

ResearchOnline@JCU

This file is part of the following reference:

Zuchowski, Ines Sofia (2015) *Social work field education with external supervision*. PhD thesis, James Cook University.

Access to this file is available from:

<http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/43811/>

The author has certified to JCU that they have made a reasonable effort to gain permission and acknowledge the owner of any third party copyright material included in this document. If you believe that this is not the case, please contact

ResearchOnline@jcu.edu.au and quote
<http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/43811/>

Social Work Field Education with External Supervision

Thesis submitted by
Ines Sofia Zuchowski, BSW James Cook University

July 15th 2015

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Social Work and Human Services
in the College of Arts, Society and Education
James Cook University

Acknowledgments

This research would have not been possible without the generous sharing of the experiences of the participants. I thank you very much for your time, your contributions and your interest in field education for social work.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, family and friends who have been supportive and interested in this research. The interest you have shown and the feedback you have provided has encouraged me and helped me complete this research.

I would like to acknowledge the support of James Cook University in providing structures, resources and time to complete the research.

Most importantly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my two supervisors Associate Professor Debra Miles and Associate Professor Susan Gair who have worked jointly to support, guide, teach and encourage me through this journey. You have been very generous in providing your time and wisdom to facilitate my understanding of research and the ability to complete this study. I admire your dedication to research and students and truly and deeply appreciate that you have been committed to supporting me throughout. You provided timely and useful feedback on my work in what seems impossible workloads and short timeframes. I thank you for your guidance, and for doing more than what seems possible and for the extra hours you always put in.

Statement of the Contributions of Others

Financial Contributions

James Cook University supported this project in the form of Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) waiver and minimum resources funding allowance that has facilitated access to training and conferences to disseminate research findings.

Ines Zuchowski

Date: 15th July 2015

Editorial Assistance

This thesis has been supported by editing suggestions of my two co-supervisors, Associate Professor Debra Miles and Associate Professor Susan Gair (Social Work and Human Services, College of Arts, Education and Societies, James Cook University).

Paid editorial support for grammatical and syntax proof reading only was provided by Katharine Fowler.

Ines Zuchowski

Date: 15th July 2015

Declaration on Ethics

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human (1999) the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (1997), the James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics. Standard Practices and Guidelines (2001) and the James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (2001).

The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee: H4184.

Ines Zuchowski

Date: 15th July 2015

Abstract

Field education is essential in preparing social work students for professional social work practice. Students complete placement in a human service organisation, during which their learning is guided and assessed, typically by an experienced social worker within the agency. Placements also can be set up with external supervision, where a social worker outside the agency provides weekly professional supervision to the student. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of key stakeholders in social work field education which is conducted with external supervision.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with students, task supervisors, field educators and university liaison people. Findings suggest that placements with external supervision can provide additional layers of learning when structures are in place to address various challenges. The discussion highlights that placements with external supervision are focused on learning about practicing social work. They emphasise the importance of student driven learning. Complexities in the relationships, collaboration processes and learning environment in placements with external supervision impact the learning in field education.

The thesis reports that external and internal pressures are impacting on social work practice learning. As a consequence off-site supervision is becoming more prevalent. Recommendations propose that emerging field education models be planned appropriately, focussing on student learning and growth. It is recommended that these placements be well-supported, with explicit collaboration between the university, the field and the students, rather than set up as a last resort.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Statement of the Contributions of Others	iii
Financial Contributions	iii
Editorial Assistance	iii
Declaration on Ethics	iv
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
Chapter 1 Introduction	2
1.1 Chapter Overview.....	2
1.2 Introducing Myself as the Researcher and My Interest in the Topic	2
1.3 Theoretical Context	6
1.4 Introducing the Research.....	7
1.4.1 Definitions and Assumptions	8
Field education, placement, practicum or practice learning	8
Task, work-based or on-site Supervisors.....	9
External or off-site supervisor/ field educator	9
1.4.2 Aims of the Research.....	10
1.5 Significance and Originality	11
1.6 Thesis Overview	11

1.7	Chapter Summary	12
Chapter 2	Literature Review	13
2.1	Chapter Overview	13
2.2	The Place and Purpose of Field Education in Social Work Education	15
2.2.1	Social work education	15
2.2.2	Field education	18
2.2.3	Field education to develop critical reflective professional practice	22
2.3	Current Contexts of Social Work Practice and Education.....	28
2.4	Field Education: Learning, Processes and Relationships	34
2.4.1	Learning in field education: Important, yet challenging	34
2.4.2	The supervisory relationship	39
2.4.3	Field education students, experiences and expectations.....	44
2.5	Social Work Field Education with External Supervision	48
2.5.1	Learning in field education with external supervision	55
2.5.2	Models for placements with external supervision.....	59
2.6	Conclusion	61
2.7	Chapter Summary	62
Chapter 3	Methodology	64
3.1	Chapter Overview	64
3.2	Introduction: Doing Qualitative Research	65
3.2.1	Insider Positioning.....	70
3.3	Ontology and Epistemology	72
3.3.1	Phenomenology	76
3.3.1.1	<i>Concepts and influential theorists</i>	76
3.3.1.2	<i>Challenges and cautions</i>	82
3.3.2	Social Constructivism.....	84

3.3.2.1	<i>Concepts and influential theorists</i>	84
3.3.2.2	<i>Challenges and cautions</i>	86
3.3.3	Application of Phenomenology and Social Constructivism	86
3.4	Methods	88
3.4.1	Research Questions and Aims	88
3.4.2	Ethics and Consent	89
3.4.3	Data Collection	92
3.4.3.1	<i>Sampling and Recruitment</i>	92
3.4.3.2	<i>Participants/ Demographic Data</i>	93
	Students	96
	Task Supervisors	97
	External Field Educators	97
	Liaison People	97
3.4.3.3	<i>Interviews</i>	98
3.4.4	Data Analysis	101
3.4.4.1	<i>Coding</i>	101
3.4.5	Validation of the research	103
3.4.5.1	<i>Post- reflexion</i>	108
3.4.6	Limitations	108
3.4.7	Dissemination of Research Findings	111
3.5	Chapter Summary	112
 Chapter 4 The Experiences of Key Stakeholders in Placements with External Supervision		115
4.1	Chapter Overview	115
4.2	The Experiences of Students in Placements with External Supervision	117
4.2.1	General Experiences: Struggles, Power, and Being Lucky	118
4.2.2	Students' Experiences and Expectations specific to Placements with External Supervision	121

4.2.3	Challenges of Placements with External Supervision	123
4.2.4	Opportunities of Placements with External Supervision.....	125
4.2.5	The Four Way Relationship: A Disjointed Picture.....	127
4.2.6	Ideal Placement: Not About External or Internal Supervision?	129
4.2.7	Conclusion.....	131
4.3	The Experiences of Task Supervisors in Supporting Social Work Placements with External Supervision	131
4.3.1	Task supervisor's Experiences: Rewards and Responsibilities.....	132
4.3.2	Purposeful Supervision: Theories, Values and Being Job Ready	134
4.3.3	Supervisors' Roles.....	136
4.3.4	Relationships between Supervisors	140
4.3.5	Conclusion.....	141
4.4	The Experiences of External Supervisors in Supporting Field Education with External Supervision.....	142
4.4.1	The Experience of Providing External Supervision to Social Work Students	143
4.4.2	Opportunities of Placements with External Supervision.....	144
4.4.3	Challenges of Placements with External Supervision	146
4.4.4	Understanding the Context.....	149
4.4.5	Relationships and Space	152
4.4.6	Supervision and Growth.....	153
4.4.7	Conclusion.....	155
4.5	The Experiences of Liaison People in Supporting Field Education with External Supervision	156
4.5.1	The Experience of Liaison People Supporting Placements with External Supervision.....	157
4.5.2	The Ideal Placement: Modes of Supervision are just Part of the Picture	160
4.5.3	The Experience of Liaison People: Being the University	163
4.5.4	Field Education Coordination Considerations.....	166

4.5.5	Conclusion.....	168
4.6	Foregrounding the Multiple Voices in Placements with External Supervision	169
4.7	Chapter Summary	172
 Chapter 5 Core Themes in Placements with External Supervision 173		
5.1	Chapter Overview.....	173
5.2	Learning about Practicing Social Work.....	174
5.2.1	Learning about Social Work Theories.....	182
5.2.2	Learning about Organisations.....	186
5.2.3	Developing a Professional Practice Framework.....	187
5.3	Student Focused Learning	191
5.3.1	Student Responsibility for own Learning.....	193
5.3.2	Usefulness of Placement to Student's Learning.....	196
5.4	Learning Environment and Relationships	198
5.4.1	Understanding the Context.....	198
5.4.2	Relationships are Key to Support Student Learning	201
5.4.3	Power, Safety and Organisational Culture	205
5.4.4	Collaboration	212
5.5	Current Contexts Impacting Field Education with External Supervision 217	
5.5.1	Availabilities of Placements and Supervisors	219
5.5.2	Key Players Juggling Responsibilities	222
5.6	Chapter Summary	226
 Chapter 6 Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion 229		
6.1	Chapter Overview.....	229
6.2	Discussion of Findings	230

6.2.1	The Potential of Placements with External Supervision	230
6.2.2	Identification of Unsafe Placements.....	233
6.2.3	Inherent Challenges of Placements with External Supervision.....	235
6.2.4	The Impact of Neoliberal Contexts on Field Education.....	239
6.2.5	Extra Support Needed for Placements with External Supervision.....	243
6.2.6	Conclusion.....	244
6.3	Recommendations for Practice: Making Field Education with External Supervision Work.....	246
6.4	Recommendations for Research.....	251
6.5	Chapter Summary	254
Chapter 7	Post Reflexion on the Research Process.....	255
7.1	Chapter Introduction	255
7.2	Reflections on Becoming a Researcher	255
7.2.1	Publicizing Findings.....	256
7.2.2	Foregrounding the voices of Participants.....	263
7.3	Thesis Conclusion	264
7.4	Chapter Summary	266
References	267
Appendices	291
Appendix 1	Interview guide.....	292
Appendix 2	Ethics Approval.....	293
Appendix 3:	Informed Consent Form.....	294
Appendix 4:	Student Participant Recruitment letter	295
Appendix 5:	Task Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter	296
Appendix 6:	External Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter	297
Appendix 7:	Liaison Person Participant Recruitment letter	298

Appendix 8: Participant Recruitment Bookmarks for distribution	299
Appendix 9: Research Information Sheet	300

List of Tables

<i>Table 3.1 Participants and their (multiple) role(s)</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Table 3.2 Roles with the list of Participants.....</i>	<i>96</i>

List of Figures

<i>Figure 6.1 Recommendation for Practice</i>	<i>246</i>
---	------------

Part One: The Research Context

Part one of the thesis presents the three chapters detailing the research context. In Chapter One I introduce myself as the researcher, and I provide an introduction to the research. In Chapter Two I explore the literature and research relevant to social work education, field education and field education with external supervision. Chapter Three presents and discusses the research framework and methods.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces me as a researcher and provides a context and summary of my research, introducing key concepts, the aims, and the theoretical conceptualisation of the research. It also outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Introducing Myself as the Researcher and My Interest in the Topic

The first step in qualitative research is acknowledging the self and the context of the research (Neuman, 2014). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) highlighted the importance of considering how the research we propose arises out of our own life history. Recognising that the passion for the topic is a motivating factor to undertake research, they pointed out the researcher's own subjectivity will guide the study, but should not be overshadowed by "... an overinvolvement in very personal issues that need resolution" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 14). Phenomenology attempts to put one's own subjectivity aside, with the researcher writing about their own experience, the context and the situations that have influenced their experiences as important steps in the research process (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) pointed to the importance of considering which parts of our identity or person might impact on the research access and data collection. Self-reflexion on who we are and what we bring to research can engage us in questioning "...our connections/ discussions, assumptions of what we take to be normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked" (Vagle, 2014, p. 132). In this section I share my reflections on who I am as a researcher, and document some of the experiences that might affect my own subjectivity and assumptions.

I engaged in reflective writing in order to explore my assumptions and recorded insights about my personal attributes and characteristics and my world view. My own placement experiences, experiences in supporting placements and undertaking research were also examined. My aim in writing these reflections was to engage in what is termed 'bracketing' or 'epoche' in phenomenology (LeVasseur, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). These phenomenological concepts are explored further in the methodology section of this thesis. In this section of the chapter I am using some of my initial bracketing reflections to explore my biographical context and my processes in topic selection.

I am a female, middle aged social worker who commenced studies in Germany. After migrating to Australia, I continued my studies at James Cook University. Having completing my studies, I have worked for fourteen years as a social work practitioner in Townsville. Most of my work has focused on violence prevention, and is informed by feminist and strengths-based practice frameworks. I have worked at James Cook University for the past eight years, teaching various social work subjects and working in the field education program. Currently I am employed at James Cook University as the field education coordinator. My work involves sourcing and supporting placements, developing placement opportunities, and supporting, developing and guiding the academic field education program in social work at the university.

My professional values and ethics are shaped by a concern for social justice and an awareness of the systemic issues of oppression and power. They are influenced by my personal values and ethics, including a strong work ethic, integrity, a belief in the potential of people and my belief in Christianity. My professional practice framework includes the use of feminist theory, strengths-based practice and systems theory.

I completed two placements as part of my Bachelor of Social Work degree. The first placement was supervised actively by an experienced social worker. Input also came from other workers in the organisation, both social workers and non-social workers. This was a positive experience, growing me as a professional worker, both through positive guidance and challenges. I have clear memories of input from the placement field educator and other people to my learning, although I have no recollection of university input/support for the placement.

The second placement was in a Government organisation, in which I was supervised by a non-social worker, with the input of a range of professionals. I have no specific recollection in what way this was also supported by a social worker or by the university. I was fairly confident at that stage, and took on a significant workload. This placement lead to employment in a related area. Thinking back on the second placement I cannot recall the same sense of positive professional guidance around social work that there was in the first placement. However, I can identify that I was well guided in the job role from an organisational perspective. In reflecting on my own placement experiences, I valued these experiences for learning about social work and getting ready to practice.

Who I am as a researcher and how my own experience have influenced my interest in the research into placements with external supervision is highlighted by my own engagement in social work education and field education supervision. Throughout my career I have provided supervision to social work and welfare students. It is a role that I have both taken seriously and enjoyed. The ability to engage with students allowed me to share my commitment for ethical and just social work practice, but also contributed to my own continual growth as a professional social worker. My own practice as a social worker is very much shaped by feminist and strengths-based practice (King, 2001; McCashen, 2005), and this is congruent in my eyes with what social work education is aiming to

achieve. It prepares future social workers to “...address the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society” to be actively responsive in “... in situations of personal distress and crisis” (AASW, 2012a, p. 7).

My own experience in, and training and reflection about supervising social work students led me to form ideas about what I think is important in supervision. I clearly value rapport building by integrating students in the agency. This process involves building a relationship with the students, working with them where they are at, building learning opportunities that suit them, letting them tag along and observe my work, but also getting them involved. Adult learning models, incorporating the idea that people are not empty vessels to be filled but rather they actively engage in learning, fit nicely within my practice framework. I have attempted to build on people’s strengths, and help them to acquire critical reflection skills for practice. This allows them to engage, looking through a critical lens that seeks social justice and equity and works towards change. These values and aspirations fit with core professional social work values (AASW, 2010a) and theories (see for example McCashen, 2005; Noble, 2004a; Pease, 2009).

I am also aware how taking on a student can challenge my own identity as a competent worker/supervisor. Working at university has meant taking on roles as liaison person and external supervisor. These experiences highlighted some concerns about external supervision for me. At times it can be challenging to be an external supervisor, and from that position establish the rapport, provide supervision that is relevant, ensure that what is covered is relevant to practice and extrapolate what is actually happening in the organisation. My research query is deeply connected with my own learning and professional experience. I am well aware that I have to monitor my own thinking and the ideas about the research that informs it, throughout the research process.

Undertaking research about field education with external supervision is related to exploring practice in my current professional field. I want to find out more about the experiences of people in placements with external supervision, and hope to improve practice in this area. However, I acknowledge that the research can benefit me personally, through gaining a PhD, publications and professional respect.

My belief in the people's strengths and agency and their expertise in their own lives (McCashen, 2005) motivates me to try to understand people's experiences within their own contexts. My assumptions that people's worlds are shaped by social factors, means that my research considers both the topic and the social context of the experience. Hence post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2014) and social constructivism (Neuman, 2014) are used to frame the methodology in this research.

1.3 Theoretical Context

As a qualitative researcher I am interested in the "... multiple, socially constructed realities or 'qualities' that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables..." (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6). My research framework is guided by an interpretivist paradigm: as a researcher I am interested in understanding the lived experience rather than deriving explanations or predictions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Interpretive research is rooted in the "...empathic understanding or *verstehen*, of the everyday lived experience of people..." (Neuman, 2014, p. 103). This research is framed by post-intentional phenomenology and social constructivism. In post-intentional phenomenology, the focus is more on becoming, and meanings are seen as generative, multiple, partial and fleeting (Vagle, 2014). Phenomena are embraced as social rather than as attached just to the individual and are seen as being experienced not in isolation, but in the social context of the experience (Vagle, 2014). A social constructivist position contends that people

continually filter “... their human experiences through an ongoing, fluid, subjective sense of reality that shapes how we see and act on events” (Neuman, 2014, p. 435).

1.4 Introducing the Research

Before outlining the aims of the research, it is important to take note of the context of the research. It is located in the field of social work education, specifically social work field education. From its beginning, social work education has consisted of academic training and practical placement experience (Camilleri, 2001). Field education is considered central to the educational endeavour of preparing social work students for professional social work practice. The Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW] (2012c), the professional social work association for Australia, and the available literature (see for example Barton, Bell, & Bowles, 2005; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010) consider placements a site for experiential learning that is considered a critical component of social work education. My own professional experience leads me to highly value field education learning both in the professional social work degree, and for the formation of future practitioners’ frameworks for practice.

During field education the student- supervisor relationship has been deemed vital (Bennett, Mohr, BrintzenhofeSzoc, & Saks, 2008), and while both social workers and non-social work staff support social work student placements (Barton et al., 2005), the AASW (2012b) requires that students be supervised by a qualified social worker. The challenges that current environments pose to social work education, and field education in particular, are discussed later in the thesis. At this point I would like to highlight that when student supervision in field education is provided by a qualified social worker who is from outside the agency this is seen as outside the norm (Abram, Hartung, & Wernet, 2000). The centrality of field education to the social work degree raises questions about

placements with external supervision and my research explores the experience of key players in those placements.

This thesis reports on qualitative research with students, external field educators, task supervisors and liaison people who had experiences with placements with external supervision. Thirty- two participants contributed to this research. Interviews with participants were conducted in 2011 and 2012. Interviews explored the participants' experiences in field education with external supervision, their experience of the four-way relationship and what they thought an ideal placement set-up might be (see Appendix 1). The participants were associated with a range of social work education programs across Australia.

1.4.1 Definitions and Assumptions

Field education, placement, practicum or practice learning

Field education in social work is based on the principle that students learn by doing and by engaging with social work supervisors who act as role models (Camilleri, 2001; Cleak & Smith, 2012). The terms field education, placement, practicum and practice learning are often used interchangeably in the literature. Field education and placements are the terms generally used in Australia, whereas practicum seems to be more commonly used internationally (Abram et al., 2000, for example, use this term in the US context), and practice learning is a term more readily used in the UK (see, for instance, Henderson, 2010; Moriarty et al., 2009). It is generally assumed that socialising students into the profession involves the transmission of professional knowledge, values and skills ideally via field education arrangements that include an onsite qualified social work supervisor (Abram et al., 2000). The accreditation body for Australian social work is the Australian Association of Social Work [AASW]. This organisation guides practice and learning in

social work through Practice Standards (AASW, 2013), the Code of Ethics (AASW, 2010a), Supervision Standards (AASW, 2014) and the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW, 2012c). The AASW provides specific guidance for the delivery field education programs (AASW, 2012a).

Task, work-based or on-site Supervisors

The descriptor ‘task supervisor’, ‘work-based’ or ‘onsite supervisor’ in social work placements refers to an employee of the placement agency who accepts responsibility for the day-to-day direction and support of a social work student, but who does not meet the criteria set by the Australian Association of Social Workers to perform the professional supervision role. Social work placements need to be supervised by a qualified social worker in Australia (AASW, 2012a). Task supervisors often have an occupational background other than social work. While task supervisors regularly participate in social work placements by taking responsibility for specific tasks or skill acquisitions in a specific project or program (Cleak & Wilson, 2013), less is known about the experience of task supervisors who accompany social work students throughout their placement in which an external or off-site supervisor is appointed to provide social work supervision. The AASW (AASW, 2010b, 2012a) described task supervisors as ‘co-field educators’, suggesting that the task supervisor and the external supervisor are a team who work together to promote the student learning.

External or off-site supervisor/ field educator

The AASW requires that each social work student placement is allocated a qualified and experienced social worker as the field educator, who guides the student’s learning (AASW, 2012a). Field educators are required to attend training on the field education role, and need to provide a minimum of 1.5 hours supervision per week (AASW, 2012a). The university needs to ensure that an external or off-site field educator is allocated to a

placement if there is no social worker in the agency available to supervise the student (AASW, 2012a). The external or off-site supervisor is a qualified social worker with at least 2 years post-qualifying work experience (AASW, 2012a).

Liaison person

The AASW expects all staff of a social work program “... to actively contribute to the field education program” (2012a, p. 5) and to incorporate field education learning into the curriculum. They also require that each placement has an academic staff member or social worker with at least 5 years post-qualifying work experience allocated as a liaison person to support the field education (AASW, 2012a). The AASW prescribes liaison duties. Liaison persons are required to maintain regular contact with organisations and students, conduct at least three contacts, including a minimum of one on-site visit, and collaboratively work with students and organisations to develop the placement goals, learning, structure and assessment (AASW, 2012a).

1.4.2 Aims of the Research

The research question is

What are the experiences of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision?.

The aims of the research are to:

- Review and explore what is known about supervision for social work students on placements with external supervision;
- Ascertain the experience of students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison persons in social work field education with external supervision;

- Explore the four-way relationship between external supervisor, internal supervisor, student and liaison person;
- Investigate what external field education brings to field education; and
- Develop a model/ framework or principles of practice for field education with external supervision.

1.5 Significance and Originality

The outcomes of my research make a significant and original contribution to the knowledge and understanding of social work education, and in particular field education with external supervision. They add to research and practice in the area through a review of the literature that highlights a gap in knowledge about field education with external supervision, particularly the experiences of key stakeholders in external supervision. The findings provide a new understanding of the experiences of key stakeholders in placements with external supervision, and new insights about placements with external supervision as a model for field education. The application of a post-intentional phenomenological approach to the research has identified the usefulness of this framework in foregrounding the voices of participants and processes for accessing multiple voices.

1.6 Thesis Overview

The thesis is organised as a series of chapters that provide the justification for undertaking the research, the framework and aims of the study, the methodology, findings, discussion and recommendations. These are grouped into three parts. Part One provides the information about the context, background and approach for the research and includes *Chapter One Introduction*, *Chapter Two Literature Review* and *Chapter Three*

Methodology. Part Two provides the results of research and includes *Chapter Four The Experiences of Participants in Placements With External Supervision* and *Chapter Five Overall Findings*. Part Three connects the findings with the literature through discussion, reflection and conclusion. Part Three contains *Chapter Six Discussion and Recommendations*, *Chapter Seven Reflections on Becoming a Researcher*, the Appendices and list of References. The references for the thesis are presented using the APA (6th edition) referencing style. The appendices include the ethics approval, material used to recruit participants, the research overview presented to the participants, the informed consent form and the interview guide used in this research.

The structure of the thesis provides a comprehensive overview of my PhD research into external supervision social work placements with external supervision and my position in the research process. The thesis provides a logically organised summary of relevant literature, the methodological framework, the findings of the study and the implications for social work education. It is my hope that the results provide an insight into the experience of participating in and contributing to a social work placement with external supervision from a variety of perspectives. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research will assist in implementing supports and guidelines for social work placements with external supervision.

1.7 Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter I have reflected on who I am as a researcher and how this contributed particularity to my topic selection and methodology choice. Moreover, I have provided an overview about the aims of the research, referred to the theoretical conceptualisation of the research and outlined the structure of my thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter I examine the body of literature relevant to this research. In the first section of the chapter I consider the place and purpose of field education in social work education. I review literature on learning in social work education and how field education is used to develop critical and reflective professional social work practice. Social work education is aimed at preparing social work students for professional social work practice. Field education is placed at the heart of this educational endeavour in order to achieve the experiential learning required in the degree.

In the second section of this chapter I explore the current political environment and the context of social work practice and education in Australia. I examine the issues that arise out of this context, that impact on the preparation of students for professional social work practice. Social work practice and education globally, and in Australia, are affected by neoliberalism and managerialism. These doctrines shape workplaces, and therefore influence the professional practice of social workers (Chenoweth, 2012). As a result, social work educators need to consider how to prepare social work students for professional practice in current contexts. Equally, neoliberal policies impact on the funding models and agendas of tertiary institutions (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Social work field education is a resource-intensive activity that places high demands on its education programs and in the field. In current contexts finding placements with social work qualified supervisors on site can be difficult, and placements with offsite supervision are increasing.

In the third section of the chapter I review the literature about field education in general, learning in social work education through field education, and the factors that govern that

learning. I explore what is known about the placement experience and its relationships, and the students and supervisors. For students, field education is a dual experience of growth and associated stress, and the supervisory relationship is an important conduit in students' learning experiences. Students want to be able to observe and be guided by an experienced practitioner. Field educators need to be able to observe students' work during field education.

In the fourth section of the chapter I explore what is known about placements with offsite supervision. I outline the key issues and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these placements. Research that highlights the importance of the triad relationships and communication is explored. This literature raises concerns about placements with off-site supervision, including the ability of students to develop a social work identity, assessment triangulation and learning about social work practice. The potential for power imbalances between supervisors and lower student satisfaction in placements with off-site supervision is highlighted. The literature also considers the opportunities offered by placements with external supervision, including the provision of supervision external to the placement context, students actually receiving supervision, and the potential for growth of students, supervisors and the field.

In the final section of the chapter I summarise the key points raised and highlight the need to further research placements with off-site supervision. I maintain that research into the experience of students, task-supervisors, off-site supervisor and liaison people in placement arrangements with external supervisors can make a valuable contribution to what is currently known about placements with external supervision.

2.2 The Place and Purpose of Field Education in Social Work Education

2.2.1 Social work education

In Australia social work education is delivered by tertiary education institutions. Its aim is to prepare students for local, national and global social work practice (AASW, 2012c). “Social work can be seen as a dynamic profession and its role in society constantly changes and adapts in response to wider social and ideological forces” (Jones & Miles, 2012, p. 248). The professional social work association (the Australian Association of Social Work [AASW]) recognises that the context for social work practice is constantly changing (AASW, 2010b) and thus expects that social work student will graduate from social work education programs with skills and knowledge of a range of practice methods applicable to various fields of practice (AASW, 2012c). Social work graduates are meant to be prepared to critically analyse the changing context of social work practice and able to apply critical thinking skills. The aim of social work education is to develop “... competent, effective, skilled, knowledgeable, ethical and confident practitioners” (AASW, 2012c, p. 10) who have acquired nine prescribed social work attributes, underpinned by professional values, skills and knowledge (AASW, 2012c). These attributes include a “... demonstrated sense of identity as a social worker” and “...understanding of and commitment to social work values and ethics to guide professional practice” (AASW, 2012c, p. 10). The principles of social work education established through the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards are aimed at developing attributes for ‘thinking, doing and being’ (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015). Knowledge and commitment to the Professional Code of Ethics are key aspects of social work education and professional social work practice (AASW, 2012c). Acknowledging respect for persons, social justice and professional integrity are the

profession's core values (AASW, 2010a) and essential to the professional identity to be advanced by social work students (AASW, 2012b).

The centrality of professional values and ethics in the social work degree links with local and global aims of social work practice, which are focused on promoting social change which upholds social justice and human rights:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (AASW, 2010a, p. 7).

Ife (2001) argued that social work is a human rights-based profession. He maintained that a

... human rights program that aims at social justice and a fairer society must incorporate a commitment to economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to meaningful work, the right to adequate food, water, and health care, the right to social security, the right to housing, and the right to education. (Ife, 2001, p. 11).

Ife reasoned that "... it is essential that social workers identify ways in which they can make a difference and influence the policy and organisational context of their practice, rather than simply reacting to changes over which they have no control" (Ife, 2000, p. 14). Moreover, Flynn (2005) maintained that social work should embrace collective responsibility for problems and work towards macro-level change, placing collective

responsibility for social issues at the heart of social work. Ife (2001) claimed that linking the personal to the political is core to social work practice. However, social work's mission to collectively achieve social justice is undermined by the retreating welfare state (Noble & Irwin, 2009). Post-modern discourses have marginalised meta-narratives such as social justice. Nevertheless, Noble (2004a, p. 302) called for social work practice to look "... at the way economic, gender and colonial issues continue to lie at the root of injustice and impoverishment". Methods and models of practice that share a commitment to social justice, human rights and social transformation are integral to social work (Pease, 2009). From a critical perspective, social work practice

- Challenges power imbalances,
- Considers the impact of oppressive structures on practice and service users, and
- Recognises how experiences and relationships are shaped by economic and political systems (Pease, 2009).

While one thus could argue that all social work practice fundamentally should have a critical change focus, there are inherent tensions in the social work profession. It is a profession that generally becomes prominent in settings across the globe in which "...market orientated economic individualism becomes the dominant form of social relations..." (Parton & Kirk, 2009, p. 25). Social work developed to alleviate social problems that emerged from industrialisation (Noble, 2004b). Parton and Kirk asserted that "Social work is seen as a positive solution to a major problem for the liberal state ... Social work develops at a midway point between individual initiative and an all-encompassing state" (2009, p. 25, citing Hirst 1981). Social work education prepares students for professional social work practice, and needs to facilitate students' critical engagements with these inherent tensions of the profession, such as social worker as

agent of the state versus social worker as change agent. Social work practitioners need to be able to critically engage with the tensions within social work's held knowledge. The context for ways of helping, issues of cultural validity and local and global knowledge (Ife, 2001), must be reconciled if the social work profession is to have an emancipatory change focus. It follows that social work education must emphasise preparing students for working "...towards an analysis of oppressive power practices directed against certain peoples and socio-ethnic-religious groupings in our society as well as explor[ing] strategies to help with their liberations" (Noble, 2011b, p. 301). In summary, social work education is aiming to prepare students for professional practice that is responsive to changing contexts, with professional aims and values guiding the education and practice. Later in this chapter, the impact of current climates on social work practice and education is discussed.

2.2.2 Field education

In the field, students have the opportunity to test what they learn in the classroom; integrate theory with practice; evaluate the effectiveness of interventions; contend with the realities of social, political and economic injustice; strive for cultural sensitivity and competence; deliberate on the choices posed by ethical dilemmas; develop a sense of self in practice; and build a connection to and identify with the profession. (Lager & Robbins, 2004, p. 3).

As indicated in the above quote, field education is a defining moment in the social work degree. At that point, students apply in practice what they have learned in theory (Homonoff, 2008). Field education is the point in their academic degree at which students' ability to work in human services is tested (Razack, 2000). The student is

guided, supported and supervised by a qualified social work practitioner (AASW, 2012a). Field education provides a hands on, practical experience in which traditionally students were seen to undertake “... training as an apprenticeship in social work” (Camilleri, 2001, p. 17). The concept of an apprenticeship model dates back to social work training at the end of the 19th century (Barretti, 2007). At that time, the roles of supervisor and student were more closely defined. Social workers were seen as moral agents, and modelled appropriate moral behaviours that clients were meant to copy. Thus, student learning involved imitating the professional social worker to acquire professional skills (Barretti, 2007). However, the idea that social work students purely learn social work practice through observing expert social worker supervisors’ behaviours changed over time, and students moved from being seen as passive recipients to active participants in their learning experience (Barretti, 2007). “Throughout time, the field instructor was transformed from role model to therapist to producer of services for a discriminating consumer base” (Barretti, 2007, p. 224). Nevertheless, role modelling or observing the supervisors practice is still recognised as a critical element in field education (Barretti, 2009; Cleak & Smith, 2012; Knight, 2001). Much of the social work practice knowledge and skills are taught by field educators during placement (Noble, 2001). Noble commented that “[o]ften marginalized by the university in the curriculum development and scholarship enterprise, these field supervisors or practice-based teachers are mostly left to their own devices in the teaching and fostering of professional skills and the theory and practice link” (2001, p. 348). Although it is seen as central to social work education, field education generally has been marginalised in academia and has attracted little research attention in the past (Noble, 2001).

The AASW describes field education as ‘learning for practice’ (AASW, 2012c, p. 12) and expects social work students to undertake a total of 1000 placement hours. During

this time a social work supervisor is expected to formally supervise the student and guide his/her learning (AASW, 2012a). Field Education “... is a cooperative endeavour between the higher education provider, the student, agencies and field educators to assist the integration of theory and practice” (AASW, 2012c, p. 9). To pass the final field education subject, the AASW requires students to have met the learning outcomes defined by the graduate attributes which are contained in the accreditation standards for social work education (AASW, 2012c). Field education can be a time of growth, and a critical transition period in the development of professional practice (Patford, 2000). Field education engages students in learning by doing and as such needs to be carefully planned and supported (Pack, 2011).

Social work education programs support the field education component of students’ learning in a variety of ways. Each program is expected to have a clearly identifiable field education unit, with administrative support and a field education coordinator, as well as field education liaison staff for each placement (AASW, 2012a). At times, high student numbers and students studying by distance education can mean that universities ‘contract out’ the liaison role to experienced social workers or other universities (Alston, 2007). However, the AASW (2012a, p. 5) expects all social work program staff “... to actively contribute to the field education program”. The aim is to incorporate field education learning into the curriculum, reflecting the centrality of field education to the Australian social work program.

The traditional model of field education in Australia involved placement of a student with a qualified social worker in an agency. The supervisory relationship mediates much of the student’s learning in field education (Cleak & Smith, 2012). Field educators are required to be qualified social workers, have a minimum of 2 years post-qualifying

professional social work experience and to provide a minimum of one and half hours of formal supervision to the student per 35 hours of placement (AASW, 2012a).

Field education must provide opportunities for students to be active in social work practice; placements cannot be observational only (AASW, 2012a). Research shows that students seek field education opportunities that encourage autonomy and foster professional growth. Therefore they sought supervisors who were willing to have their way of working observed, and who were respectful, communicative, informed, responsive and supportive to students (Barretti, 2009). Students valued skilful, approachable supervisors, who evaluated them fairly (Fernandez, 2003). Students preferred frequent, lengthy supervision and valued supervisors who employed skills such as “...clarifying role and purpose, discussing taboo subjects, partializing concerns, clarifying expectations, reviewing the student’s cases, and helping the student understand the agency...” (Knight, 2000, p. 187). While students wanted their supervisors to be accessible (Knight, 2000), research highlighted that they sometimes found it hard to access supervision (Patford, 2000), and that social work supervisors were either not always able to be observed or the observed practice was questionable (Barretti, 2009). Barretti (2009, p. 60) stressed that “...observation of a professional holds a critical place in students’ education whether or not they are even available for observation”, but that the role-modelling by field educators may not always reflect the desirable characteristics of a professional social worker. However, Barretti’s study found that academic social work educators role-modelled professional behaviour and the true nature of social work to students and that the academics needed to support the students as well as the field educators (Barretti, 2009). Workload issues, low staff retention, staff recruitment difficulties and the challenges of a crisis-driven environment may make it difficult for social work field educators to assist students’ professional growth in field education

(Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011). Thus, consideration needs to be given to whether the traditional model of social work field education, which places a social work student in a human service organisation with an experienced social work supervisor on site from whom to learn (Camilleri, 2001), is consistently attainable and effective.

2.2.3 Field education to develop critical reflective professional practice

[T]he perfect placement is the imperfect learning environment; learning can and does happen anywhere- because students determine their own learning opportunities; critical reflection provides a framework to experience rich, transformative learning regardless of the organisational context in which they are placed. (Morley & Dunstan, 2013, p. 151).

The key points highlighted by Morley and Dunstan (2013) are that students can determine their own learning environment and that critical reflection provides an avenue for transformative learning. Learning is a holistic process, and involves making meaning of experience, and integrating “...new ways of thinking and being, which incorporates new ways of acting” (Fook, 2001, p. 22). Learning is diverse and contextual, the student’s and educator’s own personal, social and cultural backgrounds affecting the elucidation of experience and the creation of meaning (Fook, 2001). Professional social work practice abilities to be developed include researching and reflecting on practice knowledge and the “...ability to use knowledge in a creative way to respond to new and changing contexts, and in the process to create new learning” (Fook, 2001, p. 23). Social work education needs to prepare social work students for the realities of social work practice. Agllias (2010) reported that students were expecting that the social work role might be challenged by others, an idea largely formed through field education. “However, new graduates were still surprised by the powerlessness of social workers and the profession”

(Agllias, 2010, p. 353). Agllias suggested that social work programs should not rely on field education to reveal the reality of social work practice to students, as field educators may shelter students on placement. She recommended that social work education programs assist students to explore the transitional difficulties beyond the personal and organisational context, by offering a structural analysis (Agllias, 2010).

Critical thinking and reflection are crucial elements of social work practice (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015; Razack, 2000). Critical reflection is necessary to discern the underlying values, theories and principles of current trends, and to determine whether these are congruent with those held by the social work profession (Askeland & Fook, 2009). Critical reflection allows tacitly held knowledge to come to the surface, which can then be used to legitimise social work practice (Potting, Sniekers, Lamers, & Reverda, 2010). Professional social workers face complex, unpredictable and often uncertain situations and the 'social work self' can be encouraged to deal with the complexities and challenges of social work practice through the development of core ethics and virtues (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015). The awareness of self and its impact on being a social worker is often expressed in the concept of 'use of self' in social work practice. It needs to be informed by an understanding of self as an instrument to facilitate change (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015). Supervision can provide a forum for reflection, in which social workers can reflect upon and develop their expertise, and develop innovative approaches to changing practice contexts (Geißler-Piltz, 2011).

Critical reflection can be understood in a number of ways. In educational philosophy reflection is broadly seen as learning from the experience of examining thinking and its implicit, underlying assumptions and implications (Askeland & Fook, 2009 referring to Dewey, 1933). The meaning making and transformative qualities of reflection are discussed by Mezirow and Associates (2000 in Askeland & Fook, 2009). Reflective

practice is core to transformative practice. Reflection is “... the central dynamic in intentional learning, problem solving, and validity testing through rational discourse” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 99). Reflective practice “... refers more to a process of reflection upon professional practice which leads to practice improvement through examining (and resolving) hidden gaps between espoused thinking, and the often contradictory thinking implied in actual practice” (Askeland & Fook, 2009, p. 290 referring to Schön, 1983). Becoming aware of the gaps and identifying individual frames for practice allows practitioners “... to become aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality...” in practice (Schön, 1991, p. 310). ‘Critical’ reflection can refer to reflection utilised to uncover the assumptive level of thinking, or it can refer to applying critical social theory to an analysis of power and social structures (Askeland & Fook, 2009; Brookfield, 2009). Brookfield (2009) advocated the latter position, and argued that social workers have to be critically aware and examine power positions and structures, that if unexplored in their work, could lead to further oppression of clients. According to Brookfield (2009), critical reflection needs to explore and question the hegemony of social work practice and to externalise and investigate power relationships. This position confirmed that these processes are important in social work education.

Whether or not any form of reflection is actually common in social worker’s practice is a question that warrants further exploration. Potting et al. (2010, p. 14) reported that “[a]lthough reflection was considered an important part of the professionalism of most participating social workers, they lacked the skill or professional vocabulary to reflect on their work”. However, these authors found that reflective skills can be acquired, and that

...when professionals are encouraged and facilitated to have an open discussion of their good and bad practices, their questions and dilemmas with colleagues, and when professionals use this opportunity to learn and voice

their experiences, the result will be a practice of 'reflection on action'.

(Potting et al., 2010, p. 17).

Similarly, Morley and Dunstan (2013, p. 153) pointed out that when students were taught critical reflection skills, they were able "...to rethink some of the unhelpful, dominant constructions within field education and social work discourses more broadly". Research about graduate social workers and students in field education both point out that skills for critical reflection need to be taught and cannot be assumed (Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Potting et al., 2010).

Field education is "... often the only opportunity that students have to foster a critical and reflective approach to social work before entering the profession as qualified practitioners" (Noble, 2011a, p. 6). Supervision in field education can be an occasion for students to critically reflect on practice issues and tensions, to untangle their thoughts, explore the connections between their personal and professional selves, learn to practice independently, and stimulate skills for practice. In general, it helps students learn to learn (Hooyberghs, 2012; Van Hees, 2011). Supervision is a tool for a student "... to reflect independently on his or her professional actions" (Hooyberghs, 2012, p. 26). The challenge is to ensure that no one position is dominant and "... to make teaching and learning approaches flexible, responsive, reflective, and evolving as well as lively and enjoyable in order to bring as much variety as possible in the teaching/ learning relationship and to avoid ritualistic, superficial and automatic responses" (Noble, 2011b, p. 313).

Supervision with the field educator can engage students in critical reflective processes that allow them to develop practice frameworks and experience transformative learning. However, it is doubtful whether field educators are always available to students in field

education (Barretti, 2009; Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011; Patford, 2000). The capacity of social work educators to support practice learning can be compromised by the erosion of educational infrastructures, thus moving practice learning rather in the direction of training compliance than critical practice (Bellinger, 2010a). The demise of the welfare state and the dominance of a market-driven state

...create tension between the social work practitioner and the academics who view social work education as part of a more global project than the preparation of practitioners, who need to be equipped for daily engagement with a generic set of tasks in often unsympathetic environments. (Lewis & Bolzan, 2007, p. 141).

Thus, from an educational perspective, the goal of student supervision in field education is “...not to develop optimal working performances, but to encourage the optimal development of the supervisee as a professional” (Hooyberghs, 2012, p. 25). While social work educators are aiming to prepare students to respond to practice challenges, there is concern that industry demands for this preparation is focused on meeting target driven agendas rather than ethical practice (Wilson & Campbell, 2013). A point to ponder might be whether a social worker not attached to the organisational setting could potentially assist students to keep ethical, rights based practice on the learning agenda.

As outlined above, the social work profession is focused on social justice and human rights and on the social changes required to achieve those aims (Ife, 2000, 2001). Yet, the practice environment for last 25 years has been shaped by a neo-liberal ideology (Chenoweth, 2012). The impact of this environment will be explored in the next section. For consideration here, though, is how social workers need to be prepared for practice by keeping these tensions in mind. In simple terms, neoliberalism is an ideological construct

resulting in “...the promotion of political beliefs, values and practices that promote individual rather than collective responsibility for social problem” (Wallace & Peace, 2011 in Morley & Dunstan, 2013, p. 142). Ledwith (2001) argued that it is important to be articulate and be able to critically analyse the ideological issues impacting on practice. Yet, to date the response of education to this “... political context of anti-collective individualism...” has been on skills and competencies as opposed to critical reflection and praxis (Ledwith, 2001, p. 174). However, social work education is more than working through a checklist of desired competencies; it is a complex task of situated learning.

Educating social work students for the profession through field education consequently requires them to critically engage with the practice context (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Therefore, if students are to be enabled to be responsive to current practices and social change (Bellinger, 2010b), the pedagogical culture surrounding the placement is important in assessing its quality. Bellinger argued that while an apprentice-style learning model can work well when expert practitioners are promoting expansive learning, it can be problematic when agencies are under pressure (Bellinger, 2010b). Quality placement environments involve a ‘generative process’, in which practice is not prescribed but constructed, and students are engaged as active contributors and learners. It therefore facilitates a dynamic connection between academic and practice learning (Bellinger, 2010b, p. 2460). Bellinger (2010b) highlighted that students’ learning can be undermined by workplace practice that is contrary to professional aims and values. Thus, whether the social work supervision is onsite or not is not the defining feature in assessing the quality of a placement, rather, the pedagogical culture surrounding the placement is paramount (Bellinger, 2010b).

In summary, this first section of the literature review considered the purpose of social work education and identified the important role of field education in the preparation of students for professional practice. Field education is able to contribute to the development of critical reflective practitioners. Even so, there are tensions between the foci of what is learned in field education. The final point stressed in this section is that quality placements are about creating pedagogical environments that engage students. Students, as active contributors and learners, then dynamically link academic and practice learning. Field education learning and processes will be further considered more after the following section. It presents a picture of the external factors that shape social work practice and the learning environment.

2.3 Current Contexts of Social Work Practice and Education

Neoliberal ideologies impact upon social work education in a number of ways. They impact social work and human services practice and consequently the availability of placements and the environment that students enter during field education. Neoliberal contexts are creating competition between education providers and marginalising field education within social work education, impacting the ability and willingness of social work educators to support student placements.

Practice and thus field education in the human services field is impacted by neoliberalism and New Public Management ideologies. These impacts in the widest sense include the deprofessionalisation of social work (Healy, 2004; Morley & Dunstan, 2013), "...the devaluing of the traditional roles of social workers in the public sector" (Noble, 2004a, p. 294) and a culture of audits, austerity, risk management, and welfare reforms that threaten the heart of social work and lead to less worker autonomy (Chenoweth, 2012). Noble (2004a) pointed out that neo-liberal concepts of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving'

put social workers in the role of perpetuating social inequalities on behalf of the state. Moreover, Chenoweth (2012), maintained that every aspect of a human service worker's professional life is measured and monitored to meet auditing and risk-management requirements, stunting professional autonomy and creativity and diverting the attention away from providing assistance and therapeutic intervention for people in need. Risk management and neo-liberal management provides a rationale for Government to reduce collective universal responses to need, and focus delivery on individual needs and individual responsibilities (Green, 2007). Risk can be an attractive vehicle for Governments to regulate human services. Increasingly social workers do not only work within the organizational objectives and professional knowledge, but need to concentrate on managing risks (Green, 2007). Risk management changes the focus of practice from caring relationships to the assessment and management of risk and its associated accountabilities and administration (Green, 2007).

High demands on social workers, including increased accountability, limited discretionary powers, high and complex caseloads and a lack of managerial support strain social workers (Kalliath, Hughes, & Newcombe, 2012) and limit their ability to support students (Barton et al., 2005). Staff face heavy workloads that often are not adjusted by management when supervisors take on the extra responsibilities of a field educator (Moriarty et al., 2009). Social workers' ability to supervise students in organisations is severely impacted by the level of support and workload relief they get to undertake this work (Torry, Furness, & Wilkinson, 2005). Hanlen's (2011) New Zealand study found that a workload reduction for accepting students on placement did not occur, and that this was not feasible in current workplace environments. A United Kingdom (UK) survey of field educators found that only 47% of practice teachers were satisfied with the overall level of agency support they received while their supported student placements (Torry et

al., 2005). Taking on students on placements in current environments may be an extra load on busy practitioners. This may have contributed to the use of private practitioners, i.e. externally employed social workers, to provide the student supervision in agencies that do not generally employ social workers or who are too stretched to adequately support social work students.

Neoliberal contexts impact on the workplace practices to which social work students are exposed in field education. On one hand, austerity measures have led to globalised welfare reforms, resulting in reduced welfare eligibility and reduced funding of non-government organisations (NGOs) (Chenoweth, 2012). The consequences of neoliberalism include the devaluing of social work skills and knowledge, a reduction of practitioner autonomy, the positioning of workers as experts, a focus on procedural solutions rather than structural analysis, and an overall loss of the meaningful social work identity that is linked to emancipatory social change (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Thus, students' learning and growth in the social work profession can be undermined by workplace practices that are contrary to professional aims and values. This is especially true if the student is seen as a passive recipient of knowledge, following and imitating the expert social worker (Bellinger, 2010b; Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Morley and Dunstan (2013) highlighted that students often feel tempted to acquire the technical skills and competencies in order to gain what may be seen as the 'real social work identity' of a neoliberal social worker. They view this as practice in the 'real world', and conclude that critical education is irrelevant. Getting students ready for the job (Camilleri, 2001) can lead to a deprofessionalisation of social work, with emphasis on competency-based training rather than the development and use of the critically analytical frameworks crucial for social work practice (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). 'Competency' and 'fitness for practice discourses' in higher education can construct practice learning as a training

ground for efficient employees, rather than holistic education for social work practice in complex changing environments (Bellinger, 2010a).

Current contexts change the practice environments of social workers. There is a change in the demographics of where social workers are employed and where social workers enter new fields of practice. For example, social workers have been employed in and positively contributed to schools (Parker, Hillison, & Wilson, 2003). Overall, while government departments might be large employers of social workers, 89% of employment in the human services sector is in the non-Government sector (Cortis & Meagher, 2012, p. 296). Scholar, McCaughan, McLaughlin and Coleman (2012) pointed to global changes in the way social work is delivered and that social work students "...have actually followed the work into these non-traditional settings" (Scholar et al., 2012, p. 935). McLaughlin, Scholar, McCaughan, and Coleman (2014) used the term non-traditional placements for field education opportunities without social workers on site. At times these have core business other than social work.

Present practice contexts impact on the delivery of field education. Supporting social work field education is costly for the organisation, and costly for universities (Camilleri, 2001). Universities are struggling to support student placements appropriately, but also find it hard to find field education places for students in "...a sea of competition for placements..." (Hanlen, 2011, p. 234). This increased competition creates situations where field education units are constantly working with a sense of urgency to place students and field educators have expressed concern about a "last minute rush" for placements, claiming that the "late start to placement" caused disorientation and disruption to the placement setting (Torry et al., 2005, p. 33). The increased competition for placements comes from the increasing number of social work programs within the Australian tertiary education sector, but also from overseas social work programs and

from associated fields, such as child care or mental health training (Hanlen, 2011). This impacts on placements' availability, and is also connected with the concept of professional identity, a contentious topic for Australian social work. "The rise in the number of allied professions has also meant that social workers are working in the new professional setting where other health practitioners are claiming similar knowledge and skills and are sharing similar clients" (Noble & Sullivan, 2009, p. 91) leading to a blurring of professional boundaries. This also could affect the ability of social workers employed in generic roles to offer field education opportunities to students, as the importance to this voluntary endeavour to assisting the social work profession might not be acknowledged by non-social work managers and administrators.

The university is not immune to managerialism and neoliberalism and a double impact on the positioning and standing of field education can be identified there. First, field education and academics' willingness to engage in liaison is influenced by the resourcing of the tertiary education sector in Australia. Field education is marginalised by decreasing university budgets and funding priorities that put pressure on staff to undertake scholarly activity "... rather than spending time on teaching, advising, curriculum development, and field liaison duties" (Lager & Robbins, 2004, p. 7). Second, field education is a resource-intensive activity for schools of social work in a climate of budgetary cuts. These leave universities dependent on private sector partnerships, which have an emphasis on research and relegate learning and teaching as secondary (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Waitere, Wright, Tremaine, Brown and Pausé (2011, p. 206) highlighted that "...neoliberalism underpins the new managerial philosophy, promoting individualism and competitiveness within the state and university sector". As universities receive extra funding for publications and research output of their staff, the call is to 'publish or perish'. Performance reviews and promotion guidelines put pressure on

academic staff to publish in high impact journals (Brischoux & Cook, 2009; McGrail, Rickard, & Jones, 2006; Waitere et al., 2011). For academic staff engaged in field education, shrinking resources and increasing student numbers make it very difficult to devote time to research and publication (Plath, 2003). Consequently, the research focus of universities and workload issues result in a reluctance of academia to engage in liaison work (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). This is not unique to academic staff in Australia. As Wilson and Campbell (2013) outlined, UK social work educators expressed concerns about the extra workload of field education, the lack of recognition of the complex demands of field education and the limitations this placed on their abilities to be active in research.

Overall, although the centrality of field education to social work education is recognised across the globe, field education academics are marginalised in tertiary institutions. Lyter (2012), for example, highlighted that field education directors or coordinators experienced a lack of resources, power, status, promotion opportunities and seniority. Her research pointed to discrepancies in salaries, privileges and professional development and a lack of authority for field education staff in academia (Lyter, 2012). Many universities have staffed field education units with non-academic staff, which increases marginalisation within the academic context, and limits the capacity for field education staff to research and document their practice and their experience. The staffing of field education primarily by non-academics endangers the teaching–research nexus in field education, and thus “....within the academic environment, it will continue to be viewed as secondary to real academic teaching and learning” (Zuchowski, Hudson, Bartlett, & Diamandi, 2014, p. 68).

In summary, neoliberalism impacts upon and shapes the context of social work practice and education. In considering field education opportunities and models, these are factors

that need to be taken into account. While traditionally placements with internal supervision might have been the norm or the ideal placement, current contexts make these arrangements increasingly difficult to achieve. Whereas the earlier sections of this thesis have highlighted the importance of field education and critical reflection in the preparation for social work practice, this section has identified that neoliberalism impacts social work practice and education. In exploring social work practice, education and field education, consideration needs to be given to effective learning experience in current environments, and how these experiences can be best supported. This consideration might put the idea that internal supervision is always best into question. In the following section I explore the literature about learning in field education in general.

2.4 Field Education: Learning, Processes and Relationships

2.4.1 Learning in field education: Important, yet challenging

The literature on field education overwhelmingly identifies social work field education as crucial (Barton et al., 2005; Unger, 2003), "...a cornerstone for social work education..." (Abram et al., 2000, p. 171) and a critical transition towards professional practice (Patford, 2000). Social work field education is a place of holistic learning which "...involves the exploration of a complex web of factors: personal, relational, cultural, political, and organisational. Learners access and utilise knowledge, emotion, behaviour and prior experience in the learning context" (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011, p. 129). Research identifies that social work students benefit from field education. Patford (2000), for example, found that significant learning experiences for students on placement included encountering organisational constraints, regulating strong emotions, reconsidering the commitment to social work, experiences relevant to academic learning and operating solo. This opportunity to engage in practice learning can facilitate the

development of self-efficacy, which is necessary for the development of competent practitioners (Parker, 2005).

Field education prepares students for practice and aims to facilitate students' theory to practice understanding. Agllias (2010) found that students and new graduates entering the workplace "...thought that they were well prepared in communication skills, teamwork, self-directed learning, and in the provision of client-centred and ethically informed service" (Agllias, 2010, p. 350). However, students struggle significantly in gaining the necessary 'theory to practice' understanding through field education. Lewis and Bolzan found that "...79 % of students were unable to see the relevance of meta theories to the placement experience" (Lewis & Bolzan, 2007, p. 139). Students more often described learning specific to the role of a social work in the agency, than learning related to the broader social work profession (Lewis & Bolzan, 2007).

Field education can be a time of distress and tumult. Beddoe (2003) maintained that, in general, social workers are ill-equipped and unprepared to address the abuse and violence they may encounter in the workplace, and argued that social work educators need to prepare students and practitioners to deal better with situations of violence. Violence in the helping professions is a reality and social work students in field education have reported that they felt unsafe or threatened during placement and have experienced violence as part of their placement experience (Tully, Kropf, & Price, 1999). During field education students can experience bullying and feel powerless (Gair & Thomas, 2008). A significant number of the social work and occupational therapy students surveyed by Gair and Thomas (2008) felt unsafe in their field placement organisations. Students' experience of safety in field education can be affected by their own sense of safety in regards the space they operate in, the location of the placement and the client group with whom they engage (Wilkinson & Bissell, 2005). However, Gair and Thomas found that

many students had witnessed incidents of bullying and harassment while on placement (2008). Moreover, a quarter of the students in their study reported feeling intimidated by the power imbalance between students and supervisors (Gair & Thomas, 2008).

Razack identified three groups of students particularly at risk during field education, mature aged students, students with emotional/psychological problems and students from racial minorities (2000). Razack (2000, p. 202) highlighted that “[s]tudents often report feeling anxious, fearful, incompetent and powerless in the learning process. Minority students face additional fears arising from historical treatment and present societal reality”. International students face language barriers, unrealistic expectations, and a disregard of unique cultural contexts (Zuchowski et al., 2014). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are exposed to racism in field education (Gair, Miles, Savage, & Zuchowski, 2015). They are forced to develop survival strategies to deal with racism, confront stark connections to their personal lived experience in their placement experiences and engage in the complex task of developing a unique professional identity (Zuchowski, Savage, Miles, & Gair, 2013). Thus, while field education can facilitate growth, there are power and safety issues for students that need to be considered.

Field education is the point on the path to professional practice where performance difficulties, perhaps not evident during academic study, emerge in the practice context. Students in field education are being assessed by their field educator in regards to their competencies and strengths (Tadam, 2014). The field educator assists students to gain “...sense of ownership, mastery and understanding of direct practice, thus he or she must both facilitate reflection in beginning practice, and instruct and guide the student in practice activities in which they will be assessed” (Beddoe, Ackroyd, Chinnery, & Appleton, 2011, p. 514). Homonoff’s (2008) research found that field educators participate in this gatekeeping role and needed the university’s support in setting

boundaries. The author argued that the field educators "...demonstrated energy and creativity in tackling the problems of field education", made themselves available for supervision and acknowledged the value of students' work (Homonoff, 2008, p. 156). Likewise, Razack highlighted that field education is "... the place where significant issues pertaining students' abilities and competencies for professional practice become evident", and therefore "...can be referred to as the profession's 'gatekeeper'" (2000, p. 196).

At the same time, though, to 'fail' students in a placement is complicated and uncommon (Razack, 2000). Parker (2010) identified that placement breakdowns or difficulties can be devastating for all parties concerned. Parker highlights that this is exacerbated by the fact that field education is the site where students demonstrate, practise and polish their practice skills. Students often invest a great deal during field education and in preparation for it, including financial resources and learning, and that the level of investment is often a factor to consider in assessing the viability of continuing a placement (Parker, 2010). Sowbel (2012) pointed out that the factors that contribute to the reluctance of field educators to fail students include lack of support from liaison people, field education programs transferring students to other placements, lack of knowledge of what to document, concerns about the impact placement failure could have on the student and their own discomfort with and circumventing of authority.

Thus, while field education is generally discussed as the heart of social work education (Beddoe, 2000; Homonoff, 2008) or a signature pedagogy (Wayne et al., 2010), it is important to acknowledge that field education is an undertaking that can have a significant impact on students. Maidment (2003b) exposed the dual experience of students on placement, the significant professional learning experience and the coexisting experience of associated stress. She pondered whether "... the work based placement

arrangements now favoured... serve to complement or even further complicate student lives and learning” (Maidment, 2003b, p. 54). Maidment (2003a, p. 5) suggested that the “...unhealthy reliance on the field to provide all practicum learning...” in light of quality concerns and risk concerns may need to be re-evaluated.

The complicated and challenging experience of students in practice learning is further discussed by Ornstein and Moses (2010), who argued that field education is a key experience challenging the students’ sense of self and personal identity and suggested that the relationship between the field educator and student is the focus point of the field placement learning experience. Ornstein and Moses put forward a relational approach to supervision that “...is defined by mutuality, shared and authorised power, and the co-construction of knowledge” (2010, p. 103). Similarly, Ben Shlomo, Levy and Izhaky (2012) pointed out that satisfaction with the supervisory relationship contributes significantly to the development of the student’s professional identity. The authors suggested that a specific set of resources, including supervision, personal values and environmental factors, impact upon the development of professional identity, and that each can play a protective role when one of the other resources is low (Ben Shlomo et al., 2012). Ben Shlomo et al. (2012) proposed that the supervisory relationship needs to be fostered in field education.

The idea that field education challenges a student’s sense of self is suggested in Lam, Wong and Leung’s research. Their findings found that unsettling occurrences in field education were a catalyst for reflection. Thus, emotional experiences in practice led to discovery of self (Lam, Wong, & Leung, 2005). Students in that study stated that self-discovery was a positive outcome of field education. Lam et al. (2005, p. 99) found that self-discovery generally led to the connection of the personal with the professional self, but did not lead to further exploration of “...either the normative professional principles

or the construction of their prevailing ‘self’”. They suggested that it is important to create social work education that considers the connection of students’ experiences to the dynamic context in which these experiences occur (Lam et al., 2005).

2.4.2 The supervisory relationship

The supervisory relationship is important in professional practice. McMahon (2002) referred to three conceptualisations of supervision: supervision as a relationship, as a developmental process and as a learning environment. She pointed out that “[t]he quality of the supervisory relationship is an important ingredient in the success of supervision” and that “[t]he supervision might be viewed as a process that needs to be monitored, and the issues will vary according to the stage of development” (McMahon, 2002, p. 18). In graduate social work, supervision and the supervisory relationship is acknowledged as a process that assists social workers to develop professionally (Pack, 2012). Pack found that for supervisees and supervisors, clinical supervision was experienced differently. Supervisors placed emphasis on “...ensuring ‘safe practice’ on behalf of the employer and clients”, and supervisees emphasised “...supervision as a ‘safe’ place to discuss their issues freely without the fear of censure” (2012, p. 169). Noble and Irwin maintained that critical social worker supervision required addressing “...[the] impact of power differentials associated with gender, class and ethnicity, as well as cultural and other structural barriers and their impact on the function and process of supervision” (2009, p. 354). The AASW promotes the importance of professional supervision for the maintenance of best practice and recognises that “the quality of the supervisory relationship is fundamental to successful supervision” (AASW, 2014, p. 5).

For social workers, supervision can be an important factor to their well-being and support them to stay in the profession (Chiller & Crisp, 2012). The AASW (2014) recently has

released Supervision Standards that guide supervision based on the core values of social work practice:

- Respect for persons,
- Social justice, and
- Professional integrity.

Supervision is complex in its functions that can include educational, administrative, organisational, supportive, mediative and advocacy aspects (Noble & Irwin, 2009). The education, support and accountability functions are identified as relevant for professional supervision. The potential for ambiguities and tensions between those functions are recognised in the Supervision Standards (AASW, 2014). Pack also determined that in the supervisory relationship there can be tensions between managerial and clinical or psychosocial approaches to supervision (Pack, 2012). Adams (2007, cited in Noble & Irwin, 2009) pointed out that current workload pressures result in reduced time for social workers to supervise others or access supervision themselves. Noble and Irwin (2009) identified that there is an increased focus on the administrative and organisational functions of supervision. They maintained that a primary focus on managerial accountability results in lesser integrity and independence of supervision as a tool for professional development, arguing that it does not allow for a process of reflection removed from managerial matters (Noble & Irwin, 2009).

In social work practice, workers often choose supervision external to the agency. External supervision can allow a step outside the immediate environment, and can allow the exploration of the more general picture (Pack, 2012). Such supervision may be less about judgement of the work performance (Pack, 2012), and more an opportunity for the

exploration of organisational issues. It allows the participant a stronger focus on the personal professional development as a practitioner and a lower concentration on authority and power issues (Beddoe, 2012). Other advantages of external supervision can include a choice of supervisor, deeper listening and more collaborative relationships (Ung, 2002). Yet, the external supervisory relationship is not devoid of risk, fear and accountabilities (Beddoe, 2012).

With similarities to graduate supervision processes, in field education the supervisory relationship is the focal point of the experience (Tadam, 2014). Parker's (2010) research outlined that field educators are core to the field education learning experience and that if the relationship between student and field educator was lacking this led to placement disruptions. Students felt they were supported when their field educator was available to them (Parker, 2010). To a large extent, students' satisfaction with the placement is influenced by their perception of the supervisor and the supervisory relationship (Fernandez, 2003). Supervision in field education is key factor in student satisfaction with their practice learning. However, workload pressures influence the provision of effective practice learning and supervisors' access to further education (Domakin, 2013). Chinnery and Beddoe (2011, p. 128) identified that "[f]ield educators confront barriers in trying to meet the education needs of students on placement, including workload, staff recruitment and retention challenges and the crisis-driven environment", often resulting in student supervision being more task focused and limiting "...opportunities to integrate their use of professional knowledge in practice". However, Bellinger (2010b) pointed out that supervision needs to build a pedagogical culture that actively engages students in their learning.

Literature on the supervisory relationship acknowledges the central part it plays in successful student placements, yet highlights some of the inherent challenges. For

example, Cooper and Maidment (2001) concluded that while supervisors recognised and acknowledged difference and inequalities in relationships with clients, they are less able to recognise power differences in relation to their relationships with students. Rogers, Benson, Bouey, Clark, Langevin, Mamchur, and Sawa (2003) found that significant numbers of students and field educators reported incidences of conflict in the supervisory relationship, but that this conflict was experienced differently by students and field educators. Their study found that students reported higher rates of conflict, felt more in conflict with their supervisors and experienced this as a greater degree of strain on the supervisory relationship than did supervisors (Rogers et al., 2003). Generally, field educators were more likely to report that conflict led to growth and development, whereas students frequently characterised “...outcomes as more detrimental to their learning, health and self-image” than did the field educators (Rogers et al., 2003, p. 44). Karban (1999) highlighted the importance of the supervisory relationships and the need to acknowledge the dynamics and power in those relationships. Similarly, Maidment and Woodward (2002, p. 101) considered that “...the analysis of power and the ability to exercise power appropriately” was one of the key attributes of external supervisors, while Razack argued that “[s]tudents and field educators need to understand that power is not simply what one is able to exert on the other; it is, rather, the constant analysis of how what we know and do is socially produced” (2000, pp. 203-204). Parker (2010) recognised the significance of power in the student/supervisor relationship and proposed that power and power sharing needs to be explored and acknowledged as impacting field education. He recommended building relationships, collaboration and having good structures in place for dealing with difficulties in field education. Similarly, in exploring journal writing for reflective practice Pack (2014) pointed to the importance of the relationship between field educator and student. She highlighted that a “... climate of

safety above all other variables establishes a context for deep learning” (Pack, 2014, p. 411).

The supervisory relationship creates anxieties for both students and field educators. For students, anxieties arise because they anticipate challenges to their understanding of competency and expectations of autonomy and independence (Beddoe, 2000). For field educators anxieties arise as they “...face the complex task of creating a safe, trusting relationship in which assessment is a major feature” (Beddoe, 2000, pp. 45-46). For many of them it is the first experience of providing supervision (Beddoe et al., 2011). Moreover, field educators recognise that to some extent their work will also be evaluated during placement, by the students, the university, their colleagues and their superiors and some “...may fear that their own practice limitations will be exposed or that they will not be up to the task of supervision” (Beddoe, 2000, p. 46).

The importance of the supervisory relationship is further developed by Ornstein and Moses (2010) in their journal article on the relational approach to field education. Key considerations of this approach are acknowledgement of power, the role of mutual feedback, the reflection on the process, quality and nature of field instruction and the leadership role of the field educator in initiating and role-modelling processes (Ornstein & Moses, 2010). Ornstein and Moses (2010) acknowledged that complexities and ambiguities are part of supervisory relationships and encouraged continued negotiation and dialogue around the compatibility of the student and field educator.

Whether this compatibility is a feature of placement planning is unclear. Torry et al.’s (2005) survey of field educators suggests that, at times, matching students was based on a ‘convenience’ approach. Nevertheless, 40% of practice teachers thought that their own strengths were considered when they were matched to placements (Torry et al., 2005).

Other criteria applied when matching students to supervisors were the learning needs of the student, their gender, age and ethnicity (Torry et al., 2005). Wayne, Bogo and Raskin argued that “though field experiences have a powerful influence on a student’s education, there is less rigorous process for selecting field instructors than classroom teachers” (2010, p. 335). They highlighted that supervisors’ experience, views and abilities vary and proposed “...the active interaction with students and peers through greater use of education group structures” (Wayne et al., 2010, p. 334). The authors suggested the use of field seminars to provide opportunities for learning from the best educators in the profession in a group context, in addition to student access to an on-site field educator.

In summary, the supervisory relationship is recognised as crucial to the field education process and the literature identifies that power dynamics need to be explored and acknowledged in field education. However, as Rogers’ (2003) research showed, in practice, field educators may not always be aware how students are affected by those dynamics. Relationships are important in field education, and consideration has to be given to preparing and matching students and field education in supervisory relationships.

2.4.3 Field education students, experiences and expectations

Students bring a range of experiences and expectations to field education. Homonoff identified critical challenges to social work field education including “...teaching of assessment and intervention skills, reflection and theory (and the development of a model to integrate them), and incorporating theory into practice” (2008, p. 137). Homonoff pointed out that the composition of the student body is changing. Today it includes more students with special needs and with fiscal and family restraints. Similarly, Ryan, Barns and McAuliffe argued that the “...the reality of being a student in a postindustrial

economy necessitates juggling the demands of work, study, and for many students, family relationships and responsibilities” (2011, p. 326). Twenty-two percent (22%) of students in Ryan et al.’s (2011) study identified that placement would be difficult while supporting themselves, 19 % identified that they needed to financially support themselves while on placement and 15 % stated that they would be unable to do a full-time placement because of work commitments. While students identified positive learning outcomes from their employment, they were concerned how their employment would impact field education (Ryan et al., 2011). In a recent survey by the AASW over 30% of social work students were working more than 25 hours a week in paid employment, while studying (Baglow, 2014). Many students chose part-time studies because of the need to earn an income, but one third of the part-time student respondents indicated that they would prefer to study full-time if they could afford it (Baglow, 2014). The survey also showed that significant number of students lack sufficient finances to support themselves. “Almost a third (31%) report insufficient money for clothes, a quarter (25% not enough for food and a fifth not enough for accommodation (20%) or medication (22%)” (Baglow, 2014, p. 11).

Social work students are often mature aged and experienced. Crisp and Maidment (2009) outlined that experienced welfare/human service practitioners enrol in social work degrees to either enhance their skills and knowledge or to seek recognition for skills and knowledge they have acquired previously. They found that many experienced students resent the fact that they are required to undertake field placements. As a consequence field placement coordinators may need to work with aggrieved students, some who find “...the transition from experienced practitioner to student on placement difficult” (Crisp & Maidment, 2009, p. 166). The author’s literature review identified that experienced students may prefer placements that allow some autonomy and independence and may

“...be resistant to supervisors who fail to recognise already developed competence” (Stoltenberg, McNeil & Delworth, 1998 cited in Crisp & Maidment, 2009, p. 166) or who omit to make links between the placement experience and prior learning. Conversely, Crisp and Maidment (2009) found that experienced students may be afraid to have their shortcomings exposed and may struggle with the process of examinations.

It appears that students expect different things from their supervisors at different stages of their placement. Towards the end of the placement they expect less focus on clarifying concerns and more focus on “...encouraging open discussion, individualizing learning, the student’s comfort sharing her or his process recording, and reviewing the student’s cases in supervision” (Knight, 2001, p. 371). Knight stated that “...the field-instructor-student relationship is a dynamic, evolving one, requiring the field instructor to use a variety of skills, depending upon where the student is in the learning process” (2001, p. 273). The author highlighted that, towards the end of the placement, students want more direct involvement from their field educator. However, often this is when field educators provide less involvement (Knight, 2001). Knight summarised the situation: “... field instruction is a process. Students’ learning needs evolve over the course of the practicum” (2001, p. 377).

Some literature explored the desired characteristics of field educators from a student’s perspective. Research showed that students want field educators to be “...available, respectful, responsive, supportive, fair, objective, and that are knowledgeable and able to directly communicate their knowledge and provide feedback” (Barretti, 2009, p. 50). Students also want field educators to “...encourage autonomy, provide opportunity to be observed, and facilitate professional development” (Barretti, 2009, p. 51). These desired characteristics support the idea that students want to learn from observation of the field educators’ practice. Research highlighted that “...observation of a professional holds a

critical place in students' education..." (Barretti, 2009, p. 60). However, Barretti (2009) pointed out that field educators supporting student placements were not always available to be observed. Sometimes learning about desirable professional characteristics was reinforced by students experiencing or observing the opposite behaviour or attribute in reality. This is supported by Patford's (2000) findings that reported that students on placements found it difficult to access supervision. Patford (2000) argued that the regular availability of field educators to supervise students was an important consideration in setting up placements. The provision of timely and directive guidance to students at this stage of their professional development was deemed to be essential.

Maidment (2000) identified that field educators need to find ways to make the student's work visible and assessable in addition to the student's self-assessment, which may be filtered through the student's experience, values and theoretical orientation. Live observation of the student's practice by the supervisor in field education can facilitate student's growth, and the ability to develop "...flexibility and a creative repertoire..." for social work practice (Beddoe et al., 2011, p. 515). Beddoe et al. argued that "...observation of student work needs to be conceptualised as more than just watching: it is collaborative, purposeful and formative" (2011, p. 517). Thus, live supervision needs to be a collaborative planned process which promotes self-awareness and reflection (Beddoe et al., 2011). In Australia, observation of students' practice during placement for assessment is recommended, and is required when engaged in a placement with direct service delivery (AASW, 2012a).

In summary, the literature on field education highlighted the centrality of the placement experience to social work education. It discussed the dual experience of growth and associated stress during field education. The literature emphasised the importance of the supervisory relationship and pointed to power as an issue for consideration. It outlined

students' expectations in field education, including the ability to learn from field educators, but also highlighted some of the challenges in regards to these expectations.

2.5 Social Work Field Education with External Supervision

Non-traditional placements, if properly planned with suitable materials, supervisors, practice educators and supported by HEIs, do offer a quality practice learning experience that can be viewed as different from a statutory agency. To thus claim that these are second best is to miss the point that because something is different does not necessarily make it less valuable or worthwhile. (McLaughlin et al., 2014, p. 18).

The significance of social work field education and supervision invites questions about external social work field education supervision. The AASW permits placements with external supervision in situations where there are not suitable social work educators available in the host organisation, with the proviso that "...arrangements must be made to ensure that appropriate professional formation and supervision is provided by a qualified social work field educator" (AASW, 2012a, p. 7). Despite the acknowledgement that field education placements with external supervision are valid, these types of placement arrangements often are discussed as less than ideal by both the AASW (AASW, 2012a), and in the literature (Abram et al., 2000; Cleak & Smith, 2012). However, recent developments within the human services sector suggest that alternative placement structures may become less exceptional. The availability and success of placements relies on the commitment and good will of placement organisations and supervisors (Plath, 2003). Growing numbers of social work students, and a reluctance to provide placement opportunities in the field are contributing to a crisis in finding placements (Camilleri, 2001). There are particular shortages of qualified field educators

in rural areas (Plath, 2003; Unger, 2003). However, even in urban areas it is difficult to find student placements supported by social work professionals (Abram et al., 2000; Barton et al., 2005; Unger, 2003). There is no record of the specific numbers of placements with off-site supervision in Australia, but it is suggested that the numbers are increasing. In Cleak and Smith's (2012) Australian study 13.7 % of placements had external supervision. There is some evidence of similar issues globally. Curtis, Moriarty and Netten (2011) found that, in the United Kingdom, 27.7 % of placements have an off-site supervisor. As the opportunities for traditional student placements diminish, examining the dynamics and challenges of these alternative structures becomes a professional imperative.

The concept that the internal agency supervisor is providing professional supervision for the students is prominent in the Anglo-American context (Van Hees, 2011). Van Hees maintained that student supervision in European countries is more focused on the personal development, and thus "...leads to a conflict with the administrative function of the Anglo-American interpretation of supervision" (2011, p. 31 referring to Kadushin & Harkness, 2002). Van Hees (2011) outlined that in European countries, other than the United Kingdom and Ireland, teaching supervision is part of the social work education program. In field education, students build on their prior knowledge and preparation for supervision. They receive their social work supervision either from a university academic, an independent social work practitioner or through peer supervision (Van Hees, 2011). In the first two cases van Hees described triad models, either the social work academic or the independent social working closely together with the agency supervisor and the student to enhance the student's learning (2011). For example, the model of an independent, i.e. external supervisor is strongly supported in Germany and Holland (Van Hees, 2011). Geißler-Piltz (2011) highlighted that commonly supervision

in Germany is provided by someone external to the organisation. Overall, in about half of the German social work education programs, student supervision in field education is delivered externally to social work students (Witte, 2009). External student supervision is meant to maintain a separation between assessment and professional development (Witte, 2009). Moreover, the focus on the provision of external supervision in general is linked to a rejection of the monitoring function of supervision. It draws a clear distinction between the educational and administrative functions of supervision (Geißler-Piltz, 2010). Geißler-Piltz (2010, p. 144) described the supervision of social work students at her institute in Germany as an opportunity for “...reflection on and the development of the professional role of trainee, professional identity and learning within fields of psychosocial and social work”. Social work students choose their own social work supervisor, who provides reflection-oriented supervision (Geißler-Piltz, 2010). Field education is seen as an opportunity to develop a professional identity and new interventions for practice (Geißler-Piltz, 2010).

In Australia, placements with external supervision are often seen as a last resort, and while this outlook has been challenged (Abram et al., 2000; Bellinger, 2010b; Plath, 2003; Zuchowski, 2011b) a recent Australian comparative survey suggested that students are generally “...more satisfied across all aspects of their placements where there is a strong onsite social work presence” (Cleak & Smith, 2012, p. 256). Social work identity, learning opportunities on placements and feeling competent were the key issues that led to higher student satisfaction in placements with internal supervision (Cleak & Smith, 2012). Similarly, students in Scholar et al.’s (2012) English study were reluctant to undertake placements in organisations without social work supervisors on-site. Students’ satisfaction in placements with external supervision may need to be explored further, as

the mode of supervision is just one of among of a number of important factors that influence students' experience of field education.

When aided by the work of the university education program's work to "... proactively develop such placements and help social work students value the opportunities on offer", Scholar, et al. (2012, p. 941) found that students' attitudes changed as the placement progressed. The development of induction material for placements, the host organisation's work to link the placement with practice standards and informal and formal supervision arrangements supported students' growth into and identity with the profession (Scholar et al., 2012). In this program, students were able to develop a sense of their social work identity in placements without social workers on site. However, the university, the organisation and the off-site supervisor all worked collaboratively and proactively with the students to facilitate this outcome. Moreover, through engaging in a process of constructing their positions on the nature of social work, the majority of students developed a sense of ownership and identity as a consequence (Scholar, McLaughlin, McCaughan, & Coleman, 2014). Students were able to identify that they acquired social work relevant attributes in their placements without social workers on site, in regards to skills, knowledge, qualities and attitudes (Scholar et al., 2014). Some of the social work learning occurred

... by being proactive in helping their onsite supervisors understand social work models, codes and practices; by talking about anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice with on-site supervisors; by challenging project leaders... devising an exercise ... to explore their views, experiences and stereotypical assumptions about social work. (Scholar et al., 2014, p. 1005 citing Scholar, et al. 2010).

A further study by the same authors (McLaughlin et al., 2014) noted that students' resistance to enter non-traditional placements stemmed from their fear that they would have limited employment options in the future. McLaughlin et al. (2014) outlined that non-traditional placements were often seen as inferior and judged by what they did not offer, not by what they did offer. As non-traditional placements they were regarded as the 'other' and thus judged to be inferior. Scholar et al. (2012) suggested that the focus needed to be shifted towards exploring quality learning, and whether the required standards for social work practice can be achieved. A point that might be interesting to ponder is: Are placements with external supervision which are set up as a last resort, in fact, less than ideal? Setting them up as the last resort might mean that the purposeful consideration of the pedagogical learning opportunities in field education may not be central to the process.

Social work placements with external supervision can have advantages for social work students as well as for the discipline as a whole (Bellinger, 2010b). Bellinger (Bellinger, 2010b) discussed the opportunities of students and supervisors engaging in generative learning, as co-constructors of new learning.

In placements in which there is no one to copy, the relationship between educators and students as co-constructors of knowledge is less prescribed. The teacher or enabler takes a facilitative position in which their knowledge and its limits are acknowledged and where they are explicitly committed to the wider goal of social transformation. (Bellinger, 2010b, p. 2463).

Field education with off-site supervision can provide placement experiences in a non-traditional emergent field, allow for multi-disciplinary work, illustrate the value of social work skills and knowledge where no social work discipline focus is present, and provide

job opportunities (Abram et al., 2000). Students can develop their skills and understanding of inter-disciplinary work, and stereotypes between professional can be broken down (Hek, 2012). Moreover, research from England suggested that placements in non-traditional placement settings opened the students' values to greater scrutiny. Students also had more opportunities to practice higher level social work skills than in statutory placements (McLaughlin et al., 2014). Scholar et al. (2012) highlighted that placements without the social work supervisor on site required students to pay greater attention to value-based social work. It allowed them to explore the nature of social work with the off-site supervisors, bringing the professional values alive.

By the end of their placements, students were talking confidently about what they saw as the different perspective they brought to the team as students of social work. They were able to articulate how their experience on placement had developed their social work knowledge and skills, and particularly their awareness of social work values. (Scholar et al., 2012, p. 942).

Similarly, students placed in placements without social workers on site, for example, police and probation services, developed the ability to present a social work perspective to other professionals (Hek, 2012).

Unger (2003) outlined that social work education programs in rural areas often needed to rely on non-social work qualified field instructors. She suggested that while this could be seen as weakening the social work perspective and requires extra external social work supervision, it can offer opportunities. These include quality field education learning opportunities contributing to the professionalization of the social service community (Unger, 2003). Moreover Parker et al. (2003) pointed out that the social work field education presence in non-traditional placement settings, such as schools, can have

positive outcomes for students, their families and staff. Placements with external supervision can produce employable and flexible graduates (Plath, 2003). Social work placements in agencies without social work supervisors on staff can provide broad experiences in emerging community organisations and a improve staff opinion of students (Abram et al., 2000). They can provide opportunities for students to participate in 'social work' (Scholar et al., 2012). Students in Scholar et al.'s (2012) study, for instance, identified the opportunity to directly work with young people as invaluable. The authors reported that students in such settings were involved in working directly alongside disadvantaged and socially excluded client groups. There, they witnessed the possibility of change, that can help develop "...creative professionals concerned with the promotion of individual and social change" (Scholar et al., 2012, p. 948). Field education with off-site supervision offers the potential for opening up new fields of practice and placing social workers in areas where they are scarce (Zuchowski, 2011b). Placements in emerging field can demonstrate social work knowledge and skills to the host agency and create new job opportunities (Abram et al., 2000).

Nevertheless, field education with external supervision has challenges, including the lack of clearly defined social work roles for students to observe and the complexity of a four-way process of assessment and reporting (Plath, 2003). Off-site supervisors may not fully understand the processes of service delivery, while the internal supervisor and or manager still carries any associated risk of taking the student on placement, and ensuring their learning and wellbeing (Hanlen, 2011). Moreover, in the same way as internal social work supervisors, the task- or on-site supervisors, find it difficult to balance their responsibilities towards the student placement and effective program delivery (Scholar et al., 2012).

Relationships in placements with external supervision can be complex. Parker (2010), in his research on placements that went wrong, found that some students felt there were perceived power imbalances, whereas others who had two supervisors in one agency felt watched. In placements with external supervision there is a potential for power imbalances between the on-site and off-site supervisors (Henderson, 2010). For instance, the skills of the on-site supervisors can be undervalued (Plath, 2003). Internal task supervisors might provide the main support to students throughout their placement, and yet be unacknowledged and devalued in the overall placement arrangement (Henderson, 2010). Moreover, agencies may be reluctant to open their doors to off-site supervisors. External supervisors may lack an understanding of the operation and functioning of the organisation, and extra “...scrutiny of the agency from an ‘outsider’ may also be considered an unwelcome unnecessary pressure” (Hanlen, 2011, p. 235).

2.5.1 Learning in field education with external supervision

The limited literature available on field education with off-site supervision highlighted the importance of the triad relationship (Abram et al., 2000), the support needed for field educators, task supervisors and students (Clare, 2001; Henderson, 2010) and the need to clarify the responsibilities of each of the supervisors (Karban, 1999). The relationship between supervisors is a key factor in a successful student placement with external supervision (Abram et al., 2000). Abraham et al. identified “...common philosophy and values, clarification of roles and division of labor, and frequent communication...” as three important aspects for positive relationships between the supervisors (2000, p. 179). Information sharing, professionalism, authenticity, rapport building and cooperation are important ingredients for the success of placements with external supervision (Karban, 1999). In order for placements to be effective, the different responsibilities of the

supervisors (Karban, 1999) and the characteristics of each supervisor (Maidment & Beddoe, 2012) need to be explored. Students who are seen as more suitable for placements with off-site supervision are described as strong and mature (Abram et al., 2000), independent and with an interest in the area of work (Plath, 2003) or as proactive, creative and able to work independently (Parker et al., 2003).

In placements with external supervision, research has identified that extra support is needed for field educators, task supervisors and students in triad relationships in placements with external supervision (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010). The question arises as to whether this is provided in the reality of busy workplaces and marginalised field education unit, and if so in what form and by whom. Moreover, research has suggested that the preparation, support and maintenance of these placements need to be carefully planned and implemented. Parker, Hillison and Wilson (2003) highlighted that the planning stage of the placements with external supervision was critical, as it encouraged the clarification of the learning framework, roles and tasks. The authors found that placement in non-traditional settings were most successful when preparation was done well, and involved the inclusion of agency staff (Parker et al., 2003). Effective communication and support networks were important, and all key players needed to be prepared for the work. Parker et al. (2003) stressed that the university played an essential role in developing the placement opportunity, and in monitoring and assessing the progress.

The literature raised concerns about the students' learning experience in placements supported by off-site supervisor, for example, about their experiences, learning and assessment and whether the lack of clearly defined social work roles adversely affected the development of social work identity (Plath, 2003). Further questions arise about students' ability to develop critically reflective social work practice with an off-site

supervisor who may not be involved in the every-day practice context. According to Ung, the danger could be that "...any discussion can become merely a theoretical exercise" in supervision if the supervisor has no insight into the actual practice of the supervisee (2002, p. 100).

Students' sense of competence in social work practice can be affected by external supervision. McLaughlin et al. (2014) pointed out that the students and field educators in their English study were confident that they could meet the six identified key roles identified in the National Occupational Standards. However, they were less confident about competencies required of newly qualified social workers. Students' confidence in undertaking formal assessment in practice contexts was a particular concern (McLaughlin et al., 2014). Students did not always recognise that the processes they were applying in practice were related to formal assessment. The authors suggested that there is an increased role for the external field educator to help students understand the different forms of assessment, and the fact that assessment was taking place (McLaughlin et al., 2014). Their earlier study produced similar results, showing that students' assessment processes in social work practice were inconsistent until they were assisted in their practice through the development of a formal assessment tool (Scholar et al., 2012). Overall, students found it difficult to understand how their learning can transfer to statutory placement settings (Scholar et al., 2012). Similarly, in Hek's study, students struggled at times to recognise when they were gaining transferable skills (2012). Scholar et al. (2012) and Hek (2012) deduced that placement preparation and guidance were essential to student learning and Scholar et al. suggested that further research is needed to identify the strengths and weakness of these placements.

Henderson outlined the role of the on-site task supervisor as providing the main support to students on placement: "...responsible for the day-to- day supervision and accountable

for the student's practice", whereas the role of the off-site field educator is to "...plan practice learning with the student to meet the learning outcomes, provide teaching and take overall responsibility for the assessment" (2010, p. 2). Similarly, Scholar et al. (2012) found that the off-site field educator supported the students' professional development and undertook the assessment, and the on-site supervisors provided the day to day support and supervision. Their research highlighted that proactive preparation facilitated clarity in role differentiations (Scholar et al., 2012). Abram et al. suggested that "... in an effective triad each person involved has primary responsibility for one of several functions that a single ... social worker has shouldered alone in the past" (2000, p. 183).

Matching up supervisors, students and agencies may need to be explored further. The literature pointed out that off-site supervisors would prefer to be matched to the placement and know the agency and the internal supervisor (Henderson, 2010). Similarly, "[w]ork-based supervisors expressed a preference for working with off-site practice teachers who were familiar to them and who were 'credible' in their practice knowledge" (Henderson, 2010, p. 12).

Moreover, it is recognised in the literature that assessment in field education with off-site supervision has proved complex. The ASSW (2012a) clearly requires that the liaison person should utilise consultative processes for assessment. However, the complexity of a four-way process of assessment and reporting has been identified as problematic in placements with off-site supervision (Plath, 2003). Equally, Henderson (2010) highlighted that task supervisors were rarely involved in the final placement assessment, even though this was a requirement set out in their university handbook.

2.5.2 Models for placements with external supervision

Some models for field education are presented in the literature. A number of authors have described in what way students, field educators and task supervisors can be better supported in order to fulfil their roles. Clare (2001) suggested a field education model focused on four key steps:

- Developing a coordinated system or partnership,
- Articulating a field education syllabus,
- Implementing more rigorous assessment of field education placements, and
- Introducing training courses for field educators.

According to Clare (2001), this model would be useful across a range of field education settings, including those with off-site supervision, as it seeks to be responsive to and prepare students for the diversity of practice. Social work “...is seldom routine and involves working with people all of whom are unique, in situations which are complex, frequently messy and obscure, rarely easy to understand and almost never amenable to standardised or prescribed responses” (Yelloly & Henkel, 1995 cited in Clare, 2001, p. 65). Unger (2003) argued field education with off-site supervision required onsite visits, interviews of potential supervisors by the field education coordinator, initially regular lunch time sessions for non-social work supervisors and their students and finally, more structured orientation sessions for field educators and students.

Henderson considered placements with off-site supervision in the United Kingdom context (2010). She enunciated the importance of the triad relationship between the student, work-based supervisor and practice teacher. Henderson underlined the importance of regular meetings, time to communicate roles and expectations and the

benefits of accessing the perspectives and experiences of two supervisors. Her research findings, however, also drew attention to the role of the university liaison person. Particularly, she described their role in the power dynamics and provision of support and information. Several work-based supervisors felt excluded by the liaison person (Henderson, 2010). She suggested that the off-site supervisor be matched to the placement, agency and field of practice, and if that was not possible, then the field educator would need to spend time familiarising themselves with the field education context at the start of placement. Henderson proposed that additional support, training, recognition and compensation need to be provided to work-based supervisors to achieve quality outcomes for students in field education with off-site supervision (2010).

Maidment and Woodward (2002) presented a specific model for external supervision. The authors proposed an ecological perspective for field education with off-site supervision that recognises the environmental influences of the teaching and learning exchange. This perspective is used to analyse the transactional outcomes and assist in the role and task clarification of external supervision (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). The authors suggested that the ecological paradigm acknowledges differences between the various stakeholders in field education and facilitates an understanding of how they may interpret information differently (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). Maidment and Woodward listed seven essential attributes of external supervisors. These include

...expertise and credibility in social work practice; awareness of formal and informal contract obligations boundaries and responsibilities; ability to balance demands; commitment to values, ethics and standards to manage simultaneous responsibilities; ability to motivate, communicate and negotiate an analysis of power and the ability to exercise power appropriately (Maidment & Woodward, 2002, p. 109).

The model highlights the potential for external supervisors who are skilled in communication and engagement to gain the commitment and trust of the agency and thus minimise the problems with placements (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). It appears that it would be useful to consider an ecological understanding of placements with off-site supervision, as it could highlight the interconnectedness of systems, and how stakeholders such as off-site supervisors can help construct a successful learning arrangement. However, it seems that there would be potential to extend the model to consider the attributes and experiences of other stakeholders, such as students, task supervisors, and liaison people.

2.6 Conclusion

Field education is central to social work education in a climate where social work education is under pressure. Both field and university social work educators experience pressures that may make it difficult to support students in their journey to professional social work practice. There are limited placements with social workers available (Cleak & Smith, 2012) and there are concerns about the supervisors' ability to support and guide students in social work placements (Barretti, 2009). Questions also arise about what is learned in field education, when the field is under pressure, overworked and impacted by neoliberal ideologies (Chenoweth, 2012; Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Wilson & Campbell, 2013).

There has been little research into social work field education in the past (Noble, 2001) and research into field education in non-traditional settings is fragmented, generally poorly funded, and at times defensive in response to the undervaluing of such settings (Scholar et al., 2012). Field education with external supervision is generally seen as an outcome of interlinked issues. Factors identified include fierce competition for

placements (Hanlen, 2011), increased student numbers (Lefevre, 2005), a lack of support for field educators (Torry et al., 2005), workload issues (Moriarty et al., 2009) and the lack of social workers in certain geographical areas (Unger, 2003). Overall, it is considered to be a response to a crisis-driven environment, and concerns are raised about student satisfaction, student identity and learning (Cleak & Smith, 2012), student competencies (McLaughlin et al., 2014), students' ability to observe social workers (Plath, 2003), power imbalances between supervisors and the complexity of the triad relationship (Henderson, 2010). Yet, good planning and cooperation processes between supervisor, the agency and the university may address some of these concerns (McLaughlin et al., 2014; Scholar et al., 2012). Little is known about the experiences of students in placements with external supervision, and even less about the experiences of the supervisors and liaison people supporting these placements. Social work and the field have much to gain from a better understanding of the experiences of key players in placements with external supervision.

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have explored the literature relevant to field education, including placements with off-site supervision. I have explored social work education as it relates to the core values, ethics and aims of social work. The literature confirms field education as central to social work education and considers the current contexts that shape social work practice, social work education and field education. It further highlights the specific challenges of placements with external supervision, but also points to opportunities provided by these placements. I have highlighted that while there is some research available on placements with external supervision and models for this area of social work

education, further understanding of the experiences of key stakeholders in placements with external supervision will be useful.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter I will outline the overall paradigm and theoretical framework of this research. I identify phenomenology and social constructivism as the approaches that inform the research methodology, design, approach and analysis. I outline the methods utilised in this study, including semi-structured interviewing, data analysis, strategies and dissemination of the research findings. I will provide a description and justification of the research methodology at each point. In this chapter, I integrate process reflections to explain and justify the research process and the impact of engaging in particular processes.

In the introductory section I state why qualitative research is appropriate to the research undertaken, and discuss the relevance of qualitative research to the study. I further identify my insider status in the research, and consider the implications of this positioning.

In the second section I discuss the philosophy structure which underpins the design, conduct and discussion of this qualitative research. The research ontology, or the nature of reality as it is assumed in this research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), is informed by phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014) and social constructivism (Schwandt, 1994). I briefly consider how these fit with my own feminist worldview. I then consider the concepts and history of these frameworks, and discuss how these were applied in the design and implementation of the research project.

In the third section of the chapter I provide an overview of the research methods, relevant to and informed by my prior discussion of the research ontology and epistemology (Guba

& Lincoln, 1994). I describe the data collection processes, including the sampling and recruitment processes. There follows an overview of the participants in this study, its ethics and consents, and a description of the semi-structured qualitative interviews. The data analysis processes are outlined. I reflect on the validity and limitations of this research, and outline the dissemination strategies for the research.

In the final section of this chapter I summarise how the methods of the research are appropriate for the inquiry. I conclude that phenomenology and social constructivism are relevant frameworks for this research and have allowed to me to foreground participants' voices about their experiences in field education with external supervision.

3.2 Introduction: Doing Qualitative Research

The research design process in qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions that the inquirers make in deciding to undertake a qualitative study. In addition, researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research project, and these inform the conduct and writing of the qualitative study... Good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and, at a minimum, to be aware that they influence the conduct of inquiry. (Creswell, 2007, p. 15)

The methodology section of the thesis will make the philosophical assumptions that underpin my research project clear. Included in this chapter is information about the methods of the research, outlining the research techniques and procedures (Caelli, 2001). In presenting the methodology of this research, my discussion will go beyond focusing on the application of methods and techniques (Powell & Ramos, 2009). Research is value laden, and as the researcher I play a significant role in the creation of knowledge

emerging from the research process (Powell & Ramos, 2009). I concur with Creswell, who argued that qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry, “in which the researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand. The researchers’ interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings” (2009, p. 176). Yet, at the same time, using a phenomenological approach to research, I worked to “bridle” (Dahlberg, 2006), or in other words rein in or curb, my own assumptions, experiences and histories (Vagle, 2014). This will be explored in more detail further on in the thesis. A commitment to reflexivity on the research process is central to understanding where I position myself in the research process and my impact upon it (Powell & Ramos, 2009).

All qualitative research is concerned with understanding the phenomenon that is being explored, rather than exclusively focusing on researching the participants (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach that I have applied to the research is not concerned with studying the participants or the objects of their experience, but is particularly concerned with exploring the participants’ intentional relationships with the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014).

Creswell (2007) proposed that qualitative research is like a fabric woven and held together by world views and perspectives. He explained that “[w]ithin these worldviews and through these lenses are approaches to qualitative inquiry, such as narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies” (Creswell, 2007, p. 35). Creswell pictured that this “... field has many different individuals with different perspectives who are on their own looms creating the fabric of qualitative research” (2007, p. 35). My own loom is set up with phenomenology and social constructivism.

Qualitative research is interested in “...how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meanings they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). Participants’ feelings, thoughts and perceptions are of central interest in qualitative research (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008). Anfara and Mertz (2006) pointed out that there are various positions in relation to how theory relates to qualitative research. These range from a position that theory has a minor relationship with qualitative research, to an understanding that theory is imbedded in and frames qualitative research. Between those two positions, some researchers take the stance that some theoretical frameworks relate to some methodologies. From this latter position theoretical frameworks or philosophical stances inform methodologies “...that constitute research designs that affect the choice of methods to be used...” (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xxi). These frameworks acknowledge that “how you study the world determines what you learn about the world” (Patton, 1990, p.67 cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xxiii). Anfara and Mertz, however, argued that theoretical frameworks play a role beyond influencing the methodologies and methods (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). They concurred with Merriam, who argued that theoretical frameworks are the result of the literature base and disciplinary orientation and affect every feature of research, including setting the topic, developing the aims, and collecting and analysing the data (1998 cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006). The point stressed is that no research is theory-free, whether the theoretical framework is acknowledged or remains only implicit. I recognise that it is important to identify and examine my theoretical framework for research, as this facilitates a discussion of how the research is affected by the position taken. In line with my chosen method of enquiry and throughout much of the research process, I have worked towards identifying and exploring the meaning of the experience from the participants’ position. In practice this meant that while I recognise my inclination towards

feminist approaches to social work practice, and this will thus affect the focus of my research glance, I have worked to present the participants' exploration of their experiences. In its pure form, phenomenological research is not guided by an explicit theoretical approach, yet I recognise my own experience is not value free, and that my meaning making is shaped through interactions with social and historical contexts (Creswell, 2009).

I have chosen to undertake qualitative research as it seems to be appropriate to my interest in the experience of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision. Qualitative research is best suited to acquire an understanding of the meaning that participants ascribe to social and human issues and problems (Creswell, 2009). Social work education is focused on facilitating students' learning about thinking, doing and being (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015). Critical reflection, the development of skills and the use of self are important aspects of developing professional social work practice (Pawar & Anscombe, 2015). Discussions on social work education highlight the personal context of the learning experience (Crawford, 2001; Fook, 2001). Equipping students to be critical, analytical thinkers (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009; Camilleri, 2001), and achieving transformative learning (Cooper & Maidment, 2001) are also important factors in equipping students to be effective social workers in the changing environments of the profession and society. Research into the area of student supervision is required to describe the experience of participants in supervision, the context of that experience, the meaning-making that is happening and the outcomes of supervision. Thus, qualitative processes are appropriate to undertake research that involves interviewing students, field educators, task supervisors and liaison persons about their experience of external supervision. As well, it is required to access their knowledge and understanding to develop a model of practice for this area of field education. Qualitative research in

phenomenological and social constructivist traditions is suited to exploring experiences and considering what meanings participants attach to their experiences.

I recognise that I do not bring a purely traditional phenomenological perspective to this research. However, I am applying a phenomenological approach that considers the multiple and varied contexts of the phenomena explored (Vagle, 2014). Moreover, as social work practice occurs within a socio-political and economic environment that challenges its core values (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009), this investigation has applied a social constructivist lens to the inquiry. I will later explore the reasons and implications of using this lens as

Ethical practices of the researchers recognize the importance of the subjectivity of their own lens, acknowledge the powerful position they have in the research, and admit that the participants or the co-construction of the account between researchers and the participants are the true owner of the information collected. (Creswell, 2007, p. 24)

All researchers bring their own values and assumption to the research process. However, as a qualitative researcher I make these explicit and consider their impact on my inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

The quality of this research will be explored throughout this chapter and specifically considered when discussing validity strategies in subsequent sections. Creswell visualised research as the interplay of the approach to inquiry, research design procedures, and philosophical and theoretical assumptions leading to a complex, rigorous study (2007). A guiding principle of this thesis is that in good qualitative research there is "... emphasis on the process of research as flowing from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens, and on to the procedures ..." (Creswell,

2007, p. 37). One cannot think of each of the research parts as separate, but needs to consider their interrelationship in order to conduct research that is consistent, whole and coherent. Research ontology, epistemology and methodology need to be interrelated and congruent (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The starting point of phenomenological research is understanding and exploring the philosophy behind the approach (Vagle, 2014).

3.2.1 Insider Positioning

As a qualitative researcher I am aware that my position in the research is not neutral or without impact (Creswell, 2007). Therefore it is crucial that I consider the impact of my experience and position upon this research project in order to ‘locate myself’ as researcher. . Throughout the research I was employed as a field education staff member at a university, teaching in field education subjects, developing placement opportunities, finding, allocating and supporting field education opportunities, providing training to the field and supervising students. As outlined in the introductory section of the thesis, my interest in this research question was prompted by my own experience of providing external supervision to students in field education and wondering whether these arrangements suited students and assisted them appropriately in their journey to professional social work practice.

Participants were aware of my background and current involvement in field education at a tertiary institution. This could have had a variety of impacts. On one hand this might have provided me access to participants and assisted me in understanding the requirements of field education, the terminology used and the context discussed in the interviews (Minichiello et al., 2008). On the other hand, the assumption that I know some of what the participants bring to the interview might have caused participants not to share some aspects of their experiences (Mannay, 2010). The danger of ‘insider positioning’

was that both participants and I could falsely assume that I knew what was meant in their statements (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Throughout the research process I needed to ensure that I was conscious of the danger of “...assuming a taking for granted stance...” (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 190). I was mindful of this pitfall in the interview process in particular, and asked participants to explain or further explore a concept, term or expression they used, stating that I did not want to make the assumption that I knew or understood. Throughout the interviews, I was trying to adopt what Glesne and Peshkin (1992) described as a ‘naïve’ stance in the interview, setting aside assumptions that I might know what the participants meant. In analysing the data I tried to extrapolate the meaning participants had shared from their explanations and shared contexts, attempting to be open and to actively reflect on whether I had already framed ideas with my terms of reference and understanding without being aware of such presuppositions (Vagle, 2014). Yet, I recognise that, as a qualitative researcher, my “...own experiences and knowledge are a resource and source for exploring the ideas of others” (Holloway & Biley, 2011). I was never fully out of the picture.

A further impact of my insider position in this research project could have been participants’ awareness that my positioning in field education might lead to changes and development in field education. Ethical research should not be for academic advancement, but should lead to constructive use of the results (Basnett & Sheffield, 2010). Participation and sharing of particular information in this research might have been motivated by a concern about the research topic or a desire to see further practice developed in this area. Many of the participants commented on their motivation for participating at the end of the interview, when they were requested to share anything they had not been asked about. At that point they shared their interest in the topic, or excitement to find out about the research.

My insider positioning also needed to be considered in light of the use of phenomenology as an approach to conducting the research, and will be further referred to when discussing bracketing below. My own involvement with field education meant that I was working in familiar territory and thus there was the risk that my findings could “...be overshadowed by the enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding” (Mannay, 2010, p. 94). A risk of insider positioning is that data collection and interpretation can be biased (Minichiello et al., 2008). Here bracketing or ‘bridling’ (Dahlberg, 2006) my own understandings throughout the research process, and making a conscious effort to remain curious and attentive to what participants shared proved useful. Cross-checking findings in the data-analysis process also helped uncover new insights.

3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

I think it is helpful to start humbling ourselves now..... I mean the kind of humility whereby we turn ourselves over to openness, wonder, and inquiry. It is the kind of humility we engage when we try to stop being so certain of what we know and think. It is the kind of humility evidenced when we truly consider new things. It is the type of humility in which we let go. (Vagle, 2014, p. 15).

The Vagle quote (2014) offers a glimpse of the phenomenological philosophical framework for this research. The common philosophical aims and assumptions of phenomenology are “...the study of the lived experiences of the persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990), and the development of descriptions of the essence of those experiences, not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). Post-intentional phenomenology has been

particularly relevant to this research (Vagle, 2014). The recognition of the contextual understanding of knowledge separates post-intentional phenomenology from other perspectives of phenomenological philosophy. Knowledge and philosophical ideas are treated as partial, fleeting, malleable, and ever-changing (Vagle, 2014). As such the focus is not on essences and one dimensional understanding. As a philosophy post-intentional phenomenology assumes the connective, interconnected and ever-changing nature of things (Vagle, 2014). Vagle situated "...post-intentional phenomenology as a political philosophy as the connective nature of social, ethical, and political relations does not lend itself to simplicities and essences. It does lend itself to complexities and tentative understandings" (2014, p. 117).

The philosophical assumption of post-intentional phenomenology is "...that the individual is being, becoming, and moving through the lifeworld in intersubjective relationships with others, and with intentional relationships with other things" (Vagle, 2014, p. 23). The concept of intentionality "...signifies that we are meaningfully connected to the world" (Vagle, 2014, p. 27). Thus, as a being in the interaction I bring my own contexts and understandings to the interactions. In the research application I aim to bridle these (Vagle, 2014). While acknowledging that my own outlook on the world is shaped by feminism, it is useful to briefly explore how this interrelates with phenomenological philosophy.

Trying to understand the experiences of others from their perspective fits well with my social work practice framework. As a social work practitioner, strengths-based practice and feminist approaches have been core to my practice. Feminism is concerned with exploring, exposing and addressing gendered injustices and women's subordination in society (Ramanzanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Feminist research processes align with feminist practice, and thus the importance of process and participants as experts, and the

acknowledgement of the connection between the researcher and the participants' lives are all congruent with feminist research frameworks (Klein, 1994). Feminist research also recognises that women researchers have the 'outsider within' advantage, and that knowledge is socially constructed, and thus needs to be explored in that context (Sprague & Kobryniewicz, 2004). Feminist contemplation has influenced qualitative research by advocating for its value and legitimacy, by contending that research is not value-free and by investigating the reflexive nature of the research encounter (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Rich descriptive texts of concrete experiences rather than the abstract theorising of positivist research form the basis of feminist thinking about research (Chafetz, 2004). Personal validation of the participants' experiences through exploring personal meaning forms part of the social action of the interview (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). "Feminist theorists advocated research methods that enabled women to express their experience from their own perspective, contrasting this with positivist methodologies that claimed to be objective, but that are constructed, and analysed from the perspective of men" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 22). Feminist thinking about practice and research seemed to fit with the opportunities that phenomenology research presented. To me, phenomenological research can foreground the participants' voices, making their experiences the focus of the findings. Phenomenological research concentrates on understanding participants' meaning-making and lifeworld. This type of research can demonstrate the critical change work of approaches such as feminism (Vagle, 2014).

The ontology of this research is further shaped by an interpretivist/ social constructivist understanding of the world. Social constructivism assumes that people's understandings of the world and their experiences are varied and multiple, and that individuals have subjective understandings of their experience (Creswell, 2009). The particular

phenomenological approach applied in this research is compatible with this worldview. Post-intentional phenomenology recognises that the experiences of a phenomenon are not taking place in isolation or a vacuum (Vagle, 2014). Rather the approach acknowledges “...that each individual is part of many larger social strata that have histories and traditions (as Gadamer 1975 proposes)” and that people’s “...experiences are ‘shot through’ the world” (Vagle, 2014, p. 42). Understanding the contextual setting for social work research is important. Shaw highlighted that

...the character, purposeful priorities and uses of social work research will always be shaped – diversely – by the challenges of the places and times in which it occurs. Time and place are not only the contexts within which social work research ‘happens’ but also the ‘character-makers’ of research and the (unduly neglected) focus and concern of the research act. (Shaw, 2009b, p. 210).

Similarly, social constructivists seek to understand the world in which we live, develop subjective meanings of experience, and look for complexity of views, rather than seeking narrow meanings (Creswell, 2007). The goal of research is to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20-21).

From an interpretive/ constructivist viewpoint, the purpose of an inquiry is to describe, understand and interpret (Merriam, 2009). This interpretation posits that there are multiple realities and that these are context bound (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology is concerned with exploring the lived experience of people, and as such it contributes to the philosophical framework of the research. However, it also informs the methods as outlined in further sections (Creswell, 2009). Considering that little is known about the

experiences of key stakeholders in field education with external supervision an exploratory study that sets out to describe, understand and interpret peoples' experiences seems very appropriate.

3.3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenological research is focused on identifying the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Creswell, 2009). Creswell explained that phenomenological research

...describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon...The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. (Creswell, 2007, pp. 57-58)

Gallagher and Francesconi highlighted that phenomenology "... should not be seen as a retreat into introspection that treats consciousness or experience as an isolated phenomenon. Instead, due to the fact that phenomenology emphasizes the intentionality of the consciousness, it is about our relationship with the world" (2012, p. 3). In general, distinction is made between the hermeneutic and the American transcendental/psychological approach to phenomenology (Caelli, 2001; Creswell, 2007). However, there are further phenomenological approaches.

3.3.1.1 Concepts and influential theorists

Phenomenology is first and foremost a philosophy (Caelli, 2001). As Vagle put it, "[i]n many respects, phenomenological philosophy and phenomenological human science

research are delicately intertwined, crossing lines between philosophical and empirical work” (Vagle, 2014, p. 125). Understanding of the philosophy is important to the research process. Phenomenology is based to a large extent on the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl developed phenomenology as a philosophy that is “... focused on how meaning is experienced in intentionality, the being or experience of being” (Freeman & Vagle, 2013, p. 727). Husserl described the aim of phenomenology as “...being a *descriptive* theory of the essence of pure transcendental experiences...” (1952, p. 209). Husserl asserted that “...to fully understand meaning we have to restore the originating influence of persons who experience it” (Thorpe & Holt, 2008, p. 153). The prime focus of the inquiry thus is the intentionality of the object of the inquiry, “...hence the primary concerns for the phenomenologist is not whether things or objects exist, but whether these are intended in consciousness” (Thorpe & Holt, 2008, p. 153). Moustakas outlined a process of understanding meaning involving intentionality to “... uncover the meanings of phenomena, deliver them from the anonymity of the natural attitude, move them toward an inclusive totality of consciousness” (1994, p. 31). Husserl’s philosophy drew attention toward the intimate connection between the objects and subjects of the world (cited in Freeman & Vagle, 2013). Husserl suggested that the relationship between the perception of an object and the object was active, and that consciousness creates the objects of experience (cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Husserl (1952, p. 222) asserted that “[o]nly through acts of *experiencing* as reflected on do we know anything of the stream of experience and its necessary relationship to the pure Ego...”. Husserl proposed that “Consciousness was *intentional* in that it was always directed toward something ‘outside’ of the human mind—and this directedness also connoted interconnectedness” (cited in Freeman & Vagle, 2013, p. 729). Husserl held that phenomenological research conducted in Husserl’s tradition focused on discovering

the essence of the experience or the conscious meaning making. The basic assumption of phenomenology was that “...*there is an essence of essences to shared experiences*. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” (Patton, 2002, p. 106 cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 25)

Influential phenomenologists who followed Husserl include Schutz, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Moustakas and van Manen (Creswell, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Jupp, 2006; Vagle, 2014). Schutz developed a social phenomenology combining sociology and phenomenology (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). He emphasized the constitutive nature of consciousness and interaction (Schutz, 1964 cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Schutz argued that research should explore the experiential world that individuals take for granted, the lifeworld that is created and experienced by individuals (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Heidegger added to phenomenological thinking by introducing “...the question of one's everyday ‘being in the world’” (Thorpe & Holt, 2008, p. 107). Heidegger “...suggested that phenomena are *brought into being* through our living in the world” (cited in Vagle, 2014, p. 20). Language and the use of language became important in phenomenological research through the work of Heidegger (Freeman & Vagle, 2013). Merleau-Ponty held that phenomenological inquiry explores “...how the world opens itself out on to subjects and of how subjects open out on to the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1988 in 2008, p. 153). Van Manen's work devolves from Heidegger's philosophy; he developed hermeneutic phenomenology. In hermeneutic phenomenology text and the intention of the meaning are central (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas argued that “... the hermeneutical task is to find justifiable modes through which my experience and comprehension of the phenomenon being researched can serve as a bridge or access for elucidation and interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon” (1994, p. 11 citing Tittleman, 1979). Van Manen highlighted that the subject's

interpretation of the experience is more important than the description of the experience itself (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012), a point particularly relevant to this research project. I am interested in how participants experienced field education with external supervision rather than gaining a description of what happened.

Moustakas developed an empirical, transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). This approach is explored in more detail, as my research started out utilising Moustakas' phenomenological research methods. Moustakas (1994) acknowledged Husserl's pioneering work and explained the key concepts of epoche and phenomenon. "Epoche requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Epoche is the process of bracketing off one's own experience (Thorpe & Holt, 2008), its original Greek meaning being "...to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). To be able to understand the essence of phenomena it is important to be aware of one's own assumptions, viewpoints and prejudices (Merriam, 2009). The assumption behind bracketing is that it "...allows for the setting aside that taken-for-granted aspect of experience..." as they are brought to our consciousness through the process of bracketing (Jupp, 2006, p. 221). As discussed by Vagle (2014), this concept is rooted in Husserl's philosophy. He maintained that phenomenological research requires the research phenomenological reduction or bracketing of one's preconceived assumptions, experiences and ideas. Moustakas outlined that in undertaking phenomenological reduction, in bracketing or epoche the researcher

...engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgements regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the epoche process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs,

and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies- to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22)

From the onset of the research I have considered bracketing, and later on bridling, as an important part of the research process, through engaging in processes of bracketing and reflection.

The phenomenon in phenomenology is that what appears in consciousness, "...phenomenon means to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day" (Heidegger, 1977, pp 74-75 cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). "Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). To bring to light the phenomena core processes of the methodology of transcendental phenomenology are epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). The research methods include phenomenological reduction, which involves bracketing and horizontalizing. Horizontalizing involves treating every comment initially the same, then deleting repetitions or irrelevant comments (Moustakas, 1994). The next step is clustering themes as a textual description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological researcher needs to remain within the phenomenological attitude throughout the research (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Thus, phenomenological reduction is a first step, but it is also a constant task that needs to be renewed throughout the research process (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Interviewers need to use open questions that explore experiences, and then apply follow-up questions that seek further clarification (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Imaginative variation is seeks to develop a structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas summarised

phenomenological research in the following way: “In phenomenological studies the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection” (1994, p. 45).

My research methodology has been further extended to embrace Vagle’s post-intentional phenomenology. Vagle (2014) highlighted the connection of the intentional relationships that emerge between the researcher, the research participants and the study. His approach is shaped by post-structural thinking and he views intentionality as a moving, changing and unstable construct (Vagle, 2014). Post-intentional phenomenology holds

...whatever understanding is opened up through an investigation will always move with and through the researcher’s intentional relationship with the phenomenon- not simply in the researcher, in the participants, in the text, or in their power positions, but in the dynamic intentional relationships that tie participants, the researcher, the produced text, and their positionalities together. In this way intentionality is always moving, is unstable and therefore can be read post-structurally. (Vagle, 2014, p. 29)

Vagle (2014) maintained that the researcher is positioned in moments of time and that intentionality is the key to facilitating the understanding and awareness of this positioning. Importantly, the researcher’s own positioning in the research is acknowledged and the exploration of the positioning is an active part of the research process through reflexion (Vagle, 2014).

The phenomenological approach should emerge from the philosophical implications that are integral to the question posed (Caelli, 2001). This is challenging as research methods are therefore not clearly articulated (Caelli, 2001). Yet, it is an opportunity to remain

open and responsive to the multiple and varied contexts and manifestations of phenomena throughout the research process (Vagle, 2014).

3.3.1.2 Challenges and cautions

Bracketing one's experience has been a key concept of phenomenology, with the idea that the experiences of other can be understood from the other's point of view (Moustakas, 1994). However, there are challenges in regards to how far bracketing needs to be and practically can be taken (Merriam, 2009), and while some phenomenologists argue that bracketing needs to include bracketing the participants' experiences (Caelli, 2001) others have departed from the strict application of bracketing (Vagle, 2014).

Caelli (2001) reflected that bracketing out one's assumptions about the phenomenon needs to be taken further and include the participants. She argued that

Primordial experience cannot be described unless I, as well as the participants, attempt to put aside our assumptions about the phenomenon and the interpretations that occurred to us subsequent to the experience to see the phenomenon anew as it was experienced. (Caelli, 2001, p. 276)

Caelli (2001, p. 277) argued that the phenomenological reduction is central to phenomenology and "...without it, the search for the essential structures of a phenomenon is not possible". Yet, other authors, like LeVasseur (2003) suggested that fully bracketing one's own experiences is not possible. Instead, a bracketing with the purpose of bringing the unconscious to the consciousness can achieve a suspension of our natural attitude. Similarly, Dahlberg (2006) argued that, rather than looking at bracketing one's assumptions the researcher should work to 'bridle' them. LeVasseur referred to Heidegger, who "...emphasized the lived world..." and suggested "...we are first and foremost 'beings in the world'", and asserted there are "...no such things as pure

reflection” (2003, p. 414). LeVasseur (2003) outlines that for existentialists the essence cannot be separated from existence, and thus bracketing becomes unattainable. Some phenomenologists such as Boyd (1989 in LeVasseur, 2003) explored bracketing in terms of a temporary suspension of one’s belief and highlighted the distinction between the initial perception and the interpretations that grows from awareness. Similarly, Dahlberg highlighted “[n]either researchers nor anyone else can cut off one’s pre- understanding, that little vexation that constantly occupied philosophers as well as researchers, but it can be “bridled” from having uncontrolled effect on understanding” (2005, p 128 in Vagle, 2014, p. 61). LeVasseur suggested utilising Husserl’s core notions of bracketing, but limiting this to his concept of natural attitude, or everyday attitude toward the world, arguing that “...bracketing the natural attitude, that is bracketing the everyday assumption that things are only as they appear to our unreflective consciousness, would be possible within the interpretive paradigm and serve as a bridge to the philosophical attitude” (2003, p. 417).

In this research I have considered the suggestion that fully putting aside one’s own experiences is not possible. LeVasseur proposed that bracketing can be used as a step in the hermeneutic circle, in which “...we make progress toward sense and meaning by questioning prior knowledge, thus expanding into new horizons of meaning” (2003, p. 418). What I have attempted to do is bracket my own experiences “...to get beyond the ordinary assumptions of understanding and stay persistently curious about new phenomena” (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 419). In line with post-intentional phenomenology I have actively worked to ‘bridle’ my own assumptions (Vagle, 2014). For example, at various points of the research process I have stopped to reflect on my own experiences, assumptions and judgements, in order to engage in the process of epoche (Merriam, 2009). I have considered whether and how they might impact the research project,

including reflecting on my experiences relevant to this research prior to beginning the interview process in August 2011. This effort was made to attempt to bracket these experiences and allow me to stay curious about the experiences of the participants. For example, I was aware that my feminist and strengths-based practice framework would influence my thinking on how people would relate to each other, yet, here I needed to put this aside, not judge, not comment but listen, absorb and comprehend what the experience was like from each person's position and viewpoint.

A further challenge is that a purely phenomenological approach seems irrelevant to social work, with its critical change focus (AASW, 2010a), and in many ways seems impossible to achieve. Phenomenological research can just be thick description, however a post-intentional phenomenological approach in conjunction with social constructivism moves beyond mere description. Phenomenological research does not have a change agenda, although change can result due to interpretive awareness (Caelli, 2001). As noted above, phenomenology can make a contribution to the critical agenda of social work by forming the basis for such work. The lack of available research in externally supervised field education invited an exploratory look at people's experiences. Thus, a phenomenological lens helped guide the design of the research and the exploration of the data.

3.3.2 Social Constructivism

3.3.2.1 Concepts and influential theorists

The basic assumptions of social constructivism are that people try to understand the world in which they live and act and that they ascribe subjective meanings to their experiences (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, social constructivism assumes that an individual's meaning-making process is shaped by historical and social interpretations. This impacts both the interpretation of the participants and the researcher (Creswell,

2009). The world as such is a reality, but it is shaped by human interactions, “...social realities, identities and knowledge are created and maintained in interactions, and are culturally, historically, and linguistically influenced” (Thorpe & Holt, 2008, p. 200). From a constructivist perspective, truth and knowledge are not discovered by the mind, but created by it (Schwandt, 1994). A further assumption is that meaning arises in and out of interaction with others. Therefore, research is an inductive process (Creswell, 2009). Creswell highlighted that these “...meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (2009, p. 8). The research process framed by social constructivism is focused on participants’ views of the phenomenon. Research aims to remain broad and the interview questions are open and general, to be cognisant of the complexity and variety of views and ideas (Creswell, 2009).

Constructivist philosophy has been influenced by Nelson Goodman, who held that “...essence is not essential, and matter doesn’t matter...”, thus it is “... interested in how people are making meaning of and judging the world” (1984, cited in Schwandt, 1994). Social constructivism has been influenced by the phenomenology of Peter Berger and Alfred Schutz (Schwandt, 1994). Theorists include Kenneth and May Gergen, who steered the inquiry “... outward to the world of intersubjectivity shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (1985, cited in Schwandt, 1994, p. 127), rather than allowing it to focus on cognitive processes and individual minds. Attention is turned to the “...collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 127). The key tenets of social constructivism are, first, that facts are not objects, but are socially constructed; second, that a defining feature of a fact is that it is socially constructed, and third, that each construction is a possibility rather than a given certainty (Shaw, 2009a).

3.3.2.2 Challenges and cautions

Challenges for social constructivism and other interpretive research include relativism and solipsism (Schwandt, 1994). When the basic assumption denies unquestioned foundations for any interpretation, the question arises “[w]hat is an adequate warrant for a subjectively mediated intersubjective meaning?” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 130). In other words, the validity and application of the findings may seem limited due to the subjectivity of interpretation and the assumptions of the contingency and the social construction of facts. Schwandt (1994) further highlighted that the privileging of the views of the participants can mean a lack of critical interest or critical review of the accounts thus produced. Language and structure are important when trying to understand the relevance of social work contexts. “Thus, there is a risk that a too exclusive emphasis on ‘constructivist’ orientations neglects issues of power, space, place and time – context. This is particularly true when we slip into speaking of constructions as if they were merely mental constructs...” (Shaw, 2009b, p. 211). A further issue is the inherent contradiction in the epistemological claim of social constructivism. If knowledge is created by individual minds, how can this knowledge then be shared publicly (Schwandt, 1994)? This will be taken up in further sections, when validation and limitations are examined.

3.3.3 Application of Phenomenology and Social Constructivism

As indicated above, I have engaged in a process of epoche, identifying my own experiences, assumptions and judgements about placements with external supervision (Merriam, 2009). I have attempted to then bracket my own experiences in the research process (Merriam, 2009), with the aim of bridling these (Vagle, 2014) and staying curious about the experiences of others (LeVasseur, 2003). My aim was to understand the

information that participants have shared in the interviews from their perspective, and, in the process, be reflexive on the context of their experiences. I also intended to be intentionally aware of my own thinking, experiences and understandings. Moreover, I have tried to understand the perspective from each participant's whole group before moving to analyse the data as a whole, attempting to gain an understanding of the essence of their experience (Merriam, 2009). For example, in the data analysis phase of the research I have initially looked solely at the interviews of student participants, identifying themes and concepts that showed how students experienced and discussed placements with external supervision. On completion of the analysis I then presented this analysis at a conference, and completed a paper on the prominent elements in the discussions of the student participants. This allowed me to 'bracket' (Moustakas, 1994) the meaning of the experience for each group of participants before moving on exploring the experiences of the next group (Merriam, 2009), helping me to bridle my thinking (Vagle, 2014). I repeated this process with each of the participant groups and found that disseminating the perspectives of the group via conference presentations, workshops and through writing manuscripts, helped me to complete an exploration of the experiences of each group. I was then able to start a new process of exploring and emerging myself in the experiences of the next group with fresh eyes and a curious mind.

My initial literature review was in line with what Vagle (2014) identified as a relevant research component of post-intentional phenomenology. A partial literature review served to situate the research inquiry in a context, while verifying that the research question has not been answered elsewhere. This literature review was not meant to be extensive, but was designed to ensure that the "...really important phenomenological work- opening up and exploring the phenomenon" was not postponed (Vagle, 2014, p. 72). Other phenomenological strategies such as horizonlisation and imaginative

variation (Merriam, 2009) and post-reflexion (Vagle, 2014) were utilised in the data analysis phases of each subset of the research. This will be explored in subsequent sections. In line with post-intentional phenomenology and social constructivism, the experience of participants in field education with external supervision was explored from their perspective, but situated within context and shaped by social constructions of meaning and knowledge.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Research Questions and Aims

Qualitative research design begins with the posing of the research question. What I am trying to find out needs to shape the research methodology I employ (Janesick, 1994). Conducting research connected to student supervision in field education is relevant to social work, considering that social work education since its inception has consisted of academic training and practical placement experience (Camilleri, 2001). Field education is a site for experimental learning and students agree with the Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW] that considers field education to be a critical component of their social work education (Barton et al., 2005; Gaha, 2001). Within field education the student-supervisor relationship (Bennett et al., 2008), and in placements with external supervision, also the triad relationship (Abram et al., 2000), have been deemed vital. It appears that there has been minimal research attention on field education with external supervision. Personally, having been involved in the provision of external supervision in field education, I had queries about the students' experiences with external supervision. I was also interested in best practice models for this area of social work education.

Thus, emerging from the initial partial literature review and my interest and questions about field education with external supervision, the research question was *What are the*

experiences of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision?. The aims of the research were to:

- Review and explore what is known about supervision for social work students on placements;
- Ascertain the experience of students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison persons in social work field education with external supervision;
- Explore the four-way relationship between external supervisor, internal supervisor, student and liaison person;
- Investigate what external field education brings to field education; and
- Develop a model/ framework or principles of practice for field education with external supervision.

3.4.2 Ethics and Consent

Social work research perspectives and techniques can provide powerful insights into the world. However, with that power come responsibilities (Krueger & Neuman, 2006). As a researcher I was aware that the ethical responsibilities for the research remain with the researcher (Neuman, 2006). Krueger and Neuman (2006) highlighted that discussing ethical concerns about research during the research process and reporting them is morally and socially responsible. I have ensured that my research met the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government, 2007a, 2007b).

To ensure that appropriate ethical standards were maintained, I obtained ethical approval to undertake this research from James Cook University (see Appendix 2). I provided

participants with an overview of the purpose and procedures of the research, and information about myself as the researcher. I also ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, the participants' rights, and promoted the ability for participants to terminate their participation, to contribute to the research process and to access the findings as they wished (Neuman, 2006) (see Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8). I obtained informed consent from all participants and clearly outlined the points that participation in the research was voluntary and that consent could be withdrawn (Australian Government, 2007b) (see Appendix 3). Information provided about me needed to clarify my own values and philosophical position (Krueger & Neuman, 2006) as relevant to the research topic, and I declared my interest and experience in the provision of external supervision. Ethical dilemmas I had considered prior to data collection included the impact of possibly including research participants who have been involved in external supervision with James Cook University Social Work and Human Services Department, and whether my connection with the Field Education Team would influence their participation or responses (Australian Government, 2007b). To address these concerns I ensured that I did not directly approach potential participants. None of my samples included participants who have worked with me in the role of an external supervisor. Some participants had experiences of working with me as a teacher or in my field education role prior to volunteering to participate in the study. However, I made sure that there was no potential impact on students participating in the research (Australian Government, 2007b). For instance, I ensured that I would not be involved with them as students in field education. Participants were provided with the contact information for my PhD supervisors and Ethics and Grants Administrator of James Cook University, with encouragement to report any ethical concerns, should these arise, for the participants.

The literature review for this research has identified that field education can be a challenging experience for students (Maidment, 2006; Ornstein & Moses, 2010; Patford, 2000) and relationships can be fraught with power imbalances (Henderson, 2010). Thus, participating in research about field education could trigger deep personal feelings and even distress. Consequently, this possibility was considered in every stage of the research process (Lee & Renzetti, 1993). For example, I needed strategies in place to support participants who became distressed, and I needed to assure participants that they could withdraw from the research project at any stage of the research (Australian Government, 2007b). This was discussed at the start of the interview and was also outlined in the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix 3), which participants signed.

I needed to be aware of aspects of difference between myself and the participant group (Cooper & Maidment, 2001). I considered whether the research approach or instrument developed needed to be applied cautiously, within cultural context of the participant group or individual participants (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009). Further ethical considerations followed the principles of responsible research. I have ensured the integrity and scientific rigor of the research, for example, by accessing education, training, support and feedback from the university's research program, my supervisors, peers and researchers with expertise in my field (Australian Government, 2007b). I have respected the confidentiality of the participants, and kept a clear record of the research methods and the data sources. The research data was stored safely (Australian Government, 2007b). I have considered the possibility of participants changing and implementing change because of their participation in this research.

A further consideration was whether participants might have had unrealistic expectations in regards to the benefits of the study due to my position in field education (Australian Government, 2007b). For example, the possibility was there that those participants

associated with my university might request specific changes to the field education program, While this would have been relevant information, I would have confirmed that I heard this, and reiterated my role as a researcher in the interview process. I would then have stated that, although I was part of a field education team, any ideas emerging from the research would need to pass through the Department at a later point in time for implementation.

3.4.3 Data Collection

3.4.3.1 Sampling and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was deemed to be an appropriate sampling method for this research (Creswell, 2007), and opportunities arose to use aspects of snowball sampling, in that a number of early participants referred other participants to the research after their interview (Merriam, 2009). The criteria for participation in this research stated that the person must have been involved in social work field placements with external social supervision as a student, external field educator, task supervisor or liaison person.

Strategies to access participants for my research included putting out a call for research participants via the field education units of Australian universities, and using the membership list of the AASW and their publications to inform people of the research and invite interested parties to participate (see Appendices 2-5). This information was sent via the Administration Office of the School as an invitation for participants to contact me if interested. Two presentations on my research design and literature review allowed me to issue a general call for participation as part of the conference presentation, and to distribute bookmarks with information on my research (Zuchowski, 2011a, 2011c). Word of mouth also proved to be a useful avenue for participants to enquire about and participate in the research. As the result of a range of recruitment strategies, 32

participants were interviewed for this research. Participants in this research were associated with a number of social work programs in Australian universities in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia.

The initial response rate to the invitation to participate in the research was positive with 18 people contacting me within the first three weeks of presenting the information at a conference and sending out information flyers to those recently associated with field education at James Cook University. However, not one person with experience as a task supervisor contacted me during this time. On reflection, I wondered at the time whether this was because of the way we communicated with task supervisors, whether this research was relevant to them or even how involved overall they felt in social work field education? Task supervisors started contacting me after a further invitation to task supervisors to participate, via various universities, a number of them encouraged personally by others, either from staff located in university field education offices or by other participants. At some stage there was a theoretical saturation point and a sense of repetition in the information shared by the interviewees (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Merriam, 2009), Thus it was felt that the 32 participants offered an adequate number of contributors to the research to progress on the research aim (Merriam, 2009).

3.4.3.2 Participants/ Demographic Data

Thirty eight (38) people responded to the call for participation in this research. Six of the 38 people who contacted subsequently decided not to participate in an interview. Therefore, 32 participants were interviewed in total. Participants were associated with a number of social work education programs across Australia. They were physically located across the country, with the majority residing in Queensland, but participants

were also located in regional and metropolitan Western Australia and Victoria, as well as in South Australia and Australia Capital Territory. In the process of setting up the interviews and the interview process, it emerged that various participants had experienced multiple roles in field education with external supervision. In the interviews, participants were asked to respond to questions from the point of view of one role at a time, and in the data analysis of each group only the responses that specifically related to their discussion of that particular role were considered. Table 3.1 lists the participants and indicates the various roles they talked about in their interview. Table 3.2 lists the roles and shows which participants talked about these roles in their interview. Participants who shared their information from the position of more than one role are highlighted in blue. The names of the participants have been changed to ensure the confidentiality of participants. In the process of creating synonyms, the gender of the participant, their experience, background information and role has remained as it was related in the interviews.

Table 3.1
Participants and their (multiple) role(s)

	Student	External Supervisor	Task Supervisor	Liaison	Field education coordination	New name
1	x					Stephanie
2		x		x	x	Karen
3		x				Ralph
4		x		x	x	Anna
5	x	x				Belinda
6		x		x		Bridget
7		x		x		Georgina
8	x					Carmen
9	x					Melissa
10			x			Regina
11		x		x	x	Iona
12	x					Kelly
13		x				Paul
14	x					Jennifer
14	x					Jamie
16	x	x	x			Tanya
17	x					Laura
18	x					Kate
19			x			Louise
20			x			Monica
21		x				Matthew
22			x			Loretta
23			x	x		Mary
24	x	x	x			Shelly
25	x					Denise
26		x				Chloe
27		x		x	x	Maria
28		x		x		Robert
29		x		x		Wayne
30			x			Lucy

31				x	Dana
32	x		x	x	Samantha

Table 3.2
Roles with the list of Participants

	Student	Supervisor	Task	Liaison	Field education coordination
1	Stephanie	Karen	Regina	Karen	Karen
2	Belinda	Ralph	Tanya	Anna	Anna
3	Carmen	Anna	Louise	Bridget	Iona
4	Melissa	Belinda	Monica	Georgina	Maria
5	Kelly	Bridget	Loretta	Iona	
6	Jennifer	Georgina	Mary	Mary	
7	Jamie	Iona	Shelly	Maria	
8	Tanya	Paul	Lucy	Robert	
9	Laura	Tanya	Samantha	Wayne	
10	Kate	Matthew		Dana	
11	Shelly	Shelly		Samantha	
12	Denise	Chloe			
13	Samantha	Maria			
14		Robert			
15		Wayne			

Students

Thirteen (13) participants identified as having experienced the role of student in this research. Nine (9) of these participants shared student experiences only and four (4) had experiences across a number of roles including that of student. All of the student participants were female and 6 of them were final year students, completing or having just completed their final placement at the time of the interview.

Task Supervisors

Nine (9) participants identified as having supported social work student placements as task supervisors. The participants held a range of qualifications, all relevant to work in the social welfare sector. Three (3) participants had social work qualifications, but were not eligible to supervise social work students as they had graduated less than two years ago. Two (2) of the participants drew on only one experience as a task supervisor while the other seven (7) drew on numerous experiences - for some of the participants too numerous to accurately count. All task supervisors were female, and their work experience in the social welfare sector ranged between 5 and 27 years.

External Field Educators

Fifteen (15) participants identified as having supported social work student placements as external supervisors. The participants were experienced social workers, having worked in the social welfare sector and/or social work education between 5 and 40 years. There were 10 female and 5 male participants. The great majority of participants drew on numerous experiences as external supervisors of social students.

Liaison People

Eleven (11) participants identified as having supported social work student placements as liaison people. Nine (9) of the liaison people were female and two were male. The participants were experienced in the role of liaison person, and most of them also had provided off-site supervision to students at some stage. Four (4) of the liaison people also described field education coordination roles. However, there was no separate analysis of this group, rather findings relevant to this group emerged as part of the liaison peoples' discussions.

3.4.3.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 32 participants exploring their experience as students, field educators, task supervisors and/or liaison persons involved in social work field education placements with external supervision. There was no relationship between these participants, with all participants exploring unrelated experiences within field education. The interviews were conducted in 2011/ 2012 and took place both face-to-face in Townsville, Cairns and Kuranda and over the telephone, with participants from other locations. In total there were 15 face to face interviews and 17 telephone interviews.

In social constructivist research the “Questions are broad and general so that participants can construct meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions of interactions with other persons” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Similarly, phenomenological researchers pose open and broad questions. In phenomenology it is not important whether each interview includes the same questions, rather “... all interviews are treated as exciting opportunities to potentially learning something important about the phenomenon” (Vagle, 2014, p. 79). In this research process I constructed an interview guide (see Appendix 4), centred on the research question and aims. However, questions were phrased openly, and were focused on their general meaning rather than the exact wording. I used a recursive model of interviewing, involving the researcher following the lead of the participant in the interview within a conversational model (Minichiello et al., 2008). As such the interview is not just determined by the researcher,

...(r)ather, researchers doing in-depth interviewing rely on, and adjust to, their interest and engagement of the participant, who will often move according to the dictates of their own concern about what is important to

them, in discussing the topic introduced by the researcher. (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 86)

A recursive model of interviewing can use an interview guide and employs various ways of eliciting information, through a range of techniques, such as funnelling, storytelling, probing, leading questions and nudging (Minichiello et al., 2008). As a researcher I participated in the research process by “...answering, commenting and attending to conversation sensitively”, but also “...thinking about each verbal interaction and its theoretical, political and ethical direction; when to probe for clarification or elaboration, and when to sit quietly and acknowledge the silence of the informant” (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 84). Moustakas highlighted that while a phenomenological researcher

...may in advance develop a series of questions aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person’s experience of the phenomenon, these are varied, altered, or not used at all when the co-researcher shares the full story of his or her experience of the bracketed question. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114)

Similarly, Vagle (2014) suggested a flexible approach to data collection was suitable to a post-intentional phenomenological approach. Questions need to be aimed at leading the participants to share their lived experiences rather than their thoughts, opinions or theories (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012).

In using the interview guide I attempted a more informal, interactive process and used open ended questions and comments (Moustakas, 1994). My Interview Guide (see Appendix 4) set the broad parameters for the interview, but allowed the interview to proceed in a variety of directions under broad themes. I was interested in the lived experience of participants, and therefore open questions were centred on the participants’

experiences (Merriam, 2009). I often followed the participants' lead to explore information that was shared further, or posed clarifying questions to gain better insight into what was shared (Merriam, 2009). In line with social constructivism, I was interested in hearing what people shared about their experiences and what meanings they attributed to these occurrences (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenology in its pure application would avoid asking for participants' opinions. Questions that ask participants about their opinions and thoughts about specific things in their lives are "... entirely against the spirit of the phenomenological epoché, which call for a suspension, not only of the investigator's theories and pre-conceived opinions, but also of the subjects' theories and pre-conceived notions regarding their own lived experiences" (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012, p. 2). I was interested in more than participants' experience, but also in understanding how they viewed the world and constructed meaning (Creswell, 2009). I was also interested in what might work in field education with off-site supervision. I asked some follow-up questions about what worked and what they thought might be an ideal placement. As outlined above, the attainment of a total suspension of someone's theories and ideas is questionable (LeVasseur, 2003), rather answers to these questions provided contextual information and insights into placements with off-site supervision. In line with social constructivism and post-intentional phenomenology, I was interested in the interactions between people and asked about their experiences and thoughts about the field education relationships they were in (Creswell, 2009; Vagle, 2014). In order to capture information that I have missed or not considered, I posed a final open ended question, inviting participants to share anything I had not asked them about that they wanted to share, seeking to gain broad information (Creswell, 2009).

3.4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is inductive: themes, categories and patterns emerge from the data (Janesick, 1994). It involves absorbing, considering and reflecting on the themes that emerge from the participants' accounts in a systematic and rigorous way. As these themes emerge they are reported through the researcher's language (Minichiello et al., 2008).

Data analysis in this research involved organising and preparing the transcripts of interviews for coding through the use of nodes in the data analysis software NVivo10. I used NVivo to store, categorise and work with the data. However, I did not use the analytical functions of the software for the analysis. In the data analysis I reduced the data into themes, condensing the nodes. I then expressed the data in forms of findings and discussions (Creswell, 2007). Coding was a progressive process of “....sorting and defining and defining and sorting...” the collected data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 133). In line with my research approach, I dealt with each set of data anew, and coded each group of participants' transcripts in a new NVivo project. I then coded the themes, categories and patterns that emerged from each set separately.

3.4.4.1 Coding

It is my understanding that when I produce an interpretation of the research my own language, life experience and understanding will impact on the process of analysing the data (Smith, 1998 in Ramanzanoğlu & Holland, 2002). What I have attempted to do in the data analysis process is to remain curious and approach the data with fresh eyes (LeVasseur, 2003). However, I need to acknowledge that “[s]imple decisions over how to categorize, what to include and what to exclude also carry theoretical, political and ethical implications” (Ramanzanoğlu & Holland, 2002, p. 161).

The phenomenological method of data analysis requires the researcher to read the transcripts to gather an overall feeling for them (Creswell, 2007). In my initial coding of the data, I was open-minded to emerging ideas and themes, utilising the exact words of participants to create nodes in order to start building categories in NVivo (Merriam, 2009). My initial data analysis was in line with phenomenological strategies. Data analysis was about being open to anything and actively noticing (Vagle, 2014). In a process that Moustakas (1994) called horizontalization, every perception or contribution of the participants had equal value in the examination of the data. Building on this process of horizontalization the data then was organised into themes (Merriam, 2009).

Using the nodes function in NVivo, I copied sections from the transcripts in various nodes as these emerged as themes, often utilising a quote multiple times, either partially or fully. This allowed me to view the data from various perspectives, in line with the phenomenological strategy of imaginative variation (Merriam, 2009). Once I had gathered the information from each group of participants into nodes using their own words, I reconsidered the information and looked particularly for descriptions of their experiences and associated meanings of those. The final step in the data analysis involves interpreting or exploring the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). This involved exploring a narrative of findings, detailed discussion of themes or a discussion of the interconnectedness of themes (Creswell, 2009). As outlined in the dissemination section below I worked to present the experiences of each group separately. This meant analysing one set of data, reporting on it before then completing data analysis of the other groups and then finally, analysis of the data as a whole. In the data analysis this meant that I developed a detailed discussion of the themes that emerged from each set of data. With a social constructivist lens and in line with post-intentional phenomenology, I was interested in how meaning and understandings were shaped with the interactions of

others. I was also interested in how the context in which people live and work shapes the historical and social setting of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Vagle, 2014).

3.4.5 Validation of the research

The debate no longer centred on the validity of qualitative research as a form of inquiry, but on how to ensure the validity of the research outcomes (Angen, 2000). Positivist notions of quantitative research require that research is reliability, valid and generalizable (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative research, however, is not based on establishing facts and finding truth. Neuman (2011) explained that validity means truthfulness. He stated that qualitative research is aiming at “...achieving authenticity rather than a single version of ‘Truth’” (Neuman, 2011, p. 214). Qualitative researchers cannot be sure whether participants distort or hide information or facts, “...the qualitative researcher is not primarily focused on finding out the truth per se but rather the truth as the informant sees it” (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 111). Phenomenological research assumes that

...the way in which a person presents information about their perceptions and experience is tied to the way in which they attach meaning to these events and experiences and that most people would act on their own interpretations. Given that these interpretations or rationales are the ones most of us use to justify our choices and behaviour it makes sense to gain access to these rather than ‘checking the Truth’. (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 111)

Validity in qualitative research has been seen as checking the credibility of the research findings, i.e. does the explanation fit the description (Janesick, 1994)? Qualitative research acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher, but in constructing the narrative

of the research “...it must be imaginable by others, and it must be verifiable by others” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 104).

Qualitative researchers have employed various strategies to ensure the validity of their research. Janesick, for example, relied on experience and the literature to ensure validity, generalisation and reliability (Janesick, 1994). Moreover, Janesick enumerated triangulation and member checking as tools to achieve validity in qualitative research. Triangulation can involve data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation or interdisciplinary triangulation (Janesick, 1994). Creswell proposed a number of validity strategies for qualitative research that included triangulation, but also member checking, peer debriefing and external auditing to review the project (Creswell, 2009). Merriam (2009) considered internal validity or credibility. In other words, she advised the researcher to check how congruent the findings are with reality, as well as posing the question, can the results be generalised (external validity)? Moreover, she stressed the importance of the reliability, or consistency, of the findings (Merriam, 2009).

The above measures for validity work to establish the legitimacy of qualitative research, however, lean towards positivist assumptions of an external foundational reality (Angen, 2000). Janesick (1994) extended her discussion on the qualitative research design to suggest that qualitative researchers are uncomfortable with a “...preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told” (p. 215), and prefer “...to capture the lived experience of participants in order to understand their meaning perspectives” (p. 218). Interpretivist qualitative researchers recognise that “...what we can know of a reality is socially constructed through our intersubjective experiences within the lived world, which results in a form of truth that is negotiated through dialogue” (Angen, 2000, p. 386).

Angen (2000) explored the problems inherent in the use of specific criteria, namely member checking, reflexivity, triangulation and peer review. The problem with member checking is that the experience of the interview itself could have made an impact on their original considerations, or changed their understanding of the experience (Angen, 2000). Viewed from a non-fundamentalist perspective, there is no strict static truth against which the participants can check their interview (Angen, 2000). Reflexivity, as a way to develop some objective distance between the self and research, negates the understanding of interpretive research in that the researcher is not separate from the participants or the phenomenon that is being explored (Angen, 2000). However, reflexivity, the researcher's own interpretation of the research, is still important to identify and "...to trace how the researcher's original sense of the topic changes over the course of the research (Bergum, 1991). Interpretive research depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning and understanding" (Angen, 2000, p. 383). I have worked to continuously reflect on my position and assumptions throughout the study, and to 'bridle' these and be open to and reflective of the participants' experiences and the meanings they attributed to these. This is further discussed in Chapter Seven 'Post Reflexion on the Research Process'. Reflexivity can be achieved through bridling as "...an active project in which one consciously tends to the understanding of the phenomenon as a whole throughout the study" (Vagle, 2014, p. 67).

Triangulation suggests that multiple methods, researchers and data sources will provide a convergence of meaning (Lincoln & Cuba, 1988). However, Angen (2000) identified this process as problematic, as the context of meaning can be lost. Peer review can be problematic in interpretive research, as the researcher's peers would not necessarily have the ability to give adequate consideration to all perceptions. Yet, peer review can be an avenue to assess "...whether the investigator has argued cogently and written

persuasively” (Angen, 2000, p. 384). In submitting manuscripts for publication actively throughout the research process, I have exposed my writing to peer review and the assessment of this latter point.

Angen (2000) further argued that what is needed to evaluate qualitative research is ethical validation and substantive validation of the research. Validation describes a process of judging the trustworthiness or goodness of the research as a continual process (Angen, 2000). Ethical validation states that “all scientific endeavors should contribute to our ability to carry on in an ethical way; interpretive human science inquiry in particular becomes a moral issue, with its aim of more fully understanding the meanings involved in our everyday existence” (Angen, 2000, p. 388). Ethical validation considers the value of the research and the usefulness of the interpretation (Angen, 2000). Ultimately, validity and reliability are subject to the ethics of the researcher and his/her commitment to proceed with the research in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009). “Ethical validation requires that we provide practical, generative, possible transformative and hopefully nondogmatic answers to the questions we pose as researchers” (Angen, 2000, p. 389). Substantive validation is concerned with the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the understanding gained from the research. Researchers need to illustrate “...how they have done justice to the complexity of their chosen topic by bringing into play all the various, present and historical, intersubjective understandings of it” (van Manen, 1990 cited in Angen, 2000, p. 390). The research process identified here involved evidencing the fullness of the research interpretation and guiding the audience. As well it required the researcher to be clear about her own interpretation (Angen, 2000). Shaw considered that quality research in social work is achieved, when it

...aims for methodological excellence in whatever it does, promotes social work marked by rigour, range, variety, depth and progression, sustains an

active conversation with the social science community, achieves a thoroughgoing consistency with broader social work purposes, gives serious attention to aspects of the research enterprise that are close to social work, and aims to unsettle its preconceptions by taking seriously aspects of the research enterprise that seem on the face of it far from social work. (Shaw, 2009a, p. 259)

Dennis (2013) proposed that the validity conditions of social sciences are openness (expression and willingness to explore other concepts) and egalitarianism (equal opportunities to participate). He suggested that understanding participants, and understanding self in the research context/ experience, understanding the nature and product of dissemination are all important strategies to validate research, and that researchers need to attend to this validation and provide information about it in equalitarian and open ways (Dennis, 2013). In the research discussed here I have worked towards methodological excellence, with vigour, depth and progression. I have maintained active debate with the social sciences community. The inquiry is important for social work as it considers aspects of education for future social workers, and I have kept an open and inquiring mind as to what might emerge from the research enterprise.

Other validity strategies that I have used are more in line with the idea of validation and include using rich, thick descriptions, clarifying bias and presenting negative or differing information (Creswell, 2009). The extent to which the researcher describes the assumptions and theory underlying the study, the thick description of the findings and the detail about how the study was conducted also assisted in determining the reliability of the research (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, I sent transcripts of the interviews and copies of the publications to the participants. This later point is discussed further in my reflections about the research process in Chapter Seven.

3.4.5.1 Post- reflexion

As discussed above, reflexivity has been recognised as a relevant tool contributing to the validation of qualitative research. Reflexivity can assist in checking data and the interpretation of it, but also in finding new insights. Reflexivity is a tool for recognising the social position and assumptions of the researcher (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). In a similar vein, post-phenomenological inquiry suggests a process of post-reflexion (Vagle, 2014). Vagle argued that “...bridling requires us to stretch our idea of openness and humility, and this stretching is a necessary part of this type of research. In post intentional phenomenological research it is important to go further with our reflexivity, however” (2014, p. 131). Post-reflexion required me, as a researcher, to reflect on how things might be already framed, which I may not have been be aware of throughout the research process (Vagle, 2014). This was an ongoing process in which I specifically engaged in preparation for supervision meetings, data analysis and dissemination of findings. Post-reflexion was an active process of this research and attention was given to

...wonder about and question our connections/ discussions, assumptions of what we take as normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked. For it is in these moments that our post –reflexive work needs to take place, and this means that we must constantly interrogate our pre-understandings and developing understandings of the phenomenon. (Vagle, 2014, p. 132)

3.4.6 Limitations

Participants in this study have self-selected, and have chosen what they want to share in the interviews. Therefore, their reality is explored as the participant presents it, and is reliant on their recollection and reflection (Minichiello et al., 2008). Participants’ self-selection may be based on a special interest and awareness of social work field education

or external supervision. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised, but can offer insight into the experiences of participants who have been involved in similar placements with external supervision.

My intention has been to approach this inquiry with fresh eyes, in line with phenomenological research. I have attempted to ‘bridle’ my own experiences and positions (Dahlberg, 2006; LeVasseur, 2003; Vagle, 2014). Thus, I summarised and reflected on my own experiences prior to interviewing, and in the data analysis. I approached the transcripts of each group of participants separately with the intention of focusing on the voice of only one group of participants at a time. I recognised that I have had experiences in placements with external supervision as a student, an external supervisor and a liaison person, and thus I am positioned as an insider in this research. For example when looking at interviews, at times I made assumptions about the field education processes. For example, I assumed that matching students to field placements would be a common process, but this was not the case everywhere. Being open in the interview, following up participants’ understandings, asking further probing questions and engaging in reflexion were all processes that helped to limit the impact of my own positioning. My own context and experiences have impacted the choice of focus, the interviews and the analysis (Minichiello et al., 2008). My insider status may have also impacted upon the participants’ reflections, as participants potentially could have assumed a shared understanding.

As I started interviewing, it emerged that some participants had experienced field education with external supervision in various roles. It is my understanding that our past experiences, our histories and our thinking affect the way we process new experiences. Where participants identified that they had experiences in more than one of the roles, I have asked them whether they were happy to talk about these roles separately. In practice

this meant asking them to answer questions from the perspective of one role and then, unless this had already emerged in their answers, repeating the questions again, asking participants to respond with the other role in mind. Participants were able to provide responses from the separate positions. However, while I used only the responses that related to each role in the analysis of each group, one could argue that if participants experienced multiple roles these would affect their discussions of other roles. I think it is important to note this multiple positioning, although, other experiences, contexts and histories are always influencing our experiences and our views of experiences. As a participant or researcher I cannot rule these out; there is no neutral, un-impinged experience. What I have attempted to do is to approach this in each interview anew, by asking the participant, 'so how was your experience in the other role?'. Surprisingly, different foci emerged after asking participants to consider the questions from a different position.

A further limitation of the study is that I have restricted the key stakeholders included in this research to students, task supervisors, external supervisors and liaison people. It became clear from the interviews that field education coordinator and administrator concerns could have been explored as a separate group, providing further detail. Moreover, the voices of the clients of social work services are missing. In a way, this has been omitted because of the way we deliver and assess field education in Australia. The Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards [AWEAS] and the Practice Standards require that students and social workers are prepared to work appropriately with clients, and the AWEAS suggest that clients should be engaged to plan social work education programs. However, there is no requirement for clients to be involved in the assessment of students' performance in field education (AASW, 2012b, 2013). Yet, elsewhere in the world clients are involved in assessing the student's

performance in field education. In England, for example, assessment of students on placement is managed through a partnership between the university, the organisation and service users and carers (The College of Social Work, 2014).

3.4.7 Dissemination of Research Findings

Dissemination of the research findings is essential for the research to be of significance, and to allow others to benefit from what was learned in the study (Merriam, 2009). Authenticity and providing detailed accounts of how participants understand and make sense of external supervision are important measures of success for qualitative research projects (Neuman, 2006). The way we write about the findings is "...a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class and the personal politics that we bring to research. All writing is 'positioned' and within a stance" (Creswell, 2007, p. 179). In line with post-intentional phenomenology there are many different valid textual expressions, providing these are read coherently (Vagle, 2014). Vagle (2014) maintained that the writing about the findings needs to include identified tentative manifestations, relate to and incorporate the philosophical discussions of the particular field, and reflect the researcher's post-reflexive work. The language of my writing has shaped the qualitative texts and this shaping affects not only the participants, but also the readers of the writing (Creswell, 2007). I am aware that, in writing about the research findings, I had a number of agendas. Primarily, I was committed to foregrounding the experience of each group in the discussion. Thus, I have presented and written about the findings of each group separately. However, I am also aware that I purposefully aimed my writing at a particular audience. With a keen interest in field education and a critical approach to social work, I was attempting to reach social work educators and social workers with an interest in field education, and I sent manuscripts to journals that might

reach my target audience. I was aware that interacting with the audience close to the data was a powerful way of presenting the findings (Janesick, 1994). I used wording from participants to present quotes, but also to formulate the themes and titles of presentations (Creswell, 2009).

To contribute to the building of knowledge and to allow scrutiny and peer review, I have commenced disseminating the research findings. To date, arising out of this research, six manuscripts have been published (Zuchowski, 2011b, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014d, 2015a). I have presented two posters and six papers at local, national and international conferences (Zuchowski, 2011a, 2011c, 2012, 2013a, 2013c, 2014c, 2014e, 2015b). The conference presentations and peer reviews have allowed for robust discussion of the issues presented. This has led to further reflection, interpretation, analysis and insights. I am planning a further paper on the overall research findings and discussion of my findings within schools of social work, to improve the understanding of the issues, but also improve current practice in this area. Chapter Seven advances the reflections on the research process and disseminations of findings.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have described the research methods I have used to explore the experiences of key stakeholders involved in placements with external supervision. I have described the rationale for undertaking the research within a phenomenological and social constructivist framework, outlined the key concepts and shown how these were applied in the research process. I have outlined data collection and analysis processes and have described how findings have emerged and have been shared. I have outlined my own position in the research, my ethical conduct of research and the limitations of the research. Throughout, I have shown the relevance of phenomenology and social

constructivism to the research process. These approaches have allowed me to foreground the participants' voices about their experiences in field education with external supervision, and kept me conscious and alert to need to 'bridle' my own assumptions and ideas.

Part Two: Results

In the following two chapters I present the findings of this qualitative research project. In line with my research design, I present the findings of the research in 2 separate chapters to reflect a phenomenological and social constructivist research framework. The data of each group of stakeholders was analysed separately, initially by exploring the experience of each group specifically as it pertained to them. Thus in presenting the data in this thesis, it is important to present what they had to say about their experience in social work placements with external supervision distinctly. Chapter Four thus presents the findings based on contributions of the four key stakeholder groups, as they emerged out of the separate analyses. In the summary of Chapter Four I explore the importance of hearing the voices from each group.

After completing a thorough analysis of the data from each group of stakeholders and disseminating the understanding gained from these analyses, I undertook a second analysis of all the data. Chapter Five presents the outcomes of this second analysis based on a thematic analysis of the contributions from all participants.

Chapter 4 The Experiences of Key Stakeholders in Placements with External Supervision

4.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter I present the findings that emerged out of the analysis of each individual stakeholder group. The initial analysis of each group focused on crystallising the experiences and the issues, discussions and ideas that each group foregrounded in their discussions. Then these experiences were reported in conference presentations and academic publications. The five sections of this chapter are based on these presentations and publications.

Section one presents the experiences of the students in field education with external supervision. Students' discussions focused on their general experiences in field education, and many participants stated that field education itself was a struggle for them. The students further discussed their experiences and expectations in placements with external supervision, the challenges and opportunities of placements with external supervision, the four-way relationships and ideal placements. Participants expressed concerns about the quality of and their access to supervision. Some were getting different ideas from the two different supervisors. The section concludes with the suggestion that placement matching, preparation and support are essential in order for students to have a positive experience in field education with external supervision.

Section two presents the experiences of task supervisors. These supervisors supported social work students in field education with external supervision. The task supervisors' discussions focused on the rewards and responsibilities of providing placement opportunities to social work students. This supervision focused on getting students job-ready, the importance of role clarification and the relationship with the other supervisor.

Task supervisors provided informal and formal supervision to students, but not all task supervisors were involved in placement assessment. While some participants described a strong relationship with the other supervisor, many had no direct relationship with the external supervisor. The section concludes with concerns that not all task supervisors were seen as valued partners in social work placements.

Section three presents the experiences of external supervisors who supported social work students in field education with external supervision. Overall, external supervisors commented on the positive nature of their own experience as external supervisors. Discussions focused on the opportunities and challenges of providing external supervision to social work students, the importance of building relationships and connections to understand the context of the students, the placement and the people involved, and the focus of their supervision on assisting students to build professional social work practice. The section concludes with discussing the importance of relationship building and role clarification. It is essential for an external supervisor to understand the context of the placement, in order to be able to appropriately support student learning.

Section four presents the experiences of liaison people who supported students in field education with external supervision. Prominent themes that emerged through the interviews concerned the liaison person's overall description of their role in bringing the university to the placement. Participants discussed their roles and outlined that the ideal placement needed to be focused on the student learning experience. They identified that their work could be satisfying, but highlighted that placements with external supervision meant more work for them. The section concludes with highlighting the liaison persons' concerns about accessing external supervisors.

In the fifth and final section, I summarise the key points from each group and discuss the relevance of hearing the multiple voices.

4.2 The Experiences of Students in Placements with External Supervision

In the first section of the chapter I present the experiences of the students in field education with external supervision. As indicated in the methodology section, 13 participants discussed experiences as students in field education with external supervision. All the students were female. Seven participants were practicing social workers at the time they discussed their experiences as field education students, while six of them were final year students, completing or having just completed their final placement at the time of the interview. This section of the thesis is based on the data analysis and the presentations and publications on the students' experiences that emerged from this research (Zuchowski, 2012, 2013b).

The section is organised around the themes that were prominent in the discussions of the participants' own experiences as students in field education with external supervision. The students' discussions focused on their general experience in field education, and many participants highlighted that field education itself was a struggle for them. They further discussed their experiences and expectations in placements with external supervision, the challenges and opportunities of these placements, the four-way relationships and ideal placements. Participants explored the relationships they had with the supervisors and the quality of and access to supervision. Some expressed concerns about getting different ideas from different supervisors. The section concludes with the suggestion that placement matching, preparation and support are essential for students to have a positive experience in field education with external supervision.

4.2.1 General Experiences: Struggles, Power, and Being Lucky

Prominent in a number of participants' discussions was the idea that completing field education itself was a struggle. Participants talked about the need to give up employment to undertake placement, the lack of child care, and the multiple roles of working, raising small children and the massive investment of time that placement required in their lives. This is in line with previous research that highlighted that students need to balance, and sometimes struggle with the realities of work, family and educational demands while studying to become social workers (Baglow, 2014; Homonoff, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011; Swain, 2007). A number of students said that they felt chaotic or worried about their sanity during placement, as this reflection by Shelly exemplifies:

“And if I put myself back completely in context I ...had two small children and my husband worked away and I was working full-time ... completing my degree, and I was probably semi-insane by that time.” Shelly

Some participants said that they experienced power struggles, the bullying culture of an organisation and received put-downs related to gender during field education. This supports the findings of research: that placement can expose student to violence and to feeling unsafe (Gair & Thomas, 2008; Tully et al., 1999). The participants in this group pointed out that students needed to be aware of the power imbalance in placements, and some talked about the put-downs and name calling that they experienced.

“We are students in this environment and we want to fit in a very comfortable space, so ... I think we are mindful of that and the power imbalance (laughs) I suppose with students...” Laura

“He took me in the kitchen and gave me that whole lecture about, men and women's brains and how ... we regurgitate, we are like cows chewing

apart, we do this, we chew all over it, we vomit it up, whereas men are action people, they make the plans and they do it, that's why I have to listen to him and just do as he says (laughs)." Jamie

Some participants pointed to their lack of choice about the field of practice and supervisors, and to the limited number of placements and supervisors as reasons for staying in unsafe situations.

"We hear a lot of how hard it is to get supervisors and ... placements ... and that kind of censors us a bit, God, I am so thankful to have somewhere." Laura

"If there had been a sense that you had more flexibility and you were more confident to sort of speak up, but there was just that sense, be grateful for that placement, they were difficult to organise, not everybody was placed where they wanted to. Just put up and shut up ... there wasn't that safe space to sort of do that." Denise

A prominent concept used in all but two interviews regarding the student experience on placement was 'being lucky'. Participants referred to the ways things worked out, to getting another placement quickly, to having a good supervisor or to others stepping in to support them. Kelly, for example, described feeling lucky to receive the support of a co-worker and her external supervisor:

"I remember feeling very anxious to start with, but I was lucky that [co-worker] was there ... and she kind of really took me under her wing."

Kelly

“Even if it is external you got to have someone, that is willing to work with it, too, you know ... and I have been lucky in that.” Kelly

Carmen described how her liaison person and the external supervisor pulled her out of an unsafe placement environment, and how lucky she was to get a placement soon after:

“They said you can’t carry on like that, you know, it’s not safe for you, I think your learning has to be enhanced, we have to find you another placement. And luckily enough, that came to a stop on a Wednesday and by the Monday I had another placement. So it didn’t interfere too much ... with my learning.” Carmen

Students in this research shared that undertaking placement itself can be stressful and that, for some, placement had been an unsafe experience. The participants who have experienced external supervision as students in social work field education suggested that one of the messages students are hearing is that social work placements are difficult to obtain. Students talked about getting the message that there are limited placements available, and go into their placement with the sense that they are ‘lucky’ or ‘grateful’ when they get something positive or that they are ‘lucky’ to survive this, or lucky that nothing worse happened. This ‘should be grateful’ tenet of placement may need closer examination by social work educators, because these messages have the potential to keep students in unsafe placements. Social work educators may need to ensure that students get the message that learning and safety matter first and foremost. As Denise pointed out, students need to hear that no matter how difficult it is to find placements the safety and wellbeing of students is important.

“If it had been actively promoted that, ok, ... that is the nature, you know, not everybody in the industry puts their hand up for a student, no matter,

we want to provide that safe space for you for you to do that, this is important, still let us know, then I would have spoken up much sooner”.

Denise

4.2.2 Students’ Experiences and Expectations specific to Placements with External Supervision

Student participants talked about their experience with and expectations of supervisors. Students’ expectations of the attributes external supervisors and the internal task supervisors needed to bring to their placement experience were different. While there were common attributes that they thought the different parties should bring, such as being available and supportive, participants had many more concrete expectations of external supervisors and were more detailed about their experiences with them. Although asked specifically to comment on the qualities the different parties should bring to supervision, only one student, who had a particularly negative experience with her external supervisor, further expressed concrete expectations for internal task supervisors. Apart from this, all participants outlined that external supervisors needed to bring experience and knowledge. Generally, participants wanted external supervisors to be able to link theory to practice, have contextual knowledge and help and guide them to develop their own practice. This is in line with research about field education in general. Students want field educators to be “...available, respectful, responsive, supportive, fair, objective, and that are knowledgeable and able to directly communicate their knowledge and provide feedback” (Barretti, 2009, p. 50) and want them to “...encourage autonomy, provide opportunity to be observed, and facilitate professional development” (Barretti, 2009, p. 51). Student experiences in this study identified a range of interpersonal skills that external supervisors needed to bring to the placement, including the ability to establish relationships, listen and communicate. They wanted them to be motivated, warm, caring,

encouraging and challenging. Belinda, for instance, suggested that the external supervisor should be

“...able to listen and certainly learn about the context of which the student is doing their placement ... to be able to contextualise the setting and so on, because from that the supervisor is able to build and extend the student’s thinking... it’s having a core understanding of where they are... looking for the strengths within the student and what they bring. To get to know the student is really important.” Belinda

Some, but not all, participants had supervision with both supervisors. A number of participants felt that the task supervisor lost interest or had no real input to their placement. Other participants, who had supervision with their task supervisor, commented on receiving supervision around specific skills, organisational issues and the provision of practice opportunities. Most participants explored the outcomes of their supervisory relationship with the external supervisor in the interviews. These experiences included gaining perspectives and new layers of learning, the ability to critique and explore practice and skills as well as value and ideological positions. Samantha, for example reflected on the being able to improve her own practice through engagement in external supervision:

“External supervision was really fantastic ... and there was a lot of value in that for me, ... when it is done really well, and when the student brings to it, and the supervisor brings to it, it can have fantastic outcomes, like for both the student and the supervisor and for the family, the client that you work with. Yeah if we want to get better at what we do, maybe we need to do more or better supervision.” Samantha

Carmen talked about the support she received from the external supervisor, but also the ability to reflect on the organisational contexts and ideologies:

“We talked about the philosophy and the underpinning of the organisation, she was really good at that and it was helpful that she had worked in a feminist organisation.” Carmen

From the discussion of the participants, it appears that, overall, students had clearer expectations of the external supervisor. They linked expectations and outcomes of developmental growth with supervision they received from the external supervisor. Some participants also received supervision from the internal task supervisor. Laura pondered on the experience of receiving support from more than one source:

“I think the whole package has kind of worked quite well, because she [task supervisor] just makes time and sees the importance of that... and I have a motivated external supervisor, ...I feel quite supported in my learning which has been great and also knowing that I have a liaison person ..., who ... is incredibly available as well, so (laughs) I have been absolutely blessed or just maybe it's working.” Laura

4.2.3 Challenges of Placements with External Supervision

Participants highlighted some of the specific challenges of placements with external supervision. One concern was the limited access to the social work supervisor and the inability to immediately debrief with them. This may fit the idea that students chosen for placements with external supervision should be more independent (Parker et al., 2003; Plath, 2003). Overall, however, this factor was not presented as a major challenge. The concerns about external supervision were expressed more in terms of the quality of the

supervision, the external social work supervisor's lack of understanding of the context of the work of the agency, the limitations of task supervision and the differing ideas between supervisors. Participants expressed that they felt burdened by the responsibility of coordinating the communication between supervisors.

Seven participants raised the external supervisor's lack of contextual knowledge as challenging, highlighting the lack of insight into the organisation and the field of practice as impacting their placement, supervision and assessment. Denise, for example, highlighted the difficulties arising from the external supervisor's lack of knowledge of the practice context of their placement:

“And my experience with her... was not very good..., she didn't have any real insight into homelessness and that proved a big barrier to... me being able to ... discuss my learning and plans and goals, and... generally sort of base my ideas around theories and things like that.” Denise

Considering that learning is contextual and involves the meaning-making of the experience (Fook, 2001), the lack of understanding of the context may make it difficult for students to be able to engage in professional discussion about their specific placement learning experience. It seems that this validates Henderson's (2010) suggestion that the off-site supervisor be matched to the placement, agency and field of practice, and if that was not possible, then the field educator would need to spend time familiarising themselves with the field education context at the start of placement.

Six participants raised concerns specifically about task supervision. These concerns included lack of task supervision, task supervisors not holding social work values and the resultant concern of not being able to develop social work competence. This may relate to student satisfaction in field education with external supervision. Recent

Australian research found that social work identity, learning opportunities on placements and feeling competent were key issues that led to higher student satisfaction in placements with internal supervision (Cleak & Smith, 2012).

“I would look at it from the task supervisor, she has a lot of background in case management, and... you know, ... so I get to almost do it, how she is, or how I think it should be done, and then sometimes I look back and oh, is that done like a social worker?” Kelly

A further challenge raised by participants was dealing with differing ideas between two supervisors and feeling that the supervisors ‘were not on the same page’. Samantha outlined the consequences of the supervisors asking her to do opposing things in the following way:

“I felt I had to make the decision, it was being left to me ... I was like caught in the middle of a war.” Samantha

Six participants relayed a sense of burden: that the onus of making placement work was on them, that they had to push the learning forward and connect everybody. Kelly, for example, highlighted that she experienced the placement with external supervisor as more stressful:

“I guess it was more stressful ... just to arrange things and sometimes you think well, it would be easier if everybody just worked in the organisation or was involved more, or was around more.” Kelly

4.2.4 Opportunities of Placements with External Supervision

Most participants highlighted a number of advantages in receiving supervision separately from the organisation, including safe space, a separate space to sit and reflect, scheduling

time specific for supervision, an independent look at issues, keeping an eye on things, providing a new layer of learning and exploring issues of concern outside the agency.

Laura, for example, talked about how external supervision provided an extra layer of learning to her placement that she might not have otherwise obtained. She reflected on the idea that external supervision provides a safe space where she can pull things apart more openly:

“It felt really safe ... to have the external supervisor to listen to and go, you know what, I really think that we need to do something about that... I wouldn’t have felt comfortable having that conversation with my task supervisor as explicit, probably, certainly....” Laura

Other participants talked about how external supervision allowing them to complete placement, or how it helped them withdraw from an unsafe one. Receiving external supervision enabled them to identify and name the violence they experienced in the workplace. Jamie, for example, shared how discussions with the external supervisor helped her identify that leaving an unsafe placement was an option:

“The professional supervisor said, do you want to continue with this placement? And I hadn’t even considered that that was an option for me, that this was actually not ok to be treated like this.” Jamie

The ability to take issues of concerns outside the agency was discussed by six participants, the issue often arising multiple times, signifying its importance to those participants. This related to the ability of being honest and open, sitting with their own sense of social justice, getting a clear perspective, including encouraging them to look at what they were responsible for, and how this exploration can flow back into the

organisation. Shelly, and some other students explained that at times it was useful to take issues to the external supervisor, as they did not want to upset others.

“There is that sensitivity around this is where someone has chosen to work and in my case, my task supervisor has been in here 8 years and ...why would you explore certain things ... it is easier to critique a workplace ... when you do not challenge someone who works in it (laughs), that’s probably hard.” Shelly

Several participants highlighted the idea that external supervision provided them with an opportunity to explore placement issues safely, away from the workplace. This may not be surprising, as similarly, social work practitioners who access external supervision are more likely to share ethical dilemmas (McAuliffe & Sudbery, 2005). The barriers to sharing issues in supervision that social work practitioners identified in previous research included “...situations of power imbalance between supervisors and supervisees, or where there were problematic relationship issues” (2005, p. 30). Participants in this study identified the importance of the safe space and the support that external supervision can offer, corresponding with the major argument for external supervision in professional practice, “...that it provides an opportunity to offer emotional support that is untainted by power relations and issues of confidentiality” (Beddoe, 2012, p. 205).

4.2.5 The Four Way Relationship: A Disjointed Picture

A specific query was made with participants about the relationships and the interconnectivity between the different parties, with the aim of exploring the four-way relationship. Very little information was forthcoming about this topic and the majority of participants talked about relationships that were not close, that were instead fractured or disjointed. Kelly, for instance described a disjointed experience of the relationships

“It’s just that it is sometimes ...disjointed to me in that way, ... there hasn’t been a time where the four of us have sat down, the manager, the task supervisor, the field educator and myself ... I sit with the task supervisor, I sit (laughs) with the manager, I sit with the social worker, [the] social worker talks to the manager....”. Kelly

Participants at times were not sure about who had been involved in the placement and outlined that people were only getting together at the meetings and then not always all parties. Only two participants talked positively about a strong four-way relationship. Laura, for example, talked about a team working together to support her placement:

“They are quite committed and flexible at times, and it comes together quite well and certainly the energy, I suppose, at meetings have been one of support and one of working together as a team”. Laura

It appears that there was not much to be said about a four-way relationship from a students’ perspective, because it seems that many did not experience a coherent four-way relationship. Yet, students did refer to the three other parties when talking about their experiences in placements with external supervision. They referred to the relationships they have with their external supervisor, their task supervisor and their liaison person, and the relationships the supervisors and/or liaison people had between them. These individual relationships have been described according to how the students experienced or observed them, varying from supportive, reciprocal, strong, positive and wonderful to antagonistic and detrimental. However, they were mostly described as two way relationships rather than relationships that include all parties.

4.2.6 Ideal Placement: Not About External or Internal Supervision?

When asked about the ideal placement, students did not necessarily emphasise either the external or internal supervision. Rather, participants talked about good placement preparation, the importance of matching students to placements and supervisors and that you can learn from any placement. Seven participants pondered whether placements with external or internal supervision could be ideal, depending on the circumstances and their learning needs. Jamie, for example, spoke about her professional practice framework being aligned to the agency:

“My professional practice framework is pretty much aligned to workers there, and also the values of that agency and... their mission statement and values, what they actually do, so there is not this gap. So, you know, it mightn’t be the same for another person, that went in and had different values ... that might, be different.” Jamie

Five students expressed that the ideal placement would be with internal supervision, and participants noted that it would need to be with trained field educators. Participants reasoned that the context of the work would be clearer and it would make things flow better.

“I think the ideal placement is actually to have a field supervisor ... in the organisation, but ... an experienced field educator that had the training, that goes to the university and finds out what the university wants from their students and the skills that they want to have developed.” Carmen

Five participants discussed how placements with external supervision could be ideal, reasoning, for instance, that they provide distance to reflect and students can get double

supervision. This was qualified with the proviso that people have connections and supervisors have contextual knowledge.

“I think, just that particular set-up, where the supervisor had a very good working knowledge of the organisation, the supervisor ... was a lecturer at university ... he has worked in the field I actually found, and I do find external supervision a really, really positive ... experience.” Jennifer

Overall, however, student participants in this study did not generally put the concept of internal/external supervision in the foreground when considering the ideal placement. Rather they highlighted that it depended on what they wanted to learn, how they and their supervisors were prepared for this placement, what they were bringing to the placement and how it was supported. This is illustrated by Laura’s experience. Her first placement was supervised internally and was a positive experience. She talked about how her expectations were that this was the ideal placement, so when she found she had external supervision in her second placement she was disappointed, but thought she could make it work. Laura was pleasantly surprised as the placement with external supervision was valuable and added a new layer of learning to her placement experience. She reflected that

“I like to think that these people were handpicked (laughs), I think that can be really useful ..., I did request my liaison person and I am really aware that she would really keep my focus on my practice and my ideology and that I can really expand my knowledge around that and.... it would be lovely to think if that could happen for everyone, that people were supported in areas that they needed to be supported in.” Laura

4.2.7 Conclusion

The students' contributions that I have highlighted here emphasised the importance of the processes of matching, supporting and promoting placements for diverse experiences in field education. Students identified that, for them, external supervision had a number of challenges, and that at times students feel burdened and left alone to deal with these challenges. The contributions of the student participants identified that similarly to other placements, placements with external supervision could expose students to unsafe situations. Students in this research described and used the opportunities that external supervision offered, one of these opportunities being the ability to discuss and leave unsafe placements. Students appeared to understand that external supervision was perceived as less than ideal at times, but considered that it could also be a positive experience with increased learning opportunities.

4.3 The Experiences of Task Supervisors in Supporting Social Work Placements with External Supervision

In the second section I present the experiences of the nine task supervisors in field education with off-site supervision. As discussed in the methodology section, all task supervisors were female and their work experience in the social welfare sector ranged between 5 and 27 years. This section of the thesis is based on the data analysis and drawn from the publication about the task supervisors' experiences that emerged from this research (Zuchowski, 2014b).

The section is organised around the themes that were prominent in the discussions of task supervisors' experiences in field education. Overall, participants highlighted positive experiences as task supervisors, but also identified a number of challenges within that role. The task supervisors' discussions focused on the rewards and responsibilities of

providing placement opportunities to social work students, a supervision focused on getting students job-ready, the importance of role clarification, and the relationship with the other supervisor. Task supervisors provided informal and formal supervision to students, but not all task supervisors were involved in placement assessment. The task supervisors' roles and responsibilities were explored and while some participants described a strong relationship with the other supervisor, many had no direct relationship with the external supervisor. The section concludes with concerns that not all task supervisors may have experienced themselves as valued partners in social work placements.

4.3.1 Task supervisor's Experiences: Rewards and Responsibilities

Task supervisors' responses were overwhelmingly positive about supporting social work student placements, identifying rewards and expressing appreciation for the added responsibility. Participants used expressions such as 'enjoyable', 'gratifying', 'rewarding' and 'exciting' to describe their experiences as task supervisors. Participants clearly identified the benefits of supporting a social work student on placement. Participants talked about opportunities to build their own strengths and to further develop their own professional practice, to grow new workers in the field and to advocate for their field of practice. This is consistent with literature about the benefits of taking on students on placement. These benefits include the ability to reflect on your own practice (Barton et al., 2005), but also the advantages of placement with external supervision, such as professionalising the field (Unger, 2003), supporting the work of the field (Parker et al., 2003) and getting quality graduates (Plath, 2003). The positive experiences and perceived benefits are highlighted, for example, by Regina and Monica's comments:

“...it is a very enjoyable position to be in, is to help grow a new worker into this sector...” Regina

“...it actually makes us better workers through having students there asking difficult questions, challenging us, making us stop and think about why we do things in certain ways. “ Monica

Although participants highlighted the many positives of supporting social work students, a number of participants also described their experiences as ‘challenging’, ‘complex’, ‘tricky’ and an ‘extra workload’. The challenges participants identified were about different practice frameworks between supervisors, the busyness of the organisation, as well as not knowing what social work students needed from their placements. Monica, for example, reflected on the challenges of not being sure about what social work students needed in field education:

“Because sometimes ... I am wandering around in the dark and guessing what they need ... I have never had the experience of being on prac ... I never did social work, none of our people in the work place are social workers, like they are from various professional background... so sometimes I am not sure that I am actually giving what the student needs.”

Monica

A number of task supervisors raised the point that student placements take extra time, but each time this was qualified with the parallel benefits the task supervisor or the agency received. Some participants highlighted the challenges of having responsibility to the agency as well as supervising the student. Regina was referring to her role as agency coordinator when she outlined that

“I do have that added strain of responsibility that the student fits in well here with rest of the organisation ... everyone else has to jostle aside and make room for them.” Regina

The challenges that some task supervisors explored, in terms of the impact of the student on the organisation, their workload, the agency's standing and the team, are worth noting. Task supervisors appeared to be balancing many factors, reflecting the current complex realities of organisational practice (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011; Kalliath et al., 2012). There may be a danger that task supervisors, similarly to social work trained supervisors (Barretti, 2009), may be inaccessible to students because of these realities. Task supervisors participating in this study were concerned about the students learning and growing, but also about the impact the student placement had on the organisation and staff team. These challenges could be recognised and acknowledged in placement planning, and if this is done well and leads to collaborative, mutually supportive arrangements, it may allow for the sharing of responsibilities and lightening of the load of student placements (Abram et al., 2000).

4.3.2 Purposeful Supervision: Theories, Values and Being Job Ready

Task supervisors talked about informal and formal supervision and a number of them provided both types of supervision to social work students on placement. Informal supervision was seen as opportunistic responses to what just happened, generally an immediate response to an occurrence. At times, informal supervision was about allocating tasks, but more often about exploring something the student might be struggling with. Regina, for example, reflected on the supervision she was providing:

“For me as a coordinator it is about observing the workers, and how things are going for them, and it’s the same with the students ... are you a

bit lost and bored, well let's talked about something exciting and plan something. Or are you struggling with something or are you stuck with that interaction you just had, let's go and talk about that...I really think that informal stuff has a huge role to play, that you can deal with that at that moment or that time." Regina

Some task supervisors talked about having an 'open door policy' to ensure that they were accessible for immediate and timely debriefing and supervision. Loretta, for instance, commented:

"I have an open door process, whereas if they want to come to me and discuss something, what do I think about that? Can I try this?" Loretta

The majority of task supervisors outlined regular, more formal supervision sessions that they conducted with students. The focus of these sessions included theory discussions and linking practice to theory, organisational practice, personal practice models and preparing students to be ready for practice. Lucy and Loretta, for example, discussed providing work related tasks and getting students job-ready:

"I think one of the qualities I did bring was linking tasks to different theoretical paradigms, and I know that's probably not a role of a task supervisor, but...I think that has been actually one of my strengths." Lucy

"I try to link it in with [the] theoretical, because it is social work ... what theory do they relate it to ... and how do they relate to it. So I try to give them work related tasks... that they can critique." Loretta

Some task supervisors saw their role as providing opportunities for learning and reflection to students, so that they can then take these experiences and reflections to external supervision. Thus, Loretta explained:

“I just plant little seeds ... asking them what they think and they have to walk out and think well when I see [name of external supervisor], this is what I am going to explain to him.” Loretta

Participants outlined a purposeful engagement in supervision, and filled the need for informal, immediate debriefing and feedback to students. They shared that they provided supervision that reflected on practice, aiming at developing students’ practice and learning. There was a clear sense, however, that this would be supported by the external social work supervisors, who would then engage in critical reflection with the student about what the student had experienced in practice.

4.3.3 Supervisors’ Roles

The literature identifies the importance of clarifying the roles between the task supervisors and the external supervisors (Abram et al., 2000). The AASW (AASW, 2012a) requires that these roles are specifically outlined. A number of participants highlighted the importance of making role expectations clear. They suggested that everyone needed to know *‘their place’* and have an understanding of each other’s role. Louise, for instance, stressed that clarifying role expectations might be useful:

“...making ... the roles very clear, the supervisor and the task supervisor, they need to sit down separately at the beginning and establish and fitting in when we can have these conversations and sticking to it and that’s through commitment.” Louise

Participants highlighted that it would be useful to have more clarification of role expectations. Monica, for example, suggested that setting up expectations would be important. At the same time, however, she recognised that she herself could gain a better understanding if she attended training sessions:

“... just like setting up the expectations with the students a clear expectation of everyone’s role ... and how to communicate when things go wrong, might be good. In saying that ... those task supervisor sessions that are run, I see them, I put them in my calendar, I never go. Maybe I would have a better understanding if I attended.” Monica

When discussing the roles of task supervisors and external supervisors in supporting social work student placements, participants generally described the task supervisor’s role in terms of allocating tasks, offering learning opportunities, providing guidance, role modelling, assisting the student to fit into the organisation and keeping an eye on the placement. These actions do appear relevant to social work placement supervision (AASW, 2014). Tanya, for instance defined the role of the task supervisor as ‘giving tasks’. Monica added making sure the ‘tasks are ticked off’ and Loretta also identified how she and other staff allocated task to students.

“They sort of tag along with the staff a lot. And ask questions and lean over their shoulders and the staff will give them different tasks to fulfil.”

Loretta

However, participants also identified further responsibilities of the task supervisor. This is shown in Lucy and Samantha’s comments:

“My role is about supporting the student and understanding as much as possible, sort of ensuring that she is a student... is achieving her learning requirements and whatever understanding but also that she is sure that, like supporting her with understanding where the field supervisor is coming from.” Lucy

“It is a serious business ... when you have got a student, it is a lot of responsibility, you want to make sure that their process is ethical and that they know what they are doing.” Samantha

A few of the task supervisors expressed their appreciation that the external supervisor was involved in the placement. Some task supervisors identified the ability to learn from the external supervisor as valuable. Other participants valued the opportunities of receiving and giving updates on the student's progress. Appreciation was expressed about sharing responsibility, echoing the idea of 'co-field educators' (AASW, 2012a) and shouldering the responsibility together (Abram et al., 2000). Lucy, for instance, used the pronoun 'we' when describing the work she and the external supervisor conducted with the student:

“We will say, no, we are not going to tell you, in your role as the student it's about you are taking, what's your responsibility. So I think we sort of have the double whammy, not just being the placement, but also assisting the student to understand as a student 'what is your role'.” Lucy

And Tanya outlined that it was reassuring

“...that the student did have somewhere to go ... that I didn't have the sole responsibility ... of influencing it.” Tanya

Participants suggested that the external supervisor's role was to provide the social work supervision around theoretical approaches, to monitor and assess, and to exchange information regarding the student's progress. However, this exchange did not always take place, and three participants stated that they were not involved in the students' assessment. Louise expressed her frustration at the lack of opportunity to input into the assessment of students performance, and explained that her frustration was that not seeking her feedback was poor practice. She went on to say that, as task supervisor, she could accurately report or reflect on

"...areas of improvement, things that they are doing really, really well, things that they are contributing, ... I think that needs to be acknowledged, we have had a lot of students here develop certain things, you know, I have never had the opportunity to write that down." Louise

Not seeking the task supervisor's feedback for assessment would leave the task supervisors' work and observations unacknowledged and the students' work incompletely assessed. Both points would be concerning. Not acknowledging the task supervisors' work may mean that task supervisors feel they are the 'neglected partners in practice learning' (Henderson, 2010). Receiving feedback from the task supervisors about the students work would be useful to gain insight in their conduct in the agency.

The remaining six participants described how they were engaged in discussions of the placement progress to varying degrees. It seems that there was not always clarity around the roles of the various people involved in placement, and from whom feedback should be sought. Tanya, for example, reflected:

"There most probably is some confusion within the organisation...over who did have that role, who was the student accountable to go to. So my

name definitely wasn't on the sheet, but because I was a social worker, that's who the student came to, and yet I wasn't involved in any of the formal part of that." Tanya

4.3.4 Relationships between Supervisors

The potential for unequal relationships between task and external supervisors has been recognised (Henderson, 2010), and the importance of collaborative relationships is stressed in the literature (Abram et al., 2000; Maidment & Woodward, 2002). In this research, four task supervisors described their relationship with the external supervisor as strong. Some of these task supervisors referred to the work they did with students from a joint perspective. Regina, for example, discussed how she worked with the external supervisor in partnership to address placement concerns:

"So she was able to say things to him that he would accept in ways that he wasn't accepting from me... but then I was able to take them up with him again, and he had already been convinced about them.... I certainly think that she took some of my anxieties off, so the issue was not between her and me, it was more about what to do with him to get him through the placement the best way as possible." Regina

However, five participants said that they had no relationship with the external supervisor, with two participants identifying that their links to the external supervisor was only via the student or the liaison person.

Louise's discussion highlighted her concerns of not having direct contact with the field educator:

“It should be a more formal process, a requirement that the supervisor sits down with the three of us, especially when there have been difficulties ... Because how can the supervisor possibly, they only know what the student is telling them.” Louise

Relationships are core to field education and learning (Ornstein & Moses, 2010), and the relationship between task and external supervisor is crucial to success of the placement (Abram et al., 2000). The relationship of the ‘co-field educators’ (AASW, 2012a) would be core to negotiating roles, expectations and assessment. It seems important that mutual relationships are affirmed and supported for the benefit of students and their supervisors. Respectful inclusive relationships are the foundation of social work.

“I suppose in lots of ways the relationship is... folding in on itself, isn’t it? The things that we value ... respect, and empowerment, and capacity building and all those words we use, the relationships have to be like that as well.” Regina

4.3.5 Conclusion

In this section I have discussed the experiences of task supervisors in social work placements. The task supervisors who participated in this research identified the value and enjoyment of supporting placements with external supervision. Participants recognised that being involved in social work placements was an opportunity to build their own practice through reflection, engage with theory and explore the work they do with students. From the task supervisors’ perspective, supporting social work placements can further strengthen human services workers and the field (Rambally, 1999; Unger, 2003). Not all task supervisors were involved in student assessment or had active relationships with the other supervisor. Those who did, spoke favourably of the joint

relationship designed to support the student's learning. Importantly, task supervisors' input into supervision, assessment and learning for students on placement should be sought and valued, befitting their role as 'co-field educators' (AASW, 2012a). This should be enacted so that they "... are no longer ignored and are provided with the training, support, recognition and reward that they deserve" (Henderson, 2010, p. 13).

4.4 The Experiences of External Supervisors in Supporting Field Education with External Supervision

In the third section of this chapter I present the experiences of the external supervisors in field education with external supervision. As discussed in the methodology section, fifteen (15) participants identified as having supported social work student placements as external supervisors. The participants were experienced social workers, having worked in the social welfare sector and/or social work education between 5 and 40 years. There were 10 female and 5 male participants. The section of the thesis is based on the data analysis and the presentations and publication about the external supervisors' experiences that emerged from this research (Zuchowski, 2013a, 2013c, 2014a, 2014d).

The section is organised around the themes that were prominent in the discussions with external supervisors in field education. Overall, external supervisors' commented on the positive nature of their own experience as external supervisors. Discussions focused on the opportunities and challenges of providing external supervision to social work students, the importance of building relationships and connections in order to understand the context of the students, the placement and the people involved and the focus of their supervision to assist students in building professional social work practice. The section concludes with highlighting the importance of relationship building and role clarification

for external supervisor, in order to understand the context of the placement, and therefore to be able to appropriately support student learning.

4.4.1 The Experience of Providing External Supervision to Social Work Students

Overall, external supervisors gave positive descriptions of their experience in providing off-site supervision to social work students on placement. Ten participants described their experience in positive terms: as good, comfortable, exciting and beneficial for themselves. Tanya, for example, highlighted the following:

“I am loving this time of working with students... really reflecting on who they are and what they stand for as social workers... this chair feels very comfortable for me.” Tanya

Six participants particularly emphasised the benefits and learning they received from providing external supervision. For example, supervisors appreciated the opportunity to get to know other agencies, seeing an organisation through new eyes, reflecting on their own practice and the ability to have, theoretically, higher level discussions. These findings confirm that the benefits of taking students on placement include the supervisor’s own professional development and reflection on practice (Barton et al., 2005). Anna and Belinda, for example, stated:

“I have really enjoyed doing it, because it gives me insight into another agency, where I may not have worked. So I enjoy it from the learning of the agency, what opportunities students are having, trying to see how that fits with theory with social work in general, I still am learning as well.”

Anna

“I have other external supervisees from other organisations and work at different levels, so that informs me and helps me to support people more broadly.” Belinda

However, a number of participants’ responses suggested their experience of providing external supervision to social work students was mixed. For instance, they reasoned that it was influenced by the fact that they were not able to see the student’s practice, as Anna’s comments underscore:

“Mixed. I can think of one particular student who was in Mount Isa and I have provided phone supervision from Townsville that was mostly very positive in that it was someone external to the agency able to provide the ongoing support, the debriefing, the education role, but I suppose what was missing for me, was not being seeing any of that student’s direct practice. That to me seemed to be a bit of a gap. Like I could speak to other people in the agency and we were talking about the possibility of videoing some of the interviews. That seemed to raise huge threats and anxiety in the student and other staff.” Anna

These issues will be further discussed in this section.

4.4.2 Opportunities of Placements with External Supervision

Participants highlighted that these placements offered a number of opportunities for professional growth to students, the field and themselves. Participants suggested that students can reflect more openly, that the external supervision brought a fresh perspective, that external supervision ensured that students actually received supervision, and that it was beneficial to have supervision in a separate space. Iona, for example,

highlighted that an external person and a separate space can facilitate more open reflection on the learning experience:

“Sometimes I think it is about issues they want to raise about what is happening for them on placement that relate to the agency and they don’t feel comfortable doing that in the agency context, ... sometimes I think that students are feeling really very pressured in placement, whether that is related to the placement or the broader context for them and it’s about the time and space, it’s a bit strange, but part of me feels it’s a little bit about that time and space of actually being away.” Iona

External supervision was experienced as an opportunity to share fresh perspectives. For example, Karen reported that

“They were more than happy with what he was doing, but he fed back that he was really enjoying being challenged in supervision and to have a different perspective when I asked questions about why was that. Why have you done it that way? How else could you have looked at this?”

Karen

Participants pointed out that external supervision offered a separate space for exploration of issues, but also meant that supervision was actually happening.

“Because my feeling is that the students that are getting external supervision are generally getting at least more consistent supervision when they get it and are better supported on placement and I think that says more about the changing of the sector than it does about whether or not social workers on site give supervision.” Iona

Participants discussed that external supervision was an investment and an opportunity for professional development in the field. Participants talked about modelling the importance of supervision and transitioning to professional supervision practice. Moreover, this was seen as an opportunity to model, to the human service field, the value of social work, and an opportunity to open up new field of practice (Zuchowski, 2011b). For instance, Robert suggested:

“It is a good opportunity to put the focus of what skills a competent social worker has back into that work place, and also for other grass roots agencies...show the skills that social work can contribute.” Robert

4.4.3 Challenges of Placements with External Supervision

External supervisors suggested that external supervision assisted students in their learning and growth, but that, with limited insight into the placement, the task supervisor’s busyness. At times the lack of understanding from the task supervisor and within human service organisations also posed challenges. External supervisors suggested that they needed to understand the context of the placement experience and described how they engaged with others to gain this context. External supervisors highlighted not having their own visual observation in the agency as challenging, and that this meant that they had to rely on what the student and agency told them. Understanding the context will be presented as a separated area of discussion in this section, as it permeates more than one area of the external supervisors’ discussions.

A number of participants raised the concept that not having visual observations of their own, ‘*made it tricky*’, meaning that they had to rely on what the student and the agency told them. This, in turn, made it difficult to provide concrete examples in feedback and

left a gap in their understanding, which made it hard to match their understanding to that of the student.

“If I know an agency ... it’s easier, because I have got to know the context a little bit better, whereas one of the difficulties is you are often relying on the student conveying the context and their understanding of the broader issues, agency are not always, they are not the same as mine would be.” Iona

“It is tricky because you’re not there all week and you don’t actually see the student working, so you really have to rely on what the student can tell you and what the feedback is from the people on-site, so that varies tremendously anyway.” Wayne

Observation of the student’s practice has been part of the requirements for field education in Australia for some time (AASW, 2010b). However, while still required, this expectation has recently been changed to the observation of practice, when the placement focus is direct practice (AASW, 2012c). Purposeful observation of the student’s work by the field educator can help performance assessment, the integration of theory into practice, and facilitate critical reflection (Maidment, 2000). Participants in this research recognised the importance of understanding the agency context for their supervision and assessment of student, but only a few identified direct observation of student practice as something they would always do. Maria clearly highlighted that direct observation of student’s practice was always part of her practice as a supervisor. She stressed:

“I mean students can tell you anything really. Unless you actually see them and it is not that I don’t trust the student, and I think that most of them would say, too, that they would like me to sit in and watch them,

because then they know that they are on the right track... that kind of can be reassuring for them as well.” Maria

A significant number of participants referred to the busyness of task supervisors in the agency and the hierarchy of the organisation impacting the field education experience. Three participants specifically pointed out that, in some agencies, the ‘wrong’ people were appointed as task supervisors through default, because of hierarchical structures, which then meant that

“...students have to manage senior people who do not have an understanding of social work.” Georgina

External supervisors’ references to the busyness of task supervisors in current work environments reflects Chinnery and Beddoe’s (2011) observation that workload issues in placement organisations, in a crisis-driven environment, made it challenging for supervisors to be fully available to students. External supervisors noted the hectic pace of workplaces in which the students were placed, and highlighted that the busyness of the task supervisors in the agency meant that the dedicated supervision time they themselves had with the students was really important. Matthew’s reflections, for instance, highlight this:

“Let’s say they are a task supervisor and so the student is not getting the formal supervision, at least with an external then, there can be some accommodating of that, because you have the external meeting. Because that is usually ... defined each week, it is already locked.” Matthew

A further challenge identified by participants was that students might get two different opinions from the two supervisors, and could get confused. Karen, for instance, described consequences of the student getting differing messages:

“There was miscommunication happening and that put the student in an awkward position because they were getting different messages from their task supervisor and my expectations of what was happening, wasn’t actually happening.” Karen

This highlights the importance of relationships and effective triad relationships (Abram et al., 2000). Role clarification, collaboration and planning between supervisors become essential. Some participants also suggested that a private space between supervisors was important, in order to ensure that they were not played off against one another. Shelly, for example, suggested that the task supervisor and the external supervisor needed private space to discuss the student’s progress,

“I think if you don’t provide that private space I have seen it happen that the student plays one against the other... I have seen supervisors actually fall out and if they have had the opportunity to actually work more as a team, that wouldn’t have happened.” Shelly

4.4.4 Understanding the Context

External supervisors raised the significance of understanding context in regards to the student, the organisation, supervision, the ideal placement, assessment, relationships and roles. Participants talked about the importance of knowing and understanding the context in which the student acted, worked, responded and made decisions. Also, how understanding of this context impacted the manner in which they structured and

negotiated supervision and the strategies they used to gain an appreciation of the placement context were critical.

One challenge of providing external supervision was ‘not knowing the context’. Participants suggested that they struggled when they did not know the context of where the student was placed or did not know the task supervisor well. Robert explained that

“You tend to only briefly meet the field work [task] supervisor and all of those specifics about the agency you don’t know, whether there is conflict or harmony ... you don’t have that understanding of the agency environment. And that can be difficult.” Robert

Participants particularly outlined that if they did not know the context it was hard to know what to focus their supervision on.

“I am sometimes allocated a placement that I haven’t had a student in before ...it’s quite tricky, because it might be not until the first meeting that I actually get to look inside the agency ... So you are essentially supervising without context until it dribbles in with little bits of information directly from the student.” Iona

Five participants pointed out that knowing the agency was key to a positive supervision experience, suggesting that this was useful for communication, understanding the agency’s work and regular contact. Participants stressed that understanding the agency improved supervision, made it easier and that otherwise, “*you are blind and have no clue*” (Matthew).

External supervisors repeatedly highlighted the significance of knowing the placement milieu including the agency environment, atmosphere and culture for external

supervision. This is consistent with Ung's (2002) assertion about supervision for professional workers, that external supervision without contextual understanding risks becoming a mere theoretical exercise. Participants employed various strategies to get a clearer picture of the students' performance and the setting. Some requested the student dissect or role-play the interaction for reflection. Others reflected that they channelled supervision around wider picture issues, such as the values that were impacting, or motivation for entering social work. Tanya, for example, explained:

“She was working in child protection ... and I had no experience in child protection, and so she would start talking about assessment tools ... and I was like, what do I have to give to that? Nothing, to give to that, because I have never filled out that form. So ... we channelled it around what were her values ..., what was her goal in the way that she wanted to work, what change was she looking for? Why did she come into social work?” Tanya

Participants talked about preparation for supervision, providing readings to students and asking them to do process reports. They used various methods to compensate for the lack of direct observations of the students practice to build a picture that could guide their supervision and assessment and help them facilitate student learning. Building relationships and clarifying roles were key aspects of understanding and considering the perspectives of other parties in these placement arrangements.

Participants stressed the importance of clarifying roles. They saw this as important for working out what everyone brought to placement and where the boundaries between the different supervisors lay. Clarification of roles was seen as important so that the student did not get conflicting messages from the supervisors. Supervisors need to know the

perspective others were bringing to supervision in order to plan their own work and understand the context of the input.

“When you do have external supervision ... you are dividing up the supervisory roles... Because I think if you are an external supervisor you could give ... some guidance to students, maybe about something they could be doing in the work place, but If you are not having a discussion with the task supervisor about the applicability of that, then it go all pear shaped”. Iona

4.4.5 Relationships and Space

The importance of building relationships with students (McMahon, 2002) and the task supervisor has been highlighted in the literature (Abram et al., 2000). Participants talked about the importance of building relationships, and often saw themselves as initiator or builder of the relationships with others involved in the placement. Research about external supervision highlights the importance of the triad relationships (Abram et al., 2000). However, participants described the relationships they had with others more in terms of individual relationships rather than four-way relationships. Despite specific questions about four-way relationships in the interviews, very few participants referred to four-way relationships between students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison people. Instead, most explored their individual relationships with other parties, and these were seen as important for the placement. Meetings between various parties were seen as important to build relationships and served to clarify issues, roles, and the purpose of placement and monitor the student’s progress. For example, Karen reflected:

“I think it[meeting] strengthened it and our supervision had gone quite ok and I think just when we put everything on the table, the student felt

more at ease and she was more able to engage with other things and felt more supported when the task supervisor had more things clarified and we all had met together.” Karen

This would be particularly important in light of the significance students placed on this relationship. Lefevre (2005) found that trusting, collaborative relationships with their supervisors facilitated students’ experience of the learning environment and their ability to expose their practice to the field educator’s scrutiny. Participants recognised that fostering relationships built their understanding of the agency, the student and the task supervisor and therefore facilitated learning on placement.

4.4.6 Supervision and Growth

The educational function of supervision was prominent in the participants’ reflections on providing external supervision in field education. Some participants discussed both the supportive and administrative functions of supervision (Kadushin, 1992). These included providing support, space to reflect and encouraging the student to do self-care, or providing the student with specific tasks in supervision sessions. Supervision, as described by the participants, focused on the professional growth of students, and social work frameworks, values and theories. Thus external supervisors mainly picked up one part of the role of field educators, who in the general setting are advised to ideally present students with the educational, administrative and supportive roles of supervision in placements (Cleak & Wilson, 2013).

The supervisor’s educational role was described in terms of teaching, training, coaching, exploring trees of knowledge and translating what students have learned in the classroom into practice. The majority of participants highlighted that supervision is about promoting students’ growth within the discipline. Ralph, for example outlined the following:

“...training, coaching, listening, it is largely facilitating, it is promoting people’s professional or psychological growth within a discipline.” Ralph

Participants placed emphasis on the idea that they use supervision for students in order to progress their practice frameworks and to develop into effective practitioners. Matthew summarised this in the following way:

“What you are attempting to do is to give, you want that person to develop as bold professionally and personally, so that as they can be a, an effective practitioner.” Matthew

The majority of participants stated that they were providing the social work component to the placement. Participants outlined supervision relating to social work theory, social work skills, social work values and social work perspectives. Participants said that they were using critical reflection in supervision. A few participants highlighted the importance of the student getting feedback from them as social workers, in order to allow students to explore the social work contribution to practice. This might be particularly important in light of the current deprofessionalisation of sections of the field (Healy, 2004), and the possibility that other neoliberal interests are threatening meaningful social work identities (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

“It is just an opportunity to say, well look as a social worker this is the feedback, ... just relating it back to social work knowledge, which people from other disciplines can’t do ... and it is not that this [practice by non-social workers] is a bad way, but it is just what we need to do is highlight, well, what is the social work contribution to this? And how is it different from what you are getting from the task supervisor?” Maria

4.4.7 Conclusion

External supervisors highlighted the importance of understanding the context of the field education experience in order to facilitate assessment, supervision and support. They described supervision processes and strategies to understand the context of the student's experiences and learning in order to prepare students for professional social work practice. In highlighting the opportunities and challenges of external supervision, external supervisors focused on the importance of supervision, the time they could dedicate to the student's learning, and that a busy task supervisor may not always be able to provide supervision. They highlighted the importance of a separate time and space for supervision, which was a valuable opportunity to focus on the professional formation and growth of students. Social workers providing student supervision from outside these practice contexts described a focus on building up a strong social work identity and framework. They also identified that their off-site role might, in fact, facilitate more authentic discussions, because the interest and agenda of the organisation are not distracting from the focus of student development and learning (Hughes, 1998).

The challenges of placements with external supervision include the danger of students receiving two different messages from the supervisors or students playing the supervisors off against one another. Understanding the context of the student, the agency and the placement was raised as critical to the supervision of the student. Participants highlighted the importance of building relationships, especially with the task supervisors, in order to clarify roles, share information and communicate effectively. Participants suggested that some meetings with the task supervisors needed to be just between those two parties. This meeting could open up another space, in which supervisors can discuss the student's progress without the student present.

4.5 The Experiences of Liaison People in Supporting Field Education with External Supervision

In this fourth section I present the experiences of the liaison people in field education with off-site supervision. As discussed in the methodology chapter, eleven (11) participants identified as having supported social work student placements as liaison people. Nine of the liaison people were female and two were male. The participants were experienced in the role of liaison person, and eight of them had also provided external supervision to students in the past. It also became evident that a number of the liaison people had multiple experiences of placements with external supervision as field education coordinators or placement organisers. These experiences were not explored specifically or separately, but references to this role are noted in this section.

The section is based on the data analysis and the presentations and publications about the liaison persons' experiences that emerged from this research (Zuchowski, 2014e, 2015a). The section is organised around the themes that were in the foreground of participants' reflections about their experiences as liaison people supporting field education placements with external supervision. Prominent themes that emerged included the liaison person's overall description of their role as bringing the university to the placement. Participants discussed their role and stated that the ideal placement needed to consider the student learning experience. They identified that their work could be satisfying, but highlighted that placements with off-site supervision meant more work for them. Liaison people identified naming issues as difficult in field education. They discussed modes of supervision only as one aspect of the ideal placement. The section concludes with highlighting the liaison people's concerns about gaining access to external supervisors.

4.5.1 The Experience of Liaison People Supporting Placements with External Supervision

Participants identified that their involvement in placements with external supervision could be satisfying, but that it meant extra work for them. They discussed different aspects of placement with external supervision that increased their workload, and highlighted the difficulties of naming particular issues.

A few of the participants commented on the positive aspects of being the liaison person. For example, they described their experience as enjoyable, wonderful and feeling important. Anna, for instance, highlighted the job satisfaction of assisting students to have the best possible placement with external supervision;

“I suppose also in terms of job satisfaction of knowing the best possible placement experience or as good as possible that we can arrange in this particular town, in this particular agency, with this supervisor, we have put everything in place we can possibly think of for that to go well, for that to be a good learning experience and that gives me a greater sense of satisfaction, that I have done a good job by that student.” Anna

However, the majority of participants noted that providing liaison support in placement with external supervision meant more work for them. The extra work they identified included building links and holding things together, providing role clarification, managing relationships, providing extra support to students and external supervisors and getting examples about placement learning. Bridget summarised the extra workload in the following way:

“I think ...what I am saying is that there is a lot more work involved with a student on placement where you do have an external supervisor, because of all those links that need to be made.” Bridget

Similarly, Robert identified extra work in making connections and organising meetings:

“...because you are chasing your tail to get things signed and then, trying to organise meeting and then ... the field educator wouldn’t come to liaison meetings, because they are too busy in meetings, because they were the manager.” Robert

Additionally, liaison people identified extra work resulting from managing triad relationships and trying to get clear examples for assessment. Mary, for example, considered her involvement in managing the triad relationship:

“As a liaison person that is quite a difficult relationship to manage when you have got the three people and they are not necessarily comfortable in their roles.” Mary

It also took extra effort to get learning examples in the assessment process. Bridget shared the following reflection:

“I have been thinking, next time I have a placement where there is the external supervisor, I have to work harder in eliciting information about getting some clear examples, that link placement experiences with learning.” Bridget

Nine out of the 11 participants discussed their liaison work in placements with external supervision in ways that showed their extra engagement. Many participants described various points multiple times, indicating that for liaison people, placements with external

supervision can present an extra workload. This occurs in a context where field education is already restricting their ability to meet the expectations of tertiary institutions to deliver research outputs and attract income (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

A second matter indicated that supporting placements with external supervision might be complex for liaison people. It concerned naming or raising issues, when this implied criticising a supervisor. Six participants identified that it was difficult at times for them to 'name' issues. Wayne, for example, discussed a placement in detail, in which he became aware, over time, that something was not right. However, this situation was not 'named' or acknowledged,

"I was liaison..., the first time I didn't pick it up, or not clearly enough, I kind of, it didn't come to my conscious, I couldn't name it. But then it became very clear later on, but ... the onsite person didn't want to name it, didn't want to know, so, we just never named it and just dealt with it as good as we could." Wayne

Participants identified that professional relationships contributed to them not naming issues at times.

"I picked up ... the supervisor was very much about trying to show how much knowledge he had rather than guiding and supporting the student, facilitating their learning process, now I had to be really careful as well, because I couldn't be seen as bagging out another (laughs) social worker and supporting the student." Samantha

"In a small town with ongoing relationships with all of those people (laughs), it was very tricky trying to name that without actually saying,

‘hey listen, you have got, you are being threatened here’ (laughs).”

Wayne

It seems that, at times, participants might have struggled with providing feedback to the supervisor about their impact and contributions. Participants found various strategies for addressing issues that might be difficult to name directly. Sometimes the issue was ignored, sometimes they offered extra support to the students, for example, to counteract an issue, or they approached the issue indirectly. This was done by talking about it in general terms to guide a supervisor, for example, but not challenging them directly. Dana described how, rather than directly naming something, she worked around the issue. She indirectly addressed the concern that an external supervisor was seen as not supporting the student appropriately:

“I worked with a student not so long ago, who felt really unsupported and felt like, wasn’t getting, getting the support in their supervision from the external supervisor and so she was definitely really feeling unsafe and so, I just went around that in a generic sort of way, a reminder to the off-site supervisor what commitments were in a way that was hopefully in-offensive, but was a reminder of the importance of the role.” Dana

4.5.2 The Ideal Placement: Modes of Supervision are just Part of the Picture

Participants were asked to consider, from a liaison person’s point of view, what they thought might be an ideal placement. A range of reflections resulted. There was some discussion about whether internal or external supervision in placement was ideal. Four of the participants suggested that on-site supervision might be preferable. However, three of them then qualified this by commenting that external supervision can work well, and

two highlighted that external supervision was a form of preparation for current day social work practice. Wayne suggested:

“Internal is much better, but increasingly...social workers work in positions and roles that aren’t designated social workers...so the reality is that people will work in all of those agencies and preparing them for that work isn’t a bad thing. So I think you also have to acknowledge that it is not a bad thing to have people in organisations with external supervisors. But that is a yes and no answer, isn’t it?” Wayne

Other participants pointed out that there was no such thing as ideal, and that the great majority of participants emphasised that placement opportunities need to be centred around learning opportunities and the student. Maria, for example, pointed out:

“The ideal is where everyone understands what their role is, including the student and ...has a kind of appreciation of how those roles work together to provide a supportive learning environment for the student.”

Maria

Participants outlined that if field education included external supervision it was particularly important to clarify roles, and ensure that the supervisors were available, and that joint meetings took place. These aspects confirmed what was reported in the literature about placement with external supervision. This highlights the importance of role clarification and communication (Abram et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2003). Dana, for instance, proposed that placements with external supervision need quality input from supervisors, including involvement in meetings:

“The off-site supervisor is able to be available and supportive and ready to give the time entirely to the student when he meets with her for this hour each week and ...that he sorts, so that everyone is organised, everyone is on time, everyone is aware of what is to be achieved, flexible within that, ... knowing the framework well, but having flexibility for any, misadventures that happen along the way.” Dana

Iona highlighted the positive outcomes of the clarification of roles and expectations:

“I think it works well when everyone knows what their expectations are. There is a lot of work involved in having a student ...just in terms of liaison meetings, the assessment tasks that have to be done. And it works well when people are prepared to put in the time to do that.” Iona

Bridget emphasised the importance of supervisors having a discussion about the assessment and her role in leading the process:

“I would say, have a discussion about ... mid-placement through the placement ... as supervisors you are assessing her placement, so you need to take the lead role in pulling that together.” Bridget

Yet, the ideal placement set-up may not always be present in reality. A number of participants identified people's time constraints as a concern, and suggested that getting people together for meetings or even getting external supervisors to provide all the required supervision hours can be challenging. Dana, for example outlined the supervisors had to be chosen carefully:

“Students do say to me that they do find it very difficult when they have a query or they are uncertain or they need some professional leadership

and there is no one they can turn to right at that point in time, so I would say that the students who were to have external supervisors need to be chosen carefully in their capacity to manage that difficulty.” Dana

One participant in a number of sections of the interview pointed out that external supervisors did not always put in the required time. Iona reflected:

“I think there is a real issue about people considering that role ... as a job and a professional role. And I think there is a number of external supervisors that don’t. That kind of do it in addition to their bits and pieces and don’t see the students enough, and that’s an issue, and I think, and this is my personal view (laughs). And I think that suits the university sometimes, because if everybody saw them all the time you are supposed to it would cost a bomb.” Iona

4.5.3 The Experience of Liaison People: Being the University

The great majority of participants identified that bringing the university perspective to the placement was an important part of the liaison role. Liaison people saw themselves involved in clarifying roles and briefing people. They pointed out that that they needed to be available and supportive. Bringing the university perspective to placement was explained in terms of linking the placement in with the university and the degree requirements, ensuring that students have opportunities for learning in placement, checking that everything is in place and that students have a safe learning environment. Wayne, for example, stated:

“I say, when I am doing the liaison officer, listen, you know my job here is ‘be the university’, the quality control. I am here to make sure the

university can be audited by AASW and pass, so I am here actually so someone can come along and look at all the documentation about this placement and say, all of the requirements of the AASW have been met and the student should have passed.” Wayne

Participants said that clarifying roles and briefing supervisors and students on their role was part of their role as a liaison person. The liaison role was described by some in terms of a linking role or a central role. Karen, for example, described the liaison role as being the ‘anchor’ in placements with external supervision, explaining that:

“I think that it has almost like an anchor role, that the way that liaison has happened, just to be that central point so that everybody can be on the same page has been really important so the student is clear and knows that the information that each of the supervisors had is clear and that there is not that uncertainty and difficulty that could happen if that’s the case. the anchoring is more about holding it together, more of a net around and holding it together for the placement to complete. ... So it’s about tying, and it’s about having things in place so that the relationship can stay healthy.” Karen

Participants highlighted the importance of providing support for supervisors and students. Anna, for example, described the briefing she did with supervisors:

“From a liaison person’s point of view it is more a role in supporting the supervisor in how to do that role when they are external , what extra resources they could use, ... I suppose coaching along the external supervisor, how to do that better, how I suppose to be more effective, how you feel you have got more connections....” Anna

The importance of being available and supportive to students is indicated by Karen and Mary's reflections:

"Be very available throughout the placement, if there any queries, that that can be clarified, because if it ends up being the student that's the one caught in the middle of that." Karen

"Another situation where as a liaison person where I have actually met the student outside of work one morning, where I had wanted to pull the student ...and the student had said to me, I want to go in today. So I have actually stood there outside the building, talking it through with them. I think you have to as a liaison person, qualities, you have to be really stringed in, you have to be prepared to be there at those critical times. And to live by your judgments. I had one I had pulled the student, and the... [task supervisor] turned up at the student's house. She rang me and abused me as well, you know. Which validated my decision." Mary

Mary's comment suggests that it is imperative that liaison people are available to students in field education. However, more importantly, they need to be aware of what is happening in the placement and be prepared to intervene when necessary (Parker, 2010). This is an important role, as the research showed that students are at risk of harassment and bullying in field education (Gair, Thomson, & Savage, 2005). The discussion of the role of the liaison person by liaison people indicates the importance of their active involvement in field education. Liaison people assist supervisors and students to ensure that university and professional expectations are met and that students have a safe learning experiences. Participants' reflections highlight the significance of liaison people having a presence in the students' field education experience.

4.5.4 Field Education Coordination Considerations

Bringing the university perspective into the placement was extended to include considerations that fit the field education coordination role, a role that had not been identified as one of the key stakeholders in the original research design. As outlined in the methodology Chapter Four, liaison people were also involved in field education coordination roles. Schools of Social Work need to allocate both field education coordinators and liaison staff to each placement (AASW, 2012c). The responsibilities of field education coordinators include placement development, training of field educators and field education integration workshops (AASW, 2012c). Interestingly, field education coordination considerations also emerged in the discussion with participants who did not hold this role as an official position, indicating that liaison people shared concerns beyond their individual support roles, reflecting a responsibility for the whole field education program.

Participants raised issues regarding the need to organise liaison people, recruit external supervisors, the quality of external supervisors, the facilitation of good learning opportunities and the difficulties of finding placements. For instance, a number of participants worried about the quality and preparation of external supervisors and liaison people. Mary, for example, reflected:

“I worry about us contracting out liaison so much. Because I don’t know that we sit a liaison person down and really, I don’t know what briefing they get and from what I saw years ago, they just get a contract and just go and do some liaisons. Whether we really talk them through all the nuances of, you know what we are trying to achieve for students. I don’t know that we do liaison training.” Mary

Iona was concerned that the field education unit needed to constantly recruit new supervisors and to ensure that these are available to students:

“My feeling is the good ones we have here, they are people who like the students, ... I think that is actually really important, to be respectful of students and to value them and to hear what they have to say about their learning. And to be available, too, Ines, I suspect. ... the real danger with external supervision is that a lot of people do it as a little add-on. ... We have more placements that haven’t got ... an internal supervisor, social work qualified supervisor, we are constantly faced with trying to recruit external supervisors. But we do that casually here.” Iona

A number of liaison people shared that it can be difficult to find liaison people, external supervisors and placements. Some of this impacted on the work they would do to support the student and the placement. Mary provided the following example:

“The pragmatism of regional, the process of finding placement and ... the quality of the people we have to use sometimes ... we aren’t necessary able to be picky, and therefore the importance of liaison to help student unravel what sometimes is quite appalling practice, without turning against the person. The supervisor is a bad supervisor, personally, no, your supervisor is in a very difficult situation.” Mary

Learning opportunities and matching students to the right setting were other considerations shared. Anna outlined:

“I would take into the decision around what is a good set-up for the student or, those things into account. Are they any other social workers in

the agency who just can't provide the supervision but would be there providing a role- model of what social work is in the agency , a model of how social workers respond to those different situations, a co-worker that they can work with and then the supervision just happens to be external. I think that can work very, very well.” Anna

4.5.5 Conclusion

The discussions of the liaison people provide an insight into important aspects of the role and function of liaison people and their experiences in supporting placements with off-site supervision. The extra workload for liaison people in supporting placements with off-site supervision is of concern, considering that field education is already marginalised in academia (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Placement with off-site supervision might be seen as less than ideal, due to extra workloads and concerns about the quality of the people hired to do the job. Liaison people recognised that students could learn in a variety of placement settings, but that these needed to be centred on providing learning opportunities for them. In discussing their own experience in supporting placements with external supervision, liaison people raised concerns about the overall quality of supervision, provision of supervision and the difficulty of accessing qualified supervisors to provide supervision. While it is difficult to find student placements supported by agency social work professionals (Abram et al., 2000; Barton et al., 2005; Unger, 2003), liaison people are concerned about the support that is then available, and needed to supervise students when placements with external supervision are set up.

4.6 Foregrounding the Multiple Voices in Placements with External Supervision

The following findings chapter provides the outcomes of the data analysis of all the interviews in the study, looking at the data more holistically and identifying the overall themes that have emerged. What has emerged from the examination of the individual groups of participants in this chapter is that the concerns for each group are slightly different, yet they are connected. For students the survival of this potentially valuable learning experience is a focal point. Thus, while the literature might explore which placement arrangements with which students are more satisfied (Cleak & Smith, 2012), a key consideration that precedes this discussion is that the placement experience itself can be a struggle for students, regardless of the particular arrangement. So Maidment's point (2003b, 2006) that placement is a dual experience of significant professional learning experience and the coexisting experience of associated stress needs to be considered more carefully in the process of placement preparation and support.

The concerns that emerge from the description of their experiences indicates that they may not always be seen as valued partners in the social work placement (Henderson, 2010). At other times, though, they are working to support social work placements in a team with external supervision. Not working closely with the task supervisor or not seeking the task supervisor's feedback for assessment would leave the task supervisor's work and observations unacknowledged and the students' work incompletely assessed. While not primary focus, this also appeared as an issue of concern for students in placements with external supervision. Students identified both the lack of the external supervisor's contextual understanding of their placement (and thus assessment), and the lack of the task supervisor's input at the point of assessment, as concerning (Zuchowski, 2013b). Valuing the task supervisors' input is more than a professional courtesy, it

creates opportunities for multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work (Abram et al., 2000; Hek, 2012), and ensures that co-field educators (AASW, 2012a) actively support the learning experience.

External supervisors identified the extra time needed to build relationships, clarify roles and understand the context of the learning experience. The challenges, understanding and opinions of external social work supervisors need to be considered in order to re-examine the assumptions of social work placements and the necessary pedagogical culture and supports surrounding these (Bellinger, 2010b). Their discussion highlighted the potential of external supervision as a positive contribution to field education. This fits with the advantages of placements with external supervision that students have identified. Students valued the opportunity that supervision external to the work place brought for them to be able to explore ideas and concerns safely. This connects with the concept of supervision for graduate social workers, who commonly access supervision away from their work place as a purposeful strategy and choice (Beddoe, 2012; Chiller & Crisp, 2012; Ung, 2002). Placements with external supervision can be useful for students' growth and learning during placement, and thus provide a model of supervision for their future professional practice. Yet, field education with external supervision is costly. The work of external field educators needs to be resourced appropriately. However, the context of field education in general means that it is marginalised in academia and expending more funds is difficult (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

For liaison people, a major concern was the extra time and resources needed to support placements with external supervision and the quality of the supervisors that could support these placements. The importance of connecting key players, building relationships and coordinating meetings have been acknowledged in the data of the other groups. There is very little research that explores the views of liaison people, however, as they

predominantly are academics supporting field education. Potentially, their views could be strongly represented in the research and literature about field education and field education with external supervision. Academics research and write about social work education. If a prime concern of the participants in this study are the extra resources and time and the quality of social work educators, then this could influence the focus and exploration of the studies undertaken in this area. It is important to record the experiences of liaison people, as they are rarely made explicit through research, and can contribute to a broader understanding of practice in social work education.

The potential opportunities of placements with external supervision were explored from different perspectives. Both task supervisors and external supervisors recognised the opportunities external supervision could bring to students, but task supervisors also highlighted their own involvement in social work placement as positive factors for their organisation and their own growth. Task supervisors recognised being involved in social work placements was an opportunity to build their own practice through reflection. It also allowed them to engage with theory through the work they do with students. Thus, supporting social work placements can further strengthening human services workers and the field itself (Parker et al., 2003; Rambally, 1999; Unger, 2003).

The focus of external supervisors was more on the professional growth that these placements offered to students, the field and themselves. They identified that placements with external supervision could ensure that supervision of student placements actually took place. Since social workers who provided student supervision from outside traditional practice contexts were focused on building up a strong social work identity and framework, their off-site role might in fact facilitate more authentic discussions, as the interest and agenda of the organisation do not distract from the focus of student development and learning (Hughes, 1998). In contrast liaison people did not much

discuss the opportunities of placements with external supervision, but mainly focused on the challenges of supporting them appropriately.

Identifying the experiences of the individual groups of participants facilitates the discovery of gaps, new angles and viewpoints. It ensures that not only the known, familiar viewpoint is heard, but that other ideas, thoughts and nuances can come to the surface and be considered. While similar concerns and ideas were discussed, the different angles and nuances in the presentation and primary focus can help stakeholders in field education identify a fuller picture of experiences in field education with external supervision. What has been identified in this chapter is that field education with external supervision is complex, and that overall it would be useful to have discussions and communication about the various viewpoints, expectations and understandings prior to field placements, but also during the experience. Participants raised insights and concerns about relationships, communication and understandings and these could be better factored into considering and setting up placements with external supervision.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented the findings that emerged out of the analysis of each individual stakeholder group. I summarised the key points from each group and while similar themes and ideas emerged at times, overall, each group of participants foregrounded particular aspects of the placement experience in their discussions. In the final section of the chapter I discussed the relevance of hearing the multiple voices.

Chapter 5 Core Themes in Placements with External Supervision

5.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter I present the overall findings of the research organised around four major themes that have emerged from the analysis across the participant groups. The themes emerged as participants reflected on their experiences with and in placements with off-site supervision guided by the open questions in the interview guide. In this chapter the rich experiences are synthesised as I seek to present the kaleidoscope of experiences as shared by the participants in this research.

The first theme I identified has been titled ‘learning about social work’. This theme highlights the way in which participants discussed learning about practicing social work. Participants described the learning in field education with external supervision as social work focused. They discussed learning about theories and the organisation, and considered the development of a professional social work framework.

The second theme has been labelled ‘student focused learning’. Included under this thematic heading are the discussions about learning that were framed in terms of the relevance to students’ learning needs and requirements. Furthermore, the participants discussed student-driven learning. They highlighted the importance of students having opportunities to participate in social work practice in useful and supported placements.

The third thematic area considers ‘learning environment and relationships’ and the different factors that contributed to a positive learning environment. The findings confirm that relationships are key to supporting learning. Particularly, the supervisory relationships played a key role in the success of placements. Safety, power and the organisational culture all were relevant to and influenced by relationships. Collaboration

between individuals, and collectively between all members of the perceived triad was important. These processes were complex in placements with external supervision and needed role clarification and good communication processes.

The final theme highlighted is categorised as the ‘current contexts impacting field education with external supervision’. Participants observed that universities and organisations were struggling to support field education. They noted that limited placements were available, as well as the difficulty in hiring quality external field educators. They discussed the availability of key players to engage in placements with off-site supervision.

In the chapter summary I highlight that what emerged overall in the findings, including some of the concerns about placements with external supervision.

5.2 Learning about Practicing Social Work

Field Education is a time in which students “... learn how to practise one’s discipline”, (Maidment, 2013, p. 4) as well as learn about procedures, practices and the connections between theoretical learning and practice settings. Field education provides opportunities to analyse professional values and ethics in situ and work with other professionals in teams (Maidment, 2013). Field education is about helping students experience practice in the human service industry. It aims to expose them to evidence-based knowledge and theories, in order to help them develop a professional identity, to understand professional roles and develop and strengthen their competencies and skills as reflective practitioners (Cleak & Wilson, 2013). The learning in field education is guided by professional standards and codes. In Australia, the AASW prescribes the parameters in which field education can take place and the outcomes that need to be achieved (AASW, 2012a). Thus, field education is an integral part of the academic social work degree designed to

help students to achieve the graduate attributes of a social worker. These attributes include a

[d]emonstrated sense of identity as a professional social worker...[s]ound understanding of and commitment to social work values and ethics to guide professional practice...the [a]bility to apply social work knowledge and interventions ... [and the a]bility to review, critically analyse and synthesise knowledge and values and apply reflective thinking skills to inform professional judgement and practice. (AASW, 2012b, pp. 10-11).

The limited literature about field education with external supervision might pose questions about students' ability to acquire a professional social work identity (Cleak & Smith, 2012; Plath, 2003). However, recent research also points out that placement in organisations without social workers might actually facilitate students' participation in social work practice (McLaughlin et al., 2014). These placements can offer "...valuable field experience that was quite consistent with generalist social work practice" (Unger, 2003, p. 111). Moreover, social work students "...in these placements engaged in a process of constructing their positions on the nature of social work, and developing a sense of ownership and identity as a consequence" (Scholar et al., 2014).

The issues raised in the literature were reflected in the participants' discussions. Participants in this study identified that field education in general was a time to learn about social work, social work identity and professional frameworks. In discussing field education opportunities with external supervision participants outlined that students were on placement to learn the '*social worky stuff*'. They further pointed out that whether this learning was always achieved in the placement with off-site supervision needed to be monitored and the learning facilitated through supervision.

Facilitating students' capacity to integrate theory and practice was central to almost all the discussions. Participants talked about field education as learning about social work and social work practice. Maria, for example, who spoke as an external supervisor, pointed out:

"It can really help them clarify in their own mind, yeah, this is what social work is, this is what is different." Maria

Talking about her experience as a student, Carmen categorized her social work learning in field education as learning about the reality of social work:

"I suppose the reality of being a social worker is very different as opposed to what you actually learn about at uni. So you come out of university with those rose coloured glasses on about what you are going to be doing, you are going to be helping people, and you actually do help people, that's a really big part of social work. But there are a whole range of other things that are part of social work, that are quite hard." Carmen

As a task supervisor, Lucy explained that the learning was about integrating the frameworks, approaches and skills the students were studying into practice in the real world:

"I guess their learning, so have the ability to be able to sort of look at the work they are doing and sort of reflect on the work they are studying, so reflect on those approaches, those frameworks, those different skills they are learning and taking in their study area, sort of reflect on how that sort of impacts in the real world. And how you implement that." Lucy

However, some participants were not sure whether what was learned, taught and role-modelled in placements with off-site social work supervision was always consistent with social work. At times students in externally supervised placements wondered whether they were doing enough social work, and whether what they were learning was appropriate for social work practice. As a student, Kelly reflected:

“Sometimes I think I am not integrating this all straight away, but I mean, I still sort of look at it and assess, you know, am I doing it. Sometimes I do sit there, and am I doing like a social worker would do it? So, it almost like I separate it a bit.” Kelly

Similarly, some of the off-site field educators were concerned that they were not able to model social work practice to the students, and that their interactions with students were limited. Thus, students would not see them in action. Some expressed concern that what students would see in practice was not the way social workers would practice. For example, Iona in the role of an external supervisor mused:

“So I think that’s the missing component, because what they see of your practice is that interaction with themselves and they will see you in a meeting, a couple of assessment meetings, but that’s not the same as seeing you interacting with a client or ... seeing me pick up the phone deal with a difficult situation where I am perhaps having to calm someone down who is very distressed or some of those more traditional social work tasks that you would do ... regardless of your role ... you have the opportunity to exercise a much broader range of social work skills and they get to see that. And, I just don’t think it is the same, Ines. When other people do it, when non-social work professionals do it. That doesn’t mean

that it is not valuable and they don't learn from it ... and I don't think it is just about identity... I think it's about values and social work context and the way that we have that shared understanding of practice... I think these are different.” Iona

Discussions with some of the task supervisors also highlighted the concern about whether what was learned was consistent with what was necessary for social work practice. Monica, for instance, wondered whether she was educating students about social work:

“I sometimes feel challenged by not being confident that I am giving that exactly what they need to tick off that kind of work book or task, that I am really educating them in the social work realm of things.” Monica

As a task supervisor, Mary recognised the importance of the external supervisor as providing the social work guidance to student in her on site placement:

“Just a recognition that I can't do it for the student ... I don't have the legitimacy to do it for the student and while the student's feedback to me is ... You are a social worker. I am not, ... you talk like one or you act like one, but I am not, so there is a sense, yeah relief, in the sense, [name of external supervisor] is there to provide that layer.” Mary

Dana, a liaison person involved in supporting placements with external supervision, pointed to the different focus of the work that the two supervisors accomplished with the students. However, she noted that the contact with the external supervisor was just a small component of the supervision:

“The on-site supervisor in my experience has been someone who is possibly more in a managerial kind of role or ... an organisational type of

role, so ... they would supervise the day to day doings, but not ... the actually professional practice in terms of social work development, so the off-site supervisor would come and meet with the student once a week for an hour, ... so it is not very much.” Dana

Participants recognised the importance of the social work focus to the placement, and that role-modelling played a part in student learning on placement. In placements with external supervision some questions were aired by participants in regards to what was being role-modelled and whether this was appropriate for social work practice. This is reflected in other research, for example, the outcomes of Cleak and Smith’s (2012) research which showed that students were less satisfied in placement with external supervision. Their research linked levels of student satisfaction with a sense of social work identity, learning opportunities on placements and feeling competent (Cleak & Smith, 2012). Scholar, McCaughan, McLaughlin and Coleman (2012) also found that social work identity was an issue of concern in placements with external supervision. The authors, however, pointed out that a sense of social work identity in placements without social workers on site was achieved in their study when the university, the organisation and the off-site supervisor worked collaboratively and proactively with the students to facilitate this learning (Scholar et al., 2012). Modelling can instruct students and demystify professional practice. However, as Cleak and Wilson (2013, p. 92) observed, it is “...*one* way, rather than *the* way, to learn”. What is emerging from the research reported in this thesis is that participants are concerned about what is modelled in practice in placement with external supervision.

Engagement in external supervision provided an important forum to discuss social work identity, roles and theories. Students relied on their external supervisors to discuss the

social work aspects of the placement. Students also revealed that they approached different supervisors for different issues:

“If I have got a question about the organisation or procedure ... I obviously go to the task supervisor and say, what do I do here or what’s the policy, what paper or what do I fill out, there are times I think it’s almost, it makes me break it up more in my head, not that’s a good thing or bad thing, like I tend to,... break it up social work side, organisational side, I don’t always see it together.” Kate

As a task supervisor, Regina recognised that:

“The professional supervisor ...would be very much centred around the social work part of the placement. Like where your experience ends and what you are learning on the job sits in with the social work degree and expectations and ethics and all of those things.” Regina

Supervision provided the opportunity to talk about social work learning and put strategies in place to ensure that the placement was focused on issues important to social work learning. As an external supervisor, Chloe pointed out:

“But we tried to also focus, like my role being the, to give the social work framework, so we kept that on the agenda. ... I guess it was up to me... apart from the student, to make sure that we were adding that social work component to the placement.” Chloe

Drawing from the above comments it appears that supervision with the external supervisor provided a space to keep the social work focus paramount in the supervision experience. Participants pointed out that supervision with the external supervisor

provided opportunities to consider bigger picture issues, frameworks and perspectives. It allowed both supervisor and student to step outside discussions about daily issues and concerns. This is also illustrated in the following comment from Melissa, a student:

“I think you really need somebody who can talk you through that, someone who can bring the bigger picture and stuff, because I think, when you are doing the work ...you get so stuck in the day to day task...I think you need someone who can really help you to link in with, and remind you about,...what the bigger picture is and what we are all working towards, ... and talk about why I even wanted to be a social worker, ... that opportunity to step back and look at everything, I think is really important.” Melissa

This usefulness of supervision away from the actual experience was also highlighted by many off-site supervisors. Shelly outlined that:

“I think that there is a tendency if you are the internal supervisor to sometimes get caught talking about tasks. Rather than ... the theories that could be applied, even talking about ... your values and your ethics and how... there is a rub here because ... in your world children shouldn't be taken away from their parents and in this world they are... all that sort of thing.” Shelly

It was speculated by the participants that external social work supervision allowed a focus on social work, which if provided internally, might have remained secondary, or at least limited by the necessary discussion about organisational and case management matters. This conjecture reflects the concern that in current socio-political climates supervision can be primarily focused on tasks and risks (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011; Green, 2007)

and identifies that this concern could potentially be mitigated in placements with external supervision. Students who receive supervision externally can become active contributors to their learning in supervision discussions that focus on social work practice, values and ethics (Bellinger, 2010b), rather than having task focused supervision that might limit the integration of professional knowledge into practice (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011). External supervision of the type identified above can allow student to step aside from the immediate tasks to participate in social work learning that critically engages with the practice context (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). It provides the potential to reflect on

... the relationship, the work of supervision, the structure, the context and associated tasks and assessments as well as making explicit the interpretations, assumptions, knowledges, behaviours in self, organisation, communities of practice and work with clients and how these are mediated by language, discourse, and power relations. (Noble, 2011b, p. 315)

Learning about social work practice was discussed in regards to the social work focus of the placement, but participants' contributions also suggested particular learning about theories, organisations and professional practice frameworks were facilitated in placements with external supervision.

5.2.1 Learning about Social Work Theories

Participants appreciated the relevance of learning about theories in field education with external supervision, the '*understanding the theoretical perspectives*' (Jamie). Participants linked theories to practice experiences, reflections and supervision discussions. Interactions about theories happened with external supervisors, internal supervisors and liaison people.

“[External supervisor], she was fantastic, because she was able to link in a lot of the academic side of it. So a lot of the things that might not come up in task supervision. She was able to bring those in and we would talk about theory a lot and how that would relate to an interaction that I might have with a family.” Stephanie

“The liaison person ... was great with her direction in regards to my journals and being able to help me to... focus, so, ok what theoretical framework are you coming from ... where do you think you stand with that theory?” Carmen

In this study external supervisors placed emphasis on the fact that they discussed theory with the students. Some, like Paul, talked about teaching students about theory:

“So we are actually now reading through the basic text, her reaction was, theory? Who needs theory? I trust my gut sort of thing, and I am saying, well, wait till you in a witness box, you have been subpoenaed and you are being cross-examined, they won’t go with intuition or a gut feeling (laughs), you need your theory to actually give an understanding of why you have chosen this.” Paul

However, theory discussions did not just happen between students and external supervisors. Task supervisors discussed the importance of students being able to discuss theories and approaches to practice. A number of them talked about discussing theory, approaches and practice frameworks with students, and some expressed that they felt equipped to do so. For example, Regina related that she would discuss feminism, empowerment, counselling and organisational frameworks with students. Tanya highlighted that when she was a task supervisor she would link tasks to theoretical

frameworks, while Loretta described how she worked with a student to gain a better understanding between the theoretical studies and professional work. Lucy suggested that the understanding of frameworks and approaches gained from her work experience assisted her in relating the practice experience to the approaches studied in social work. That students access various people in their placement to develop their professional social work identity can be considered in the light of Scholar, McLaughlin, McCaughan and Coleman's (2014) research. This research found that while approximately half of the students stated they accessed the external supervisor for support in developing their professional social work identity, 24% stated they also accessed their liaison person, and 21 % their task supervisors. However, not all task supervisors in this research indicated that they explored theory in supervision, and some, like Lucy, did not feel comfortable in engaging in discussions about theory:

"I wouldn't have any idea how to sort of relate our work or help the student relate the work we are doing here to the approaches she is studying in social work." Lucy

Others, like Monica, got students to explain the concepts so they could then relate this jointly to the work in the organisation:

"I guess they say things like, systems theory, and you are like, well what does that mean and how would that apply here? ...I don't necessarily understand the concept, so them explaining it to me and then after reflecting on what would we do in our daily work, we sort of see how theories and concepts integrate, so stuff that they have learnt, how does that apply to what we do and the way we work with other agencies, and stuff...it gives them an opportunity to tell me about social work." Monica

Task supervisors generally pointed out that they provided opportunities for learning and reflection to students, and some specifically did so to inform the students' reflection and discussion in external supervision:

"I like to have a discussion with them over the progress of the student or more how can I work whatever task I am giving them to fit in what professional supervision they are giving them. With one particular student we had I was giving her a task, but she couldn't link it to the theoretical part of the studies. So I had to open it up a little bit more so she would get a better understanding of how she could link it in with the professional part of it." Loretta

Participants outlined a purposeful engagement in supervision aimed at developing students' understanding of theory. This would indicate that placements with external supervision do include efforts to achieve the theory to practice link. However, there is some sense that the discussions about relating theory to practice in placements with external supervision could be a split affair. It appears that the practice and potential dilemmas experienced in the organisation were discussed with the task supervisor initially, but then explored as theoretical understanding with the external supervisor. Integrating theory into practice has been identified as a critical challenge to social work education (Homonoff, 2008). From the participants' discussions it appears that integrating theory to practice is a core part of the field education experience in placements with external supervision. Moreover, it seems to be at times a joint endeavour, in line with the AASW expectation that field education '... is a cooperative endeavour between the higher education provider, the student, agencies and field educators to assist the integration of theory and practice' (AASW, 2012c, p. 9). Expectations about and

strategies for joint work may need to be explicitly included in placement preparation for placements with external supervision.

5.2.2 Learning about Organisations

Social work specific learning was part of the placement experience. However, student and task supervisor participants highlighted that learning in field education involved much more than focussing on social work. Students highlighted this in a number of ways, pointing to the learning about human service institutions, the particular organisation, but also learning about how to work in an organisation:

“Being on placement is not just about learning to be a social worker, it’s about learning to be a person working in an organisation with other people, and learning the realities of communication break down and that people are not always going to say what they are going to do and that there are times, when even though you don’t like it, you are going to have to speak up for yourself and say something, like it is about learning about all of those things.” Melissa

Similarly, task supervisors talked about opportunities for learning about the workplace, workplace practices and procedures, service delivery and the service field.

“It provides the student an opportunity to see what challenges there are when they work as a case manager for an offender, so it gives them good insight into whether they like to work in this field or not and how they can actually implement their skills into the field.” Loretta

Learning about social work practice “...involves the exploration of a complex web of factors: personal, relational, cultural, political, and organisational” (Chinnery & Beddoe,

2011, p. 91). Literature about learning in field education suggests that learning about the organisation is a significant part of the placement experience (Patford, 2000). In organisations students learn important lessons such “the importance of process” or “personal suitability for particular social work roles in particular settings” (Patford, 2000, p. 26). Learning about the organisation is relevant to social work practice and social work education, because social work practice is shaped in part by the organisational context in which the social worker operates (Cameron, 2014). From the data in this research, it seems that students are exposed to learning about organisations and working in organisational contexts, and that in placements with external supervision this learning is facilitated by non-social workers.

5.2.3 Developing a Professional Practice Framework

Developing a sense of self in practice is seen as one of the important goals of field education (Lager & Robbins, 2004). Participants’ discussions in this study show that a student’s ‘use of self’ is a focus of placements with external supervision. Students were offered opportunities to learn about their professional self in practice and to develop a professional practice framework.

For example, as an external supervisor, Georgina explained that, through external supervision, students could develop their own professional practice framework:

“Looking at what they are doing every day and how they are going about it and putting frameworks around that and helping them to get encouraged and them putting their own frameworks around why I am doing that? Why am I doing [this]? What am I learning out of this? What I have learned in the classroom I am translating into the face to face contact with the client.” Georgina

The relevance of developing a professional practice framework was also stressed by task supervisors. Regina, for instance, shared the following:

“But the other thing I always enjoy talking with the students about is about who they are and what sort of worker do they think they are going to be, because that is the whole purpose of the placement, isn’t it?”

Regina

Conversely, when the external supervision was not supportive of the student’s learning, this left the student stranded in regards to the development of their practice framework. Denise’s comment illustrates students’ expectations about being able to build a practice framework during field education, and the impact of not being able to do this in supervision:

“During prac, ... that was all about building your practice framework..., you had to go back to the drawing board and really think about whether you... were indeed leaning towards narrative therapy, solution focused, whether you liked strengths based... that appeals to me, ok I am connecting this and this with that service delivery... Now, none of that happened and you were kind of left a little bit isolated.” Denise

Many participants pointed out the potential benefits of external supervision to the development of a professional practice framework. Advantages included space away from the actual experience to expose and discuss aspects of the professional self, and the supervisor being removed from the agency and from the organisational demands and therefore being committed to the professional development of the student. Particularly, a number of participants raised the issue of being able to reflect on placement experiences

with a supervisor not enmeshed with the agency as a positive aspect of placements with external supervision. This was recognised in the discussion by students:

“Because I was able to have somebody outside of that to be able to bounce things off and then perhaps then I can go back in and try new things. Because when you are enmeshed in the agency, sometimes that is hard to do for anybody that is in the agency.” Stephanie

Similarly, external supervisors highlighted the benefits of external supervision to facilitate a broader look at issues, removed from the immediate tasks:

“Being external to that team, I am able to draw that out further for the students, yeah that’s what you did there, let’s think about this more broadly, let’s think agency wide, community wide, globally, so where the, the task person would still be still confined around the task, I think, the head space would go [there].” Belinda

In her role as a liaison person Samantha reflected on the potential of external supervisors being more committed to the student’s professional development:

“I actually think it’s somebody who listens without judgement, who poses questions, for you to contemplate, I think is committed to supervisee’s personal and professional development, and... time is taken to help the supervisee to reflect ...on their practice, ... what I am finding in a lot of places is, ... if a student brings something or an employee actually brings something to the table they are just told what they have to do. And I don’t think that that is helpful.” Samantha

The participants' discussion described above highlights the benefits of external supervision for students. It gives them a space to critically reflect on their placement experiences, their practice frameworks and their professional selves as part of developing professional identities. In light of increasing managerialism, social workers in professional practice often partake in external supervision, and "... the dominance of compliance and surveillance activities with public sector regimes of audit and quality management" (Beddoe, 2012, p. 204). Supervision that is away from their workplace, is a purposeful strategy for professional social workers (Beddoe, 2012; Ung, 2002). For graduate social workers internal supervision can be focused on tasks and roles, whereas external supervision can lead to the shifting of focus onto the personal dimensions of practice (Ung, 2002). Similarly, participants described how receiving external supervision as students focused supervision on the development of them as professional practitioners, beyond reflecting on the immediate tasks. This was facilitated through critical reflection with someone who could bring a new perspective to the experience. This can promote the exploration of students' frames of practice and the development of reflective practitioners (Schön, 1991).

When considering what might be an ideal learning experience, then, external supervision can potentially be a contributor to the growth of a professional social worker. This was acknowledged by Monica, who, in her role as a task supervisor, also pointed to the student focus of the learning experience:

"I am thinking sometimes it is good, like sometimes we seek external supervision because it is good for us.... to talk about a situation that the other person is actually not involved in, sometimes that challenges you more and makes you think differently, ... I think an experience where they

do get to have control about what they are learning and what they want to learn is good.” Monica

The experience in placements with external supervision was discussed as being social work focused. Learning was discussed in regards to theories, organisations and social work. Participants referred to the development of professional practice frameworks and the ability to reflect on the self and practice.

5.3 Student Focused Learning

The second theme that emerged from the overall data has been titled ‘Student focused learning’. Participants discussed that it was necessary that the learning, the learning opportunities and the learning support were relevant to the students’ abilities and requirements. The learning, moreover, needed to be student driven. Participants highlighted the importance of students having opportunities to participate in meaningful practice in field education.

In some way this could appear self-apparent: that the student field education opportunity would be focused on student learning. However, no question was asked directly about learning, yet most participants made the point that it was important to develop learning around the student’s needs, abilities, ways of learning and interests. These answers emerged mainly when participants were asked questions about what they thought the ideal placement was. This supports the argument that whether the social work is onsite or not is not the defining feature in assessing the quality of a placement. Rather it is the pedagogical culture surrounding the placement (Bellinger, 2010b). The idea of student focused learning seems to relate more to them as active learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Barretti, 2007; Bellinger, 2010b).

The student focus in field education was raised almost unanimously as participants talked about the importance of getting to know the students and their learning styles and needs. This is exemplified in a comment by the task supervisor Loretta:

“I like to see how they progress. And it is really funny, every student is different and every student wants to learn in a different way. And I would believe that every student I ever had works with a different theoretical framework.” Loretta

Discussions about student focused learning among task and external supervisors, as well as some of the students, were extended to include an element of choice and a matching of the learning opportunities and people to the student. The element of choice was, for example, discussed in terms of making sure that what the external supervisor had to offer matched the placement setting and the student’s learning style. For example, Paul, an external supervisor stated:

“I insist on, and probably most supervisors do it, the student has to meet with me before the placement is confirmed ... I tell them my expectations, and then they go away ... I won’t take them on just, they have to go away and think about, well, can I really learn with the old bugger?” Paul

In the liaison persons’ discussion the student focused learning encompassed considerations of the needs of the students, the agency setting and the external supervisor. Their comments highlighted the importance of creating the best learning opportunity through a matching process, but acknowledged that what was best was different for every placement. Karen commented:

“I don’t think there is an ideal set-up. I think placement agencies are so varied, students are so varied, I don’t think there is one way that would fit everybody. I think we do need to remain open to be flexible to see how things can work and I think that the most important aspect is that students have that time ... so If we feel that there is an agency that is very busy and we are alerted early to the fact that supervision may not come easily, that it may become disrupted then I would suggest adding in somebody else, because that component is really important.” Karen

Overall, participants discussed the importance of a learning environment that was supportive of the student’s learning and students and supervisors getting to know each other to create a positive learning environment. Fook (2001) and Morley and Dunstan (2013) highlight the importance of rich learning environments that facilitate critical reflection and new ways of acting. Learning can happen anywhere (Morley & Dunstan, 2013) and the important factor is how this learning is supported pedagogically (Bellinger, 2010b). It appears from the participants’ discussions that the focus of placements with external supervision was student focused learning, aiming to facilitate pedagogical contexts that suit students’ learning needs and styles in the context of the placement experience.

5.3.1 Student Responsibility for own Learning

A number of participants stated that students needed to be proactive in their learning, adopt an adult learning model and not expect to be ‘*spoon fed*’ with information. A number of participants linked the idea that students should be proactive and self-directed in their learning to adult learning models. Robert explained that students’ self-driven

learning needed to be facilitated and they communicated those expectations with students.

“You need a pro-active student that will follow things up ... they have got to take on board adult learning models. And a lot of them don’t, they are wanting to be spoon fed. So if you have got one student who can take on adult learning and follows things up and then comes back with their experiences, it can be a really productive time, but when it becomes talking heads, it’s really just an extension of class time. So the link between practice and theory has to be generated by the supervisor, not by the student.” Robert

Lucy, for example, described how she as a task supervisor worked with the external supervisor to help the student understand that she was responsible for her own learning. Carmen appreciated the guidance of her supervisor in helping her to understand that she was responsible for her own learning:

“My field supervisor was wonderful in being able to direct me and being able to help me to focus on other aspects that were my strengths, and ... my skills that I brought to the equation, that I wasn’t just a conduit of having the information given to me, that I actually was responsible for my own learning ... so that was excellent.” Carmen

Participants overall seemed to indicate that the students were responsible for their own learning. Connected to the concept that students had to take responsibility for their own learning were description of the qualities that students needed in placements with offsite supervision. These included honesty, openness, commitment and critical reflection. From a student perspective, Jamie highlighted:

“I think you have got to be very honest (laughs), I think you have to, you do have to reflect on what is happening and not just go along with whatever is happening.” Jamie

While being proactive was a topic that was raised in the interviews, it was not touched on by the majority of participants. Rather, it occurred repeatedly in the same interviews. Although some research points out that students in placements with off-site supervision needed to be independent and proactive (Parker et al., 2003; Plath, 2003), only one participant specifically stated that in matching students to placements with off-site supervision it was important to consider the student’s level of independence. Maria highlighted:

“I think... you don’t have students who are very dependant... that they are reasonably self-directed and that they feel confident enough about going into a situation like that. ... I would think use their initiative a bit, ... I suppose ideally, like all students, we like them to ...not just to react, but to reflect on what is actually happening and they come up with some ideas that then they discuss with the supervisor and others and work steadily towards a resolution.” Maria

Overall, it appears that the expectation was that students took responsibility for their own learning. However, the focus of the interviews was not that students had to be particularly proactive, creative and able to work independently to enter placements with external supervision (Parker et al., 2003). Taking responsibility for their own learning matches expectations of adult learning models (Barretti, 2007) and textbooks on field education (Cleak & Wilson, 2013). However, participants acknowledged the value of guiding students in regards to being responsible for their own learning.

5.3.2 Usefulness of Placement to Student's Learning

The majority of participants discussed the usefulness of the placement as important, particularly as part of their response to the question of what they saw as an ideal placement. Their responses were not so much centred on whether the placement supervision was provided internally or externally. Rather, other aspects were more at the forefront of their discussion and associated with more definite responses, i.e. that the usefulness of the placement, placement support and student focused learning opportunities are essential. This fits with Bellinger's discussion about learning in field education, as referred to earlier. Bellinger (2010b) suggested that the defining feature in assessing the quality of a placement is not the provision of onsite or off-site supervision, rather the pedagogical culture surrounding the placement. The potential value of placements with no social workers on site was indicated in some participants' discussion in this research. They were described as offering students the opportunity for them to participate in 'social work' (Scholar et al., 2012) and can provide experiences in a non-traditional emergent field (Abram et al., 2000).

Participants discussed the importance of students having the opportunity to participate in practice in a field that provides valuable learning. Jamie, for example, described the usefulness of gaining experience in an area of practice that she might want to pursue in future practice:

"I have got in my mind that I will go back and work in Aboriginal communities in NT, so this placement is actually really good for that, because of their community development focus, and the sort of personal framework for girls there, they are not social workers, ... but they are more social workers than a lot of social workers... their ethics and values

are very similar to mine ... so they have been good models for practice.”

Jamie

That students be given opportunities to practice and allowed to do things was identified as important. Monica, as a task supervisor, referred to practice experiences that allowed students to experience the job role and service delivery:

“I think being aware, that they need an opportunity to experience and explore things and taking time to think about the tasks that we do in our job role and giving them an opportunity to be part of these aspects.”

Monica

Participants talked about the usefulness of a range of learning experiences. Robert, for example, referred to the “*diversity of experiences in the workplace*”, Bridget spoke of the “*range of learning experiences*” and Iona identified the “*breadth of learning opportunities*”. An interesting point in regards to placements with external supervision is that a number of participants proposed that placements with external supervision might be particularly suited to provide that useful learning experience. Comments suggested that placement with external supervision happened in fields that are relevant to social work, but not where social workers were employed, and that these experiences could offer valuable learning. Robert stressed that placement with external supervision can be in cutting edge social work:

“It can be very good in cutting edge social work of having students getting experience in agencies that don’t include a social worker, so that gives a greater scope for social work as a profession.” Robert

This supports assertions that social work placements without social work supervisors on staff can provide broad, integrated social work learning experiences in emerging community organisations (Abram et al., 2000), and open up new fields of practice and grow social workers in areas where they are scant (Zuchowski, 2011b).

5.4 Learning Environment and Relationships

The third theme, ‘learning environment and relationships’ includes discussions about the learning environment and the relationships that impact on the student’s learning in field education with external supervision. Participants highlighted the need for the supervisor to gain an understanding and knowledge of the context of the placement. They discussed the importance of relationships and collaboration. Participants also explored safety and power issues and in that context, the value of external supervision.

5.4.1 Understanding the Context

As identified in some of the individual sections of Chapter Four, ‘understanding the context’ was described by the participants as a challenge in placements with off-site supervision. This had a twofold meaning. On one hand it was important for off-site supervisors to have or to gain an understanding of the placement agency practice context. On the other hand, it was important for the on-site supervisors to have or to gain an understanding of the learning context of the placement.

Participants identified that external supervisors needed to have an understanding of the agency context and if this understanding was lacking it was difficult for them to support the student learning. This finding supports Henderson’s (2010) suggestion that the off-site supervisor needs to be matched to the placement, agency and field of practice. If that

was not possible, then the field educator would need to spend time familiarising themselves with the field education context at the start of the placement.

As outlined in the previous chapter, both external supervisors and students in particular, raised the significance of understanding context in regards to the student, the organisation, supervision, the ideal placement, assessment, relationships and roles. Participants talked about the importance of knowing and understanding the context in which the student acted, worked, responded and made decisions. It was also important to recognise how the understanding this context affected the manner in which they structured and negotiated supervision and the strategies they used to gain an appreciation of the placement context.

Many of the student participants raised the lack of contextual knowledge of the external supervisor as challenging, highlighting a lack of insight into the organisation and the field of practice as affecting their placement, supervision and assessment. Stephanie outlined:

“I guess some of the challenges were at times, because the external supervisor didn’t have a knowledge of the agency, besides what I gave them, so their background clashed a little bit with what the task supervisor might want.” Stephanie

However, not knowing the context initially can provide an avenue to further students’ learning, a point made by Loretta from her position as task supervisor:

“I think it benefits the student in that it is remote from the office. They do what they do in the office and know they have to actually go home and think about what they did, so they can explain it to the external professional supervisor, because that person usually doesn’t have much

idea of the work, so it is making the student work a little bit harder to put what they are learning into context for their professional supervisor..... I think that is a benefit to the, I would find this a benefit to me as a student.”

Loretta

Establishing the context of the placement is important for a number of reasons, the foremost of which is the recognition that learning is diverse and contextual. Students' and educators' own personal, social and cultural backgrounds impact on the elucidation of experience and the creation of meaning (Fook, 2001) and this would need to be considered in the learning experience. Educating social work students for the profession in practice learning requires them to critically engage with the practice context (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Thus, gaining an understanding of the context of the placement is necessary to support student learning in field education.

While participants highlighted the importance of practice educators gaining an understanding of the placement context, a number of participants pointed out that task supervisors needed to gain an understanding of the learning context of the placement. Participants suggested that task supervisors did not always understand the requirements of a social work placement, and that it was important that they received relevant training. As liaison person, Dana, for instance, highlighted the impact on student learning if task supervisors were not well informed about the learning context:

“The supervisor in the placement had a background in education and in management and had no understanding, hadn't read up very much around placement or around the requirements of the AASW or any such things, really, so wasn't very well informed, ... and was finding that their student was

overwhelmed with duties that weren't appropriate for her at that point of her studies and wasn't being given time and space." Dana

A number of students proposed that it would be good if the task supervisor attended training or received detailed information about social work field education. Jamie, for instance, suggested:

"I think the uni might be encouraging task supervisors to be aware a bit more and involved with the field ed unit... with ... the session and so to prepare them for stuff, I don't think many people do that, and they could even meet people and get an idea." Jamie

In Henderson's (2010) research, task supervisors themselves reported an initial lack of knowledge about social work, and that they were less than confident in their role. Overall, this indicates that extra support and training is needed for supervisors in placements with off-site supervisors (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010), and that roles and responsibilities need to be clarified during the planning stages of the placement (Parker et al., 2003). Creating an awareness of the context of the agency, as well as the learning expectations and learning processes, would be an important part of creating a learning environment that is conducive to students' growth in the profession.

5.4.2 Relationships are Key to Support Student Learning

The supervisory relationship is seen as a focal point of the learning in field education (Tadam, 2014). Literature highlights that in placements with external supervision triad relationships are important, and that these need to be supported (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010). Building relationships is particularly necessary in order to ensure that all key players are prepared for the work in placements with off-site supervision and

effective communication and support networks are ensured (Parker et al., 2003). Research suggests that field educators are core to the field education learning experience, and if the relationship between student and field educator was lacking this would lead to placement disruptions (Parker, 2010). This is confirmed by participants in this study, who identified the importance of good relationships for the successful supervision and placement processes. Denise, for example, described how different relationships with key people in her placement supported or hindered her learning as a student:

“I would say, my relationship with my manager was a very supportive one and reciprocal, we both got something out of that. The relationship with the university liaison officer felt very supported, and specifically about my learning and getting my degree. The relationship with my external supervisor was distant, unproductive, negative and actually detrimental to what I was doing.” Denise

As previously noted, participants talked about the importance of building relationships between the student and each supervisor, but some also referred to the building of the relationship between supervisors. In the interviews, participants specifically were asked about the four-way relationships between student, task supervisor, field educator and liaison person, but very few participants referred to four-way relationships. Most participants explored their individual relationships with other parties, and these were seen as important for the placement.

A number of the participants suggested that it was important that the two supervisors had a relationship. Participants recognised that fostering relationships facilitated learning on placement. As a liaison person, Iona shared the following:

“I think ... that whole presence of building relationships with other people in the agency, it ... sets ... an arrangement where they feel they can contact you. ... I actually think that it means that they look after the student a bit better ... if I build relationships and I am there for the student, ... I set the scene a little bit.” Iona

Participants stated that the relationships between parties were important to clarify roles and responsibilities. As a task supervisor, Lucy highlighted the importance of building relationships to avoid misunderstandings:

“I think it’s important to have your own relationship, ...we have it sort of a triangular, I suppose, if you are talking about the field supervisor-the external supervisor, the student and myself, sort of a triangular one, but ... what I also like to do is let that the person knows who I am as a person not just in my role, so,... having that individual sort of relationship as well. Because I think ...otherwise things are sort of assumed or taken for granted ... that you spelling it out.” Lucy

Similarly, Matthew explained the importance of good relationships between supervisors. He argued that supervisors needed an understanding of each other to avoid conflict in the relationship, which could adversely impact student learning:

“I think that ... the external field educator needs a good relationship with the task supervisor where the clarity of roles and responsibility is known. So, now we can do that in a concrete sense and write down these are my expectations...what are my respective roles and responsibilities..., we can have that, but there has been nuances that are not, that can be different in different situations. They are not necessary the same contextually, and not

necessary the same between people and so you actually need a relationship on a more personal level, so as that you know that you are both working towards the same ends for the student... you are not actually going to provide conflicts within the relationship which inhibits the student from becoming a more effective practitioner.” Matthew

Meetings between various parties were seen as important to build relationships and served to clarify issues, roles, and the purpose of placement, and monitor the student's progress. Participants particularly highlighted the importance of building a good relationship between the external supervisor and the task supervisor.

“The external field educator needs a good relationship with the task supervisor where the clarity of roles and responsibility is known. So, now, we can do that in a concrete sense and write down these are my expectations... andwhat are my respective roles and responsibilities are, we can have that, but there has been nuances that...are not necessary the same contextually, and not necessary the same between people and so you actually need a relationship on a more personal level, so as that you know that you are both working towards the same ends for the student. And that ... you are not actually going to provide conflicts within the relationship which inhibits the student from becoming a more effective practitioner.” Matthew

While there was some reference to triad relationships happening, most participants discussed individual relationships between people. Many saw the student as the connecting piece in the relationships. Thus, Belinda, when reflecting on her experience as a student in field education with external supervision, pointed out

“Not a close relationship, it was, only if you came for review or something like that. It wouldn’t be that continual connection, and I think probably that is useful, certainly to be, to know one another, to shake hands and to come and have a chat, that sort of thing, but each element had a part ...maybe ... the focus is on the student to draw all of this together, the merit of each of those elements, that they all have a purpose.” Belinda

A number of participants talked about the importance of building respectful, trusting and safe relationships, Karen, for instance, highlighted the importance of quickly building a safe and trusting relationship:

“Very much based on a relationship that is similar to any therapeutic relationship that you establish. That is about very quickly having to build a safe and trusting environment for students and to be available and to quickly get to know the placement agency so that you can understand and be a support to them through that.” Karen

Safe and trusting relationships are important in field education. Research shows that students can be unsafe or feel vulnerable in field education, and may be exposed to bullying and feelings of powerlessness (Gair & Thomas, 2008; Razack, 2000). Participants in this study identified that students were not always safe in their relationships in field education.

5.4.3 Power, Safety and Organisational Culture

A number of participants outlined how they have supported students in leaving unsafe placements, or how, as students, they had been exposed to unsafe practices, comments and relationships. It appears that students are vulnerable in field education, and the threat

can exist in any of the relationships they have with others. Jamie, for example, described how her relationship with her task supervisor was very destructive and abusive:

“Then he started getting nasty ... putting me down and stuff.... He was also making barriers to the work I was supposed to be doing, undermining, not making available things for the groups, making it impossible to run the groups, and I had done all that work getting them going.” Jamie

Other students felt caught up in the tensions of their supervisors’ relationships, Samantha feeling as if she was in a ‘war zone’ and Carmen managing her supervisors’ ‘*antagonistic*’ relationship. A number of participants identified that students are vulnerable in field education. Melissa lost trust in the relationships with the people who supported her in her placement when her liaison person opened up her journal and read this out to others:

“The liaison officer opened my journal, started reading that in front of the supervisor and me, not the task supervisor, but still, and said, oh, you are not happy here (laughs). Which I had not yet brought up with the supervisor, because I guess I was the kind of person who would give something a go first ... that was at the first meeting ...so I guess after that ...I didn’t feel that I could trust them to sort the situation out in a way that was, like respectful to everybody, or, did not sound like me whinging, or attacking the other person.” Melissa

Equally, some of the liaison people and external supervisors discussed pulling students out of unsafe placements. In her role as liaison person, Mary, described:

“I think you have to as a liaison person... you have to be really stringed in, you have to be prepared to be there at those critical times. ... I had pulled the student, and the supervisor turned up at the student’s house. She rang me and abused me as well.... Which validated my decision.... But then you have to work with the student about ... this is a small community, how can she ... engage back with that supervisor in a different role in the future?” Mary

Some participants experienced and/or observed power struggles, the bullying culture of an organisation and put-downs related to gender, echoing research that placement can expose student to violence and feeling unsafe (Gair & Thomas, 2008). Jamie, for example, commented:

“The task supervisor.... he seemed to me to be very manipulative to staff,... his attitude towards mentally ill people seemed to be totally contrary to the whole idea of [name of the program] or he had a very negative attitude and pathologising people .. that they were dangerous,there wasn’t really any training... I mean I couldn’t access any policies of the agency... I was given instructions for things that I didn’t feel I could do, like, my first week there, I had to talk someone down who had just taken an overdose when I arrived in the door step.” Jamie

Participants recognised the powerlessness of students in field education. Shelly, for example, considered this from a position of a student and an external supervisor:

“I suppose, eagerness to please and not having a lot of power, it probably wouldn’t have occurred to me that she should come to me sometimes, because of course, I am the one that should go to everyone.” Shelly

“There was probably some personalities that ... can be a bit intimidating and I get that students maybe don’t want to go there. They don’t have the power, but I also don’t want to set it up as the external supervisor that people do on people to me.” Shelly

A number of participants suggested that at times students remained in learning environments that were unsafe. A factor impacting on this could be the message that it was hard to find field education opportunities; Denise reflected:

“At the end of the day, you just want to get on with it. It is a huge chunk of time, I think 17 or 18 weeks is a massive chunk of your life... you really sort of feel, geez, if I speak up about this one, I don’t know what is going to happen, it might break down the placement, I might have to defer, I might not be able to pick up another one. It’s not a safe a place.” Denise

As discussed previously, conflict, bullying and violence in the helping professions is a reality and for social work students in field education this can mean that they feel unsafe or threatened during placement and suffer violence as part of their placement experience (Tully et al., 1999). The literature highlights the importance of recognising power and power sharing or the lack of it as impacting field education relationships (Parker, 2010). What is apparent through some of the comments of participants across various roles in this research, is the vulnerability of students in field education and how feelings of powerlessness and lack of choice may act to keep them in unsafe situations. Dana highlighted the importance of the liaison person to ensure supportive learning environments:

“...because the social worker on placement is obviously in the most vulnerable situation, I think that is even more reason to be a lot more

mindful and careful around the importance of the role, ... there is a lot of responsibility involved in providing a very supportive environment for a student, and I don't think that is something that should be taken lightly."

Dana

Students and many of the external supervisors and liaison persons, as well as two task supervisors, identified the usefulness of external supervision as a safe space away from the agency to ensure students were safe, and also had the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues away from the agency. This is captured by Iona's comment, who explored the usefulness of the time and space away:

"Sometimes I think it is about issues they want to raise about what is happening for them on placement that relate to the agency and they don't feel comfortable doing that in the agency context, sometimes I think that students are feeling really very pressured in placement, whether that is related to the placement or the broader context for them and it's about the time and space, it's a bit strange, but part of me feel it's a little bit about that time and space of actually being away." Iona

In addition to exploring personal issues of safety and power, comments were also made about the impact of organisational culture and issues on the learning environment and vice versa. Participants discussed the organisational culture as shaping what students could learn, but also the pressure the culture and organisational issues imposed on supervisors and students. The literature considers organisational culture to include the particular terms and interactions between staff members (Berends & Crinall, 2014). The organisational culture influences a range of things, including the way problems are solved and approached, expectations about staff performances, the norms about staff

interactions and the strengths, resilience, and shared experiences of the staff team (Berends & Crinall, 2014). The culture of an organisation is shaped by rites and ceremonies, stories and myths, symbols, organizational structures, power relationships and control systems (Ozanne & Rose, 2013). For example, there are formal and informal power structures that may be based on a person's position in an organisation or other factors, such as their expertise, and these determine the influence people can have in an organisation, and what relationships they have with others (Ozanne & Rose, 2013). Participants recognised the impact of power structures in an agency. As an external supervisor, Georgina reflected:

“Most organisations ... are going to have a hierarchy and they are not going to be on the top of it (laughs), initially. And so it is learning for them as how to manage bureaucracy, how to manage, sometimes senior people who don't have any understanding or appreciation of social work or what social workers do or their value base or even that sort of thing... There is often a challenging environment of who gets the clients and what reasons and things like that.” Georgina

External supervision, while potentially providing a safe space for students to discuss issues, also means that outsiders are looking into an organisation, and a number of participants recognised that this scrutiny could be threatening to task supervisors. Mary, for example, discussed this from her perspective as a liaison person:

“I think that's, that is probably a tension I felt in a lot of the placements, ...here is somebody from outside who is going to hear about this students perceptions of the internal traumas and workings of this organisation? And so the task supervisor ... can feel if they are not confident in

themselves, that they are being assessed. Or they are at least being scrutinised.” Mary

Task supervisors raised organisational concerns, and the impact of the student on the organisation in their interviews. Interestingly, those participants often described their experiences with student placement and their impact in terms of the organisation as a whole, rather than just as an individual experience of that participant. Using collective terms may relate to the human services workers’ engagement in busy organisations in difficult and stressful environments (Chiller & Crisp, 2012). Some task supervisors highlighted the challenges of having responsibility to the agency as well as supervising the student. Monica, for example, discussed interviewing students and introducing them to organisational expectations:

“I think having an interview type of situation, like you would for an employee, where you talk about what the role is, what you expect, they talk about what they are needing and what they are wanting and then having that discussion about this is what is going to look like, would that work for both of us? And being really clear at the start these are the expectation of being in our work place and yes you are a student, but I expect these things, ... this is the communication system that we have and I expect you to use that, so I can recognise that you are a student and that it is a learning experience, but at the same time these are the expectations, that’s how we work.” Monica

In general, participants noted that task supervisors were often balancing many factors, reflecting the current complex realities of social work practice (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011; Kalliath et al., 2012). Data emerging from the research indicates that reflections

and deliberations about the learning environment of social work students in placement with external supervision need to consider power and safety issues and the busyness of agencies and supervisors.

5.4.4 Collaboration

The majority of participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between people involved in placements with external supervision. Many of the participants talked about working in a team or joint work. Collaboration was important to facilitate learning, clarify roles and expectations and ensure accountability.

The AASW expects that the external and task supervisor will work together to facilitate student learning in field education, naming them ‘co-field educators’ (AASW, 2012a). A quarter of the participants used expressions of team, tandem and joint work when describing their relationships with others in the placement, and a further quarter of the participants talked about ‘working together’. Loretta as a task supervisor, for instance, outlined:

“Another external supervisor that I didn’t know at all, ... [name], he has rang me quite a few times and discussed things with me and discussed progress with me and I find that very helpful. If he says to me this isn’t happening, we have got work together to make it happen. I think we are part of a, the team.” Loretta

Participants stressed the importance of clarifying roles and expectations. As a liaison person, Iona outlined the importance of building relationships for shared understandings and collaboration:

“I think if you build the relationships of the parties ... everyone is on the same page ... we have a shared understanding of what a good placement is and what expectations are, then external supervisors can fit into that as well as anybody else, but there needs to be probably more of a team approach, I think. Because the times it works well, are when people do have that shared understanding and having relationships with all the parties is likely a bonus that facilitates that.” Iona

A number of participants proposed pre-placement meetings to organise collaboration. Lucy as a task supervisor, pointed out:

“I think that ideally there would be a chance for the two supervisors to actually meet and actually plan, maybe a bit, prior to the student coming on board, that you talk a bit about how this sort of, or you know, ... get to know each other a bit, understand how things work a bit, um and I think the student needs to have some say.” Lucy

Research has shown that proactive preparation can clarify role differentiation and support students in placements with external supervision (Parker et al., 2003; Scholar et al., 2012). However, as highlighted in Chapter Four, lack of collaboration could mean that supervisors could have opposing expectations and ideas of what the student should achieve and do. Samantha, for instance, remembered feeling set-up between her two supervisors, both wanting her to take a different course of action and both implying that if she took the other course of action her placement was threatened:

“I just remember feeling very set-up between two people whose input I was actually looking at valuing and... because you do, because they are the ones with practice wisdom and I would go backwards and forward to

each one of them, trying to work this out, and ... it wasn't nice, and my on-site supervisor was saying that I should not be taking this sort of thing to the external supervisor, because this is, the task, the policy of the agency and I should not be discussing that with my field supervisor. So it was just getting worse." Samantha

Collaboration links strongly to the threads of relationships, understanding the context and ensuring safety. It is also relevant to the assessment of the student's performance. Assessment is part of the learning experience in field education. The AASW requires field education to be as rigorously assessed as any other academic subject (AASW, 2012a). A range of learning activities and methods needed to be utilised to assess the student placement (AASW, 2012a).

Several participants in this study expressed concern that task supervisors were not always involved in the assessment of the student performance. Kelly, for example, was concerned that the task supervisor was the one who mainly observed her work and performance, but did not contribute to the assessment:

"I am having my final assessment next week.... see in my situation my task supervisor that had taught me the case management and the role... and it is her first time she ever had a student, so... she has pretty very much left it up to the social work supervisor or field educator to do a lot of those notes on my mid assessment and final assessment, yet she is the one who has physically seen me do most of the stuff, so I think the social worker,... she did sit in on one interview with me, but she is sort of saying, well I am doing the notes, ...I am going on what they are saying, but they are really not contributing a lot to the assessment." Kelly

Similarly, Louise, as a task supervisor, expressed being frustrated by the lack of opportunity to input into the assessment of student's performance. She went on to question the validity of just accessing the external supervisor's assessment:

"I don't think that works...she is never here and she never sees anything and she never is part of any discussions, she doesn't go out with any of the visits, it is impracticable basically." Louise

It seems that there was not always clarity around what feedback should be sought from the task supervisor, and whether the feedback from the task supervisor was valued. When asked whether her feedback is sought at the meetings, Monica, who had a number of experiences in being the task supervisor of social workers, when asked whether her feedback is sought at the meetings, responded:

"Um? I guess at the check-in points it's... maybe not so much actually. (Laughs). It's more, do you have any problems? Are we on the right track? Are you happy with what's been learnt? ... not so much my feedback on what, how they are doing, whether I think they are learning or whatever."

Monica

External supervisors reported that it was difficult to assess the students' performance and provide feedback to them without seeing their actual practice. Yet, in their role as external field educators, some participants talked about joint work in assessment and supervision, and others about seeking feedback from task supervisors. Paul as an external supervisor, for example, shared how various key players needed to provide input to the student assessment:

“I always say to the student on placement that when I am making that assessment with you as a joint operation, you will prepare your report, I will prepare my report, we will prepare and they can double together, but essentially... [task supervisor] is going to be a part of that as the day to day task supervisor. She will put in a small input, but also, I am going to touch base, maybe you can touch base with a client and get some feedback from the client.” Paul

Overall, the responses of participants reflect a lack of clarity of understanding of how task supervisors’ observations and feedback are recognised in assessment. It seems difficult to discern whether the task supervisors’ supervision input and guidance is taken up in the overall placement assessment, and whether their work is recognised and valued. The success of field education with external supervision depends on collaborative relationships (Clare, 2001), clearly defined roles and an understanding and valuing what each party brings to the placement (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). Moreover, social work student assessment needs input from all those who are party to the placement (AASW, 2012a). It appears that ongoing communication, meaningful relationships and relevant discussion is needed in order to understand and clarify the contributions of the supervisors to student learning in field education. As a liaison person, Bridget mused:

“I have that assumption that the right things are being done ... with external supervision, and I probably ask a lot more of task supervisors in terms of trying to find out what is happening with the placement. And some of that is natural, because the external supervisor can’t answer those questions, but just in talking today, ... I think as a liaison person I can probably ask a little more to try and ascertain what links are made to the actually practice in that placement. If terms a popped around, such as,

you know the students is linking theory to practice, but I don't know that I always as a liaison person, is that the practice they are doing as a student that is being looked at?" Bridget

The contributions of various people can assist in making student's work visible in assessment. This, in turn, can be useful for performance assessment, the integration of theory into practice and facilitating critical reflection (Maidment, 2000). Strong relationships and guidance in what needs to be assessed are needed to facilitate input from all parties (Maidment & Woodward, 2002).

While the majority of the participants identified the importance of collaboration, there was a significant number of participants who stated that supervisors were not collaborating. Effective communication, clarification of roles and expectations, division of labour and support are identified in the literature as important ingredients of successful placements with external supervision (Abram et al., 2000; Karban, 1999; Parker et al., 2003).

5.5 Current Contexts Impacting Field Education with External Supervision

The fifth theme discusses current contexts impacting upon field education. Participants raised a number of concerns in regards to the structural and professional contexts of field education and placements with external supervision. Two issues were particularly prominent, the placement finding process and availability of placements, and, associated with this issue, concerns about the quality of external supervisors, and key players needing to juggle responsibilities. In many ways these issues are interrelated, and one participant, in particular, talked in length about the structural and professional contexts that shape field education and external placements.

As a liaison person, Iona stated that there were increasing pressures on social workers in organisations, and less time for students in these busy workplaces. She also pointed out that there were various pressures on universities. These include increasing student numbers, and the changing staff composition of the sector as factors impacting field education. Iona's reflection, for example, connects the changing nature of the sector with the limited student placements:

"I think it is the same people that always take them.... our numbers of students have actually virtually doubled in the last probably few years, so there is a limit to how many social workers can take them,... but I think primarily, it's reflective of the changing nature of the sector,... I think we have seen the non-Government sector operating quite differently than it used to. I think there are less social workers employed there and the ones that are employed there are often not in direct practice positions, they are often in management positions, because of the rates of pay are so different between Government and non-Government." Iona

A few participants suggested that placements with external supervision were common in Australian field education. Maria suggested it was therefore important to learn more about these placements:

"The reality is that we do rely on agencies providing placements where there aren't social workers, so external supervision is a reality and, every year it is a reality and part of what we work with students about, so ... we want to learn about more about what's going to work well and what is not going to work so well." Maria

Some participants suggested that the ideal placement is one in which field educators wanted to give back to the field and social work, and provide student placements so social workers could come into the sector. As a student, Denise highlighted that the

“...ideal placement would be somewhere where that was prepared... had a real commitment to supporting student learning and willing to give up a large amount of set time for the questions and the knowledge theory. I think that is a huge one ... hey we were students once, somebody took the time and troubled supervisors, we want to give back and that’s really important, ..., that altruistic sort of sense, we really want to do this, otherwise how we are going to have the social workers coming through in our sector, how are we are going to promote social work when we are not prepared to put our hand up and recognise that there is some good people out there wanting to come in.” Denise

Although a number of participants and some of the literature recognise the benefits of taking students on placement (Barton et al., 2005), field education in Australia relies on an altruistic engagement of social workers and commitment of the field. “Generating enough field education placements relies on the voluntary participation of industry to accept students for field education and provide educational resources” (Egan, 2005, p. 37). However, a number of the participants in this research referred to the lack of available placements.

5.5.1 Availabilities of Placements and Supervisors

Participants highlighted that it was difficult to find placements, supervisors and liaison people. As a student, Denise was aware that her university was struggling to find placements:

“What has happened with [name of university] is, they were struggling, I believe, struggling to ... find ... enough places for ... student placements that had a social worker on-site to be able to supervise the student. So they contracted external supervisors who were somewhat not known to them.” Denise

However, some participants also commented that it was difficult to find external supervisors and liaison people. Mary, as a liaison person, shared her concerns about outsourcing liaison roles:

“I know that some of our ex-students do great liaisons. I think ...they do have that deeper knowledge of particular courses and stuff and, the people are competent professionals they bring stuff around, but, it does worry me, we had a period there, where we had to contract out a lot of liaison... we were just desperate for people and I was a bit worried again, how we could manage some of this stuff.” Mary

Overall, the participants’ comments pointed to the difficulty of not only finding placements with internal supervisors on-site, but also finding external supervisors and liaison to support alternative placement options.

Several participants suggested that the placement finding process was rushed. The fact that it was limited by what was available was affecting the learning opportunities of students. Laura as a student, for example, highlighted:

“I think it could be better if those conversations were had, ok, so this is about you and your learning, what so you think might be useful, you know, this stuff, you have done a little bit of that and you are interested in that,

maybe, you know, just have a chat, but there is no time made for that, a bit of paper and couple of phone call around we got this, this has come up as opposed to you, it's about what is available, which I know there is certainly that element as well, but just getting a sense of ok I have got some say in that." Laura

It seemed important to participants to facilitate finding processes that allowed students' learning needs to be matched to the placement opportunity. Moreover, it would be vital to ensure that students did not get the message that they need to enter or stay in inappropriate placements, as discussed in an earlier section, through rushed processes and by conveying the message that placements are hard to come by.

Linked to the difficulty of finding placements and support staff was a concern expressed by a number of participants about the process of hiring the external supervisors. Denise, for example, explained in her interview that the university process, which affected the quality of the external supervisor, meant she was not ok in her placement. At the same time, there was initially a sense of being grateful that her placement could go ahead at all.

"But I think I wasn't assigned an external supervisor until one week into placement, when we had to play catch-up and there is a real sense in the university, look can you not find somebody who will do that for you? That was actually put to me, can you not find the supervisor yourself? And I said, I don't know any social workers in the field. What was I supposed to do? I t was all left to late and for me, I was just very grateful, oh, thanks goodness, this can go ahead." Denise

Iona highlighted that the process of hiring staff can be fraught with difficulties when universities are under pressure to find enough supervisors to support placement:

“There is a real issue around the process, I think ... we have just opened up the flood gates, here you go, apply. We haven’t had an interview process, we have heard good people have seen this, I have had a conversation, I was just involved on the periphery of this, but had a conversation with probably one or two people to try and establish their experience and because of the requirements, too, it’s got to be social work experience, but we have essentially ... kind of opened the flood gates to a number of social workers and then allocated to students and don’t know anything about their work, really. I don’t think that is really good process, we are not looking after the students as well as well should be.” Iona

The matching of the field educator to the placement should be more than a matter of clerical convenience (Torry et al., 2005). Field educators need to be matched carefully to the placement agency and to the student (Henderson, 2010). Ensuring that supervisors are capable of guiding the students’ learning in field education is important, in light of the need for quality in field instruction and the leadership role of the field educator in initiating and modelling processes (Ornstein & Moses, 2010).

5.5.2 Key Players Juggling Responsibilities

Many participants recognised that the availability of key players affected learning opportunities. Busyness seemed to affect the student’s learning, and also the availability of supervisors and liaison people to support the placement learning. Various participants recognised that undertaking placement was a difficult time for students and that many of them were juggling various responsibilities while on placement. Thus, Melissa outlined

that she worked a retail job during the day and completed her placement after hours; others described giving up work and struggling financially, or finding it difficult to combine placement and family responsibilities. Jennifer discussed the impact of her experience as a student:

“There was all sorts of expectations that I wouldn’t be doing first placement, which meant, ... I came back from [name of city] and I am straight into this full-time work I had no child care, I had nothing, it was just absolutely chaotic.” Jennifer

It was not only student participants who recognised that undertaking placement was a difficult time for students. As a task supervisor Monica recognised:

“It must be a challenge for them to survive financially or trying to get work done during that period, because the time of working a full-time job, alone trying to survive outside that, like working free.” Monica

And, as an external supervisor Chloe identified the complexity of doing part-time placement as a result of the student continuing part-time work:

“Given that she was part-time, that’s how it got complex and having to juggle work and life and anything in-between essential two placements, really.” Chloe

Comments of participants in this study suggested that students find combining placement with other responsibilities difficult. Research highlights that students face additional financial burdens as a result of undertaking placement (Maidment, 2003b). The profile of the student body is changing and Maidment (2003b) pointed to the difficulties that placements pose to students’ lives and learning. Research confirms that a significant

number of students are in paid employment while studying. In Ryan, Barns and McAuliffe's study (2011), more than 80 % of students were in paid employment, working an average of 18.5 hours per week. As highlighted earlier in the thesis, Ryan et al. (2011) found that engagement in paid employment impacted on the students' choice of field education. Twenty two percent (22%) of students identified that placement would be difficult while supporting themselves, 19 % identified that they needed to financially support themselves while on placement and 15 % stated that they would be unable to do a full-time placement because of work commitments (Ryan et al., 2011).

Comments from participants in this research indicated that the busyness of key players made it difficult to get everyone together, but also put the regularity of supervision session in doubt. As a liaison person Tanya suggested that all key players were juggling things, making it difficult for them to work together:

“If those parties could come together more often, and I know it is hard because everyone's juggling stuff, especially external supervision is juggling most probably their own job and doing this on top of that, and to find more time would be hard, but somehow that there is this feeling of partnership.” Tanya

Some comments suggested that external supervision at least ensured that the students would receive regular supervision.

“I think if they are getting regular supervision from the external, those placements actually work better because they actually get supervision because I think it is debatable how many and how much internal supervision actually happens. And I would really love for us to be able to

check that. I think, there is some dangers in that it is going to open up a pretty interesting can of worms.” Iona

Equally, the busyness of supervisors in placement with external supervision was raised by a number of participants. Monica, for example, pointed to the workloads in the agency:

“Sometimes things do get a little bit fast paced and you kind of forget about this poor old student sitting in the corner, going hello (laughs).”

Monica

Similarly, a number of participants pointed out that the external supervisor was busy, often taking the role on as an extra task, but needed to make themselves available to the student. Anna as an external supervisor, for example, explored the need to be available for more than the one hour a week:

“The external supervisor might be very busy in another job, is really only available just to give that one hour a week, which meets the requirement, ... should be looking at... is there another way that that external supervisor can complement the things for the students around what is the social work role, how do you do things from a social work perspective, how do you relate to other people and organisations, had they really got their head around what this other agency is? What it’s like for the student?” Anna

The comments of these participants indicate that the busyness of people’s lives and their job roles can impact field education, but also the field education processes and the availability of key players to support field education. Social workers supporting field education face heavy workloads as they combine their responsibilities as practice

educator and their job role (Moriarty et al., 2009). Participants acknowledged that this might still be the case when supervision is provided in an external capacity.

5.6 Chapter Summary

What is emerging overall in the findings is that some of the concerns about placements with external supervision in the literature were confirmed by participants in this study. For example, the complexity of developing four-way relationships, including those developed for assessment in placements with external supervision, was stressed (Plath, 2003). Participants recognised that assessment was informed by various players, but identified that further clarity was needed in regards to the task supervisors' input into assessment. At times it was difficult to discern whether the task supervisors' supervision input and guidance is taken up in the overall placement assessment and this featured as a concern in discussions about assessment. However, the findings also indicated that other concerns, for example, whether the lack of social work presence on site limits the ability of students to acquire a social work identity (Cleak & Smith, 2012; Plath, 2003) may not be a dominant or concerning issue, and further research is needed. Research demonstrates that satisfaction with supervisory relationship significantly contributes to the development of the students' professional identity (Ben Shlomo et al., 2012). Recent research has shown that students' growth into and identity with the profession and sense of social work identity can be facilitated by placements with external supervision if the university, the organisation and the off-site supervisor work collaboratively and proactively with the students to facilitate it (Scholar et al., 2012). What the discussions with the participants in this study highlighted was that placements with external supervision, like other social work placements, are focused on learning about practicing social work. The usefulness of the placement to student learning featured more

prominently in participants' discussions than whether the supervision was provided internally or externally. While learning about social work practice is not absent from placements with external supervision, participants recognised that placements with external supervision have an impact on this learning through the relationships and current contexts of practice.

Some of threads under these themes include the importance of understanding the context of the field education experience, as well as preparation and assessment, which are linked to it. Understanding the placement context particularly required the active engagement of the external supervisors. Building relationships with others was seen as facilitating this understanding. Other threads included concerns about issues of power and safety, and collaboration. Field education in general can expose students to unsafe environments, bullying and violence (Gair & Thomas, 2008). The experiences of participants indicated that in placements with external supervision, the off-site supervision can provide a safe space for students to identify and explore issues of concern.

Although participants recognised that communication and collaboration was important, in practice collaboration did not always occur for them. Thus, while research indicates that the success of field education with external supervision depends on collaborative relationships (Clare, 2001), clearly defined roles and an understanding and valuing what each party brings to the placement (Maidment & Woodward, 2002), at times students did get differing messages from supervisors, or task supervisors often were not involved in the assessment of the student performance.

Part Three: Concluding Chapters, References and Appendices

In Part Three of the thesis I discuss the findings, make recommendation for practice and draw final conclusions. Part Three of the thesis contains the final two chapters, the references and appendices. In Chapter Six I present the overall discussion of the findings and outline recommendations for research and practice. In Chapter Seven, I reflect on my journey of becoming a researcher through this research and the dissemination strategy I have applied, I summarise the research and make a concluding statement.

Chapter 6 Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter of the thesis I discuss the findings of the research and make recommendations for practice and research. My discussions, recommendations and conclusion are relevant to the findings that have emerged from this research and relate to the initial research questions and aims. The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision. The literature review and findings chapters have explored what was known about supervision for social work students on placements with external supervision and ascertained the experience of students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison persons in social work field education with external supervision. This chapter further consolidates the achievement of these and other research aims.

In the first section of this chapter I discuss the findings of this research. The discussion of the findings of this research relates to my research question and research aims. My discussion highlights five key points. First, placements with external supervision can provide valuable learning experiences. Second, placements with external supervision have the potential to assist in the identification of unsafe placement environments and the removal of students from these organisations. Third, placements with external supervision have inherent challenges that need to be considered in placement planning and support. Fourth, the impact of neoliberal contexts on field education and fifth, that extra support is needed for placements with external supervision. The discussion concludes that field education as the focal point of the social work degree requires student learning considerations to be central to the experience.

In the second section of this chapter I outline recommendations for practice emerging from this research. One of the aims of this research was '*to develop a model/framework or principles of practice for field education with external supervision*'. In this section I address this aim by making specific suggestions for practice in this area. I particularly highlight the importance of a pedagogy focused on student learning guiding field education, four-way placement preparation, establishing the context, building collaboration, ensuring safe practice and the appropriate resourcing of field education support.

In the third section of this chapter I make recommendations for further research that address issues relating to social work identity, the four-way relationship and models of field education in social work.

The fourth and final section I draw my final conclusions from the data, findings and discussions presented earlier.

6.2 Discussion of Findings

6.2.1 The Potential of Placements with External Supervision

One of the sub aims of the research was to investigate what external field education brings to field education. The findings of this research highlighted that placements with external supervision can be valuable learning experiences. For some participants this came as a bit of a surprise, potentially reinforcing the idea that placements with external supervision might be seen as second best (AASW, 2012a; Abram et al., 2000; Cleak & Smith, 2012). However, learning about practicing social work, student focused learning and the importance of the learning environment were central to the participants' discussion about their experiences in field education with external supervision. Thus, similarly to any other

social work field education, placements with external supervision were discussed in this research as focused on learning about social work. This would be consistent with the requirement by the Australian accreditation body that contemporary pedagogical processes and knowledge are utilised to develop ‘.... core attributes and for building students’ commitment to, and an identity with, professional social work’ (AASW, 2012c, p. 9).

Having a separate space for supervision was identified as a potential bonus of placements with external supervision. This could allow a space for critical reflection and thinking, in order to explore practice and the dominant constructs and ideas that shape it (Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Noble, 2011b; Schön, 1991). While participants in this study acknowledged the utility of being able to step aside from the discussions about the daily issues and concerns to consider bigger picture issues, frameworks and perspectives, further investigation on how external supervision facilitates critically reflective practice might be useful.

Contributions of the participants in this research suggested that placements with external supervision can add value to the students’ learning experiences and to the supervisors’ professional growth. They can ensure that supervision of students actually happens. They can also engage students and supervisors in explorations of the context of the placement and learning that can be beneficial to the learning. Participants’ responses highlighted that engagement in placement with external supervision that requires professional engagement of both supervisors can mean that they themselves are achieving professional growth from supervising students. This reflects published research which concluded that supervising students can assist the supervisor’s ability to reflect on their own practice (Barton et al., 2005) and that it can help develop the professional field (Unger, 2003).

In the literature about field education there are concerns about whether the supervision requirements of field education are actually met in practice. The AASW requires that field educators provide ‘... a minimum of 1.5 hours formal supervision per student for each 35 hours of placement’ (AASW, 2012a, p. 5). Research shows that students want their supervisors to be accessible (Knight, 2000). It also highlights that students sometimes found it hard to access supervision (Patford, 2000) and that social work supervisors were not always available (Barretti, 2009). Research shows that social work field educators at times find it difficult to assist students’ professional growth in field education due to workload issues, low staff retention, staff recruitment difficulties and the challenges of a crisis-driven environment (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011). In general, contributions of participants in this research seemed to suggest that supervision did take place, implying a difference when compared with placements with onsite supervision, where literature has identified that supervision may not always occur in a busy agency (Patford, 2000). It could be argued that externally engaged field educators could potentially alleviate the pressures on internal supervisors by providing the set supervision each week. Participants recognised this as a valuable aspect of placements with external supervision. However, it should be noted that this needs to be investigated further. One participant suggested that not all externally employed supervisors provided the required weekly supervision and it was acknowledged that the economic costs are a significant consideration.

Placements with external supervision could provide unique opportunities for additional discussion of the context of the learning experience. Participants stated that the off-site position of the field educator to the placement provided an opportunity for separate space to have those difficult discussions that were not able to be achieved in the midst of the organisations. However, there was recognition that explaining the context to a supervisor

not directly involved in the agency, or explaining social work knowledge to supervisors in the agency, could increase the learning of the student. Establishing the context of the experience or finding strategies to explore practice more widely, involved engagement of the student in their learning. This arose through needing to explore and describe the context of their practice, potentially creating a more generative learning experience for students (Bellinger, 2010b). For participants in this research it meant that supervision was focused on discussion of professional social work practice, rather than limiting discussions to exploration of assessment tools and organisational procedures and uncritically socialising students into the culture of the organisation (Domakin, 2013).

The conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that it may not be useful or accurate to consider placements with external supervision generally as second best. The contributions of the participants in this research suggested that a useful consideration can be how each field education opportunity is set up in terms of the relevance to the student's learning needs. The potential of the organisation, the student and the university to support this learning and the optimal supports that can be put in place should be considered. Placements with external supervision can add value, however, the student's learning needs need to be the focal point of the discussions of what would be the ideal placement or the best option for this learning experience.

6.2.2 Identification of Unsafe Placements

A significant number of participants in this study pointed out that external supervision can assist students to negotiate unsafe and difficult learning environments. External supervision was described by participants in this research as a safe environment for students to share issues and concerns. Participants suggested that in external supervision issues could be shared more openly, without disrupting relationships in the actual

placement agency. Organisational issues and culture were seen as affecting the learning experience, and at times it was beneficial to discuss issues in a safe space away from the agency. Literature about graduate social work supervision highlights the importance of a safe space away from the organisational setting to allow a focus on the professional development as a practitioner (Beddoe, 2012). The supervisory relationship can provoke tensions between managerial and clinical or psychosocial approaches to supervision (Pack, 2012). While the supervisees put emphasis on supervision as a safe space to disclose issues for professional growth, supervisors within an organisation focused on ensuring safety for clients and safe practice (Pack, 2012). External supervision can mean a choice of supervisor, more collaborative relationships between supervisor and supervisee and deeper listening (Ung, 2002). Therefore, it could be argued that placements with external supervision can offer ‘...an opportunity to offer emotional support that is untainted by power relations and issues of confidentiality’ (Beddoe, 2012, p. 205).

It appears that external supervision has the potential to allow for space to ensure safety for students in field education, both in terms of removing students from unsafe situations, and also in terms of discussing organisational practice while in safe spaces. The latter might be important for the development of critically reflective practitioners. Safe spaces, without fear of failure, between student and supervisors are needed to foster critical questioning and reflection (Noble, 2011a).

Participants in this research identified the importance of the safe space and agreed that external supervision can offer these spaces, specifically when students are unsafe in the placement. Participants in the research related that at times students did experience power struggles, put-downs and harassment and they related various occasions where the external supervision set-up helped students to either finish the placement or to leave an

unsafe situation. External supervisors helped to put things in perspective, highlighted behaviour that was not acceptable and supported students when bullying or harassment was present in the workplace. They thus identified students' vulnerability to "...supervisors and senior staff members who simultaneously socialize and silence them" (Gair & Thomas, 2008, p. 50).

At the same time, data in this research also showed that, while students in field education in general often feel "... anxious, fearful, incompetent and powerless in the learning process" (Razack, 2000, p. 202), placements with external supervision expose students to additional relationships with others, and the additional relationships that others have, and these are not always safe spaces. External supervision could add to the potential of students being caught up in conflicts or experience difficult relationships with one or the other placement support person. These added dimensions need acknowledgment, discussion and exploration in field education with external supervision.

6.2.3 Inherent Challenges of Placements with External Supervision

Placements with external supervision have challenges, some of which can occur in any field education experience but others that are particular to field education with external supervision. Three concerns that were prominent throughout the data were the fit between the people in the placement experience, disjointed relationships and clarity of roles. Establishing the context was a further challenge, however, as discussed throughout the thesis and conceptualised in the first point raised above, establishing the context can be used to add to the student's learning experience.

An issue that can occur in any field education arrangement is that if the fit between the student, the organisation and the supervisors is not right, this can hinder student learning. This relates to all relationships, including the fit between the supervisors. Participants in

this research have emphasised the importance of student focused and student driven learning. They discussed strategies to ensure this, but some also shared instances where the match between student and supervisor was detrimental to the placement. For example, a task supervisor could not be interested in supporting student learning or be disruptive to the student engagement in learning, or an external field educator might not recognise the specific learning opportunity a particular field of practice might offer.

Some of these points related to understanding the context of the placement experience and the learning in social work field education. However, there was a sense that it would be beneficial in the placement finding processes to match the student to the learning experience and to the supervisors. A number of participants suggested that this might involve an interview after which parties could make the decision about this arrangement going ahead or not. At the same time, some participants suggested that they had no contact with the supervisor or insight into the agency before placement commenced. The compatibility of student and supervisor is recognised as important in literature about field education. Ornstein and Moses (2010) described a relational approach to supervision that requires negotiation and dialogue around the compatibility of the student and field educator. Cleak and Wilson's (2013) textbook, preparing students and field educators for placement, outlines strategies for students to identify their professional and personal development needs. They suggested utilising the pre-placement interview as an opportunity to check whether the placement can meet those needs. Further, they should assess the personal and academic compatibility of the supervisor and the student. However, Cleak and Wilson (2013) pointed out that students might not be given much choice by the education provider about their placement. Similarly, Torry et al. (Torry et al., 2005) suggested that matching students to field educators is often based on a convenience approach. What the data in this research seems to be pointing to is that if fit

with the supervisor is not right, either with the field educator or the task supervisor, this may have negative consequences for student learning. Therefore it would be useful to check and ensure the fit of the placement, the support people and the organisation. It would be useful to include considerations of the availability of key players to support the placement. Also whether the relationships could work and the understanding of the context can be established should also be considered. Some responses in this research seem to indicate that the reactive nature of placement finding does not always facilitate this.

The findings pointed out that while some participants had strong relationships with other parties in the placement set-up, overall the four-way relationships were disjointed. Participants in this research shared that it was hard to get people together, and that there was not always clarity on how they would work together and to what purpose. It would appear that this is noteworthy for placement planning and support. Field Education is meant to be a joint effort between the university, the organisation, the field educator and the student (AASW, 2012c). The success of field education with external supervision is contingent on collaborative relationships (Clare, 2001), an understanding and valuing what each party brings to the placement and clearly defined roles (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). The question thus arises, how effective is the joint endeavour if the relationship are disjointed? One could assume that although there might not be an active relationship, each of the parties contribute to the learning experience in his/her own way, and through the learning plan and in conjunction with the liaison person, the student pulls it all together. I would argue, though, if we do not have an active four-way relationship we do not get a full picture of the learning experience, and I would suggest that this full picture is important for accountability, and also to ensure that the full potential for student learning is realised. One example from the data that can be deliberated is the significant

number of task supervisors who had limited relationships with external supervisors and who suggested that their role was an unacknowledged factor in placement. This practice highlights questions about the positioning of task supervisors, the nature of power in these relationships and how the input of all is sought for assessment triangulation. Building relationships, collaboration and having good structures in place are crucial in dealing with potential difficulties in field education (Parker, 2010). As task supervisors were discussing their experience in social work field education with external supervision in this research, though, many did not have a relationship with the external supervisor. Yet, task supervisors in this research also talked about planting seeds that students can then explore with the field educator. However, the process by which these seeds or ideas were tended to by the external supervisor was unknown to some participants (Zuchowski, 2014b). Moreover, social work student assessment needs input from all those who are party to the placement (AASW, 2012a). These contributions assist in making students' work visible in assessment. This, in turn, can be useful for performance assessment, the integration of theory into practice and facilitating critical reflection (Maidment, 2000). Strong relationships and guidance of what needs to be assessed are needed to stimulate input from all parties (Maidment & Woodward, 2002). What seems apparent from the findings of this research is that transparent processes of joint discussions, careful planning and support of a valuable triad relationship (Clare, 2001; Henderson, 2010) would be useful.

Connected to the earlier points is the finding that, for participants, there seemed to be a lack of clarity about the roles at times. Task supervisors and students particularly were unsure what the roles of key stakeholders in field education were at times. Task supervisors, for example were missing some direction about how to support the student social work learning (Zuchowski, 2014b). A lack of direction is an important issue to

address, considering that field education requires students to meet the Australian Social Work Attributes about professional social work practice (AASW, 2012b). If the task supervisor is unsure whether he/she is meeting the social work professional requirements, how can conclusions be drawn that the student has attained these? Similarly, a number of participants commented that differing practice frameworks of supervisors may create confusion for students. Clarification about roles and establishing joint relationships could help establish the process for critical reflection that can bolster the student's learning, rather than leaving them confused during the process. Considering and addressing these challenges is an important aspect of placement planning.

6.2.4 The Impact of Neoliberal Contexts on Field Education

Previous research has identified that the neoliberal context as described in Chapter Two influences social work practice and field education. Through the influence of neoliberalism and managerialism, social work practice is changing, and students need to be prepared for new practice contexts (Chenoweth, 2012; Morley & Dunstan, 2013). The availability of social workers to supervise and support students appropriately in field education is affected by workplace pressures and contexts (Kalliath et al., 2012; Moriarty et al., 2009). This is a real and present threat to good supervision and work ready graduates. Moreover, it is suggested that tertiary institutions, their funding models and agendas are affected by neo-liberal policies (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). Three particularly noteworthy points relating to the impact of the neoliberal context on field education have emerged from this research. First, the contributions of participants in this research indicate that there is limited time available to adequately support field education with external supervision, in light of the extra effort and time needed. Second, it can be queried whether the sense that placements with external supervision are less

than ideal might be affected by academics' sense of burden, in light of the demands that are placed on them in tertiary education. And, third, contributions of participants in this research seem to indicate that students might inadvertently get the message that placements are hard to come by, and thus may be silenced about less than ideal placement set-ups.

One of potential benefit of placements with external supervision is that it could assist stretched organisation supervisors to support student placements. Student supervision and support means that the supervisor can spend less on their usual duties (Barton et al., 2005). This research has shown that at times it was difficult for the internal supervisor and the student to get together for supervision, or to get all parties together for joint meetings. Task supervisors and external supervisors in particular identified the busyness of the organisation as a challenge for supervisors to provide the extra support a placement needed (Zuchowski, 2014b, 2014d). Participants contributions seem to indicate that the dedicated time available of the external supervisor to focus on the supervision and professional development of the student may therefore provide a valuable model in times when agencies are under strain and supervisors are time- restricted and may indeed not get work load relief for taking on students on placement (Healy, 2004; Moriarty et al., 2009). However, if external supervision is to be an appropriate model for field education, we need to consider education with external supervision needs resourcing (Henderson, 2010). The responsibility for student education and supervision should be shifted from unpaid staff in overworked organisations, to external supervisors who generally get paid for the time they spend guiding, supporting and teaching the future social work professionals. Currently, albeit this is a relatively small payment, this is a cost carried by universities, who are under pressure to provide educational opportunities to onsite students. This could result in further marginalisation of field education in academia, as it

reinforces the concern of field education as a resource-intensive learning endeavour (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

Liaison people identified the extra workload that field education with external supervision presented them in this research (Zuchowski, 2015a). They identified that they were bringing the university perspective to the placement and identified that they had a significant role in the placement experience, including responsibility for the preparation and support of students and supervisors (Zuchowski, 2015a). The findings suggest that current neo-liberal pressures affecting social workers in the field and social work educators (Morley & Dunstan, 2013) are impacting on the context of this work. Particularly in the liaison people's findings, but also reflected in the data of other participants, concerns were expressed about the quality of the staff hired to conduct supervision and liaison work (Zuchowski, 2015a).

Participants were concerned about contracting out liaison and hiring off-site supervisors in large numbers, and questioned the quality of the persons hired as the 'flood-gates' were opened and people might be hired who fulfil the role on top of 'other bits and pieces'. Liaison persons were concerned about the preparation, supports and engagement that was possible with off-site supervisors and liaison persons. (Zuchowski, 2015a, p. 11)

Whether placements with external supervision are seen as less than ideal because of extra workloads for liaison staff and concerns about the quality of the people hired to do the job is a point to ponder. Potentially, a sense that placements with external supervision are less than ideal might be influenced by social educators' sense of burden, in light of the demands that are placed on them in academia (Morley & Dunstan, 2013). The push in academia is to 'publish or perish', putting pressure on staff to publish in high impact

journals (Brischoux & Cook, 2009). Universities receive extra funding for the research output of their staff, and thus academic promotion is linked to their publication record (McGrail et al., 2006). However, shrinking resources and increasing student numbers make it difficult for academics engaged in field education to undertake research and publish (Plath, 2003). As highlighted earlier, the extra workload involved in field education can result in reluctance of academic staff to get involved (Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Wilson & Campbell, 2013). In general it is academic staff who do research and publish about social work education, thus the question arises whether their own experience in field education could produce a feeling that field education with external supervision is less than ideal. This might be an important consideration, as we need to consider the impact of this message on setting up learning opportunities and students entering field education with external supervision.

The findings of this research have shown that students may receive the message that placements and supervisors are hard to come by in current neo-liberal environments. There is competition for placements (Hanlen, 2011; Noble & Sullivan, 2009) and often a last minute rush to secure a field education opportunity for the student (Torry et al., 2005). The message that placement with external supervision is less than ideal, but that this is all that there is available may be woven into this narrative. Students in this research talked about the limited placements available and shared a sense that they are 'lucky' or 'grateful' when they get something positive or that are 'lucky' to survive this or nothing worse happened (Zuchowski, 2013b). Clearly this is not the best mindset for field education. It is important to ensure that we do not inadvertently give messages to students that are counterproductive to their learning experience. Students must get the message that all field education is guided by best practice principles. It must meet AASW (2012a) requirements and ensure the emergence of competent social work practitioners (Parker,

2005). Emerging field education models, such as field education with external supervision, need to be more than responses to difficult times, they need to be planned appropriately. They must have student learning and growth at their centre, and be supported well, in a collaboration between the university, the field and the student.

6.2.5 Extra Support Needed for Placements with External Supervision

The discussion, the data and the literature (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010; Parker et al., 2003), all indicate that field education with external supervision needs extra support. Placements with external supervision have an added level of complexity that means that relationships and collaboration processes must be firmly established. This is the case in all field education experiences, but in field education with external supervision there are more parties with their own expectations involved, bringing experiences and knowledge that feed in to the learning experience. The data suggests that students, supervisors and placements need to be well matched to ensure learning opportunities are focused on student learning. Contributions from the participants highlight that various viewpoints need to be accessed, considered and integrated into the learning experience, the support and the learning assessment. Strategies for providing extra support for the field education experience are discussed in the Recommendations for Practice section of this thesis. This work requires the leadership and input of social work educators.

Liaison people's discussion, particularly, identified the extra work that placements with external supervision posed (Zuchowski, 2015a). Clearly, social work educators need the resources and time to provide this support for field education. It is important that the social work academic group and the tertiary education institutions ensure that academics involved in field education can flourish. Some of this may be about manageable workloads and time to be involved in research. Some can be connected to the status and

decision-making capability of field education staff (Lyter, 2012). Field education academic staff generally face disparities in salaries, professional development, and workplace privileges (Lyter, 2012). More indication of the respect of universities for field education work "...could contribute to underutilization of resources and to social stratification within the social work academy, resulting in impediments to both implicit and explicit curriculum" (Lyter, 2012, p. 186). Supporting field education academics can also be about mentorship and guidance. Academic staff in field education are often entering academia through practice experience rather than having a doctorate (Lyter, 2012). Some specific strategies to ensure that social work academics involved in field education can stay research active can include mentoring or linking them to writing support groups, writing courses or coaches (McGrail et al., 2006).

6.2.6 Conclusion

The contributions of participants in this research suggested that external supervision can provide extra layers of learning, professional development opportunities and useful placement opportunities. However the students' learning needs, opportunities and support needs must be central to the placement. The ideal placement, as discussed by participants in this research, is not primarily focused on the question of whether supervision is internal or external. Other considerations were more central to the participants' discussion. These include whether supervision happens, whether the student is well supported, and whether they are in a safe space to critically reflect. Also pivotal are whether all parties are prepared well, communicate well, are clear about their roles and appreciate what each brings to the field education experience.

The discussions of participants in this research suggested that when key stakeholders work together, field education can allow students to critically reflect on practice. This

allows them to integrate what they are learning in the field with what they have learned and are still learning about social work theories. On the other hand, when relationships and processes are disjointed, students and supervisors might be left wondering whether what students are learning in placements with external supervision is sufficient for social work practice.

For external supervision to work well, all parties, including the task supervisors, need to be involved and informed, so that their contributions are accessed and valued. Relationships need to be built and communication maintained. There are multiple relationships, and the research points to the fact that different people have different expectations around how these relationships should function during the placement. This needs to be clarified and discussed with all parties, preferably before placement commences. Good communication requires various parties to share ideas respectfully, ensuring that each person is heard. Roles need to be clarified and defined. And communication between parties needs to ensure that students can grow professionally through the input of others, rather than be left confused, threatened or indifferent.

A model of field education that uses external supervision with the sole purpose of responding to lack of placements with on-site supervision may not be the best way of creating pedagogic quality in field education. This seems to leave field education units scrambling to find supervisors and liaison people, and concerns social work educators, students and supervisors, as highlighted in this research's findings.

Field education needs to be well-resourced, be in the centre-stage of the academic degree. External supervision is not a less than perfect option, rather one of the models of field education that can be used well for student learning if matched and properly supported.

6.3 Recommendations for Practice: Making Field Education with External Supervision Work

Field education is a core component of social work education in Australia (AASW, 2012b) and students invest significant time and resources to undertake this learning activity (Parker, 2010). Field education can be supported with external supervision in Australia. This model of practice learning, like any other model, needs to be carefully planned and supported, with student learning about social work at the core of the endeavour. I suggest the following practice principles, which have emerged from this research:

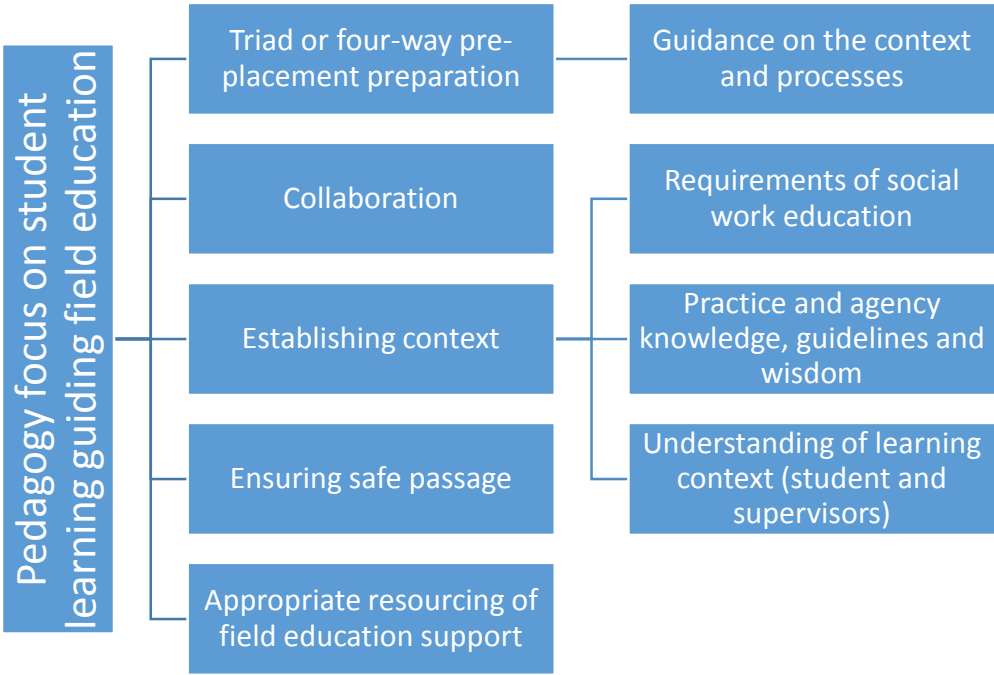


Figure 6.1 Recommendation for Practice

Field education, as a component of social work education, is all about preparing social work students for social work practice in local, national and global environments (AASW, 2012c). Social work education aims for social work graduates to acquired nine prescribed The professional values, skills and knowledge which underpin social work attributes, aim to develop ‘... competent, effective, skilled, knowledgeable, ethical and

confident practitioners' (AASW, 2012c, p. 10). Social work field education needs to be guided by the pedagogical environment and the students' learning needs to prepare students for social work practice. The consequence for practice may thus require re-evaluation and rethinking of policies. Is the AASW proviso, that only one placement should have an external supervisor, relevant (AASW, 2012a)? If the thinking about field education has been reframed from the concept of an apprentice following the expert social worker to learn by copying, to learning through critical discussion and reflection, is it preferable that the social worker is on site? The findings of this research suggest that participants considered that the learning in externally supervised field education was social work focused. The process of setting up placements with external supervision as a last resort provides messages that keep students and supervisors wondering about the value of the learning experience. Instead it needs to be ensured that each placement is set up with the focus on students' learning about social work practice, and opportunities to explore this learning through relevant supervision. Providing guidelines about practice in placements with external supervision would be useful, and these should consider the placement preparation, collaboration, relationships, establishing context of the learning experience and ensuring students' safe passage.

Triad pre-placement preparation is an important part of placements with external supervision. I would suggest that the liaison person, as the fourth person should be involved in this, but, as discussed earlier, research needs to explore this further. Triad relationships are important in field education with external supervision and function better when people understand their roles, are matched to be able to work with each other and in the particular field of practice, and have effective collaboration processes in place (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010; Parker et al., 2003). This needs to be planned and

confirmed, and data from this research suggests that this ideally done before placement commenced.

I would suggest that pre-placement placement planning needs to provide guidance on the context and process of the field education placement. Accreditation requirements necessitate that the learning outcomes and expectation are clearly established for each placement and documented in a learning plan (AASW, 2012a). While the accreditation standards state that it is necessary to appoint “an external social worker to undertake the professional supervision requirements [and] a suitably qualified co-field educator to supervise the student’s day-to-day learning in conjunction with the external social work field educator”, there is no guidance or discussion about what working in conjunction might mean in practice (AASW, 2012a, p. 7). It would be useful to provide guidance on expectations of and processes for the co-facilitators to work together to support student learning. For example, instructions could be given that the four parties meet to discuss collaboration, roles, supervision, communication and assessment.

It would be useful to provide guidance on the context of the placement, the learning experiences and the process of specific learning experience. Three general areas need to be covered. First, information needs to be provided about the requirements of social work education, with all people involved in and supporting the field education experience. Second, information needs to be given about the practice and agency knowledge, guidelines and wisdom. Third, understanding learning and teaching approaches can provide useful insights that guide learning, supervision and support in field education. Field education textbooks, such as ‘Making the most of Field Education’ by Cleak and Wilson (2013), offer tools for identifying learning and teaching styles for students and supervisors to use. It would be useful to encourage the use of these by all parties involved.

If social work education is to prepare students for the social work profession's call of socially- just, human rights based practice, then preparing field educators and students to use critical reflection as a tool to look at the roots of injustice is important (Brookfield, 2009; Fook, 2001; Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Noble, 2004a). External supervision has the potential to allow critical reflection in a safe space away from the hustle and bustle of the organisational experience. However, it is a skill that needs to be honed in preparation for effective supervision (Morley & Dunstan, 2013; Noble, 2011b; Potting et al., 2010). Thus, I would argue, it needs to form part of placement preparation for students and field educators.

The vulnerability of students in field education and the potential for them to remain in unsafe situations has been identified in this research. This is touched on elsewhere in the literature, Parker (2010) highlighting the importance of recognising power and power sharing in field education and others identifying the risk of violence in field education (Gair & Thomas, 2008; Tully et al., 1999). Gair and Thomas suggest that "...university educators and workplace supervisors/managers may be failing to take reasonable steps to manage and reduce the risks for students, and there appears to be a dearth of policies and educational materials (developed with students and organisations) for ensuring the safe passage of students" (2008, p. 50). It is important to have policies and educational material available in line with the accreditation requirements that social work education providers ensure "...that host organisations have alerted students to policies regarding harassment, bullying and other obligations under relevant legislation [and] ...that host organisations understand that their legal obligation to provide a safe workplace with respect to freedom from bullying, harassment etc. extends to students in the workplace" (AASW, 2012a, p. 6). Moreover, ensuring safe learning environments many need to be more than a paper exercise that lists policies against violence and harassment. Students,

educators and supervisors need to understand that providing a safe space safe for students is really important to everyone involved, so that students are not discouraged to speak up. Discussions about power and power sharing can be a foundation to create safe learning environments. Parker highlights that the development of an “....awareness of and acknowledging issues of power is important, as is creating open and honest relationships in which power differences and impacts are acknowledged” (2010, p. 996). Discussions about power and power sharing can contribute to skilling students in critical reflection, by exploring and questioning the hegemony of social work practice and externalise and investigate power relationships (Brookfield, 2009).

Field education support needs to be appropriately resourced. Field education work is resource-intensive. For students, field education subjects mean 500 hours contact time in the field, plus additional time learning. Liaison staff and supervisors need to support this journey (AASW, 2012a). The accreditation body prescribes that social work education has the support of the field education unit, that the staffing should reflect “...commitment to the centrality of field education in the social work curriculum”, and that each placement has a field education coordinator and liaison person (AASW, 2012a, p. 5). The practice implication is that social work units need to continue to advocate for the appropriate resourcing of the field education unit, to alleviate concerns that education units are scrambling to support field education (Zuchowski, 2015a). A sense of students of ‘...just putting their head down and getting through this experience as they believed they may not get another placement’ (Zuchowski, 2013b, p. 115) is not desirable.

Additionally, it would be useful to consider what can be improved in order to create an environment where placements with external supervision are not considered a last resort by a system in crisis. A shift in thinking needs to occur, recognising that placement with externally supervision is one model of practice with strengths and challenges. While

supporting placements with external supervision needs time, this is not necessarily just about ensuring that resources are available, but also about the availability of processes, tools, training materials, narratives, workshops, and information material.

6.4 Recommendations for Research

Field education in general is under-researched. Overall, it appears that the centrality it has in social work education in Australia (AASW, 2012b) warrants further research. Specifically connected to this research I would suggest four areas of research.

Firstly, it would be important to ascertain acquisition of a professional social work identity that students in placements with off-site supervision gain in placements with external supervision. Findings from this research show that learning about social work practice is a focus of placements with external supervision (see also Zuchowski, 2014d). However, this does not answer the question how these placements impact the development of the professional social work identity. Further research is needed to explore the competencies, skills and abilities that students gain in placements with external supervision. English research by McLaughlin et al. (2014) has found that students and external field educators in non-traditional placements feel confident that they can acquire competence across the six roles identified in the National Occupation Standards in England. They were less positive about attaining the competence required of newly qualified social work practitioners. They particularly struggled with identifying the ability to do formal assessment, for example. It would be useful to understand whether Australian social work students, in placements with external supervision, are able to acquire the core competencies outlined in the Australian Practice Standards (AASW, 2013).

Some research also proposes that completing field education in settings without a social work presence can actually increase students' sense of the professional value base. This occurs through needing to explore, and then explain and justify the social work value base to other professionals (Scholar et al., 2012). It suggests that placements with external supervision could contribute the formation of the professional identity of social work students. This is because the principal values of the profession: acknowledging respect for persons, social justice and professional integrity (AASW, 2010a), are considered core to the professional identity (AASW, 2012b). While the research discussed here indicates that students are engaged in exploring and critiquing values (Zuchowski, 2013b), further research into the emerging professional identity and value base of students in social work placements with external supervision in Australia would be useful.

As mentioned above, participants appreciated the step outside of the immersion in the agency to reflect on the placement experience. Further exploration would be useful to establish how external supervision can support the development of social justice and human rights based critical social work practitioners (Ife, 2001; Noble, 2011b; Pease, 2009).

Secondly, it would be useful to examine how the four-way relationship between student, task supervisor, field educator and liaison person can be effectively strengthened. Participants stressed the importance of the relationship, but also highlighted the disjointed experiences from the four-way relationship and the difficulty of getting everyone together (see also Zuchowski, 2013b, 2014b, 2015a). The importance of supporting the triad relationship has been identified elsewhere (Abram et al., 2000; Henderson, 2010), and the AASW advises that the provision of social work education through field education is a joint endeavour between the university, the agency, the field educator and the student (AASW, 2012b). It would appear that once an external field

educator joins the process this becomes a relationship that includes at a minimum four parties, a four-way relationship (Zuchowski, 2011b). In this research participants' really did not perceive themselves in an active four-way relationship. It would be useful to explore how an active four-way relationship can be established and maintained effectively and how this would impact upon the field education experience.

Thirdly, students and others have identified that placement can be difficult for students to complete (see also Zuchowski, 2013b). Students struggle to combine the studies, finances and family responsibilities (Maidment, 2003b; Ryan et al., 2011). Many students complete placement at the same time as working elsewhere, while others are undertaking work-based placements. Several participants expressed concerns about students undertaking placements part-time or as work-based placements. The AASW also includes specific guidelines to curb part-time and work-based placements (AASW, 2012b). While the some research identifies positive learning outcomes for students from working while studying (Ryan et al., 2011), it would be useful to explore the benefits and challenges of work-based placements further, as anecdotally, more students are seeking those in order to survive financially.

Lastly, linked to the identification of the difficulties of students completing work-based field education (Zuchowski, 2013c), and the challenges of providing these placement opportunities supported by social workers in the field to social work students (Zuchowski, 2015a), I would like to suggest comparative research into various modes of field education. Currently, a work-based model is favoured, which as Maidment (2003b) suggested, may complicate students' lives and learning. Internationally focused research could examine the effectiveness of a range of field education models, and their effectiveness in preparing students for social work practice. This could assist our understanding and planning of social work education.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings that emerged out of the data analysis. I particularly highlighted some of the opportunities that placements with external supervision present, but also outlined the inherent challenges of these placements. I discussed the impact of neo-liberalism on field education, and that extra support was needed for placements with external supervision. I presented recommendations for practice and research in social work education relating to placements with external supervision.

Chapter 7 Post Reflexion on the Research Process

7.1 Chapter Introduction

The importance of the researcher reflecting on what he/she brings to the research and how this might impact the research was highlighted in the introduction and methodology chapters. I have outlined the ‘bridling’ of my own assumptions and reported that I have engaged in processes to stay curious and open in the way I looked at the data (Dahlberg, 2006; Vagle, 2014). In this chapter I share some of the outcomes of the post reflexion of the research (Vagle, 2014), particularly relating this to reflections on disseminating the findings and foregrounding participants’ voices. I contextualise these as reflection on becoming a researcher. They are not an exhaustive list, but some of my reflective processes. I end the chapter with concluding statements about the research.

7.2 Reflections on Becoming a Researcher

I started this journey as a social work practitioner who had recently begun employment in tertiary teaching and field education support. In many ways my initial reflections on what I brought to the research and my assumptions were steeped in my significant professional experience as a social work practitioner and field educator. My professional experiences stimulated my query about field education with external supervision, but also determined the path for the inquiry. I wanted to understand how people’s experiences linked to strengths-based practice (McCashen, 2005) and the values of the social work profession (AASW, 2012a). This desire shaped the way I approached data collection, analysis and the dissemination of the findings.

I have learned much about who I have become as a researcher: what I value, what might be my strengths and what I need to watch in the process. For example, being task-focused

by nature, I consciously focused on process in the interview, and ensured that I engage in reflections on process and outcomes, rather than just on focusing on outputs. Throughout, I have reflected on my thinking about the research and the research process, externally through supervision and discussions with others, and through processes of internal reflections. For example, I have reflected on how what I heard has shaped my own understanding:

Doing this research is shaping how I think about the topic area constantly, it's like a jigsaw puzzle, though, it seems more that I am adding things to it, rather than totally reshaping my thinking. This could have to do with two things: Firstly, I am filtering what I am seeing to fit in my understanding, secondly, the years of my experience in this area is significant, thus while I am reflecting on stuff, change is slight.... Ines, memo 2011

My intention was to not make assumptions about others, but to try to be open, assuming that people's points of view and experiences might be different. This has allowed me to probe further in conversation, stating that I do not want to make assumptions. However, my experience and trying to understand people's views has also shaped the process of disseminating findings.

7.2.1 Publicizing Findings

Writing has been an important aspect of my research process. I mirrored Caelli's experience: "...reflecting, writing, and rewriting about the phenomenon produced another, deeper level of interpretation" (2001, pp. 275-276). During the process of presenting the information, putting together and reviewing my thoughts and reflections on paper enabled me to unearth insights about the experiences that might have been

missed, had I started writing for publication after analysing all the data. As part of the research process I submitted seven manuscripts, six which have been published to date. I delivered six oral papers and two posters at national and international conferences. As part of the research process, presenting and writing has assisted in disseminating findings and exposing the material to peer-review, but it also allowed me to approach each set of data with open eyes and ears and fresh enthusiasm.

Reflecting on the value of bracketing, I considered the value of presenting and writing as part of the research process early on, and started with summarising my thinking about the literature. When I conducted an initial literature review and presented interim findings at conferences, I reflected that the dominant story about field education with external supervision seemed to be that it was ‘second best’. Writing to develop arguments about why this topic was relevant to social work education in the Asia Pacific, and developing clearer arguments after initial reviewer feedback, helped me understand the importance of targeted writing. It also clarified the purpose and some of the context of the research. I concur with Creswell, that all writing is “positioned” (Creswell, 2007). I am aware that my writing was focused on crystallising the ideas that emerged about field education with external supervision and encouraging the audience to look beyond the idea that field education with external supervision might be ‘second best’. I wanted to stimulate them to want to hear the participants’ experiences.

As part of summarising and reviewing the literature I presented a poster at the 2011 AASW North Queensland & Queensland Biennial Conference, held in Townsville, Queensland, entitled *Social work field education with external supervision* (Zuchowski, 2011a). I also gave an oral presentation at the 2011 Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Education Symposium: Footprints: Social Work and Welfare Education Making its Mark, at the Gold Coast, Queensland, entitled *Supporting student*

placements with external supervision in current contexts (Zuchowski, 2011c). This assisted in spreading the word that I was looking for participants, and also contributed to developing an initial literature review. Based on that initial literature review, I submitted a chapter to an edited book 'Social work field education and supervision across Asia Pacific'. After the chapter was accepted and then published it seemed that I was able to put those thoughts aside for the moment, as they were now captured in writing. Thus I confirmed the idea that bracketing can be a useful exercise for researchers (LeVasseur, 2003; Vagle, 2014). The book chapter is entitled *Social work student placements with external supervision: last resort or value-adding in the Asia Pacific?* (Zuchowski, 2011b).

I was trying to listen carefully to what the participants were saying about their experience, and what emerged out of their interviews. I assumed that each person in the field education arrangement might have a different angle or viewpoint. If people are experts in their own lives, I needed to listen carefully to what they had to say about their experience (McCashen, 2005). As one of my desires was to understand and present how field education with external supervision was experienced and viewed by the participants, I analysed the data of each group separately and then presented the findings of that participant group. I looked for the main themes and the emphasis in each group's conversations.

I started by exploring the transcripts of the participants who talked about their experiences as students in placements with external supervision. The conference presentation and publication that emerged from the data analysis highlighted that placements with external supervision can provide an extra layer of learning for students. They can be a positive experience, but also can mean that students are caught between differing opinions and instructions from supervisors (Zuchowski, 2012, 2013b).

The conference presentation was an oral presentation at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators 2012 Symposium, Cultural Diversity: Social Work and Human Services education working with difference in Adelaide, South Australia, entitled *From being 'caught in the middle of a war' to 'getting everything and more'- Social Work Students Experiences in Placements with External Supervision* (Zuchowski, 2012). The article created from documenting students' experiences in placements with external supervision is titled *From being 'caught in the middle of a war' to being 'in a really safe space'- social work field education with external supervision*, and was published in volume 15 of *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education* (Zuchowski, 2013b).

I analysed the data of task supervisors next, wanting to ensure that I immersed myself in their comments and discussions first, before exploring the voices of groups that might have a stronger voice. My assumption was that task supervisor voices might not always be sought. This was reflected in Henderson's (2010) finding that they might be the neglected partners in the field education process. I drafted a manuscript emerging from the data analysis that highlighted the task supervisors' positive experiences in and enjoyment of field education with external supervision. Moreover, it outlined that task supervisors spoke about 'planting seeds' for external supervision sessions (Zuchowski, 2014b).

I submitted the manuscript to an Australian peer reviewed journal, as I was keen to share the insights with local social work professionals who would at times be working with task supervisors, to support student placements. I engaged in receiving and addressing feedback to make major revisions to the manuscript over an eighteen months period prior to the final rejection of the paper. Some editorial and reviewer feedback was about theorising the content further by looking at what task supervisors had to offer to social

work learning. However a major concern expressed was that this data should not be presented separately, but in comparison to or incorporating the perspectives of external supervisors. This was interesting feedback that I tried to address by referring to the other groups, without compromising the essence of what the task supervisors had shared about their experience. I reflected on the context of the rejection of the manuscript. By the end of the 18 months process, this was the only manuscript of five submitted papers emerging from individual stakeholder groups that received the feedback that a standalone paper might not be valuable. I considered that each journal and reviewer would have a different focus, guidelines and processes, and that I might not have expressed my message clearly enough. Nevertheless, I was concerned that the rejection happened to the manuscript about the group identified as potential having less power and being a neglected partner (Henderson, 2010). It made me reflect on Ahmed's (2000) comment that writing is strategic and affects the world. Her reflections about what is considered valuable in writing about feminist theory highlights a "hierarchization" in academia, "...ways of delineating more and less important writing by restricting the audience or 'destination' of certain work..." (Ahmed, 2000, p. 98). It confirmed my impulse to have the task supervisors' manuscript published as a standalone rather than a comparative piece. I submitted the manuscript to an international journal, and it was accepted. The article about the task educators' experiences in placements with external supervision is titled *Planting the seeds for someone else's discussion: Experiences of task supervisors supporting social work placements* and is published in the Journal of Practice Teaching (Zuchowski, 2014b).

I then analysed transcripts of the interviews with the external field educators. Getting to know and understand the context of the placement, student, the agency and the supervisor (Zuchowski, 2013c, 2014a) was a clear message from this group. I delivered an oral

presentation at the Joint Social Work Education Conference and Social Work Research Conference, in London, UK in September 2013, entitled *The importance of context for 'external' social work supervisors in social work practice learning* (Zuchowski, 2013c). The article resulting from the primary analysis of the external field educators' interviews is entitled *Getting to Know the Context: The complexities of providing off-site supervision in social work practice learning* and published in the British Journal of Social Work (Zuchowski, 2014a).

Once I put aside the focus on the context theme that had emerged, I explored the data further. External supervisors also discussed the importance of creating space and time to develop the student's professional growth, and foregrounded relationship building and role clarification as important prerequisites to successful involvement in supervision. I developed a further oral conference presentation, which I presented at the 2013 Australian New Zealand Welfare Work Educator conference in Perth. It was entitled *Focusing on professional growth: The experiences of external social work supervisors in field education* (Zuchowski, 2013a) and a journal article followed (Zuchowski, 2014d). The second article based on the external field educators' interviews is entitled *Space, time and relationships for professional growth: The experiences of external field education supervisors* and is published in volume 16 of *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education* (Zuchowski, 2014d).

Finally, I explored the liaison people's interviews about placements with external supervision. They reflected on bringing the university to the placement, creating student centred learning opportunities, the complexities of connecting the various players and the extra support and resources needed to support placements with external supervision (Zuchowski, 2015a). I delivered an oral conference presentation at the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (Zuchowski, 2014e),

entitled *Supporting Social Work Field Education with Off-side Supervision: Views from Liaison People*. The liaison's people experiences in placements with external supervision are documented in an article entitled *Being the university; liaison people's reflections on placements with off-site supervision*, published in *Social Work Education: The International Journal* (Zuchowski, 2015a).

After completing this initial process of analysing the data from each group separately, I explored the combined data of all transcripts, in order to crystallise emerging themes. I utilised this to develop findings for the overall research and draft manuscripts, conference presentations and the thesis. I presented on the overall findings at The International Conference on "Discovery and Innovation in Social Work Practicum Education" in Hong Kong, 2015, entitled *Social work practicum education and the opportunities and challenges of external supervision of student* (Zuchowski, 2015b). A manuscript has been submitted to peer-reviewed journal.

As a beginning researcher I have come to see research and writing as closely linked. I believe that writing throughout the research process has helped me to put thoughts aside at times. Putting thoughts on paper, mulling over them, and thus clarifying them for myself, has allowed me after writing them down to move on to other areas without still being concerned about the prior material. Moreover, disseminating the research findings throughout the research process has helped me to fine-tune what I was trying to share with the audience through feedback and review, but it has also meant a growth in my ability as a writer. It has meant that I have gained an awareness of the importance and usefulness of sharing insights of the research in a timely and ongoing matter. Determining how research is written up is a critical responsibility that the researcher needs to bear (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005).

7.2.2 **Foregrounding the voices of Participants**

I reflected on the idea of foregrounding the voices of specific groups of participants utilising the concept of ‘voice’ and realised the complexity, ambiguousness and multi-dimension of concept of ‘voice’ (Holloway & Biley, 2011). There is danger of distortion, and some voices of the many might be given more weight than others. As a researcher I interpret, and often move to a “...different level of abstraction from the participants” (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p. 972). I sent the transcripts to the participants after the interview, to check accuracy, and one participant came back to clarify a point, after a typing error I had made changed the point she was making.

Towards the end of the research process I emailed the references of the five published and one accepted manuscripts emerging from the research to the participants, thanking them for the participation and asking them whether they would like copies of the articles. Seventeen of the 32 participants emailed back asking for copies. Participants generally supported the importance of the research as they responded to my email. After reading a number of the articles, one participant sent a further email commenting on what she had read:

Thanks for sending these articles, I really enjoyed reading the ones I have managed so far. I don't think I had characterised the arrangements we have as a triad or a four way process of assessment before reading these. I thought the Asia Pacific one made some really good points. After reading it I started to wonder what role I could have in capacity building for Indigenous students. I enjoyed the Space, Time and Relationships paper, it was very reflective and helped me be reflective about the content. . I did notice a tiny typo on the end of pge 57 the word why instead

*(perhaps) way? I am still getting on with the rest and enjoying the reading
and thinking they bring up, thank you” Regina*

The participants’ generous sharing of their stories has facilitated me to write about the experiences of people in field education with external supervision. I realise however, that my own voice is a contributing factor in the writing. Text is shaped by the participants, the researcher and the reader (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Through utilising a post-intentional phenomenological approach, I drew out tentative manifestations that are relevant (Vagle, 2014). Writing is focused on restating the multiple and varied contexts, and writers need an engagement with the reflections about their pre-conceptions (Vagle, 2014).

To me, research has become a process of accessing people’s voices and ideas, making sense of these and then sharing these with others. I have been cautious with my own voice, using it to share the research, but trying hard to focus on foregrounding what the participants have shared. As a researcher I have something to share. It cannot be all about me as I am not the subject of this research, but it is not without me either. For example, years of working as a feminist in violence prevention made me notice issues of safety and violence in people’s accounts. At some stage my experience tempted me to include really detailed accounts of the participants’ words about the violence they have experienced. Reflecting on the limitations of what one document can include has helped me review these sections. I considered, yes, this is one aspect of what has been shared, but other points needed to be highlighted as well.

7.3 Thesis Conclusion

In Part One I provided an overview, context and explanation of this research. My interests in exploring placements with external supervision are imbedded in my own experience

of providing and supporting field education learning opportunities. I have explored my considerations and reflections to ‘bridle’ (Dahlberg, 2006) my own assumptions and interests in the research. I have met the aims of the research, although four-way relationships need further exploration. I acknowledge that the findings are not representative of all people involved in field education with external supervision, but are a glimpse into the experience of the participants who contributed to the research.

This research has reinforced the value of undertaking exploratory studies within a phenomenological and social constructivist research framework (Schwandt, 1994; Vagle, 2014). The findings from this research provide an insight into the experiences of students, task supervisors, field educators and liaison people in placements with off-site supervision. Hearing each participant group separately can be useful in amplifying the voices that may not always be heard.

Placements with external supervision can potentially add significant value to social work education, by offering extra layers of learning, in times when organisations are under pressure and may offer restrictive learning opportunities. More research into this area is needed, particularly on field education models that focus on establishing quality pedagogic learning environments for field education with off-site supervision. As long as this form of practice learning for social work is utilised in social work education, it needs to be guided by best practice principles to meet AASW (2012a) requirements, and ensure the emergence of competent social work practitioners (Parker, 2005). I strongly believe that emerging field education models need to be more than responses to difficult times. They need to be planned appropriately, with student learning and growth at their centre, and be supported well through a collaboration of the university, the field and the student.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I shared my reflections on becoming a researcher. I reflected that through engaging in research, I have learned about ‘bridling’ my own assumptions. This was an ongoing process that did not result in the researcher being fully out of the picture. This research has been a shared journey which illuminated lived experiences regarding external supervision for optimal field education learning processes and relationships.

References

- AASW. (2010a). *AASW code of ethics [2010]*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2010b). Australian social work education and accreditation standards: *Learning for practice in field education* (Vol. 4.3, pp. 13-17). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2012a). Australian social work education and accreditation standards (ASWEAS) 2012 *guideline 1.2: Guidance on field education programs* (pp. 1-69). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2012b). Australian social work education and accreditation standards (ASWEAS) 2012. (pp. 1-37). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2012c). Australian social work education and accreditation standards (ASWEAS) 2012 v1.2(1) (pp. 1-27). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2013). Practice standards 2013 (pp. 1-19). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- AASW. (2014). Supervision standards 2014 (pp. 1-15). Canberra, ACT: Australian Association of Social Workers.
- Abram, F. Y., Hartung, M. R., & Wernet, S. P. (2000). The nonMSW task supervisor, MSW field instructor, and the practicum student. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 20(1), 171-185. doi: 10.1300/J067v20n01_11

- Agllias, K. (2010). Student to practitioner: A study of preparedness for social work practitioners. *Australian Social Work*, 63(3), 346-360. doi: 10.1080/0312407X.2010.498522
- Ahmed, S. (2000). Whose counting? *Feminist Theory*, 1(1), 97-103. doi: 10.1177/14647000022229083
- Alston, M. (2007). Rural and regional developments in social work higher education. *Australian Social Work*, 60(1), 107-121. doi: 10.1080/03124070601166752
- Anfara, V. A., & Mertz, N. T. (2006). Introduction. In V. A. Anfara & N. T. Mertz (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research* (pp. xiii-xxxii). London: Sage.
- Angen, M. J. (2000). Pearls, pith, and provocation. Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395. doi: 10.1177/104973230001000308
- Askeland, G. A., & Fook, J. (2009). Critical reflection in social work. *European Journal of Social Work*, 12(3), 287-292. doi: 10.1080/13691450903100851
- Australian Government. (2007a). *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia Retrieved from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/index.htm>.
- Australian Government. (2007b). *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*. Canberra: Australian Government Retrieved from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72>
- Baglow, L. (2014). Findings from the AASW student survey on income support. *AASW National Bulletin*, 24(4), 1-21.

- Barretti, M. A. (2007). Teachers and field instructors as student role models. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 27(3), 215-239. doi: 10.1300/J067v27n03_14
- Barretti, M. A. (2009). Ranking desirable field instructor characteristics: Viewing student preferenced in context with field and class experience. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 28(1), 47-71. doi: 10.1080/07325220902855128
- Barton, H., Bell, K., & Bowles, W. (2005). Help or hindrance? Outcomes of social work student placements. *Australian Social Work*, 58(3), 301-312. doi: 10.1111/j.1447-0748.2005.00222.x
- Basnett, F., & Sheffield, D. (2010). The impact of social work student failure upon practice educators. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40, 2119-2136. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcq012
- Beddoe, L. (2000). The supervisory relationship. In L. Cooper & L. Briggs (Eds.), *Fieldwork in human services. Theory and practice for field educators, practice teachers and supervisors*. (pp. 41-54). Sydney: Allen& Unwin.
- Beddoe, L. (2003). Danger and disdain: Truth and dare in social work education. *Women in Welfare Education*, 6(Special Field Education Edition), 13- 25.
- Beddoe, L. (2012). External supervision in social Work: Power, space, risk, and the search for safety. *Australian Social Work*, 65(2), 197-213. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2011.591187
- Beddoe, L., Ackroyd, J., Chinnery, S.-A., & Appleton, C. (2011). Live supervision of students in field placement: More than just watching. *Social Work Education*, 30(5), 512-528. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2010.516358
- Beddoe, L., & Maidment, J. (2009). Becoming a practitioner researcher. In E. Beddoe & J. Maidment (Eds.), *Mapping knowledge for social work practice* (pp. 55-69). South Melbourne: Cengage Learning.

- Bellinger, A. (2010a). Studying the landscape: Practice learning for social work reconsidered. *Social Work Education*, 29(6), 599-615. doi: 10.1080/02615470903508743
- Bellinger, A. (2010b). Talking about (re)generation: Practice learning as a site of renewal for social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(8), 2450-2466. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcq072
- Ben Shlomo, S., Levy, D., & Itzhaky, H. (2012). Development of professional identity among social work students: Contributing factors. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 31(2), 240-255. doi: 10.1080/07325223.2013.733305
- Bennett, S., Mohr, J., BrintzenhofeSzoc, K., & Saks, L. V. (2008). General and supervision-specific attachment styles: Relations to student perceptions of field supervisors. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(2), 75- 94. doi: 10.5175/JSWE.2008.200700016
- Berends, L., & Crinall, K. (2014). *The management and practice in health and human service organisations*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Brischoux, F., & Cook, T. R. (2009). Juniors seek an end to the impact factor race. *BioScience*, 59(8), 638-639. doi: 10.1525/bio.2009.59.8.2
- Brookfield, S. (2009). The concept of critical reflection: Promises and contradictions. *European Journal of Social Work*, 12(3), 293-304. doi: 10.1080/13691450902945215
- Caelli, K. (2001). Engaging with phenomenology: Is it more of a challenge than it needs to be? *Qualitative Health Research*, 11(2), 273-281. doi: 10.1177/104973201129118993
- Cameron, M. (2014). This is common factors. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 42(2), 151-160. doi: 10.1007/s10615-013-0467-9

- Camilleri, P. (2001). Educating for social work: Facing the new century. *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 16-20. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415259
- Chafetz, J. S. (2004). Bridging feminist theory and research methodology. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(7), 963-977.
- Chenoweth, L. (2012). Troubling times? Strategies for countering contemporary challenges in social work and human services practice. In V. Pulla, L. Chenoweth, A. Francis, & S. Bakaj (Eds.), *Papers in strengths based practice* (pp. 66-74). New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited.
- Chiller, P., & Crisp, B. R. (2012). Professional supervision: A workforce retention strategy for social work? *Australian Social Work*, 65(2), 232-242. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2011.625036
- Chinnery, S. A., & Beddoe, L. (2011). Taking active steps towards the competent use of self in social work. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 13(1), 127-152.
- Clare, M. (2001). Thinking systemically about fieldwork education: A third way. *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 53-66. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415264
- Cleak, H., & Smith, D. (2012). Student satisfaction with models of field placement supervision. *Australian Social Work*, 65(2), 243-258. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2011.572981
- Cleak, H., & Wilson, J. (2013). *Making the most of field placement* (3rd ed.). South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.
- Cooper, L., & Maidment, J. (2001). Thinking about difference in student supervision. *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 41-52. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415263

- Cortis, N., & Meagher, G. (2012). Social work education as preparation for practice: Evidence from a survey of the New South Wales community sector. *Australian Social Work*, 65(3), 295-310. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2012.707666
- Crawford, F. (2001). The aim of a Bachelor of Social Work? *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 13-16. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415258
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). New Dehli, India: Sage Publications. India
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crisp, B., & Maidment, J. (2009). Swapping roles or swapping desks? When experienced practitioners become students on placement. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, 8(3), 165-174. doi: 10.1111/j.1473-6861.2008.00208.x
- Curtis, L., Moriarty, J., & Netten, A. (2011). The costs of qualifying a social worker. *British Journal of Social Work*, 42(4), 706-724. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcr113
- Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences – The search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1(1), 11-19. doi: 10.1080/17482620500478405
- Dennis, B. (2013). "Validity crisis" in qualitative research: Still? Movement toward a unified approach. In B. Dennis, L. Carspecken, & P. F. Carspecken (Eds.), *Qualitative research. A reader in philosophy, core concepts, and practice* (pp. 3-37). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

- Domakin, A. (2013). Are we making the most of learning from the practice placement? *Social Work Education*, 33(6) 718-730. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2013.869315
- Egan, R. (2005). Field education as a catalyst for community strengthening strategies: The time is right. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 7(1), 35-41.
- Fernandez, E. (2003). Promoting teaching competence in field education. *Women in Welfare Education*, 6(Special Field Education Edition), 103-129.
- Flynn, D. (2005). What's wrong with rights? Rethinking human rights and responsibilities. *Australian Social Work*, 58(3), 244-256. doi: 10.1111/j.1447-0748.2005.00218.x
- Fook, J. (2001). What is the aim of the Bachelor of Social Work? *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 20-23. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415260
- Freeman, M., & Vagle, M. D. (2013). Grafting the intentional relation of hermeneutics and phenomenology in linguisticality. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(9), 725-735. doi: 10.1177/1077800413500933
- Gaha, J. (2001). Educating entry-level professionals - AASW policy. *Australian Social Work*, 54(1), 23-27. doi: 10.1080/03124070108415261
- Gair, S., Miles, D., Savage, D., & Zuchowski, I. (2015). Racism unmasked: The experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in social work field placements. *Australian Social Work*, 68(1), 32-48. doi: 10.1080/0312407X.2014.928335
- Gair, S., & Thomas, Y. (2008). Ensuring safe passage: Identifying the threat of workplace violence against tertiary students. *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety Australia and New Zealand*, 24(1), 43-51.
- Gair, S., Thomson, J., & Savage, D. (2005). What's stopping them? Exploring barriers hindering indigenous Australians from completing a social work degree at a

- regional Queensland university. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 7(1), 54-62.
- Gallagher, S., & Francesconi, D. (2012). Teaching phenomenology to qualitative researchers, cognitive scientists, and phenomenologists. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 12(Special Edition), 1-10. doi: 10.2989/ipjp.2012.12.1.4.1112
- Geißler-Piltz, B. (2010). Case study Germany "Supervision in the BA Social Work programme". In G. Van Hees & B. Geißler-Piltz (Eds.), *Supervision meets Education. Supervision in the Bachelor of Social Work in Europe*. Maastricht: CESRT Research Centre Social Integration, Faculty of Social Studies, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.
- Geißler-Piltz, B. (2011). How social workers experience supervision: Results of an empirical study in the health sector. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 20(1), 5- 22.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers. An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Green, D. (2007). Risk and social work practice. *Australian Social Work*, 60(4), 395-409. doi: 10.1080/03124070701671131
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hanlen, P. (2011). Community engagement: Managers' viewpoints. In C. Noble & M. Hendrickson (Eds.), *Social work field education and supervision across Asia Pacific* (pp. 221-241). Sydney: Sydney University Press.

- Healy, K. (2004). Social workers in the new human services marketplace: Trends, challenges and responses. *Australian Social Work*, 57(2), 103-114. doi: 10.1111/j.1447-0748.2004.00125.x
- Hek, R. (2012). Is it possible to develop and sustain non-traditional placements? An evaluation of the development of practice learning opportunities in partnership with the police and probation services in the West Midlands. *Social Work Education*, 31(4), 512-529. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2011.570328
- Henderson, K. J. (2010). Work-based supervisors: The neglected partners in practice learning. *Social Work Education*, 29(5), 490-502. doi: 10.1080/02615470903156352
- Hesse-Biber, S. J., & Yaiser, M. L. (Eds.). (2004). *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Holloway, I., & Biley, F. C. (2011). Being a qualitative researcher. *Qualitative Health Research*, 21(7), 968-975. doi: 10.1177/1049732310395607
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1994). Phenomenology, ethnomethodology and interpretive practice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 262- 272). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Homonoff, E. (2008). The heart of social work: Best practitioners rise to challenges in field instruction. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 27(2), 135-169. doi: 10.1080/07325220802490828
- Hooyberghs, E. (2012). How should we deal with ethics in student supervision? *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 21(2), 23-38.
- Hughes, C. (1998). Practicum learning: Perils of the authentic workplace. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 17(2), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/0729436980170206

- Husserl, E. (1952). *Ideas. General introduction to pure phenomenology*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Ife, J. (2000). A comment on 'Reconstructing and re-conceptualising social work in the emerging milieu'. *Australian Social Work*, 53(3), 13-14. doi: 10.1080/03124070008414308
- Ife, J. (2001). Local and global practice: Relocating social work as a human rights profession in the new global order. *European Journal of Social Work*, 4(1), 5-15. doi: 10.1080/714052835
- Janesick, V. J. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 209-219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jones, P., & Miles, D. (2012). Reaching out to the region: Developing a blended pedagogy for social work education at a distance. In J. Peterson, O. Lee, T. Islam, & M. Piscioneri (Eds.), *Effectively implementing information communication technology in higher education in the Asia-Pacific Region* (pp. 247-263). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Jupp, V. (2006). *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kadushin, A. (1992). *Supervision in social work* (3rd ed.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kalliath, P., Hughes, M., & Newcombe, P. (2012). When work and family are in conflict: Impact on psychological strain experienced by social workers in Australia. *Australian Social Work*, 65(3), 355-371. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2011.625035

- Karban, K. (1999). Long-arm practice teaching for the diploma in social work: The views of students and practice teachers. *Social Work Education, 18*(1), 59-70. doi: 10.1080/02615479911220061
- Kayrooz, C., & Trevitt, C. (2005). *Research in organisations and communities. Tales from the real world*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- King, K. (2001). Productive agencies of feminist theory: The work it does. *Feminist Theory, 2*(1), 94-98. doi: 10.1177/14647000122229406
- Klein, R. (1994). How to do what we want to do: Thoughts about feminist methodology. In R. Klein (Ed.), *Feminist research methodology: A reader* (pp. 88- 104). Geelong: Deakin University.
- Knight, C. (2000). Engaging the student in the field instruction relationship. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 20*(3), 173-201. doi: 10.1300/J067v20n03_12
- Knight, C. (2001). The process of field instruction: BSW and MSW students' views of effective field supervision. *Journal of Social work education, 37*(2), 357-379. doi: 10.1080/10437797.2001.10779060
- Krueger, L., & Neuman, W. L. (2006). The ethics and politics of social work research. In L. Kreuger & W. L. Neuman, *Social work research methods* (pp. 97-132). New York: Pearson.
- Lager, P. B., & Robbins, V. C. (2004). Field education: Exploring the future, expanding the vision. *Journal of Social work education, 40*(1), 3-12. doi: 10.1080/10437797.2004.10778475
- Lam, C. M., Wong, H., & Leung, T. T. F. (2005). An unfinished reflexive journey: Social work students' reflection on their placement experiences. *British Journal of Social Work, 37*(1), 91-105. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcl320

- Ledwith, M. (2001). Community work as critical pedagogy: Re-envisioning Freire and Gramsci. *Community Development Journal*, 36(3), 171-182. doi: 10.1093/cdj/36.3.171
- Lee, R., & Renzetti, C. (1993). The problems of researching sensitive topics. In C. Renzetti & R. Lee (Eds.), *Researching sensitive topics* (pp. 3-13). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lefevre, M. (2005). Facilitating practice learning and assessment: The influence of relationship. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 24(5), 565-583. doi: 10.1080/02615470500132806
- LeVasseur, J. J. (2003). The problem of bracketing in phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(3), 408-420. doi: 10.1177/1049732302250337
- Lewis, I., & Bolzan, N. (2007). Social work with a twist: Interweaving practice knowledge, student experience and academic theory. *Australian Social Work*, 60(2), 136-146. doi: 10.1080/03124070701323782
- Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). Background to qualitative research. In P. Liamputtong & D. Ezzy, *Theory in qualitative research: Traditions and innovations* (2nd ed., pp. 12-31). South Melbourne: Oxford.
- Lyter, S. C. (2012). Potential of field education as signature pedagogy: The field director role. *Journal of Social work education*, 48(1), 179-188. doi: 10.5175/JSWE.2012.201000005
- Maidment, J. (2000). Strategies to promote student learning and integration of theory with practice in the field. In L. Cooper & L. Briggs (Eds.), *Fieldwork in the human Services. Theory and practice for field educators, practice teachers and supervisors* (pp. 205-215). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

- Maidment, J. (2003a). Developing trends in social work field education. *Women in Welfare Education*, 6(Special Field Education Edition), 1-12.
- Maidment, J. (2003b). Problems experienced by students on field placement: Using research findings to inform curriculum design and content. *Australian Social Work*, 56(1), 50-60. doi: 10.1046/j.0312-407X.2003.00049.x
- Maidment, J. (2006). Using on-line delivery to support students during practicum placements. *Australian Social Work*, 59(1), 47-55. doi: 10.1080/03124070500449770
- Maidment, J. (2013). Getting ready for placement. In K. Stagnitti, A. Schoo, & D. Welch (Eds.), *Clinical and fieldwork placement in the health professions* (2nd ed., pp. 3-12). Sydney: Oxford University Press.
- Maidment, J., & Beddoe, L. (2012). Is social work supervision in “good heart”? A critical commentary. *Australian Social Work*, 65(2), 163-170. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2012.680426
- Maidment, J., & Woodward, P. (2002). Student supervision in context: A model for external supervision In S. Shardlow & M. Doel (Eds.), *Learning to practice: International approaches* (pp. 93-109). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.
- Mannay, D. (2010). Making the familiar strange: Can visual research methods render the familiar setting more perceptible? *Qualitative Research*, 10(1), 91-111. doi: 10.1177/1468794109348684
- McAuliffe, D., & Sudbery, J. (2005). 'Who do I tell?': Support and consultation in cases of ethical conflict. *Journal of Social Work*, 5(21), 21-43. doi: 10.1177/1468017305051362

- McCashen, W. (2005). *The strengths approach: A strength-based resource for sharing power and creating change*. Bendigo, Victoria: St. Luke's Innovative Resources.
- McGrail, M. R., Rickard, C. M., & Jones, R. (2006). Publish or perish: A systematic review of interventions to increase academic publication rates. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25(1), 19-35. doi: 10.1080/07294360500453053
- McLaughlin, H., Scholar, H., McCaughan, S., & Coleman, A. (2014). Are non-traditional social work placements second-best learning opportunities for social work qualifying students? *British Journal of Social Work*. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcu021
- McMahon, M. (2002). Some supervision practicalities. In M. McMahon & W. Patton (Eds.), *Supervision in the helping profession: A practical Approach* (pp. 17-26). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research. A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., & Hays, T. (2008). *In-depth interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sydney: Pearson Education Australia.
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., & Alexander, L. (1995). *In-depth interviewing: Principles, techniques, analysis* (2nd ed.). Melbourne: Longman Australia.
- Moriarty, J., MacIntyre, G., Manthorpe, J., Crisp, B. R., Orme, J., Lister, P. G., . . . Sharpe, E. (2009). 'My expectations remain the same. The student has to be

- competent to practise': Practice assessor perspectives on the new social work degree qualification in England. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(2), 583-601. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcn178
- Morley, C., & Dunstan, J. (2013). Critical reflection: A response to neoliberal challenges to field education? *Social Work Education*, 32(2), 141-156. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2012.730141
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. (7th ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson .
- Noble, C. (2001). Researching field practice in social work education. Integration of theory and practice through the use of narratives. *Journal of Social Work*, 1(3), 347-360. doi: 10.1177/146801730100100307
- Noble, C. (2004a). Postmodern thinking: Where is it taking social work? *Journal of Social Work*, 4(3), 289-304. doi: 10.1177/1468017304047747
- Noble, C. (2004b). Social work education, training and standards in the Asia-Pacific region. *Social Work Education*, 23(5), 527-536. doi: 10.1080/0261547042000252262
- Noble, C. (2011a). Field education: Supervision, curricula and teaching methods. In C. Noble & M. Hendrickson (Eds.), *Social work field education and supervision across Asia Pacific* (pp. 3-22). Sydney: Sydney University Press.

- Noble, C. (2011b). Ways of thinking about field education and supervision: Building a critical perspective. In C. Noble & M. Hendrickson (Eds.), *Social work field education and supervision across Asia Pacific* (pp. 299-320). Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Noble, C., & Irwin, J. (2009). Social work supervision: An exploration of the current challenges in a rapidly changing social, economic and political environment. *Journal of Social Work*, 9(3), 345-358. doi: 10.1177/1468017309334848
- Noble, C., & Sullivan, J. (2009). Is social work still a distinctive profession? Students, supervisors and educators reflect. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 11(1), 89- 107.
- Ornstein, E., & Moses, H. (2010). Goodness of fit: A relational approach to field instruction. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 30(1), 101-114. doi: 10.1080/08841230903479615
- Ozanne, E., & Rose, D. (2013). *The organisational context of human service practice*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pack, M. (2011). The design and development of teaching resources for the purpose of demonstrating aspects of clinical supervision: Developing the on-line community of learners. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 13(1), 111-126.
- Pack, M. (2012). Two sides to every story: A phenomenological exploration of the meanings of clinical supervision from supervisee and supervisor perspectives. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 26(2), 163-179. doi: 10.1080/02650533.2011.611302

- Pack, M. (2014). Practice journeys: Using online reflective journals in social work fieldwork education. *Reflective Practice*, 15(3), 404-412. doi: 10.1080/14623943.2014.883304
- Parker, J. (2005). Developing perceptions of competence during practice learning. *British Journal of Social Work*, 36(6), 1017-1036. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bch347
- Parker, J. (2010). When things go wrong! Placement disruption and termination: Power and student perspectives. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(3), 983-999. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcn149
- Parker, J., Hillison, K., & Wilson, L. (2003). SWiSP: The social work students in schools project. *Practice*, 15(4), 69-87. doi: 10.1080/09503150308416935
- Parton, N., & Kirk, S. (2009). The nature and purposes of social work. In I. F. Shaw, K. Briar-Lawson, J. Orme, & R. Ruckdeschel (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work research* (KINDLE ed., pp. 23-36). London: Sage Publications.
- Patford, J. (2000). Can I do social work and do I want to? Students perception of significant learning incidents during practica. *Australian Social Work*, 53(2), 21-28. doi: 10.1080/03124070008414145
- Pawar, M., & Anscombe, B. (2015). *Reflective social work practice*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Pease, B. (2009). Challenging the dominant paradigm: Social work research, social justice and social change. In I. F. Shaw, K. Briar-Lawson, J. Orme, & R. Ruckdeschel (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work research* (KINDLE ed., pp. 98-112). London: Sage.
- Plath, D. (2003). An experience based model of practice learning. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 23-38.

- Potting, M., Sniekers, M., Lamers, C., & Reverda, N. (2010). Legitimizing social work: The practice of reflective professionals. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 19(3), 6-20.
- Powell, J., & Ramos, B. (2009). The practice of social work research. In I. F. Shaw, K. Briar-Lawson, J. Orme, & R. Ruckdeschel (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work research* (KINDLE ed., pp. 231-245). London: Sage Publications.
- Ramanzanoğlu, C., & Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist methodology : Challenges and choices*. London: Sage Publications.
- Rambally, R. E. T. (1999). Field education in a developing country: Promoting organizational change and social development. *International Social Work*, 42(4), 485-496. doi: 10.1177/002087289904200409
- Razack, N. (2000). Students at risk in the field. In L. Cooper & L. Briggs (Eds.), *Fieldwork in the human services. Theory and practice for field educators, practice teachers and supervisors*. (pp. 195-204). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Rogers, G., Benson, G., Bouey, E., Clark, B., Langevin, P., Mamchur, C., & Sawa, R. (2003). An exploration of conflict in the practicum in four professions. *Women in Welfare Education*, 6(Special Field Education Edition), 26- 50.
- Ryan, M., Barns, A., & McAuliffe, D. (2011). Part-time employment and effects on Australian social work students: A report on a national study. *Australian Social Work*, 63(3), 313-329. doi: 10.1080/0312407X.2010.538420
- Scholar, H., McCaughan, S., McLaughlin, H., & Coleman, A. (2012). ‘Why is this not social work?’ The contribution of ‘non-traditional’ placements in preparing social work students for practice. *Social Work Education*, 31(7), 932-950. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2011.608123

- Scholar, H., McLaughlin, H., McCaughan, S., & Coleman, A. (2014). Learning to be a social worker in a non-traditional placement: Critical reflections on social work, professional identity and social work education in England. *Social Work Education, 33*(8), 998-1016. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2014.926320
- Schön, D. (1991). *The reflective practitioner*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 118- 137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shaw, I. F. (2009a). Logics, qualities and quality of social work research. In I. F. Shaw, K. Briar-Lawson, J. Orme, & R. Ruckdeschel (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work research* (KINDLE ed., pp. 246-265). London: Sage Publications.
- Shaw, I. F. (2009b). Places in time: Contextualizing social work research. In I. F. Shaw, K. Briar-Lawson, J. Orme, & R. Ruckdeschel (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work* (KINDLE ed., pp. 210-228). London: Sage Publishing.
- Sowbel, L. R. (2012). Gatekeeping: Why shouldn't we be ambivalent? *Journal of Social work education, 48*(1), 27-44. doi: 10.5175/jswe.2012.201000027
- Sprague, J., & Kobrynowicz, D. (2004). A feminist epistemology. In S. J. Hesse-Biber & M. L. Yaiser (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on social research* (pp. 78-98). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Swain, P. (2007). "Active student involvement and a real struggle with ideas": Small group teaching in social work education? *Australian Social Work, 60*(4), 466-480. doi: 10.1080/03124070701671172
- Tedam, P. (2014). When failing doesn't matter: A narrative inquiry into the social work practice learning experiences of black African students in England. *International Journal of Higher Education, 3*(1). doi: 10.5430/ijhe.v3n1p136

- The College of Social Work. (2014). Practice learning guidance. In *Use of the PCF and assessment criteria for practice learning* (pp. 1-7). UK: The College of Social Work.
- Thorpe, R., & Holt, R. (2008). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative management research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Torry, B., Furness, S., & Wilkinson, P. (2005). The importance of agency culture and support in recruiting and retaining social workers to supervise students on placement. *Practice*, 17(1), 29-38. doi: 10.1080/09503150500058025
- Tully, C., Kropf, N., & Price, J. (1999). Is field a hard hat area? A study of violence in field placements. *Journal of Social work education*, 29(2), 191-199. doi: 10.1080/10437797.1993.10778814
- Ung, K. (2002). The complex and diverse landscape of agency and external supervision. In M. McMahon & W. Patton (Eds.), *Supervision in the helping profession: A practical approach* (pp. 91-104). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Unger, J. (2003). Supporting agency field instructors in forgottonia. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 23(1), 105-121. doi: 10.1300/J067v23n01_08
- Vagle, M. D. (2014). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
- Van Hees, G. (2011). Student supervision as educational method in faculties of social work. A study in seven European countries. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 20(1), 23-40.
- Waitere, H. J., Wright, J., Tremaine, M., Brown, S., & Pausé, C. J. (2011). Choosing whether to resist or reinforce the new managerialism: The impact of

- performance-based research funding on academic identity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 30(2), 205-217. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.509760
- Wayne, J., Bogo, M., & Raskin, M. (2010). Field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education. *Journal of Social work education*, 46(3), 327-339. doi: 10.5175/jswe.2010.200900043
- Wilkinson, P., & Bissell, G. (2005). Social work education and the 'place' of placements. *Practice*, 17(4), 285-297. doi: 10.1080/095031505000427204
- Wilson, G., & Campbell, A. (2013). Developing social work education: Academic perspectives. *British Journal of Social Work*, 43(5), 1005-1023. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcs038
- Witte, W. (2009). Ausbildungssupervision – Supervision in studiengängen der sozialen arbeit als non-formeller lernort. *Soziale Arbeit - Zeitschrift für Soziale und Sozialverwandte Gebiete*(Mai 2009), 170-181.
- Zuchowski, I. (2011a). *Social work field education with external supervision*. Poster session presented at the AASW North Queensland & Queensland Biennial Conference 2011,. Townsville, QLD.
- Zuchowski, I. (2011b). Social work student placements with external supervision: Last resort or value-adding in the Asia Pacific? In C. Noble & M. Henrickson (Eds.), *Social work field education and supervision across the Asia-Pacific*. (pp. 375-397). Sydney, NSW: University of Sydney Press.
- Zuchowski, I. (2011c). *Supporting student placements with external supervision in current contexts*. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Education Symposium. Footprints: Social work and welfare education making its mark, Gold Coast.
- <http://www.aaswwe.asn.au/2011Symposium/symposium.php>

- Zuchowski, I. (2012). *From being 'caught in the middle of a war' to 'getting everything and more'- Social work students' experiences in placements with external supervision*. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators 2012 Symposium. Cultural Diversity: Social Work and Human Services education working with difference, University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA. <http://www.anzswwer.org/symposium/symposium-2012/>
- Zuchowski, I. (2013a). *Focusing on professional growth: The experiences of external social work supervisors in field education*. Paper presented at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Education 2013 Symposium: Imagining Futures for Social Work Education and Research, Perth, WA. <http://www.anzswwer.org/symposium/symposium-2013/>
- Zuchowski, I. (2013b). From being 'caught in the middle of a war' to being 'in a really safe space'- Social work field education with external supervision. *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 15(1), 104- 119.
- Zuchowski, I. (2013c). *The importance of context for 'external' social work supervisors in social work practice learning*. Paper presented at the Joint Social Work Education Conference and Social Work Research Conference. 15th UK Joint Social Work Education Conference and 7th UK Social Work Research Conference. Positive practice in hard times: Social work fights back, London, UK. <http://jswec.net/2013/faq/programme-information/>
- Zuchowski, I. (2014a). Getting to know the context: The complexities of providing off-Site supervision in social work practice learning. *British Journal of Social Work*. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcu133

- Zuchowski, I. (2014b). Planting the seeds for someone else's discussion: Experiences of task supervisors supporting social work placements. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 13(3), 5-23. doi: 10.1921/12202130105
- Zuchowski, I. (2014c). *Social work field education with external supervision. Interim findings*. Poster presentation at CASE Fest James Cook University. James Cook University. Townsville, QLD.
- Zuchowski, I. (2014d). Space, time and relationships for professional growth: The experiences of external field education supervisors. *Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education*, 16(1), 52- 66.
- Zuchowski, I. (2014e). *Supporting social work field education with off-site Supervision: Views from liaison people*. Paper presented at the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2014 Melbourne, VIC.
<http://www.swsd2014.org/download-abstracts/>
- Zuchowski, I. (2015a). Being the university: Liaison persons' reflections on placements with off-site supervision. *Social Work Education*, 1-14. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2015.1005070
- Zuchowski, I. (2015b). *Social Work Practicum Education and the Opportunities and Challenges of External Supervision of Students*. Paper presented at the The International Conference on “Discovery and Innovation in Social Work Practicum Education”, Hong Kong.
- Zuchowski, I., Hudson, C., Bartlett, B., & Diamandi, S. (2014). Social work field education in Australia: Sharing practice wisdom and reflection. *Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education*, 16(1), 69- 80.

Zuchowski, I., Savage, D., Miles, D., & Gair, S. (2013). Decolonising field education-
Challenging Australian social work praxis. *Advances in Social Work and
Welfare Education*, 15(1), 47- 62.

Appendices

<i>Appendix 1 Interview guide</i>	<i>292</i>
<i>Appendix 2 Ethics Approval</i>	<i>293</i>
<i>Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form</i>	<i>294</i>
<i>Appendix 4: Student Participant Recruitment letter</i>	<i>295</i>
<i>Appendix 5: Task Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter.....</i>	<i>296</i>
<i>Appendix 6: External Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter</i>	<i>297</i>
<i>Appendix 7: Liaison Person Participant Recruitment letter</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>Appendix 8: Participant Recruitment Bookmarks for distribution.....</i>	<i>299</i>
<i>Appendix 9: Research Information Sheet</i>	<i>300</i>

Appendix 1 Interview guide

Audio file save as:

Time:

Interview guide

Date:

Name:

Role:

Years / scope of experience:

Cultural Background:

General experience

What has your placement/ experience in supporting on students been like?

Tell me a bit about the placement/ the work you have done with...

what was the placement set-up, who was involved with the placement?

Experience of external supervision

How was it to receive external supervision/ provide supervision/ provide support in placements with external supervision?

What worked well? What did not work so well?

What do you think could have been done to make this work better?

What qualities/ skills did you bring to the experience?

What qualities/ skills did others bring to this experience?

Four-way relationship;

Who was involved in supporting the placement?

How did the relationship between student, field educator, task supervisor and liaison work?

What was this experience like?

How would you describe the relationship/ links between the different people involved?

What worked well? What did not work so well?

What do you think could have been done to make this work better?

Considering your experience, reflections and knowledge, If you were to set up an ideal placement- would this look like?

If a placement would include external supervision, how could that be set up best in your opinion?

Any other info, anything that you wanted to share that I did not ask you about?

Appendix 2 Ethics Approval

This administrative form
has been removed

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

This administrative form
has been removed

Appendix 4: Student Participant Recruitment letter

28th of November 2011

Dear colleague,

Have you been a social work student on placement where there has been more than one person involved in supervising you? Did you have a task supervisor in the agency as well as an external social work supervisor? Have you supervised students in these settings as a task supervisor or external social work supervisor? Have you been a liaison person for such placements? If so, I am interested in talking to you.

I am researching field education where a placement uses external supervision. As part of my research I am interested in interviewing social workers or social work students, who have undertaken at least one social work placement where they have received supervision external to the placement agency. At the same time I would also like to interview social work supervisors, task supervisors and university liaison persons who have been involved in this type of placement set-up. I am particularly interested to understand how each of these key stake holders experienced and viewed these placements.

The aim of my research are to review what is known about supervision for social work students on placements, to ascertain the experience and relationships of key players, to investigate what external field education brings to field education and to develop a model/ framework or principles for field education with external supervision. I am undertaking this study as part of my PhD research in Social Work at James Cook University.

I am hoping that you may be interested in participating in this research by making yourself available to be interviewed and, if interested later on, to participate in discussions with others about the topic in a group meeting..

I would also appreciate it if you could forward my email to social workers, task supervisors or liaison persons who might have experienced/ been involved in social work placements with external supervision.

Details about what is involved for participants are in the attached Information Sheet, which has my contact details. There is also a consent form that prospective participants would need to complete.

If you are interested to participate or would just like to find out more information, please contact me via email: ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au or phone 07 47815527.

Thank you very much,

Kind regards,

Ines

Appendix 5: Task Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter

28th November 2011

Dear colleague,

Have you supervised social work students on placements as a task supervisor? If so, I am interested in talking to you.

I am researching field education where a placement uses external supervision. As part of my research I am interested in interviewing social welfare workers and social workers who have supported social work students, who have undertaken at least one social work placement where they have received supervision external to the placement agency. I am particularly interested to understand how each of the key stake holders, student, task supervisor, external supervisor and liaison person, experience and view these placements.

The aim of my research are to review what is known about supervision for social work students on placements, to ascertain the experience and relationships of key players, to investigate what external field education brings to field education and to develop a model/ framework or principles for field education with external supervision. I am undertaking this study as part of my PhD research in Social Work at James Cook University.

I am hoping that you may be interested in participating in this research by making yourself available to be interviewed and, if interested later on, to participate in discussions with others about the topic in a group meeting..

I would also appreciate it if you could forward my email to other task supervisors who might have experienced/ been involved in social work placements with external supervision.

Details about what is involved for participants are in the attached Information Sheet, which has my contact details. There is also a consent form that prospective participants would need to complete.

If you are interested to participate or would just like to find out more information, please contact me via email: ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au or phone 07 47815527.

Thank you very much,

Kind regards,

Ines

Appendix 6: External Supervisor Participant Recruitment letter

28th of November 2011

Dear colleague,

Have you supported social work student placements with external supervision as an external social work supervisor? If so, I am interested in talking to you.

I am researching field education where a placement uses external supervision. As part of my research I am interested in interviewing social workers or social work students, who have undertaken at least one social work placement where they have received supervision external to the placement agency. At the same time I would also like to interview social work supervisors, task supervisors and university liaison persons who have been involved in this type of placement set-up. I am particularly interested to understand how each of these key stake holders experienced and viewed these placements.

The aim of my research are to review what is known about supervision for social work students on placements, to ascertain the experience and relationships of key players, to investigate what external field education brings to field education and to develop a model/ framework or principles for field education with external supervision. I am undertaking this study as part of my PhD research in Social Work at James Cook University.

I am hoping that you may be interested in participating in this research by making yourself available to be interviewed and, if interested later on, to participate in discussions with others about the topic in a group meeting.

I would also appreciate it if you could forward my email to other supervisors, task supervisors or liaison persons who might have experienced/ been involved in social work placements with external supervision.

Details about what is involved for participants are in the attached Information Sheet, which has my contact details. There is also a consent form that prospective participants would need to complete.

If you are interested to participate or would just like to find out more information, please contact me via email: ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au or phone 07 47815527.

Thank you very much,

Kind regards,

Ines

Appendix 7: Liaison Person Participant Recruitment letter

28th of November 2011

Dear colleague,

Have you supported social work student placements with external supervision as a university liaison person? If so, I am interested in talking to you.

I am researching field education where a placement uses external supervision. As part of my research I am interested in interviewing social workers or social work students, who have undertaken at least one social work placement where they have received supervision external to the placement agency. At the same time I would also like to interview social work supervisors, task supervisors and university liaison persons who have been involved in this type of placement set-up. I am particularly interested to understand how each of these key stake holders experienced and viewed these placements.

The aim of my research are to review what is known about supervision for social work students on placements, to ascertain the experience and relationships of key players, to investigate what external field education brings to field education and to develop a model/ framework or principles for field education with external supervision. I am undertaking this study as part of my PhD research in Social Work at James Cook University.

I am hoping that you may be interested in participating in this research by making yourself available to be interviewed and, if interested later on, to participate in discussions with others about the topic in a group meeting.

I would also appreciate it if you could forward my email to task supervisors or liaison persons who might have experienced/ been involved in social work placements with external supervision.

Details about what is involved for participants are in the attached Information Sheet, which has my contact details. There is also a consent form that prospective participants would need to complete.

If you are interested to participate or would just like to find out more information, please contact me via email: ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au or phone 07 47815527.

Thank you very much,

Kind regards,

Ines

Appendix 8: Participant Recruitment Bookmarks for distribution

Please take one:

<p>Research</p> <p>Field Education with External Supervision</p> <p>Have you been involved in participating in or supporting social work student placements with external supervision as a</p> <p>Student?</p> <p>Field Educator?</p> <p>Task Supervisor? Or</p> <p>Liaison Person?</p> <p>Please contact me if you are interested in participating in research about this topic.</p> <p>Contact Details: Ines Zuchowski</p> <p>Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>Ph: 07 47815 527</p>	<p>Research</p> <p>Field Education with External Supervision</p> <p>Have you been involved in participating in or supporting social work student placements with external supervision as a</p> <p>Student?</p> <p>Field Educator?</p> <p>Task Supervisor? Or</p> <p>Liaison Person?</p> <p>Please contact me if you are interested in participating in research about this topic.</p> <p>Contact Details: Ines Zuchowski</p> <p>Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>Ph: 07 47815 527</p>	<p>Research</p> <p>Field Education with External Supervision</p> <p>Have you been involved in participating in or supporting social work student placements with external supervision as a</p> <p>Student?</p> <p>Field Educator?</p> <p>Task Supervisor? Or</p> <p>Liaison Person?</p> <p>Please contact me if you are interested in participating in research about this topic.</p> <p>Contact Details: Ines Zuchowski</p> <p>Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>Ph: 07 47815 527</p>	<p>Research</p> <p>Field Education with External Supervision</p> <p>Have you been involved in participating in or supporting social work student placements with external supervision as a</p> <p>Student?</p> <p>Field Educator?</p> <p>Task Supervisor? Or</p> <p>Liaison Person?</p> <p>Please contact me if you are interested in participating in research about this topic.</p> <p>Contact Details: Ines Zuchowski</p> <p>Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>Ph: 07 47815 527</p>	<p>Research</p> <p>Field Education with External Supervision</p> <p>Have you been involved in participating in or supporting social work student placements with external supervision as a</p> <p>Student?</p> <p>Field Educator?</p> <p>Task Supervisor? Or</p> <p>Liaison Person?</p> <p>Please contact me if you are interested in participating in research about this topic.</p> <p>Contact Details: Ines Zuchowski</p> <p>Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au</p> <p>Ph: 07 47815 527</p>
--	--	--	--	--

Appendix 9: Research Information Sheet



INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: **External Supervision in Social Work Field Education**

You are invited to take part in a research project about external social work supervision for social work students on placements. The research question being explored is "What are the experiences of all key stakeholders in field education with external supervision?". The aims of the research are to review what is known about supervision for social work students on placements, to ascertain the experience and relationships of key players, to investigate what external field education brings to field education and to develop a model/framework or principles for field education with external supervision. The study is being conducted by Ines Zuchowski and will contribute to the PhD research in Social Work at James Cook University.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be invited to be interviewed. The interview, with your consent, will be audio-taped, and should only take approximately 1 hour of your time. At a later stage, you will be invited to participate in a follow-up interview and a workshop, which with your consent, will be audio-taped, and should take approximately 3 hours of your time. The interview and workshop will be conducted at the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University, or another suitable venue.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. You may also withdraw any unprocessed data from the study. Your responses and contact details will be treated strictly confidential by the researcher. The data from the study will be used in research publications and reports to the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare. You will not be identified in any way in these publications. The importance of confidentiality will be discussed in the workshop, however cannot be assured in a workshop context.

If you know of others that might be interested in this study, can you please pass on this information sheet to them so they may contact me to volunteer for the study?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Ines Zuchowski.

Principal Investigator:

Ines Zuchowski

Department of Social Work and Community Welfare
James Cook University

Phone: 4781 5527

Email: Ines.Zuchowski@jcu.edu.au

Supervisors:

Dr Debra Miles and Dr Susan Gair

Department of Social Work and Community Welfare
James Cook University

Phone: 07 47815891/ 07 47814892

Email: Debra.Miles@jcu.edu.au; Susan.Gair@jcu.edu.au

*If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Sophie Thompson, Human Ethics and Grants Administrator, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 6575 (Sophie.Thompson@jcu.edu.au)*

Cairns - Townsville - Brisbane - Singapore
CRICOS Provider Code 00117J