

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1994

Factors influencing males in their choice of social work as a career

Frieda Kepple Heim

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Heim, Frieda Kepple, "Factors influencing males in their choice of social work as a career" (1994). *Theses Digitization Project*. 864.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/864>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

FACTORS INFLUENCING MALES
IN
THEIR CHOICE OF SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Frieda Kepple Heim

June 1994

FACTORS INFLUENCING MALES
IN
THEIR CHOICE OF SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Frieda Kepple Heim
June 1994

Approved by:


Dr. Marjorie Hunt, Project Advisor, Social Work

5-24-94
Date


Paul Rout, Agency Representative


5-25-94


Gary Null, Agency Representative

5-25-94


Patrick Tansey, Agency Representative

5-25-94


Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Research Sequence

5/26/94

ABSTRACT

Using survey research design, this project attempted to discover and describe factors influencing males' choice of professional social work at the MSW level as a career. A profile of men choosing professional social work as a career was discovered from the data. Using Ott's concept of "relative uniqueness" information was obtained relating to males' perception of their numbers within the profession.

This profile could be of particular benefit in the recruitment of males into the profession via academic routes. Furthermore, specific knowledge of males who choose social work as a profession may be helpful in planning retention strategies congruent with the personality profile of male social workers working in both public and private agencies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my husband Merrill and my daughter Sheila for their loving kindness and support and for their help in keeping family life alive and well throughout the process of my education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	1
PROBLEM FOCUS.....	6
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD.....	8
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Question.....	9
Sampling.....	10
Instrument and Data Collection.....	10
Instrument.....	10
Weaknesses and Strengths of the Instrument.....	11
Factors Measured by the Questionnaire.....	11
Data Collection.....	12
Procedure.....	12
Protection of Human Subjects.....	13
ANALYSIS.....	14
Quantitative Procedures.....	14
Concepts.....	14
Tables.....	14
Qualitative Analysis.....	15
RESULTS.....	16
A Profile of the Characteristics of Male Social Workers.....	16

Age.....	16
Religious Background.....	16
Ethnicity.....	16
Education.....	17
Family Background.....	18
Background of Parents.....	19
Influences Toward Choosing Social Work as a Career.....	21
Future Plans.....	23
DISCUSSION.....	23
Gender.....	24
Age.....	28
Religion.....	28
Ethnicity.....	29
Education.....	30
Family Background.....	30
Parental Education.....	32
Influences Toward Choosing Social Work as a Career.....	34
Opinions, Please.....	34
SUMMARY.....	36
APPENDIX A: CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE SOCIAL WORKERS.....	37
REFERENCES.....	48

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social work, elementary school teaching, library work and nursing are commonly labeled female dominated professions, or "gendered" professions. (Lips, 1988; Dowell 1988). "Gendered" professions are those in which one of the genders is overrepresented while the remaining gender is either underrepresented or absent in the profession. Professions may be gendered at levels within the profession. It is not unusual to find that women constitute the majority of "front line workers" while men constitute the majority of administrative personnel in female dominated professions. "Gendering" is rooted in perceptions related to the notion of the division of labor and the attribution of traditional sex role skills, attitudes and values "which (have) placed the responsibility for caring activities almost exclusively on women..." (Condon, 1991, p. 14). This allows for the creation of a two tiered work force based on attribution of capability according to perceptions of appropriateness related to gender.

Attribution of negative value also accompanies professions with a high female to male gender ratio. Female dominated professions are not given full credence as "professions" but are instead often referred to as "semi-professions". Despite sharing the same prerequisites as other professions for advanced education and specific

credentials, female dominated professions lack influence, prestige, autonomy and control over a specific taxonomy such as characterizes the legal and medical fields (Lips, 1988). "Women, it seems, have always been in transition toward but never quite reaching [sic] full human status or full participation in the public, political, or spiritual domains. (Condon, 1991, p. 14).

Historically, female workers and their product have been devalued in that women have been more prevalent in the lowest paid and least protected sectors of the labor market (Sztaba & Colwill 1988; Colwill, 1984 in Lips 1988, Dowell 1988). A recent edition of NASW (National Association of Social Workers) NEWS (Oct. 1993, p. 1, 12) adds credence to the claim that female dominated fields experience low economic return for their efforts. NASW NEWS cited research done by Gibelman and Schervish (1993) which stated the median income for NASW members working full time in 1993, \$30,000.00, was close to the bottom of professional groups. Bridges (1989) quoted Block, Denker and Tittle (1981) and Machung (1986) as indicating that males highly value occupational status and financial benefits more so than women. Grimm and Stern (1974, in Lips, 1988) relate the "provider role", e.g. earning lots of money, of males to sex role strain, but just as adamantly stated that being less than a good provider generated similar provider role stress. Therefore, how do males, socialized to be the

breadwinners of families, reduce the negative impact of low financial return for services rendered? How do males adjust to the impact of working in a profession with reduced status? How do males adjust to working in a female dominated profession?

Many female social workers feel that a change in the male to female ratio within social work would have a positive influence on their salary scale. Lips (1988) stated that only the entrance of large numbers of men into female dominated occupations would change the status of female gendered professions. However, social work as a profession has not outgrown the notion of women as its front line workers. This contributes to the feminization of the profession and the subsequent devaluation of both the product and status of the profession and may, in turn, contribute to the discouragement of males planning to enter the field. Consequently, this perpetuates the cycle which results in a dearth of men entering front line social work positions. As verification of the dearth of men in the field in general, Gibelman and Schervish (1993) give social work statistics for 1991; 77.3% of the profession was female and 22.7% of the profession was male.

Studies by Golden, Pins and Jones (1972), Abell and McDonnell (1990), Spaulding (1990), Butler (1990), and Gibelman and Schervish (1993) have indicated the majority of aspiring social workers and actual social workers are

women. Golden, Pins and Jones (1972) found almost 60% of student respondents were females in their 1966 study of social workers. Spaulding (1990), writing in "Statistics on Social Work Education In the United States: 1989", found males to constitute 18.9% and females 81.1% of the master's students enrolled in 1989. Abell and McDonnell (1990), in evaluating the MSW class of 1990 found women to constitute 80.2% of respondents in graduate training, and of Butler's (1990) respondents, 82% were predominantly female caucasian students. Because there is little research addressing the reversal of this ratio despite the profession's clamoring for male social workers to address the needs of male clients, male social workers become a phenomenon to be studied because of their choice of social work as a profession.

Some observers pose an alternative analysis to the low male/high female ratio in female gendered professions, one in which maintaining that status quo benefits men on at least two points. First, men entering social work or any female dominated field may perceive the social role training of women an asset contributing to the furtherance of their own ambitions for power and leadership. They may interpret stereotypical social roles as influencing women to maintain organizational positions of low responsibility and authority in order to be available and responsive to the needs of their families and husbands. In other words,

women's responsiveness and availability to relational commitments, leaves open to men, relatively unchallenged, positions of authority and power, status and prestige, within the hierarchies of social work administrations and social work academia. Such thinking seems to imply that men enter female dominated professions in order to rise quickly through the ranks to administrative levels. This would indeed reduce their provider anxiety with subsequent salary increases while at the same time maximizing their perceived status among professionals.

A second point of benefit to males in professions with a high female to male ratio is underscored by E. Marlies Ott (1989), who notes that "relative uniqueness...may be an advantage for men among female majorities" (p.42). She indicates that belonging to a group with a positive label, with high status, while at the same time being a minority within one's profession, can create a more positive image for the male minority in female dominated professions. However, because of cultural prejudices, not all men belong to a high status, positively labeled male group. Such a point of view may place some males who chose social work as a profession at risk for negative stereotyping from family, peers, colleagues and some clients.

PROBLEM FOCUS

It would seem there are several inherent characteristics within social work which would dissuade a man from choosing social work as a profession, which might account for the low percentages of men entering the field. This raises the question which has become the focus of this study; what factors influence men to choose social work as a profession despite the profession's female gendered status, low economic return, and the possibility of negative impact related to token male status?

This study was an exploratory, positivist study aimed at discovering and describing a profile of men who chose to function as professionals in the female dominated field of social work. It is loosely patterned after an extensive study done by Golden, Pins and Jones (1972), who compared characteristics of social work students in CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) accredited schools of social work and also attempted to build a profile of social work students. They noted that in 1966, approximately 40% of first year social work students were men. Half the beginning graduate students were under 25 years of age, and almost half had been or were married. Religious affiliation indicated slightly more than 50% were Protestant, 25% were Catholic and 16% were Jewish. Ethnically, a little less than 10% were Black, 88% were Caucasian. The SES (socio-economic status) of students'

parents was lower middle and middle class. Comparison with a 1960 study done by Pins (1963) indicated that more of the 1966 group entered social work at a younger age than the 1960 group: in 1966 more students entering social work were under 24 years of age, and a greater number were married than the 1960 group. In 1966 students came from a higher SES than the 1960 group.

Abell and McDonell (1990) evaluated the MSW class of 1990 in a national, stratified random sample survey of full time graduate students in seven (7) public and four (4) private graduate schools of social work. They reported a higher percentage of female entrants (80.2%) in the incoming, full time graduate class than the 1966 study; caucasians again dominated the sample (79.1%). Black males accounted for 9.2% of entrants. There were undesignated percentages of two minority groups: Hispanics and Asians. Married students constituted 35% of the group while 13.1% were separated or divorced and 49.7% were single. Sixty three percent of the sample had no children. Fifteen percent of the sample held a BSW degree. Students indicated that the versatility of the MSW degree was of great importance in their choice of social work as a career.

Butler (1990) studied social work students' career interests at the MSW level and found commitment to the traditional values of social work strong, despite 63% of

social work students expressing a desire to enter private practice as therapists. Butler's study verified an increasing trend in the number of women entering social work; 82% were female among predominantly caucasian students.

Other studies (Rotberg, Brown and Ware, 1987; Schein, Mueller and Jacobsen, 1989; Wong, Kettlewell and Sproule, 1985; and King and King, 1985) confirm the importance of ethnicity, gender, sex role orientation, SES factors, career self efficacy and socialization patterns as variables influencing the process of occupational choice making. This study dealt with men only and obtained a profile of men in social work based on ethnicity, SES factors, socialization patterns and career self efficacy.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore, discover and describe a profile of men who chose to enter social work as a profession. Social work is a profession with several inherent characteristics which might be negatively construed by anyone choosing it as their life's work. However several of these characteristics may impact males more severely. The particular detractor attributes of social work include but are not limited to:

1. The profession's female dominance in line worker/entry level positions with the implicit loss of professional status accorded gendered professions;
2. the profession's low economic return in line worker positions and the consequent role provider strain and reduced status as a good provider in the eyes of significant others; and
3. the possibility of being designated the "token male" within the system, especially if the male social worker does not belong to a staturesd, male group within the society at large.

Research Question

Considering the low ratio of males to females in social work, these and other characteristics may have a powerful, negative effect on some men. This study was designed to look at a profile of men in social work and to ask what influences acted upon them in their choice of social work as a profession? The project utilized a one-shot, exploratory, survey research design.

An implication to be considered in the use of survey design studies is that they can be circumscribed by the range of questions predetermined for use in the survey. It was hoped that the use of space within the questionnaire for further comments contributed to overriding any barriers

to revelation on the part of the respondents.

Sampling

Members of the population of interest were males who had already made the choice of social work as a professional career at the MSW level and were currently working at that educational level in the profession. The Department of Public Social Services in two counties and the medical social work department of a local county hospital provided the subject pool for the study. Fifty two questionnaires were returned; two were unusable.

Instrument and Data Collection

Instrument. Respondents completed a one-shot survey questionnaire adapted for this research from the survey questionnaire used by Golden, Pins and Jones (1972). Modifications made the questionnaire specific to male MSWs and allowed for personal comments. The questionnaire did not ask the participant to evaluate their current job placement nor did it ask for information that compromised their current situation.

Because the questionnaire was an amended version of one used by Golden, Pins, and Jones (1972), validity, reliability and cultural sensitivity of the amended instrument were not tested.

Weaknesses and Strengths of the Instrument.

Weaknesses of self report inventories (SRI) relate to their having a tendency to miss reporting on important choices relevant to the respondent simply because item choices have been preselected by the researcher. An attempt was made to allow personal comments throughout the amended questionnaire thus expanding statements of choice specific to the respondent. Similarly, another weakness of SRIs is that they may not capture internal or motivational characteristics of the respondent. It was hoped that the frequent use of space for "Other" responses would provide an accurate reflection of the influences upon the decision making of men choosing social work as a profession.

Strengths of SRI questionnaires are that a large quantity of information can be presented in a uniform manner and many persons can be sampled in a short space of time. This particular survey provided check-off answers for speed and ease of answering, and comments/specify lines to allow for more explanation of answers. There were also several questions which sought the respondent's opinions.

Factors Measured by the Questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide a profile of men who chose to enter social work as MSWs and to assess for influencing factors which led to their decision to become social workers. Along with demographic information the survey asked for specific information on commencement and

completion of both the bachelor's degree and the master's degree, SES status of the family of origin, sibling position in the family of origin and educational level of parents in the family of origin. Several questions assessed the time at which the respondent began to consider social work as a career.

Data Collection. Three participating agencies distributed and made arrangements for mailing the sealed inventory directly to the researcher, or for pick up of the sealed inventory by the researcher. Each questionnaire was distributed in the Winter Quarter of 1994, with a sealable envelope and written instructions to return the completed form inside the sealed envelope. This aided the process of confidentiality.

Procedure

This research project was a one-shot survey: respondents completed the questionnaire one time only. Questionnaires were delivered by the researcher to a designated supervisor within the organization. They were then distributed to participants via internal organizational mail procedures, accompanied by a memorandum written by the supervisor who had given permission for the study. Most respondents completed the survey within 3 to 4 weeks; however the designated closure time remained the end of the quarter. Several trips were made to pick up those

questionnaires returned to the organization. Some questionnaires were mailed directly from the respondent to the researcher.

Protection of Human Subjects

To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of human subjects, personal names were not collected on the completed questionnaires. A document labeled "Informed Consent" constituted the front page of the survey. It described the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of participation in the study and requested the signature of the respondent as giving his consent to participate and as designating his understanding of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of participation.

Upon receiving the completed questionnaires, each was assigned an identification number for the purpose of rechecking coded data entries if that was deemed necessary. The "Informed Consent" sheets were removed from the completed questionnaire and maintained in a separate envelope within the researcher's home. Any question unanswered was assigned a number indicating a "missing information" category. Completed questionnaires were stored at the home of the researcher during the analysis of data.

Subjects were given, through separate documentation, using the same delivery system, a debriefing statement with

the telephone number of Dr. Hunt, Project Advisor at California State University, San Bernardino. Through this contact subjects could obtain information about the project, or talk about any troubling aspect of the survey. There were no known risks to humans as a result of completing this questionnaire.

ANALYSIS

Quantitative Procedures

Concepts. This research project used a survey response questionnaire to explore the research question. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions with closed end responses and frequent opportunity for comments. Statistical analysis was generated by the SPSS computer analysis program.

Demographic information on age, ethnicity, marital status, sibling position, number of siblings, religious persuasion, SES and educational levels of the family of origin was obtained. Information related to personal perceptions of influencing factors such as having a sense of self efficacy or fit about the work of social work or having a sense of altruism about social work's contribution to individuals and society was asked for.

Tables. The demographic data provided nominal variables which were used to generate univariate statistics in the form of frequency tables. From these, valid

percentages were obtained. Ordinal variables were obtained from ranking information such as birth order and socioeconomic status. These were grouped and treated as nominal variables. Appropriate measures of central tendency, such as the mean, the median and the mode were calculated on particular variables such as age and SES. Other measurements of variability obtained from these univariate statistics included minimum and maximum values and the range of values.

Qualitative Analysis

Several questions requested comments. These comments were written out and analyzed using open coding as a first step. In the open coding process the data was broken down line by line, or paragraph by paragraph, into discrete parts which were then labeled conceptually. Related conceptualizations were grouped into categories. Categories were conceptually labeled broadly enough to encompass all the concepts and the properties they held.

Next, axial coding procedures were performed to make connections between categories. These connections followed coding procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This paradigm involves discovering, from the categorized data, the progression of causal conditions leading to the occurrence of the phenomena under consideration in the question, or the context surrounding the phenomena. As a

result of both open coding and axial coding, broad themes emerged in response to the questions asked. These broad themes shed more light on the research question why men chose social work as a professional career. Themes were categorized according to similarity and synthesized in writing, to further elucidate factors which male social workers stated contributed to their choice of social work as a career.

RESULTS

A Profile of the Characteristics of Male Social Workers

Age. Fifty male social workers responded to the self reporting survey and indicated they were between 24 and 60 years of age, with a mean age of 46 years within the group and a bimodal age of 48 years of age (8%) and 56 years of age (8%). Forty per cent of respondents were in their fifties, 28% in their forties, and 22% in their thirties. Six per cent were in their twenties, with 4% indicated they were 60 years of age.

Religious Background. Forty percent of respondents claimed Protestant affiliations, 28% denied any religious affiliation, 18% claimed Catholicism, 8% claimed another religious affiliation than those listed, 4% claimed to be Jewish. Two percent did not respond to this question.

Ethnicity. Caucasians represented 76% of respondents, while Asians and Hispanics each represented 8% of

respondents. African Americans represented 4% of respondents and Native Americans represented 2% of respondents. Two percent gave no response.

Education. Seventy six percent of male respondents had commenced their undergraduate work by 20 years of age: one respondent entered a baccalaureate program at age 16. For this group, baccalaureate education concluded at age 35. A full 46% began college education at 18 years of age, following what might be considered a typical course for American young people fresh out of high school. By the age of 25, 94% had entered bachelor's studies. Another 4% of the group began their bachelor's studies between the ages of 32 and 35. It was interesting to note, that in this group, no one began baccalaureate studies between the ages of 26 and 31 years of age or after 35 years of age. Two percent did not respond to this question.

Sixty eight percent had completed undergraduate work by age 25 and 86% had completed undergraduate studies by age 29. Another 12% completed bachelor studies by age 38. These figures may indicate that for some, life factors caused the four year degree to stretch out longer than anticipated. Two percent did not complete this question.

Seventy six percent indicated an undergraduate major in the social sciences, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, political science, economics and social work.

At the master's level, 56% had commenced master's education by 29 years of age, with the largest percentages of males (10% in each age group) beginning master's education at the specific ages of 24 and 28. By 39 years of age, 92% had returned for post graduate education. In this group of respondents, men in their thirties constituted 36% of beginning graduate students. An interesting finding is that males in their forties constituted 8% of returnees for graduate studies in social work.

By 29 years of age, 38% had completed their master's education in social work. An additional 42% had completed by 39 years of age. Another sixteen percent completed their master's education by age 48, and 4% did not respond to this question.

For most, graduate education was completed in two or three years. Seventy percent indicated they went full time and 18% indicated they went part time. Some, 6%, indicated going both full time and part time to accomplish their educational goal while the remaining 6% did not respond. None of the respondents indicated they had a master's level degree in another field; 2% indicated they possessed a doctorate, a decline when compared to their fathers, of whom 4% obtained doctorates.

Family Background. Almost three fourths of respondents (74%) were married, 14% were divorced or

separated and 12% reported they were never married. When asked about their position among siblings in their family of origin, 52% indicated they were firstborn children; 24% were middle children and 24% were the youngest children in their family of origin. For these social workers, family of origin size ranged from being the only child in the family to being one of 10 children in the family. Sixty four percent came from families with one to four children in the family: 2% were only children, 34% came from homes containing two children only, 16% from homes with three children and 12% from homes with four children. Twenty two percent of respondents came from homes with five to ten children in the family. Fourteen percent gave no response to this item.

Perceived socioeconomic status (SES) precluded listing precise dollar amounts in favor of the personal perceptions of the respondents regarding the SES of their families of origin. A little over half of the respondents (52%) claimed to have grown up in middle class socioeconomic backgrounds while almost one third (32%) stated they came from lower class socioeconomic backgrounds. A total of 16% claimed upper class socioeconomic family backgrounds.

Background of Parents. Thirty two percent of male social workers responding to this questionnaire stated their father's occupation to be in the skilled or semi-skilled arena while 28% of respondent's fathers were

professional people and 20% were proprietors, business owners, bankers, officials or involved as officers in the service. The remaining percentage was divided into 10% clerical, sales, and office workers, and 8% listed in an "other" category. Two percent declined to answer.

In response to "mother's occupational status", 36% of males had mothers in the "Other" category; many indicated their mothers were full time housewives and mothers. Twenty eight percent of male respondents had mothers involved in clerical, sales and office occupations, while 16% had mothers involved as professional persons in medicine, teaching, law, science, and library science. Twelve percent of responding male social workers stated their mothers were involved in skilled and semi skilled work, while 4% were proprietors, managers and officials. Four per cent of respondents omitted this question.

When frequencies of the educational background of each sex parent were tabulated they indicated that 10% of respondents' mothers never attended high school; 12% attended high school, while 38% completed high school. In secondary education, 22% of mothers attended college and 12% completed college. Four percent of mothers obtained a master's degree. Two percent of mothers were deceased and their educational status was not accounted for.

Fathers who never attended high school comprised 8% of the group; those who attended high school equaled 20%,

while 34% completed high school. Regarding secondary education, 14% of fathers attended college, 8% completed college, 8% obtained a master's degree and 4% obtained a doctorate. Four percent were listed as deceased and educational status was not accounted for.

Comparison of the educational means of both genders indicates that fathers have more education (3.74) than mothers (3.44) overall, possibly as a result of those fathers obtaining doctoral degrees.

Because the approval of significant people could be relevant to career choice, one question sought to elucidate who did or did not approve of the career choice of the male respondents in this survey. Fifty per cent of fathers approved compared to 66% of mothers, while 24% of fathers had mixed reactions compared to 20% of mothers regarding the professional choice of their sons. An equal percent of fathers and mothers (8%) disapproved; 18% of fathers and 6% of mothers were not accounted for by respondents.

In rating the approval of significant others such as wives and lovers, 64% gave approval for the respondent's career choice while 20% were of mixed or disapproving opinions. There was no response for 16% of respondents to this question.

Influences Toward Choosing Social Work as a Career.

In order to assess the ranking of influences upon the career choice of respondents, male social workers were

asked to choose, in order of importance, the three most important influences upon their choice of social work as a profession. The desire to serve poor and disadvantaged populations was chosen as their first most important influence by 22% of respondents. Similarly, 20% indicated the same response as second in importance and influence regarding their choice of social work as a career. The third choice, with 16% of respondents choosing it, was a consideration of the versatility of the MSW degree in regards to being acceptable in other states and encompassing a variety of work areas within the social work profession. When asked about alternative careers considered or worked at, teaching, business, psychology and law emerged as popular fields. However, when asked for one major reason they did not follow the career considered, 30% stated they learned about social work and considered themselves better suited for it. Twelve per cent had tried another career through work or study and nullified it as a life career. Ten per cent were offered employment in social work.

Forty four per cent of respondents became aware of social work as a career during the first three years of college while 24% became aware of the field after graduation from college. However, the decision to definitely enter social work as a career came during the last year of college for 30% of male respondents and after

graduation from college for 54% of respondents.

Future Plans. Upon completion of graduate education 74% of respondents went into public agency social work. Ten per cent indicated "Other" fields as post graduate social work jobs. Four percent went into Supervision, while another 4% went into administration and 2% went into private practice. Six per cent of respondents did not answer this question.

When asked about plans five years after graduation, 32% indicated they planned to go into, or did go into a supervisory capacity in social work. Thirty per cent planned on public agency work while 14% expected to be involved in administration. Six per cent planned to go into private practice and 4% planned "Other" types of work. Fourteen percent did not respond to this question. No one indicated plans to enter into consultation or research in social work five years post graduate education.

DISCUSSION

Throughout this section comparisons of this study will be made to information obtained by Golden, Pins and Jones (1972) in two national studies of social workers done in the years 1960 and 1966. While tight comparisons and conclusions cannot be drawn due to the different constitution of the groups surveyed, trends over time create interesting topics of speculation. This section

will also include summations of the qualitative data requested at the end of the questionnaire.

Gender. Statistics indicate a higher female to male ratio in social work. Golden, Pins and Jones (1972) indicated that in 1966 almost 60% of student respondents were females; slightly more than 80% of Abell and McDonnell's (1990) 1990 MSW class were females, while 82% of Butler's (1990) respondents were females. Gibelman and Schervish (1993) indicate that in 1991 77.3% of the profession was female. However, male respondents in this survey indicated they hardly noticed the gender imbalance; for most, gender balance was not a consideration, either positively or negatively, in their choice of the field. As one respondent put it, "Social work is a non-gendered concept."

However, considering that previously given statistics overwhelmingly supported the notion of a gender imbalance in the field of Social Work, and given the afore stated implications of this imbalance, the fact that many respondents of this survey indicated they hardly noticed the imbalance posed a conundrum. Some respondents indicated they worked mostly with men in their professional life. For those who worked mostly with female colleagues it was speculated that social stereotypes generally promoted the acceptability and norm of a high female to male ratio in both social and professional life. Only when

the stereotype is fractured does the anomaly become focused upon, as it might if one viewed a female plumber surrounded by male counterparts, or a female fire fighter carrying a limp child down the ladder from a burning building, or a female winemaker taste-testing her wine in a circle of male colleagues.

A second speculation postulated that the caring component of social work also justified and normalized, in both a social sense and a professional sense, the high female to male ratio.

There is no anomaly in either of these speculations in light of social stereotypes. Thus, the anomaly is not that social work contains a high number of women, but that there are any males in the field at all.

Several respondents indicated awareness of transgressing social stereotypes and voiced some genuine concern about the image others imposed on them. However, most indicated they were basically unconcerned with society's negative stereotyping of them as a result of their professional choice. They viewed themselves as unwilling to allow others to define who they were and what was important to them. In fact some took exception to labeling the profession a "gendered profession," and stated that the emphasis on the gender constitution of the profession only furthered the stereotype of males as being out of character if they possessed attributes of

sensitivity, caring and compassion. They preferred to see social acceptance of an expansion of male attributes as inclusive of these softer emotions. Respondents stated they chose social work as a profession out of a desire to be of help to others and out of the strong belief that it was possible to help others change their lives for the better.

In support of the alternative analysis to the low male/high female ratio in female gendered professions alluded to earlier, several respondents indicated an awareness that there were fewer males to compete against. They claimed their small numbers made them more visible to management and therefore, more easily promotable.

Regarding the hypothesis of E. Marlies Ott that relative uniqueness has advantages for men in female gendered professions, most respondents indicated they never gave their uniqueness any thought. It is possible that this response again typified social expectations of entitlement related to gender as the norm in that only a deviation from the norm would be noticed. However, some respondents indicated awareness of gender bias favoring males in promotions and in obtaining agency financial aid for advanced schooling.

Several respondents, however, viewed their uniqueness within the profession as a groundbreaking opportunity. They recognized that their uniqueness and scant numbers

gave them the foundational opportunity to serve as positive, competent, non-abusive male role models, demonstrating nurturing characteristics towards and for both clients and coworkers.

Many respondents felt nurtured and supported by women in their work environments and appreciated the mostly positive experience working with women had been for them. However, some indicated the existence of sex bias issues. Namely, that organizationally, only one orientation to issues was presented. For example, social work may be centered on viewing abuse issues from the point of view of the woman always being the victim rather than the victimizer and from the point of view of males as always being the abusers rather than the abused. Social work as a profession may not be active enough in presenting a positive view of males as role models, for either their clients or for their professional staff.

Respondents also indicated other sex bias issues: men were expected to do any casework which hinted of danger; male social workers were sometimes unfairly singled out for male bashing and sexist remarks by female workers because of broad generalizations related to men as oppressive, and that gender territoriality, e.g. female counselor with rape victim or male counselor with rapist, may perpetuate stereotypes and restrict opportunity for personal growth and corrective role modeling by male social workers.

A profound disadvantage expressed by male social workers working in a field where the ratio of women to men is approximately 4:1 was the sense of loss related to male bonding and same sex understanding of the pressures of the job. Several respondents were acutely aware of the loss of camaraderie among males and the lack of a shared social taxonomy related to male interests beyond the job.

Age. The statistics on age presented an increasing percentage of male social workers in each decade until the sixth decade. Six percent were in their twenties, 22% in their thirties, 28% in their forties and 40% in their fifties. A drastic reduction is seen as social workers enter their sixth decade: only 4% of respondents were in their 60s and may be accounted for by retirement patterns.

Religion. Golden, Pins and Jones (1972) found Protestant representation greatest in both their 1960 (55.7%) and 1966 (51.5%) studies, although declining through the years. This study indicates the perpetuation of that decline with 40% being Protestant. However, while Golden et. al. show that 5.4% and 4.7% in the years 1960 and 1966 respectively indicated "none" in their religious affiliation category, 28% of male social workers responding to this survey indicated no religious affiliation. Catholicism represented 23.3% and 26.2% in 1960 and 1966 respectively, but 18% in this study. Jewish representation was 4% in this study compared to 14.1% and 16.4%

respectively in 1960 and 1966.

Overall, this study indicates a decline in claiming allegiance to one of the traditionally recognized religions in the United States, and an increase in claiming no religious affiliation (28%), an "other" religious affiliation (8%), or no response to the inquiry (2%). It is possible that the decline in "owning" a religious preference is due to the influence of political correctness in our society or an effort to present a neutral front to clients, as well as simply having no religious/spiritual connections. However social work literature is now promoting spiritual support as a resource, making it quite possible that in the future these statistics will change again.

Ethnicity. Golden et.al. (1972) presented three categories for race and found "white" to constitute 86.3% and 88.1% in 1960 and 1966 respectively. While all three studies cannot be strictly compared categorically because Golden et. al. (1972) included both males and females in their study, this study indicates 76% of respondents were caucasian, an approximate 12% decline in "white"/caucasian applicants. However this decline may only be representative of the overall male population within social work. Golden et. al (1972) indicated 11.8% and 9.3% of co-ed applicants were "black" in the years 1960 and 1966 respectively, while 4% of male respondents recognized

themselves as "African American" in this study. In Golden et.al. (1972) there were no other races specified. In this study Asians and Hispanics each represented 8% of male respondents. Of interest here, because of cultural outlook on life, is the 8% Asian male representation within social work. Native Americans had a 2% representation within respondents.

Education. Eight per cent of beginning master's level social workers in this study were between the ages of 40 and 45. This compares similarly with the comparative work done by Golden, Pins and Jones (1972) which found the percentage of students 40 to 49 years of age who entered graduate school in both 1960 and 1966 to also constitute 8% of graduate students. However, their study included both men and women entering graduate school. But an interesting speculation might be that women in their 40s might be still occupied with family responsibilities, and because of the years compared, 1960 and 1966, that the 8% of Golden et. al. (1972), might have been mostly men entering graduate school in their forties. If this were an accurate speculation, the percentage of men entering graduate school in their fourth decade would have remained consistent across the years.

Family Background. Regarding perceived socioeconomic status, Golden et. al. (1972) found a similar pattern of distribution in 1960 with the bulk of social work students

(43%), men and women, claiming middle class socioeconomic origins compared to 52% of male respondents claiming the same SES in this study. Thirty two percent of Golden et. al. (1972) respondents claimed lower class socioeconomic origins compared to 32% of male respondents in this study. Twenty three per cent of Golden et. al. (1972) respondents claimed upper class socioeconomic origins while 16% in this study did so.

Of note is the constancy of the workforce contribution of the lower class across these two studies; 32% of respondents in Golden et. al. (1972) and 32% in this study.

However, in 1966, possibly due to the emphasis on increased concern about the world among college students, the pattern changed somewhat. The bulk of social work students (42%), men and women included (Golden et. al., 1972), came from the upper class. Forty percent came from the middle class and 18% from the lower class.

In this study, as in Golden et. al. (1972) in 1960, it was found that of those students not claiming middle class economic status, more identified with lower class economic status than with upper class economic status. In this study, 32% identified with lower economic origins compared to 16% who identified with upper class economic origins. Historically, social work began out of the concern of an affluent class; in this 1994 study, 32% of respondents come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, while the more

affluent class contributed 16% of respondents.

Parental Education. In this group of respondents a higher percentage of mothers than fathers never attended high school. A higher percentage of mothers (38%) completed high school than fathers (34%) of this group. The trend continued into secondary education: 22% of mothers attended college compared to 14% of fathers and 12% of mothers completed college compared to 8% of fathers. This may reflect a historical trend among women of that era going on for secondary education, and of postponing marriage, for the purpose of completing their baccalaureate education. Similarly and in reverse, it may reflect an historical trend of the time, that of young men marrying during baccalaureate education, hastening marriage and family economic responsibilities which may have prevented a number of them from completing their college educations. For those who did not marry and did not complete their education, it may reflect the reality of difficult economic times in the lives of many of these fathers when they were young men.

However, the trend reversed at the graduate level of education for some of these fathers: 4% of mothers compared to 8% of fathers obtained a master's degree and 4% of fathers, while none of the mothers, obtained doctoral degrees.

Regarding the approval of parents and significant

others when males made their choice of social work as a career, responses indicated that more fathers were reluctant to give their sons full approval for their choice of social work as a professional career when compared to mothers. Fifty per cent of fathers approved compared to 66% of mothers. Thirty two percent of fathers had mixed or disapproving responses to their son's career choice compared to 28% of mothers. Some respondents indicated they were aware their choice of career could result in possible disapproval from a male dominated society. In fact, one respondent stated that he was generally more respected by women and less respected by men for what he did within his career.

And even among significant others, 20% had mixed or disapproving responses to the respondent's choice of social work as a career. The circularity of the effects of compliance or non compliance with social stereotypes can be postulated here. It would seem that the approval of others, particularly significant others and same sex parents, as well as compliance with societal gender stereotypes, are key influences of the gendering of a profession.

On the other hand, 50% of fathers did approve of their son's choice of profession. Further study of these respondents and life satisfaction perceptions regarding their work is indicated.

Influences Toward Choosing Social Work as a Career.

Overall, respondents indicated that altruism and humanitarianism directed towards the poor and disadvantaged played a major role in their decision to enter social work. Consideration of the versatility of the MSW degree was also an influential factor in choosing this particular avenue for their expression of humanitarianism and altruism. It is quite possible that consideration of the degree's versatility reflected the need to consider the uncertain economic climate and increased mobility of the day.

Other factors influencing men in their choice of social work related to their vision of social work as making an important contribution to society and as a change agent within society, an enjoyment of working with people, and a strong sense of efficacy and fit with the type of work involved in social work.

As mentioned earlier, 54% of respondents made the definitive decision to enter the social work profession after graduation from college while 30% made that decision during their last year of college. These statistics indicate a potential window of recruitment opportunity for graduate schools interested in increasing their numbers of male applicants. The post baccalaureate decision may also indicate that graduate schools of social work should also target market the workplace for male recruits.

Opinions, please. Respondents were given opportunity

to evaluate their profession based on a quote from an article published in the National Association of Social Workers newspaper in October of 1993. In it, Jon Hiratsuka stated that "social work salaries have barely kept pace with inflation and continue to reflect a significant bias based on sex....The median income for NASW members working full time in 1993 was \$30,000."

Many respondents denied salary considerations had any influence in their decision to enter and stay in the field of social work and elaborated on their altruistic motivations and visions of social work as a change agent in society. However, others stated that a better salary might be helpful in attracting men to professional social work. Some, however, hinted that even if social work were a field with a higher ratio of men to women that salaries would remain low, reflecting, not a significant bias based on gender, but a bias based on the value society places on non-product oriented professions.

When asked to elaborate on what could be done to increase the number of males willing to stay in front line positions in social work, many voiced the need to improve the public image and status of the social work profession. Some cited the need for media to portray more male social workers in stronger, more positive roles indicating the breadth of social work's involvement in clinical situations, community planning, administrative positions

and politics. Others suggested better representation of social work at college career days and increased visitation to elementary and junior high school career days by male social workers willing to act as positive male role models, willing to influence the American stereotype of masculinity. These role models would portray personal gender balance as a strength.

SUMMARY

This study asked what factors influenced the choice of male social workers towards professional social work and posed several inherent professional characteristics which could act as deterrents to doing so. Statistics might also imply the existence of intrinsic deterrents for male applicants.

However, salary, the high female to male ratio, and the "token male" status do not seem to weigh as heavily as expected on the minds of the male social workers who responded to this survey. Instead, the image and status of the field among professions demanding similar educational degrees and the male gender stereotype prevalent in American society presented as issues requiring further exploration as factors which may prevent young men from entering and staying in the front lines of social work practice.

APPENDIX A
CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE SOCIAL WORKERS
QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Age_____
2. Ethnicity:
African American_____ Asian_____
- Caucasian_____ Hispanic_____
- Native American_____ Other_____
3. Current marital status:
Married_____ Never married_____
- Divorced/separated_____ Spouse deceased_____
- Other; specify_____
4. Religious affiliation:
Catholic_____ Jewish_____
- Protestant_____ None_____
- Other; specify_____
5. What is your sibling position in family of origin?
Oldest child_____ Youngest child_____
- Middle child_____
6. Number of children in family of origin?_____

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND SES DATA

7. What were/are the occupations of your father and your mother?

	Father check one only	Mother check one only
Professional person (e.g. doctor, teacher, lawyer, minister, nurse, scientist, librarian)	_____	_____
Proprietor, manager, official (e.g. business owner, banker, army officer, city official)	_____	_____
Clerical, sales, office worker (book-keeper, insurance agent, salesman)	_____	_____
Skilled or semi-skilled worker (crafts-man, barber, jeweler, bartender, plumber)	_____	_____
Other; specify	_____	_____

8. How would you classify your family's general socioeconomic situation when you were growing up?

_____ Lower lower	_____ middle lower	_____ upper lower
_____ Lower middle	_____ middle middle	_____ upper middle
_____ Lower upper	_____ middle upper	_____ upper upper

9. What is the highest level of education achieved by your parents?

	Mother Check one only	Father Check one only
Never attended high school	_____	_____
Attended High school	_____	_____
Completed High school	_____	_____
Attended college	_____	_____

Completed college	_____	_____
Did graduate work	_____	_____
Obtained Master's degree	_____	_____
Obtained Doctorate	_____	_____
Do not know	_____	_____
Deceased	_____	_____

PERSONAL EDUCATION DATA

10. Educational Status:

Age when entered Bachelor's program _____.

Age when completed Bachelor's program _____.

Age when entered MSW program _____.

Age when completed MSW program _____.

11. What was your major in your undergraduate program?
Check only one.

_____ Social Science (e.g. psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, political science, economics)

_____ Social Work

_____ Physical Science (e.g. physics, chemistry)

_____ Biological science (e.g. zoology, biology)

_____ English & Literature

_____ Foreign Languages

_____ Mathematics

_____ Fine Arts

_____ Education

_____ Business

_____Other. Specify_____

_____No major subject area.

12. Indicate below whether you hold a master's degree or a doctorate in some field other than social work.

Master's degree: Yes_____ No_____ If yes, what field?_____

Doctorate: Yes_____ No_____ If yes, what field?_____

13. To obtain your Master's degree did you attend school full time_____, part time_____, both_____?

ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

14. Indicate whether you seriously considered another career before deciding on social work; whether you worked in another career; or whether you took courses in preparation for another career? Check all those which apply.

Other career	considered	worked	took courses
business	_____	_____	_____
engineering	_____	_____	_____
law	_____	_____	_____
medicine	_____	_____	_____
nursing	_____	_____	_____
teaching	_____	_____	_____
clergy	_____	_____	_____
psychology	_____	_____	_____
sociology	_____	_____	_____

Other, specify

_____ none (Omit next question. Go to question # 16.)

15. What is the one major reason why you did not follow the career considered or tried before choosing social work as a career?

_____ Tried the career through work or study and did not like it or did not succeed.

_____ Could not finance preparatory study.

_____ Preparatory study is too long.

_____ Was not admitted to preparatory study.

_____ Learned about social work and considered myself better suited for it.

_____ Learned about social work and considered it more important work.

_____ Job opportunities, salaries and security better in social work.

_____ Could not find employment.

_____ Was offered employment in social work.

_____ Social work offered an increased range of career options.

SOCIAL WORK EXPOSURE

16. What influenced you to choose social work as a profession? Choose as many as apply:

_____ a relative who worked as a social worker

_____ church OR non-religious group involvement in outreach program to community, Mexico, another country, or a specific group of people

_____ being a recipient of social work services

_____ participation as peer counsellor in school

_____having received school counselling on the outcome
of aptitude/ability tests

_____college courses or instructors

_____being unable to pursue original professional
ambitions in another field

_____necessary step toward ultimate goal, which is

_____the versatility of the MSW degree. Explain

_____military experience as a conscientious objector,
chaplain, or medic

_____desire to serve poor and disadvantaged
populations

_____desire to enter public agency work

_____desire to enter private practice

_____Other. Explain:

17. In order of importance, which three of the above responses would you consider most important in influencing you to choose social work as a profession?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

18. When did you first become aware of social work as a career?

_____prior to last three years of high school

- _____ during the last three years of high school
- _____ during the first three years of college
- _____ during the last year of college
- _____ after graduation from college
- _____ do not remember

19. When did you first consider social work as a possible career for yourself?

- _____ prior to last three years of high school
- _____ during the last three years of high school
- _____ during the first three years of college
- _____ during the last year of college
- _____ after graduation from college
- _____ do not remember

20. When did you definitely decide on social work as your career?

- _____ prior to the last three years of high school
- _____ during the last three years of high school
- _____ during the first three years of college
- _____ during the last year of college
- _____ after graduation from college
- _____ do not remember

21. Which two of the following statements come closest to expressing major reasons why you chose social work as your career? Please number in order of importance with #1 indicating the MOST important reason and #2 indicating the NEXT important reason.

- _____ Social work is an interesting and exciting profession.
- _____ Social work will give me social status and

prestige.

_____ Social work makes an important contribution to individuals and society.

_____ I think I can succeed in this kind of work.

_____ Salaries and working conditions are good in social work.

_____ I enjoy working with people.

_____ Social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner.

_____ Job opportunity and security are good in social work.

_____ Other. Specify _____

22. How did people close to you feel about your choice of a social work career? For each person or group listed below, check only one in the applicable column.

	approved	mixed	disapproved
Father	_____	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____	_____
Relatives or family friends	_____	_____	_____
Significant Other	_____	_____	_____
Personal friends	_____	_____	_____
Teachers	_____	_____	_____
Other. Specify _____			

23. After graduation from an MSW program, in what field of practice did you/do you plan to work?

_____ Private Community Agency

_____ Public Assistance (Department of Welfare)

_____ Medical Social Work (Hospital or Public Health Dept.)

- _____ Psychiatric Social Work, Mental Health
- _____ Child Welfare
- _____ Family Services
- _____ Child and Family Welfare
- _____ Community Organization, Planning or Development
- _____ School Social Work
- _____ Occupational Social Work
- _____ Other. Specify _____

24. At what level of practice would you like to/did you engage in upon graduation, and 5 years after graduation?

	upon graduation check one only	5 years after check one only
Private Practice	_____	_____
Supervision	_____	_____
Consultation	_____	_____
Administration	_____	_____
Research	_____	_____
Agency work	_____	_____
Other. Specify		
_____	_____	_____
Undecided	_____	_____

YOUR OPINION, PLEASE

25. NASW NEWS, the official newspaper of the National Association of Social Workers, published, in October 1993, an article by Jon Hiratsuka. The article stated "Social work salaries have barely kept pace with inflation and continue to reflect a significant bias

based on sex....The median income for NASW members working full time in 1993 was \$30,000."

In view of the economic picture portrayed in this statement, what in your opinion, influences a man to choose social work as a career? Use reverse side if necessary.

26. What, in your opinion, is meant by Hiratsuka's statement, "Social work salaries...reflect a significant bias based on sex"? Use reverse side if necessary.

27. In light of Hiratsuka's statement, what, in your opinion, are the factors which influence a man to choose a profession with a high female to male ratio? Use reverse side if necessary.

28. What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages to males, of working in a "female gendered" profession? (e.g. a profession with a high female to male ratio.) Use reverse side if necessary.

29. How do you feel about your relative uniqueness as a male within a female majority, in the social work profession. Use reverse side if necessary.

30. What, in your opinion, can be done to increase the number of males working as social workers at the MSW level? Use reverse side if necessary.

REFERENCES

- Abell, N. & McDonell, J. R. (1990). Preparing for practice: Motivations, expectations and aspirations of the MSW class of 1990. Journal of Social Work Education, 25, 57-64.
- Bridges, J. S. (1989). Sex differences in occupational values. Sex Roles, 20, 205-210.
- Butler, A. C. (1990). A reevaluation of social work students' career interests. Journal of Social Work Education, 26, 45-56.
- Condon, E. H., (1991). Nursing and the caring metaphor: Gender and political influences on an ethics of care. Nursing Outlook, 40, 14-19.
- Dowell, D. R. (1988). Sex and salary in a female dominated profession. The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 14, 92-98.
- Gibelman, M., & Schervish, P. H. (1993). Who We Are. Washington: NASW Press, 37.
- Golden, D., Pins, A. M., & Jones, W. (1972). Students in schools of social work: A study of characteristics and factors affecting career choice and practice concentration. New York: Council on Social Work Education.
- Hiratsuka, J. (1993, Oct.). Salaries strain to keep up. NASW NEWS, pp. 1, 12.
- King, L. A., & King, D. W. (1985). Sex-role egalitarianism: Biographical and personality correlates. Psychological Reports, 57, 787-792.
- Lips, H. M. (1988). Sex & Gender: An introduction. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Ott, E. M. (1989). Effects of the male-female ratio at work: Policewomen and male nurses. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13, 14-57.
- Rotberg, H.L., Brown, D. & Ware, W. B. (1987). Career self-efficacy expectations and perceived range of career options in community college students. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34, 2, 164-170.

- Schein, V. E., Mueller, R., & Jacobson, C. (1989). The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among college students. Sex Roles, 20, 103-110.
- Spaulding, E. C. (1990). Statistics on Social Work Education In the United States: 1989. Alexandria, Virginia: Council on Social Work Education.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques. Newberry Park, California: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Sztaba, T. I. & Colwill, N. L. (1988). Secretarial and Management students: Attitudes, attributes, and career choice considerations. Sex Roles, 19, 651-665.
- Wong, P. T. P., Kettlewell, G., & Sproule, C. F. (1985). On the importance of being masculine: Sex role, attribution, and women's career achievement. Sex Roles, 12, 757-769.