged or better distinguished. I had many instances where I coded the same chunk of data using multiple codes. Thus, I, paid careful attention to determine codes that co-occurred, and whether they were discrete or needed to be merged, which in some instances they did. I attempted to be thorough in initial coding so as to not leave any data un-coded for analysis; however, this took several iterations of reading and coding, and returning to the data after new codes and concepts emerged. As the codebook expanded and

evolved, I made memos about that process and noted that I needed to go back to earlier

transcripts to review and apply new codes. Revised codes were automatically changed

in transcripts by Atlas.ti as a function of renaming, merging, or deleting codes.

I wrote memos freely without focusing on grammar writing style; this allowed a

free form flow of thoughts about a concept or the connections between concepts. I

titled memos as specifically as possible with the different concepts occurring in them so

I could easily return to them when reviewing or writing about those concepts. This made

it easy to do a word search and find all instances to combine these memos in an output

report (Word document) so I could better revise memos to connect thoughts and write

findings. I wrote successive levels of memos at each stage of data collection and

analysis. I inserted dates in all memos to keep chronological versions so I could see my

evolving thought processes and revisit earlier versions if needed as I revised and refined

each memo.

Memo writing allowed me to think about data and write initial thoughts about

codes and potential categories. Initial memos were more ambiguous as I worked to

define meanings in data and sought through writing to make sense of data and clarify

where I still had questions. Through constant comparison, I revised my memos, refined

codes and categories so that they were more well-defined, discrete, complete, and

clear. In these memos, I also attempted to unpack the condensed meanings of codes

and make connections beyond individual cases. I especially looked for structures,

processes, and experiences in the data to allow me to make conceptual connections in

my memos (i.e., between codes, across categories). I used examples from the transcripts to illustrate points I made in memos, which enhanced my ability to stay grounded in the data.

During axial coding, I examined all the codes I had created for the data that had emerged. As I saw broader categories that explained the relationships across data I created category names and then went back to each code and added each into a category. Thus, my newly created category name "Shaping the Profession" was added before the code "writing and disseminating" when I realized it represented a support to one's involvement in addressing environmental issues. These categories served as a second level organization for the emerging concepts.

After all transcripts were coded, I reread each transcript again, in light of discoveries gained from data analysis. I drew a concept map of the codes and categories, and mapped them onto the research questions to see what was missed, non-essential, or needed to be re-defined or re-considered. I continued to refine my codebook, and sometimes I renamed or unlinked previously coded data chunks to better reflect their true meaning. I also merged codes with similar meanings to ensure they were conceptually distinct.

Finally, I ran query reports in Atlas.ti for each code to compile all memos related to a specific code and any quotations to which the code applied across transcripts. I used the content to write results for each code and/or category, staying grounded in the data by using direct quotes and basing my data synthesis on memos I had written. I was

then also able to see how the data from this sample compared to the existing literature, specifically my conceptual framework based primarily on the Reinharz (1993) model of professional socialization.

Validity

I was attentive to identify any threats to validity, or how my interpretations could be wrong. The two main threats in this study included researcher bias and reactivity.

Researcher Bias.

I acknowledge that I brought to this study my own bias based on my knowledge and experiences as a social worker developing an expanded professional identity and as an advocate who wants to find ways to promote it within the profession. My expanded professional identity includes the belief that social workers have the responsibility to address environmental issues. However, I noticed this belief was not held by many social workers I encountered since I developed my expanded professional identity. This observation, along with the extensive literature I had found supporting an expanded professional identity and my own experience of professional socialization sparked my interest in developing this research project. In designing the study and in data collection and analysis I used my personal insight into the professional socialization process. As I had already been reflecting on my own process of socialization and had knowledge of the literature, when I analyzed the data I was able to more quickly make sense of the data. I could easily identify those who had similar experiences as mine, and I sought to explore how the participants' processes and experiences differed from mine. I tried to

use their language, or terms for concepts, when conducting interviews. I asked

participants to define what they meant by terms, rather than assuming the meaning and

merely interpreting through my own lens. I made memos and had discussions with my

dissertation chair about the process, especially looking for ways that my interpretations

may have been incorrect.

In addition, I assumed that all social workers working on environmental issues

would have already begun developing expanded professional identities. However, this

incorrect assumption led me to include a few people in my sample who did not have

expanded professional identities, even though they met my sampling criteria. Thus,

because of my own lens I was able to distinguish a very crucial, but nuanced detail of an

expanded professional identity: that it includes not only expanded professional

boundaries, but also expanded professional responsibility. I explain each of these

concepts fully in Chapter 4.

Reactivity.

I approached each interview as a conversation between me and the participants

to simply explore their work on environmental issues and how they saw it fitting with

their understanding of social work. I asked my interview questions and as they

answered I attempted to use their terminology throughout the interview. I asked them

to explain what they meant by terms or concepts they used, so that I did not assume

what they meant. If a participant asked a question about the interview question I simply

kept it open, and non-leading. I also kept my questions open for discussion rather than

definitive, thereby giving participants freedom to answer more honestly and not feel

pressured that there was a "right" answer. I attempted to keep my comments minimal during the interview, and asked more questions as I needed them to clarify answers. When I did share things about my own experiences it was after they had already answered the interview questions. At the end of the interview they often would indicate they were interested in the study findings. Thus, I would share a little about what I experienced or what I had learned that others' experienced. I kept all comments as non-judgmental and open as I offered examples from the range of different experiences social workers may have had.

I was surprised to find a few participants in my sample who had not developed an expanded professional identity. However, this provided greater insight as one of these participants exhibited reactivity to being asked the interview questions. She made several statements during our interview such as, "but like I said, I'm sitting here thinking, wow! And, I wouldn't have thought of this, you know, before I talked to you. You're inspiring me, broadening my thoughts here" (Liz). Thus, the process of conducting this study and simply asking the interview questions brought to her conscious awareness that social workers were addressing environmental issues as part of an expanded professional identity. Therefore, she demonstrated the beginning of a conscious transition to an expanded professional identity during our interview. This adds to the validity of my study findings that social workers can develop an expanded professional identity when they experience educational influences that support such a conscious transition as they cause one to rethink and reinterpret their understanding of professional identity. I explore her experience further as it relates to key factors

presented in Chapter 4, and again in Chapter 5 as I discuss what insight her experience

offers the profession as it strives to help social workers develop an expanded

professional identity.

Ethics

I obtained approval for this study from the University of South Carolina's Human

Subjects Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary;

I obtained verbal informed consent prior to conducting interviews (Appendix B).

Confidentiality was maintained by removing identifying information from results prior to

dissemination. Participants were informed that the main risk of participation was that

someone may recognize them in dissemination forums, despite efforts to maintain

confidentiality. I expected and found that participants enjoyed discussing their

experiences as a social worker on environmental issues. Most participants expressed

their enthusiasm to share and eagerness to learn results of this study.

Data Management.

I stored study data on password-protected computers and in files designated for

this research study. Access was limited to the researcher, her dissertation committee,

and a professional transcriptionist. I printed paper copies of data (i.e., memos,

codebooks, interview transcripts) only after they were de-identified and secured them

in a locked storage space.

Informed Consent.

I provided participants with both written (Appendix B) and verbal information

regarding this research, including the purpose of the study, how long interviews would

last, how data from the interviews would be used, and benefits and risks to participating

in the study. I informed them that there would be no compensation for participation in

this study; that their participation was voluntary; and that they could withdraw from the

study at any time for any reason without any negative consequences. I gave all

participants information on how to contact the IRB director, me, and my dissertation

committee chair if they had any questions or concerns as a research participant. By their

participation in the interviews, they gave consent. No written consent was required,

however, I encouraged them to keep a copy of the informed consent document should

they have questions or concerns later. I answered any questions and addressed any

concerns they had prior to beginning each interview. I identified an unanticipated

benefit as many participants indicated that they had a sense of solidarity and were

thankful to know this study was occurring because there were other people who

considered this topic important.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Increasingly, social workers are responding to the environmental crisis as

professionals. For example, social workers in this study started school recycling

programs, conducted community campaigns for health hazards such as air pollution,

and lead llama treks into the wilderness for at-risk youth as therapy and environmental

education. Often, social workers used nature as a tool to benefit clients, and also taught

clients how to care for the environment. This chapter presents results from in-depth

interviews with individual social workers.

Description of Participants

First, I briefly describe the participants. The descriptions are limited as they do

not fully describe the unique and complex parts that constitute the whole of each

participant. The interviews were snapshots of participants' lives; I do not assume to fully

know participants based on our interviews alone. I offer snapshots based on our

interviews.

Seventeen social workers participated in this study. For confidentiality, actual

names have been changed and other identifying information removed. Ages ranged

from 24 to 72 years, with an average of 42. Five were in their late 20s, three in their mid

to late 30s, three in their early 40s, four in their early 50s, one in the 60s, and one in the

70s. All but one participant held an MSW; that participant held a BSW. Two participants

had attained doctoral level education in social work. Participants identified themselves as Bi-racial/Multi-racial (n=1), Caucasian/Anglo-American (n=14), Latino/Hispanic (n=1), and Native-American/Alaskan Native/First Nations (n=1), according to options on a pre-screening questionnaire. There were 13 females and 4 males. The 17 participants had experiences using professional social work skills to work on environmental issues in various states across the USA; seven had additional relevant work experiences overseas. The phrase "work on environmental issues" denotes work with issues that address environmental outcomes. For this study, these outcomes may be the result of an intentional intervention to address environmental outcomes, or the byproduct of an intervention to address social outcomes (e.g., wilderness therapy with social outcomes as intentional focus, and environmental outcomes as byproducts). Despite the intent to exclusively address a social or an environmental outcome, each has an inevitable impact on the other because humans and the environment are inextricably linked.

Participants had a wide variety of social work practice experiences with environmental issues including working with refugees on public and environmental health issues; conducting case management and teaching group classes on healthy environments in the built environment (e.g., home environment); designing and producing products that make a social and environmental impact; leading wilderness therapy treks with llamas for at-risk youth; developing and implementing a school recycling program or rain garden with at-risk youth; working with farmers' markets and nutrition programs; developing programs to address and prevent root causes of childhood trauma related to nutrition and food insecurity; working with the community

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to address environmental hazards; working with community gardening projects; conducting research studies on child hunger, nutrition, and food insecurity; conducting post-disaster case management; and developing policies and programs for mitigating environmental hazards and sustainable development.

I initially attempted to identify a sample that varied by time in use of professional social work skills on issues related to the physical environment (i.e., 0-5 years, 6-10 years, over 10 years). This was because I assumed, based on Reinharz (1993), that participants who had worked longer on environmental issues as social workers would have developed expanded professional identities. Participants varied by time in use of professional social work skills on issues related to the physical environment from one month to 35 years with an average of approximately eight years: Eight participants had 0-5 years, four participants had 6-10 years, and five participants had over 10 years. After the first five interviews, there were participants on both ends of the spectrum (12, 1, 3, 35, and 2 years); thus, data did not confirm the original assumption. Rather, participants were more alike than different, and time was not a key factor in the development of professional identity. To confirm this discovery, participants primarily in the first two categories (i.e., 0-5 years, 6-10 years) were intentionally selected for subsequent interviews, which confirmed that amount of time using professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment was not a key factor for a participant to developed an expanded professional identity.

After realizing that amount of time was not a key factor, I wanted to explore other factors that could potentially help develop participants' expanded professional

identities. During data collection and analysis, I had several casual conversations with colleagues who explained that they understood environmental issues fit macro-level social work practice but found it difficult to understood how working on environmental issues fit with micro-level social work practice. Thus, I felt the need to explore whether level of social work practice was a factor in shaping participants' expanded professional identities. I assessed participants' level of practice as I noticed participants had conducted a wide range of activities at micro, mezzo, macro, and systems levels of social work practice (Miley, O'Melia, & DuBois, 2009). For example, they worked on environmental issues in direct practice as school social workers, direct practice therapists, community organizers, or legislative policy advocates. Several participants explicitly stated that social work is rarely practiced at only one level of practice (e.g., only micro, only macro). However, the data provided no evidence to indicate that level of social work practice was a factor in shaping participants' expanded professional identities.

Contrary to my assumptions, not all participants held expanded professional identities. I assumed that working on environmental issues as a professional social worker meant that one had an expanded professional identity. Yet, three participants did not hold expanded professional identities. These participants had worked on environmental issues for a range of years (less than 1, 12, 18) and practiced at various levels (micro, micro, mezzo/macro). This unexpected group of outliers in my sample showed a need to solidify a more concrete understanding of expanded professional identity. Findings from the majority of participants (n=14) who did have expanded

professional identities provide the main features of my study. The following sections

present details from participants' processes of professional socialization.

Overview of Results

I explored how social workers developed an expanded professional identity

which included a response to the environmental crisis and how, if at all, they influenced

others in the profession to develop an expanded professional identity. Due to the

unexpected finding that not all participants held expanded professional identities, I

created a more focused definition of an expanded professional identity which required

two key factors: an expanded boundary of professional social work and an expanded

responsibility of professional social work. An expanded boundary of professional social

work is when one considers social work broad enough to situate oneself in a role that

includes a behavioral response to environmental issues. An expanded responsibility of

professional social work is when one believes it is a professional obligation to address

environmental issues. Although all participants understood their professional identity to

include having expanded professional boundaries of social work, they did not all hold an

expanded professional responsibility; rather, I found   variations in their understanding

of professional responsibility. I separated my sample into two groups. One group (n=14)

included participants with expanded professional identities, meaning they held both an

expanded boundary and an expanded responsibility. A second group (n = 3) included

participants without expanded professional identities, meaning they held only an

expanded boundary, but not an expanded responsibility. Additional analysis on data

from this second group showed insight on possible hindrances that may have kept

participants from developing an expanded professional identity; however, these findings

are presented with caution because such analysis was beyond the focus of this study. To

answer my original research questions, I focused on participants who had expanded

professional identities. Findings also showed various ways that participants influenced

others in the profession to develop expanded professional identities.

Expanded Professional Responsibility.

An expanded professional responsibility means that one believes that social

workers are professionally obligated to address environmental issues. The discovery of

professional responsibility as a crucial factor occurred as I began to notice variations in

participants' beliefs about their professional responsibility to address environmental

issues, in spite of each one's expanded professional boundaries which allowed them to

be involved in environmental issues. As I focused on a more concrete definition for

expanded professional identity, I added the component of expanded professional

responsibility. This allowed me to separate participants into two groups. All participants

understood social work practice to include work on environmental issues. However,

some considered it part of their professional responsibility, while others did not.

Participants who had an expanded professional identity (n=14) spoke very

strongly about the profound professional responsibility of social workers to address

environmental issues, many even referred to the environment as a client along with

humans. For example, Sandra stated, "I do think it's our responsibility. I think it's our

duty. I truly think social work and environmental issues are inextricably linked and it's

kind of baffling to me to see other people think otherwise." Amy demonstrated a similar

understanding of professional responsibility, as she explained:

> Well, it has it within our cores: service, social justice, dignity, importance,
>
> integrity, competence, all those. Like, that's our responsibility. And applying that
>
> to our natural world is equally our responsibility as applying that to any other
>
> population, because the natural world that we live in is what our people, our
>
> populations live in. It's vulnerable, it's marginalized, it's disenfranchised, it's all
>
> of those things that we push back against and we fight for, we advocate for and
>
> we work towards, it needs to be included, instead of excluded.

Several participants also mentioned a variety of things that they thought would be

included in one's professional responsibility to environmental issues such as being

vigilant in learning about environmental issues; revising the social work curriculum to

include environmental issues; educating, organizing, doing advocacy work; being at the

forefront of research and conversations on environmental issues; working in a holistic

manner that helps clients and communities meet their basic needs in a sustainable way;

and working directly on environmental issues for the sake of the environment itself, not

only for what it offers to humanity. For example, Dan stated:

> I think social work as a profession has a lot to do with giving a voice to the
>
> unheard. And, while we can see environmental impacts, sometimes, obviously
>
> the environment doesn't have a voice. So, just to be ambassadors for
>
> environmental initiatives and conservation projects. I think that's what social
>
> workers can contribute.

Some participants indicated they thought of the environment as a client or as vulnerable and in need of social work advocacy. For example, Larry indicated his practice had: "double purpose" that helped his human clients, but "it also gives them this exposure to the environment which they then will have more understanding about it and perhaps more willing to protect and make use of in a positive fashion." Likewise, Ginger stated:

> Now I kind of feel like I am a social worker for the trees. In a very loose sense. It's the people who I ultimately serve but it's sort of really just finding that specific home for my passion and skill set.

Professional Responsibility and Social Work Education.

I questioned some participants about their understanding of professional responsibility by asking, "Do you think that it should be part of the mandatory social work curriculum to talk about environmental issues?" All participants who had an expanded professional identity, who were asked this, replied affirmatively and suggested infusing it in core social work curriculum by expanding the person-environment frameworks taught to social workers to include the physical environment, as well as offering the content in an elective course format and in service learning courses. For example, Ginger stated:

> Oh, yea! Just as much as any social issues… I'd very much like to see it at least as a consideration in human behavior classes as well as looking at the history of environmental justice issues that you're studying and in your advocacy and your policy and your organizing stuff.

Alicia further demonstrated an expanded professional responsibility when she said, "to show a commitment to environmental issues in the community as a whole, for the school, would be a fantastic thing." Some participants also demonstrated their understanding of professional responsibility and how they thought the profession was moving towards embracing an expanded professional responsibility by moving to include environmental issues as a part of the social work curriculum. For example, Katherine stated, "Definitely! I think it will. I think it will. It's not there right now. But the urgency is more and more from IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change], you know. So, I think it will." Luis made several strong suggestions about the need to include environmental issues as a mandatory part of social work curriculum, and for social workers to think ecologically and work interdisciplinary. He stated:

> Well. I think right now we have to be teaching social workers. I think we should
> be writing about the interconnection between all these issues. And I think we
> need to be providing social work students skills that they need to practice with
> these issues. We need to be thinking ecologically. … I think we need to be
> looking more at the interconnection of all these dynamics. And that's where I
> think the environment plays a huge role. So, I think students need to be learning
> about air quality as much as they do youth violence.

In contrast, participants who did not have an expanded professional identity had a more traditional understanding of professional responsibility, meaning they felt responsibility to human clients and social systems, but not to the environment. For example, Tom was using wilderness as a therapeutic tool with youth; although he had a

personal passion for enjoyment of the environment and a personal desire to be responsible for it and help preserve it, he did not explicitly see it as a social work responsibility. When asked about his responsibility was to the environment as a social worker, he stated:

> Wow. Hum, you know, I don't know that I've ever connected those. My responsibility professionally as a social worker **AND** the environment. It comes more from a personal connection rather than from a professional connection. Yea. Never thought about that. Ha-ha.

Probing more, I asked what he thought was the profession's responsibility in addressing environmental issues. He replied:

> WOW! Yea it's just not a connection that I've made. Hum. Again, I just have not made that connection in my head about environment and social work. So what you're doing is intriguing to me. But for me, again, the environment, nature, all of that stuff comes from a personal place not a professional place. So I don't connect the two.

Similarly, Liz, indicated personal interest in the environment and that she addressed it from a place of personal responsibility, but had not explicitly considered it as a social work responsibility. When asked about the profession's responsibility to addressing environmental issues, she answered:

> Wow! That's a good question. I don't think, honestly, I don't think we, I don't think we go there… I don't know that we do that when there's not a crisis. Because when I first defined the environment in social work, I always thought it

in terms of what could I use to contribute to life? In other words, are there

farmer's markets around? I know the local distribution sites for fruits and

vegetables in my county. That's the limit of what I would have said, that's

environmental and social work. This, only because I got this newsletter and I go,

oh, and they had something to offer us and we could offer something back.

Really that's where I made the first connection. And then when I saw your, your

question on Facebook, I'm like, wow, you know, I never thought of social work

and environment quite like this.

So, in her recent work partnering with a local environmental conservation group to

develop a rain garden with her clients at their school campus, and in seeing my

recruitment letter on Facebook, Liz was first presented with the idea that social work

could be professionally connected to environmental issues, but she appeared to

maintain a more traditional professional responsibility in doing so.

Lack of Professional Responsibility and Social Work Education.

All participants who had an expanded professional responsibility who were

asked whether environmental issues should be part of the mandatory social work

curriculum affirmed wholeheartedly. However, only one of three participants who did

not have an expanded professional identity thought it should be mandatory. The other

two participants indicated that it may be appropriate and even interesting to teach

about environmental issues in social work courses, but that they did not feel it should be

mandatory. For example, Phyllis stated, "I don't know that it has to be a separate class,

but it could certainly be incorporated into something. I think – yeah. I think that wouldn't hurt." Similarly, Tom stated:

> Ooh. That would be interesting. I don't know that I think it would need to be mandatory. But I think it would be appropriate to make it an elective within the curriculum that they could take. I would be interested to see it in the policy class. It would be interesting to see if there is a way to focus or pay attention to the environmental policy.

Their answers demonstrated that they did not believe that work on environmental issues was a professional responsibility, rather they maintained openness to including it, but did not see it as critical for social work training and imparting of professional responsibility.

> Liz, however, did view it as something that should be mandatory in the curriculum, though she acknowledged that she did not know what that kind of training should include. She stated:

> Yeah, I do. I don't know why, why we would leave it out? I don't know why that was. I feel like it was left out of my training … involving social workers and the environment, I don't even know what those jobs or that training would look like.

Her response demonstrated that she was on the verge of a conscious transition in the form of an epiphany moment, similar to some participants who had expanded professional identities and who had already had such transitions. Her experience is explored further throughout this chapter as it offers valuable insight.

Although all participants were involved with work on environmental issues within their professional duties, a few participants (n=3) did not believe that social workers are professionally responsible to address environmental issues. Rather, for those participants, the environment was seen more of an entrée into community work or a platform for conducting what they considered professional social work responsibilities (e.g., traditional social justice issues).

In summary, having an expanded professional responsibility was found to be a crucial factor in developing an expanded professional identity. Thus, it became part of my revised definition for an expanded professional identity. One group of participants *had* developed an expanded professional identity inclusive of an expanded professional responsibility. A few other participants held a more traditional understanding of professional identity that did not include expanded professional responsibility. In the next section, I describe two pathways that emerged when exploring the process of professional socialization among participants who had an expanded professional identity. Although I grouped participants by common critical factors, it is also important to note that participants within groups and within pathways varied on other factors. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

Pathways of Developing an Expanded Professional Identity.

After further data analysis, I discovered that participants who had expanded professional identities experienced two different pathways in the development of their identities. One pathway included participants (n=7) who came to social work (i.e., began their formal social work education) assuming that environmental issues fit with social

work. They were often unaware of it being expanded because they assumed that it simply was social work professional identity. They also stated that they could not recall ever having a different (e.g., more traditional) understanding of professional social work identity. For example, Abigail:

> I would naturally just say of course the natural world is part of this, but the fact maybe that it may not be entirely and that we had to raise consciousness even within the profession, I think that perplexes me….because that's the way I see the world. And the fact that people, that the social work profession would be a bit disconnected from it, wow!

Katherine also offered a similar example by stating, "I feel like including environment is not or having the environment as an inclusion is not something new to me. It's always been my perception of social work."

Often these participants had various support factors that appeared to contribute to the development of their understanding of an expanded professional identity prior to coming to social work. For example, some were introduced to the profession of social work as they encountered social workers in practice doing work with environmental issues (e.g. disaster work). Others provided examples of formative experiences that supported their understanding of social work to be expanded (e.g., eco-therapy). These are all discussed in the sections below on supports.

By entering the social work profession assuming that environmental issues fit with social work they immediately interpreted and applied an expanded understanding of the person-environment framework that includes the physical environment. This was

true whether or not they experienced any external supports (e.g., explicitly being taught about an expanded framework during social work education). They maintained passions for both social and environmental issues, seeing them as inextricably linked. The most common internal hindrance this group described was feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues as they indicated they knew very few, if any, other social workers who held similar expanded professional identities, as demonstrated by the lack of support and solidarity in conversations with other social workers about social work's connection to environmental issues. Participants in this group had various external supports (e.g., paid employment to work on environmental issues), and also indicated they had some external hindrances (e.g., lack of social work education on environmental issues), but they ignored or overcame them and were ultimately able to develop an expanded professional identity. These and other factors that emerged which showed contributions to or hindrances to these participants' continuing development of expanded professional identities are presented in later in this chapter.

Other participants (n=7) specifically stated they had made a conscious transition in expanding their understanding of their professional identity after coming to social work (i.e., after beginning formal social work education), thus resulting in a different pathway to an expanded identity. They noted that they came to social work with a more traditional understanding of professional identity. They demonstrated that their conscious transitions typically resulted from various culminating experiences of internal and external supports. For example, they all indicated that they had come to social work understanding their passions and responsibilities for social issues as separate from their

personal passions and responsibilities for environmental issues, but now saw them as connected. Participants also mentioned their peers, professors, social work literature, field internships and job opportunities as sources of external supports that they saw as the reason for their reinterpretation and change in understanding of an expanded professional identity.

Most participants in this pathway (n=5) recalled exact moments when they considered and made a conscious decision to embrace an expanded professional identity. For example, Amy stated:

Justice and social work ethics and my social work passions were always very separate from my kind of passion for nature and environment. And, I personally was never able to really join those for some reason until I took _____'s class. He kind of helped marry those things for me. So, it was kind of a duh moment, like wow.

Similarly, Ginger recalled hearing a peer social work student discuss community gardens as a way to teach young people about environmental issues and as a tool for advocacy and community engagement. She said this was an "epiphany" for her and went on to indicate, "I was floored not only that people were doing it, but that I hadn't thought of it myself."

However, for two participants, Hannah and Luis, they indicated that they made a conscious transition over a longer period of time rather than a single moment. For Hannah, this happened during her social work education and experiences working in the inner city for field work, and abroad for an independent study. She stated:

I think that when I took my initial social work classes, and learned about just

commitment to social justice and the people who are impoverished or, or

disenfranchised, I think that's when I started realizing, oh yeah, like

environmental issues really do fit in on this. And like, it's not, it might not be

brought up in class as much, but environmental issues are affecting all of us,

they're affecting people and they're affecting ourselves as well as the people

that we work with.

Luis noted his conscious transition occurred during his work as a social worker on

environmental issues after he had graduated, whereas the others in this pathway

indicated they made these conscious transitions during formal education. He noted he

used to think in "silos" but that in his current job he began to rethink and embrace an

expanded professional identity stating, "I've got a much more ecological perspective of

how all these things are connected. So, I'd say my thinking has really, really grown the

last 3-4 years" (Luis).

The most common experience of internal hindrance participants in this pathway

described was feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues. Also,

participants in this pathway had various experiences of external supports (e.g., having

paid employment to address environmental issues) and even indicated that they had

some external hindrances, but they ignored or overcame them (e.g., sought education

opportunities through independent study) and were ultimately able to develop an

expanded professional identity. These and other factors that emerged that showed

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contributions to or hindrances to these participants' continuing development of expanded professional identities are presented later in this chapter.

Participants in this study who did not hold expanded professional identities demonstrated that social workers could respond to environmental issues in their professional actions or behaviors without having expanded professional identities. Although I could not explore my original research questions with them, their data provided insight from which I discovered that they were similar to participants in the second pathway (i.e., those who had a conscious transition in expanding their understanding of their professional identity after coming to social work). These participants also entered social work holding a more traditional professional identity but, unlike those in the second pathway, they had not experienced a conscious transition to an expanded professional identity. Each of them indicated they lacked social work education on environmental issues. Also, they understood their passions for social issues as professional and their passions, or perhaps milder interests, for the environment as personal, and never connected the two passions. For example, Liz, noted that when she saw the recruitment for this research study, it was the first time it occurred to her that work on environmental issues was something social workers did professionally. Liz had only recently begun a program to address her clients' social issues that incorporated an environmental intervention (e.g., rain garden on a school campus). Liz was passionate and knowledgeable about environmental issues, but professionally she indicated that she had simply taken advantage of a community partnership opportunity to develop the intervention for primarily social outcomes. During our

interview process it seemed that Liz was demonstrating a conscious transition in the

form of an epiphany moment by making comments, such as:

> I realize, you asked me to define social work, but I'm defining it more as to
>
> people. I mean, I'm not broadening out enough, to include the environment. I
>
> see the application of using environment, you know, so I'm gonna do it with my
>
> [clients]. But I, generally speaking, don't have a broad definition that includes,
>
> that naturally includes it. So that's something that I'm gonna think more about.
>
> And redefine for myself.

Liz, however, consciously stated during the interview that she had not yet had a shift in

thinking. Her participation was an incredibly insightful perspective in this study, and will

be discussed further later in this chapter.

Overall, participants in this study knew very few, if any, other social workers who

worked on environmental issues. Though participants who did not have an expanded

professional identity did not describe it as feeling alone as a social worker working on

environmental issues, as other participants did; perhaps they were not looking for

solidarity in that part of their professional identity. Also, participants across groups

experienced various external supports (e.g., having paid employment to work on

environmental issues; having supportive people). These key factors will be discussed in

greater detail later in this chapter.

To focus on the research aims I focused analysis on those who had expanded

professional identities and the two pathways among participants that emerged. I also

included limited findings from those in the smaller group of participants who did not

have an expanded professional identity. In the following sections, I define each key

factor that emerged in the data and organize them into five new categories I identified

related to the process of professional socialization in developing an expanded

professional identity: 1) Having Internal Supports; 2) Experiencing External Supports, 3)

Having Internal Hindrances, 4) Experiencing External Hindrances, and 5) Shaping the

Profession. Together, the groups, pathways, and factors that emerged in the data all

comprise a grounded theory of professional socialization. I will attempt to unpack each

of these complex processes more fully throughout this chapter. There are many distinct

concepts that emerged in the data analysis; however, all concepts are interrelated and

thus must be discussed contextually. Each emerging concept will be fully addressed in

its own section of this chapter. Despite the complexity of writing qualitative results, I

have attempted to organize these concepts for clarity of presentation.

Having Internal Supports

Some factors that emerged which supported participants' development of

expanded professional identities included having an expanded understanding of the

person-environment framework that included the physical environment, and having

internal motivations (i.e., passion, religious/non-religious spiritual perspectives). Each

factor is defined below. Because these factors were similar to each other, I grouped

them into a category and named it "Having Internal Supports", which means

maintaining or holding beliefs or perspectives that support the process of developing an

expanded professional identity.

Having an Expanded Framework.

I defined "having an expanded person-environment framework" as taking into consideration not only the social, economic, and political issues, but also the physical environment (i.e., built and natural). By this, one considers not only the impact the physical environment may have on humans, but also the reciprocal impact that humans have on the physical environment.

For example, one participant commented that client's social issues don't exist in a vacuum; rather they exist in the context of a physical environment, and require the consideration of the physical environment to address the social issues. At the same time, she mentioned, environmental issues do not exist in a vacuum either, rather, science has shown that they are often direct results of human interaction, and require humans to change their behaviors to address them.

All participants in this study showed that they held an expanded person-environment framework. This appeared to support their development of an understanding of an expanded social work boundaries, which is one piece of the expanded professional identity. However, those who held an expanded professional identity interpreted and applied the expanded person-environment framework as it relates to an expanded professional identity slightly differently than those who did not hold an expanded professional identity. For instance, while participants in both groups saw the reciprocal impact of environment and human relationships in an expanded person-environment framework, only those with an expanded professional identity maintained that it was their professional responsibility to also impact the environment.

Participants who did not have an expanded professional identity, however, held a more traditional professional responsibility to the human client systems, therefore while they held an expanded person-environment framework; it did not ultimately support their understanding of an expanded professional identity. Thus, those who did not have an expanded professional identity will be discussed in the section on Having Internal Hindrances. Examples from those with an expanded professional identity will be discussed in the following subsection.

Expanded person-environment framework and coming to the social work profession with an expanded professional identity.

One pathway included participants assuming that environmental issues fit with social work. They were often unaware of it being expanded because they assumed that it simply was social work professional identity. Therefore, when presented with the person-environment framework in social work education they naturally assumed an expanded framework regardless of whether it was explicitly taught. Throughout their interviews, participants in this pathway all demonstrated ways they seamlessly integrated their expanded person-environment framework into their roles as social workers.

For some, it was so naturally ingrained in them to include the environment and it appeared it was difficult for them discuss in the interview as they were not conscious of their own professional identity being expanded. It had never occurred to them to exclude the environment. For example, when asked how he came to understand it this way, Dan answered:

[notable pause] I've never asked myself these questions. Uh…I'd say just

learning in other capacities. Learning from other people and other sources of

information outside of the classroom that had that piece. I guess I got a little bit

of that, you know, in the social work program as far as dealing with things being

holistic, I guess, holistic was a decent topic with social work, but it seems to me

to be focused mostly on people and I guess I just, maybe I took that concept and

because that was already ingrained in me, just kind of accepted the

environmental piece through other avenues. I'm not sure how.

Similarly, Abigail stated:

I've always naturally thought in the way of systems, that's just naturally how my

brain works. It was just like duh! We use the natural environment to get the

resources that we need, for Maslow's hierarchy of need, so the natural world is

part of social work. ... I would naturally just say, "of course the natural world is

part of this". But the fact, maybe, that it may not be entirely and that we have to

raise consciousness even within the profession, I think that perplexes me.

Abigail demonstrated that she was becoming more conscious that others in social work

may have differing views of professional identity, what she called, "blind spots". I

interpreted this to mean social workers who hold a more traditional professional

identity and a narrower person-environment framework are not able to see the need to

incorporate the physical environment in their practice. She indicated she wanted to

learn ways to articulate the connections and help them "connect the dots" so they could

embrace an expanded person-environment framework and an expanded professional

identity.

Some participants in this pathway were more conscious of their having an expanded professional identity and that others in the profession often held more traditional understandings of professional identity. This caused them to have different interpretations of the person-environment framework. For example, Larry described what he saw as a notable problem in social work practice in Western society. He felt that due to a focus on human well-being that was separated from environmental well-being, social workers have overspecialized and become narrowly focused; often using a narrower person-environment framework, and thus they have lost sight of the big picture from holistic, expanded person-environment standpoint.

Expanded person-environment framework and consciously transitioning to an expanded professional identity after coming to social work profession.

Participants in the other pathway who had consciously shifted to an expanded professional identity after they came to the social work profession, and then embraced an expanded framework, regardless of whether it was explicitly taught. For example, Karen finished her entire MSW program and graduated and was still unaware of an expanded person-environment framework in social work. She even stated that she was unsure of staying in social work for her career and when perusing her doctorate because she wanted to find some way to connect professionally to her personal passions for environmental issues. She stated that she remembered thinking:

I don't know if I'll stay in social work because I really want to do something

environment related. And then the colleague mentioned "oh, well our Dean has

been talking about that, about the environment and social work". So that was

my first introduction to, oh, ok, so somebody else had thought of this and that

maybe it would make sense to stay in a social work program.

This is a prime example of an external support of an interaction with a colleague helped

Karen to consciously re-think her understanding of her social work identity. Karen noted

that it was an easy transition to this expanded professional identity as she stated, "I

think that the realization to me that environmental issues could be part of social work

didn't take me long to get over. Because, I don't know why, it just seemed to make

sense." Similarly, Amy was looking for a career option to address her personal

environmental passions, but had not made the connection to the expanded professional

responsibility or the expanded person-environment framework. Amy stated:

I was looking for the connection. I remember being at ___ (outdoor camp) and

talking about applying for social work and things like that and the guy – I was in

my undergrad year – and I said I would like to find work where I can take the

natural world and apply it to the human world. I had no idea what I was trying to

say, but I said those words. I even said, how can you look at animals and use

animals in a way that benefits us as people without harming them. Like animal

assisted therapy, you do things like that. But I was looking for it and I didn't even

find it.

As already mentioned, it was not until her MSW program that Amy had her conscious

transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment in a social work class and her

professor helped to make these connections. During analysis I saw that what she

described was a conscious transition to an expanded professional identity, which was supported by her interpretation of an expanded person-environment framework. She also said, "I was able to kind of join those two worlds instead of just sort of reading and researching about them separately. Now I can do it together with the same lens instead of separate lenses."

Ginger began to study on her own during her MSW program, connected environmental issues and social work, and had a conscious transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment. She stated:

When I really started to look into these issues, for example the history of the environmental justice movement, and to see how things like pollution and landfill siting were directly correlated to low income communities of color, I was like, oh, this is really connected to the work that I'm doing and the things that I'm studying (as a social worker) and it just kind of uncovered a lot of deeper issues that are in the movement that I just wasn't previously aware of.

Jade had a similar experience as she studied on her own during the MSW program, found literature by a social work scholar connecting social work to environmental issues and had her conscious transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment. She stated:

It really changed my mind about it. And how it's really the populations that are the most insecure and the most vulnerable, that are really dealing with these issues. First, ecological justice, and the roots of it, these people clearly being the

dumping ground. And I saw this a lot in ____. In the park in ____. All the crap. It

changed my mind.

Jade went on to explain that as she read those social work resources, she realized she

was consciously transitioning and embracing an expanded person-environment

framework and an expanded professional identity. Jade offered a succinct picture of her

progression towards the expanded professional identity and an expanded person-

environment framework:

As I started working in art history, I started to realize that while objects are very

interesting and beautiful, and could actually change people's minds, I was really

wanting to work with the population that I had started out to work with, which

was immigrants and farmworkers. So I started volunteering and that's how I got

into social work. So for me it really started out as human rights and farmworker's

rights, and then when I started working with ____ (farmer's market) and the

farmer's market I really started to learn about more ecology issues. And once I

started working at ____ (parks) I really got a much better understanding. So it

really didn't start out environmental for me."

For Jade, it was a result of having an expanded professional identity and expanded

person-environment framework that allowed her to seek work experiences that were

more environmentally-oriented rather than in traditional social work settings.

In summary, although all participants were involved with work on environmental

issues within their professional duties and they all held expanded person-environment

frameworks, this ultimately only contributed to the development of an expanded

professional identity for participants in this second pathway as it influenced them into rethinking and consciously shifting to an expanded professional identity. Some participants in the study did not hold ultimately develop an expanded professional identity. Thus, only holding an expanded person-environment framework without expanded professional responsibility was found as a potential hindrance rather than a support to the development of an expanded professional identity. This will be explored further in a later section of this chapter.

Having Motivations.

Participants demonstrated having various internal supports which served as motivations, meaning they promoted involvement with environmental issues as professional social workers. These included having passion for the environment and having religious/non-religious spiritual perspectives. Each motivation helped to support various participants across both groups as they became involved with environmental issues and especially contributed to their influence on others to also address environmental issues.

Having Passion for the Environment.

Having passion for the environment, which means a strong feeling of excitement for working on environmental issues, emerged in the data as a consistently prominent concept as a motivating factor that supported participants to develop an expanded professional identity. For example, Sandra expressed:

My biggest concern with the environment is environmental justice. That's my

passion that's what drives me every day… to me, nothing else is as important,

because while all of the other issues matter, of course, nothing matters more if

we don't have a planet to live on.

Participants' passion for the environment was often demonstrated in their interviews

through zealous, detailed descriptions of what they had done. Often, participants

explicitly stated their passions, such as in the above quote. Some participants had been

passionate about environmental issues for as long as they could remember, often citing

having influences in childhood or youth (e.g., having a family member teach them to

care for the environment, memories of camping, being part of a group such as the Boy

Scouts). Others gained passion for the environment later in life as adults when they had

experiences of being in nature and/or seeing how a crisis in the physical environment

affected their clients and communities (e.g., air pollution). The length of time

participants had been involved as professional social workers on environmental issues

did not seem related to their level of passion. Variations in passion found among

participants across and within groups are discussed below.

Connecting Personal and Professional Passions.

Related to passion, the first pathway included participants who had personal and

professional passions for the environment and social issues, and did not remember a

time when they could not see the two passions as inextricably linked. Participants in the

other pathway could recall a period of time or a moment in time when they consciously

connected what they had earlier understood as separate passions (i.e., passion for social

issues as professional but their passions for environmental issues as personal).

Ultimately, all participants who had an expanded professional identity, in both

pathways, connected their personal and professional passions, thus it was found to be a support in their development of expanded professional identities. For example, Ginger shared:

> My job has allowed me to combine my personal and professional passions. And when I say my personal passion I do see it very specifically about gardening… it has allowed me to affect what kind of social worker I can and want to be. It's given me my population. I used to make this joke and I had no idea how true it would ring. But before I went to grad school I was thinking if the aspect of social work that I like is service and being a resource for people. I used to always say. I could be a social worker for people. I could be a social worker for dogs. I could be a social worker for trees. It's the theory behind the work. It's the motivation behind the work. And now I kind of feel like I am a social worker for the trees. In a very loose sense. It's the people who I ultimately serve but it's sort of really just finding that specific home for my passion and skill set.

Alternatively, participants who did not have expanded professional identities understood their passions for social issues as professional, and their passions, or perhaps milder interests, for the environment as personal and never connected the two passions professionally. Viewing passions for social issues and passions for environmental issues as separate was found to be a potential internal hindrance factor in the development of an expanded professional identity for this group. These participants were primarily passionate about the social issues and saw their work with environmental issues more as a platform or merely saw the environment as a tool to

engage in addressing social issues. This will be explored in the section on Having Internal

Hindrances later in this chapter.

Passion and Education.

Each participant, across both groups in the sample, was passionate about their

work as demonstrated by their excitement during interviews and detailed descriptions

of what they did related to environmental issues, often incorporating very technical

scientific language and information specific to their environmental issues. Their passion

also lead them to seek education on such matters when not formally taught. When

asked how they came to gain this education, many indicated they primarily learned it

beyond the social work classroom on their own initiative (e.g., on the job, independent

studies, informal skill and educational development). However, the scope of the process

of how they learned it will be expanded upon in the section on experiencing external

supports.

Additional data analysis showed that some participants experienced a reciprocal

process. As they learned about how the social and environmental issues were

inextricably connected, they became more passionate and it motivated them to learn

more and to respond to environmental issues as a professional social worker. For

example, Hannah indicated that the more education she attained about environmental

issues lead to greater passion to respond to it as a social worker: "once learning those

types of things it became more of a passion and something that's really important in my

life, also figuring out ways to integrate it into my work." Several others also indicated a

heightening of passion as they learned more about how their clients and communities

were connected to the environmental crisis.

Passion and Jobs.

Having passion was a motivating factor for participants who desired to attain a

job that would allow them to address their environmental passions. Often such jobs

were not readily available, and will be discussed in further detail later this chapter.

However, I will briefly mention here that having passion helped them to overcome such

hindrances and find ways to launch their careers in non-traditional social work settings,

or to expand their current job duties to include work on environmental issues. For

example, when asked about what helped her as a professional social worker to become

involved with environmental issues, Sandra stated, "it's my passion, so I work to make it

happen." Several participants also indicated they were so passionate that they were

willing to do volunteer work when paid positions were not available, and some even

began their own programs or non-profits just so they could fulfill their desire to work on

environmental passions. This commitment to their passions served to further

demonstrate the depth of their passions. How participants situated themselves in their

desired jobs to work on environmental issues will be explained more later in this

chapter.

A Range of Passions.

Across both groups and within each pathway, participants exhibited various

levels of passion towards environmental issues, ranging from strong passions to more

moderate ones. The data showed that participants who had expanded professional

identities intentionally positioned themselves in roles to address the environmental

crisis based on their passions which they considered both professional as well as

personal. The other three participants, who did not have expanded professional

identities, each indicated they did not position themselves in roles to work on

environmental issues based on any passion to address environmental issues but, simply

because they saw it as an opportunity to address the social needs using the

environment simply as a platform. One of these three indicated that he positioned

himself to work in an environmental setting due to his personal passion to be in nature

but, again, not with the intent to address any environmental outcomes on a professional

level. One of these three indicated that she had only a growing passion for

environmental issues personally, and the other demonstrated very mild concerns and

less passion for environmental issues personally.

In addition to the concepts discussed above, participants' internal passions were

influenced by other factors. For example, often their passions were fueled by

experiencing external factors (e.g., environmental hazard nearby, other people), and

some participants indicated that at times their passions helped them to overcome

hindrances they may have encountered (e.g., feeling alone as a social worker on

environmental issues, receiving negative messages about doing environmental work as

a social worker). There also appeared to be a connection between holding a strong

professional passion and having an expanded professional responsibility to address

environmental issues. Finally, participants' passion also contributed to how they sought

to influence others, thereby shaping the profession. These concepts will be discussed later in this chapter.

In summary, the concept of passion was an undercurrent as a motivating factor to some participants' in both groups to obtaining the education they needed to work on environmental issues and motivating them to obtain the jobs they wanted. There was a reciprocal process of increased education as fueling passion which led participants to seek more education and to work to address those environmental issues as part of their professional identity as a social worker. Ultimately, whether or not participants linked their personal passions for the environment and their professional passions for social issues did not serve as deterrents to participants situating themselves in roles to work as social workers with environmental issues. However, participants' connecting their social and environmental passions was an essential factor which supported participants' development of an expanded professional identity.

Having Religious and Non-religious Spiritual Perspectives.

Religious or non-religious spirituality was not a predominant motivating factor mentioned by all participants, but it was a significant factor indicated by a few participants. With an interview guide that was already very long, I decided against specifically asking about religious or non-religious spiritual perspectives unless the participant gave indications of them, and then I would. A few participants who had expanded professional identities mentioned these perspectives.

Hannah mentioned her religious spiritual perspective when answering one of the interview guide questions. I followed up by asking, "Is your religion or faith a motivating factor for you to become involved in this kind of work?" She replied:

Yeah, it definitely is. The whole idea of "Creation Care". I grew up in a Christian home environment and my faith has changed a lot and become a lot more holistic because I think in the past a lot of Christians have just kind of focused on the individuals. But I think we really, my faith tells me to also to think about, like the Creation that we've been given and the things that we need to take care of as being humans on this Earth and so it helps us but then it also helps all people around the world. We all need to be focused on this.

Hannah shared how her understanding of the environment was connected to her spiritual perspective in the context of organized religion, but other participants indicated different connections to non-religious spiritual perspectives. One participant did not mention any organized religion, whereas two participants indicated a specific wariness for organized religion. For example, Abigail explained how she had a spiritual connection and personal healing from experiencing nature, and wanted to explore it as a therapeutic tool for use as a social worker when she stated:

Then when I had the crisis and had the experience out at the ranch for 2 years. That's what influenced me. Because I was finally able to heal... everything was building back up through real spiritual connection, being out at the ranch. In that ecosystem, there's so much nature out there. And being with it every day it was just a very magical experience.

Amy indicated that although she was very wary of organized religion, her social work

identity and values were formed alongside her non-religious spirituality. She stated:

> My understanding of nature is very holistic, so my understanding of people is
>
> very holistic as well. So being able to kind of join those two worlds and – I guess
>
> to get really personal with you, my beliefs are very spiritual in the fact that I
>
> believe the natural world offers whatever answer I need. And if I don't have an
>
> answer I'm not asking the right question. Or I'm not seeing it because my eyes
>
> aren't open, or my ears aren't open, or I'm not, my heart does not open to
>
> hearing the answer. So in that approach, understanding my relationship with
>
> nature, that's how I approach people in what I do and the way I work.

Ginger offered a unique example. She indicated she was wary about working as a social

work intern at a religious-based organization. However, she realized during the

experience that religious spiritual perspectives could be a motivating factor for others,

and she became more comfortable using it as a tool to engage clients on environmental

issues.

For participants who did not mention religious and non-religious spiritual

perspectives, perhaps these perspectives were not motivators for their work on

environmental issues. Or, perhaps participants did not think to mention these

perspectives although they may have been of some importance. Or, perhaps

participants did not mention these perspectives because social workers may be

professionally socialized to keep religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives

separate from their professional work; future studies may want to examine this concept because it was not feasible to do so for this study.

Although religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives were not a prominent factor mentioned by all participants, the findings offer valuable insight. These participants demonstrated how religious or non-religious spiritual experiences in nature could be used as an intervention tool, personally and/or with clients. For some participants, religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives were an essential factor in their development of expanded professional identities.

Experiencing External Supports

Other factors emerging from the data also supported participants' development of expanded professional identities included experiencing educational influences (i.e., having formal generalist social work education, having environmental education unrelated to social work, environmental education linked to social work, supportive people who influenced participants, receiving supportive messages), having paid employment (e.g., being allowed to integrate role within a job, creating job), and experiencing formative experiences that promoted their response to the environmental crisis (e.g., having experiences in nature such as camping as a child or enduring a natural disaster). I viewed these factors as similar, so I grouped them into a category and named it "Experiencing External Supports" which means having experiences or opportunities that support the process of developing an expanded professional identity.

Experiencing Educational Influences.

The data showed that having one or more educational influences was a key external support factor that contributed to the development of an expanded professional identity for some participants. For this study, experiencing educational influences means having formal academic generalist social work education, having formal and/or informal environmental education not explicitly linked to social work, having formal and/or informal academic environmental education explicitly linked to social work, and having people who influenced and contributed to the formal and/or informal educational process of the participants (e.g., professors, peer students, field supervisors, social work and non-social work colleagues, mentors, friends, family). These types of educational influences were found in the context of traditional academic educational systems, as well as beyond academia (e.g., on-the-job training), and from external, non-academic resources and people. These experiences will be explored further in the following sections. Data concerning how participants acted as socializers will be presented in the section on Shaping the Profession.

Having Formal, Academic Generalist Social Work Education.

Often participants cited their generalist social work education of values, ethics, and skills as tools that equipped them to effectively work on environmental issues. These tools included ability to work at all levels of social work practice; ability to work in interdisciplinary settings; ability to bridge and translate among multiple stakeholders; social work ethics and values; and an expanded person-environment framework.

Hannah summarized benefits of her generalist social work education in support of her

work on environmental issues by stating:

> Well, I think that as social workers that's often what we're doing. Because we're
>
> working in so many different places, whether it's schools or hospitals, or we're
>
> often kind of thrown in with a lot of different professions. And, and I think that
>
> as a social worker we do have that really unique perspective of working at
>
> different levels, like ways of affecting change in our society, the macro and
>
> micro. And, also like specifically seeing the people who are on the fringe and
>
> helping to make sure that their voices are heard. I think that's pretty uniquely
>
> social work.

Several participants indicated that large environmental issues overwhelmed them

before they began their social work education, but after they acquired the generalist

social work tools to address those issues, they felt equipped to intervene. For example,

Amy stated:

> Now it's not just this - it's not just this overwhelming problem. But social work
>
> has given me an outlet to do something about it … social work has given me the
>
> avenue to do something about it. Like I can call my senator, I can protest, I can
>
> rally, I can organize, I can advocate, I can be involved in a meaningful way.

Many participants specifically cited that their generalist social work education provided

them tools and versatility to work at all levels of practice (i.e., micro, mezzo, macro,

systems). For example, participants said how they were able to work with individuals in

therapeutic ways in wilderness camping, gardening or recycling programs, showing

them how skills and lessons acquired in those environmental contexts could be internalized and applied in other areas of life. Other participants noted how they were able to work in communities, navigate bureaucracies, and organize for change. Some participants noted how social work gave them tools to research, analyze, and address environmental problems, when they indicated that social workers are not just studying the interface of social and environmental issues, but are equipped to design and implement interventions.

Participants frequently demonstrated how their generalist social work education equipped them to bring skills and expertise to interdisciplinary settings, which is critical to addressing the environmental crisis. For example, Dan discussed how generalist social work tools "crossover" when he noted that skills to work on social issues apply effectively to work on environmental issues. Several participants worked in international contexts on environmental issues with interdisciplinary teams.

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated how their generalist social work education taught them skills of bridging and translating between multiple stakeholders (e.g., community members, policy makers, environmentalists). For example, Amy described this by stating:

> The environmental world doesn't do well speaking to policy level or to the people. They speak different languages and social workers can be the liaison, being able to speak to all the languages needed.

The bridging and translating included social work values such as empowering marginalized voices to be heard, the right to self-determination, and strengths based

practice. These values enabled participants to work with multiple stakeholders on environmental issues in a manner that brought solutions considered culturally competent, inclusive, and effective. Participants noted that often vulnerable populations and their communities were targets of environmentally-focused interventions by professionals from non-social work disciplines (e.g., environmentalists). Many participants indicated how their generalist social work education helped them highlight the values of being sensitive to vulnerable populations in those contexts, and to work towards inclusivity and empowering them as the experts in their environments. For example, Larry noted:

> When we did our overseas trips, we were helping the scientist to see perhaps some of the other aspects of this than just the science part. The science part is extremely important but if you want to keep going beyond when you have left you should try to help the people who live here to see the importance of it and to help them learn. And after all they're the ones who probably want to protect this more than anybody. It's their home.

Karen shared that she was often the only social worker at interdisciplinary conferences on environmental issues, and the only one who asked how to include voices of those being excluded and how the environmental interventions and policies may exclude or harm people. Often participants pointed out how clients and communities were experts on their own lives and simply needed a social worker to serve as an advocate to help them frame issues and get attention of people in power.

Several participants indicated that social work values allowed them to bring

attention to human benefits (e.g., therapeutic benefits) and burdens (e.g., disruption of social power structures) of environmental activities (e.g., community gardening, water purification programs).

Finally, many participants who had expanded professional identities noted their expanded person-environment framework allowed them to look at all systems, including the environment. Some participants noted that operationalizing the person-environment framework in an expanded way (i.e., inclusive of the physical environment) allowed them to attend more holistically to the intersection and reciprocal impact of social and environmental issues, and not be restricted to attend only to the social issues of their clients and communities.

Having Environmental Education Not Explicitly Linked to Social Work.

Participants in both groups indicated various forms of environmental education not explicitly linked to social work that supported their work on environmental issues. Participants often provided detailed descriptions of work on environmental issues, incorporating technical language and information specific to the environmental issues. As mentioned in an earlier section, their passions often prompted them to seek environmental education when not formally taught in their social work courses. When asked how they gained knowledge of environmental issues, participants often cited non-social work related educational resources and people that they took the initiative to seek out. The scope of how they learned these things included environmental education programs (e.g., Boy Scouts, Sierra Club, environmental camp, space camp), learning on the job, taking academic courses in other disciplines related to environmental issues,

taking independent studies which they tailored for environmental education, watching

documentaries, and reading literature on environmental issues from non-social work

disciplines. For example, Jade noted that she went to a non-social work discipline to find

education and develop skills on her specific topic of interest, horticultural therapy.

Several participants indicated that they had one or more non-social work

mentors or colleagues who were environmental advocates who inspired and taught

them about environmental issues. Every participant indicated that they investigated on

their own through resources such as academic and non-academic courses, training,

literature, documentaries, and other resources to enhance their education on

environmental issues. Participants mentioned many interdisciplinary topics that they

studied including economics, ecology, organic gardening, farming, sustainable and safe

housing, climate change, farm workers' rights, environmental health, environmental

geology, history, anthropology, environmental sustainability, equine therapy, wilderness

therapy, childhood trauma, nutrition, and environmental justice movement.

Having Environmental Education Explicitly Linked to Social Work.

For this study, having environmental education explicitly linked to social work

means having one or more of the following: social work professor who offered course

content, assignments, or discussions to explicitly connect environmental issues and

social work; social work colleague or classmate who brought this explicit link to

participant's attention; social work field internship that explicitly helped participant

connect environmental issues and social work; or seeking social work education on own

initiative beyond what is offered in core courses as it explicitly links to environmental

issues (e.g., formal independent study, informal research and reading scholarly social work literature). Many participants who had expanded professional identities had environmental education explicitly linked to social work. This was a key factor in supporting some participants in the development of an expanded professional identity, as it was often the critical experience that supported their conscious transition to an expanded professional identity. None of the participants who did not have an expanded professional identity indicated that they had any environmental education explicitly linked to social work.

A few participants who had expanded professional identities had one or more professors who offered course content that explicitly connected environmental issues and social work in class through discussions, readings, and/or assignments. This supporting factor varied from extensive discussions in class and relevant assignments, to very minimal mentioning of the links between environmental issues and social work as a side discussion topic. For example, Amy indicated that in one course during her MSW program, a professor assigned articles and showed documentaries that explicitly connected environmental issues and social work. This supported a conscious transition in the form of prominent epiphany moment as she noted how she was then able to make the explicit connections, thereby allowing her to embrace an expanded professional identity. Similarly, Hannah recalled a social work professor who required a class project on the disappearance of bees as pollinators. She indicated that many classmates did not understand the connection to social work, but that the professor helped them "to get out of our box of what social work is supposed to be."

Other participants experienced much less course content offered by social

worker professors on the explicit connections between environmental issues and social

work. For example, Ginger stated that it rarely came up in class conversations, but even

then, it was not an intentional topic of focus of the professor. Sandra indicated that

although she had one professor who did specifically teach about environmental issues,

others often only integrated it into their normal course curriculum, stating: "several

other professors would talk about environmental issues, but it's not necessarily the

focus of the course. It might be environmental justice one topic for a week, as opposed

to that." Several participants indicated that their class assignments were open enough

that they could tailor their own learning around environmental topics of interest to

them, but they were not explicitly taught in the classes.

Interestingly, a few participants knew that their professors had published on the

topic of the explicit connection of environmental issues and social work. However, they

indicated that they did not get much of that explicit connection from what these

professors taught in class, but rather from reading those articles on their own. For

example, Hannah stated:

> I think for _____ (professor) she was kind of more, it was more important to her,
>
> she didn't talk about it a whole lot in classes, it would come up here and there.
>
> And specifically when I was able to read her article and I was like, oh, she's
>
> totally on board with this. So I think she was more, she was of an encouragement
>
> in a different way. But I feel like it should be talked about more.

I also asked participants if they knew of the NASW policy statement on the environment (Humphreys & Rogge, 2000) that explicitly connected environmental issues and social work identity and which included an expanded professional responsibility. Only five out of the fourteen participants who had expanded professional identities, and only one participant who did not have an expanded professional identity had heard of this resource. Thus it appeared that such potentially supportive resources were not widely known about and as influential in these participants' experiences.

Two participants indicated that they had a professor encourage them to publish work on their experiences and understanding of their expanded professional identity. They both stated that this was a source of great support in the development of their expanded professional identity.

Very few participants noted that their social work academic institutions had environmentally-focused social work student groups; only one participant indicated that she was actively involved in such a group during her time in that educational program. Several participants shared that they knew at least one other social work peer student who had similar interests in environmental issues. A few participants shared that they had classmates who chose environmental topics (e.g., lead poisoning, landfills, community gardening) for their assignments. Several participants mentioned that they had a colleague or classmate bring to their attention the explicit link between environmental issues and social work. Katherine noted that other students with interests in environmental issues helped to open educational opportunities, somewhat

paving the way for her when she entered the social work program, and making it easier for her to tailor her education to include environmental issues. One participant mentioned an experience at a professional social work conference and feeling supported when she connected with other social work colleagues who presented on environmental topics.

Some participants noted supportive encouragement and messages from professors, colleagues, and/or classmates about their work on environmental issues as a social worker. Participants who indicated that they did not feel explicitly supported by other social workers explained that they did not feel any pushback either; thus, the lack of negative messages or pushback could be seen as an external support, too. For example, Karen stated:

> I think that other things that helped, I think we were talking earlier, that no one really challenged me on this. The faculty at our school, they couldn't help me much in thinking about it, but they didn't think it was a bad idea by any means. They were happy for me to run with it.

Similarly, Jade indicated that she did not have other students or professors deterring her interests. She stated, "everyone had their own baby concept, but we never got real pushback on it in any real way. Other than like 'ok, and let's move along'." A few participants felt they had minor forms of pushback to their interest in work on environmental issues as a social worker. These will be discussed in detail in the section on experiencing external hindrances.

Very few of these participants reported having a substantial, long-lasting relationship beyond formal social work education, that was mutually-reinforcing of their shared understanding in the explicit links between environment issues and social work. The lack of having social work colleagues who supported the development of an expanded professional identity will be discussed further in the section on external hindrances. Interestingly, many of the participants indicated that they gained a sense of solidarity knowing that I was conducting this study, as they realized there must be more social workers in the world who were doing things similar to their work with environmental issue to warrant such a research study.

Some participants indicated that they had one or more academic social work field internships that explicitly helped them connect environmental issues and social work. Although internships specific to environmental issues were not readily available, several participants felt their administrators and supervisors helped them tailor their learning and work towards those interests. Others were able to have their internships completely focused on their environmental interests. For example, Sandra said:

> We were looking at how do we make low-income housing more energy-efficient
>
> for the people while they're still living there and how do you do that with an
>
> occupied home versus a vacant one. And it was great. That was my first
>
> practicum. Then my second practicum-my concentration practicum-was working
>
> with the ____(city) Green Partnership. We built a large community garden.

Primarily, participants indicated that they sought education on their own initiative beyond their social work classes through multiple and various forms such as formal

independent study, informal research and reading scholarly social work literature on the explicit links of environmental issues and social work, and/or study abroad courses. For example, Sandra summed up her initiative to seek out educational opportunities and tailor her focus on environmental issues:

My practicum were obviously environmental focused, and then my specialization at the _____ School was environmental justice and the way I did that was I just focused on environmental issues in all the classes that I could. I was able to study abroad and I took a class called Sustainable Human Development and Human Rights in Costa Rica. It was incredible and I learned so much about how much further advanced their environmental policies are than ours. So then I came back and I wrote my macroeconomics paper on the green economy in Costa Rica. So basically, even classes that on transcript don't look environmental, I worked to make them environmental by choosing to study environmental issues, and write about them.

Many others indicated a similar tailoring of social work class assignments, as demonstrated in Karen's statement:

I never took an environmentally focused class as a social worker in MSW or doctoral program but the nature of our two years of coursework was such that you can tailor your papers to what you wanted to work on.

Several participants created their own independent studies on environmental issues (e.g., community gardening, recycling program for soccer equipment, sustainability) during their formal academic social work education. One participant

indicated that when she found horticultural therapy as a social work intervention, she felt it strengthened her professional identity as a social worker because she viewed herself as a macro-social worker and had not previously found any micro social work appealing. Jade demonstrated this external support when she read social work literature and was pleasantly surprised by realizing that she was not alone in her understanding of an expanded professional identity. She stated: "it turned out we [self and classmate] weren't the only ones thinking this. And, there are a lot of books on it. And, we didn't know." Finally, one participant indicated that it was during his job after formal academic social work education when he explicitly connected environment issues and social work. He indicated that he learned specific environmental education on the job from multiple non-social work resources, but applied it in his practice as a social worker. His experience was consistent across participants in both groups.

Experiencing Educational Influences and Increasing Response to Environmental Crisis.

As previously mentioned in the above section on passion and education, data analysis showed that some participants experienced a reciprocal process of education, meaning as they learned about how the social and environmental issues were inextricably connected, they became more passionate and it motivated them to learn more and to respond to environmental issues as a professional social worker. Sandra offered a key example of this when she stated:

I think once I hit [social work] grad school it really opened up my eyes. Obviously I had more tools, I could access more research and was learning more about all

the horrible injustices that happen environmentally every day. It was a real eye-opener and I think it fueled me that much more to work towards gleaning everything that I do and everything that the company I work for does. For instance, access to research really helps me push my creativity and looking for creative and productive ways to lower carbon footprints and the poverty level at the same time.

Several participants indicated that the more they learned about the connections between environmental issues and social injustices, the more it became a priority for their work as social workers. Most participants indicated a heightening of focus on environmental issues as they learned more about how their clients and communities were connected to the environmental crisis.

In summary, the data showed that a generalist social work education, along with environmental education on special topics, equipped participants to bring skills and expertise to interdisciplinary settings, which was critical to addressing the environmental crisis. Participants who had an expanded professional identity had a variety of educational influences across and within the two pathways. Not all participants experienced all of the support factors. Experiencing the external supports of environmental education explicitly linked to social work and people who influenced an understanding of this link were both critical for most participants in the second pathway who had a conscious transition to an expanded professional identity. Only one of those participants cited a formative experience that provided support for the development of his expanded professional identity *after* his formal social work education was completed

and he was in the job setting. Many participants in the first pathway also experienced one or both of these factors; but, they were not seen as critical, as they had already come to social work assuming that environmental issues fit with social work and that allowed them to interpret linkages between environment and social work with or without being explicitly taught in social work or by encountering others' influence. Participants who did not have an expanded professional identity did not indicate having either of these two critical experiences. I also found that on their own initiative, participants who had expanded professional identities sought out environmental education explicitly connected to social work through educational opportunities and/or resources beyond that offered in core courses. All participants across groups sought non-social work specific environmental education from multiple non-social work resources, and often learned specific environmental education on the job.

Having Paid Employment.

Having paid employment to work on environmental and social issues was a key external support factor that contributed to the development of an expanded professional identity for some participants. For this study, paid employment was found by participants through various avenues including advertised positions for social workers with job responsibilities that explicitly connected social and environmental issues (e.g., healthy housing case management); advertised positions for social workers that did not have job duties focused on environmental issues (e.g., school social worker) but where participants saw an opportunity to infuse environmental issues into their work; advertised positions for professional disciplines other than social work (e.g., parks

and recreation departments) but participants thought they could infuse social and/or environmental issues in their work; created opportunities for themselves for paid employment to work on environmental and social issues within an existing employment structure (e.g., grant writing to fund a new position); and started their own business and/or non-profit for paid employment. As already noted, participants who did not have expanded professional identities had paid employment to work on environmental and social issues, but it was not enough to develop an expanded professional identity. Because they did not have expanded professional identities, these participants viewed their paid employment more traditionally as platforms to primarily address social issues, even if they were in environmentally focused jobs and/or settings (e.g., wilderness therapy, environmental quality control). This will be further discussed later in the section on external hindrances.

Participants rarely indicated that they found advertised positions for social workers with job responsibilities that explicitly connected social and environmental issues; participants who did found positions as social work case managers (e.g., disaster relief, healthy housing). More often, participants said that they could not find such advertised positions, despite their best and sometimes exhaustive job searches. Thus, most participants indicated that they found ways to infuse the connection between environmental and social issues in their paid employment whether it was in traditional (e.g., counseling at-risk youth) or non-traditional social work roles (e.g., environmental quality control). For example, several participants found paid positions advertised for social workers that did not have job duties focused on environmental issues (e.g., school

social worker). These participants took it upon themselves to find opportunities to infuse environmental issues into their work. For example, Alicia started a school recycling program that had the mutual benefit of environmental sustainability and a social intervention for at-risk youth. She noted that her job as a school social worker gave her the flexibility to work on environmental issues because she was not burdened with academic performance goals like teachers were. Liz, also a school social worker, noted how the environmental activity of starting a rain garden served as a great social intervention as it fit goals of her clients. Hannah, as a counselor, indicated that she met clients outside, and/or used natural and recycled objects in her work with clients. Many participants indicated that everything they did had an element of environmental work even if the position was supposed to be focused primarily on social issues. For example, Marin recalled her work with several organizations focused on human rights and her work with refugees abroad as being completely interwoven with work on environmental issues.

Many participants found advertised paid positions for professional disciplines other than social work (e.g., parks and recreation departments). They applied for such jobs because they were equipped to work in interdisciplinary settings, and saw the opportunity to infuse social issues to jobs primarily focused on environmental issues. For participants who had expanded professional identities, they held an expanded professional responsibility. For example, participants indicated that they applied for and attained jobs typically filled by nutritionists, scientists, or other disciplines. Jade said that she applied for a job advertised for a nutritionist, and had to really sell her

qualifications and demonstrate to the employer how she as a social worker would be successful in the job. Ginger recalled how she looked very broadly at a multitude of organizations to find a job that would allow her to work on environmental and social issues as a social worker. She almost gave up her desire to find such a job, but ultimately found one in a non-traditional social work setting. Finding such a position was a key external support, as demonstrated in her statement:

And I truly never, I always thought this would stay a personal passion of mine and that I would probably be employed doing some other kind of work, but that I would always care about this issue and try to write on this issue and keep myself engaged as an aside. I never really, truly expected. Unless I had the guts to start my own nonprofit, which right out of grad school was way too much of a commitment. I truly never expected to find work in this field. I can't still to this day, I can't believe I get paid to do what I do.

Although Ginger had other experiences that supported the development of an expanded professional identity, her experience of paid employment to address environmental issues was an additional external support to her ongoing development of an expanded professional identity beyond the academic setting.

For participants who did not have expanded professional identities, however, they saw paid employment as platforms to address primarily social issues, even if they were in environmentally-focused jobs and/or settings (e.g., wilderness therapy, environmental quality control). For example, Phyllis stated that she applied for a non-social work position in environmental quality control at an organization where she was

working in a traditional social work role. She indicated that she saw it as an opportunity to work on social issues and better engage the community. This will be further discussed later in the section on external hindrances. Here I note that all participants in each group were able to access and situate themselves in paid positions that allowed them to work on environmental and social issues as social workers.

A few participants said that they worked to develop or create opportunities for themselves for paid employment to work on environmental and social issues within an existing employment structure. For example, Beverly said, "with coordinating the child hunger study, I was the one who asked. I was the one who sought out myself to create this position for me through the nutrition center." She went on to say she did this by writing a grant to fund the position she proposed. Larry also said that he sought many research grants to fund his work; for example, he received a contract to interview people to determine their ideas about the physical environment and the impact it had on them.

Several participants indicated that they had dreams of one day starting their own non-profit related to their environmental interests (e.g., community garden, eco-friendly home renovations in impoverished neighborhoods). A few participants did successfully start their own for-profit businesses and/or non-profits. This was a major support for them to work on environmental issues as a social worker. For example, Dan and Larry each indicated that they started for-profit businesses with a main goal of using proceeds to fund their non-profits which worked on social and environmental issues. Also, Dan started a non-profit that addressed social and environmental issues (e.g.,

recycling and redistributing soccer equipment to those in need) which he was able to

transition to be funded and run by a friend's for-profit business. Both Dan and Larry had

partners in their business and non-profit start-ups. Thus, having these supportive people

and having the structure of funding from for-profit businesses were supports for these

non-profit endeavors.

Participants mentioned a few other supports to their work on environmental

issues as a social worker. For example, several participants indicated that they first

volunteered to work without pay to eventually obtain a position for pay. Thus, time and

financial resources to work without pay was a support that, for a few participants,

resulted in paid employment. One participant, Ginger, noted that when she was

promoted to a supervisory role, she was better able to tailor her job duties and infuse

social justice issues into her job which had been primarily focused on environmental

issues. Several participants indicated that they had supportive people (e.g., supervisors,

colleagues) who understood the connections of environmental and social issues. Several

participants stated that they could not have done the work without the supportive

relationships. Some participants indicated that they found the supportive relationships

as validating and tremendously helpful to their work.

In summary, having paid employment to work on environmental and social

issues contributed to the development of expanded professional identities for some

participants. A few participants found traditional social work positions or created their

own positions to work specifically on environmental and social issues, but most

participants found paid employment in non-traditional and interdisciplinary social work

settings. Those participants were then able to infuse environmental and social issues into their interdisciplinary work. Their inclination to seek such jobs was primarily due to their belief that their social work values and skills could apply broadly enough to fill roles in non-traditional and interdisciplinary settings. Although all participants in both groups addressed environmental issues in their work, only some participants held expanded professional identities. These participants indicated that they felt supported as they brought beneficial and welcomed perspectives to their interdisciplinary jobs. A few participants experienced mild forms of hindrances, or lack of support, but those will be discussed in later in the section on experiencing external hindrances.

Having Formative Experiences.

Having a formative experiences were a key factor that contributed to some participants' development of an expanded professional identity. For this study, formative experiences mean one or more occurrences that sparked the desire of participants to work on environmental issues. These included experiences (e.g., natural disaster, personal healing in nature, membership in environmental clubs) that may have occurred prior to or after coming to the social work profession. Although some participants had formative experiences, their experiences did not lead to the development of expanded professional identities. This will be discussed later in the section on experiencing hindrances.

Having Negative Formative Experiences.

Participants indicated a variety of formative experiences that were interpreted as negative or problems to address, but that positively sparked their work on

environmental issues. Some participants spoke globally about the negative formative experiences of living on our planet in times of global warming, extreme carbon emissions, pollution to air, water, and soil, a consumeristic society, human displacement due to environmental hazards, and the tumultuous political climate from disagreements over natural resources. For example, Marin stated:

I think that environmentalism isn't something that's an add-on. It's got to be incorporated into everything we do because this is what is going to, this is the biggest problem on earth today. This is what's threatening humanity more than anything else because it affects every single person, the air, the water, the soil, the food we eat, our futures. And it cannot be ignored. In fact, it's almost too late now.

Often, participants indicated negative formative experiences in a local context. For example, they spoke of environmental injustices related to overconsumption, local food insecurity, flooding from hurricanes, beach erosion, rising sea levels, extreme air pollution, fracking, and hazards of coal mining and nuclear power plants. Several participants pointed to experiences in locations where people are not as removed from the environment, but see explicit connections between human and environmental well-being daily. For example, Karen noted:

Well, almost anything you're going to work on, or that anyone would work on in a developing country, again this is pretty broad but, is going to be related to the environment in some way. There isn't necessarily so much of that separation, especially in rural communities. But in urban areas too, like in _____(city)

where you have such dense population, where not everybody has access to

clean water, not everybody has good sanitation, these are all urban

environmental problems that are about basic wellbeing and survival. So there's

not as, I don't know, it just doesn't seem as separate as maybe it might here or

maybe in other industrialized countries.

Having such a negative formative experience was perceived as crucial in Liz's mind when

she stated, "where's your crisis?" This was interpreted to mean where is the struggle for

human and environmental well-being as seen as imminent and explicitly evident. She

explained that it was often most apparent during a natural disaster or similar crisis. She

felt that without such experiences, social workers would be less inclined to make it part

of their professional responsibility, as she admitted was true for herself. Katherine was

first exposed to social workers as the professionals working with clients after a

hurricane. She indicated that this tremendously contributed to her expanded

professional identity formation. She stated:

The people who were doing the coordinating of the essential human services

part were social workers. And I don't know. It's just been, that's what social

workers do. So that's my entry into social work and my understanding of who a

social worker was. They were disaster people.

Having Positive Formative Experiences.

Participants described many different formative experiences that were

interpreted as positive and promoted their work on environmental issues. These

included activities and experiences such as camping in nature, gardening, kayaking,

mountain biking, hiking, equestrian therapy, and international travel. Several

participants mentioned how they had been involved with environmental clubs (e.g.,

Sierra Club, Boy Scouts), and some mentioned parents or friends who encouraged their

interest in the environment and instilled in them the desire to work on environmental

issues. Many participants discussed how their experiences with international travel gave

them perspectives on communities that lived more sustainably than the ones from

which they came in the USA, and that those positive experiences influenced their work

on environmental issues. For example, Katherine noted the following about her time

living in another country:

> They had very different mindset about climate change and even consumption in
>
> general, personal consumption, with anything, food, clothes, gasoline, driving.
>
> They just had a different mindset and I think it altered my view. It made me see
>
> that other people think about this stuff. Especially my small community
>
> didn't think about it as a whole other than 'oh we're gonna lose this land, but
>
> there's nothing anybody can do about it'. So, it made me think how whole
>
> societies can have this in their consciousness and be proactive about wanting to
>
> stop it and not being, like, victimized.

Several participants stated that their local cultural trend towards environmental

sustainability was a positive formative experience in their lives. For example, Alicia

mentioned that she intentionally chose to move to her community because it was very

progressive on sustainability issues, and a few other participants stated that they

noticed cultural trends in their generations as being more concerned about the

environment, although these spanned the entire age range of the sample.

In summary, both positive and negative formative experiences influenced

participants to work on environmental issues. For those who had expanded professional

identities, formative experiences contributed to the development of expanded

professional identities. Yet, not all participants who had formative experiences

developed expanded professional identities. I also noted that the lack of an imminent

negative environmental experience may result in a social worker not explicitly

connecting the environmental and professional responsibilities. These issues will be

discussed further in the section on external hindrances.

Experiencing Internal Hindrances

Some factors that emerged from the data that hindered participants'

development of an expanded professional identity included maintaining a traditional

professional identity, not seeing personal passions for environment as connected to

professional passions for social issues, and feeling alone as a social worker responding

to environmental issues. I viewed these factors as similar, so I grouped them into a

category and named it "Experiencing Internal Hindrances" which means having beliefs

or perceptions that created an obstacle in the process of developing an expanded

professional identity. A hindrance may range in its ability to hinder a participant from

developing an expanded professional identity. For example, a hindrance may be

experienced and interpreted differently by different participants; for one person it could

be a complete barrier, while for others it may be a minimal, almost non-issue that is

easily and perhaps unconsciously resolved. For others, it may be the lack of a support, which thereby created a potential hindrance in their development of an expanded professional identity. This is explained in detail in the following sections as each factor is examined concerning how different participants experienced and interpreted different factors.

Maintaining a Traditional Understanding of Professional Identity.

The data showed that while all participants interpreted and held an expanded person-environment framework, with the additional understanding of an expanded professional responsibility some participants were supported in developing an expanded professional identity. Others, held a more traditional professional responsibility to the human client systems, therefore while they held an expanded person-environment framework, it did not ultimately support their understanding of an expanded professional identity.

As noted in the chapter's overview, all participants understood social work to have expanded professional boundaries which allowed them to situate themselves in jobs that involved work with environmental issues (i.e., schools, refugee camps, community health foundations, governmental departments of environmental health). Participants in one pathway came to social work assuming environmental issues fit within social work professional identity and they naturally interpreted the person-environment as expanded. Participants in another pathway came to social work with perspective more traditional understanding of professional identity and at first narrowly operationalized the person-environment framework; however, after coming to social

work, they had a variety of culminating experiences that supported a conscious

transition which presented them with the idea of an expanded professional identity and

an expanded person-environment framework. These experiences did not appear to be

hindrances, as they overwhelmingly demonstrated how easy it was to shift their

thinking to embrace an expanded professional identity and expanded person-

environment framework. Alternatively, participants who did not have expanded

professional identities did not describe having any experiences prior to our interview

that supported a conscious transition in the development of an expanded professional

identity.

Participants who did not have an expanded professional identity maintained a

traditional professional identity. This was demonstrated as participants offered

examples showed that, although they considered the physical environment when

bringing skills and values to their roles, they primarily focused on addressing the social

issues and used the environment only as a tool or platform. For example, when asked,

"how did you make the link between the environment and social work?" Tom answered,

"wow. I think it's just it's using the environment as the therapeutic modality. And there's

a whole field of wilderness therapy. And that's the social work connection." His answer,

echoed in similar responses throughout his interview, demonstrated a one-sided use of

the physical environment for human benefit rather than the mutual well-being and

interdependency of humans and the environment. Similarly, Phyllis stated the

environment was never a big interest of hers and she took a job working on

environmental issues only because she saw it as platform or opportunity to work with

communities on engaging citizens to address social justice issues.

Liz also demonstrated a traditional professional identity. Interestingly, however,

it appeared that she experienced these internal hindrances perhaps for the first time

when she realized that there may be an alternative expanded professional identity

which she thought she should consider. She stated:

Well, I'll have to think about this more. But at this point I'm wondering if I

thought of the environment more as a means to an end. Using the environment

not just to protect it, but how can I affect my students and use the environment?

More for what it can do for them as a person rather than change… And maybe

that's not the way it's supposed to be. But I'm not there yet. It's supposed to be

different and I suspect it is, you're supposed to be more, as concerned about the

environment as you are the people because without it, and I get that.

Later in the interview, Liz said:

I'm kind of embarrassed about it… Because I realize, you asked me to define

social work, but I'm defining it more as to people. I mean, I'm not broadening

out enough, to include the environment. I see the application of using

environment, you know, so I'm gonna do it with my [clients]. But I, generally

speaking don't have a broad definition that includes that. Naturally includes it.

So that's something that I'm gonna think more about. And redefine for myself.

It appeared that our interview presented her for the first time with the knowledge that

there were alternative, expanded professional identities and she began to contemplate

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what they meant to her professional identity. She even described the internal hindrance as being embarrassed by not knowing there were alternative understandings or definitions of social. This appeared to be part of the conscious transition process that some participants experienced as they resolved the internal hindrances and ultimately shifted their thinking and embraced an expanded professional identity.

In summary, although all participants embraced roles that allowed them to work on environmental issues, some participants maintained traditional professional identity with traditional understanding of responsibility, potentially hindering development of expanded professional identities. Not having expanded professional identities did not hinder these participants from doing work to address social issues along with work on environmental issues, but it appeared to hinder the ability to address the urgent conditions of the environment itself.

Not Connecting Personal and Professional Passions.

Not connecting personal and professional passions was an internal hindrance for some participants that appeared to hinder development of expanded professional identities. As noted previously, a hindrance does not have to result in a conscious struggle; it can be a source, sometimes without their awareness, that hinders a participant from developing an expanded professional identity.

Some participants understood their passions for social issues as professional, and their passions, or perhaps milder interests, for the environment as personal, but never connected the two passions professionally. One of three participants who did not have an expanded professional identity indicated that he positioned himself to work in

an environmental setting due to his personal passion to be in nature, but not with the

intent to address any environmental outcomes on a professional level. Another

participant in this group indicated that she had a growing passion for environmental

issues, but only on a personal level. The third participant in this group demonstrated

only very mild concerns and less passion for environmental issues personally. These

participants were primarily passionate about social issues professionally and saw their

work with environmental issues more as a platform, or merely saw the environment as a

tool to engage in addressing social issues. For example, Phyllis stated:

> It never was a real big interest to me. I mean, I always believed we needed a
>
> clean environment, but I never, you know, I had other things I was more
>
> interested in, social justice being probably the most important thing I've been
>
> interested in. Like I said, I grew up near a paper mill and remember fishing in a
>
> pond with my parents and seeing the white ash all over the water and thinking,
>
> this is not good. But, I really never had that much interest in the environment. I
>
> just took the job because I saw it as an opportunity to do something to help
>
> citizens get better engaged.

Tom, who worked in various organizations running wilderness therapeutic programs for

at-risk youth, indicated that he held a passion for the environment that was so well

known by others that he friends would suggest him for jobs based on his personal

passion for the environment. Yet, Tom maintained that he saw them as separate

passions and did not link the two in his professional social work practice; rather, he

merely used the environment as a tool to address the social issues of his clients.

Liz was a clinical school social worker who began implementing a rain garden at her high school campus as an intervention to work with at-risk youth. She indicated that although she had a growing personal passion for the environment (e.g., kayaking, camping, concern for fracking in her state), she focused her social work professional practice solely on her passion of social issues and using the environment only as a tool. She also stated that she did not regard the environmental outcomes as part of her ultimate concern or responsibility as a social worker.

In addition to the concepts discussed previously, participants' passions were influenced by other factors. For example, often their passions were fueled by experiencing external factors (e.g., environmental hazard nearby, other people). Ultimately, whether or not participants linked their personal passions for the environment and their professional passions for social issues did not serve as deterrents to these participants situating themselves in roles to work as social workers with environmental issues.

Feeling Alone as a Social Worker Working on Environmental Issues.

Expressions of "feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues" was a key internal hindrance factor which, for some participants, hindered the development of expanded professional identities. For this study, feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues means feeling that they knew very few, if any, other social workers with expanded professional identities. Typically, participants knew only one or very few other social workers who worked on environmental issues; the supportive aspects of these sparse relationships were discussed in the previous section

on External Supports. Here I address participants' various ways that they felt alone as a social worker working on environmental issues, and how this was a hindrance or internal hindrance for some.

Participants often worked in non-traditional social work and multidisciplinary settings, where they indicated that they were the only professional social worker. They experienced isolation as a social worker, and felt alone as a social worker, despite the fact that many indicated that they had non-social work colleagues who shared their work on and passion for environmental issues. For example, Ginger said:

My biggest challenge again goes back to being the only social worker in the room. I think I have a set of priorities and values that aren't necessarily shared by my organization. At least not explicitly… It's just that I know we have slightly separate, certainly not counter-intuitive, but certainly separate agendas.

Similarly, most participants indicated that they felt alone as a social worker working on environmental issues during their social work education. And sometimes felt like they had to justify their expanded professional identity. For example, Hannah stated:

I didn't feel like there were many of the students who were interested or cared as much about environmental concerns or even saw the importance of environmental concerns within social work. So not having that support with other students and I feel like there were a couple other students who kind of were on the same page about that. But a lot weren't, so that was maybe a little bit harder.

Most participants indicated that they never felt disrespected or ignored, nor did they consider it a hindrance when the experienced receiving explicit pushback, meaning questioning or doubting that their work on environmental issues is legitimate to do as a professional social worker. Rather, they said that most social workers who they encountered and with whom they discussed their environmental work thought it was fine for the participant to do, but they did not think it was necessary to incorporate into their professional practice. I considered this a mild experience of hindrance as it did not support their expanded professional identity, yet it did not necessarily hinder it. For example, Larry stated:

> I've never heard anybody question it. They don't think there's anything wrong with. It is just not for them… They kind of glaze over when you start talking to them about it. Or they'll be interested when you talk to them about it, but then they don't do anything about it."

Many participants offered possible reasons why they thought they were alone as a social worker working on environmental issues. Some mentioned it was because others merely did not know about the connections between environmental issues and social work, or environmental issues were not part of their professional passion, or they maybe were interested in environmental issues at a personal level, but did not consider it their professional responsibility, or they saw the connections at a macro level, but did not know how to apply it at a micro level. Abigail called these hindrances "blind spots," as other social workers could not see the connections between social work and environmental issues. Alicia shared that she felt alone as a social worker, but attributed

it to others simply not knowing about the connections of environmental issues and social work. She stated:

> I can see social workers who, you know, like at a state conference, who would have absolutely no clue about environmental issues just cause it wasn't on their radar. You know, because they, you know; they're working in DSS and do, you know, CPS investigations all day long. It's just not, I don't think it would be a disagreement; I just don't think it's on their radar because it's not part of what they, part of what they do.

Although not all issues are on every social worker's radar, participants who had expanded professional identities addressed environmental issues even if they were working in gerontology, school social work, any setting, or on any client/community issue. With expanded professional identities, they believe the boundaries of social work were broad enough to address the environmental issues that related to their clients/communities of interest, ***and*** they believed they had the professional obligation to do so alongside the social issues they were addressing with their clients/communities.

Some participants indicated that they had milder hindrances such as feelings of frustration or aggravation that other social workers did not also maintain such a professional identity. For example, Larry stated:

> I do wish that social workers would begin to see this as a being very important and immediate issue… I feel disappointed in my profession. I don't see very many social workers looking at this and saying this is a social work issue. It is a very

important social work issue.

Amy indicated it bothered her greatly that her social work co-workers did not also see it as their responsibility, stating, "nobody is as open to it as I am. Everyone sees it as a burden... nobody seems to find it as important as I do".

The previous examples demonstrate dismissive or indifferent attitudes from other social workers, causing the participants to feel alone as a social worker working on environmental issues. These experiences may not have created strong hindrances or conflicts for participants, but they were underlying internal hindrances that participants had to resolve.

A few participants reported experiencing a more explicit form of hindrance when others questioned their work on environmental issues as being a legitimate part of professional social work. For example, Katherine experienced a more severe and explicit form of internal hindrance during her social work doctoral program as she was committed to environmental issues as well as her professional social work identity. She stated:

And my first year was incredibly, until I went to a national conference and met other people, other environmental social workers. I really felt like I was in the wrong field. I didn't want to give up social work, something that I loved so much. I couldn't imagine doing this PhD in another discipline, it just didn't feel right. I have completely taken on the social worker identity. So it just wasn't imaginable for me to change but it also wasn't imaginable to change my interest area. So I went through an incredible crisis of do I just not do this? Am I not meant to do

this?

A few participants indicated they experienced more explicit hindrance as potential employers questioned their work on environmental issues. These will be described in Experiencing External Hindrances.

A distinction worth noting within this key internal hindrance is that participants who did not have an expanded professional identity interpreted "feeling alone as a social worker" differently than those did have an expanded professional identity. Although all participants indicated knowing very few other social workers who worked on environmental issues, those who did not have expanded professional identities did not describe it as feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues. They had merely situated themselves in roles as social workers that allowed them to work on environmental issues, but did not themselves hold expanded professional identities; thus, they did not expect or need it from others. For example, Tom was aware that he was one of a small minority among peers in his MSW program who even thought about the environment in their personal, let alone professional life. He attributed it to regional trends in environmentalism as he lived in an area that was not very progressive on issues of environmental sustainability. When asked directly if being alone as a social worker working on environmental issues was a challenge or hindrance for him, he indicated it was not. Similarly, Phyllis indicated that she knew only a few other social workers who worked on environmental issues, but that she was not in close connection working with them as she worked in a department of a state agency where she was the only social worker. She attributed this to the funding silos within her agency that

traditionally funded social workers in other departments, not within the environmentally-focused department where she worked. She also indicated that she had sought unsuccessfully to get a social work intern and establish a job description that would hire a social worker for her position after she retired. This showed she was interested in not being the only social worker working on environmental issues, and had a desire to "pass the torch" so that her work continued after her departure. Finally, Liz indicated that prior to being involved in this study she had no idea that other social workers worked on environmental issues professionally, but that she was very interested in learning more about how they incorporated it into their professional identities. Thus, while participants who did not have expanded professional identities did not recognize being alone as a social worker as an explicit hindrance, it could be that not knowing other social workers who work on environmental issues and actually had expanded professional identities may have hindered their development of expanded professional identities.

In summary, participants overwhelmingly indicated they felt alone as they knew few, if any, other social workers who held expanded professional identities. Ultimately, whether they experienced explicit or more mild internal hindrances as feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues, whether they recognized it as an internal hindrance, and whether they resolved it consciously, feeling alone as a social worker working on environmental issues was a key internal hindrance factor that appeared to be a hindrance for some participants in the development of expanded professional identities.

Experiencing External Hindrances

Other factors that emerged in the data that that hindered participants' development of expanded professional identities included lacking educational influences (i.e., no environmental education, no environmental education linked to social work, unsupportive people who influenced participants, and lack of/few supportive messages received), lacking paid employment (e.g., no jobs advertised, not allowed to do as part of work hours, difficulties in creation of own job), and lacking formative experiences that promoted their response to the environmental crisis (e.g., lack of experiences in nature such as camping as a child or a natural disaster). I viewed these as similar and I grouped them into a category and named it "Experiencing External Hindrances" which means having experiences or opportunities that hindered or created obstacles in the process of developing an expanded professional identity.

Lacking Educational Influences.

Very few or no educational influences was a key external hindrance factor that appeared to hinder some participants in developing expanded professional identities. For this study, lacking educational influences means having little, if any, formal and/or informal environmental education not explicitly linked to social work; having little, if any, formal and/or informal academic environmental education explicitly linked to social work; and/or having few, if any, people who influenced and contributed to the formal and/or informal educational process of participants (e.g., professors, peer students, field supervisors, social work and non-social work colleagues, mentors, friends, family). Participants noted that they encountered people who were not only unsupportive in

passive ways, but sometimes actively offered unsupportive or negative messages

related to social work and environmental issues. Examples will be presented below.

Participants described their lack of educational influences in the context of traditional

academic educational systems; beyond academia (e.g., on the job training); external,

non-academic resources; and people. Sometimes participants did not have any

environmental education explicitly linked to social work or people who influenced an

understanding of this link; this was true for three study participants who ultimately did

not develop expanded professional identities.

Lacking Environmental Education.

Participants from both groups indicated various forms of environmental

education not explicitly linked to social work that supported their work on

environmental issues. However, limited environmental education and lack of

educational influences often hindered their ability to work on environmental issues.

Participants often cited the lack of environmental education as an extreme challenge of

working on environmental issues as a social worker. Participants often noted that they

were very aware of not having as much knowledge about environmental issues as

others from different professional disciplines with whom they worked. Participants

believed they had a big learning curve to gain the math and scientific technical jargon.

An astute observation was made by Amy, as she stated:

Social work is one of the very few professions that didn't have any, like science.

There's no, and not only do we not have a lot of science involved, we are very

afraid of it and I think … to further professionalize us as a profession, as a whole,

is that we need to incorporate research, we need to incorporate science. And

environmental involves a lot of science so to not stray away from or get scared

of when you get in a conversation about carbon footprints and what does that

mean, and what is air quality and what is water quality and what do they actually

mean? Like don't just give that lip service but understand what qualifies

something in poor water quality and why and being able to articulate that. I

think that's what the social work lacks actually.

Some participants noted frequent frustration as they did not have anyone to turn to for

support and guidance while learning the details of environmental issues.

Lacking Environmental Education Explicitly Linked to Social Work.

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that they either did not have any, or had

very limited exposure to environmental education explicitly linked to social work. As

previously defined, for this study, having environmental education explicitly linked to

social work means having one or more of the following: social work professor who

offered course content, assignments, or discussions that explicitly connected

environmental issues and social work; social work colleague or classmate who brought

this explicit link to participants' attention; social work field internship that explicitly

helped them connect environmental issues and social work; or seeking out social work

education on their initiative beyond what was offered in core courses as it explicitly links

to environmental issues (e.g., formal independent study, informal research, reading

scholarly social work literature).

Some participants in indicated that they had a professor who offered some piece

of course content which explicitly connected environmental issues and social work in class through discussions, readings, and/or assignments. However, they often shared that it infrequently occurred in class conversations and when it occurred it was often presented as a side note and not a focus of the course, nor as a thematic undercurrent. Overwhelmingly, participants offered responses similar to what Hannah stated:

> I felt like not as many of my professors talked about it a lot, about environmental issues being part of social work. I feel like there were a couple who did speak to that. And I think overall it was considered a justice issue by some professors, but it just wasn't always focused on. And so not having that as a, as a possibility sometimes seems like it was hard to make the connection between the environment and social work because of the professors not speaking to it as much.

Interestingly, a few participants knew their professors had an interest in or had published on the topic that explicitly connected environmental issues and social work. Yet, they indicated that they did not get much of the explicit connection from what these professors taught in class. For example, Abigail recalled:

> And I knew that Dr. _____ was interested in sustainability, but I was never able to learn that much from him in the classes. Because it was just the regular curriculum. But he did mention this discussion in class.

One participant mentioned that she knew of a specific course offering that connected environmental issues and social work, but that she couldn't take the class because she lacked room in her schedule for an elective.

However minimal the formal or informal educational influences of environmental education explicitly linked to social work were, participants who had expanded professional identities had experienced them in some way. Participants in one pathway had educational influences in which they had environmental education explicitly linked to social work, and these often supported a conscious transition, sometimes inclusive of a prominent epiphany moment that was a key external support factor contributing to development of expanded professional identities. Participants in who did not have expanded professional identities were similar to some other participants that came to social work with a traditional understanding of professional identity. However, the participants who did not hold expanded professional identities did not indicate educational influences to support a conscious transition to reinterpret and embrace an expanded professional identity. In addition, they indicated no educational influences that helped them connect social work and environmental issues. For example, Tom stated, "there was no class on wilderness therapy or environmental therapy or that kind of stuff. There was no connection there in the curriculum." Interestingly, Liz stated:

> It was not a part of my training as a social worker, so I didn't really make that
> connection. I've become more connected because I'm personally more
> interested in being outside. There are things that concern me, but I'm not
> overwhelmed by those concerns. But I don't see that they're a crisis, so I feel like
> we have time. And so I think that's why we don't make the connection to the
> environment. And as a profession in the training programs, those connections

might be in a course, but I didn't have a single course on anything that involved

that.

Liz began a conscious transition during our interview as she became aware of what she

had not connected prior to the interview and made statements that she would have to

keep thinking about it and consider changing her understanding of her professional

identity.

In summary, the data showed that lacking or having very few educational

influences was a key external hindrance for some participants in developing expanded

professional identities. This was especially true of the participants who did not have

expanded professional identities as they had no educational influences of

environmental education explicitly linked to social work. In addition, many participants

noted that lacking environmental education hindered their ability to effectively work on

environmental issues.

Experiencing Unsupportive or Negative Messages.

Some participants indicated that they perceived they experienced "pushback" in

the form of unsupportive messages from professors, colleagues, classmates, and/or

employers about their interest in working on environmental issues as a social worker.

Frequently, participants noted how these baffling or disheartening messages hindered

their development of expanded professional identities. Participants sometimes

encountered negative messages from others concerning how environmental work in

general was not important for anyone to address, or that there was a different priority

for needed interventions to address social issues over environmental issues. For

example, Marin encountered people did not view her work on the environment as important in a refugee camp situation because they prioritized other issues. She had to overcome those hindrances to demonstrate the inseparable linkages of person and environmental wellbeing. Some participants indicated feeling discouraged by the negative messages encountered from faculty and administrators at their academic institutions. For example, Katherine stated the following about pushback she experienced from her faculty:

> I think some people hear environment and it just, they are like no, environment is not, we work for people. And environment is not a person and therefore it is not something that we address… It was incredibly difficult. Two professors wouldn't even let me write about environmental things in my papers. So I had to write about like one of them I had to write about education. Something that I wasn't even remotely interested in but yea. And the other one told me that there's no theory in environment so why would I concentrate on it. Yea it was very challenging.

Ginger noted that she also felt discouraged by her professors:

> And I don't know that people who were putting blocks on me, I don't know that they were being closed minded totally. I think they were scared I wouldn't be able to get federal grants as a social worker. So at the time I thought they were just kind of evil. But now I know them better and I see them more. And I think that it wasn't that they didn't believe in me or believe in environmental social work, but they feared that others, others being gatekeepers of journals or

grants, that others wouldn't think it was social work so kind of tried to persuade

me against it.

Only three participants noted that their social work academic institutions offered

student-led environmentally-focused groups for social work students. Only one

participant indicated she was actively involved in it during her time in that educational

program. Several participants indicated that internships specific to environmental issues

were not available at their academic institutions, despite interests and requests.

Frequently, participants recalled more passive forms of negative messages. For

example, participants thought others merely dismissed their interests in environmental

issues as a social worker as a pet issue, but not actually social work. For example, Amy

shared:

I guess in my experience, I at least had a few colleagues, a few professors who

were just like, that's not really social work. Why are you doing this? It's not that

they told me, "no, you can't". It's more questioning if it's legitimate social work.

Several participants indicated they felt they had to defend their work as social workers

addressing environmental issues, or fighting against the idea that social work is not

connected to the environment. For example, Jade had social workers who she believed

were well-meaning, but offered quite negative messages. She stated:

Yea, I have. I have people in my life that do case management. And they're often

like, not they've ever been like "you're not a real social worker", but they say,

"aww, don't you miss social work?" Things like that. And I say "I'm doing it".

This occurred most often when participants looked for jobs and encountered social work employers. For example, Karen was looking for a job in social work academia after graduating. She stated, "I was looking for a place that I wasn't going to have to defend why this work was relevant".

In summary, the data showed that experiencing unsupportive or negative messages was a key external hindrance for some participants in developing expanded professional identities. Most participants did not report feeling deterred by active or passive unsupportive messages, but indicated it was a hindrance as they felt "alone" in their interests and understanding of their expanded professional identities. This was previously addressed in the section "Feeling Alone as a Social Worker".

Lacking Paid Employment.

All who held expanded professional identities indicated that they intentionally looked for jobs that allowed them to address environmental and social issues. All participants had eventually been able to access and situate themselves in paid positions that allowed them to work on environmental and social issues as a social worker. However, many participants noted hindrances related to the lack of paid employment, or difficulty in finding or creating paid employment to work on environmental and social issues. The lack of paid employment was an external hindrance factor that may have hindered participants' development of expanded professional identities.

It was rare for participants to find paid employment through advertised positions for social workers that included job responsibilities that explicitly connected social and environmental issues (e.g., healthy housing case management). More often, participants

said they could not find such advertised positions, despite their best and sometimes exhaustive job searches. This lack of advertised social work positions that included job responsibilities related to environmental issues was a hindrance for some as they struggled for periods of time to position themselves in paid employment.

As participants struggled to find paid employment in social work that also allowed them to address environmental issues, they indicated that they had to move beyond the typical social work organizations and look at advertised positions for professional non-social work disciplines (e.g., nutritionists, scientists, public health). Many indicated being often turned away or discouraged from applying, and having to advocate for themselves beyond normal job applications to even be accepted for an interview. For example, Jade said she applied for a job advertising for a nutritionist, and was only offered an interview because she legally met the requirements for the job. At the interview she had to sell her qualifications and demonstrate to the employer how she as a social worker would be successful in the job. As another example, Sandra shared:

> There's a lot of environmental jobs and they don't even consider having social work being one of their required degrees because they just don't know and so that's a huge hindrance to a lot of social workers that want to work in the environmental field, is that the community as a whole doesn't equate environment and social work. So, it can be really difficult to find a position and you eventually kind of have to create your own like I did.

Similarly, Amy stated:

Finding that place that is willing to hire a social worker, and to be honest with

you I don't even know where to begin. I've talked to Dr. _____ and he's like, yep

that's a common – I guess from what he said it's kind of, you just kind of happen

across it, these places are not advertising for social workers. You've got to

advertise yourself, you've got to market yourself. Or you've got to do it within an

agency, creating a. I guess at the ___, I could've created a system or a policy or

procedure that allowed better access to food. That's an environmental issue.

That's a social work issue.

Participants often stated that they had to take other jobs, even non-social work, and

part-time jobs just to pay bills while they searched. For example, Ginger recalled looking

broadly in a multitude of organizations to find a job that would allow her to work on

environmental and social issues as a social worker. She almost gave up her desire to find

a job as a social worker addressing environmental issues, but ultimately found one in a

non-traditional social work setting (i.e., parks and recreation department). Similarly,

Abigail noted that she worked other jobs for a few years as she waited and persevered

and eventually succeeded in developing her own non-profit that addressed hunger and

poverty through locally sourced and sustainable food production. Dan indicated he had

to work several part-time jobs while his business that addressed environmental and

social issues was beginning, thus it slowed him down as he had less time to put into the

business. Thus, effort and time to search for jobs in non-traditional social work settings

were hindrances for many participants in attaining paid employment at one time or

another.

Sometimes participants were frustrated at not finding jobs to address environmental and social issues, and thus created their own jobs. For example, Larry stated:

When I got my MSW I looked around for ways that I could tie it into environmental issues and there really weren't very many ways to tie into the environmental issues. So, I had to kind of invent ways to tie into environmental issues. And, there were really no professional ways to do it, that is paid ways to do it… You'd be hard put to go out and try to find a job that exists. You have to create your own. At least that's been my experience.

A few participants, like Larry, were successful at creating opportunities for paid employment to work on environmental and social issues within an existing employment structure (e.g., grant-writing to fund a new position), and/or by starting their own business and/or non-profit for paid employment. Several participants indicated that they had been unsuccessful in attempts at creating a position for themselves. For example, some participants indicated that they had unfulfilled dreams of one day starting their own non-profit related to their environmental interests (e.g., community garden, eco-friendly home renovations impoverished neighborhoods). Sandra said:

I was working on starting my own non-profit and unfortunately it didn't pan out. I still have hopes that it will eventually. Basically my whole philosophy is I believe environmental social work is working toward lowering carbon footprints and poverty at the same time. So, I was trying to start my own non-profit that was looking into how best to make existing homes, for people who are in poverty, efficient. Because we saw a

problem in that a lot of organizations would come in to a vacant home and redo it and make it wonderful and completely green and energy efficient and completely gentrify it to the point where even if it was in a low-income neighborhood, low-income people couldn't afford to live there.

Abigail indicated that she struggled for several years to start her non-profit as she waited for the proper legal status to enable acceptance of tax-exempt donations and fund herself as a paid employee.

Participants often mentioned that at times they had jobs in which they were not allowed to work on environmental issues during work hours. For example, Katherine stated:

When I was searching for jobs there wasn't an opportunity as direct employment as in my job description to work on environmental issues. So I ended up taking a health care related job. But a lot of the work that I did had environmental themes in it.

Alicia noted, "it wasn't part of my job description so it was extra effort on my part to make it happen, and extra time." Due to the lack of paid employment to work on environmental issues, several participants had limited non-work hours to work on environmental issues.

In summary, various factors, such as lack of advertised social work positions that included job responsibilities related to environmental issues or lack of time to work on environmental issues during paid hours, or necessity for paid work while waiting to create own paid employment all created a hindrance and/or delayed paid employment

to work on environmental and social issues. This hindrance may have been interpreted as an implicit negative message that social work should not include environmental issues and thus could have been an external hindrance factor that hindered some participants in developing expanded professional identities.

Lacking Formative Experiences.

For this study, lacking a formative experience means lacking occurrences (e.g., natural disaster, personal healing in nature) that sparked a desire to work on environmental issues. The lack of such formative experiences appeared to be an external hindrance factor that hindered the development of an expanded professional identity.

Lack of Positive Formative Experiences.

Many participants mentioned formative experiences that they interpreted as positive, such as camping in nature, gardening, kayaking, mountain biking, hiking, and recycling. However, Tom expressed awareness that he lived and worked in a cultural context that was not as progressive on environmental sustainability issues and he wished he lived where they were more of the cultural norm. Thus, not having that positive formative experience of living where it is the cultural norm to respond to the environmental crisis may have been an external hindrance factor that hindered the development of an expanded professional identity.

Lack of Negative Formative Experiences.

Some participants did not have any formative experiences they interpreted as negative and directly affecting their social work clients or communities. For example, Liz

acknowledged that some issues (e.g., mining, fracking) were pressing in her local

community, but she only knew of social workers who worked on environmental issues in

international contexts where client populations more closely relied on the natural

environment. Liz stated:

> But right now my big concern is my kids [clients as a school social worker] and
>
> what we're addressing. And is not environment, it's not as big an issue as if we
>
> were in an earthquake in Haiti. So I'm not desperate to fix it, so that their lives
>
> are improved. You know, that would be a whole different, that would put a
>
> different meaning to me. If our environment were in a more critical condition,
>
> you know, if we were in a, if we were flooded out with Hurricane Katrina, we
>
> were in an earthquake situation, I'd be looking at this differently.

Thus, the lack of a negative formative experience such as a natural disaster appeared to

be a crucial factor that inclined her less towards an expanded professional identity. She

also said that social workers like her may not get involved without a crisis in their

locality that helps them explicitly connect their clients and environmental well-being. Liz

stated, "where's your crisis?" which was interpreted to mean where is the struggle for

human and environmental well-being that is imminent and explicitly evident with clients

and/or communities and for which she as a social worker felt responsible to serve

professionally. However, this was not true for all participants, because one participant

was involved daily as a social worker who addressed local environmental crises and yet

she did not develop an expanded professional identity.

In summary, the lack of both positive and negative formative experiences was demonstrated in some participants as a hindrance in developing expanded professional identities. However, the lack of a positive or a negative formative experience did not appear to be an overwhelming hindrance for participants.

Shaping the Profession

The second research question examined the other side of the reciprocal process of professional socialization process; it asked how participants have influenced others to develop an expanded professional identity. The data showed various ways that participants influenced others in the profession to develop expanded professional identities. These included seeking environmental education explicitly connected to social work (e.g., tailoring class assignments, creating independent studies); writing and disseminating information which explicitly connected environmental issues and social work; formal teaching, lecturing, and training social work audiences to explicitly connect environmental issues and social work; having informal discussions with other social workers; and being examples by identifying themselves as a social worker who practiced with an expanded professional identify. I viewed these as similar and I grouped them into a category and named it "Shaping the Profession", which means both passive (e.g., identifying oneself as a social worker when addressing environmental issues) and active (e.g., teaching, publishing) activities which could support other social workers to develop expanded professional identities.

Seeking Environmental Education Explicitly Connected to Social Work.

Participants who had expanded professional identities created a demand for environmental education explicitly connected to social work in their formal, academic social work education programs. They did this by seeking to tailor their course assignments, and by working with administrators and social work professors to create independent studies and internships which allowed them to explicitly gain educational opportunities which connected environmental issues to social work. In doing so, they attracted the attention of professors, peers, and administrators to these connections, thereby demonstrating that environmental issues are could and, perhaps, should be included in social work academic programs. For example, participants noted that often internships specific to environmental issues were not readily available. Several participants said that their administrators and supervisors helped them to tailor their learning towards these interests. As the professional academic socializers (i.e., social work academic instructors, administrators, field internship coordinators) encountered and approved requests from students such as participants in this study, they may have started to view environmental issues as a legitimate part of social work. Katherine thought that her professors may have tried to caution her about work on environmental issues because they were worried that the profession at large would not accept it for publications or that she might not find grants in social work on environmental issues. However, she said that the recent increase in the number of students with interest in environmental issues has created a demand which is helping to change the opinion of professors. She stated:

I think it's mass. Even people who were here at [social work graduate school]

before me are coming out in the open saying we're really into the environment.

Yea. I think that one person alone couldn't do it. But there's a lot of us. And we

have someone who graduated last year and people loved her work. Loved it. And

weren't convinced it was social work when she went into her project, but when

she came out and when she came back from her field work and when she started

presenting and doing job talks and taking to professors and I think that opened

up minds for some people.

Similar to Katherine's experience, other participants shared that their professors

became less resistant and more supportive of the desire to tailor social work education

to include environmental issues when the professors saw an increasing number of social

work students with interest in environmental issues, success in social work research

related to environmental issues, and success finding employment in social work to work

on environmental issues. Jade shared that her professor was initially quite reticent

about her interests in environmental issues, but at the end of the course, he invited her

and another student to write a chapter on their environmental work for a social work

textbook that he was editing. Jade said:

He thought, when we first started bringing it up, it didn't seem as pressing of an

issue as the other concerns of other people in our class who were looking at sex

trafficking or issues that are more heard about in social work classes. But we did

all of our work on it, and I guess it just opened his eyes on it, to this is a huge

issue.

Thus, Jade and her peer tailored their course work to include environmental issues, and helped to shape it for others as the professor changed his understanding and helped them disseminate their work in a book chapter, potentially shaping thousands of other social workers to understand and develop expanded professional identities. Other participants who disseminated work through publications will be described below.

Written Dissemination.

A few participants indicated that they had opportunities to disseminate their interests in environmental issues and understandings of an expanded professional identity. They did so through articles, book chapters, and/or smaller essay posts in newsletters or on websites. For example, Alicia was interviewed about her work on wilderness therapy and featured in her social work alumni newsletter. Such dissemination has potential to shape thousands of social workers who read the newsletter because they may gain insight to explicitly connect environmental issues and social work. Ginger demonstrated understanding of an expanded professional identity and a sense of responsibility to help shape the profession when she stated:

> I think calling attention to the importance of environmental issues and how important they are to our work is a responsibility that I feel very tied to and that really manifested itself as we were writing the book chapter… And I felt like when we were writing that chapter that we were sort of championing a cause that was important to us as social workers and trying to make the argument that it is incredibly relevant and very much critical to our whole practice.

A few participants noted that their written research reports on environmental issues included data from communities in which social workers often serve. Thus, their writing and dissemination helped community members' voices be heard and included in shaping social policies.

Formal Teaching, Presenting, Lecturing, and/or Training.

Several participants who had expanded professional identities indicated that they had experiences formally teaching, presented, guest lectured, and/or provided training for social workers/students. Through such activities, these experiences they helped to shape their social work audiences' understanding of an expanded professional identity. Karen, who became a social work professor, shared that she intentionally tried to influence students to develop expanded professional identities. She stated:

> As a teacher I think my goal is to support any student who has a similar interest and then if there are any students who don't, just bringing the environment, the natural environment, in as another factor to consider and how it relates to people's lives, to people's well-being.

Similarly, Larry said that he taught social work courses for a few years in a formal academic program, and for two years taught a formal job training course that was multi-disciplinary and inclusive of social work practitioners. He indicated that he used similar content for both groups, including community organizing and preparation for work on specific environmental issues that were typical to students' localities. He indicated that in any training or presentation, he would always introduce the explicit connections of environmental issues and social work, as he stated:

When I'm doing training, any kind for that matter, with social workers I try to remind them of our social work values. I have a slide, just a standard slide that I use that talks about person in the environment and lists five or six things that make social work unique. And I throw in some stuff about environmental social work and there are things you can do, and this is another place as social workers can work and what that's about. It only takes about five minutes to go through those. But just to remind people in the first case about what makes social work unique and in the second case let them know about environmental social work. So, I just work it into whenever I'm doing something.

Luis said that he provided field supervision for MSW students, but primarily focused his training efforts on generalist social work practice skill development related to specific community environmental issues. A few participants stated that they guest lectured at a social work class and typically shared more specifically what they do related to the environment and how they got into those jobs. Amy indicated that she guest lectured for a class of BSW students and discussed her understanding of an expanded professional identity. Sandra, as co-chair of her campus' environmental social work group, helped to coordinate events to educate social work students to consider more sustainable practices in their personal lives, and worked with administrators to help green their school of social work.

Informal Discussions.

Many participants indicated that they had informal experiences discussing the explicit connection of environmental issues and social work. For example, participants

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shared experiences including mentioning it in social work class discussions; discussing with junior cohort students to help them navigate the academic system so they could successfully tailor their learning to include environmental issues; discussing with peers how to situate themselves in jobs that allowed them to work on environmental issues as a social worker; and helping other social work peers consider more sustainable practices in their personal lives (e.g., buying fair trade).

Some participants demonstrated considerable passion about environmental issues and indicated that they would intentionally mention environmental issues in conversations with other social workers. Other participants indicated that they did not try to make concerted efforts to shape others' thinking, but that they talked about what they did all the time with other social workers. Thus, by being social workers in roles working on environmental issues, and by discussing their work with others, they were helping to shape the profession. This will be discussed more below.

Being an Example of Social Workers Who Address Environmental Issues.

All participants were in roles where they worked on environmental issues as social workers. Thus, by simply serving in these roles, and also by identifying themselves as social workers, they shaped the profession as other social workers and non-social workers alike gained a new understanding that social workers could be involved with environmental issues. For example, in describing her role as a social worker in interdisciplinary work teams on environmental issues, Jade stated:

I think it's made me feel very proud to be a social worker. I feel like we're

equipped to handle a lot of different issues and I always tell them I'm a social

worker. I try to make it known that social workers can be anywhere.

These participants helped shape others' views of social work as being inclusive of

addressing environmental issues when they applied for jobs, sometimes having to

market themselves as appropriately skilled despite the job advertisement for non-social

work disciplines; others started their own businesses and/or non-profits, carving a space

for social workers to be employed to work on environmental issues. Amy poignantly

noted that if there were more opportunities for paid employment, it would help to

legitimize and normalize social workers' roles on environmental issues. But, she also

stated that for now, the burden is on the social workers with expanded professional

identities to attain jobs that may not be easily found. She stated:

I think what would legitimize it more if there would be more opportunities for

social work. And, again, I mean, that's us having, that's back to us trying to

market ourselves to that industry. Like the environmental industries are not

going to say, post a job on Monster and say, I need a social worker. No, we as

social workers who have these very specific passions we need to market

ourselves and say, you need us. You need me and here's why.

Phyllis did not see it as a professional responsibility to address environmental issues, but

saw the need as a social worker to respond to the social issues of environmental

injustices. She applied for, and obtained, a role that was not advertised as a social work

position, and when she was retiring, she helped shape a job description for the position

which required that it be filled by a social worker; thus, she shaped that organization and the profession of social work. She noted that she also tried to help another agency, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to begin to tailor their job descriptions to include social workers. Larry created employment opportunities for several social workers and involved many more over the years as volunteers in his non-profit organization which connected environmental and social issues through wilderness therapy.

In summary, participants became examples and trendsetters who helping to influence other social workers' to develop an expanded professional identity. Many identified environmental education explicitly connected to social work, and tailored class assignments and courses which influenced their professors and their peer social work students. Some wrote and disseminated work on environmental issues as social workers, potentially reaching thousands. A few taught formal social work classes or trainings, and others informally had discussions with social workers, helping their audiences explicitly connect environmental issues and social work. They helped shape the profession by being examples and identifying themselves as social workers who practice with environmental issues. They especially helped employers' shift their mindsets as they demonstrated how organizations could benefit from a social worker's skill set to address environmental issues.

Influencing the profession sometimes reinforced participants in developing expanded professional identities. For example, Ginger shared:

I think being published felt really good. At first you wonder why do you want me

to write this and then you start writing and you just kind of go with it. And then

word gets out that you've been published on a topic. And you suddenly start to

believe it yourself a little bit. And I think that particular instance [publishing on

the explicit connections of environmental issues and social work] solidified my

identity as a social worker working on environmental issues. And kind of helped

me get closer to a place where I would like to be professionally.

For some participants, being a participant in this study helped to reinforce their

expanded professional identities. For one participant, the interview process appeared

to offer her new information that she stated she would think about and possibly

redefine her professional identity to expand it. Knowing that they were one of several

interview participants for this study, some participants realized that they were not as

alone as they had previously felt as a social worker addressing environmental issues.

Participants also stated that by sharing their experiences for analysis and dissemination,

they were helping to shape the profession.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social and ecological injustice issues related to the environmental crisis are increasingly of great concern to the global social work profession, as evidenced in recent national and international professional policy statements, and in an expanding body of international social work literature. For several decades, social work scholars have promoted the need for an expanded professional identity that includes a response to the environmental crisis; some have offered brief case examples of what social workers do concerning environmental issues. Despite the increasing prevalence of scholarly views, current literature does not explain how practitioners became involved with environmental issues as professional social workers. For social work as a profession to remain relevant, and also become a leader in an era of global environmental crisis, we need to learn from such social workers who have successfully engaged in work on the environmental crisis. We need knowledge of professional socialization to support other social workers in developing expanded professional identities that includes a response to the environmental crisis.

The current study explored experiences of the reciprocal process of professional socialization of a purposive sample of 17 social workers using professional social work skills to address environmental issues. The research questions were:

(1) How have these social workers developed an expanded professional identity that includes a response to the environmental crisis?

    a. What, if anything, facilitated their responses as social workers to the environmental crisis?

    b. What, if anything, hindered their responses as social workers to the environmental crisis? How have they overcome these hindrances?

(2) How, if at all, have these social workers influenced others to develop an expanded professional identity?

Key factors that answer these questions which emerged from the data were coded and organized into five new categories I identified related to the process of professional socialization: 1) Having Internal Supports; 2) Experiencing External Supports, 3) Having Internal Hindrances, 4) Experiencing External Hindrances, and 5) Shaping the Profession. Chapter 4 details key factors composing each of these categories. The data from this study resulted in a grounded theory of professional socialization. In this chapter, I discuss my grounded theory, compare it to the existing literature, and describe its novel contributions to our understanding of professional socialization, especially concerning social workers working on environmental issues. Also, I will present implications to support developing an expanded professional identity across social work education, practice, research, and policy, and the transformation of the profession as a whole.

Discussion

This study offered the primary benefit of in-depth exploration on this topic to expand the literature base. The data that emerged in my study led me to inductively develop a grounded theory of professional socialization of social workers who hold an expanded professional identity. In chapter 4 I presented findings which demonstrate how participants developed an expanded professional identity. In this chapter I describe this grounded theory, and then I compare my grounded theory to the literature and highlight ways that this research contributes to the current body of knowledge.

In this study I developed a concrete definition of an expanded professional identity that includes a response to the environmental crisis, which requires two key factors: an expanded boundary of professional social work and an expanded responsibility of professional social work. An expanded boundary of professional social work is when one considers social work broad enough to situate oneself in a role that includes a behavioral response to environmental issues. An expanded responsibility of professional social work is when one believes it is a professional obligation to address environmental issues.

Although all participants understood their professional identity to include having expanded professional boundaries of social work, they did not all hold an expanded professional responsibility. Thus, I separated my sample into two groups. One group (n=14) included participants with expanded professional identities, meaning they held both an expanded boundary and an expanded responsibility. The other group (n = 3)

included participants without expanded professional identities, meaning they held only an expanded boundary, but not an expanded responsibility.

After further data analysis, I discovered that participants who had expanded professional identities experienced two different pathways in the development of their identities. One pathway included participants (n=7) who came to social work (i.e., began their formal social work education) assuming that environmental issues fit with social work. They were often unaware of it being expanded because they assumed that it simply was social work professional identity. They also stated that they could not recall ever having a different (e.g., more traditional) understanding of professional social work identity.

The other pathway included participants (n=7) who specifically stated they had made a conscious transition in their understanding of their professional identity after coming to social work (e.g., during formal education, in practice). They noted that they came to social work with a more traditional understanding of professional identity. These conscious transitions often were inclusive of a prominent epiphany moment. However, two participants did not note a prominent epiphany moment, rather noted they had more long term, culminating processes of conscious transition. In addition, conscious transitions were the result of various experiences of internal supports (e.g., passions) and external support (e.g., peers, professors, jobs) and may have occurred during social work education or during an experience in social work practice.

Although all participants experiences demonstrated that professional socialization was a process that began before coming to the profession, during formal education, and beyond; data also revealed components of conversion or transfer as each participant in this pathway demonstrated a conscious transition, often inclusive of a prominent epiphany moment. Thus, the current study shows that an ongoing process and a process of transfer or conversion are both valid components of the process of professional socialization.

As key factors emerged I coded and organized them into five new categories I identified related to the process of professional socialization: 1) Having Internal Supports; 2) Experiencing External Supports, 3) Having Internal Hindrances, 4) Experiencing External Hindrances, and 5) Shaping the Profession. All key factors were presented in detail in chapter 4, but will be summarized here. The most important key factors to support the development of an expanded professional identity included expanding the person-environment framework, educational influences, working for pay, and having formative experiences.

"Having Internal Supports" was a category I created which means maintaining or holding beliefs or perspectives that support the process of developing an expanded professional identity. The factors that emerged in the data that I grouped into this category include: having an expanded understanding of the person-environment framework that included the physical environment, and having internal motivations. Each factor was defined and discussed in Chapter 4. Data showed that all participants in

both groups held an expanded person-environment framework, despite having

developed these understandings before or after coming to social work. Those who had

an expanded professional identity were able to move beyond merely working on

environmental issues in an expanded professional boundary, as they also held an

expanded professional responsibility. Passion was found to be an undercurrent as a

motivating factor to some participants' in both groups to obtaining the education they

needed to work on environmental issues and motivating them to obtain the jobs they

wanted. There was a reciprocal process of increased education as fueling passion which

led participants to seek more education and to work to address those environmental

issues as part of their professional identity as a social worker. Ultimately, whether or not

participants linked their personal passions for the environment and their professional

passions for social issues did not serve as deterrents to participants seeing the

boundaries of social work as expanded enough to situate themselves in roles to work on

environmental issues. However, participants who did connect their social and

environmental passions was an essential factor which supported their development of

an expanded professional identity.

"Experiencing External Supports" is another category I created which means

having experiences or opportunities that support the process of developing an

expanded professional identity. The factors that emerged in the data that I grouped into

this category include: experiencing educational influences, having paid employment,

and experiencing formative experiences that promoted their response to the

environmental crisis. All participants experienced educational influences such as a

generalist social work education, along with environmental education on special topics, equipping participants to bring skills and expertise to interdisciplinary settings, which was critical to addressing the environmental crisis.

Participants who had an expanded professional identity had a variety of educational influences, including explicit social work education linked to environmental issues. Their experiences were similar and varied across and within the two pathways, and not all participants experienced all of the support factors. For example, as presented in Chapter 4, many participants discussed how both social work and non-social work peers (i.e., students or co-workers), professors, and scholarly articles helped to support development of an expanded professional identity.

Experiencing the external supports of environmental education explicitly linked to social work (e.g., people, reading social work literature, field experiences) was critical for participants in one pathway as these external supports for their conscious transitions that led to an expanded professional identity. Some participants in one pathway often experienced educational influences but these were not as critical because they had come to social work with an expanded professional identity with or without being explicitly taught in social work or by encountering others' influence. Participants who did not have expanded professional identities did not indicate having either of these two critical educational experiences. I also found that on their own initiative, participants who had an expanded professional identity sought out environmental education explicitly connected to social work through educational opportunities and/or

resources beyond that offered in core courses. And, all participants across groups sought non-social work specific environmental education from multiple non-social work resources, and often learned specific environmental education on the job.

Having paid employment to work on environmental and social issues also was found to contribute to the development of expanded professional identities for some participants. A few participants found traditional social work positions or created their own positions to work specifically on environmental and social issues, but most participants found paid employment in non-traditional and interdisciplinary social work settings. Some participants shared that they felt a sense of legitimacy and confirmation when they when they gained employment as a social worker addressing environmental issues; thus, supporting their development of an expanded professional identity. However, I also found that not all participants indicated the need for affirmation to feel legitimate in their expanded professional identity.

Data also emerged which demonstrated that external supports and external hindrances included not only people (e.g., professors, peers), but also experiences (e.g., an environmental disaster). For example, although participants often cited other people as sources of influence (both supports and hindrances), they also cited experiences such as intimate connections to nature. These experiences were often as impactful as relational experiences in the support of the development of an expanded professional identity. I also found that the lack of an imminent negative environmental experience

may result in a social worker not explicitly connecting the environmental and professional responsibilities.

Participants across groups indicated they had both positive and negative formative experiences (e.g., experiences in nature such as camping as a child, enduring a natural disaster) influenced participants to work on environmental issues. Formative experiences were a key factor that promoted the development of an expanded professional identity for some participants. Yet, not all participants who had formative experiences developed an expanded professional identity. This is because those who had expanded professional identities viewed the formative experiences through a lens of that expanded identity. Thus, when they experienced more imminent and critical threats from environmental issues in their own locale or knew of it in another location (e.g., fracking, rising sea level) they were able to make the connections of how social work and environmental issues were inextricably.

"Having Internal Hindrances" is another category I created which means having beliefs or perceptions that created an obstacle in the process of developing an expanded professional identity. A hindrance may range in its ability to hinder a participant from developing an expanded professional identity. For example, a hindrance may be experienced and interpreted differently by different participants; for one person it could be a complete barrier, while for others it may be a minimal, almost non-issue that is easily and perhaps unconsciously resolved. This is explained in detail in the following sections as each factor is examined concerning how different participants

experienced and interpreted different factors. Some factors that emerged from the data

I grouped in this category are: maintaining a traditional understanding of professional

identity, not seeing personal passions for environment as connected to professional

passions for social issues, and feeling alone as a social worker responding to

environmental issues.

My research found that several participants did indeed experience explicit

external hindrances or pushback when others questioned their work on environmental

issues as being beyond the scope of social work. However, participants predominantly

experienced much milder hindrances. They were often unrecognized or were

considered such mild hindrances that they did not warrant resolution or were resolved

so nonchalantly that participants often did not even consider them tensions, but rather

hindrances. For example, participants noted times when they experienced dismissive or

indifferent attitudes from other social workers when they explained their work on

environmental issues. These participants often indicated that they were not actually

contentious experiences; rather, they attributed others' attitudes to lack of

understanding. Participants often indicated that such experiences encouraged them to

connect the environment and social work in terms of future opportunities that others

could hopefully understand and embrace (e.g., framing a conference presentation as

disaster social work rather than environmental social work). However, most participants

noted that even when they explained it to others who they felt non-contentiously

allowed for it, the others did not embrace it nor integrate it into their own professional

identity. These mild hindrances were not conflict-ridden, nor the demand resolutions, or

risk taking of pushing beyond traditional professional boundaries that was anticipated in my original framework for this study. Instead, data from this study revealed many more mild hindrances that for some participants hindered them from developing an expanded professional identity.

"Experiencing External Hindrances" is another category I created which means having experiences or opportunities that hindered or created obstacles in the process of developing an expanded professional identity. Factors that emerged in the data that I grouped in this category include: lacking educational influences, lacking paid employment, and lacking formative experiences that promoted their response to the environmental crisis. For example, some participants were conscious of the lack of educational influences offered by professors who were known to have expertise on explicit connections between social work and environmental issues. Such professors were ideally poised to have the most impact on their students, yet in the opinion of these participants, they did not. In addition, a few participants indicated that they had social work professors explicitly telling their students not to write about environmental issues for class assignments, or employers questioning work on environmental issues as legitimate social work.

Although several participants in this study experienced some forms of pushback from others who felt that work on environmental issues was beyond the scope of social work, none of the participants felt that they were boundary pushers. Instead, data showed that all participants comfortably situated themselves in practice as social

workers working on environmental issues as they perceived the boundaries of social work as expansive enough to include work on environmental issues. Even those who did not have expanded professional identities did not question or feel tension around whether or not social work on environmental issues was included in the boundaries of their professional social work practice. They had not embraced it as a professional responsibility, and thus did not have an expanded professional identity. This was not a hindrance because they had not consciously considered and rejected the idea that professional identity should include responsibility to the environmental crisis; instead, it was a connection they had never considered.

Data from this study also supported the concept that professional socialization is a reciprocal process as participants were found to be socializers themselves. For example, participants mentioned that they often found opportunities to educate and socialize others to help them consider how social work is inclusive of work on issues related to the physical environment. Data showed that this was not always a bold, intentional process of socializing (e.g., publishing, formal teaching), but often took the form of more informal conversations with peers.

Thus, "Shaping the Profession" is the final category I created which means both passive (e.g., identifying oneself as a social worker when addressing environmental issues) and active (e.g., teaching, publishing) activities which could support other social workers to develop expanded professional identities. Factors that emerged in the data that I grouped into this category include: seeking environmental education explicitly

connected to social work, writing and disseminating information which explicitly

connected environmental issues and social work, formal teaching, lecturing, and training

social work audiences to explicitly connect environmental issues and social work, having

informal discussions with other social workers, and being examples by identifying

themselves as a social worker who practiced with an expanded professional identity.

Participants described how they became examples and trendsetters who helping to

influence other social workers' to develop an expanded professional identity. Many

identified environmental education explicitly connected to social work, and tailored

class assignments and courses which influenced their professors and their peer social

work students. Some wrote and disseminated work on environmental issues as social

workers, potentially reaching thousands. A few taught formal social work classes or

trainings, and others informally had discussions with social workers, helping their

audiences explicitly connect environmental issues and social work. They helped shape

the profession by being examples and identifying themselves as social workers who

practice with environmental issues. They especially helped employers' shift their

mindsets as they demonstrated how organizations could benefit from a social worker's

skill set to address environmental issues.

For some participants, being a participant in this study helped to reinforce their

expanded professional identities. For one participant, the interview process appeared to

offer her new information that she stated she would think about and possibly redefine

her professional identity to expand it. Knowing that they were one of several interview

participants for this study, some participants realized that they were not as alone as

they had previously felt as a social worker addressing environmental issues. Finally, by sharing their experiences for this study participants were also helping to shape the profession.

Contributions to Existing Literature

The grounded theory I developed explaining the professional socialization of social workers who hold an expanded professional identity (Chapter 4) offers some support for Reinharz's (1993) and Miller's(2010) models of professional socialization. In this section, I discuss ways that my study's findings supported several aspects of their models. In the following section, I discuss ways in which my study contributes to gaps in the literature.

In review, Reinharz's model included three components: "the private resolution of dissonance, the intimate interaction with significant others, and the public confirmation of the new self through various ritualized events" (p. 374). Although her model offered a framework to begin structuring my understanding of professional socialization and data collection, the data that emerged allowed me to create a grounded theory. The first component of Reinharz's (1993) model concerns "private resolution of dissonance" (p.374) or conflicts experienced by novices in a profession. This component of Reinharz's model resonated with me due to my own experience; thus, I initially anticipated that others would have had similar conflicts, tensions, or hindrances that they had to resolve. While some data supported this concept, I was extremely surprised that most participants had far fewer conflict-ridden experiences. I

discuss this further in the section on contributions to the gaps in literature. As part of this first component of Reinharz's (1993) model on dissonance and conflict, she also noted tensions that novices encounter when attempting to conform to a profession that does not have consistent norms and boundaries. Although participants in this study experienced some forms of pushback, all participants perceived the boundaries of social work as expansive enough to include work on environmental issues. My grounded theory supports Miller's (2010) model in that participants' experiences were much less conflict-ridden than Reinharz's model suggested.

The second component of Reinharz's (1993) model concerns "intimate interaction with significant others" (p.374) as she accounted for the impact that others had on novices' professional socialization process. Data from this study supported this because others (e.g., professors, peers) influenced participants when they were in and beyond professional educational settings. The third component of Reinharz's (1993) model concerns "public confirmation of the new self through various ritualized events" (e.g., graduation, licensure, hiring) (p.374). Data from this study demonstrated some support for this concept as some participants shared that they felt a sense of legitimacy and confirmation when they published on this topic or when they gained employment as a social worker addressing environmental issues. A final, key concept of Reinharz's (1993) overall model concerns the assertion of personal agency as individuals themselves become socializers, thereby creating a reciprocal process of professional socialization. Data from this study supported this concept because participants were found to be socializers themselves.

In summary, findings support several key aspects of Reinharz's (1993) and

Miller's (2010) model of professional socialization. However, my grounded theory also

expands upon these models as discussed below.

Contributions to Gaps in Literature.

The grounded theory I developed explaining the professional socialization of

social workers who hold an expanded professional identity (Chapter 4) differs from

Reinharz's (1993) and Miller's (2010) models of professional socialization. In this section,

I discuss several ways in which the grounded theory varies from and expands on their

models.

First, Reinharz (1993) emphasized "private resolution of dissonance" (p. 374). An

additional category of experiencing external hindrances emerged from my data that was

not explicitly noted by Reinharz. Although Reinharz did allow that conflicts could be

simple ambiguities and not always create extreme tensions, her model primarily

emphasizes the more explicit conflicts, challenges, discrepancies, and dissonances that

demanded resolutions. My research provided some support of this experience of more

extreme conflict by a few participants who experienced pushback when others

questioned their work on environmental issues as being beyond the scope of social

work. However, data from this study revealed much less conflict-ridden experiences,

and more mild hindrances that for some participants hindered them from developing an

expanded professional identity.

Second, as mentioned previously, although data supported the component of Reinharz's (1993) model concerning "intimate interaction with significant others" (p.374), data also emerged that showed that external supports and external hindrances included not only people or significant others (e.g., professors), but also experiences (e.g., an environmental disaster). Hence, my grounded theory offers this new component to expand upon Reinharz.

Third, some participants offered examples that supported the third component of Reinharz's (1993) model concerning "public confirmation of the new self through various ritualized events" (e.g., graduation, licensure, hiring) (p.374); however most data in my study did not support this as not all participants needed external supports of public confirmation through ritualized events, but rather some already possess sufficient internal supports to develop an expanded professional identity.

The grounded theory varied from and expanded on Reinharz's (1993) model of professional socialization in the three main components just discussed. Also, data contrasted with Reinharz in her claim that the process of professional socialization is a dynamic, continual process of conflict resolution and not a "process of transfer" (Reinharz, 1993, p.373). Although data from this study found professional socialization to be an ongoing process for all participants that began before coming to the profession, during formal education, and beyond, data also revealed some participants have experiences of conversion or transfer. Thus, the current study shows are both valid components of the process of professional socialization.

Data from the current study also confirmed the key component of Reinharz's

model that there is a reciprocal process of professional socialization, and that novices

are not just passive recipients, but are active in shaping the profession which they enter.

Miller (2010) did not incorporate the key aspect of personal agency that Reinharz's

model did by making explicit the extent to which novices or students themselves

become socializers. Although Miller's model allowed for the setting itself to be a

socializer, the individual novice him/herself is not indicated as a socializer. Thus, Miller's

model may be expanded by the addition of the reciprocal process of professional

socialization as found in my grounded theory and in Reinharz's model.

Contributions to Broader Professional Socialization Literature.

In the review of professional socialization literature (Chapter 2), professional

identity was typically discussed in terms of roles, ethics, standards, ideals, theories,

mission, values, knowledge, skills, norms, and boundaries (Abott, 1995; Abramovitz,

1998; Barretti, 2004; Clouder, 2003; Landau, 1999; Levy Simon, 1998; Miller 2010, 2013;

Reinharz, 1993; Weiss, Gal, Cnaan, 2004). These authors implicitly connected

professional identity to professional responsibility as they discussed that boundaries,

jurisdiction, problem areas, values, ethics, and theories shape the mission and drive

knowledge and skill development and ultimately determine what falls within norms and

boundaries of professional practice. However, none of them explicitly mentioned

professional responsibility. This revelation was not very conspicuous in the review of the

literature in Chapter 2 as I developed a framework for this study. However, professional

responsibility or obligation to address environmental issues has been explicitly

promoted by numerous social work scholars who write apart from professional socialization literature. Those articles have become critical sources of professional socialization within social work, and have influenced social work education, practice, research, and policy (e.g., Berger & Kelly, 1993; Besthorn, 2003; Coates, 2005; Dominelli , 2012; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Hoff & Rogge, 1996; Jones, 2010; Humphreys & Rogge, 2000; Mary, 2008; McKinnon, 2008; Park, 1996; Soine, 1987; Zapf, 2009). Thus, the current study supported the social work literature on embracing an expanded professional identity that includes an expanded professional responsibility. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on professional socialization by challenging it to explicitly discuss professional responsibility by making it an explicit component when defining professional identity.

Summary of Discussion.

Based on the data that emerged in my study I inductively developed a grounded theory of professional socialization of social workers who hold an expanded professional identity. A critical finding that emerged and is absent from the professional socialization literature is the need for explicit understanding of an expanded professional responsibility of social work. Below, I discuss how we can no longer allow this understanding of an expanded professional responsibility to continue to be only implicit in the literature, or in social work education, practice, research or policy. The grounded theory from this study also offer some support of and expand upon Reinharz's (1993) and Miller's (2010) models of professional socialization.

Participants in this study who held expanded professional identities demonstrated how social workers can successfully work in transdisciplinary positions addressing social injustice as well as environmental issues. Insight from this dissertation will advance the current body of knowledge by providing a grounded theory of professional socialization contributes to the literature as it expands on earlier models (Reinharz, 1993; Miller, 2010).

Implications

This section discusses possible supports that we as a profession can provide to social workers to contribute to the development of an expanded professional identity. These are directly related to the grounded theory presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in this chapter. The following are implications to support the development of an expanded professional identity across social work education, practice, research, and policy, and transformation of the profession as a whole.

Implications for Social Work Education.

Results of this study demonstrate the complex process of professional socialization which includes, but is not limited to, formal social work education. Data showed that participants' learning occurred at both implicit and explicit educational levels. Participants also experienced internal and external supports related to their education as part of their professional socialization. Also, education occurred within and beyond formal social work educational programs, as social workers are often involved in continuing education workshops, and peer-to-peer or supervisory education.

Collectively, results indicate a need to integrate issues concerning environmental justice into the explicit and implicit curriculum, supplemented by experiential learning opportunities, and continuing education opportunities.

Findings suggest that it is crucial for social work educators to help some students connect environmental and social issues, and to discuss the explicit need to embrace a professional responsibility to the environment. This could be done through both infusion of content across the curriculum, and by offering electives or independent studies on specific environmental topics within social work curriculum. The new Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards or "EPAS" (2014) includes environmental justice as a core competency; schools of social work are required to show evidence of this core competency's presence in the curriculum. Areas for infusion across the social work curriculum include Human Behavior Social Environment; Policy; Research; Practice (i.e., micro, mezzo, macro, systems), Introduction to Social Work; Diversity and Cultural Competency; International Social Work; and Field Seminars. This study found that there was little social work formal education to prepare social workers for positions to address environmental issues. Students need education to prepare them for effective professional practice and research concerning the global environmental crisis. Hence, formal education (both in schools and beyond) of social workers could include appropriate practice methods for intervening with clients and communities to achieve positive results for both social and ecological outcomes, as well as promoting social work research on environmental issues. Although schools of social work could infuse this content into their curriculum,

schools could also require social work students to take an environmental science course outside of the social work educational program, to help students connect to interdisciplinary resources and learn the scientific details and language used with environmental issues. Also, continuing education opportunities could be offered that explicitly concern issues of social work's role in the environmental crisis.

Formative experiences were a key factor that promoted the development of an expanded professional identity (e.g., experiences in nature such as camping as a child, enduring a natural disaster). For example, data showed that often when participants experienced more imminent and critical threats from environmental issues in their own locale, or witnessed it firsthand in another location (e.g., fracking, rising sea level), they were better able to make the connections of how social work and environmental issues were inextricably connected. Thus, social work educators can also foster a sense of urgency and connection between imminent and critical environmental and social issues by offering traditional classroom-based as well as experiential opportunities on and off campus; research projects on environmental issues; service learning; field internships; and beyond formal education in professional exchange programs. For example, some schools of social work promote involvement with campus and community gardening programs which provide an array of educational opportunities. Field Education departments could look to generate and offer internship options that are more integrative of environmental and social issues (e.g., local Parks and Recreation offices, community sustainability initiatives). Social work educators can offer encouragement, even if it is not their topic of interest, and thus help social workers/students to tap into

their motivations (e.g., passion), as results from this study showed a reciprocal process between education and passion—more educational opportunities increased passions on environmental justice topics, and in turn, participants sought more educational opportunities so they could become active in addressing such issues.

Social work education could not only seek to improve supports such as the ones identified, but also seek to eliminate and/or counteract hindrances or tensions by ensuring that social workers/students receive supportive messages connecting social work and environmental issues. Many supportive messages can be explicit in the offering of course work and class assignments, but the implicit curriculum at schools of social work and beyond is an important component of professional socialization to consider. This refers to the inclusion of environmental issues in our organizations' policies, practices, and procedures, not just the explicit pedagogy. For example, a school or organization could ensure that their policies include sustainable event planning, and their offices operate under "Green" office policies. Thus, sustainable food choices, and recycling could be provided at new student orientations, faculty meetings, continuing educational trainings, etc.

Finally, although social workers, such as participants in this study, are increasingly finding creative ways to find and occupy positions that allow them to address environmental issues, it is important to help social workers/students learn how they also may situate themselves in similar paid employment roles. Social work educators could teach how to search outside of traditional social work positions when

looking for employment, and how to write grants, or seek funding for roles and/or

organizations they wish to create. Explicit discussions about how to integrate

environmental justice issues in field placements for students may help them develop

similar skills to negotiate job descriptions which infuse environmental justice into their

paid employment roles. In addition, they need to be taught how to discuss and frame

their expanded professional identity as a social worker who is responding and has a

responsibility to address environmental issues, so they can help others understand why

they would intentionally situate themselves into such roles. These are critical

components of education as work on environmental issues could be embraced as

something all social workers address in any social work practice, and not just those in a

niche or specialty of our profession.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Research.

Increasingly, social workers are intentionally positioning themselves to address

the environmental crisis. Examples that participants in this study were involved with

included community advocacy work around air pollution, post-hurricane disaster

casework, community gardening, and eco-therapeutic interventions. A key social work

value of inclusivity means that social work roles in addressing environmental injustices is

to include voices of those who are often marginalized and to help others to view them

as experts in their own lives. Looking to include indigenous populations and other local

populations while working in communities is a primary role social workers can offer in

the interdisciplinary work to address environmental justices. The ability as a social

worker to practice in interdisciplinary settings and to develop multiple partnerships

beyond the social work profession has advantages when addressing such broad, multi-faceted environmental issues. However, as seen in this study, it is important to also find other social workers with whom one can feel a sense of support and solidarity, as often when social workers, such as this study's participants, have positioned themselves in roles to work on environmental issues, they feel alone as the only social worker addressing such issues. A collaborative network (e.g., the Green/Environmental Social Work Collaborative Network) is a great tool to assist practitioners and researchers with building solidarity; sharing practice and educational resources; and sharing potential grant, research, or job opportunities.

Although there is an urgent call to action for social workers to engage in practice related to the environmental crisis, the profession also needs social workers who practice robust research to collect and disseminate evidence in interdisciplinary forums. Examples from this study include research on environmental injustice related air pollution, water security, outmigration, chemical disasters, and trauma related to disasters. Such social work research could identify and monitor environmental injustice indicators (e.g., social implications), and examine ways that issues are being handled worldwide. Contributing such research will help establish our profession as participants, and potential leaders, in the global, interdisciplinary response to the environmental crisis.

Implications for Social Work Policy.

As presented in Chapter 1, more national and international efforts have been made to include a response to the environmental crisis in professional agendas and policy statements; however, these often remain relatively unknown by the majority of social work professionals. Added emphasis on disseminating existing professional agenda items and policy statements concerning environmental issues, along with new efforts, can bring the necessary force to help the social work profession at large acknowledge the need to embrace an expanded professional identity. New policy efforts could benefit from explicitly emphasizing the need for a paradigm shift to embrace an eco-centric paradigm, so that as a profession we do not continue to propagate the structures of injustice we are fighting so diligently to overcome. From this eco-centric paradigm, there could be a discussion concerning the need for an expanded person-environment framework which includes the physical environment, and the possibility of making an explicit statement of professional responsibility, not merely alluding to how social workers could address environmental issues. Rather, what could be offered is a professional mandate of explicit responsibility that social workers should address the environmental crisis. International and national definitions of social work could adjust language to include this explicit responsibility.

Environmental Justice is in the forefront of social work in the USA as CSWE's (2014) new EPAS include it as a core competency. CSWE has established a Committee on Environmental Justice to make recommendations and supply resources to schools of

social work trying to meet these standards as they integrate them into their curriculum. CSWE could publish and disseminate a manual that includes such resources, along with examples of courses that have successfully infused environmental justice. There is a growing body of literature by social work scholars, but additional avenues could be made available for funding and disseminating new research and scholarship. Also, social workers who hold expanded professional identities could volunteer to be journal manuscript editors so they may offer feedback on how such manuscripts could be more inclusive of an eco-centric paradigm and an expanded professional responsibility.

In addition, as a profession, we need to engage in advocacy and policy work in international arenas such as with the United Nations Environmental Program and the ongoing international climate change talks. We can promote social work representatives to attend critical events to offer their social work expertise concerning environmental issues. These representatives could report back to the profession concerning specific roles social work could do to address the environmental crisis, such as advocating for accountability to new standards of environmental well-being.

This study's participants sought to shape the profession by writing for course work and professional dissemination concerning the explicit connections between environmental issues and social work; formally teaching, lecturing, and training social work audiences; having informal discussions with other social workers; and being examples by identifying themselves as social workers when involved in practice with environmental issues. Such bottom-up approaches of social workers such as this study's

participants, and other social workers beyond this sample who are impacting the profession through their efforts in education, practice, and research, coupled with top-down approaches from a policy level, could potentially transform the profession.

Strengths

For this study, I employed the concrete methods of a modified grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) which allowed for both deductive and inductive data collection and analyses. It is a strong method well suited to study a process, such as that of professional socialization. I was able to recruit a sufficient sample (n = 17) of interview participants to meet the study aims. I utilized my strengths of interpersonal skills and experience in conducting interviews to help recruit, build rapport, and interview the participants. After each interview, I provided the participant with a copy of the interview transcript and asked if the participant would like to change or elaborate on anything. Only one participant asked to change a statement to help keep her interview content more anonymous; the change was unrelated to any major theme in this study. By conducting this type of data collection, I incurred minimal costs which included only my time and transcription service fees.

An additional strength of this study was using my own perspective to draw from and compare and contrast with the participants' experiences. I am a social worker who came to the profession with dual passions for environmental issues and social justice issues, but had not linked them until my graduate program. Despite four years in an undergraduate social work program, and one year in a graduate MSW program, I had

not been shown, and had not myself made the link. In one course on Sustainable Development, I had a conscious transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment, and directly linked the two topics. My experience is another example of the process of professional socialization in developing an expanded professional identity.

My interest in the topic led me to explore how other social workers developed an expanded professional identity. However, I did not anticipate that some participants would not have an expanded professional identity (Chapter 4, Overview). I could categorize myself as part of the group who had an expanded professional identity due to a conscious transition after coming to social work; thus, I was able to compare and contrast my own experiences and understanding of my process of professional socialization with participants in each group. This caused me to more fully explore data that did not make sense to me, and to question things I had assumed. Thus, this study revealed important findings, grounded in the data and not my assumptions.

In addition, the act of conducting a study on this topic brought it to participants' attention, some of whom may have never previously considered it. For example, during our interview, a participant who did not have an expanded professional identity became acutely aware that the idea of the connection between social work and the environment was new to her and she explicitly stated she would have to consider and possibly redefine social work for herself. This was a prime example of a conscious transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment that could contribute to one's development

of an expanded professional identity. Thus, her reactivity was a benefit to the study as I was able to witness such a precise moment in the process of professional socialization.

Ultimately, this study's findings led to the development of a grounded theory for professional socialization, as the study demonstrated that participants had much less conflict-ridden experiences than I did (e.g., they did not receive as much pushback from others that environmental issues were not considered part of social work). This could have occurred for several reasons; first, it was not until I had completed a BSW and was in my second year of my MSW graduate program that I had a class which triggered my conscious transition in the form of a prominent epiphany moment similar to others who had such experiences in that pathway. Thus, realizing that I had been through so much of my social work education and had only towards the end of it experienced a conscious transition, made me more aware that it was not being taught in all classes or schools. In addition, my new found excitement for my expanded professional identity, coupled with my desire to help others to develop an expanded professional identity may have led to more frequent discussions in which I sought to engage with others on this matter. Finally, I may have been more aware or attentive to pushback as I was more focused on the process of professional socialization and professional identity development as I began pursuing a career in social work higher education.

The grounded theory developed in this study contributes to the current literature on professional socialization, and provides crucial insight on ways to support

and equip social workers to become leaders in the global, interdisciplinary response to the environmental crisis.

Limitations

The main limitations to this study are the inability to interview more participants due to time constraints, and the lack of a list of social workers involved with environmental issues. Indeed there may have been groups of people who were overlooked or who could not be identified and interviewed. Such people may include those who may have left the social work profession to pursue their commitments to environment causes in other disciplines as they may have felt the profession was not broad enough to include such an expanded professional identity; or social workers who have expanded professional identities yet in the face of internal and external tensions or hindrances they have not been able to do work on environmental issues. In addition, after I began my study and sampling process the profession at large began to include environmental issues on in the CSWE's EPAS and on national and international professional agendas. Thus, perhaps a study conducted after these recent trends may produce a much different sample of more participants who have expanded professional identities, and perhaps who have encountered fewer hindrances. Also, due to my difficulty in snowball sampling for this study, I decided to create a few virtual networks which will be helpful for future research studies to identify similar study populations. As my study progressed and data analysis led me to sort participants into two distinct groups (Chapter 4, Overview), I faced the additional challenge of sampling for participants in the second group. This would have required extensive time and effort for

a more thorough pre-screening process to attempt to pre-determine if each individual

being selected actually had or did not have an expanded professional identity. However,

this may not have been possible without the full interview to truly determine the

participant's views. Thus, these individuals would be included in future studies that

allow for more time and effort to recruit a larger sample, and as networks expand that

allow for better access to target populations.

There are limits to transferability to populations beyond the current study

sample; however, the findings have contributed to the development of a grounded

theory of professional socialization that could be applied more broadly in social work

research, education, and practice. Also, it is possible that there was selection bias as

study participants were more alike than those who would not volunteer for such a

study; however, this was an anticipated possibility as the target population was a more

homogeneous subset of the larger, general population of professional social workers.

The sample of 17 participants included three males, and three participants of non-

Caucasian/Anglo-American ethnic origins; thus, the sample could have included a more

diverse group of participants based on gender and ethnicity. However, this sample

closely matches demographics of the majority of social workers in the USA who are

white and female.

This study's purposive sample ultimately only included social workers trained in

the USA and was intentionally limited to social workers who spoke English due to

financial and time constraints. It is possible that non-English speakers and/or social

workers from different cultural contexts and professional training could offer different perspectives on the process of professional socialization concerning the development of an expanded professional identity. Future studies could include broader samples which would add greater depth of findings that interviews within this sample may not have captured.

I was attentive to identify, write memos about, and discuss with my chair any threats to validity, or how my interpretations could be incomplete, too coherent, or wrong. Despite this effort, it is possible that my interpretations were wrong. The two main threats to validity in this study include researcher bias and reactivity. I attempted to pay particular attention to how my bias or perspective influenced the data I collected and the way I analyzed it. For example, I assumed that all social workers working on environmental issues would have expanded professional identities. However, this incorrect assumption led me to include a few people in my sample who did not have expanded professional identities, even though they met my sampling criteria. Thus, because of my own lens I was able to distinguish a very crucial, but nuanced detail of an expanded professional identity: that it includes not only expanded professional boundaries, but also expanded professional responsibility. I explained each of these concepts fully in Chapter 4.

Thus, in this study I attempted to proceed with caution by seeking particularly to explore how the participants' experiences were similar to and differed from mine. I attempted to use their language, or terms for concepts when conducting interviews. I

asked participants to define what they meant by concepts, rather than assuming I knew

what they meant and merely interpreting through my own lens. I made memos about

this process and discussed this with my dissertation chair throughout the process,

especially looking for ways that my interpretations may be incorrect. The mere act of

conducting a study on this topic brought it to the attention of participants, some of

whom may have never previously considered it. Although I could not completely avoid

such reactivity from participants, I made special consideration to keep my comments

and questions open for discussion rather than definitive, thereby giving participants

freedom to answer honestly and not feel pressured that there was any "right" answer

for any question. This limitation is also discussed in the previous section as it also

contributes to the strength of this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this current study offered new insights and contributed to the

literature in vital ways, it is only one exploratory study with a small sample of social

workers worldwide who are addressing environmental issues as part of their social work

practice. Future studies could expand the sample to include more participants who do

not have expanded professional identities, yet who work on environmental issues as

social workers. Perhaps participants they are similar to some participants who had an

expanded professional identity, but have not yet experienced any external supports for

a conscious transition to embrace an understanding of an expanded professional

identity. Insight from their perspectives could expand our knowledge of why social

workers engaged in social work practice still do not hold expanded professional identities.

Because this study was limited to social workers trained in the USA, it would be advantageous for future studies to intentionally include international populations, and compare and contrast new findings with the various factors of professional socialization that emerged in this study. Based on findings of this study, it is warranted that future studies examine schools of social work to determine what they offer in courses and or field work on issues concerning the environmental crisis. This would be a timely research endeavor as the new CSWE (2014) EPAS have recently included environmental justice as a core educational competency.

Summary of Researcher's Perspective

This research also reflects my journey of resolving my own hindrances and seeking additional supports to becoming a social worker who has an expanded professional identity that includes a response to the environmental crisis. I was interested to see how others came to develop an expanded professional identity. I had originally assumed that social workers addressing environmental issues would have expanded professional identities. However, I found that a few (n=3) of the participants in my study did not hold expanded professional identities despite their understanding of social work boundaries being expanded enough to situate themselves in roles that addressed environmental issues. Thus, I realized that an expanded professional identity includes not only expanded professional boundaries, but also an understanding of

expanded professional responsibility. Thus, I focused on participants who had expanded professional identities (n=14) to see how they developed their expanded professional identities. I found that some participants with expanded professional identities came to social work (i.e., began their formal social work education) assuming that environmental issues fit with social work. They were often unaware of it being expanded because they assumed that it simply was social work professional identity. Thus, they did not require any external supports to encourage them to consider an expanded professional identity. Their expanded professional identity allowed them to naturally assume an expanded person-environment framework and assume an expanded understanding of professional identity, whether or not they were being explicitly taught it via external supports. Similar to those in other groups, they often did experience external supports or hindrances, but these seemed less critical as they already held an expanded professional identity.

I found that some participants in one pathway experienced a conscious transition inclusive of a prominent epiphany moment that helped them embrace an expanded professional identity similar to my experience during graduate school. Their experiences mirrored my experiences in this. However, while some participants cited instances of obvious pushback against their expanded professional identity, they often had much milder hindrances than I had experienced. This may have been due to several things such as realizing I had gone through all of a BSW program and most of the way through an MSW program without knowing that an expanded professional identity even existed. It fit me so well that it made me frustrated that I had not been presented with

the idea until so late in my education, and it made me wonder why others had not been teaching it. Also, I may have been more apt to discuss this topic with others as I was so intrigued with my own process, and my interest in becoming a social work educator myself, and due to my commitment to my new professional identity.

In viewing some participant's data, I realized that external supports are critical for some participants as they can contribute to conscious transitions by introducing explicit connections between social and environmental injustices. This is important information for me to see as someone going into a career as a social work educator.

In conducting this study it supported the continual development of my expanded professional identity. I found it incredibly helpful to contemplate and struggle with why the outliers in my study did not hold an expanded professional identity. While I could not answer those questions with such a limited number of participants in that group, it led me to see if those who had expanded professional responsibilities had similar experiences. Thus, I felt confirmed in my own professional identity development that I was not alone, and that the majority of participants in my study did in fact hold an expanded professional identity. I was inspired by all of my participants in both Groups who demonstrated remarkable work, experiences, and knowledge. But I felt a sense of solidarity with those who held expanded professional identities. Many of those participants have since joined the listserv I set up for a virtual network of social workers who are addressing environmental issues in their practice or as academics or researchers. The network has grown to over 175 people around the globe. I have begun

to disseminate work with two of the participants in conference presentations, and upcoming manuscripts.

Finally, while I learned that social workers can situate themselves in roles that address the environmental crisis, they may only focus on social implications and not aim at or achieve any enhancement of environmental goals unless they hold an expanded professional identity. Thus, if the profession at large now includes addressing the environmental crisis it in their national and international professional agendas, and if the new CSWE EPAS (2014) include environmental justice in their curriculum requirements, then we this study's results could help social workers not only see the expanded boundaries for social work, but also embrace the expanded responsibility to address environmental issues.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the conceptual framework (Chapter 2), this qualitative study aimed to explore: 1) how social workers developed an expanded professional identity, including supports and hindrances, and 2) how, if at all, social workers influenced others in the profession to develop an expanded professional identity. Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the grounded theory methods employed for the study. Participants consisted of 17 social workers who used their professional social work skills to work on environmental issues. Chapter 4 highlighted key factors that emerged from the data which expand our understanding of the development of an expanded professional identity. Although all participants identified strongly as social workers, and were

situated in roles to work with environmental issues, those factors alone were not enough to support their development of an expanded professional identity. Several other key factors shaped participants' professional identities and were presented in a grounded theory of reciprocal professional socialization and organized into five categories: 1) Having Internal Supports; 2) Experiencing External Supports, 3) Having Internal Hindrances, 4) Experiencing External Hindrances, and 5) Shaping the Profession. This grounded theory contributed to and expands on earlier models of professional socialization.

Chapter Five provides conclusions of the study along with implications for social work education, practice, research and policy. Entities, educators, and individual social workers, such as some participants in this study, who aim to influence and shape other social workers, could intervene with any of the key factors presented in the grounded theory, thereby potentially supporting the development of an expanded professional identity. Detailed examples of actions and ways to intervene are presented in the section on Implications. This study highlights the potential benefits in broadly disseminating social work resources and generating discussions that present the eco-centric paradigm, expanded person-environment frameworks, and the professional responsibility to respond to environmental as well as social issues. Having these explicit discussions would provide a critical source of external support that individuals could consider and potentially embrace internally, and could lead to their development of an expanded professional identity. Additionally, educational efforts could provide skill

development to prepare social workers for effective professional practice and research in responding to the global environmental crisis.

Urgent conditions of the environmental crisis make it essential for the social work profession to become a leader in the global, interdisciplinary response to the environmental crisis. Social work can emphasize the human and cultural contexts while also incorporating into their professional identity the expanded responsibility to address environmental issues. They could do this by helping to define goals and interventions in addressing the global environmental crisis at local and international levels. Although the profession as a whole has not yet embraced an expanded professional identity, individual social workers are embracing an expanded professional identity. Although these individual social workers are continuing to be shaped by the profession, at the same time, through their expanded professional identity, these social workers are also transforming the profession.

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APPENDIX A – SAMPLE RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date: ____

Dear __(Name)___,

___(Name) ____ suggested that I contact you. My name is Meredith Powers. I'm a doctoral social work candidate at the University of South Carolina and I'm looking for social workers to interview for my dissertation research.

I want to know about ways you have used your professional social work skills with work related to environmental issues. I want to understand how you got involved in this work, and how you understand this work as being professional social work. This work may have been in a paid position as a social worker, or as a volunteer using your social work skills.

If you are willing to talk with me, please check whether you qualify with the following screening criteria questions: (Please check all that apply)

[ ]   Are you 18 years or older

[ ]   Do you hold a social work/welfare degree (i.e., BSW, MSW, PhD, DSW)?

[ ]   Do you currently or have you ever used your professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment (i.e., built and/or natural)? (NOTE: this work may be in another country outside of the USA; this work could be paid or non-paid; examples may include climate change and global warming, disaster relief, food insecurity, toxic environments, contaminated waters and soils, and unsustainable resource use and waste disposal).

[ ]   Are you willing to share your time to participate in the initial and follow-up interviews (approximately 2 to 2.5 hours)?

[ ]   Do you have a phone or internet connection and an online chatting application (e.g., Skype) available to use during our interviews.

[ ]   Interviews will be conducted in English. Are you comfortable with this?

[ ]   How long have you used your professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment?

    [ ] 0-5 years

    [ ] 5-15 years

    [ ] 15 or more years

(Note: No one will be excluded based on race/ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.)

Also, if you know of any other social workers who may qualify, please let me know how I may contact them, or have them contact me at Powersm3@email.sc.edu or (803) 351-7197. Thank you for considering how you can participate in this project! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

    Meredith C. F. Powers, M.S.W.

    Doctoral Candidate

    College of Social Work

    University of South Carolina

    Powersm3@mailbox.sc.edu

APPENDIX B – INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT FORM
University of South Carolina

Research Study Title: "On becoming a professional social worker: Exploring professional identities that include a response to the environmental crisis"

Principal Researcher: Meredith C. F. Powers
University of South Carolina

You are invited to take part in a research study about your thoughts on professional social work and its connection with environmental issues (i.e., the natural environment and human interaction). This study will be conducted by Meredith C. F. Powers, doctoral student at the University of South Carolina, College of Social Work. In this research study, you will be interviewed face-to-face, over the phone, or over the internet. This is a chance for you to teach others about your life and experience using professional social work skills in work with environmental issues. This study will also provide you the opportunity to voice your opinions and concerns about professional social work and environmental issues thereby bringing greater awareness to the profession of social work regarding your experiences and expertise. You are invited to be a part of this study on a voluntary basis only.

The following are some answers to general questions about the study and roles of the participants.
• What is my role? You will be interviewed by the researcher using an in-depth, open-ended guided interview format. The interviews will be a relaxed conversation between you and the researcher.
• How long will the interview(s) last? The interview will last approximately 2 to 2.5 hours. These interviews will be audio recorded and notes will be taken by the researcher.
• What is the purpose of the interviews? The purpose of the interviews is to understand the connection between professional social work and environmental issues. I want to know about ways you have used your professional social work skills with work on environmental issues. I want to understand how you got involved and how you understand this as social work.
• How will my interview data be used? The researcher will then use findings from the interviews to encourage a broader environmental focus in practice and education for the profession as a whole.
• How will my name or identifying information be used? Your name will be used during interviews; however, names and identifying information will not be revealed, and pseudonyms will be used with all data analysis and dissemination unless you request otherwise. Despite efforts of confidentiality, there is always the chance that somebody may recognize you in data dissemination (e.g., publications).

• What are the benefits and risks of participating in this study? You may enjoy discussing your experiences as a social worker on environmental issues. If you prefer, you may choose to be acknowledged in publications resulting from this research. The main risk is the risk that someone may recognize you in dissemination forums, despite efforts to maintain confidentiality.

• Will I be paid for participating in this study? You will not be paid for participating in this study.

• How will the information be stored? Information collected during the interviews will be stored on password-protected computers, and in files designated for this research study. Access will be limited to the researcher, her dissertation committee, and possibly a professional transcriptionist. All paper copies of data (i.e., memos, codebooks, interview transcripts) will be printed only after identifying information is removed and will be secured in a locked storage file when not in direct use by the researcher for analysis.

• What if I change my mind and do not want to participate in the research study? If at any point you do not wish to participate in the interview, you may contact Meredith Powers (___)___-____ or email PowersM3@email.sc.edu. Any data you have provided will immediately be removed from the study data. You do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. You may also withdraw from the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences.

• Has this study been approved by an Institutional Review Board? Yes, this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina. This is a committee that oversees research study to ensure that the rights of participants are protected. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Thomas Coggins, Director of the office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, (803) 777-7095.

• Who is directing this study? The study director is Meredith Powers, doctoral student at the University of South Carolina, College of Social Work. She may be reached at (___)___-____ or Powersm3@email.sc.edu . She is being supervised by a dissertation committee; the chair is Dr. Terry Wolfer who may be reached at (803)777-9486 or TERRYW@mailbox.sc.edu

• What if I have additional questions about the study or my participation? If you have any additional questions about this study, feel free to contact Meredith Powers (___) ___-____ or Powersm3@email.sc.edu

• How do I provide consent for my participation? If you are interested in participating in this study, simply participate in the interview. No written consent is necessary. Please maintain a copy of this consent form should you have any questions or concerns at a later date.

APPENDIX C – POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Version 4-9-13

Please mark all that apply. Note: No one will be excluded based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.

Name/Pseudonym (if you prefer): _____

[ ] Do you hold a social work/welfare degree? (mark all that apply)
- BSW
- MSW
- PhD/DSW
- Other (specify: _____)

- Where and when did you attain these degrees? (list names of institutions and city/state/country, and years in program (start-graduation))

_____
_____

- What, if any, additional degrees and/or certificates do you hold? And, where did you attain these degrees/certificates? (list degree, names of institutions and city/state/country)

_____
_____

[ ] Do you currently or have you ever used your professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment (e.g., built and/or natural)? (NOTE: this work may be in another country outside of the USA; this work could be paid or non-paid)

_____
_____

[ ] How long have you used your professional social work skills to work on issues related to the physical environment? (#):_____

[ ] Do you have a phone or internet connection and an online chatting application (e.g., Skype) available to use during our interviews.

[ ] Interviews will be conducted in English. Are you comfortable with this?

[ ] Are you willing to share your time to participate in the interview (approximately 2 to 2.5 hours) and for any follow-up contact for clarification purposes?

[ ] Diversity:
- What is your date of birth? _____
- What is your sex?
    - Male
    - Female
    - Other (specify: _____)
- What is your race/ethnic group?
    - African-American
    - Asian-American/Pacific Islander
    - Bi-racial/Multi-racial
    - Caucasian/Anglo-American
    - Latino(a)/Hispanic-American
    - Native-American/Alaskan Native/First Nations
    - Other (specify: _____)

[ ]   Do you know other social workers who are in some way use their professional social work skills in work with environmental issues? If so, would you refer them to me for this study? (you can have them contact me at Powersm3@mailbox.sc.edu or (803)351-7197 or you can provide me their info here and I will follow up with them).

APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Have you read the Consent Form I have provided you? Do you have any further questions regarding it? Again, the purpose of this study is to explore professional social work and its connection with environmental issues (i.e., the physical environment and human interaction). I have prepared some questions, but feel free to expand on your answers beyond what you think the questions ask for. I hope this will be a comfortable, fun conversation as you share about your life, experiences, and views. If you are uncomfortable answering any question please let me know and we will skip it.

• How long have you been using your professional social work skills to work on environmental issues? Approximately?

• Before we focus on social work specifically, tell me about your concerns related to the environment (either locally or globally).

    a. How did you come to understand these concerns?

    b. Have your views changed since you first began doing social work related to environmental issues?

    c. How do your concerns make you feel (e.g., hopeful, overwhelmed, excited, frustrated, supported, alone)?

    d. Do you have any international travel experiences? In what ways have these experiences influenced how you view the environment?

• Describe for me your work as a professional social worker related to environmental issues (again, this could be paid or volunteer work, if you want to discuss multiple experiences, could you please clarify). I'd like you to give me a specific description of your work on environmental issues.

• Did you intentionally seek opportunities to work on environmental issues as a social worker?
    a. Explain to me how and why you came to do this work on environmental issues?

    b. How long have you been doing this work?

    c. What led you to do these things professionally? What supports enabled you to? What obstacles stood/stand in your way?

    d. Is/was it an official part of your job responsibilities?
    e. What percentage of your time do you spend doing this work? (describe all paid and non-paid work) What is your official title?

- What has helped support you as a professional social worker to be involved with environmental issues?

    a. Initially, what supported/facilitated you getting into it?

    b. Over time, what has helped sustain your work?

- What has hindered or made it challenging for you as a professional social worker to be involved with environmental issues?

    a. Initially, what made it challenging for you to get into it?

    b. Over time, what has been challenging to sustain your work?

- How were your efforts received? Have you had anyone question or be curious about why you're working on environmental issues as a social worker?

    a. What is their response?

    b. what do you say to them? (to help them understand)

    c. By the population served?

    d. By colleagues? (others social workers?)

    e. Supervisors?

    f. How has this reception changed over time (e.g., initially, now)?

- Do you know any other social workers working on environmental issues? If so, describe what you know about their work.
    a. How does knowing others/not knowing others make you feel about your work as a social worker addressing environmental issues?

- What do you think is your responsibility as a professional social worker in addressing environmental issues?

- What do you think is social work's responsibility in addressing environmental issues?

- How would you explain social work to someone unfamiliar with the profession?

    a. How did you come to understand it to be this way?

    b. How has your understanding of social work changed over time?

        ▪ What other understandings of social work have you held?

        ▪ Before you began your social work education?

        ▪ During your social work education?

- Since graduation?

- Since you began working specifically on environmental issues?

c. How well does this understanding describe you personally?

- How does your work with the environment fit within that definition?

d. How have you struggled with this understanding?
  - How has this understanding facilitated/supported your work on environmental issues?

  - How has as this understanding limited your work on environmental issues?

e. To what extent do other social workers question/doubt that your work on environmental issues is legitimately social work?

f. How have you helped promote this definition with others (e.g., teaching, activism, mentoring)?

- Have you ever presented about your work on environmental issues at a professional conference?

- Written about it?

- Talked to colleagues about it?

- Guest lectured in a social work class about it?

- Did any of this help legitimate your work on environmental issues as social work?

g. What difference did your professional social work education make for you? What did you learn or get out of it that you didn't already know or have? How did it supplement or fine tune what you already knew/had?

- Did your social work program offer different focuses or tracks? (e.g., micro/macro) If so, which did you pick?

- Where did you do field placements? And what was focus? (e.g., micro/macro)

h. Have you had any classes, training, or mentorship as a social worker that has focused on environmental issues or helped you understand your work on addressing environmental issues?

- If so, please describe.

- Were these taught by social workers?

      i.   How else did you come to understand this connection? How did you make this link between environment and social work? Could you give me an example of it?Tell me about faculty, field instructors, or other mentors who influenced your thinking on thisDo you think environmental issues should be included as a mandatory part of the social work curriculum? Do you think other social workers agree with you? Other social work educators?

      j.   Are you familiar with any articles, policy statements, or code of ethics that discuss social work and the physical/natural environment? If so, please tell me about these.

- Many professionals are addressing environmental issues; what do you as a professional social worker specifically contribute and why?
  - Knowledge and skill set
  - Values
  - Attitudes
  - Approaches

      b.   How does having you as a social worker involved on environmental issues affect how others (non-social workers) address the environmental issues?

      c.   How does your work with the environment differ from those in other professions who work with the environment?

      d.   How has being a social worker changed/shaped the way you do environmental work?
  - How does your social work expertise make you a different/better environmental worker?

      e.   How has being involved in environmental work changed/shaped your identyity as a social worker?
  - How does your environmental interest make you a different/better social worker?

- How has being a social worker made it challenging for you to be involved in environmental work?

- Have you encountered any dilemmas/tensions/incompatibilities/conflicts in your professional work on environmental issues?

      a.   Academic training?

      b.   Practice?

      c.   Dilemmas with your attempts to become involved with work on environmental issues?

      d.   How have you resolved these conflicts and/or done work with the environment despite them?

      e.   Have people raised questions as to why you do this as a social worker?

- Is there anything else you would like to add that you think is important for me to know? (e.g., any realizations you had during the interview)

- I plan to provide you a copy of the transcript of this interview so you can indicate any changes or elaborations that may need to be made. May I also contact you if I have questions or need clarification on anything in our interview today?

- Do you know other social workers who are in some way use their professional social work skills in work with environmental issues? If so, would you refer them to me for this study?