

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND THEMES IN  
THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

Raymond Lynn Coward

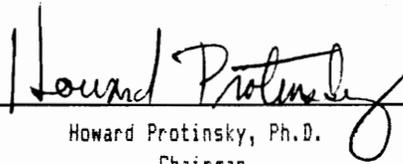
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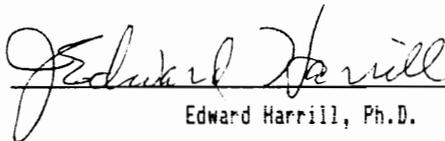
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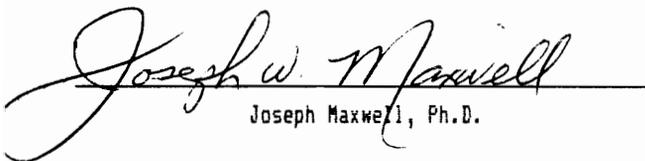
Family and Child Development

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ABSTRACT

Little has been published regarding the development of therapists during their professional lives (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992), or about the individual development of marriage and family therapists (Benningfield & Benningfield, 1992; Simon, 1992). This qualitative research study explored the development of marriage and family therapists (MFTs) using one-on-one in depth interviews that were videotaped. The purpose was to identify important events and themes in the lives of marriage and family therapists and to identify important theoretical components of MFT development. Eight marriage and family therapists who were graduates of an accredited MFT training program and/or clinical members of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy were interviewed and videotaped. The videotapes were reviewed and analyzed by the author, using

the grounded theory research approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a guide. The author compared reported events and themes to basic developmental concepts outlined by Lerner (1986). The main developmental theme was the integration of the personal and professional selves (labeled synthesis) of the participants. The most important ingredients in the participants' development seemed to be developmental motivation, resiliency, balance and balancing strategies, and awareness. Continued development was closely associated with continued synthesis, careful monitoring of boundaries, and creative use of developmental motivation. It was the interaction between events, awareness, developmental motivation, and resiliency which produced growth. Information gained from this study may be useful in understanding the self of the therapist within training and supervision, and it may serve as a map of the possible transitions facing a therapist along the journey of development. With this study the author hopes to stimulate interest in additional research on marriage and family therapist development.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

While dysfunctional therapist behaviors have received attention in recent years (Berkowitz, 1987; Boylin & Braggie, 1987; Cooper, 1986; Erlich, 1986; Farber, 1990; Fleischer & Wissler, 1985; Freudenberger, 1990; Friedman, 1985; Kaslow & Schulman, 1987; Medeiros & Prochaska, 1988; Piercy & Wetchler, 1987; Raquepaw & Miller, 1989; Wilcoxon, 1989), little has been published regarding the development of therapists during their professional lives (Skovolt & Ronnestad, 1992), or about the individual development of marriage and family therapists (Benningfield & Benningfield, 1992; Simon, 1992). Simon (1992) wrote that "...learning to be a family therapist has been a bit like learning about sex--there is much private knowledge and secret uncertainty not easily shared" (p. 2).

Most research on therapists has been conducted in training settings and has focused primarily on progress from entrance to exit of the particular program or institute (Liddle, Breunlin, & Schwartz, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Research in family therapy has, perhaps, because of its youth, been focused on efficacy of the therapy itself and, recently, training efficacy (Liddle, 1991), in order to establish a credible foundation as a field. Research on therapist training and efficacy progressed during the decade

of 1980s (Liddle, 1991), but the field of marriage and family therapy has not as yet taken advantage of and incorporated pertinent concepts of development into its models (Bruenlin et al., 1992; Falicov, 1988) and into its understanding of the progression of therapists (Benningfield & Benningfield, 1991; Simon, 1992). One goal of this research was to initiate more interest in discovering the components of therapist development and to contribute to a new body of literature in the field of marriage and family therapy that can serve as a supplement to training, a map of the possible transitions a therapist might face along the journey of development, and a potential guide for effective supervision. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to identify important events and themes in the lives of marriage and family therapists and to propose a theory of marriage and family therapist development by comparison of these events and themes to basic developmental concepts.

#### Justification of the Study

It is important to study therapist development because therapists are engaged in a professional process of fostering growth and facilitating functional improvement in the lives of human beings. The therapist is in a unique and privileged position, dealing with very sensitive issues and human vulnerabilities in a private and confidential setting.

What takes place in therapy can have a notable impact on clients' lives and the lives of therapists (Guy, 1987; Kaslow & Schulman, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Piercy & Wetchler, 1987). Therapists, in many cases, are entrusted with the serious responsibility of watching over the psychological well being of people seeking relief from distress or seeking growth. Few professionals have such intense personal contact with their clients or are expected to fill such a variety of roles in treatment - comforter, sage, expert, magician, historian, diplomat.

There is a modest volume of literature on the person of the therapist (Dryden & Spurling, 1989; Guy, 1987; Kaslow, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991). However, these writings are conspicuously missing from the marriage and family therapy literature (Simon, 1992), and therapist development is not mentioned in the most recent decade review of marriage and family therapy (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1991). The relatively new field of marriage and family therapy has been preoccupied with its own survival and development and has not had the opportunity to focus on long term development of marriage and family therapists. Family therapy in the past has focused on the group dynamics of the family to the exclusion of individual development of clients and the individual development of marriage and family therapists beyond training (Liddle, 1991; Breunlin, et. al., 1992;

Neill & Kniskern, 1982; Nichols & Schwartz, 1991). The field of marriage and family therapy follows a strict code and guidelines of ethical behavior and has a responsibility to understand those factors which influence therapists' growth and development so that the profession can insure a high quality of treatment and efficacy of therapy.

Therapists may enter the therapy profession because of motivation to be healers, teachers, spiritual or religious guides, or for more personal/psychological reasons such as their own growth, desire for power, or perhaps a desire for safe, non-sexual intimacy (Guy; 1987; Mahoney, 1991). Many therapists have indicated that they themselves have struggled with and survived some of the same circumstances which distress clients seeking therapy (Mahoney, 1991). At times the life experiences of the therapist are helpful in the treatment of clients by helping establish empathy and generating understanding of the clients' experience.

Research shows that the person of the therapist and the relationship of the therapist with the client influence the outcome of therapy (Lambert & Arnold, 1987; Lambert, 1989). The self of the therapist is the primary instrument used to establish a relationship with clients and to intervene within the therapy process (Andolfi & Angelo, 1988; Guerin & Hubbard, 1987; Haber, 1990; Hess, 1987; Real, 1990). Currently, there is scarce literature about the self of the

therapist (Schovolt & Ronnestad, 1992; Simon, 1992; Wetchler, Piercy, & Sprenkle; 1989) and most research about therapist development is confined to graduate training settings (Hill, Charles, & Reed, 1981; Reising & Daniels, 1983; Schovolt & Ronnestad, 1992; Wiley & Ray, 1986; Worthington & Stern, 1985; Worthington, 1984; Worthington, 1987). Research also indicates that we do not know when the experiences of the therapist are helpful in facilitating the process of therapy and when they are hindrances that could potentially damage (Guy, 1987; Mahoney, 1991).

Research examining development of non-therapists is likely to focus on issues other than the unique and complex processes involved in the lives of therapists. Practicing psychotherapy impacts the life of the therapist (Guy, 1987; Kaslow, 1987; Kaslow & Schulman, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991), creating a different set of developmental circumstances for the therapist than the non-therapist and may result in accelerated development and/or possible impairment (Guy, 1987; Mahoney, 1991). It may be that the different treatment environment (utilizing a systems approach in working with families and relationships verses, or in combination with, an individual approach) produces different developmental issues for marriage and family therapists than for other therapists. Marriage and family therapists must develop skills and personal coping

strategies to deal with intense emotional dynamics among family members in the treatment room. Much of the task of the family therapist is to avoid becoming entangled in the clients' drama, maintaining a delicate balance of acknowledging each person's issues while sustaining the interest of all those present. At times, it is a juggling act to remain focused, empathetic and avoid stumbling over one's own family-of-origin issues.

The potential for providing information and ideas for supervision is another reason to study therapists' developmental processes. Supervision is an area in which the self of the therapist can be the focus of attention. Information about the self of the therapist could be utilized in the supervision process by helping to match instruction, challenges, and philosophy to the appropriate ability and potential of the supervisee thus providing an environment for growth. Supervision should be geared toward " the supervisee's level of personal maturity and professional development" (Kaslow, 1991, p. 131) helping the supervisee develop skills and self awareness "regarding his or her own competence, barriers to growth, blind spots and assets" (Kaslow, 1991, p. 131). Unfortunately, there is a lack of adequate theory to address therapist development in supervision (Hess, 1987; Holloway, 1987).

Studies of graduate trainees' progress in supervision

are important; however, "[r]esearchers cannot assume that developmental change is necessarily linked to academic programming" (Holloway, 1987, p. 212). Holloway (1987) suggested that progress in training programs may be a product of pedagogy rather than significant developmental change. Comparisons between progress in training programs and developmental issues in later professional development, therefore, must be made carefully. It is important that researchers examine therapists' experience outside of and beyond the training years to adequately understand therapists' developmental processes which can impact on therapy and supervision outcome.

### Assumptions of the Study

This research project was guided by the underlying assumptions that a developmental paradigm guides the evolution of the personal and professional self of the therapist (Blocher, 1983; Hess, 1987; Hess, 1986; Holloway, 1987; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Reising & Daniels, 1983; Stoltenberg, 1981; Wiley & Ray, 1986; Worthington, 1987) and that personal and professional development of therapists are reciprocal and inseparable (Guy, 1987; Holloway, 1987; Kaslow, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991). Mapping the events of personal journeys theoretically can

help us understand the process of development and how it is influenced by the life experiences, transitions and interactions of the personal self of the therapist. Ultimately, the professional self is shaped by the personal self and, eventually, they become a dynamic, integrated combination (Dryden & Spurling, 1989; Guy, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Achieving the proper balance between the personal and professional self requires eternal vigilance on the part of the therapist (Kottler, 1986). Paradoxically, they are in ways inseparable, but, in order to survive, a therapist must also learn to insulate the self, protecting boundaries so as not to lose the self in the repeated drama of the clients' world. Failure to protect and nurture self can contribute to existential crisis and burnout (Guy, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Simon, 1992). Because of their apparent inseparable and reciprocal relationship (see Chapter 2), personal and professional development were studied together.

### Development

The construct of development was examined (Chapter 2), utilizing general background literature to sensitize the researcher to the basic foundational components of development and to developmental themes and processes. A developmental paradigm was the background used to support

proposed theoretical components of marriage and family therapists' development (Chapter 5) which emerged from the events and themes in the data.

### Phenomenological Paradigm and the Research Approach

Phenomenology, very simply defined, is the study of experience (Mahoney, 1991). Phenomenology, established by Edmund Husserl (Hanna, 1993), is a philosophy out of which evolved research approaches for investigating human experience. Qualitative research methods using interviews and conversations is a research approach with roots in phenomenology (Rudestam & Newton, 1992), but analysis and interpretation of data may not resemble the strict phenomenological research developed by Husserl or his colleagues.

Phenomenology assumes that reality is socially constructed and not produced (or discovered) in an isolated or sterile context required by logical positivism (Lincoln, 1990). Phenomenological inquiry attempts to find, describe, and understand what underlies the meaning ascribed to an individual's life experience (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Qualitative research methods can provide an avenue to interpret how that meaning was formed and relate it to our existing knowledge base while attempting to develop new theories.

Research influenced by phenomenology differs from logical positivism concerning the relationship of the researcher to the researched. The positivist researcher assumes that "the researcher knows best" and controls the study from a position of presumed objectivity separated from the subjects. The researcher, following a phenomenological paradigm, looks for clues (usually through data collected in interviews or extended conversations) about the interaction between individuals and their context, and how that interaction produces meaning for the individuals. This is a major philosophical shift (Lincoln, 1990) which moves away from "the researcher knows best" to a climate in which the participants become contributors and shapers of the analysis of meaning. The researched has something of value to contribute to understanding or to what is being studied and under the phenomenological/qualitative paradigm, the participants may become co-researchers (Cherian, 1992; Lincoln, 1990). The analysis of data is no longer reduced to a manipulation of numbers and statistics but is based on an "expansionist epistemology grounded in holism" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 290). Making observations and interacting with the participants in their context may add details which would be overlooked in tightly controlled experimental conditions striving for objectivity.

A qualitative design was chosen for this study as a

method suited to explore themes and develop descriptions of processes and events which, according to their subjective view, shaped the growth of marriage and family therapists. Interviews and extended conversations are specific techniques used by researchers following a qualitative research approach (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). According to Strauss & Corbin (1990), one of the reasons to conduct qualitative research is the particular nature of the research problem. Situations which attempt to provide an understanding of the personal experience of the participants are suited to qualitative methods. "Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19). It can provide new information about well-researched problems and it can also expose or clarify details which are not readily evident in quantitative methods. "Also underlying this approach [grounded theory] to qualitative research is the assumption that all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified, at least not in this population or place; or if so, then the relationships between the concepts are poorly understood or conceptually underdeveloped" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.37). Since the field of marriage and family therapy has not yet focused on therapist development beyond the training years (see Chapter 2 for more explanation),

qualitative research methods were an appropriate choice for the investigation of marriage and family therapist development.

#### RESEARCHER POSITION AND INTEREST

I brought to the study from past experience a belief that development arises at least partially from within the individual and a belief that people are inherently good and have a natural tendency to move toward improvement and integration (wholeness).

The spark for this study kindled from a personal and professional curiosity concerning therapist development and an interest in participating in the training of therapists in the future. What was learned about therapist development could contribute to the training and supervision of novice therapists but, just as importantly, could prepare them for experiences and opportunities to grow in their life cycle as a professional.

My first exposure to the concept of psychological development occurred during my senior year of high school when I enrolled in a psychology course. My interest in the human psyche was aroused, and after a year of college, I decided to major in psychology. At the time behaviorism was in vogue, and I was in a program which was espousing the tenets of the behaviorists and of experimental research. I

soon became discouraged by the focus on rats, pigeons, and Skinner boxes. I wanted to study people and to understand their lives and experiences. I felt intuitively that there was more to human development than classical and operant conditioning. I gave up psychology in the formal academic world and instead chose to read on my own those works that interested me. Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, had a particular fascination for me. Although I had difficulty with the complexity of his theories and writings, I was drawn to his focus on development and human experience. Ten years elapsed before I again entered formal academic study, this time in a master's program in counseling and development. One of the attractions for me was the program of study which contained optional courses on Jungian psychology.

Jung was a phenomenologist who focused his work on the richness and depth of the human journey through life. He prided himself on being a scientist, but he understood the limits of deductive science to describe the whole context of human development which contains subtle intangible elements which defy reduction and quantification.

During my graduate program in counseling, I became increasingly aware of my own developmental process and became curious about the development of therapists. I generated a number of questions. How do therapists maintain

their focus on their clients' work? How does the therapy process affect the therapist? Are there stages of development that are precipitated by life events and crises? Is the development of therapists different from the development of other people? Are marriage and family therapists trained to deal with the high levels of intimacy that are a part of the therapeutic relationship? I remain interested in the answers to these questions as they relate to the training process and the ongoing professional growth of therapists.

#### Research Question

Therefore, based upon my personal interest and position, an examination of general developmental literature (see Chapter 2), and a qualitative research approach, the research question for this study was: What do marriage and family therapists view as significant influences and events in their lives and careers that have shaped their personal and professional development?

## Chapter II

### Development:

#### Conceptual Background and Description

##### Use of Literature

Strauss & Corbin (1990) recommend that a review of specific literature related to the topic not be conducted before the research has begun, but that it should be done concurrently with the research process; i.e. during the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Literature containing general concepts related to the topic was reviewed for background (in this study, a review of broad developmental concepts and the treatment of development in family therapy).

This research investigation attempted to draw comparisons (through coding and theoretical sensitivity) between events and themes emerging from the data and basic developmental concepts. The developmental paradigm was the background used to support a proposed theory of marriage and family therapist development.

Reviewing general literature helps cultivate sensitivity to relevant and possibly significant themes which may appear in the data without the researcher becoming "so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in terms of creative efforts by our knowledge of

it!" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 50). The idea is to come to the research with minimal preconceived notions, allowing for the emergence of new categories of information. As new categories or themes emerged during data analysis, relevant and more specific literature was reviewed and included (thus building theoretical sensitivity). Since qualitative analysis is very time consuming, exploring only the pertinent literature concurrently with analysis saves times and helps keep the research interpretation focused, fresh, and creative.

### Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is a quality of the researcher which facilitates the analysis and interpretation of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It arises from the technical literature as well as from personal and professional experience (there is more explanation in Chapter 3). The initial literature review in qualitative research (grounded theory approach [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990]) is conducted broadly rather than specifically so as to enhance theoretical sensitivity. As the research proceeds, more specific literature is included and contributes to the on-going process of increasing theoretical sensitivity and data analysis. Including a mention of theoretical sensitivity at this point helps form

the rationale of the following summary. The literature on therapist development, which primarily exists outside of marriage and family therapy, was incorporated once data collection and analysis began.

### Construct of Development

General literature on the construct of development was reviewed to illustrate the broad range of developmental concepts and the complexity of development. The basic foundational elements of development common to several perspectives are summarized at the conclusion of this chapter.

There is such a volume of literature on the construct of development that a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. Partial discussions or specific points of view about development fill entire books and are often found embedded in the familiar nature verses nurture debate. Many scientists and psychologists have debated, discussed, and disagreed over the definition and essential elements of development for decades (Lerner, 1986; Mahoney, 1991). As long as scientists have strong commitments to various paradigms (Kuhn, 1970), it is unlikely we will have a uniform consensus on what development is. This researcher, however, believes that a succinct discussion of development covering a broad range of thinking serves to focus the

reader and illuminate the position of the researcher. From the reviewed literature, the researcher summarized key principles common to more than one area. Those principles focused and guided the analysis of data collected for this study.

Development proceeds at several levels concurrently and may be conceptualized as a biopsychosocial process in order to acknowledge and recognize different levels of development (Breunlin et al., 1992). The following summary includes information pertinent to development viewed through the lenses of evolutionary biology, biology, psychology, individual development, and social and relational development. The intention was to illustrate connections between areas and/or levels and show the complexity of the construct of development.

"The study of our development as a species is relevant to the study of our development as individuals" (Mahoney, 1991, p. 118). When studying the potential and limitations of current human development, cognitive and developmental psychologist, Michael Mahoney (1991) believes that it is important to consider the forces that have shaped life forms, including humans, for millions of years . Recognition of the biological and evolutionary processes which contribute to the development of individual as well as larger living systems expands our perception of the

progression and complexity of development.

Evolutionary biology is largely built on the theories of Charles Darwin and contains such concepts as gradualism, adaptation, and natural selection (Gould, 1982; Hofer, 1981; Mahoney, 1991). Until recently, evolutionary biologists believed that changes in the organism occurred when there were changes in the environment which exerted pressure on the organism. This view assumes that the environment "causes" changes in the organism. Contemporary evolutionary biologists have come to believe that the cause and effect thinking is limited and does not address the complexities of the organism or its internal processes. In other words, it is now believed that the organism plays an active role in determining its reaction and concurrent adaption to environmental change (Gould, 1980; Hofer, 1981; Mahoney, 1991). This distinction illustrates the divergence between passive and active Darwinism, i.e., passive Darwinism is the organism at the effect of the environment and active Darwinism is the organism actively exploring the environment and determining a significant portion of its own development. Development may occur as a quest for something needed or "missing" (which may arise from within the organism) or it may occur as a reaction to a stimulus in the environment and neither of these occur without feedback from the other, that is without reciprocity between the organism

and its environment (Lerner, 1986; Mahoney, 1991).

The researcher Joseph Chilton Pierce (1992) wrote about human development from a physiological point of view, describing the formation of neural pathways and the emergence of overlapping neural fields in the brain itself. When formulating our knowledge of the world, our struggle is very much a struggle of our brain to make sense of the incoming perceptual data and to place the data in a neural network which can interpret and assign meaning. If the data has no "fit" with the existing neural fields, then the brain struggles incessantly to make sense of the data so it can then construct an appropriate new neural field in proximity to other neural fields which have some relation to the new data. An example of this process might be a person seeing a new type of machine which is far more complex than any seen before and for which the brain has no previous "picture" with which to match the new machine. There may be an experience of confusion and wonderment as the person visually examines the machine and the brain searches for some familiar clue for comparison. If none exists or is not perceived, the brain would then begin a new "file" within the large neural field of mechanical data. Development has occurred because there has been a change in the neural fields resulting from the perception and integration of new information. If the person continues to interact with the

new stimuli the brain will actually begin to grow new neural pathways which interconnect the new data with relevant files in other neural fields.

Neuropsychiatrist, Richard Restak (1988) described similar processes in his reports on the brain. Even with age, a healthy person is capable of generating new neural connections in the brain thus maintaining their level of intelligence and despite the loss of over 18 million brain cells a year the person is capable of increasing their knowledge of their environment (Restak, 1988). This "new intelligence" is built upon the foundation of past life experience and gives true meaning to the phrase "the wisdom of the aged". Biologically, this is made possible by surviving neurons which actually grow larger and produce additional connections to other neural networks therefore accomplishing more despite the actual reduction in overall numbers of brain cells. Continued and increased adaption to the environment is made possible by an increase in biological complexity within the brain itself. Psychological and emotional development have an adequate biological base from which to progress well into a person's seventh decade. Elderly adults in good health are just as capable of growing new neural connections as young adults (Lerner, 1986; Restak, 1988). The long held idea that cognitive ability declines with age is in fact just a myth

(Lerner, 1986).

However impressive the biological developments of humans are, Mahoney (1991) believes that "[c]ultural evolution and the transmission of (tacit) beliefs and skills across generations have had far greater significance for human development than have the genetic changes that led to the human body as we know it" (p. 13). Mutations which account for genetic adaptations proceed slowly especially when compared to the recent pace of social change. Biological development however has given humans the structure and capacity to relate socially and to benefit from that interaction by building on existing social structure.

Integral to the construct of development is the concept of change. However, change must have a certain character to be considered developmental. "Development refers to change...and [c]hanges must have a systematic, organized character in order for them to be labeled as developmental" (Lerner, 1986, p.40). But this is not enough. "For organized, or systematic changes to be developmental ones, they have to have a successive character" (Lerner, 1986, p.41). Lerner (1986) wrote that developmental changes are connected to one another with later ones being influenced by earlier ones. Mahoney (1991) supported this sequential concept when he wrote about childhood development of core

ordering processes which stabilize and influence behavior and development in the adult years. Core ordering processes largely determine the individual's experience and construction of reality, and their personal identity. A person's reality and identity influence their interaction and formation of intimacy with others. The quality of personal relationships is an important measure of the level of functional development a person has achieved (Breunlin et al., 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Kerr & Bowen, 1991; Mahoney, 1991; Malone & Malone, 1987).

According to Mahoney (1991), psychological change is much more difficult than previously thought (by many theories) and is most often a process involving significant time and work. The process of progressive human development is balanced by forces of change and forces of stability. Furthermore there are self protective mechanisms within the individual which prevent too rapid a change and help insure the psychological integrity of the person. When a person has experienced a period of intense change in their world of the self, there follows a period of stabilization in which the person integrates the change by experimenting with new behaviors in their life (Mahoney, 1992; Malone & Malone, 1987). The mechanisms of self protection have historically been framed as resistance by therapists. In contrast to a negative view of resistance, one may reframe resistance in a

more positive light as a process which allows the self to maintain its systemic integrity and is thus an important aspect of healthy development. This concept is sometimes referred to as the person's readiness to change as opposed to their unwillingness to do the work necessary for change to occur. Readiness to change can affect the timing or possibility/potential of development.

Swiss psychologist and physician, Carl Jung spent his lifetime composing a very rich model of human development which acknowledges and embraces the complexity of individuals. Jung's theories and concepts can be found in a number of sources (Jung, 1953; Jung, 1965; Jung, 1974; Storr, 1983; Kaufmann, 1984) including practical application articles in the Journal of Counseling and Development and the Journal of Mental Health Counseling as well as the Jungian journal, Psychological Perspectives.

Differing from Freud, Jung recognized powerful positive aspects of the unconscious. "The unconscious is not just the sum total of everything that has been repressed in the course of one's development; it also contains wellsprings of creativity and sources of guidance and meaning" (Kaufmann, 1984, p. 108). A person's psyche is not simply a dichotomy of conscious and unconscious factors, it also contains many other parts or aspects that Jung termed archetypes. The Self is one of these archetypes and plays a significant role

in integrating and utilizing the other archetypes in development. This compares to Richard Schwartz's (1992) model of individual and family development called the Internal Family System. In Schwartz's model the Self also plays a regulating and organizing role with the other parts of an individual's internal system.

In Jung's view, goals of the developmental process included initiating a reciprocal didactic dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious. Dream information and symbolism was the primary source of understanding the positive contributions of the unconscious forces of the psyche. Another primary goal was an integration of the different parts (archetypes) of the psyche into a smoothly functioning Self which could utilize strengths and resources from the different archetypes. Archetypes can be thought of as untapped potentials. Another important goal was to achieve a proper balance between the conscious and unconscious and the archetypes so that none dominated the other. Pathology was often the result of unbalance between the internal parts and Jung preferred to focus on the issues of balance rather than pathology and diagnostic labels.

Jung believed development included a process called individuation. In the process of development a person is shaped by the past but is motivated toward the future, toward improvement, toward individuation. Individuation is

not a struggle for perfection; rather it is a striving for integration and wholeness. Jung recognized the importance of the family in shaping individual development and when pertinent initiated family involvement in the therapy process (Kaufmann, 1984; Storr, 1983).

The principles of psychological development apply universally only in an abstract way and the individual differences of each person must be recognized and respected. Therefore generalizations concerning human development are tentative and hypothetical. Each person's developmental process, while possibly following a general pattern, is unique (Breunlin et al., 1992; Jung, 1953; Jung, 1965; Lerner, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Nichols, 1987; Nichols & Schwartz, 1991). Life is filled with crises, challenges, and adjustment problems and any given period of life may present problems for some people and not for others. Resilience is a person's ability to persevere and cope during periods of challenge and chaos without significant psychic damage and is an important aspect of development (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Mahoney, 1991; Wolin, 1992). Variations in resilience from person to person indicate just how different each individual's developmental process is. Furthermore, given the rapid pace of change in society, facts as we know them today may not hold up even in a brief passage of time. Therefore our knowledge of what composes

such concepts as development is constantly changing and evolving.

### Developmental Concepts in Marriage and Family Therapy

The concept of development has largely been neglected by the marriage and family therapy field (Breunlin, et al., 1992; Falicov, 1988). The family life cycle (FLC) was family therapy's first attempt to explicitly include development as part of its conceptual framework (Breunlin, et. al., 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Falicov, 1988). With the FLC, family therapy began to focus on development at the family level and to depathologize family problems, conceptualizing them as difficulties with life transitions. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) conceptualized development in terms of stages occurring over time including consideration of past, present and future context as well as dynamics of a multigenerational emotional system. Normal family development proceeded in stages marked by predictable transitions. Stress levels normally increased at these nodal points and dysfunction arose when there was difficulty negotiating and coping with the stress. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) focused largely on the family; however, they did acknowledge the experience of the individual. "[T]he individual life cycle takes place within the family

life cycle, which is the primary context of human development" (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989, p.4).

Actually, many models of family therapy allude to developmental concepts (especially at family therapy's inception) but the associations must be teased out of their theoretical framework. A complete description is beyond the scope of this review but one illustration is worth noting and is related to FLC. (For more detailed information one may consult Falicov's [1988] book, Family Transitions).

Bowen seemed to conceptualize development in terms of family-of-origin influences, management of emotion, and differentiation but this is not explicitly stated and must be inferred (Falicov, 1988). Differentiation is defined rather vaguely as an interplay of the forces of togetherness and the forces of separation or individuality. The more a person is able to use his/her intellect to control his/her emotional nature the more differentiated (Kerr & Bowen, 1988) and presumably further developed they are. This conceptualization is interesting and has strengths in terms of understanding families and individuals but the theory does little to define or outline the specifics of the development of families and individuals. Bowen's theory states that differentiation is set by adolescence and remains constant for the remainder of life (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Carter & McGoldrick's (1989) work on the family life

cycle improves upon Bowen's static conceptualization but is limited by an adherence to a stage model. The authors admit this and readily describe their work as an ever changing, flexible model which expands understanding of development.

The focus on a mechanistic theory of systems in family therapy excluded an appreciation for an organismic explanation of humans systems and individuals (Breunlin, et al., 1992; Hoffman; 1989). At its inception, family therapy's wish to distinguish itself from other individually focused therapies (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991; Gurman & Kniskern, 1991; Falicov, 1988) also contributed significantly to the exclusion of developmental concepts. Perhaps the inclusion of developmental concepts into models of family therapy would have resulted in models which would have been unwieldy and difficult to learn and practice. In comparison, the counseling field considers the concept of development to be the cornerstone of its profession (Myers, 1992) but has not as yet completely integrated family therapy concepts (Corsini, 1984; Pietrofesa, et al, 1984). The recent work by family therapists Breulin, Schwartz, and Mac Kune-Karrer (1992) proposed a multifaceted view of development which incorporated elements of developmental thought from other disciplines, but there is no attempt to address the development of the therapist. Marriage and family therapy is still struggling to define and include

development as a process in its theoretical conceptualizations of the family and, more recently, the individual.

Complicating the tendency to integrate individual development in FT, as well as other therapy fields, are the rapid and massive societal changes which have occurred in the past decade and continue today. The "new epistemology" challenged the way family therapists conceptualize reality and confounded researchers with the argument that objectivity may not be possible (Hoffman, 1990; Nichols & Schwartz, 1991; Gurman & Kniskern, 1991; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990). Therapists and researchers have discovered that there is not even a solid definition of family that can be agreed upon at present, or that covers many existing living situations (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Baber & Allen, 1992; Breunlin, et. al., 1992). In light of these considerations, it is understandable that marriage and family therapy has given little attention to developmental concepts and their integration into FT. Encouragingly, voices are responding to the need to study and understand marriage and family therapist development. Kaslow and Schulman (1987) wrote an article (which will be used later in data analysis) on how to avoid some of the pitfalls of the overlap of personal and professional lives of marriage and family therapists. Benningfield and Benningfield (1991)

conducted a seminar/discussion group at the annual conference of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy in Miami on ways to renew oneself as a family therapist . The September/October issue of The Family Therapy Networker (1992) was devoted to surviving and remaining creative as a family therapist over the long haul. Recently, family therapy has given more attention to the importance of developmental concepts (Breunlin, et. al., 1992; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Falicov, 1988; McGoldrick, Anderson, & Walsh, 1989; Nichols, 1987) but there is more work to be done (Breunlin, et al., 1992; Falicov, 1988).

#### Summary of Key Developmental Principles

Development is complex and probably best viewed as a multi-faceted, multi-level, biopsychosocial process. Development is not an empirical concept which can be easily measured (Lerner, 1986) but is abstract, phenomenological, individually unique, and theoretical. Defining development is elusive and difficult. There are, however, some characteristics which may be common to the developmental experience and which can help determine when development has occurred.

First, and most basically, development implies change which has a systematic, organized, and successive character (Lerner, 1986). Basic developmental concepts provided the

backdrop in this study for examining events and themes in the lives of marriage and family therapists.

The idea of reciprocity is a common theme in development. Therapists and theoreticians in the field of family therapy have realized that individuals are complexly and reciprocally connected to their families (Kaslow, 1987; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols, 1987). It was assumed that an organism (in this case a marriage and family therapist) played an active role in its environment and the shaping of its reality (Lerner, 1986; Mahoney, 1991), as well as being acted upon by the environment. Congruent with the concept of reciprocity is the inseparable nature of personal and professional development.

Individual development and relational development are intertwined and reciprocal, and the quality of personal relationships is an important consideration in examining the level of functional development a person has achieved. Critical in our relationships with others is the quality of relationship we establish with ourselves (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Jung, 1953, 1965; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Nichols, 1987). Mahoney wrote that "...our relationships with ourselves critically affect the quality of life we experience, and that that quality emerges from and returns to influence our relations with others. One's ability to relate to other human beings is

based on one's experiences of and relationships with one's 'innermost self'; and these , in turn, grow out of one's most intimate relations with other people" (p. 21).

The concept of individuation embraces the idea that individuals are complex beings composed of different internal psychic parts. Coming to terms with one's internal parts and accepting them can be an important facet of development and one's quality of interaction with others (Jung, 1953, 1965; Nichols & Schwartz, 1991; Breunlin, et al., 1992). Central to the concept of individuation is one's natural movement toward wholeness.

Resilience is also conceptually related to the developmental process. Resilience is determined by an organism's ability to negotiate periods of disorder and imbalance (Mahoney, 1991). When change occurs, there is often an accompanying disorder which upsets stasis and results in a reconfiguration of the dynamic relationship between organism and environment. The balance may ebb and flow until the forces of stability again come to the forefront. Self protective mechanisms which prevent too rapid a change and allow for integration are also important components of healthy development.

Generally, development was considered to consist of change which was systematic, organized, and successive, including: (1) both continuity and discontinuity, (2) change

which implied an improvement in the quality of functioning for an individual or system, and (3) the integration of life experiences into the individual's or system's functioning. Additionally, this researcher is sensitized, through the above review of development, to the concepts of reciprocity, individuation (movement toward wholeness), and resilience.

## Chapter III

### Method

#### Design

Qualitative research methods utilizing in-depth interviews were employed in this study and were based on the grounded theory research approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) also known as the constant comparative method of analysis. Specifics of the analyses were guided primarily by Strauss and Corbin's (1990) procedures and techniques.

Grounded theory is a research method not to be confused with a quantitative approach in which a study arises from and is guided by a specific theory that is being tested. Rather, the purpose of qualitative research, specifically, grounded theory research, is to discover new information and to generate theory. Unlike quantitative methods which are reductionistic, qualitative methods focus on a particular question within its occurring context.

The qualitative approach in this study allowed for the incorporation of the participants' personal descriptions of their experience in the examination of their development. This approach was especially important in examining the concept of development and the context of the many factors which influence development.

## Participants

Participants for this study were professional marriage and family therapists (MFTs) with a master's degree or Ph.D level of graduate training. A marriage and family therapist was defined as someone who either graduated from a marriage and family therapy training program or who was a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, or both. Marriage and family therapists who were private practitioners, hospital employees, or public agency clinicians with approximately 10 years experience were acceptable. Eligible participants had to be actively involved in providing therapy with a minimum of 8-10 hours of client contact per week. A goal was to include a representation of female and male participants.

Participants were identified through listings in professional registers and the phone book as well as through recommendations by therapists. Letters (copy in Appendix A) explaining the study were sent to recruit participants. A self addressed envelope was included in the initial contact letter so potential participants could return an enclosed form (Appendix B) indicating their interest in the study. After allowing candidates ten days to two weeks to consider the written request, the researcher contacted them by phone to encourage their participation, to verify their eligibility, and to schedule an interview time for those

interested. The researcher found that the follow up phone call was the most effective way to recruit participants. The goal was to recruit eight to ten participants.

At the beginning of the first interview and before taping began, a research agreement/consent form (Appendix C) was presented to each participant. After any questions were addressed, the researcher asked the participant to sign the form and the interview began.

A total of 43 marriage and family therapists were contacted. All received the recruitment letter and at least one follow up phone call. Nine volunteered, one of whom was ineligible, which left a total of eight participants. The main reason cited by those refusing was lack of time. The most effective recruitment tool was telephone contact following the letter.

In North Carolina, MFTs were contacted in Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston Salem. In Virginia, MFTs were contacted in Roanoke and Blacksburg. The eight participants were all from the cities in North Carolina.

At the time of the interviews, North Carolina was not a MFT licensed state but did have certification available. Six of the eight participants were certified marriage and family therapists in North Carolina. All were members of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy except one who had just allowed his membership to expire to

reduce his expenses and responsibilities; he was a certified MFT.

There were five males and three females in the group and all were caucasian. Their ages ranged from 37 to 53 with 46.5 being the average age of the participants. They had a total of 135 years of experience with the range being 9 to 25 years and the average experience being 16.9 years.

There were 15 graduate degrees among the eight participants; six PhDs and nine masters degrees. There were two masters and one PhD in divinity, two masters of social work, two PhDs and one masters in clinical psychology, three masters and one PhD in counseling and counseling psychology, and there was one masters and two PhDs in family and child development (one of these PhDs was in marriage and family therapy from an accredited program). Six of the eight participants were multi-degreed.

All of the participants were currently in private practice, and some had experience in public mental health, teaching, and in hospital settings. Their number of weekly client contact hours ranged from 15 to 40 and averaged 24. The one person reporting 40 hours of contact said he worked a 60 hour week. His work habits were an anomaly for this group.

Six of the participants were currently married and two were divorced. There were 7 divorces in this group with

three participants married once.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The primary method of data collection was one-on-one, open-ended interviewing that was videotaped. Interviews were planned to last approximately an hour but were scheduled for 90 minutes to allow ample time for flow of information from the participant. Each participant was interviewed twice. The first interview was open-ended with the participant providing information and doing most of the talking. In the second interview, which was also open-ended, the researcher asked questions to elicit additional detail about potential themes and to corroborate or refute impressions from the first interview. Before beginning the interviews, each participant was asked to read and sign a form for consent and permission to videotape.

Demographic data were collected during the interviews with questions (see Appendix D) meant to both collect information and establish rapport. Some demographic questions were used to begin the initial interview, and others were interspersed through the interview. Collected demographic data were intended to provide a description of the group of participants.

After beginning the interview with some demographic questions, the request was, "Please tell me about the

important events and influences that have shaped your development as a professional therapist". I prepared alternate requests anticipating potential difficulties of the participants in responding. The alternate requests were: "Please tell me about how you decided on marriage and family therapy as a career" and "What would you like for me to understand about your experience as a marriage and family therapist?". These alternates proved unnecessary since all of the participants had no trouble beginning or elaborating.

My questions were kept to a minimum and were used only to encourage participants to continue or expand on their thoughts or to ask for clarification. The participants were offered the opportunity to clarify their responses and to comment on my impressions during the second interview.

Most of the participants found it helpful to schedule the second interview during the same time slot, one week later. During the second interview the participant was encouraged to reflect on the first interview and to include any additional thoughts that may have formed since the first interview. Themes and topical areas found by the researcher were shared with the participant during the second interview, and feedback was encouraged to corroborate and improve the accuracy of data analysis.

The videotapes were viewed by this researcher to extract information identifying significant developmental

events and influences upon the interviewee. Pertinent quotes were extracted from the data to illustrate the developmental themes and experiences of the participants and to enrich the description of the themes.

Analysis of data began when the first two interviews were completed. Analysis early in the collection of data helped insure that the interview questions were adequate and were eliciting a depth of response. Early analysis also allowed for any necessary corrections or adjustments for the following interviews. By viewing tapes of the first two interviews, the researcher realized that the participants were responding to the interview process. As predicted, they warmed up through the opening demographic questions and began revealing details and personal stories of their lives. Some seemed uncomfortable as the process began, but they soon entered a flow of narrative which they reportedly enjoyed. The researcher encouraged the participants by asking for more detail: "That sounds like an interesting experience. Tell me more." Or, "How did that experience affect your development as a therapist?"

All of the participants readily began the second interview with little warm up. When a participant would relate an incident or process in their life that seemed important, the researcher became sensitized to that material and asked questions in following interviews to investigate

other like experiences. Analyzing each participant's first interview before conducting the second allowed pertinent follow-up in the second interview which increased detail and confirmed or disqualified impressions. For example, it seemed that integration of personal and professional selves might be an important theme from the very first interview. This hunch guided the researcher to ask other participants if their personal and professional lives affected one another. Another potential theme, listening to intuition, emerged early in the analysis, and the researcher was sensitized to the possibility that other participants may have had similar experiences.

Videotapes of the interviews were viewed with the goals of constructing categories of information and isolating emerging themes. Notes were taken and entered into a computer during the viewing of the tapes. The notes were reviewed and used to categorize information and establish relationships between the emerging categories. Relationships that formed among the categories were assessed for potential themes. When tapes one and two from the first six participants had been reviewed (12th interview), the data were beginning to take shape. It seemed the data suddenly reached a "critical mass" in which categories came together and themes emerged. Once categories and themes began to emerge, I found myself reviewing, examining, and

attempting to structure the data in a meaningful form. In qualitative analysis, one must break all the data down into pieces and reconstruct it in a different form.

#### Researcher's Personal Process

Usually three to four hours at a time was as long a period that I could be productive in watching and analyzing the tapes. After that amount of work I usually found it necessary to take a 24 hour break from the tapes after which I could begin refreshed.

Often near the end of a viewing session as I became fatigued with determining what quotes were relevant and entering the quotes into the computer, I would stop entering and just let the tape run. Occasionally, while the tape ran, I would make a written note of the place on the tape of something interesting. This process allowed me to relax somewhat and also served to prepare me for the next viewing in which I would rewind to the place where I had stopped entering quotes.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), two important components of analysis in qualitative research are coding and theoretical sensitivity.

"Coding represents the operation by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from

data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). In the service of building theory, coding provides the tools by which rigor is maintained, sensitivities are acquired and heightened, and theory is grounded. There are three types of coding used in grounded theory research: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. All are used at different stages of the analysis and can be used separately or conjointly. Generally, open coding is used more extensively in the initial analysis to sift through the data and establish categories. The coding procedures are flexible and are not applied in a rigid or mechanical fashion. Coding and collection of data are done concurrently to guide sampling of the data and to enhance theoretical sensitivity. The interweaving of data collection and analysis enhances the potential for inclusion of enriching detail, verification, or correction of initial impressions of the researcher, and heightens theoretical sensitivity.

I generated most of my beginning categories during the initial viewing of each first interview (open coding). I then used these categories to heighten my awareness (theoretical sensitivity) of areas to press and explore for more information during the second interview and interviews with subsequent participants. In the second round of viewing tapes, the categories expanded and began to show relationships to one another (axial coding). This was when

I believed I was on the right track with the analysis, and this feeling was exciting and generated more forward momentum. Some categories overlapped, meaning the same content provided by a participant (or participants) fit into two or more categories. The process of bringing it all together into a theoretical form that made sense was a continued sifting of data (selective coding) that helped create a hierarchy of the main theme with supporting themes and categories. Selective coding is similar to axial coding but "is just done at a higher more abstract level of analysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 117).

Theoretical sensitivity is a quality of the researcher that is developed through familiarity with literature and through personal and professional experience (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The researcher obviously brings his or her life experience to the research project being conducted. The task is to recognize how this experience influences perception and sensitizes one to content of data collected. The key here is awareness of self, leading to balance between solid analysis and creativity. Awareness allows the researcher to maximize the benefits of life learning while minimizing projection of his or her own experience onto the data. Theoretical sensitivity allows the researcher to separate relevant information and assign meaning. Theoretical sensitivity is a conceptual and subjective

quality which evolves during the course of the research being conducted and is the reason that the researcher begins data analysis early in the data collection phase.

My analysis was not word by word but more general, focusing on sentences or paragraphs. I was looking for the central idea or experience conveyed by sentences and/or paragraphs. At times (actually often) I found myself asking the question, "What is the participant trying to say?", or, "What are they saying here?"

In keeping with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) guidelines, I developed my own system of labeling and categorizing the data. I created a computer file with category headings dispersed throughout and then created a list of participant numbers (101 - 108) under each category. Using the computer file, I was able to structure the data. Before creating the computer file I felt somewhat lost and bewildered by the enormous amount of data and what to do with it. Constructing the computer file was a breakthrough (one of many!) in the analysis. Once I created the file, I felt as if I had a grip on the data and a foothold for the climb up the wall of analysis. The computer file was my ladder that assisted with the climb.

Even though the data analysis was tedious and time consuming (very time consuming! Total viewing time was approximately 124 hours), it was also interesting and

enlightening. I felt some gains in personal confidence as I realized I was making progress with the analysis and when I realized that several of the participants had developmental experiences similar to my own.

During analysis and after viewing four or five tapes, I would revisit Strauss and Corbin (1990) for reassurance, to make sure I was using the right amount of creativity (theoretical sensitivity), and to stay on track within the guidelines. Also, as I got closer to the end of analysis, I could feel my momentum increase while sorting through the categories. After approximately two thirds of the analysis, the data seemed to reach a point of "critical mass" in which categories blurred, began to merge and overlap and to show relationships with other categories. I began making connections between and among the categories and developing ideas for discussion and for potential theory building. This was when the process was fun and exciting.

As I was experiencing the "critical mass" phenomenon with the data analysis, I had a critical mass experience in my own family-of-origin (FOO) work. I had been listening to, enjoying and admiring the FOO work that some of my participants described in the interviews. I was also in the process of looking at some of my own FOO issues, a process which has been going, on and off, for some years, when I had what I believe to be a significant breakthrough in

understanding my own work. It was not that any particular information from the interviews catalyzed this breakthrough. Rather, the viewing and listening process added to an already building momentum and seemed to somehow facilitate, or at least coincide, with my experience. I actually stopped the analysis and spent a day writing, feeling, and thinking about an experience which I recalled from childhood. Even though I was feeling internal pressure to stay with the analysis, my experience seemed too important to ignore or even to postpone. My intuition was telling me to focus on my experience, and I thought I should listen.

Sometimes when I began working, I felt mentally foggy or confused. At first, I would push through this feeling and continue viewing the tapes and analyzing data. Later in the process, I allowed the feeling to stay present and did not force the viewing/analysis. Rather, I paused and just sat. What happened was that those foggy times became creative sessions where I generated ideas, discovered and/or formed relationships between categories, and reorganized and synthesized the data. I learned to listen to the foggy feeling because it was not fog at all but a message that it was time to shift into creative mode. My most useful and valuable sessions emerged from these creative fogs, even though no "analysis" or viewing took place. It became a different measure of progress and productivity.

## Chapter IV

### Results and Discussion

#### Overview

Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model (method of analysis used to move toward grounded theory as discussed in Chapter III) guided the analysis of the data into an understandable theoretical form. The model simply stated is that causal conditions lead to a phenomenon (in this study, development) in its context (specific) with the relevant intervening conditions (broad, general context) and action/interaction strategies leading to the consequences. Consequences of some actions can become the causal conditions for the next step in development and the cycle repeats itself.

The phenomenon defined for study in this research was development of marriage and family therapists and the main developmental theme that emerged from the data was synthesis of personal and professional selves. The phenomena of development and synthesis of personal and professional selves were reciprocally related in the following way: as development progressed synthesis occurred, as synthesis progressed development occurred. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) model provided a structure for categories and subcategories of data and guided the analysis toward illuminating relationships between and among the categories.

As categories of data emerged, they provided a view of the context, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. The model functioned both on the macro level as a structure for the overall study and on the micro level for categorizing the range of individual phenomena that contributed to development for these participants.

The end of analysis seemed near when all of the data and categories appeared to be related to one another. The analysis had come full circle whereby the data were separated, arranged into meaningful categories, and then consolidated in a new and different whole. Relationships between and among the categories allowed for the reconstruction of the data categories.

Main Developmental Theme: Synthesis of Personal and Professional Selves

While it is no surprise that personal and professional development were intertwined (this is one of the assumptions of the study; see page 8 and 36), it was not assumed or expected that synthesis of the personal and professional selves would emerge as a major developmental theme.

Synthesis is the term chosen to represent the merging and integration of the personal and professional selves of the participants into a reciprocal and complimentary working relationship. Synthesis was chosen as the label for the

main theme to distinguish it from the more general integration of routine experience that is an ongoing part of the process of development. Synthesis is integration, but, for purposes of this study, synthesis represents the specific process of integration of personal and professional selves.

This group of MFTs essentially reported that synthesis of their personal and professional roles represented a significant portion of their developmental process since completion of their graduate training. The participants did not, however, directly verbalize their goal as integration of the selves. Some referred to the process as becoming more real as a professional. Others described processes, events, and life experiences which led them to synthesis.

#### Quotes Illustrating Synthesis

In some cases, the examples illustrate two or more overlapping concepts indicating complex connections. A significant event in development leading to synthesis can contain elements from multiple categories. For example, the quotes from the first two participants show examples of both synthesis and learning from clients. Another participant's quotes illustrate synthesis facilitated by his relationship with a female mentor and by his own intuition.

One participant's experience of visiting the Jungian

Institute in Switzerland was a significant developmental event leading to integration of his personal and professional selves. (It was interesting to note that 7 of the 8 participants spoke about being positively influenced by the works and concepts of Carl Jung.) After reading about Jung's life in Memories, Dreams and Reflections, this participant made plans to travel to the Jungian Institute. He described the experience as:

Like 15 doors getting blown off... it was like a whole new world... I felt like I had found a new truth. It was almost like a closet that had been in a house and you didn't know it was there. It was that rich for me. It was so positive. It fit patterns of both my spiritual/religious self...the male/female stuff... it started making sense about relationships, the anima/animus components. I found I could talk to my couples (clients) about that.

His experiences at the Jungian Institute were:

Almost a conversion experience, I thought, of a personal therapeutic nature. [What changed was] I had a better understanding of myself. I had a frame of reference where I could understand my worse side, my best side.

When describing the effect that Jungian thought had on him and what he liked about it, he said that it was like:

A very intriguing breath of fresh air... it seemed to provide an overarching umbrella of understanding lots of different kinds of things, you know, religion, relationships, differences of personality, the unconscious...and the approach of Jungian therapists being more present and engaging with their clients rather than detached and analytic and somewhat removed. Jung says the power is in the person and not the therapist.

His development built upon this "Jungian quest" and led to the following experience which continued his synthesis process. He said that:

The most profound decision I have made in the last ten years was deciding to leave institutional life. I am convinced that I was codependant on institutions. One day I realized, primarily after assessing some Jungian material in a theoretical sense, how much of my persona I had given away being an institutional person for 27 years... I realized I had never done anything completely out on my own, never called my own shots.

He made a conscious decision, based on his Jungian

experiences, to risk giving up the security of the institutional environment.

So I have been out on my own [in private practice for 2 years] and I absolutely love it, have never felt so liberated in my life. I would say, in a Jungian sense, to be individuated, to finally decide, "I'm going to do something for me, this way", primarily came out of understanding what that tug was from a Jungian frame of reference. To be my own person, I had to try something different.

In the second interview the participant added that he had contemplated the question, "What has shaped you as a therapist?" and decided that: "I cannot stress enough what I call the 'life experience of the therapist' itself." By this statement he seemed to refer to all of his experience as a whole, especially that experience in which he consciously participated with self assessment and self work.

I think that a good therapist... has to have self awareness, self assessment. If not, I think they are either lost or look foolish or sooner or later will trip themselves up.

He asked himself questions like, "What has kept me from

being where she [a client] is?" or, "Where have I been in a similar position?"

It does cause me to do some self analysis or some self comparative study, and it is one way I can have some authenticity and honesty about myself. I have often told my students that one of the greatest payoffs of being a therapist is you also learn so much from other people's misery and hopefully don't have to pay the same price. In a lot of cases I maybe have avoided some conflict or failure or impairment or something because somebody's story attuned me to something. The reflections are, life experience and therapeutic experience are often hard to discriminate or compartmentalize. It is an amalgamation, a merging, and I don't know what you call it. It's more than just experience ... its a learning of self, of therapeutic process, of what works.

The above quote also represents an example of another category of data, learning from clients.

The merging of self process and therapeutic process produced for him:

Continued revelation, continued learning. I can't get it from a book or seminar. Maybe the component that I am talking about is that, maybe, a growing therapist or dynamic therapist is one who is willing to continue to

be taught. It is where we are in our life experience that, I think, really does significantly influence our therapy, pro and con. There is probably no way to weigh what the life experience component is on the influence of a therapist.

He believed that therapists cannot ignore or disown their life experience but must be mindful of it, developing an awareness of when to use it and when to "bracket it in." For him, this sometimes meant referring clients with a particular concern. He described developing an awareness of self and a self monitoring behavior which helped him decide which clients were appropriate for him to work with at a particular period of time. In his early days of therapy, he referred as a way to protect the client and insure their quality of care. Now he refers not only as a protection for the client but as a way of protecting and caring for himself.

Maybe the growth of a therapist is learning to just say "No", or just learning to be more selective. I also think that is a maturation process. ...[T]he older we get we don't feel the need to prove anything or to be as sacrificial as we once were. Maybe it's respect for limits. It's not just maturation, maybe it's a respect for limits. The limit of time and energy, and going

for quality verses quantity, hopefully. A conservation of energy allows one to therefore make selective decisions.

A tendency toward self care as he matured was evident in the above quote. This participant absolutely agreed that one cannot separate personal and professional identity.

Another different type of event acting as a synthesizing force came from a participant who learned a valuable lesson from a young child one day in his office. He was talking about the integration of his personal and professional identities and said:

I don't know that they really separate out as identities go. They used to, in the beginning years of setting up a practice. I was a coat and tie man... and one year... third or forth, maybe second,... I had an over abundance of little kids. They were real stand offish, and I really couldn't understand why. One day I asked one of them if he would feel more comfortable sitting on the floor and he said, "Yes, but you can't because you have on a coat and tie." The next day I started dressing like I was coming off the golf course and I haven't had a problem since. I think at that point the professional side became more of who I was personally, and I was able to match the two more comfortably.

His behavior was more consistent overall after the event occurred, and who he was as a person was present in both his professional and personal life. There was less need to play a role when working. Who he was as a person became a tool of therapy. He attributed the blending directly to this little kid, and said, "It was really and truly attributable to that little kid who said, 'Daddy doesn't play with me when he is wearing his coat and tie.' I was probably too clinical."

Another participant spoke eloquently about the process of integration and coined an interesting phrase. During the times when he passed through the "maturational calls", he described his therapy with his clients as becoming:

Much more real and personable and less heady. I began to feel like my work with people had a relationship quality to it...before that it had been formal. I think one could starve to death doing that, just die of meaninglessness being in a room with people over and over and over all day long and me being formal and correct. I wanted to be somebody who was not afraid of people, of emotions, and of intimacy.

A female mentor helped him with this transition to being more real during the phase of his development when he was overcoming his "experiential sterility". As he worked

on different aspects of himself and became more integrated, he described the effect it had on his work. "It made my work real as opposed to professional. I think for a long time I worked as a professional as opposed to a real person."

In the second interview, he began by emphasizing the value of his "training outside of training", meaning following his inner motivation to explore both himself and what the world outside of academics had to offer.

I used to feel, sort of, professionally qualified, but that always felt like, sort of a tin suit, an aluminum siding sort of thing, and I feel more now like I'm qualified inside. I think it is important to do therapy in good faith.

Doing therapy in good faith means to him doing one's own piece of the work; i.e., continuing to push self to learn and grow through new experience and integrating new experience into therapy. This participant believes that immersing self in life experience is where the "deep learning" exists and that bringing these life experiences and deep knowledge to therapy provides an atmosphere of realism and connection to the client that may not exist or be possible in a purely academic approach to therapy.

Additionally, he said that there should be elders who

are available to help therapists (and also people in general) developmentally after formal training. He believes that structures and parameters taught (such as ethics and proper boundary setting) are developmentally necessary for the beginning therapists; however, as one matures as a therapist, the guidelines become more gray or fuzzy, and one must struggle in order to negotiate the tension that accompanies gray areas (ie., between such areas as ethics and morals).

Who helps us later to say, "Now lets move up so that maybe we can teach you how to be a therapist with people and still know them somehow in your community...invite them into your church or whatever organization you have or into your mens' or womens' thing." Is there a way to move beyond that so that we help teach each other to be true elders and not just technicians? I think that is a certain way to die, to stay behind this prescribed screen and do therapy... without connecting with people, without the possibility of including people into community when it would clearly help them.

He believed that the ethical rules that prevent this inclusion "can make therapy dead".

I think therapy would become dead if I could not use

myself in it. I would be using that received knowledge package (formal training)...always operating out of that. What that's going to do is kill me... I wouldn't be being real. People don't get well if therapy stays that way.

He was saying that the relationship that forms between the client and therapist was crucial to real healing and that it was also crucial for the therapist to "do their own homework." Another of his points was that the rules and the ethical restrictions can hinder or interfere with the authenticity of therapy. He suggested all of these ideas were in the best interest of the clients and that no action should be taken that exploits the client or is for the fulfillment of the therapists ego.

This participant's synthesis process involved mentors and provided an example of the benefit of mentors in the development of marriage and family therapists. His dialogue was also an example of the utilization of socialization and the concept of community.

In the second interview, I commented to participant 105 that it seemed that work with children was an important theme in her developmental process. She had spent the early part of her working years as a teacher and working with special populations of children. She nodded affirmatively and responded:

Well, I guess the reason I felt that I like working with children is, for a similar reason that I like working with dying people; because that they are wide open. They don't have a lot built up, usually, in their defenses. I think that it was, sort of, a natural draw of mine, to children in therapy, because that's what I was doing as a teacher. I've always liked working with children, whether it was doing music like leading children's choirs or the school work I used to do...I think they are usually pretty wide open, honest human beings, very real.

When asked to expand on how, specifically, working with children had affected her, she replied:

I think in some ways it helps me gain some balance and insight and... in working with my own children and being there for my own children, and also, it puts me in touch, it reminds me so much about little [her name], the five year old within me and that helps me a lot too.

I asked her to talk about that five year old within her and how she discovered it.

I discovered that part of myself pretty early on in my therapy with [name of therapist and mentor] and, uh,

that's just been real helpful to me, to embrace that part of myself, and learn how to both embrace her and like her and work with her and kind of, uh... acknowledge her so she doesn't act out (laughs). I believe a lot in the inner child stuff, John Bradshaw and all that; it makes a lot of sense to me. So, in working with [therapist's and mentor's name], it became a thing that we talked about early on and have touched on through the years. And then, in working with, and being with my own daughter it has helped me, too... because she looks a lot like me. And so, that brings up a lot of memories... and how I must have been when I was seven and... it's good.

I asked her how knowledge of her inner child and its dynamics influence her therapy and her development as a professional.

It influences my therapy because I believe we all have those little people parts of ourselves; and that fits in with the Satir stuff and ... I am just aware of seeing that in clients when they come in and they are talking about what's going on with them. And, I'll talk with them about that some, too. And, often that's very moving, very moving to them. If clients have a lot of issues like that with there own little inner

child and a lot of childhood issues, I will often ask them to do things like write a letter to their little child using their non-dominant hand or... I'll get them to bring pictures of when they were little. We'll talk about those and that is often very moving for the client. I use it some with play, whether it is with children or with adults, and just tapping into the playfulness and spontaneity and the ability to free up yourself that children have.

She began using inner child work with clients early in her career. She recognized the value and relevance that inner child work had for her in her own personal therapy, and she integrated it into her work as a technique she would use with her clients.

When asked about the merging of her personal and profession self in the second interview, this participant said that they worked together from very early in her career as a therapist.

I think they [personal self and professional selves] worked some together already [meaning near the beginning of her therapy career] because my mentor and my therapist was a Satir person so, that's what I knew. That's the method that had been used in therapy with

me, so, um, I think the personal and professional level was already there together, but going through the Satir training is,... is pretty gruelling, you know. You don't leave many stones unturned... it is heavy duty, emotional work. That was good in that it helped me... through even doing exercises that we were going to use professionally, we were using those on a very personal level and experiencing those on a very personal level; so, I would always get something out of it on both levels. And, so, it helped me do work in both areas, and that's why I think I felt even more whole and more competent in using a lot of the stuff that I learned on a professional level. A big part of Satir, of her ideas were,... an important part was use of self as the therapist, so, you've got to work on all that stuff to be able to use your self in a healthy, ethical way in a therapy session. I think it helped, further, [for] both to be used.

I asked if she considered the Satir training to be a transformative process and she replied, "Yeah. Yeah." I asked if she felt it would continue to be transformative and she answered:

Yeah. Yeah, I think it should continue for the rest of my life. I mean, I think it should, really, or you

would be becoming like a therapist with tenure! I mean like a stereotypical teacher who gets tenure and sits back and slacks off, and they don't need to learn anything anymore, and they don't need to put in any energy or creativity.

This quote was reflective of her commitment to grow and illustrated her belief that development is an ongoing and progressive process.

For participant 106, "real personal development" seems to be a function of "metaprocessing." An example of the main theme, synthesis of personal and professional selves, and the role of friendship/social support in facilitating synthesis was illustrated when I asked participant 106 if he had any concluding comments.

I think what I'm really trying to say is that personal development of a therapist, while it can be supplemented and helped by going to workshops..., that's not where the action is. I mean those are good and I'm not against that... but real personal development is in the interplay of life's experiences; being able to step back from them... Hopefully you'll have a place made for that in your training, and, in your work as a therapist, you've worked up a way to try to make sense of all that and step back from it. But, it is also in the midst of that social support system,

and different levels of that, all the way from mentor, a best friend, a family member, spouse, to parents; still doing family-of-origin work all the way through... I think it's [development] in the interplay of your metaprocessing of that as life goes forth, and being willing to say, "Yes" to a variety of life experiences so long as they are not real self destructive or self defeating. That plays a big part in the maturation of the person, but also, the therapist.

I commented that there was a sense of risk implied in his statement about real personal development.

Yeah! You know, you can read the story of Job and say, "Now,... what parts of that", I guess a general story of suffering, "What parts of suffering and dealing with it and feeling the love and support of your family, your spiritual side of self; where is all that leading? Does it lead toward despair? Does it lead toward integrity and a sense of well being and courage?"

Participant 107 described her awareness of the synthesis of her personal and professional identity.

There was some point, and it's got to be at least five years out, maybe more than that, where, I think there

was some recognition in my mind that I had accumulated a set of experiences... that were now a part of my expertise, and that I no longer was speaking solely from a theoretical position... that I now had such a backlog of experiences of working with patients and working with them (staff of the facility), that I also spoke with a certain amount of authority based on that backlog of experience. And I really couldn't tell you, I mean it wasn't like I had an "Ah ha" thing one day, but... at some point it was real clear to me that that was the case.

She went on to describe a more specific event and process which contributed to her development. The following event illustrated not only synthesis but also developmental motivation and use of her intuition. More information about this significant event is included in the developmental motivation section below.

I guess in terms of other turning points probably the other big one would be what led me to take the two years off. I realized... I read three books in a row, The Closing of the American Mind, The Power of Myth, and Habits of the Heart, all of which were very thought provoking, and it took me a solid year to read the three of them, and I was furious that it took me that

long to read them. The reason that it took me that long was because I truly did not have the mental energy to give to those books. Because I wanted to have the energy... it was a real eye opener that I ... had lost that kind of energy, and I really couldn't figure out how to get it in the academic setting.

...I always felt this tug where I felt like there were so many things I needed to get done [to keep up with her academic career and give some attention to her personal life] that it really was frivolous, in one sense, to sit down and read something like The Power of Myth; but, on the other hand, I was very clear that in order to do my work better I ultimately needed to do that. So, what I kept thinking was, if I'm going... to do my work well, I really need to read that stuff, and I couldn't figure out a way to do it that was going to work for me. I knew I had to just get away in order to be able to do that. I would say that reading those three books and getting indignant about the time it took me to read them was a major catalyst, I think, for me in terms of taking that time off which I think was very important to do.

I commented to her that it sounded as if there were a part of her crying out for that experience. She responded:

Yeah. Yeah, I think in terms of that part of me that is attracted to...not just thinking deeply but also exploring things ... that I had a sense would be helpful. Part of what I read during my time off was lay physics... and I felt drawn to do that. I knew there had to be a connection to family systems. And I knew that I was not going to have it in me to engage my brain in the way that I really wanted to do that, to understand it in some kind of capacity and also work at the level of intensity that I was working.

She said that the reading of the three books and her subsequent discovery of her low energy "facilitated something that was already there." This statement alluded to her internal mechanism of developmental motivation.

The two year sabbatical was an example of an event which was stimulated by developmental motivation and resulted in increased synthesis of her personal and professional selves. This participant did not think of the event in these terms, but she was conscious of deciding to embark on a personal experience which would feed her professional development. This event was an example of a developmental event leading to synthesis and could be conceptualized as follows:

Events (a sense of fatigue and boredom with

academics) --> developmental motivation stimulated due to intensity generated by impending stagnation and gradually building desire to be a better therapist and, for change --> balancing strategy created and implemented (pushing self to the decision to take two years off to read) --> pushing self to read relevant philosophical literature and taking time to reflect and integrate --> increased synthesis of her personal and professional selves --> decision to leave academics and enter full time private practice.

Participant 108 believed that, as a therapist, it was important for him to balance his professional self with his personal self. He commented on the concept of balance and the importance of therapists doing their own personal work, and he said:

We may be smart, we may be the brightest, most insightful person... but I think therapy has another component to it. Our model [self as a model], our personhood, are major agents of change with people.... I think who we are is a big part of our ability to help people change.

I commented that it sounded as if he believed that his personal and professional selves worked together. He said:

Yes, yes. I don't think we can neglect either and do our folks [clients] a service or ourselves a service. Yes, I think they are intertwined. I know not everybody agrees with that. I know a lot of folks actually disagree vehemently with that and think that... we are serving a role and separation of the person from the role is very important to the client. I don't find that approach to therapy as effective... plus, I think, therapy, the more it reflects natural life, the real world, I think the better it interfaces with the real world, and I don't think that that approach [trying to separate person and professional selves] is real worldish. Secondly, I think that it burns out therapists. I've been in private practice a long time and I'm successful at it, and I don't care how much money you make, it's taxing and you have to renew yourself. One of the ways I have avoided burn out, I think, is by being involved at a personal as well as a professional level. I have to be cognizant of boundaries and so forth but I think that is one of the keys. When you disengage and start assuming a role with clients, I think that has a temporary quality to it. I'm not sure how long human beings can sustain that before they begin to burn out.

### Boundaries as an Issue in Synthesis

In their process of synthesis, this group of marriage and family therapists were faced with an important developmental task, the reassessment and negotiation of boundaries between their personal and professional selves and between themselves and clients. This group, as might be expected, was guided by the general structure and guidelines in their training programs. Once they moved into the field, their development underwent a gradual transition in which their identity as a professional and their identity as a person began to merge. This merger was motivated by a realization that these two identities could serve and complement one another. This synthesis of their identities required a skillful and more sophisticated understanding of boundaries. Ironically, the developmental process of synthesis of personal and professional selves begins, appropriately, and as a necessary first step, with the formation of a distinction and separation between the personal and professional selves (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). This seems necessary in order to distinguish what life material belongs in each context and to develop a professional identity while in training. As one becomes clear about the distinction and has developed the skills to set limits and boundaries, that person is then ready to begin developing a dynamic flow between the selves. As

Lerner (1986) points out:

... development is characterized by a synthesis, an interweaving of two opposing tendencies. First there is the tendency to become more differentiated. This involves the tendency for new characteristics to emerge from previous global characteristics, the tendency for global characteristics to become different, specific characteristics.... Second, there is the tendency to become hierarchically organized, the tendency for earlier developments to be continuously subsumed under later ones (Lerner, 1986, p. 196).

Based on Lerner's idea, one could compare early therapist development, say in graduate school, to the first tendency, to become more differentiated. During this stage, trainees begin to differentiate themselves from previous life experience so as to form a new identity as marriage and family therapists. As they do so, they likely follow most of the guidelines and structure that has been presented to them by professors and mentors (Holloway, 1987; Kottler, 1987; Skovholt & McCarthy, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). After leaving graduate training and accruing experience in the field, they may begin to subsume earlier training experiences under present experience which may call for a more refined understanding. An appreciation and

navigation of the gray areas which are not so readily defined by professional guidelines marked an important turning point for these MFTs and seemed to parallel the synthesis of the personal and professional selves of the therapist.

The integration of personal and professional selves does not mean or imply that the participants were ignorant of or blurred boundaries inappropriately. The data indicated quite the contrary. The participants displayed an acute and sophisticated understanding of boundaries. The understanding allowed their boundaries to be permeable and flexible; therefore, permitting the best of each domain of self to serve and complement the other. This seemed to indicate a reciprocity between personal and professional selves that occurred as a result of the permeability and flexibility of the boundaries.

With participants 101, 102, 105 and with 108, as they matured and developed, there was a flexing of the lines between friendship, mentorship, support, supervision, and, in some cases, therapy. There was association with people in a number of settings and in a number of roles all of which appeared in the interest of those concerned and not detrimental. For example, mentors often became friends and colleagues even when a supervisory relationship existed. Mentors were also mentioned as important sources of personal

as well as professional support. For participants 102 and 105, their own therapists became trusted mentors and eventually friends. Participant 102 spoke about the ethical responsibility of including clients in community groups (church groups, men's group) when it would facilitate their growth, and participant 102 and 108 stressed use of the personal experience of the therapist to create a more real world experience for the client. This blurring of strict lines, however, happened consciously so that these therapists had an awareness of what they were doing. There also seemed to be an increased ability to monitor boundaries and to operate in gray areas.

Beginning therapists likely do not have the skills to make distinctions accurately about flexing boundaries; but it seems evident that some therapists develop the necessary skills to do so, and it seems to come within the context of developing an awareness of their personal and professional selves and integrating the two. Blending of personal and professional lives, which complement and facilitate one another, allowed these therapists to be human and not artificial.

Participant 102 alluded to the advantage of boundary flexibility when he spoke about mentors and described the concept of elders.

Who helps us later to say, 'now lets move up so that

maybe we can teach you how to be a therapist with people and still know them somehow in your community...invite them into your church or whatever organization you have or into your mens' or womens' thing. Is there a way to move beyond that so that we help teach each other to be true elders and not just technicians. I think that is a certain way to die, to stay behind this prescribed screen and do therapy... without connecting with people, without the possibility of including people into community when it would clearly help them. (See also heading of Quotes Illustrating Synthesis).

Boundary flexibility is likely a marker of maturity, individuation, authenticity, and congruence with self (Falicov, 1988; Jung, 1964; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) as one differentiates from the rigid structure of the graduate training experience (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). The concept of boundary flexibility parallels some of Skovholt and Ronnestad's (1992) findings and reflects movement from received knowledge to constructed knowledge. As people proceed in their development, there is movement from one set of operating behaviors to an increasingly complex set of operating behaviors (Breunlin, 1992; Falicov, 1988; Jung, 1964; Lerner, 1986). There is a tendency to increasingly

rely on learning that has been hierarchically integrated (built upon past experiences) and transformed into more sophisticated strategies for interacting in the world (Lerner, 1986; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) found in interviewing 100 counselors that those who fit in their individuated stage were "increasingly oneself within competent professional boundaries" (p. 509).

After extensive experience, the individual had an increased ability to regulate (precisely) professional involvement within and across three domains of the self: the private self, the personal self, and the professional self.... There is also an increased ability to use physical, mental, and emotional boundaries within these three domains. For example, with time, one is more able to regulate, in a productive way, the emotional involvement that is given to clients outside of sessions....There is also increased ability to regulate professional roles in one's personal life (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 513).

Based on the reports of the participants and my interpretation of that data, all of the MFTs interviewed for the current study were able to be flexible and operate

within "competent professional boundaries".

#### Summary of Main Developmental Theme

Synthesis of personal and professional selves represents a significant developmental turning point/process and achievement in the lives of this group of MFTs. It seemed that as they began to achieve this goal of integration, they became more confident and accepting of themselves while continuing to recognize the ongoing nature of their refinement and development. Growth in their personal lives was perceived to facilitate professional growth, and reciprocally, they perceived their professional growth to contribute to their personal lives.

Werner's orthogenetic principle (in Lerner, 1986, p.195) states that "whenever development occurs it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation and hierarchic integration" (Werner, 1957, p. 126). Development proceeds from general to more specific. This is illustrated as the participants proceeded to integrate personal and professional selves and to deal with the issue of boundaries between the two. At their earlier stages of professional development, they made efforts to adhere to the general notion of maintaining a strict separation between the areas of their life. As they gained

more experience, their understanding of these two areas of life became more sophisticated. They seemed to realize that there were times when one area could benefit the other and that an artificial separation between the two may create stagnation and be counter productive.

### Supporting Themes and Connecting Elements

Characteristics of the participants which facilitated development. Characteristics of the participants, such as developmental motivation, resilience, awareness, self care, and attention to balance were important elements affecting the individual's ability to make the most from life events and circumstances. These concepts emerged as threads which helped connect the data and give them developmental relevance. Developmental motivation and pushing self to grow were important subcategories of synthesis and appeared to be the primary catalysts by which events were transformed into development.

Developmental motivation and pushing self to grow. It appeared that a desire to learn and to subject one's self to the challenges that accompany growth were the necessary internal conditions to produce development. Not all of this group of MFTs were fully aware at the beginning of their careers of this internal motivation. For most of the participants, it was after gaining some experience and

achieving some synthesis of their personal and professional lives that they began to appreciate and consciously utilize their internal developmental motivation. Some were able, as they reflected, to identify early incidents in their lives where they felt they were internally motivated to solve a problem or learn from a particular experience. For some, it seemed that their action strategies pushed them too hard for growth until a more complete awareness of their push was acquired. As they became more aware of their developmental motivation and their pushing strategies, the participants enacted a new strategy, balance. Balance involved creating self care strategies which reduced the internal pressure of developmental motivation and which allowed a higher degree of integration and utilization of their experiences. Incorporating a new strategy to manage conditions is a change involving the "tendency to become hierarchically organized, the tendency for earlier developments to be continuously subsumed under later ones" (Lerner, 1986, p. 196).

The interview process for this study seemed to contribute to the participants' awareness of their internal push and to their appreciation and further integration of their experiences. The interview process itself proved to be an unexpected intervening condition in the integration of the participants' personal and professional selves and,

therefore, in their development. The act of volunteering for this study was an indication of their willingness to explore new experiences and their developmental motivation. At the end of Chapter V, there is a description of how the interviews contributed to the participants' awareness of their developmental process and its progression.

The following are examples of change and progression in the lives of the participants as their developmental pressure began to be uncomfortable. Intensity seemed to be the quality of developmental motivation that was uncomfortable and that stimulated change. Intensity could come from too much stimulation or from too little. Sometimes the participants moved from the action of pushing self to a strategy of balance through reflection and self care. At other times, balance required that they move from stagnation to the action strategy of pushing self or simply pushing self in another direction.

Participant 103 talked about how he learned to take care of himself by limiting the number and type of clients with whom he would work.

I was not very reverent or respecting of myself in early days. Reverence means respecting oneself and knowing there are limits to life. My perception is that most good therapists and care givers are more giving out than they take in, so therefore, they

haven't been as reverent for self or haven't been as limiting for self. We tend to feel like the reservoir is always going to be there and we get spent. That concept of some reverence for self is a critical factor from what I know about me.

He learned to take time to read, go backpacking, and spend time in nature. He said his self care was now more rhythmical rather than a release when the stress had built too high. An important part of his self care and development was learning to listen to his own rhythm. This listening also implied an awareness of his intuition.

Another participant described her experience of feeling the developmental pressure/intensity as becoming aware of a "heaviness" associated with a particular area of her life. She then moved toward making necessary changes. Earlier in her work experience she gave up doing testing as part of her service to needy children when the files she carried around became "too heavy". Realizing there was a heaviness around her family-of-origin relationships, she worked in therapy to understand and let go of the heaviness. More recently, she realized that:

Being a full time therapist has really come to feel heavier and heavier as time has gone on. I realized I wanted to... shift more of my time to the relaxed and

playful and other things. I think that being a therapist takes a toll. After working a full week, I have noticed that I don't have much relational kind of energy left over. I want more of that for me, for my husband, for my friends.

She began intentionally focusing more on balance in her life. As she reflected on the theme of heaviness she said, "One other little thing that comes to my mind. I have always had a thing of traveling light." She laughed as she described bantering with her husband when traveling since he likes to pack much more than she and to collect additional things along the way. Her developmental motivation showed itself as a desire to move from heaviness to lightness.

During the second interview when asked where her push came from, she said:

I don't know, but I think it's been there all my life. I think that is something I really learned about myself very early in my own personal therapy; that I came to value about myself a lot and really have trust in. I like that part of myself. I think at times, that part of myself may also have been too driving or too... relentless. It may have taken a toll in terms of just being able to relax and do the things that are more... just part of the natural flow. It is the part of me

that's always... always looking for what is next, uh, where's the action, where's the movement, where's the energy. It reminds me of the commercial, "Where's the beef?" [laughs]. I think it is inherent in everyone. It sure has been a real prime figure for me because when I can't figure out what's next, I become very uncomfortable; when I feel like nothing is going on, I become restless. It is hard to enjoy the comfortable phase. This last five years has been one where I have not been able to identify what the next new challenge is for me. I have experienced some restlessness and some boredom, and one of the things that I realized is that..., well, one of the things I can do with this time is learn to just enjoy the day in and day out. Everything is peaceful and calm; everything is working the way it should work and maybe I can just roll with that and enjoy that, not feel like I have to find something challenging to be comfortable. It is like, in Jungian terms, learning to be more in the feminine side... to be more in that feminine space is planting flowers and... just coming and going.

In the above quote, she illustrated the concept of balance. She has worked to develop an awareness of both her masculine energy and her feminine nature. Part of her

recent development is trusting the process, the flow of how things happen; a trusting, also, of her intuition.

At times that's been a life saver for me. It's felt like a real stabilizing sense that I can trust the process. Sometimes trusting the process was exactly what I had to do and sort of sit with something that was going on and trust the process, and know that I could trust the process to move in a direction that was beneficial, and that I would eventually come to recognize and understand.

She also attributed part of her achievement of balance in the masculine and feminine areas of her life to her own experiential therapy/learning in which she realized that there was a feeling component to experience in addition to a thinking, cognitive, problem solving perspective.

There was a theme of being process oriented for this participant. She identified her experiences more as processes than as individual and specific events. She concurred with this observation and in addition believed that her process orientation has been one of the essential factors attributing to her success as a therapist. She spoke of her significant events such as entering therapy, being single/living as a single adult, and being (as opposed to getting) married more as processes than as particular

points in time. There also was a feeling that in her response was a reference to listening to her intuition although she did not choose that language. This participant had a strong awareness of her process of developmental motivation and in her description provided a good example of the non-action, action strategy of reflection. She alluded to a balance of action and non-action as she talked of balancing the Jungian concepts of masculine and feminine energies. Her description was a good example of how data can show the presence of more than one concept and how the concepts may interact. This excerpt from participant 104 showed her awareness of her limits of resiliency and her action strategies of pushing self in therapy and reflecting as she worked toward understanding and balance in order to manage her developmental pressure/intensity.

Another female participant described her process of working toward balance. This was a good example of a developmental process catalyzed by a significant life event and illustrated progression. There was learning from the past that was screened by the participant for value and relevance to the present and then integrated. New experience and material were combined, building on the old and creating a new identity.

I commented to this participant during the second interview that there seemed to be a tendency for her to push

herself into circumstances that would produce learning and growth. She agreed. Examples included her interest in death and hospice work, her work with Willy M. children (in North Carolina, Willy M. is a classification of violent adolescents), her work with AIDS patients before others would risk the contact, and her pushing of herself through tough emotional work in her Satir training. I asked her what part of herself pushed her to grow. She was silent for a moment and then replied:

I don't know. I don't know exactly what that is. I guess it's the same part that used to like to work with the "bad children" [Willy M. kids] and the autistic children... people used to say, "How can you do that?" And now with grief stuff, "How can you do that?", you know, it's the same thing. I like it! I guess it is because... let's see, what part pushes me to do that? Uh, maybe it's the part that... gets bored easily. I get bored easily, and I find those people more interesting than just regular people. Because these are real things..., these are real things; somebody is dying, or has a bad disease, or somebody is autistic or kids that are violent and aggressive. It is more challenging, I guess, and that's why it is less boring. And, I get something from it,

too. That's why I like it, too [learning how people deal with the "real things"].

She experienced a divorce which was an example of an event that directed her focus more inward and caused her to explore herself and reformulate her identity. Much of her growth had come from putting herself into external situations which stimulated growth. At the time of her divorce, she became more introspective than in the past and began integrating experiences as well as considering parts of herself that were neglected or underdeveloped. I asked her to tell me what that part of her (the part that pushes her to grow) was doing currently in her life.

It had to pull in for a lot... which I think is a natural thing when you go through... a divorce. I think you go into a tunnel thing, you know, so it pulled in a lot. I disconnected myself from a lot of things, personally and professionally, during the first few years of my divorce... That part lay dormant for a number of years recently, and it's beginning to come back... because I'm beginning to feel more energy around doing other things. I do feel more like my old self and more interested in a variety of things whether it's music or a supervision group or... this workshop... or this group. I'm just back in there with

all that.

I asked if she knew how or if her "old self" had changed as it re-emerged.

I'm not real sure, yet, because the emerging part has just been happening. To me it's like a tapestry. I'm like, weaving back in my old life, my former life, my former self... and, so, here is the ... socializing part, [she makes motions with her hands as if she is weaving or pointing to a section of her tapestry], and I have lots of people over to my house now. I used to do that all the time. Just in the past year or so I've really been energized around doing that, and I've had an informal womens' group going... and with church and music and with volunteer stuff and with being involved with my childrens' school activities... those are more things like I used to be. Those are more things that I like. I think the difference now is, maybe, I'm more settled... within me, so I don't feel like I have to do these things. I feel like I can do them if I want to.... I say "No" very easily. I've gotten real good at saying, "No. Thank you for asking, but no; I really don't want to do that."... I've gotten much more in touch with who I am and what I like and don't like and what I am stronger at and not as strong at. And now, I

usually am able to know sooner about what, as Virginia Satir would say, is congruent with me... I think I am a lot stronger. I think..., prior to going through the past few years, I think I used to be... pretty sheltered in a lot of ways. I was the little golden child in my family in (state she is from). I think I was spoiled [she laughed]. I have grown up a lot; I've matured a lot; I can take care of myself.

I commented to her that it sounded as if she had a much stronger sense of identity now. "Yeah. Yes! That's right."

She went on to describe, as an example, how she had set limits with her parents, causing them to accept her as an adult. These changes were directly related to the process she entered at the time of her divorce, culminating in a stronger sense of herself.

I was really leading two different lives prior to my separation. And, even my very best friends, I was cut off from them as far as them knowing who I was...; I was very incongruent. I feel much more congruent now. The outside and inside really do match a whole lot better. And, certainly, since making some big, hugh life decisions on my own, contrary to the way I was raised, ... you know, yeah, I do feel like there is

pretty much anything I can do. I have expanded who I am as a person and that affects me as a therapist.

She acknowledged a sense of relief that accompanied her story of facing the reality of her situation and making necessary changes. "Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah and who I really am and what my life really was... of course that feels a lot better. It takes a lot more energy to fake your life than to be congruent."

Participant 107 reported feeling a gradual depletion of her personal energy after 14 years of teaching therapy in a medical school. Her sense that she needed time and energy to explore areas that could improve her therapy skills led her to a decision to take two years off to read. This was good example of intensity building from stagnation and leading to the action strategy of pushing self toward balance and self care.

I decided that... to read substantive works, things that really engaged my brain, I found I didn't have the energy to do that in my work. And what I discovered was that it took me about a year to read three books that I thought were very relevant to being a therapist and an educator, but they were not specifically marriage and family literature... but more in the realm of philosophy... things I wanted to think about. So I

decided that in order to be a better therapist and educator I would like to have some time to read that literature, so I took two years off to do that.

Her time to read proved to be a major turning point in her career because she decided to give up teaching and to focus on her therapy. She described her decision when her two years of reading were up.

There was a position open [where she had previously taught]... but what had happened over the two years as I was reading was, I noticed that, as I read, I would always think of therapy issues. I never thought about teaching issues and I just figured I should pay attention to that. So I decided that if that was true, it made more sense to me to go with where I ended up thinking and what clearly seemed more exciting to me. I decided well... I'll just go into private practice and take a chance. What I decided to do... was to set up what my ideal practice would be and work the way that keeps me excited about what I do. My primary goal is to love coming into work every day and feel satisfied when I leave every day. And that's what happens and that's what I wanted to do. It was a decision that happened when I read for two years.

This description illustrated her willingness to risk and to listen to her inner voice and intuition.

Participant 108 said he had a "crappy childhood" and did not have a sense of self as he was growing up, and as he entered into his military experience. After his tour of duty in Viet Nam, he had an opportunity to go to college and he consciously choose psychology as major to get a degree and to learn about himself. When I asked him how he survived the significant adversity in his life the participant responded:

I think I had courage. I look back at me objectively and think that somehow or another I had courage and I didn't give up, and I wanted to a lot of times. I kept on going through a lot of pain and I'm proud of me for that.

I asked how he had used his courage and his motivation to survive in the last ten years.

My family didn't teach me much at all and my people skills were terrible. I fought chronic and intense anxiety until... I'd say I began to get on top of it about... seven years ago. Anxiety is a paralyzing emotion and makes us less functional than we ought to be, so, I've stepped in a lot of cow patties along the way. I've had a lot of pain to deal with.... My

awareness has gotten better along the way.... Not giving up and pressing on has been good because I've gradually developed those skills [relationship skills], and I've gradually learned to relax and become more comfortable with people and find some peace with the old scars and the anxieties. There were so many opportunities to give up, so many times that I wanted to give up, and I didn't, and I'm real glad I didn't...

I asked him how the experiences he mentioned as important in his development, divorce, Viet Nam, having children, and finishing his doctoral work, affected his development as a therapist.

I think if you know pain, personally, you are more equipped to understand other people's pain.... If you have worked through pain I think you are more equipped to help other people work through their own pain. People can sense that you have known pain and that you care, and that makes you a lot more effective. I am probably more effective now than I was when I first started [working as a therapist] not because I know more but because I have matured.

I asked him to explain what he meant by "matured" and he said:

Life is complicated, of course, and diverse, taxing, and there is a lot to figure out, and a lot of variables to put into perspective. Maturity, to me, is where you reach that level of awareness, that level of activity and behavior, of thought and feeling, that is balanced. Where you have a balanced sense of awareness... When you can pull all those variables together in a working whole that flows...

Since he mentioned balance as a component of maturity, I asked him to describe what he believed were the critical elements of balance.

I think that is a real problem for us as therapists. I think a lot of us go into therapy [as a profession] looking for solutions to our issues. I think most of us go in to help but we don't necessarily press through our pain and our issues. I think [that] a lot of times we give in to our inadequacies, our neuroses, our pains, and create scar tissue around them that inhibits our ability to be balanced. I think we do that to our detriment and to the detriment of other people. Self actualization, Maslow's term, I think that's what he is talking about there, balance, a sense of equilibrium.... I think that's really how you achieve balance. You pick the weak area, you pick your area of

insecurity and go after it. I think over the course of years of attacking your weak spots you get stronger, and stronger, and stronger, and achieve a relative sense of balance in the process. I think mother nature has set up a system... that you can't escape that push toward balance in life.

As therapists we don't have to reach the pinnacle of personal development, but I think we need to be trying to grow and learn and seek that balance, or we are doing our clients a disservice if we don't do that within ourselves because, ultimately, I don't think we can take other people much further than we can take ourselves.... We may be smart, we may be the brightest, most insightful person... but I think therapy has another component to it. Our model [self as a model], our personhood, are major agents of change with people.... I think who we are is a big part of our ability to help people change.

In this group of MFTs, developmental motivation was a strong supporting category and theme of synthesis and general development. Some of the above quotes illustrated the overlap of concepts and how they can have effects in more than one area or category of data. One example was participant 108's description of balance and use of self.

Balance was one of the key action strategies employed by the participants which illustrated the connection between and among concepts and themes. Honing awareness and listening to intuition were actions which aided balance and were stimulated by developmental pressure.

Developmental motivation and pushing self to grow were important concepts and were connected to the category of listening to intuition/inner voice by the action strategy of balance. Several participants spoke of listening to their intuition to aid their balance and to help them decide when it was time to push ahead or when it was time to take the no action strategy of reflection and integration. Their inner voice became a trusted asset, and listening to it became an important strategy to heighten awareness and manage their developmental situation.

Internal process/inner voice/intuition. Listening to their inner voice or intuition during important transitions or events was a notable factor in guiding the development of these MFTs. Awareness of their intuition was at times a vague sense of needing change and at other times a clear internal message indicating the next step or direction. Developmental motivation and creativity seemed to be monitored and guided by intuition. When the intensity of developmental motivation increased, intuition monitored the

pressure and when awareness was present, balancing strategies were implemented to reduce the intensity. Intuition seemed to be a key ingredient in stimulating creativity and self care actions.

An example of a participant listening or attuning to his inner process was related by participant 102 and described as heeding his "maturational calls". He says he was listening to his inner voice when he was feeling the need to explore his shadow side and continued to listen and use it for guidance as he broadened his experience.

The participant talked about his intuition guiding him in at least two different ways. One was that his intuition pushed him into the unknown when he needed to grow and to experience something new. The other was intuition, functioning to keep him on track in terms of what was good for him. He spoke of his intuition as:

The side of me that could inform me about whether a certain thing is right for me. I think, I move along, and intuition comes to get me 'cause I'm overdue, and I've made a thousand tiny little decisions against my nature as it were and I'll step out into something clearer.

His first experience of his intuition scared him, and he believed it was his enemy because it was leading him out

of his first marriage. As his life became more unbearable, he followed his intuition and left his marriage because, he said, "I couldn't help it. My life had gotten so dry. It was missing so many things, I had to leave it."

Another participant, 101, said that he had been aware since childhood of his inner voice. He said that it motivated him and pushed him to learn as much as possible and that it continued to influence him in the present.

I can remember as a kid being able to understand what people were saying... I think it was the ability to understand what they were feeling when they were saying something as opposed to just hearing the words. I guess the sixth sense is the ability to be empathetic with a person without having to experience it yourself. Since grad school I have probably honed it.

He had a female mentor through his Phd experience that he described as a "very independent female, who was very directed, called a spade a spade, she had that same little voice" that drives and motivates. He continued and said all the people that had a major influence on him had that "same inner voice" which drove them toward learning.

He said that therapists should hone their "sixth sense" to be able to be warm and connect with the client. He saw

developing one's sixth sense as essential to be a good therapist. "The sixth sense is the essence of being empathic, the essence of the next step beyond the cool clinician and provides a richer and fuller experience for both the client and therapist."

His inner voice let him know when it was appropriate to use humor with his clients. "You can show them that humor can be their friend instead of their enemy." He acknowledged that humor played an important role in his development.

In the first interview and while reflecting on her decision to take two years off to read, participant 107 said, "I pay attention to whatever my internal leanings are; I do pay attention to that. I consider myself very intentional in that I think things through." She said she didn't talk about it, but followed her "internal leanings". "I just figured I had to learn how to read the way I wanted to read."

Her statements imply that she uses a balance of intellectual processing along with her intuitive messages to move herself forward in her growth. They also show a balancing strategy used to facilitate her decisions. This balancing strategy served to focus her awareness on her developmental process.

Friendship, connectedness and community. Four subcategories emerged under this supporting theme: mentors, same sex group interaction as a form of support, learning from clients (which is also in the category of developing empathy), and religious/spiritual growth. These categories are mentioned in the existing literature (Guy, 1987; Kaslow & Schulman, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Skovholt & McCarthy, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestat, 1992) as influential in the lives of therapists, and this group of MFTs reported similar influences. According to Johnson (1995), connection to community and to a larger whole through interaction with support groups, mentors, friends, and spiritual groups facilitates an individual's resilience.

Participant 102 related an experience of his internal process, a dream, which led him to an experience of connectedness to others. The connectedness he experienced had a profound effect upon him as his comments illustrated. He described having a dream at one of the "oriental sounding", experiential workshops in which he saw himself with a group of male friends at different phases in his life, all passing through similar experiences and feeling connected through their sharing and support. He felt very positive about the dream because of the connection and support among the men. He said "the idea of that just got deep in me." Motivated by his dream and idea, he called a

friend and they contacted some men and formed a group which met for one evening every two weeks. They ate together, shared their experiences, read books for discussion and provided important support for one another. The group has continued to meet for several years. He commented that the group has "ended an incredible alienation" in his understanding of himself and other men.

For participant 105, friendship and connectedness to a group was a theme that supported the integration of her personal and professional selves. She considers the two years of training she did with the Satir Institute in Chapel Hill as part of her self care.

That was a real good experience. It was good personal work and professional work. And, it was good because I met my best friend there.... We met at the first Satir thing in Chapel Hill... and we're best friends now. That's a way I've been good to myself in the past few years, too, 'cause I've made the time and put out the psychic energy and the emotional energy to have a best friend, 'cause that was always really important to me. That's one thing I have now that's helped me a lot. We help each other personally and professionally. We goof off, and we support and help one another in our own ways.

She described the Satir training as "good for me in a lot of ways." She developed a network of friends and professional colleagues with whom she maintains contact.

It was a wonderful growing experience. It gave me much more confidence as a therapist. It made me realize I do have good ideas, you know, and that I can put those into practice, and that I can development my own style of use of self as a therapist. It just gave me a lot of confidence. And, I use a lot of Satir techniques in my work, so it gave me another repertoire of things.

She described the first year of the Satir training as: [A] real hard experience...but that's part of what it is there for. The second year was a really, really good experience, a real nurturing experience... but good learning experience. As another by product of the Satir connection, I'm in a Satir supervision group here in town now, and that's another way I take care of myself. Me and about five other female therapists, all are Satir trained folks, meet one Friday morning a month and do peer supervision and support and ideas and it's good.

In the second interview, I followed the participant's attraction to Virginia Satir.

It [the Satir material] just, sort of, fit for me. That was... before even thinking about going to graduate school. I just liked that. Since then I have continued to like it even though I was presented lots of other things in graduate school,...there are a lot of other things that I do like...; that's just sort of the foundation.

I asked her for more detail about what attracted her to Satir's framework and methods.

The main thing is that I think it is very respectful of people, of the client; in the way that the therapist sees his or herself and the way they see the client, too. I think it is a really empowering thing ... for clients [as] a method of therapy. It is certainly built on the idea of building self esteem and how much that helps people. It has just given me a lot of ideas that fits with all areas of my life, including the group work with hospice... Virginia Satir's idea that 'the problem is not the problem; the coping is the problem.' I really like that. That one sentence right there, I think, sums up a whole lot. And, I'm always talking with people about... the coping methods you have used that haven't worked.... And talking to them about being centered and being in different

communication styles and stances, and rules and roles that you learned in your family-of-origin.

This participant described experiences which had overlapping influence in her development. The above example showed how her connection to a particular group enhanced her feeling of connectedness and her integration of her personal and professional selves.

#### Sub-categories of Friendship, Connectedness, and Community

Mentor influence. Several participants described mentor relationships that existed for them in graduate training and early in their careers. The participants who reported current mentor relationships described them as having gradually transformed into more of a peer type relationship. Some of them described being influenced by elders of the profession with whom they had little direct contact and followed from a distance. All of the participants in the current study reported being influenced by mentors, and for some the influence was notable as illustrated by the following examples.

The concept of mentorship had significantly influenced participant 102. He described several experiences in which mentors played an important part in his life. The following quote represents the influence of a mentor and also a

significant event in his development.

One of the most important things that happened to me in college was when I went to my major professor and told him I did not understand anything here [participant points to his heart]. I understood it here [participant points to his head] but not here [points to heart], ...the theological, spiritual stuff. He was really good. He said, "Why don't you start talking about what you do experience and don't talk about what you don't experience". He was real liberating that way. He could have said to pray harder and that would have pinched me down for a few more years, but it wouldn't have worked on me because my soul really wanted out.

One influential mentor was never his direct supervisor. The participant described being greatly influenced by "just being around him; he was genuine, and real, and incredibly perceptive about people." This mentor influenced the participant by his presence.

Another very influential mentor for participant 102 was a female therapist who helped guide him through one of his developmental transitions. Their relationship was formally defined, but they continue to keep in touch after therapy terminated. He described her as "riding the storm" with him

and "mostly helped me not hate myself."

She was a model of healthy woman; she was the best of what a therapist could be in terms of mentor and teacher... and it was full. She could work. She was accepting of whatever emotions were in the room,... and she could talk about those and put boundaries around them really well. She was relaxed, confident; she could feel and think, and she operated out of her own set [of life rules and morals] and she was a model for me in that sense.

He said that she taught him to live more from his own internal control.

As part of his developmental process, participant 102 created his own system of elders which nourished and guided him. Part of his developmental process included participation in workshops about the mens' movement (this information also fits under the subcategory of same sex support). He mentioned Jungian therapist, James Hillman, as someone he admired and considered a mentor and elder.

Who helps us later to say, "Now lets move up so that maybe we can teach you how to be a therapist with people and still know them somehow in your community... invite them into your church or whatever organization you have or into your mens' or womens' thing." Is there a way to move beyond that so that we help teach

each other to be true elders and not just technicians. I think that is a certain way to die, to stay behind this prescribed screen and do therapy... without connecting with people; without the possibility of including people into community when it would clearly help them.

This example also illustrated how boundary flexibility contributes to a sense of connectedness and community.

When asked to describe any mentor experiences he had, participant 103 mentioned being mostly influenced by three couples. His personal philosophy was greatly influenced by the concept of marriage as learned through his parents and three couples whom he considered mentors. It was almost as if the concept of marriage itself was his mentor. He was exposed to the couple mentors either through his academic training or through participation in couples' enrichment programs. The mentors were professors and their wives and a wife/husband team of trainers in a nationally known couples enrichment program.

I had all these rich, positive influences...I saw these people realistically living in a tough world, you know tough times, and pulling it off and so it intrigued me... I had all these modeling couples around me professionally and personally that sort of permeated my

whole idea of marriage and family.

A "very wise" person encouraged participant 105 to continue with her masters of social work even though her husband was having to move for his job, and it would mean commuting each week for two days. This "very wise" person was also her most significant mentor and encouraged her to pursue employment with a certain private agency when she moved following her graduate training. Her mentor knew some good therapists there and guided this participant to connect there.

When asked to tell me about the significant events and influences in her development, she began,

I think it all really started with (name of her mentor) 'cause she's my mentor and I met her in 1981. And I met her a year after I had been married and was feeling, "Gee, is that all there is". I was just feeling... mildly depressed was what I was. A friend recommended I see (name of her mentor). So I went and met (name of her mentor) and talked with her, and she has been my therapist on and off through the years and then, gradually, she's kind of, in the past seven years or so been more of my mentor and friend. I don't know.... I really respected her. I liked the work that she did. I liked the way she was with me. I liked the

reputation she had. I just thought she was really good and I thought, "Gee, I want to be like her when I grow up!"

Her mentor was instrumental in teaching her how to take care of self as a therapist. Her mentor modeled self care as well as spoke to her about it. She reported that, at times, she has not done so well with self care because she is a single parent. She described herself being more focused on self care in the last two years and has done better at setting limits and carving out time for herself. She has learned that in order to be an effective therapist she must take care of herself.

During the second interview, I commented that mentorship seemed to be an important concept to her.

Yeah! I think that is real important. I think it is important to have people in the field that you respect and you want to emulate. I think it is important to have healthy guides along the way; someone you can feel free to ask anything of, and to ask any questions of and not make any kind of judgements on yourself about, "Oh, this is silly" or "She's gonna think that's dumb", you know; just ask anything. ... And she is very open with me, too. That helps me a lot; it helps me feel supported.

She continued, drawing parallels to her group of peers/friends/colleagues from her Satir group.

In this Satir supervision group, too, there are four other women in the group... and that's the same way. And my best friend is in that group. All those people I feel like I can call and say, "What do you think about this?". And that's what we do in the group... we talk about different cases... and we can each give [name of a group member] insight... that's very helpful. But as far as having one mentor, [name of her mentor] is the one... but... all those women are. They are all teachers to me. It's just good to know you have a circle of people like that; it just feels different than, "Hey, I'm strung out on my own. I really don't have anyone I respect or... want to know their opinion."

She said that one test of respect for a colleague or mentor is whether she would use one of their suggestions in therapy or not.

It helps to have a mentor that you have the same foundation, the same mind set, like the Satir stuff and, because,... we speak the same language, and I would feel OK usually, using... the ideas they present to me.

I asked if she had any male mentors over the course of her experience and she replied,

Not really. Not really. I mean, there are some male people in my field, like [name of one person], who I like a lot and I respect his opinion. He is very sporadic and I talk to him every now and again on the phone.

When asked again if she considered this example a mentor she replied, "Not really. No. Helpers." The above statements were also examples of the sub-category of same sex support.

Participant 106 described his relationship with his major professor in graduate school as a mentorship experience.

It felt like an apprenticeship... Because of the meaning and depth and multiple levels and the significance of that mentor relationship, we have stayed in touch... We have also had a relationship where it is possible for me to discuss a case with him and vice versa. Once I was two or three years out of graduate school, it became more naturally, almost like a peer relationship although he was still my mentor. Somewhere in the middle of that period... that's where it began to feel like a real two way, interweaving kind

of relationship with a lot of reciprocity. So being able to have continuity with an admired colleague and mentor... that becomes a two way sharing.... I think that relationship has been going on now in a healthy way now for ... 15, 16 years.... I just have to call it a peak experience in my life. Nothing else compares to that, and I think that's been important to me. I know it has been important to me.

Mentors were significant facilitators of growth and synthesis for the above participants. Mentors provide personal guidance, modeling, and clinical direction. They served as a significant external source of reassurance and stimulation of growth and creativity (Kottler, 1986; Skovholt & McCarthy, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). It appears that mentorship is an important experience and training programs should consider encouraging trainees to include mentoring relationships in their experience both in the training process (Holloway, 1987; Kottler, 1986) and well into the years beyond training (Kottler, 1986; Skovholt & McCarthy, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

Same-sex support groups. As author and psychologist, Sam Keen (1991), wrote, "We need same-sex friends because there are types of validation and acceptance that we receive

only from our gendermates" (p. 174). This comment seemed to reflect the experience of some of the participants.

Motivated by a dream and an idea, participant 102 called a friend, and they contacted some men and formed a group which met for one evening every two weeks. They ate together, shared their experiences, read books for discussion and provided important support for one another. The group has continued to meet for several years. He commented that the group has "ended an incredible alienation" in his understanding of himself and other men.

I suggested to participant 105 that connection with other females seemed to be an important part of her developmental process and a theme from the first interview. She responded, "Oh yeah! Definitely." I asked her to speak about what was important in the contact and what she gained from it.

Just a sense of, you know, "I'm not in this boat alone"; a sense of empowerment and strength and, "I've got good ideas, too";... it makes me feel like I'm on the right wavelength. I'm being ethical, and I'm being clear with my work, and they support me in taking care of myself as a person and they laugh and play with me, too. We all have a good time together, too. That's another thing that I get. I think that I have a pretty good sense of humor so we like to cut up, do music, and

do all kinds of silly stuff, too. I think that helps you deal with the stress of what you do day to day, to have people you can cut up with. In the Satir group, there were a lot of women there,... my two year long training [not her on going supervision group], other people who were just good teachers, and ... good mentor-like people. It was a good balance between nitty gritty personal work, professional work and learning, and play. It was just a nice balance and so, I think that's what being around these women therapists...it helps me have some strength and some balance within myself.

These MFTs avoided isolation and actively sought connection and community. They valued quality of relationships as a way of promoting their well being, their personal satisfaction and achieving balance. The idea of pursuing balance through networking and quality of relationships is supported by Mahoney (1991), Kaslow and Schulman (1987), by Kotter (1986), and by Guy (1987).

Learning from clients. This category is practically a universal one in that all the participants spoke of learning from their clients. It did seem to promote a sense of connectedness to community and humankind through continued

exposure to the life stories and struggles of other individuals. However, they spoke generally about this concept and did not cite specific examples. It seemed that the significance of this learning from clients was that it indicated an openness on the part of these MFTs. There was no feel of condescension but rather a sense of humility and an awareness that clients stimulate growth for therapists. It was also one of the apparent ways in which this group of MFTs learned empathy.

Confirmation of the contribution that clients can make to therapists is contained in the writings of Mahoney (1991), Kottler (1986), Guy (1987), Simon (1989), Kaslow (1987), Skovholt and McCarthy (1988), and Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992).

Spiritual growth. The pursuit of understanding through philosophical, religious, and/or spiritual experiences helped provide a sense of connectedness for the participants whether to clients, to the community, to nature or to the metaphysical world.

Participant 101 described his change since graduate school, saying that he gradually became more spiritual and less religious.

I guess by being able to see what went on behind the curtains (in his experience as a chaplain) allowed me

the opportunity to see that it (organized religion) is much more human than it is spiritual. Since that time, spirituality became a much more personal thing, and it was discernable from religion because you could be a spiritual person and live in a spiritual way and not necessarily be deemed a religious person because you did not go to church.

When asked to define more clearly what he meant he said:

[I] don't go to church as often but try to practice being a Christian or spiritual type probably more. In other words [I] probably attend to the needs of people more but don't go to a four walled building with a steeple on top to get that point across. The spirituality becomes more of a person thing...

I asked him how his spiritual values affected his relationships with clients.

It probably makes me warmer as an individual... probably makes me more empathic as an individual. I try to separate problems for them so that they understand to treat them [their family members] first, with love... to treat them as human beings. Having the ability to run down basic needs of an individual that would be of a loving, caring, giving kind of nature is

a quality that therapists need... Probably a Buddhist therapist would be as effective as a Catholic as long as they have the spirituality of understanding; the loving, caring, etcetera, nature. Being able to address issues such as bereavement and death and dying from a spiritual twist as opposed to just an academic twist, I think, helps people... You take on the role of a teacher ...and it gives you the opportunity to address spiritual ideas with them, as well as secular ideas with them, as well as the intellectual.

He said he was careful not to impose spiritual ideas on clients but that he allowed the situation and the requests of the client to guide him.

Three years after his "maturational call" in which he left his marriage and began exploring life, participant 102 experienced a moment, catalyzed by the movie, "Dinner with Andre", in which he said, "There is something missing in my life and I'm going to change it." He described this shift as "another major tract" in his development. He began signing up for any "oriental sounding" experiential workshops he could find which combined meditation, dreaming, and non-academic lectures which expanded his way of thinking about intellectual topics. He said that was when the "spiritual stuff" began to come back to him. It was as if he extracted the spiritual experiences from his formalized

religious training (seminary school). He also got involved in the early phases (1986) of the mens' movement, signing up for his first workshop because, "I was scared". He said he felt some confusion about the meaning of being a man and wanted to explore this part of himself. "The mens' conferences have been very, very, very important to me,... very spiritual."

Participant 104 said that there was a spiritual feel to her work with her clients when she taught them to look within themselves for answers rather than look to the outside world. She referred to examples such as teaching clients to increase their body awareness and focus on clues or messages from their physical bodies, and encouraging clients to pay attention to the timing of events in their lives. She also described the work she does on herself as having similar spiritual components. She reported that her personal work occasionally paralleled some of the experiences her clients were having in therapy.

She related that some of Jung's writings on synchronicity apply to these parallel experiences and the timing of other events in both her life and the lives of her clients. Mahoney (1991) wrote about a person's readiness to change and encouraged therapists to sensitize themselves to their clients', as well as their own, pace of change. This participant spoke of timing in terms of readiness to change.

She also revealed the sense of connectedness that exists for her through her spiritual and philosophical thinking.

I think of it [spiritual elements of her experience] in terms of being in synch with myself and that includes being in synch with the universe, with nature, and with God; in a spiritual sense. Just as Joseph Campbell talks about following your bliss, I think that's the spiritual sense that I have about it; becoming more in tune with where my bliss is and how to follow it more, more of the time, and with more of my energy.

Participant 105 mentioned her religious/spiritual life at one point, and I asked her to expand on how that part of her life had affected her development.

Well, that's interesting. One of the things that I have looked into and dabbled in is the combining of spirituality and psychotherapy. Another thing I've been involved in which does that, which promotes that idea is Common Boundary. I've gone to a lot of their conferences in the last few years, and I read their stuff, and I've talked with some people about...well, I don't know. I may do something with that someday, the combining of spirituality and psychotherapy. I am a religious person, but I'm not "hepped up on it" as they would say in [southern state where she grew up]. I

still go to denominational churches but to me it's always been a personal thing, an intimate thing. It's my relationship with God...and it's not what the church does or doesn't do. I've been able to separate the junk [what people do and mistakes they make] from... my relationship with God... I separate the religion and spirituality stuff with myself and with my clients, you know. I choose to believe in God... but I don't think everybody has to.

I've always been a religious person because, I guess, as much as I can remember, I grew up in the church. But now I'm a conscious, thinking, real live adult, and I don't live with [names of her parents] anymore. And even through the traumatic experiences I've been through with the church, I still choose [to be religious], because I don't see that as directly relating to God... I've always believed in prayer and still do, and I pray for my clients sometimes, too. Another thing I do is ,often, before I go in a therapy session I say [a prayer]. It helps center me, and I do a lot of centering exercises which I have learned through my work with [mentor] and my Satir stuff, and I have also studied some clinical hypnosis and things like that... So, all this kind of helps me center, and get in touch with God, and me and, as Virginia Satir

says, that spot where you know what you know what you know about yourself.

When asked about her experiences with Common Boundary and if she had been influenced by Jung, she replied,

I've read a lot of Jungian stuff, and I've always liked that, too. This past year, with my Satir stuff, we had a training which was about Jung and Satir and... I think a lot of things fit together. Since about five years ago, I've been searching myself. I've always been open minded about spirituality and other religions, Taoism and all these other things, and learning what you can from other religions and other beliefs. Since the past four years I've been more open to that... and one of the first things I checked out was Common Boundary.

I believe strongly in the mind/body connection. And that is connected into my spirituality, too. I believe what Virginia Satir says about paying attention to all parts of yourself, the repressed, shoved aside parts of yourself. Or like the Jungian stuff, the shadow, self and all that.

For participant 106, his connection with his church and his sense of community with his fellow church members are

what currently "fan the flames of his philosophy." He made a distinction between religious and spiritual and said that religion is the ritual, the rules, the routine, the structured surface, and the spiritual is what he felt in his heart. He says that he does not make any attempt to proselytize or use religion in his therapy, but he does view some life challenges of his clients through a spiritual lens and may interpret content spiritually if the client indicates they are open to that.

He described himself as primarily a "giver" until the illness of his daughter. The event of his daughter's life threatening illness allowed him to shift from being a giver to also being a "receiver." His church and community pulled together and raised a substantial sum of money to help with his daughter's medical expenses. It was a personal struggle for him to receive because he had been focused on giving.

It's a life changing experience to receive love..., to be on the receiving end..., I'd say, was a life changing experience. There is a time for giving and a time to be a receiver... It changes you to receive that kind of love and caring in a concrete way and [it] made me more of a believer that love is very powerful and is where the action is as far as people caring for each other and making it real instead of just theoretical... Having experienced that makes me more

optimistic that it can happen and the more a part of the process [I am], the healthier I feel. What else is more important... than being a part of a loving process with as large a group as you can handle?

His daughter's illness and the response of his church was a significant event in the life of this participant. The content of his experience also fits under the category of developing empathy and love.

At the beginning of the second interview, I asked participant 107 if she would like to add any thoughts, having reflected on the first interview. Participant 107 began by describing her decision to be a marriage and family therapist as a "call".

I think there are times when I do conceptualize what I do as a calling. And I was aware that what might be considered my call is more out of an internally driven process... and not what I was reading in my adult Sunday school lesson ... which was interesting; I was getting a different perspective on that.

I framed it more in terms of believing that all of us fit into some sort of greater scheme that I'll never know what it is, but all my task in life is to figure out "What is the best use of my talents?", and as long as I operate in that vain, then I'm probably

contributing to some overall scheme, order of the universe or whatever it is, in the best way that I can. I guess to me that means I'm called in some kind of way, uh,... it's not like I saw a burning bush or anything like that. I certainly thought about it; it was triggered by my major [academic] but it also, for me, had more to do with what I see my role in life being.

This showed a spiritual component in this participant's life that helped guide her and provide meaning. It seemed intricately connected to her intuition and balanced by her practical thought process. Spiritual growth of the therapist is not discussed in detail in the existing literature reviewed for this study, but it is mentioned in Kottler (1986).

Utilizing personal family-of-origin work. Development has been defined in this study as a progressive process with current changes building on previous developmental experiences (Lerner, 1986). The participants in this study all reported having worked on significant family-of-origin (FOO) issues as part of their personal developmental process. They also reported that their personal FOO work influenced their work with clients in a positive way.

When one participant described the important influences on his development as a marriage and family therapist, he began with the following passage.

I think my parents' marriage and my own home living experience greatly influenced me, because number one, I knew something that was basically positive, basically dynamic, meaning it was ever evolving and growing; we didn't have a static family, uh ..., [and it] gave me an appreciation for what could be with people, and myself. So, I'm sure that has had a major influence on being a marriage and family therapist.

I asked another participant, during the second interview, if there were any long-held family traditions which she carried or which had influenced her development and therapy.

The religious and spiritual part. I say both of those because my pawpa [name of her maternal grandfather], the one I said would talk to animals, he's always been sort of... I think he was kind of a mystical type guy, you know. And my brother, [name of brother], got a lot from him... My brother is a lot like ways I think my grandfather would have been. So, he was a real spiritual type person. He was not known to be extremely religious... So, I think the religion and

spirituality traditions in my family carried into my development as a therapist and, also, other parts of nurturing, like music ... and humor. That's another thing from my family that I use a lot in therapy.

There is a pretty strong tradition of storytelling in my family... and I think storytelling is important in therapy... One of the big Common Boundary conferences that I liked the most was the one ... the one on storytelling... and rituals.... That just reaffirmed me, about how important those things really are. And in grief therapy, it is very important, and in all therapy it is, for them [the clients] to tell their story...

She cited the traditional rituals in her family and life in general as important to her development. She carries that influence into her therapy by encouraging clients to develop their own rituals around important life events, especially grief and loss experiences.

I asked participant 106 to speak about how his FOO influenced him.

As a child, in some ways I was in training to be a counselor or a therapist. The way that seemed to work was... my dad had a short fuse in terms of handling family stress matters and troubles with the kids and so

my mother would by-pass him and come to me, the oldest son, when she was having trouble with the younger brothers. I think my place in the family was one of, easy to talk to, sensible, level headed, able to listen and ... there were many breakfast meetings where I'm talking to my mom... about how to help the younger siblings, especially [name of brother], the youngest because he was always into something. He was the mischievous younger brother who, probably at least once a month, would get into some kind of crisis... and this went on even when he went off to college. No matter where I was... my mom would call and ask me to call him and help him iron it out, which I always did. I mean, that was my role in the system. He was very receptive. He would settle down and be very appreciative but then the whole thing would recycle in about a month.

He continued, saying that during his MFT training he learned that his "good, older son" role played a part in the recycling of his brother's behaviors. Bowen theory was the academic study that influenced his realization and this participant's successful interruption of the cycle. He learned by working on his own FOO issues how dynamics are held in place in a family system and how they can be interrupted or changed by changing himself and his

interaction with his family.

That whole sequence...[was] eye opening for me, and it has helped me in my therapy with others... [My family experience] made places in my brain for thinking about listening, helping, and being cooperative to solve a problem. I was good at it, but you just can't be a therapist in your own family... I think it was very good to look at family-of-origin, and if you don't look at it, you know, I could still be doing that, and I don't think I would have that gut experience of making a change at that level of process that I can now identify it more quickly and help others. If I hadn't had that experience, I wouldn't have the antennae for it that I have...

In speaking about his parents' influence on him, he said, "They were a close couple... and I think that in some way led me to be interested in marriages." His personal work of extracting himself from a triangle between his parents resulted in them becoming even closer and him more differentiated. This participant felt it was important to include in his comments how his relationship with his father had influenced his development. He described a significant event.

Since dad had a bad temper, sometimes in my younger

years his short fuse would come out on me. And so I caught what some people could have defined as some abuse,... some physical abuse. He certainly would lose control of his spankings. I think, as I've grown..., the older you get the more you're able to step back, and I just see a guy who was abandoned by his father, who went through the military and was doing his best to raise his family. I started, at my age, to see a lot of the good things about him..., now that I'm maturing... and have a different perspective, I started to see the great effort he made to do some things right and well. I think it was last father's day, I wrote him a letter. This was self-initiated..., and said I wanted to let him know all the things that I recall and remember and ponder that he did well as a father. He got that letter, and, I think, my mother,... he read it to her.... She told my wife who told me that he made a request that that letter be buried with him when he dies [because] it meant so much.

I asked him how this event affected his development.

He said:

It is just very empowering... it gave me the sense of real encouragement that what seemed like this awful, black, pathological relationship in childhood can

somehow be transformed into something actually more accurate, that what is really important is probably what he did right. The development of one's ability to love is probably what it is all about... developing that over time and you can't do it if you are hooked and trapped and constricted by whatever forces are impinging on you. You can't free up and loosen up your ability to love if you're going to be snagged and trapped in old conceptualizations of these significant others. It is a freeing experience, and it's a loosening experience, and it does seem to have a lot to do with, subjectively, my ability to love and deeply care for someone...

I asked how this experience of learning to love translated into his work as a therapist. He said it gave him "more sensitive antennae", indicating that having experienced tough events and learning to love contributed to his ability to feel empathy for his clients.

As a therapist matures, as I've matured and dealt with different things, over the life span,... the point is as I have wrestled and as I have struggled with different issues, it seems to me that from that experiential level,... once you get that experience then you are able to be facilitating, helping folks

with their stories, their perceptions and experiences at a much deeper level. I think that does vote for experience in a therapist. I know... if you are younger... you can still be a therapist, but I really think it is the seasoning from these tough places in life that really helps you become wiser, less operational from just theory or training...

I think it is extremely interwoven (personal life experience and professional skill). I'm going to vote for maximizing our understanding of wisdom and effectiveness as a therapist paralleling personal development and private subjective experiences of a therapist. It doesn't mean you have to experience cocaine to help a cocaine addict. It does mean that the more experiences you do have,... the wiser you have the potential of being. I think Carl Jung agrees with me. He used to say that it is very hard for a person to really be at a more spiritual level or a more mature level prior to midlife... the mid 30s or early 40s. As you move into the stage of life where you... have a career identity. You no longer are struggling to prove it or find it or establish it.

Because of that experience with my father, I've started to think, "What is it that my relationship with my mother needs? What is it that my relationship with

my brother needs, at this point?" I think it is a marvelous struggle. It is an exciting thing to think something good is around the corner for those, too. Something good just happened with me and my dad; something good is going to happen as time goes on...

This example illustrates his desire to grow (his developmental motivation) and to integrate his personal experience into his professional work, thus creating a synthesis of his personal and professional selves. In this instance, synthesis was facilitated by developmental motivation and family-of-origin work.

For participant 107, the influence of her family-of-origin prepared her to work in a medical setting, with physicians, without being intimidated and without having a "chip on her shoulder". She and her family had socialized frequently with physicians during her childhood and adolescence. She reported that the socialization helped her see physicians as regular people. She believed that the exposure to physicians had helped her as she established her own professional identity within the medical field.

This participant also learned from her family-of-origin that women were capable. There were professional, achieving women in her extended family that served as models for her. She reported hearing stories about these successful women

and believed it influenced her to feel that she could do whatever she wanted. "I realized later that having heard, just sort of routinely, about these women, that I think there was a message given about what was possible to do. Almost anything was possible." Her experience of her FOO was positive and had a positive effect on her professional development, as her comment suggests.

I've been asked before about my professional development...generally... and I never tend to think that there is anything particularly significant. It just seems like it sort of gradually unfolds in some kind of way with nothing really major. But, maybe that isn't really true. And, it also seems like it has been fairly easy to me; nothing has seemed like it was real hard. I do think it is true to say that I have always been very thoughtful about it and I think, pretty intentional about it.

She credited her mother with increasing her awareness of "the human problems" which translated into empathy for her clients and students. She said that even though her development had been "fairly easy", her mother's teachings about "the human problems" had helped her understand and be sensitive to the difficulties that people experience. She realized how important her mother's influence had been when

she took two years off to read and dig deeper into "the human problems."

Generally, family-of-origin work is seemingly an obvious ingredient in MFT development. Because of the choice to include FOO work in their training and growth after graduate school, this group of MFTs had a different set of tools that they brought to their own personal development than do therapists omitting personal FOO work. Inclusion of family-of-origin work as a life-long process appears to be desirable in training programs, for both the personal and professional development of marriage and family therapists (Framo, 1992; Guerin & Hubbard, 1987; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; McDaniel & Landau-Stanton, 1991). It is not surprising that the participants in this study indicated that their family-of-origin, their marriages, and the work on them were important influences in their development.

Other themes and themes unique to individual participants. Some themes may be common to the group, or exist primarily for an individual and be unique. Examples are: coming to terms with death as a life process, choosing therapy as a profession or being chosen by therapy, desire/striving for autonomy (this may be the theme of differentiation which exists in the early development of MFTs and is replaced later in development, after some

synthesis, by community and socialization); developing empathy, developing love, and music in development.

One participant, 105, spoke of music as very important in her life and her comment is included here. She said that music helped add balance to her life.

Music has just always spoken to me and helped me as a person and has always meant a lot to me. It just has always been there. It is just one of those supportive things in my life. It is a way of expressing, and it is a way that taps deeply into emotions and human experience... and it's fun, too! It's a part of my life; I love it.

## Chapter V

### Summary and Conclusions

The most significant outcome of this study was identifying synthesis of personal and professional selves as an important developmental process for marriage and family therapists (MFTs). Events in the lives of these MFTs were potential catalysts for synthesis and development. Awareness, developmental motivation, and resiliency were important characteristics of the participants that facilitated synthesis and development.

#### Synthesis

Synthesis was the label assigned by the researcher to describe the developmental process of integration of personal and professional selves in this group of MFTs. The process of synthesis was at times a spiral one as current experiences progressed by building on past experiences. This flow of development can be expressed as follows: causal conditions produce development/synthesis through the utilization of specific action strategies leading to consequences, which then become the next causal conditions producing further growth and synthesis then, the cycle repeats itself. One could imagine this flow of development as an upward moving spiral.

An event was a causal condition when it stimulated movement leading to change, and eventually the change could be considered development when it was integrated and built upon past learning, thus showing progression.

Event ---> motivation to change ---> action --->

integration ----> development

The evolution or on-going development of MFTs after 10 years experience is partially a refinement and sophistication of flow between boundaries (between selves). The participants in this study were able to negotiate the boundaries between their personal and professional worlds, bringing the best of each to the other. The process of synthesis for these participants seemed to punctuate and heighten somewhere between two and five years out of graduate training. This finding is consistent with Skovholt and Ronnestad's (1992) study on counselor development, in which they found that a process similar to synthesis occurred. They described this similar process under the integration and individuation stages of counselor development. In their study, the integration stage occurred two to five years after beginning training. Descriptions of the integration stage included, "developing authenticity",

"self as a professional elder", "synergistic and eclectic", and "increasingly realistic" (p. 509). The stage following integration, and occurring ten to thirty years after beginning training, is individuation and is described as, "Increasingly oneself within competent professional boundaries" (p. 509). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) wrote:

After extensive experience, the individual had an increased ability to regulate (precisely) professional involvement within and across three domains of the self: the private self, the personal self, and the professional self....There is also an increased ability to use physical, mental, and emotional boundaries within these three domains.

For example, with time, one is more able to regulate, in a productive way, the emotional involvement that is given to clients outside of sessions....There is also increased ability to regulate professional roles in one's personal life....The development of these boundaries is a critical skill and allows the individual to be involved but not depleted by the multiple accounts of human suffering that are heard by the average practitioner.

As Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) imply, integration, development of a flexible and appropriate flow across boundaries, and development of a distinction between the

beginning and end of professional and personal selves may contribute to healthy therapist development. The goal is to construct a flexible balance between boundaries so that they are not too permeable and not too closed. Guy (1987) suggested that therapists who do not achieve such a balance risk functional impairment and damage to themselves. Synthesis is an important developmental process for this group of marriage and family therapists. It appears that trainees and experienced therapists alike should be encouraged to increase their awareness about the process of synthesis.

#### Significant Events

Everyday life events and periodic choices made by the participants, of course, contributed to their development. However, for purposes of this study, the description of causal conditions leading to synthesis focused primarily on the significant events identified and described by the participants. At times the consequences of actions taken to facilitate development and synthesis became the next level of causal conditions for growth.

One example was when participant 101 was having difficulty joining with some children. One child told him that he could not play with him while he was wearing a tie. The participant removed his tie, joined with the child and

became "more real" as a professional. The event increased his awareness of how his personal and professional selves could work together. His awareness stimulated him to use his personal self to complement his professional self and to avoid artificial separation between the two selves.

Another example was the two-year sabbatical taken by one participant to read "substantive works" in philosophy. Her action to take time off was precipitated by her desire for more reflective time which was not available to her in her academic/clinical environment. Her reading and reflecting led to increased integration between her personal and professional selves, and as the process unfolded and progressed, she reached a decision to begin private practice and to incorporate her reading experience into her therapy practice. She believed she was better able to address her clients' concerns after her reading and reflecting. Her push for personal growth became growth for her professional self, and she moved into private practice and continued to grow from her reading.

#### Process of Marriage and Family Therapist Development

Based on these data, the developmental process of marriage and family therapists seems to move along the following course: differentiating self from previous general

and global world experiences, developing a professional identity separate from the personal identity during graduate training and two to five years following, realization through events and observation of elders that personal and professional identity can complement one another, gradual experimenting with more flexible boundaries between the personal and professional selves, and continued growth through an ongoing synthesis of personal and profession selves leading to wholeness.

The participants in the current study were aware of the internal pressure of their developmental motivation and were able to heed the "maturational calls" when the pressure reached a certain level. They were not overwhelmed by the challenge of future growth, but seemed to genuinely welcome opportunities to explore themselves. They were able to take advantage of life events and accept them as developmental challenges. There was no indication that the drive to grow was obsessive. The drive, pushing self to grow, was well balanced by other strategies which also facilitated growth, such as, their conscious efforts to care for self through recreation, fellowship, and rest. They were able to take risks which pushed the envelope of their personal and professional selves. When heeding the "maturational calls", several of them embarked on personal learning experiences which opened new levels of understanding and facilitated a

synthesis of their personal and professional selves. In more routine daily experiences, they worked with circumstances and created development and synthesis through their "metaprocessing". Metaprocessing seemed to be a combination of awareness and balancing strategies of pushing self, reflection, and integration. Metaprocessing seemed to be one participant's label for a significant portion of the developmental process.

Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) described a process similar to metaprocessing which they labeled the reflective stance. The results of their study indicated that this reflective stance was an essential element in the developmental process of counselors. They wrote:

Paramount in this process is a reflective stance, which means that the individual is consciously giving time and energy to processing, alone and with others, significant experiences. An active, exploratory, searching, and open attitude is of extreme importance. Asking for and receiving feedback is crucial (p. 509).

Utilization of friendship, mentors, and social groups helped create a sense of community for these MFTs. All of them valued their sense of community and connectedness. Connection to a group allowed them expression of their feelings and thoughts in an atmosphere that was accepting and less judgmental than general society. Guy (1987) and

Mahoney (1991) wrote that quality personal relationships help to promote wellbeing and psychological health. The participants in this study created their own personal and social niches and their community connections strengthened their resiliency.

Resiliency has been defined in a number of ways (Johnson, 1995) and could be considered to be the limits or boundaries of safety. Johnson (1995), citing Rutter (1987) wrote that "resilience is not just a matter of constitutional strengths or weaknesses, but also a reflection of what one does about one's plight. This implies that resilience has an active, behavioral component..." (p. 317). It also implies that the person has an awareness of his or her resiliency. The common ground among definitions of resiliency, according to Johnson (1995), is "the innate capacity to recover from danger and to continue to function in a healthy way" (p. 318).

Spiritual growth proved to be an important part of development for these participants. It seemed to provide a sense of comfort and inspiration while also providing a sense of connectedness to the metaphysical world. All of the participants made a clear distinction between religion and spiritual growth, and the distinction was strikingly similar for all the participants. The essence of the distinction was: religion provides structure and guidelines,

while spiritual growth is the actual experience of connection to nature and the metaphysical world. For this group, religion seemed to increase their sense of social and community connectedness while, spiritual growth extended their connection to an even larger whole (the universe as a larger system).

The participants in this study may have a quality described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as an autotelic personality. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), a person with an autotelic personality has the ability to focus consciousness (awareness) on occurring events and to control their response to the events rather than reacting instinctively. There is a tendency to see opportunity in life challenges. When one accepts a challenge as an opportunity, they cease to be controlled by the circumstances. Their actions become directed toward learning and gaining from the event. People with an autotelic personality appear to have an heightened ability to order consciousness, and an intrinsic desire to grow and improve themselves through the currently occurring process. If stagnation seems imminent, they increase the level of challenge in their lives to continue growing. If anxiety rises too high, they choose to focus on skill-building to meet new levels of challenge.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of autotelic

personalities could be compared to the participants in this study, who had the ability, through awareness, to balance intensity that existed in their lives and growth processes. Their developmental motivation represented an intrinsic desire to grow and to be internally determined.

It seemed that an awareness of systems and doing their own family-of-origin (FOO) work were significant factors that contributed to and enhanced the development of this group of MFTs. All of this group perceived themselves as part of a greater whole (system), and all of them had consciously worked on their FOO issues in an effort to improve themselves and free them from obstructive behavior patterns. Several of them reported that their FOO work directly contributed to improving their work with clients.

It seems that this group of marriage and family therapists has a developmental path similar to development of other therapists (Guy, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1991; Skovholt & McCarthy, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). It may be that the ability to take a broad perspective, a larger systems view, is what distinguishes marriage and family therapists in the mental health professions. A broad perspective includes the individual, the internal and external context in which the individual operates, and the influence of family-of-origin. Simmons and Doherty (1995) reported that a systemic orientation in

marriage and family therapists in Minnesota resulted in a broader focus on larger systems that influence clients. It is logical to surmise that marriage and family therapists who have a broad focus with their clients may also consider a broader picture when focusing on their own personal development.

### Action/Interaction Strategies

There were three main action/interaction strategies in this group of MFTs that related to their synthesis and general development. The three were, balancing, pushing self, and reflecting and integrating.

The concept of balance was a crucial regulator of developmental motivation and pushing self to grow. Over and over again the theme of balance was apparent as an underlying mechanism which regulated the potential extremes that may exist in any phase of significant change and growth. Balance was also an important aspect of the main developmental theme as personal and professional growth facilitated and reciprocally supported one another.

The strategy of balancing was used to balance pushing self with reflection, to balance alone time with social connection, to balance religious structure with abstract spiritual process, and to balance work with recreation and family time. Awareness and balance seemed to be the key

factors in negotiating gray areas between personal and professional lives and in achieving flexible and permeable boundaries between the two. The increased flexibility between personal and professional selves made more resources available in each area and facilitated increased resilience.

As the process of integration and synthesis of personal and professional selves progressed, it seemed that resiliency increased as was indicated by an increased willingness to explore themselves and to seek out growth opportunities. They had developed a sense of increased limits. Awareness of the limits of resiliency was important to the participants in the protection of self by helping stop or slow their process in order to avoid physical, psychological, or emotional damage. In their efforts to be the best therapist they could, they discovered that pushing self had another side which was slowing down for reflection and integration. Somehow they recognized the limits of their resiliency and responded accordingly.

Pushing self was an action strategy used to create movement while reflecting and integrating were strategies used to slow movement. Intensity was the property to which the balancing strategies of pushing self and reflecting/integrating were directed. Intensity was the label used by the researcher to describe the anxiety felt by the participants when events or circumstances pushed the

limits of their resilience or when stagnation produced restlessness and need for increased challenge. As intensity increased, awareness heightened, and as intensity approached the limits of resiliency or of comfort, balancing strategies were implemented by the participants.

Pushing-self-to-grow strategies were directed toward increasing the developmental challenge, whether placing self voluntarily in a growth experience (a workshop, seminar, or in one case, mountain climbing), or choosing to create a growth experience from adversity (facing divorce, serious illness, or existential crisis). Pushing self to grow could be used to overcome the intensity associated with stagnation and lack of growth. For example: the two year sabbatical taken by one participant or another participant who chose to work with difficult kids and hospice because they were "more interesting than regular people...because these are real things... it is more challenging" (part. 105). Pushing self to grow could also be used to change from a stressful environment to one that was more conducive to growth. For example: two participants who chose to leave institutional work for private practice or another participant who monitored her "heaviness" and moved to other areas of work when things became "too heavy".

#### Important Theoretical Components of MFT Development

In this study and for this group of MFTs, the major developmental theme consisted of synthesis of their personal and professional selves, facilitated by the internal characteristic of developmental motivation. The progressive development of flexible and permeable boundaries paralleled the synthesis of their personal and professional selves. Key strategies for managing the stresses of their developmental processes were balancing, pushing self to grow, and reflecting/integrating. Resiliency was also a significant characteristic of this group. Awareness of self and process was also significant and was a characteristic which progressed as synthesis and development progressed. One significant component of awareness was listening to intuition or their inner voice, and this attention to abstract process facilitated their development. Berkowitz (1987, p. 88) wrote that he was "very certain that the more concrete-minded graduates...suffer from very early burnout".

Their family-of-origin work and their awareness of systems also played significant roles in their developmental processes and may be factors setting MFTs apart from other therapists and non-therapists. According to Johnson (1995, p. 321), "the socialization process [both family-of-origin and the cultural community] does provide an environment that encourages each member's development of self while

simultaneously acting as a buffer against those forces in the greater society that might devalue an individual,...". It might be that these MFTs' understanding of systems helped them see the value of connection with others as a source of support, healing, and growth. This awareness could partially explain their reaching out to form community for themselves. Their actions to create community may have been a way of creating an extended family system of non-relatives which provided important support.

A desire to grow, to repeatedly confront issues of life, death, and identity and, to do so in a way which balances pushing and driving with rest, recreation, reflection, and integration are ingredients that constitute healthy development for MFTs. This may seem like only common sense, but since therapists work with pain, suffering, death, and other difficult life issues almost daily, they must develop an awareness of self process, even more than most people, to remain personally healthy and professionally effective (Guy, 1987; Kottler, 1986; Mahoney, 1990; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Mahoney (1990, p. 370) wrote, "Above and beyond their relative health and life satisfaction, the psychological development of mental health professionals is often substantially accelerated...", and Guy (1987, p. 243) concurred, "the practice of psychotherapy has been found to promote significant personal growth in the

practicing psychotherapist." If the process of development is accelerated, then it stands to reason that appropriate safeguards (in this group, balancing strategies and increased awareness) are necessary to cope with occupational hazards and to avoid burnout. Development may be accelerated by both exposure to clients as Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) suggest but also by the presence of developmental motivation as indicated in the current study.

### Conclusions

The most significant sign post of development in this group of MFTs was their synthesis of personal and professional selves. Their synthesis and general development were consistent with basic developmental concepts (Lerner, 1986). It seems safe to assert that one of the most important developmental processes for marriage and family therapists (and likely all therapists) is the synthesis of personal and professional development and it seems to occur somewhere between two and five years after their graduate training. Continued development is closely associated with continued synthesis, careful monitoring of boundaries, and creative use of developmental motivation.

Based on the evidence that emerged from the data, the most important ingredients in healthy MFT development seem to be developmental motivation, resiliency, balance and

balancing strategies, and awareness. It is the interaction between events, awareness, developmental motivation, and resiliency which produces growth. Awareness is a quality which can facilitate growth and integration of life experience. Family-of-origin work and viewing the world from a broad systems approach, which includes individual dynamics, seem to be important ingredients facilitating the development of marriage and family therapists.

The action strategy of balancing could be viewed as the primary mechanism utilized by the participants to organize their responses to external events and their internal developmental motivation. As an organism proceeds to increasing levels of complexity, organization becomes more important to insure that the different parts of the individual function in harmony (Breunlin, et. al., 1992; Falicov, 1988; Jung, 1964; Lerner, 1986). Therefore, it is proposed that balancing is a crucial strategy to the process of healthy therapist development.

Development of self identity in this group of MFTs proceeded along the lines of Werner's orthogenetic principle (Lerner, 1986) moving from relatively global to more differentiated. As a group the participants' concept of self advanced to a level of increased differentiation as they developed a professional identity in graduate school. The development of their professional identity continued

into their post graduate years as they further defined themselves and built upon past experience, both personal and professional, and integrated their experience (hierarchical integration).

Development proceeded continuously as evidenced by the participants' developmental motivation and their commitment to grow through pushing themselves, taking risks and "metaprocessing". Discontinuity, qualitative change, occurred when participants experienced a new level of understanding and new behavior which emerged from a previous and more global state. i.e., the participant who removed his tie and became "more real" as a professional. Continuity and discontinuity both represent development (Lerner, 1986).

It is proposed that these components are necessary ingredients of healthy marriage and family therapist development. The proposal is largely supported by the research of Skovholt and Ronnstat (1992) and, Skovholt and McCarthy (1988), as well as the writings of Guy (1987), Kaslow (1987), McDaniel and Landau-Stanton (1991), Mahoney (1991), Kerr and Bowen (1988) and Simon (1989). It is further proposed that development for marriage and family therapists consists of, at least in part, the ability to structure awareness, thereby choosing strategies which are directed toward balancing intensity created by the interplay

of external life events and internal developmental motivation. Additional substantiation of the proposed ingredients of MFT development could be attained by carefully controlled quantitative research which could investigate each component of development. However, if enough qualitative research accumulates and indicates similar findings, we may be able to assume that some of the components are crucial to therapist development and should be included in training programs.

One participant seemed to reflect the general consensus of this group when he said that learning to listen to his own rhythm had been an important part of his self care and development. Listening to one's own rhythm seemed to be listening to their intuition and following their developmental motivation. The most significant payoff for this group as a whole was the integration and synthesis of their personal and professional selves. Carl Jung (1965, 1964) would say that this was movement toward wholeness and individuation.

#### Contributions of the Interviews to the Participants

It was interesting observing the level of discomfort which appeared present in most of the participants as they allowed themselves to be vulnerable and open the pages of their life.

This discomfort seemed to be the experience of the participants in the first interview, but most seemed to relax during the second interview and "go with the flow" as they allowed material to emerge. One participant seemed impatient with the uncertainty of letting material emerge. She appeared uncomfortable and looked to me to provide more structured questions as opposed to open ended ones. I was able to stay with the unstructured process of letting her respond in the direction she chose and continued to encourage her to say more.

An example of how the interview process contributed to the participants and may have helped them integrate some of their experiences was illustrated when one participant described a transition in his use and understanding of language. He began by making a distinction between the ministers he had known growing up and:

Meeting people that I thought were real as opposed to religious..., people who could use language that fit emotions, they could cuss if they wanted to...It was ready, just right, for me to move into that...it was an answer to, I hadn't thought about that until just now ...to my earlier question of, "I can't get into what John Calvin and Luther were talking about." I could get into what those new guys were talking about. I know now it has a language of its own, but I didn't

then.

Another example of the contribution of the interviews was illustrated by a participant when she was considering the impact of her own therapy process on her development. She said, "It's current [her interest in visualization and mind/body work], and as I mention it, I realize that that's how, that's an example of how I think things shift for me."

For some, the value gained came with a realization as they were speaking during an interview, and, for others, the value became apparent between interviews.

In the following example, the insight gained by the participant illustrates the process of synthesis.

This participant began the second interview by commenting on how the first interview had affected him.

I just want to tell you that the first interview, I found to be a meaningful experience for me in that it forced me to think about things I wouldn't ordinarily think about, at least for a whole hour, as I did in that case. What dawned on me as I was thinking about it afterwards was the nature of personal career development, early childhood family-of-origin development and career development, the more I talked about it the more they seem to interdigitate and feed on each other. I started thinking about figure eights and loops and ways in which one plays off the other...

As life has gone on, it came to mind a deficit or two that I had in my experience and that I sought to fill those, to address those at some point later. You know, something that I missed earlier in my development I seemed to go after, to quench that area later in my life.

I commented that it seemed he had developed an awareness of the interplay of his personal and professional lives. He said that he saw those two areas of his life, looping together. Very much so. I don't think it is reasonable to separate them out artificially. I really think that the interview last time brought to my awareness, human development over the entire life cycle, and it is really artificial to even punctuate it at the point where you do your training.

At the end of the second interview, as I confirmed with this participant that family-of-origin work had been important to his development, he added, "But I think something that I have learned from this interview is that it doesn't stop there. I think on going thought about these matters, about different challenges, different perspectives... those are important too, very important."

Another example shows the insight gained by the participant while it also confirms his reflective characteristic. It seems the interview process stimulated

him to think in a different way about himself.

As is my typical nature, I was thinking about the process because that's who I am ... I was just thinking in a positive way that what you did for me, just in the nature of the engagement, was pushing me to a broader frame of reference which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Another participant reflected on the first interview and said, "In thinking about it after the fact, I came to a conclusion that I really have been a very experiential learner. It was almost embarrassing ... it seemed to me there should be some specific training that really was powerful..."

There was a shift in her thinking which indicated she elevated her personal experiential training and experience to the same level as didactic seminars and workshops. Much of her style of marital therapy has been derived from her own therapy and personal work. Even her training required those present to be actively involved experientially in role playing, i.e. the psychomotor work (similar to psychodrama). In viewing the tape of the first interview, it was obvious that this participant valued experiential training as well as insights gained from personal experience and introspection. In fact, the data indicate that she actually rated her personal experience as the most influential ingredient in her development. In the opening moments of

the second interview she showed, through reflection and introspection that she indeed valued personal experience highly thus corroborating an individual developmental theme for herself.

This participant was a process oriented person and tended to describe her development as a series of processes. I asked her, during the second interview, to reflect on the process of being interviewed. She responded:

It has been very interesting. I have remarked to several people that you can now do process oriented research. I think it is great. I've really enjoyed it. I think that I will probably continue to learn after I leave this interview, because some of the things you mentioned have been very interesting to me in terms of feedback. In reflecting on the first interview, I came to recognize some things, like how much I have been an experiential learner and what I said in response to your questions all had to do with my process. I'm not sure that I had really put that together conceptually so I think I will probably gain from having languaged that and put it together in a recognizable form.... It really was fun to do. I'm glad that I decided to go ahead and do it.

Another participant said:

I did have breakfast with my best friend, and I was

talking to her about it [the first interview], and I said that it was helpful to me in seeing the progression of things and seeing that there is a method to the madness, so to speak, and there's a way that all this [her development] is fit together. It felt pretty good. It was nice to see a progression and it made sense.

Another participant had reflected on the first interview and had conceptualized her desire to be a therapist as a type of calling; a call which arose "out of an internally driven process." She realized that she indeed had an internal process which moves her forward.

#### Importance of Second Interview

Generally, the second interviewed provided confirmation of themes, expanded information, and increased detail in the data. All of the participants appeared more relaxed and open during the second interview, and that comfort likely contributed to them providing more data.

Importantly, there was also a sense of satisfaction that, in this study, the research process contributed to the participants rather than simply taking what they offered. All of them said that they gained insight into their developmental processes from participation in the interviews, and this feedback was obtained in the second

interview.

I realized in one of the early second interviews that a participant's inner voice had had a significant influence on him by motivating him to search and learn. From this point I was sensitized to the possibility that this may also be an experience of other therapists, and I explored the category of intuition and inner voice in the subsequent interviews. Other categories of data emerged in a similar fashion.

The second interview with one participant deepened the theme of integration of personal and professional selves. More information emerged concerning the issue of boundaries and the use of self as they related to the emerging main theme. It provide a broader concept of the participant's idea of training and training that would be useful after 10 years experience, i.e., the elder system. The participant referred to this later training as the "second level of training," comparing it to elder systems which exist in indigenous cultures.

Exploring the use of elders by therapists could be an interesting topic for future research.

### Limitations

Replication of qualitative research is possible; however, anyone attempting to do so must keep in mind that even under tightly controlled experimental conditions time

is kinetic and real world conditions change. Thus, replication in the pure sense is virtually impossible (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). A researcher replicating this study may get different results or uncover different information. Therapists with different personal and professional responsibilities may report very different events and themes. Although the descriptions of the data were detailed, generalizations must be modest and cautious since the participants represent a small sample of individual life experiences. Any theory generated must be considered tentative and preliminary.

Using therapists with ten years experience implies that they have managed to survive as successful professionals. Their ability to survive and, seemingly thrive, suggests health. However, one may say that there are other ingredients to healthy therapist development that did not emerge because the research design may have only allowed for inclusion of therapists who view growth through self exploration.

While all the participants in this study reported that an understanding of self was important to their development as marriage and family therapists, it may have been because only therapists who thought use of self was important would have volunteered to participate in a study on therapist development. Therapists who see little value in exploring

personal history or family-of-origin issues may not see value in participating in this type of study (Guerin and Hubbard, 1987) and may also have experienced healthy development in other ways.

This group of marriage and family therapists all believe that self examination is crucial to personal and professional effectiveness. They all believe it is important to be aware of one's FOD issues. All of them were willing to risk the interview process which required further examination of self. It may be that a group that is oriented this way is more likely to volunteer for this kind of research than therapists with a different philosophical orientation.

The data collected for this study are self report and represent the stories of the participants. It is the intention of qualitative research to reveal the personal meaning inherent in participants' experiences. In quantitative research, self report is at times viewed as a weakness (not objective) but in qualitative research, self report is considered a strength (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, the questioning process and the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher served to enhance the detail of the data. The researcher used questions to focus the participant on the subject area being explored. Theoretical sensitivity of the researcher

(awareness of issues potentially relevant to the research, see Chapter III) helped guide the use of questions to elicit more detail about themes that emerged during the research process. Viewing of the first interview before conducting the second with each participant alerted the researcher to areas which needed more exploration. If a participant only gave cursory attention to a topic in the first interview, the researcher could follow up in the second by encouraging the participant to elaborate. Because the researcher was an experienced marriage and family therapist and could be empathetic and sensitive to issues they faced, the participants may have been more comfortable revealing personal experiences.

Some of the categories generated were not directly related to the main theme and may not "fit" into the final product of this research. The final product can be constructed or created several different ways using more or less the same material (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Surplus categories could be helpful if the data were to be reexamined using a focus other than development, grouping the data differently and achieving an alternate qualitative picture. Examples of a different focus are: the influence of friendship in therapist development, exploration of the use of elders by therapists, the importance of the spiritual/philosophical growth of the MFT, the ingredients

of developmental motivation or, the influences of family-of-origin work on long term development. This, of course, would be valid but would require an additional full analysis of the data and a different set of research objectives. In order to keep this study manageable, the analysis was limited to the study of development, which, in this study, emerged as synthesis and a product of internal motivation to grow.

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Appendix A

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February 14, 1995

Dear           (participant)          ,

I am a doctoral candidate in the marriage and family therapy program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

I am currently collecting data for my dissertation, Significant Events and Themes in the Development of Marriage and Family Therapists: A Qualitative Study. There is little research reported in the field of MFT on the development of therapists beyond their graduate training experience, and I hope my study will begin to address the gap in the literature. I also believe that research on marriage and family therapist development has the potential to provide information and ideas for supervision, thus, facilitating the growth of therapists and possibly increasing efficacy of therapy.

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research project. I plan to recruit eight to ten, actively practicing professional marriage and family therapists with approximately ten years experience. During two videotaped and/or audiotaped interviews, participants will be asked to speak about important events and influences in their lives that are related to their professional development. In the second interview, the participants will be asked to reflect on the first interview, to contribute any further thoughts, and to comment on my impressions of the first interview. Asking the participants for feedback will allow them the chance to corroborate themes, to delete material, and to become a co-researcher. Each interview will last from one to two hours. A third interview will be scheduled only if the second interview is incomplete. The tapes will be reviewed only by me, and the identity of each participant will be kept confidential. All tapes will be erased at the end of the project. Every effort will be made to schedule interviews at times convenient for the participants.

If you are interested in participating, please take a moment to indicate your interest on the enclosed form and return it to me in the self addressed envelope. If you have questions, please call and I will be happy to address them.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

R. Lynn Coward

Appendix B

RESEARCH PROJECT

Significant Events and Themes in the  
Development  
of Marriage and Family Therapists

Researcher: R. Lynn Coward

Phone: 704-264-5686

I have read the information on your research project, and I am interested in participating. Please contact me to schedule a meeting time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

Convenient time(s) to call: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants  
of Investigative Projects

Title of Project: Significant Events and Themes in the  
Development of Marriage and Family Therapists: A  
Qualitative Study

Principal Investigator: R. Lynn Coward

I. THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

You are invited to participate in a study about the development of marriage and family therapists. This study involves in-depth interviewing for the purpose of examining the important events and influences contributing to the developmental process of marriage and family therapists. The intention is to provide information which can be useful in understanding and facilitating the growth of therapists, and for further research.

This study involves eight to ten participants.

II. PROCEDURES

The procedures to be used in this study are in-depth interviews. You will be asked to participate in a minimum of two interviews with the principal investigator. Each interview will last from one to two hours.

It is possible that discussing your experiences and process of development will elicit some emotional feelings. Every effort will be made to move at a pace which is comfortable and reasonable, allowing time for pauses and reflection.

Every effort will be made to arrange agreeable meeting times and places.

III. BENEFITS OF THIS PROJECT

Your participation in this project will provide information about important issues and transitions in the developmental process of marriage and family therapists. There is little research done on the effects of practicing marriage and family therapy and the strategies used to keep

the self of the therapist fresh, creative, and effective. This research could potentially uncover information which could facilitate the growth of therapists and lead to improved efficacy of therapy.

It is uncertain what will be found in this research, therefore, there can be no guarantee of particular benefits.

You may receive a synopsis or summary of this research when completed if you so desire.

#### IV. EXTENT OF ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The identity of participants will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will I release the interviews to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent. The information you provide will have your name removed and only a participant number will identify you during analyses and any written reports of the research.

The interviews will be videotaped and/or audiotaped. These tapes will be reviewed only by R. Lynn Coward and will be erased after the research is completed. If a research assistant is required for any transcription, the assistant will sign a pledge of confidentiality. The assistant will agree to withdraw from transcribing tapes of anyone who is known to the assistant.

#### V. COMPENSATION

There is no formal compensation available for your participation.

#### VI. FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

#### VII. APPROVAL OF RESEARCH

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for projects involving human subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Family and Child Development.

#### VIII. SUBJECT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

I know of no reason why I cannot participate in this study.

---

Participant's Signature

IX. SUBJECT'S PERMISSION

I have read and understand the informed consent and conditions of the project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in the project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I will contact:

R. Lynn Coward                      704-264-5686

Howard Protinsky,  
Faculty Advisor                      703-231-6782

Ernest Stout, Chair of              703-231-6077  
IRB Research Division

Appendix D

Demographic Information

Participant Number

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Education

Ethnicity/Race

Gender

Employment Setting

Years of Experience

Hours of Client Contact per Week

Family of Origin:

Parents

Grandparents

Siblings (birth order)

Marital/partner status and history

Children girls \_\_\_\_\_ boys \_\_\_\_\_

Mentors

Appendix E

Research Assistant's Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Study: Significant Events and Themes in the Development of Marriage and Family Therapists: A Qualitative Study

Primary Researcher: R. Lynn Coward

Confidentiality Pledge

I understand that the information being collected in this study is sensitive, personal and is strictly confidential. I hereby pledge that I will keep all such information confidential. I also pledge to withdraw immediately from further involvement with a particular interview if I discover that the participant whose interview I am transcribing is known to me in any way.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## VITA

R. Lynn Coward  
381 Forest Lane  
Boone, North Carolina 28607  
704-264-5686

### EDUCATION

Ph.D. 1996, Department of Family and Child Development,  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,  
Blacksburg, Virginia.

Major Area: Marriage and Family Therapy  
Dissertation: *Significant Events and Themes in  
the Development of Marriage and Family  
Therapists: A Qualitative Study* (proposal  
approved 5/13/94; completion, May, 1996)

M.A. 1988, Department of Human Development and Psychological  
Counseling, Appalachian State University, Boone, North  
Carolina.

Major Area: Agency Counseling-Marriage and Family  
Therapy

B.S. 1975, Department of Forestry, North Carolina State  
University, Raleigh, N. C.

Major Area: Park Administration

### LICENSURE AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. State of North  
Carolina. License Number 581.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.  
Member from 1990 to present. Clinical member since  
1995.

American Counseling Association (formally the American  
Association for Counseling & Development). Member from  
1985 to present.

Association for Transpersonal Psychology. Member from 1991  
to present.

North Carolina Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.  
Member since 1995.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Academic Experience

Instructor: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.  
August 1990 to May 1993. FCD-3314, Human Sexuality. Taught 5000 students in this time period.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.  
August 1986 to May 1987. HPC-2200, Life and Career Planning.

Graduate Assistant: Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.  
January 1986 to May 1986. General departmental duties.

### Clinical Experience

Therapist: Private practice in the office of family physician/psychiatrist, Dr. Juan De Virgiliis, Boone, North Carolina. September 1994 to present.

Therapist: Lewis-Gale Psychiatric Center, Salem, Virginia.  
January 1993 to January 1994. (Internship, Jan. through Oct. 1993).

Therapist: The Center for Family Services, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.  
April 1991 to August 1992

Part-time private practice in individual, marital, and family therapy: Self employed, Boone, North Carolina.  
May 1989 to July 1990

Family Therapist: Commonwealth of Virginia, 27th District Court Service Unit, Galax, Virginia.  
February 1988 to April 1989

Intern: Counseling and Psychological Services Center, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.  
August 1987 to December 1987

## Career Experience

Free-lance carpenter and landscape consultant: Boone, North Carolina. January, 1981 to October, 1985.

Project Administrator, (hiking trails specialist):  
Tennessee Department of Conservation. Knoxville, Tennessee.  
January, 1981 to December, 1981.

Park Ranger & Young Adult Conservation Corps Supervisor:  
Carolina Beach State Park, Fort Macon State Park, & South  
Mountains State Park. North Carolina Department of Natural  
Resources and Community Development. July, 1976 to  
December, 1980.

## HONORS

Participant: Graduate Honors Symposium, "Ethics and the  
Professions". Cratis D. Williams Graduate School.  
Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.  
September, 1987.

Member: Gamma Beta Phi Society. 1992. Virginia  
Polytechnic Institute & State University.

## PUBLICATIONS

Marek, L., Sandifer, D., Beach, A., Coward, L., & Protinsky,  
H. (1994). Supervision without the problem: A model of  
solution-focused supervision. Journal of Family  
Psychotherapy, 5(2), 57-64.

## PRESENTATIONS

### Refereed

Dwyer, S., Sandifer, D., Marek, L., Beach, A., & Coward, L.  
"Half-hour families: A feminist perspective". National  
Council on Family Relations Annual Conference.  
Orlando, FL. November, 1992.

Beach, A., Coward, L., Marek, L., & Sandifer, D. "Leaving  
home: A qualitative study of college students  
separating from parents". National Council on Family  
Relations Annual Conference. Denver, CO. November,  
1991.

Sandifer, D., Dwyer, S., Marek, L., Beach, A., & Coward, L.  
"A qualitative analysis of television sit. coms".  
Virginia AAMFT Conference. Roanoke, VA. October,  
1991.

Sandifer, D., Dwyer, S., Marek, L., Beach, A., & Coward, L.  
"Half-hour families: A feminist perspective". 16th  
Annual Southeastern Conference on Child & Family  
Development. Greensboro, NC. April, 1990.

Invited Guest Lecturer: Communication, conflict  
resolution, & intimate relationships. Marriage &  
Family Dynamics classes. Department of Family & Child  
Development. Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State  
University. Spring, 1991; Fall, 1991; Spring, 1992;  
Fall, 1992.

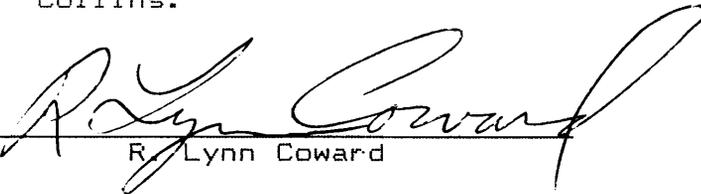
Invited Guest Speaker: Men & women in relationship, WUVT  
Campus radio, February 14, 1993.

Invited Guest Speaker: Practicing family therapy in a  
medical setting. FCD 6474, Professional Seminar in  
Marriage and Family Therapy, April 26, 1994.

#### EDITORIAL

Reviewed: Byer, C., & Shainberg, L. (1991). Dimensions  
of Human Sexuality, Third Edition. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C.  
Brown. Chapters 1 & 2, Summer, 1992.

Reviewed: Masters, W., Johnson, V., & Kolodny, R. (1992).  
Human Sexuality, Fourth Edition. New York: Harper  
Collins.



R. Lynn Coward