Teaching and Learning Criticality:

A Case Study of Post-Qualifying

Social Work Education

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A Case Study of Post-Qualifying
Social Work Education

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Abstract

Reviews of social work consistently emphasise that social workers need critical thinking to analyse complex information, alongside practical skills development. Although theoretical discussion of social work criticality is well established, this is an under-researched area with few empirical studies. This study aims to inform and develop educational practice by exploring understandings of criticality in social work through a case study of teaching and learning on a post-qualifying course. Participants were experienced social workers, working with children and families. Dialogue and reflective activities were used to encourage critical thinking and investigate participants' responses. Critical realism, aligned with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field, were used to support an investigation of how individual participants understood critical reflection in the context of their social work role. The study developed an interpretative, thematic analysis of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. Findings suggest that participants became familiar with reflective practice during their pre-qualifying courses. In their early career, opportunities for reflection receded as participants felt overwhelmed by an urgent need for technical skills and procedural knowledge. When they returned to study, as experienced social workers, the idea of critical reflection was unfamiliar and provoked anxiety. Whilst reflection was a private activity, some participants initially associated criticality with vulnerability, exposure and risk of public criticism. Participants' prior educational experiences and their perceptions of their own academic ability affected their confidence in the higher educational field. However,

opportunities to discuss their learning in a small, supportive group enabled them to develop confidence in exploring and developing their critical thinking about practice. This thesis contributes to knowledge through exposing and exploring post-qualifying students' various responses to criticality and has implications for teaching criticality effectively. The study suggests there is a role for specific teaching to develop critical thinking, especially in supporting post-qualifying social work students to become the highly critical practitioners necessary in the most complex areas of social work practice.

Key words: social work; education; post-qualifying; professional development; critical reflection; critical pedagogy; dialogue; thematic network analysis.

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Introduction to the thesis: the problem of criticality and the aims of the case study

Professional doctorates enable practitioners to develop and integrate their professional and academic knowledge (Scott et al., 2004). This thesis explores the relationship between social work and criticality through a case study of teaching and learning on a post-qualifying social work course. The opportunity for the study occurred through my work as a Senior Lecturer in Social Work, at Manchester Metropolitan (post '92[1]) University, a post that enables me to remain registered as a social worker. Participants in the study were all local authority social workers working with children and families in North West England and my own social work experience was in this type of setting between 1978 and 1991. Consequently, the thesis concentrates on local authority social work with children and families, rather than social work with other service user groups, or in other settings.

In 2010-11, I taught a group of seven experienced social workers, who were studying a unit called 'Critical Thinking and Analysis,' as part of their post-qualifying award in Advanced Practice and Management in Social Work. It was an exciting opportunity to work with social workers who, together, brought over 60 years of practice experience with them (see Chapter 3, Table 1: Profile of Participants). As I prepared for teaching the unit, a persistent problem came into focus and this became the starting point for the study.

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[1] Former polytechnics, institutes and colleges of higher education that were made universities in 1992.

The problem concerned how to help students develop understanding of criticality and develop confidence to use critical reflection in their work. Currently, social work education must comply with academic standards for higher education courses (QAA, 2014), standards of proficiency set by the regulatory body (Health and Care Professions Council, 2016) and the professional standards for social work in England (The College of Social Work, 2012c). These standards require social work students to demonstrate critical reflection, at both pre-qualifying and post-qualifying levels. However, there is little agreement about how to teach or assess criticality, with various and illusive definitions presenting difficulties for students in attempting to show criticality in written or practical work (Bailin et al., 1999; Coleman et al., 2002 ; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Ford et al., 2004).

Prior to working with this group of post-qualifying students, I had often found students bewildered by the many requirements to demonstrate critical reflection and critical analysis in their written work. Students asked what 'being critical' meant. They asked how to become more critical and how to write critically. It was apparent that students sometimes began from a common-usage understanding of criticality, associated with negative criticism and reinforced by dictionary definitions[2] (Oxford English Dictionary). In these conversations, I tried to help students distil a professional understanding of criticality, with reference to the range of approaches to critical theory and critical practice in the social work literature. I began to think that students

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[2] "criticality…. a. The quality of being critical, b. A critical remark, criticism." (Oxford English Dictionary)

might benefit from teaching that specifically focussed on developing purposeful and appreciative approaches to using criticality. The case study provided the opportunity to investigate this idea, to explore students' understanding of criticality and their responses to specific teaching.

At the beginning of the study, my own understanding of criticality was informed by discussion in the social work literature. The intellectual processes of critical thinking have long been recognised as essential to good social work, for example, in navigating and making sense of complex human circumstances, in making professional judgments and in reflecting on practice (Askeland and Fook, 2009; Knott and Scragg, 2013; Rutter and Brown, 2015; Sheppard and Charles, 2014; Turney, 2014b). There is also a history of influences coming into the profession from social movements critical of the more controlling aspects of social work, for example, from radical social work and anti-discriminatory approaches. Explicitly critical approaches gained momentum from the late 1990s (Brechin et al., 2000; Healy, 2000; Healy, 2005b; Healy, 2005a), using ideas and analytical concepts from developments in critical social theory (Fook, 2012b; Fook and Pease, 1999). Theories that identify as 'critical' question the social and political structures that give rise to differences of power within societies and, for example, offer a critique of the professional power that social workers hold in relation to the children and families with whom they work (Fook, 2012b; Fook and Askeland, 2007; Gardner, 2014).

My initial concern was to support students to develop both their understanding of criticality and their confidence in using critical reflection in their work. However, in confronting this problem, I recognised that I needed to develop my understanding of criticality in order to teach this confounding and complex subject better. I was particularly interested in developing insight into how students understood critical reflection and what they found helpful to their learning about criticality. This seemed essential for developing my own approaches to teaching.

The thesis aims to inform and develop future practice, including my practice, by exploring understandings of criticality in social work, through the literature, and from the perspectives of post-qualifying social work students. The thesis addresses a number of different theoretical understandings and practical applications of criticality.

The structure of the thesis is set out below. The thesis has six chapters, each of which is sub-divided into sections and subsections.

Chapter 1 begins with contemporary definitions of social work and criticality in the context of recent reforms to social work education and the Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro, 2010b; Munro, 2011a; Munro, 2011b). The chapter then discusses how several strands of critical ideas and approaches have influenced social work practice particularly, but not exclusively, during my time in the profession. The discussion traces the impact of modernisation and managerialism on social work with children and

families and the further effects of recent austerity policies. Social work history contains many different strands of critical thought, linked to innovations in practice. Of these, I have chosen to explore those that were significant influences on the development of my own critical thinking, whilst I was a social worker, and where the literature has helped me to identify the impact of these critical ideas in the wider profession.

Chapter 2 discusses the development of post-qualifying social work education, in the context of frequent and continuing changes to social work education, considerably influenced by high-profile child abuse related deaths. The second section discusses elements of critical pedagogy and a chosen dialogical approach to working with the student group. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 offer a review of literature and policy relevant to the aims of the thesis and lead to four research questions, stated at the end of Chapter 2. The methodology of the literature search is explained in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical framework and methodology for the case study that aimed to address the research questions. I began the case study in 2010 and completed the fieldwork in 2011. During that time, I developed and taught the new 'Critical Thinking and Analysis' unit for seven post-qualified social work students. I designed teaching and learning activities to promote students' critical reflection and designed research methodology to investigate students' responses. Semi-structured interviews with the students were taken after they had completed the unit and their work had been assessed.

Chapters 4 and 5 contain the thematic analysis of the data. Chapter 4 analyses data in relation to students' experience of criticality in their prior social work education and practice. Chapter 5 analyses student responses to the content and pedagogy of the unit.

Chapter 6 presents both the discussion and the conclusions to the study. The discussion draws together the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 and outlines the insights drawn from this research. Chapter 6 teases out the contributions to knowledge and explores the limitations to the research. The thesis is concluded through refocussing on the research questions. The contributions to knowledge, which this research makes, are presented within these concluding statements. Chapter 6 also ensures that implications for practice and further research are exemplified.

The study enabled me to develop my own practice in using dialogue, reflective activities and formative feedback, specifically for this group of students and prompted my own critical reflection on how to develop my teaching in the future.

Chapter 1: The developing context for social work with children and families

Introduction to Chapter 1 and context of the study

This chapter initially explores influential strands of critical ideas in the development of social work as a profession, drawn from a range of literature and policy. The discussion identifies tensions in contemporary understandings of social work in the context of recent reviews of social work and social work education. The Munro Review of Child Protection has been included early in the discussion, in Sections 1.1.2, because of its significance in emphasising the critical and analytical nature of social work with children (Munro, 2010b; Munro, 2011a; Munro, 2011b). The discussion then turns to exploring the emergence and legacy of selected critical ideas in the history of social work. Social work histories, like all histories, are interpretations of a complex and messy past but Foucault (1971; 1977) argued that influences from the past travel with us into the present, albeit in a discontinuous and erratic way (Garland, 2014; Higgins, 2013). Foucault (1977: 31) interrogated the past to develop a "history of the present," suggesting that investigating understandings of criticality from social work history might shed light on current understandings. The second section of this chapter explains and discusses the impact of neoliberal policies and modernisation on the scope of contemporary social work and the autonomy of social workers. The discussion in this chapter forms a framework for the subsequent development of the research offered in this thesis.

Since 1999, responsibilities and policy making powers for Education, Health, Social Services and other aspects of social policy have been devolved to the constituent UK nations (Mooney et al., 2006). There has been some divergence of policy, for example in health services, but the child welfare systems have remained similar, with more "policy borrowing" from England, than across other parts of the UK (Stafford, 2011: 219). The study took place under the framework of policy and legislation in England and, consequently, discussion in this chapter will concentrate on the context for social work in England.

In this study (developed and discussed in Chapters 3-6), participants were post-qualifying (PQ) social work students during the aftermath of two serious case reviews concerning the death of 17 month old Peter Connelly in 2007 (Haringey LSCB, 2009; Haringey LSCB, 2010). There had been a child protection plan in place for Peter, in the same Local Authority where Victoria Climbié had also died in 2000. Following Victoria's death, there had been a public inquiry (Laming, 2003) and a major transformation of children's services (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). Following Peter Connelly's death, politicians reacted to the unprecedented media coverage by making the case a major political issue, leading to further fundamental changes to social work and social work education (R. Jones, 2012; Jones, 2014a). Parton (2014: 11) describes the "politics of outrage" towards social work that lasted beyond the general election, in 2010, and into the period when participants were PQ students.

The subsequent reforms to social work and social work education were underway as this study began and formed a significant part of the context in which the study took place. Higgins (2015b: 4) and Singh and Cowden (2009: 4) argue that that these reforms are the latest development in a longstanding struggle for the "'soul' of social work," concerning the role of social workers and whether their main loyalty should be to citizens or to the state. Broader understandings of social work with children and families, particularly those that include promoting social change and social justice, are being further marginalised by an emphasis on the narrower child protection paradigm (Higgins, 2015b; Higgins and Goodyer, 2015).

This chapter discusses the contribution of literature to debates about the role and purpose of social work with children and families. The discussion highlights the significance of criticality and critical ideas, particularly from radical social work, feminism and post-modernism, in the development of contemporary critical social work.

1.1 Establishing Criticality in Social Work

1.1.1 Contemporary definitions of social work

Social workers in England work with people who are the most marginalised, whose behaviour often poses risks to themselves or others, and who are disproportionally affected by social problems such as poverty, deprivation and unemployment (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009; Jordan and Drakeford, 2012). In children and families social work, success has become equated

with preventing the worst case scenarios of child deaths or serious injury

(Pritchard et al., 2013). There is evidence of a long term decline in the rate

of child abuse related deaths since 1974, reflecting well on all those services

contributing to child protection (Jutte et al., 2015; Pritchard and Williams,

2010). However, much social work practice happens in private, in people's

homes (Ferguson, 2014), only coming to public attention through media

reports of high profile inquiries into child deaths (R. Jones, 2012; Winter,

2011). Understandably, those helped by social workers for personal, private

troubles, may be unwilling, or unable, to speak about it publicly, feeling that

their difficulties are shameful (Featherstone et al., 2012) and theirs alone

(Mills, 2000). For these reasons, Cree (2013: 2) describes social work as the

"unloved… and detested" profession.

Definitions of social work are difficult to pin down (Cree, 2013) and social

work has been a "contested profession" from the beginning (Edmondson,

2014: 22; see also Sections 1.1.3 and 1.1.4). In common with other

professions, for example teachers or nurses, contemporary social work

shows evidence of traits that are often associated with professionalism: a

distinct theoretical knowledge base; specific practical skills; altruistic values;

codes of ethics; qualification; registration and regulation (Banks, 2016;

Weinberg, 2015). Jack and Donnellan (2013) and Thompson (2015) argue

that social work is also distinct from other professions in having a

commitment to social justice (QAA, 2008a) and a mandate to promote

individual and social change (International Federation of Social Workers,

2000; International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). These features can

be seen in other professions, for example, in education and youth work (Cooper et al., 2015). However, Thompson's (2015) point is that working for individual and social change, to improve human wellbeing, is a *core* purpose of social work.

The International Federation of Social Workers (2014:online) Global Definition of Social Work states:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

This definition is a statement of aspirations and principles, a starting point for discussion and open to interpretation. The first eleven words connect the practical and academic aspects of social work, something that is a central concern for social work education but notoriously difficult to achieve (Domakin, 2014; Parton, 2000). The recent reviews of social work in England highlighted a perceived gap between social work theory, as taught on pre-qualifying social work courses, and what happens in local authority social work practice (Narey, 2014; Social Work Task Force, 2009a; Social

Work Task Force, 2009b). One consequence of the cumulative impact of these reports is that the former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, commissioned a new statement of knowledge and skills for child and family social work (Department for Education, 2014b), rather than social work in the more general sense, from the Chief Social Worker for Children in England, Isabelle Trowler (Gove, 2014). This underlined recent political interest in social work and redefined social work with children as concerned mainly with child protection, separate from the broader profession (Higgins, 2015b), moving us away from the International Federation of Social Workers definition.

The recent independent review of the education of children's social workers recommended increased specialism in pre-qualifying courses for social workers in England (Narey, 2014). In response, Jones (2014b) raised the question of whether social work is not only contested, but compromised, by having submitted to repeated political interference that has reduced social work to rationing scarce services to those most at risk and keeping them under surveillance. On the other hand, social work has developed expertise in working with those who are most vulnerable and troubled and this could be a source of power and influence (Jones, 2014b), if only the profession were less passive and willing to use this power (McGregor, 2015).

There can be a tension between the pursuit of social change and maintaining social cohesion, indicating an enduring ethical issue for social workers as they manage the contradictions between the empowering and pacifying,

controlling aspects of their role. For many social workers in England today,

idealism and desire for social change is swamped by the pressures of

managing large caseloads of children at risk, leaving little time and energy for

working at a structural level to address the causes of inequality (Higgins and

Goodyer, 2015; Preston-Shoot, 2011). Social workers are now expected to

be inquiring and sceptical about a parent's ability to care for a child (Laming,

2003; Munro, 2011b), whilst they look for ways to include children and their

families in decisions about their welfare, and manage and contain their own

fears about making mistakes (Ferguson, 2014; Stanford, 2010). Social

workers experience these tensions in their day-to-day practice, providing

fertile ground for reflection. This is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

McGregor (2015) uses Foucault (2000) to remind us that, to understand their

role, social workers need to think critically about the dynamic processes of

power in their relationships with both service users and with the state. If, as

Foucault (1980) suggests, there is usually resistance to power, we should

expect families to resist social work intervention when it is challenging, or

overbearing. Similarly, McGregor (2015) argues that social workers have a

choice either to resist or comply with the power of the state to re-define social

work. Consequently, social workers are "complicit in….current and future

transformations" of social work and have a responsibility to shape the future

of their profession, rather than be shaped *by* it (McGregor, 2015: 12).

Criticality can be an important tool in this endeavour, in encouraging

practitioners to consider the interrelationship between their work and the

wider context. A central concern in this thesis has been to investigate how post-qualifying education can contribute, to support this process.

1.1.2   Critical reflection and the Review of Child Protection in England

The Coalition Government commissioned the Munro Review of Child Protection after the General Election in 2010 (Munro, 2010b; Munro, 2011a; Munro, 2011b). In her Final Report, Munro (2011b) recommended that critical reflection and analysis should be one of the capabilities informing both initial social work education and ongoing appraisal of social workers, throughout their careers. The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (Appendix1) will be discussed further, in Chapter 2. Here, I note that its introduction was broadly welcomed in the profession (Cunningham and Cunningham, 2014; Higgins, 2015b; Higgins, 2015a), whilst interpretations of critical reflection have continued to be developed and debated.

Munro interpreted the meaning of critical reflection and analysis as:

- [the] ability to analyse critically the evidence about a child and family's circumstances and to make well-evidenced decisions and recommendations, including when a child cannot remain living in their family either as a temporary or permanent arrangement; and
- skills in achieving some objectivity about what is happening in a child's life and within their family, and assessing change over time. (Munro, 2011b: 96)

Much of the focus of the review was a critique of the child protection system and the effects of a procedural, target driven, culture (Munro, 2010b; Munro, 2011a). However, in the above definition Munro (2011b) outlined the metacognitive critical abilities that she felt individual social workers needed in their day-to-day practice. Munro used the opportunity to stress the importance of applying criticality in casework, in everyday social work processes. Social workers could interpret this as an invitation to critique themselves, to reflect on the influence of their personal thoughts, values and behaviours in each piece of work.

This kind of inward looking reflection is valuable because it can reveal biases, promote self-awareness and indicate where practice could improve (Turney, 2014a). However, reflection can also become a dispiriting and oppressive process of self-monitoring, unless it includes a critical consideration of the wider social context (Turney, 2014a). Several influential writers suggest that, although the terms 'reflective' and 'reflexive' practice are often used interchangeably in the literature, reflexive practice indicates a move into the more critical territory of situating self within context (Fook, 2012a; Fook, 2012b; Fook and Askeland, 2006; Fook and Askeland, 2007; Fook and Gardner, 2007; Turney, 2014a). The reflexive social worker would therefore consider how she impacts on the context of practice *and* how the context impacts back (Taylor and White, 2001).

> In a developed critical practice, practitioners will be both reflective
> and reflexive, able to use a variety of methods to confront the ways in

which their own backgrounds, embodiment, personalities and

perspectives *intermingle* in holistic context. (Fook, 2012b: 49,

emphasis added)

For example, in the wake of the Peter Connelly case, with the election of the

Coalition Government, the holistic context for participants in this study

included the shift in emphasis towards earlier removal of children from birth

families, where there was evidence of maltreatment, including neglect

(Kirton, 2013; Kirton, 2016). At the same time, adoption was re-emphasised

as the preferred outcome for children who needed permanent substitute care

(Gove, 2012; Narey, 2011) and attempts at re-unification with birth families

came under criticism (Kirton, 2013; Parton, 2014). This policy direction

began under New Labour (Frost and Parton, 2009) but fitted well with the

Coalition's "child protection project ….characterised by a muscular

authoritarianism towards multiply-deprived families" (Featherstone et al.,

2014b: 2). Munro's (2011b, above) definition of critical reflection did not

preclude social workers from considering how this context impacted on their

assessments and decisions, nor did her definition encourage reflexivity in this

holistic, situated sense.

The discussion so far has illustrated the power of the state to intervene in the

lives of children and families, and to determine the policy guiding those

interventions. Local authority social workers bring the power of the state into

their relationships with families (Frost, 2011), whilst also mediating and

mitigating its effects. In social work education, this is often discussed as the

tension between the care and control aspects of the role (Parton, 2000). The relationship between individuals, their families, social workers and the state, is explored further in the sections that follow, as this is fundamental to a criticality that seeks to situate self and practice within the social context (D'Cruz et al., 2007; Turney, 2014a). Debates about the role of social work are often bound up in how state power is understood and, particularly, whether the state can be neutral in mediating between conflicting interests of, for example, those who are multiply deprived and the wealthy elite (Turbett, 2014).

1.1.3 The roots of social work in England

State social work expanded after the Second World War but, before this, there were already concurrent and contrasting approaches to tackling social problems. As debates about professionalism developed in the post war period, these differences became aligned with contrasting understandings of social relations from the new social sciences and, in particular, both consensus and conflict models of society flourished (Fish and Hardy, 2015).

There was a critical and radical current in social work from the beginning, emerging in late 19th century in the 'Settlement Movement' in the USA and Britain (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009; Weinstein, 2011). The Settlement Movement saw personal problems as having social causes, rather than being due to inherited or personal deficits, and concentrated on social reform and community development, rather than casework (Dominelli, 2013;

Edmondson, 2014; McLaughlin, 2008). This approach eventually influenced

the community development projects in local authority social work teams

during the 1970s and early 1980s (Mayo, 1975). However, in the UK, these

traditions are now more common in the voluntary (charitable) sector, whilst

local authority social work teams concentrate on casework (Dominelli, 2013).

Statutory children and families social work, as it is currently practiced, has

roots in 19th Century philanthropy and charitable work, in the context of the

humiliating measures of Poor Law (Parton, 2014; Turbett, 2014). Gradually,

some charitable home visitors moved away from Victorian, punitive

approaches to poor families and started to draw on early developments in

counselling and casework, particularly from the USA, to help individual

families make changes in their lives (Payne, 2005; Turbett, 2014). Individual

and family casework models came to dominate social work in the UK, USA

and Australia, from the period of the Second World War onwards (Dominelli,

2013; Rojek et al., 1988), under what some commentators have called a

"psychiatric deluge" of psycho-dynamic theory (Harris, 2008: 668).

Caseworkers needed intellectual and reflective capacities to develop

hypotheses and insights into family problems. This humane, empathetic,

critical thinking emphasised the possibilities for individual change within

families, rather than social change, and became a way in which social

workers could demonstrate their professional expertise.

1.1.4 Social Work's emerging professionalism

The idea of professional social work, with an academic knowledge base, began in the post Second World War reconstruction, particularly in Europe and Scandinavia (Payne, 2005). In the UK, social work developed quietly for 25 years, in separate departments for the welfare of children, older people and disabled people (Edmondson, 2014; Payne, 2005). Social workers' knowledge of the legislative and policy context of their work, their gate-keeping role for resources and their training in a developing body of social work theory, all emphasised their professional power in relation to service users.

The 1970s has been described as the zenith of local authority social work (Payne, 2005; Rogowski, 2010), when social work appeared as the new "rising star" of the welfare state (Rogowski, 2012: 921). In 1971, as a result of the Seebohm Report, new combined Local Authority Social Services Departments were created to implement community based alternatives to institutional care for both adults and children (Rogowski, 2010; Seebohm, 1968). This was a period of rapid social change, when critical ideas grew alongside activism and when the social work profession came of age in providing a range of social welfare services *and* community development. However, many social workers at that time rejected the idea that social work was a profession. Some argued that privileging professional knowledge over knowledge from families and communities created unacceptable barriers between social workers and their clients (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Galper,

1980). Social workers grew in numbers and confidence (C. Jones, 2012) but ambivalence about professionalism continued (Bamford, 2015) and the British Association of Social Workers spoke of "struggling to achieve an identity for social work which is in itself in ferment" (Stevenson, 1971: 1).

The Children and Young Person's Act 1969 (CYPA 1969) provided the statutory framework for much of the children and families social work at the time. Initially, this was considered progressive legislation as it appeared to shift the emphasis towards welfare and away from punitive interventions (Harris, 1982). However, in pursuit of child welfare interventions, the CYPA 1969 also gave social workers more powers to remove children from their families and more grounds on which to seek care orders from the courts, thus increasing the potential for state intervention in families. Social workers became busy presenting more reports to courts and case conferences, activities that demonstrated their professional power over service users' lives (C. Jones, 2012).

1.1.5 The Radical Social Work critique

Criticism of social work professionalism persisted throughout the 1970s, for example, through a radical social work magazine called 'Case Con'[3] which saw professionalism as abandoning critical social work:

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[3] The name Case Con implied a critical attitude to professional 'case conferences,' that often excluded children and families from most of the discussion (Weinstein, 2011).

Professionalism is a particularly dangerous development specifically

because social workers look to it for an answer to many of the

problems and contradictions of the job itself - i.e. being unable to solve

the basic inadequacy of society through social work. (Bailey and

Brake, 1975: 145-146)

As the welfare state developed in the post war period, a social democratic

view of the state seemed to be vindicated by the progressive reforms that

introduced universal health care, education and welfare (Turbett, 2014). This

view saw the state as a neutral arbiter between competing interests in society

(Allman, 2010; Miliband, 1982). The radical social work tradition criticised

this consensual view of the state and was more aligned with a Marxist

analysis of the state as an instrument for managing discontent within the

population, through forms of domination (Miliband, 1972). This perspective

saw professional social work as firstly, coercive, through increasingly using

statutory powers, secondly, pacifying, through encouraging accommodation

to unjust social conditions and, thirdly, oppressive, by setting limits on

expectations (Allman, 2010; Bailey and Brake, 1975; Galper, 1980).

Within these debates ran an argument about the forms of persuasion that

enabled inequality to persist, drawing on Gramsci's (1971; 1978) work on

hegemony. Gramsci (1971) argued that, as well as coercion by force,

domination was achieved through more subtle forces, affecting all aspects of

people's lives, and constructing a generalised consciousness in favour of

accepting existing social conditions (Mayo, 1998). It can be argued that

there was interest in these ideas precisely because hegemonies were

challenged by new social movements, for example, from feminists and an

emerging movement for Gay and Lesbian rights (Milligan, 1975). Although

the welfare state could be seen as a progressive development, in providing

services for people in need, it could be insensitive and oppressive in

reinforcing dominant constructions of family life (Corrigan and Leonard,

1978).

Weinstein (2011) points out that the radical critique was not against family

casework per se, but was against an uncritical casework that reinforced

oppressive hegemonic ideas. For example, Freire (1996) influenced radical

social work in arguing that social workers needed to be curious to learn from

service users, as well as supporting service users to learn more about

hegemonic ideas and social conditions affecting their lives (Moch, 2009).

Freire's ideas will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.2.3

and 2.2.4) but, for some social workers, this approach to critical practice

meant supporting children to contribute to case conferences and challenging

their exclusion from these meetings (Stein and Ellis, 1983). In this way,

social work criticality not only focussed on children's individual problems, but

sought ways to empower children, within relationships with their social

workers, and in wider institutional structures that affected their lives.

As the sections that follow will show, radical social work lost support during

the 1980s. Sections 1.1.8 and 2.1.3, below, show how critical practice

developed in new directions, drawing on feminist and anti-racist perspectives

in particular (Bailey and Brake, 1980; Woodward, 2013). The literature demonstrates a resurgence of interest in radical social work around the time I was teaching participants in this study (Baldwin, 2011; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009; Lavalette, 2011; Pease, 2009; Rogowski, 2008). Interestingly, this resurgence was partly inspired by a defence of professionalism, in the context of managerialism and bureaucratic interference in professional autonomy (Broadhurst et al., 2010; Wastell et al., 2010; see also Section 1.2.2).

1.1.6 The crisis begins

If the 1970s was the zenith of social work, it was short lived. As Munro (2010b) observes there was never a golden age of social work. By the time I became a social worker in 1978, radicalism was itself under pressure from a reinvented political right, deriving its energy from an international economic crisis that rumbled on, from 1973, throughout the 1970s (Harvey, 2005; Harvey, 2011). The post-war consensus about the importance of the welfare state came under attack from the political right, who argued that the expansion of state welfare; housing, health and education, was part of the problem and that services should be cut back. This was the beginning of neoliberal ideas permeating the public sector, eventually leading to the marketization of public services (Harvey, 2005; Rogowski, 2012).

The uncertainty about cuts in public expenditure came as the new social services departments faced their first major child protection crisis following

the death of 7-year-old Maria Colwell in 1973 (Parton, 1985). This case, so soon after the new departments were created, began the process of refocussing on child protection that eventually brought generic social services departments to an end 30 years later. Maria had been fostered by her aunt for five years but was placed back with her mother and step-father, under social work supervision. Maria died following neglect and severe physical abuse (Frost and Parton, 2009; Parton, 1985). The trial, the conviction of her stepfather for manslaughter, and the subsequent public inquiry, received substantial press coverage and political attention. The Inquiry criticised the social workers in the case for not building a relationship with Maria and not adequately following up concerns from neighbours and teachers (Winter, 2011).

Parton (1985) argued that the Maria Colwell case became a watershed in social work and, in the context of the ensuing moral panic about 'problem families,' refocussed social work onto child protection as a core activity. The new Children Act 1975 (s.3) emphasised that the local authority's first duty was to the welfare of the child and, in the aftermath of the Colwell case, there was more pessimism about prospects of working successfully to maintain neglected children with birth families (Parton, 1985). Munro (2010b) points out that this case was significant in marking a change in attitudes to social work in wider society. In future, social workers would be held accountable for assessing risk to individual children, placing an expectation on social workers that they should be able to predict risk of harm accurately, in circumstances of great complexity and unpredictability.

Taylor and White (2001; 2006) have argued that the pressure to predict risk of harm can be interpreted as a quest for certainty about making the 'right' decision in very uncertain situations, where the consequences of getting it wrong could be very serious for all parties. The implication is that risk assessment is rational-technical process of accounting for risk and protective factors. However, the practical-moral aspects of judgement making include developing relationships with families and considering ethical issues such as power and powerlessness (Taylor and White, 2001). Thus, although evidence from research, inquiries and past practice can help inform judgement making, critical reflective abilities remain fundamental to engaging families and practicing ethically in situations of ambiguity and uncertainty (Parton, 1998).

Between 1973 and 1982, 29 further public inquiries into child deaths kept public and political attention on social work and concentrated social workers' attention on child protection work (Corby et al., 1998; Parton, 1985). Common themes in the inquiries suggested the desirability of a qualified social work workforce equipped to think critically and analytically about complex family situations, where the risks to a child might not be immediately apparent (Frost and Parton, 2009; Parton, 2014).

1.1.7 Alternatives to care and custody: critiquing welfare

As the economic crisis deepened into the 1980s, both public sector cuts and the Thatcher Government's ideological stance of withdrawing the state from family life, encouraged policy makers to consider alternatives to state care and custody for children and young people in trouble (Harris, 2008; Payne, 2005). One example of the endurance of criticality in the profession was the development of 'Intermediate Treatment' (IT) programmes, as alternatives to custodial sentences and care orders, an innovation that took place on a battleground of ideas (Pickford, 2012).

The Children and Young Persons Act 1969 abolished approved schools but, in large assessment centres and community homes, old regimes, attitudes and practices persisted into the late 1980s. This social work student's account of her own time in care, during the 1980s, illustrates a typical trajectory into a 'secure unit:'

> ….I went into care, when I was 12, I went to an assessment centre,…. they try and gauge where they should place you and from there they placed me in a children's home, and I was there for about a year, maybe 18 months, but I kept running away because I was older then, and it was quite near to where my family lived, so at every opportunity I would be running away, so they said if you keep running away we will have to put you somewhere where you can't, so I just didn't think they would, and eventually they put me in a secure unit in

XXXX until I was 16…. It was like prison, every door you went

through was locked and there was no toilet, erm, doors on the toilets,

or bathrooms, and you were only allowed out an hour a day in the

grounds. The school was in the basement so you were sort of locked

in there for like 23 hours a day. (Devereux et al., 2013)

The powerlessness of children incarcerated within the residential care

system was shocking and it seemed to me that children were controlled at

the expense of being cared for (Leicestershire County Council, 1993;

Staffordshire County Council, 1991; Warner, 1992; Waterhouse et al.,

2000)[4]. Intermediate Treatment (IT) challenged established practices with

young people in trouble. Interestingly, the theoretical basis for this approach

came from a critique of the 1970s shift towards child welfare. The 'law and

order' rhetoric of the incoming Conservative Government reinforced the

moral panic about 'problem families' and painted a picture of families who

could not keep children out of trouble (Frost and Stein, 1989; Muncie, 2009;

Parton, 1985). Welfare considerations, once disclosed to the court, resulted

in children being more likely to be removed from families because

magistrates saw their family circumstances as impoverished and undesirable

(Muncie, 2009; Thorpe, Green, et al., 1980).

IT was an early example of evidence based practice, where evidence

suggested we were inadvertently compromising children's rights to justice

(Rogowski, 2010). Researchers analysed social workers' interventions with

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[4] These investigations showed that children were indeed abused in a number of residential
institutions around this time.

young offenders (Denman, 1985; Thorpe, Green, et al., 1980) and social workers were increasingly aware of their power to label and damage young people (Muncie, 2009). For example, well-meaning preventative interventions might have drawn young people further into the care system than their behaviour warranted (Haines and Drakeford, 1998; Thorpe, Smith, et al., 1980). In this way, systems theory influenced social workers to look critically at their part in the Criminal Justice System, to examine the consequences of *their* actions, as well as the actions of the young people (Forder, 1976; Haines and Drakeford, 1998; Pincus and Minahan, 1973). I now call this process reflexive thinking, a process of subjecting practice to analysis though reflecting carefully on my own actions, the social and political context and, crucially, the service user's views of the work, before re-testing ideas (Knott and Scragg, 2013).

Systems theory continues to underpin contemporary analysis in social work, for example, in Munro's (2010a; 2010b; 2011b) analysis of child protection. However, recent developments have sought to address the complexity in human systems, pointing out that social work systems are not like linear mechanical systems of cause and effect, but messy complex networks of feedback loops (Fish and Hardy, 2015; Stevens and Cox, 2008). This makes systems theory difficult to use for predicting how systems will respond to changes, as there are numerous, often unknown, factors to take into account. However, as Munro (2010b) demonstrates, systems theory is currently useful as an analytical tool for seeking different elements of a whole system, and for studying relationships between them. Importantly, this type of analysis in

health care and aviation tends to accept that prediction is difficult and expects that there will be errors leading to 'near misses.' The task is to learn from investigation of these errors, in the context of the whole system, rather than apportion blame (Fish and Hardy, 2015) and this approach is currently being used to improve learning from serious case reviews (Rawlings et al., 2014)

Intermediate Treatment was one of several initiatives during the 1980s and 1990s that promoted listening to children and challenged the negative perceptions of young people. Organisations like 'Who Cares?' (Stein, 2012) encouraged children in care to speak for themselves, for example in case conferences, and to press for changes in the restrictive practices in children's homes. Eventually, the Children Act 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child required social workers to consult children about decisions that affected them (Equality and Human Rights Commission; McLeod, 2008) but, before then, one of the strongest influences in promoting the voices of service users came from the women's movement.

1.1.8 Social Work encounters feminism

Feminist theory and practice have made a major contribution to a critical understanding of how power operates in social work, including both Second and Third Wave Feminism[5] (Orme, 2009). Between 1975 and 1980, the

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[5] The Second Wave Feminism, refers to a resurgence of the women's movement, beginning in the USA and Europe in the 1960s, through to the late 1980s. Third Wave Feminism followed and represents a search for a more inclusive feminism that acknowledges diversity amongst women.

murders of 13 women in the North of England highlighted broader issue of violence against women (Gresswell and Hollin, 1994). Services for women and girls became a concern within the women's movement and the possibility of women-centred practice filtered into social work (Dominelli, 2002a; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Orme, 2009). Feminism became a further challenge to psychoanalytical casework by contesting norms and expectations about gender roles in families (Hudson, 1985).

A central matter in the dialogue between feminism and social work was that women social workers had recourse to statutory powers in their relationships with women service users. Criticisms of women centred practice in the state sector argued that statutory powers, combined with differences in social class, education and ethnicity, meant that relationships between women social workers and women service users were far from egalitarian (White, 2006). Even if social workers sought to see family problems from a women's point of view, such adaptations were seen as poor substitutes for disrupting patriarchal systems of power in wider social relations (Wise, 1990). Further, due to their child protection duty, women social workers could not avoid stigmatising women as inadequate mothers, and their practice could only reinforce women's domestic roles as mothers and carers (Dale and Foster, 1986). Radical Feminists asserted that feminists within state social work could only make limited reforms to the way social work engaged with women (Brownmiller, 1977; Firestone, 1971; Millett, 1989). Feminist social work should therefore concentrate on developing women centred practice outside of the state sector (Orme, 2003), for example, through Rape Crisis Centres

(Jones and Cook, 2008) and Women's Aid (Featherstone, 2001; Wilson, 1977; Wise, 1985).

From the 1980s, a Third Wave of feminist scholarship began to unpick the notions of common experience and identity amongst women (Orme, 2002). Contributions from black, lesbian and disabled women brought out the heterogeneity of women's experience (Orme, 2009). Davis (1982) and hooks[6] (1982) discussed the dual oppression faced by black women in the USA, originating in the history of slavery and continuing through contemporary racist ideas, in addition to sexist ideas. It was argued that black women, and poor black women in particular, were marginalised by a women's movement that was mostly made up of white, Western, middle class, professional women (hooks, 1984). Crenshaw (1991) pointed out that different forms of discrimination intersect and that identity is multi-faceted. Thus, women social workers who followed these debates could not assume common ground with women service users but were prompted to explore both commonality and difference.

Dominelli and McLeod (1989: 176-177) argued that in a predominantly female profession, mainly working with women as mothers and carers, it was *essential* to develop a "feminist professional presence in statutory social work." Gilligan's (1977; 1982) influential work on gender and moral development argued that women often prioritise caring as a moral virtue. If this were the case, it would be significant in working with women whose

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[6] hooks chooses lower case for her name.

caring for others often went unnoticed and undervalued. On the other hand, if it was assumed that an ethic of care was 'natural' for women, those who neglected their children could be judged very harshly and their behaviour could be seen viewed as "unthinkable" (Turney, 2000: 51). Social work that was sensitive to the oppression of women also needed to examine the role of men in families where children were neglected, to consider the wider social contexts and relations of power that impacted on gender roles (Turney, 2000).

It was hoped that feminist social workers would critique the power relations involved in statutory social work, work against the stigmatisation of women trapped by poverty and work alongside women who wanted to leave violent and oppressive relationships (Hague and Mullender, 2006; Mullender and Hague, 2005). These aims remain relevant to current critical analysis of practice. As Hicks (2015) points out, judgements about 'lifestyle' can still be based on gendered assumptions and prejudices, as was apparent in recent cases of child sexual exploitation, where girls at risk were described as prostitutes by professionals (Griffiths, 2013; Jay, 2014).

Feminist critiques of statutory social work added momentum to the emerging service user moments through foregrounding women service users' perspectives and challenging stereotyping. Gilligan's (1977; 1982) argument, that women's different perspectives are seldom heard, added weight to service user demands to be heard (Orme, 2003; Orme, 2009). Service user perspectives have since become more widespread in the fields of social work

policy, practice, education and research (Allain et al., 2006; Baldwin and Sadd, 2006; Beresford et al., 2006; McLaughlin, 2010; Stevens and Tanner, 2006). However, there are questions about how much influence service users have in these processes (Beresford, 2000b) and there are suspicions that service user voices are becoming incorporated and losing their critical potency (Forbes and Sashidharan, 1997; Robinson and Webber, 2013). These fears echo warnings from feminists about the potential for services to institutionalise aspects of a movement that are the least challenging to established practices and marginalising the rest (Hudson, 1985; Mullender and Hague, 2005). If this is so, critical reflection becomes an ethical activity, whereby practitioners work with integrity and communicate openness in seeking genuine feedback on practice.

1.1.9   Postmodern ideas and critical social work

In 1981, I was a qualified local authority social worker, working with children and families. As radical critiques of social inequality lost ground to the popularisation of New Right ideologies of individual responsibility, there were echoes of the Poor Law and social workers were criticised for being too understanding, too lenient with families living in poverty (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009). The progressive, modernist project of the welfare state seemed to have stalled and the gains of the post war years seemed to be in reverse. The significance of this was in opening spaces for critical approaches that drew on developments in postmodern and poststructural social theories (Callinicos, 1989).

Postmodernism can be understood both as a characterisation of the age in which we live, and as a way of theorising about the world in which we live (Fook, 2005). In questioning the modernist assumption of human progress (Howe, 1994), postmodernist analysis fitted the period of the 1980s and 1990s, when social welfare seemed to be in decline, and unemployment and poverty were increasing (Neild, 2012; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Lyotard (1984) was prominent in postmodern thinking, arguing that the universal claims (meta-narratives) of established western theories of human behaviour, for example, psychoanalysis and Marxism, made over-simplified generalisations and should be treated with scepticism. Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, p.xxiv, in Malpas, 2002: 16) argued that many established theories falsely implied the prospect of progress towards a better life (Malpas, 2002). Postmodern argument suggested that it was not possible to discern objective reality through the observation of structures (Fook, 2012b), for example, as Marxism investigated capitalist economic and political structures (Marx and Engels, 1968). Rather, meaning was unstable, fluid, open to interpretation and, therefore, subjective (Healy, 2005a; Healy and Leonard, 2000). This analysis has influenced approaches to social work research, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Introduction to Chapter 3 and Section 3.1: Ontology) and the development of critical social work practice.

Healy (2005b: 198) refers to a "range of post theories" that have influenced critical thinking in social work through advocating detailed exploration of how

power operates at the micro-level, in many fragmented forms within the relationships between people (Howe, 1994; Thompson, 2010). Poststructural approaches share the postmodernist scepticism towards assumptions of progress but concentrate attention on the way power operates through language and discourse (Fook, 2012b). Foucault's (2007: 207) interest in history (Chapter 1: Introduction), derived from his argument that every society has a "régime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true." As social work relies on written and spoken language, poststructuralists have become increasingly influential in developing critical reflective approaches in the profession, for example, in paying close attention to how language can convey implications of inferiority and superiority (Turney, 2014a).

From the early 1990s, interest in exploring 'empowerment' became indicative of this shift in emphasis (McLaughlin, 2016) and was influential in the curriculum when I began teaching social work in 1992. The idea of empowerment, as an approach to social work, originated in anti-racism and challenged social workers to counter the stereotyping and negative appraisals of black families and communities (Ahmad, 1990). Empowerment is now well established in social work but its meaning has become broader, usually referring to practice that supports service users to find their own power in challenging oppressive attitudes and institutional practices (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 2010). However, although empowerment might involve challenging structural oppression, for example through the service user movements (Beresford,

2000b; Beresford, 2000a), it came to mean social workers relinquishing some of their power to service users in the context of a casework relationship (McLaughlin, 2016). Whilst this could be helpful and humane practice, it still emphasised the professionals' power in the casework relationship and left inequality in wider society in tact (Ellsworth, 1989; Pease, 2002).

Neoliberal ideological assaults on aspirations for social and economic equality redefined progress in acquisitive, individualist terms (Harvey, 2007). In this context, postmodernists and poststructuralists offered social workers a novel critical approach to the analysis of professional power (Dominelli, 2002a). Action in pursuit of wider social change was not excluded, but the focus of criticality shifted to an analysis of the detail of relationships and interactions, exploring the different meanings and understandings that people brought to these interactions (Turbett, 2014).

1.2   Refocussing social work: the impact of neoliberalism

1.2.1   The rise of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has become the ubiquitous context for social work in England.

Neoliberal arguments for a reduced public sector began to gain a hearing

amongst Conservative politicians from the mid-1970s, coinciding with the

aftermath of the Maria Colwell case (Section 1.1.6). Following the election of

the Conservative Government in 1979 and through successive governments,

neoliberal policies have incrementally reinforced a narrow child protection

role for statutory children and families social work teams (Parton, 1985;

Parton, 2009). Aspirations have become focussed on creating change at the

level of the individual and family, rather than seeking social change and,

consequently, critical reflection in social work now takes place in the context

of a more limited range of possibilities for practice.

Neoliberal ideas developed in European academic economics during the

1930s and stressed individual responsibility for family welfare and

advancement (Harvey, 2005). These ideas assumed that people were

motivated by self-interest, acquisitiveness and profit, the antithesis of social

democratic ideas of shared risk (Rogowski, 2012; Rogowski, 2013).

Proponents of neoliberal ideas presented them as modern, progressive and

revolutionary but, as Harvey (2000) pointed out, their effects were regressive

and underpinned by nineteenth century values. Bourdieu (1998a) set out

how neoliberal governments dismantled opposition to their policies through

an ideological attack on collective approaches to welfare, emphasising individual responsibility for economic security, whilst increasing inequality and insecurity in the population. One recent manifestation is in the use of pejorative terms, such as 'welfare dependency' (Garrett, 2015). This conflates 'welfare' and 'dependency' reinforcing the neoliberal hegemonic view that both are undesirable, and creating a climate more favourable to cuts in welfare.

Despite resistance from some councils, by 1985 the Conservative government was able to impose business values and management practices on local government services, using the 'New Public Management' (NPM) approach (Pickford, 2012; Harris, 2003). Under NPM, the public sector was restructured to introduce a privatised market into service provision and import management practices from the private sector into those areas that had to be retained by the state (Hood, 1995). This 'managerial' approach, typically, included practices such as, provoking organisational change, reducing staffing costs, measuring success against targets and emphasising outputs, sometimes known as 'payment-by-results.' In the social work literature, a robust critique of managerialism has argued that social workers' professionalism has been undermined through technocratic measures of performance, for example, by imposing standardised timescales for completing assessments, regardless of the complexity (Bezes et al., 2012; Harlow, 2003; Harris, 2003; Payne, 2005; Wastell et al., 2010).

The implementation of the Children Act 1989 (CA 1989) reflected the neoliberal context, by emphasising parental responsibility and limiting the scope of compulsory social work intervention to those exceptional circumstances where children could be at risk of "significant harm" (Brayne et al., 2013). This legislation followed from the recommendations of the Cleveland Inquiry investigation into 121 contested child abuse investigations, and the rationale for curtailing the state's power to intervene in families arose from these cases (Butler-Sloss, 1988; Winter, 2011). Social workers welcomed the rhetoric of partnership working with families that accompanied the implementation of the CA 1989 (Parton, 2014). However, much provision for children in need (but not at risk of significant harm) remained discretionary and, therefore, subject to budgetary constraints. Resources were oriented on meeting statutory obligations towards children at risk, reinforcing pressure to refocus social work with children towards protecting individual children at risk, rather than promoting the wellbeing of children in general (Sayer, 2008).

1.2.2   New Labour's 'Third Way' managerialism

After winning the election in 1997, New Labour introduced a 'Third Way,' in between social democracy and neoliberalism, aiming for a mixed economy of welfare (Jordan, 2000). The state retained a role, alongside private and independent service providers (Giddens, 2013), but intensified measures to enforce accountability, for example, through more targets, inspections and performance league tables (Frost and Parton, 2009).

In social policy, the Social Exclusion Unit targeted groups for research and policy provision, including rough sleepers, teenage parents, prisoners' families, looked-after children, and families in disadvantaged areas (Jordan, 2001; Levitas, 2004; Levitas et al., 2007; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Whilst the subsequent policies were criticised for moralising about lifestyles characterised as undesirable, the programmes enabled some effective, innovative projects, for example, on sexual health for young people (Frances, 2010). However, these were often specialised, short-term services, commissioned to the private and voluntary sector, or delivered through Sure Start centres, by mainly unqualified staff and volunteers (Rogowski, 2010). This has been a factor in distancing social work further from its generic origins and confining qualified social workers to the most stressful work, with those service users at greatest risk (Jordan, 2000; Jordan, 2001).

One of the main managerial initiatives was to introduce the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families[7] (Department of Health, 2000a), a national framework prescribing areas of a child's circumstances to be included in assessments. Although assessment frameworks had existed previously in child protection cases (Department of Health, 1988), the new framework was to standardise social work assessments in respect of children and to set specified timescales for completion. Further, the new framework and the accompanying Practice

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[7] The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families was part of the Quality Protects Programme, introduced in 1998 to improve the management and delivery of children's social services. Quality Protects was one of a number of developments aimed at addressing social problems and family difficulties, including Sure Start, the Children's Fund, and the Family Support Grant programme (Department of Health, 1998b; Rushton and Dance, 2002).

Guidance (Department of Health, 2000b: xii) intended "to ensure that work with children and families is firmly evidence-based."

It seems incontrovertible that judgements concerning child welfare should use evidence gathered through interaction with the child and family, together with recent research. Garrett (2003) noted that the tools that accompanied the Assessment Framework, and the studies that informed it, were overwhelmingly drawn from the positivist tradition in psychology. These investigations reported statistical associations, for example, by drawing on longitudinal studies of children to investigate risk and protective factors for outcomes in adult life (Department of Health, 2000b; Garrett, 2003). However, this raised the epistemological question of what knowledge counted as 'evidence' (Webb, 2001) and whether qualitative evidence, for example the views of service users, or social workers, also counted (Humphries, 2003).

In social work, knowledge from research is applied to the specific context of the child and their circumstances. Millar and Corby (2006) found that, in implementing the Assessment Framework, the skill and approach of the social worker was still the major factor in how families felt about undergoing assessment. Social workers' judgements still depend on their skills in getting to know the child and their family and their reflective abilities were crucial in working out how their own subjective feelings might affect their judgement making (Taylor and White, 2006). Recent approaches to 'Evidence Based Practice' (EBP) in social work have recognised the insights that qualitative

evidence from practitioners and service users can provide, blended with research about the effectiveness and value for money (Fisher, 2016). Qualitative researchers argued for the validity of smaller scale studies that examine the intricacies of day to day practice (Adams et al., 2009; Ferguson, 2014; White, 1997) but it has taken some time for these interpretative methods to gain a hearing within EBP.

In 2002, I led seminars for children and families social workers in a North West Local Authority, to support the introduction of the Assessment Framework. The social workers welcomed access to research and readily criticised aspects of the studies. However, as Lawler (2013) suggested, the prescriptive nature of the Assessment Framework guidance seemed to undermine their confidence and autonomy. One social worker asked if the new Assessment Framework meant she had been "doing it wrong all these years." It became clear that experienced social workers in the room felt that the requirement to complete initial assessments within seven working days was unachievable and therefore a stressful and demoralising measure of their performance.

Compliance with Assessment Framework timescales meant that pressures to complete bureaucratic tasks began to take time away from working with children (White, 2008; Masson et al., 2008), especially as managers worried about risks to the organisation due to missing targets (Munro, 2010a; Turbett, 2014). Not only was this a frustration for staff, it was also increasing the risk that signs of neglect and abuse would be missed as pressure to meet

deadlines left little time for critical analysis of child observations (Jones, 2001; Munro, 2010a). Direct work with children was increasingly left to unqualified staff, as this experienced social worker illustrated:

> The ICS computer system has meant that a larger proportion of time is spent on entering information and sat before my computer. It is impossible not to do this task and therefore there is less time available for direct pieces of work with families, this work is referred on to family support workers. (Masson et al., 2008: 59)

Munro (2011b) recommended a relaxation of the timescales for assessments and a refocussing on core social work activities, by spending less time with computers and more time with children. However, the e-workload continues to expand (Garrett, 2014). Meanwhile pressure on social work services has intensified (Featherstone et al., 2012; Featherstone et al., 2014a) as families least able to cope struggle to manage the decline in their income due to austerity policies (Jordan and Drakeford, 2012; Pantazis, 2016) and referrals to children's social work services have increased (Devine and Parker, 2015; Jutte et al., 2015)[8]. Chapter 2 (Section 2.1) comes back to this point as has been growing concern that workload pressures are making it difficult for post-qualifying social work students to find time for critical reflection.

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[8] Referrals to children's social work teams in England rose in 2009/10, then decreased until 2013/14, when there was another rise, to 570,8000 children referred (Jutte et al., 2015).

1.2.3 Crisis and austerity

Both parties in the Coalition Government that emerged from the 2010 election were committed to reductions in public spending that were beginning to take effect as participants in this study provided their interviews (Pantazis, 2016). Notions of 'deserving and undeserving' surfaced in debates about welfare and support for families living in poverty, for example, in the form of the Troubled Families Programme (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Jordan and Drakeford, 2012). This programme of non-statutory, preventative help defined 'Troubled Families,' as in need of intervention to turn their lives around (Department for Education, 2010). Levitas (2012) argued that this policy was based on flawed research and a mistaken re-reading of research from the previous government's Social Exclusion Task Force. Levitas (2012: 8) pointed out that:

> '…. troubled families' discursively collapses 'families with troubles' and 'troublesome families', while simultaneously implying that they are dysfunctional as families. This discursive strategy is successful in feeding vindictive attitudes to the poor.

The emphasis on employment and education, as a route out of poverty, continued the policy direction of New Labour, but has become more narrow, prescriptive, authoritarian and arguably more stigmatising in nature (Parton, 2014). Local authorities receive funds for Troubled Families projects on the basis of 'payment by results' and commission programmes through a variety

of arrangements with local authority and voluntary agencies (Davies, 2015). The Family Intervention Workers, who work with families as part of the Troubled Families programmes, are usually unqualified, un-registered workers, further confirming social work's marginalization from preventative work (Parr, 2015).

1.2.4. Outsourcing Child Protection

Under New Labour, the Coalition, and the current Conservative Government, local authorities gradually commissioned more children's social care services from the independent, private and voluntary sector (Harris, 2003; Rogowski, 2013; Stevenson and Schraer, 2015; Turbett, 2013). Much of what was once provided by the state is now provided by the private and voluntary sector, through a process of competitive tendering, where the cost of services is a major consideration (Garrett, 2009b; Garrett, 2010). The process continues into 2016 and Jones (2016a; 2015) has been prominent in expressing concerns about this fragmentation of services, including the loosening of regulatory control for agencies outside the state sector. New powers to outsource child protection caused alarm and criticism, including from Munro (Butler, 2014a). For-profit organisations are not permitted to bid for this work (Butler, 2014b), but there are still concerns that outsourcing will open up the profession to more insecure employment arrangements and could lead to fragmented services (Butler, 2014a). Councils are now beginning to consider voluntarily outsourcing child protection services, although this can be

mandatory where children's services are graded as inadequate through inspections by Ofsted (Stevenson and Schraer, 2015)

Opponents of neoliberalism suggest that transfers of staff, services and capital, away from the state will impact negatively on the confidence of staff to assert their autonomy. Harvey (2005; 2011) argues that the introduction of precarious employment practices demoralises staff and undermines their confidence to challenge their employers and assert their autonomy. However, Harman's (2012) slightly less pessimistic analysis of the effects of outsourcing suggests that the drive for insecure employment practices is constrained where there is a need for a stable and skilled workforce. Harman's (2012) point suggests that, where staff recognise their worth to the organisation, they might also gain a sense of their power within the organisation and recover their confidence to challenge their employers. Currently, there is a shortage[9] of social workers for local authority children and families teams, suggesting that their value to their employers would be high. However, there are growing numbers of temporary agency staff working in local authority teams and this suggests that local authorities have been finding alternatives to employing permanent staff (Department for Education, 2016b; see also Section 1.2.1 of this Thesis).

Harvey (2005; 2011) and Harman (2012) draw attention to the impact of actual, or perceived, job insecurity on the confidence of staff to assert

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[9] There were 26,500 full time equivalent (FTE) children's social workers in 2015 and 5,470 FTE vacancies (including vacancies covered by agency workers). In addition, there were 4,860 FTE agency social workers, with 78% of agency social workers employed to cover vacancies (Department for Education, 2016b: 1).

themselves, when this might bring them into conflict with their employers. Harman's (2012) analysis suggests that the employee's perception of their worth to the organisation is crucial, for both public and private sector employees. This could be significant in relation to the confidence of children's social workers to express independent critical thought, should further outsourcing go ahead.

1.3   Conclusion to Chapter 1

Social Work developed from optimistic, idealistic origins as a critical profession drawing on diverse strands of critical thinking. In response to austerity, there has been a resurgence of radical social work in the UK and abroad (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2013) and a willingness, amongst a substantial minority of social workers and social work academics, to challenge growing inequality and policies that blame individuals for their problems (Ferguson, 2008; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009; Social Work Action Network, 2014).

Critical theory is widespread in the social work literature, articulating frustrations with years of neoliberal dominance over social policy (Garrett, 2014) and an urgency to think a "new politics" of resistance into social work (Gray and Webb, 2013: 211). Meanwhile, critical reflective practice is a concept in frequent use, with many different meanings, and now so much equated with good practice that aspects have become institutionalised, especially within social work education (Coleman et al., 2002).

Radical and critical social work are beginning to be conflated in the discourse about the future direction of social work practice (Woodward, 2013). Although distinguished by the Marxist theoretical traditions in radical social work and the postmodernist influences on critical theory, adherents to these two critical traditions may find they are allies in opposition to neoliberalism (Healy, 2005a). Social workers have little time in their working day, neither to engage in detailed nuances of these debates nor to experiment in practice. They are constrained by the urgency and intensity of their statutory roles and struggle to find time to reflect because they are so rushed. My role in social work education is in making time for social workers to meet and discuss their work and to support them to engage with theory that they might find helpful in developing critical reflection. A critical understanding of the context in which we work might mitigate feelings of isolation and self-blame and so might extend longevity in the profession for much needed practitioners.

The next chapter will consider the place of criticality in social work education for experienced post qualification students.

Chapter 2: Understandings of critical social work education

Introduction and outline of Chapter 2

Interest in continuing professional development (CPD) developed across many professions in response to rapid advances in knowledge and practice, particularly since the 1970s (Halton et al., 2014). Post-qualifying courses now form part of a range of possible CPD[10] activities, which the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)[11] describe as:

> …. the way professionals continue to learn and develop throughout their careers so they keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date and are able to work safely, legally and effectively. (Health and Care Professions Council, 2015)

This chapter reviews developments in post-qualifying (PQ) social work education and draws on policy and literature to investigate how criticality has become increasingly explicit in the curriculum.

Section 2.1 of this chapter traces the development of post-qualifying social work education, particularly since 1990, when the first post-qualifying

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[10] Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to a range of development activities and post-qualifying (PQ) usually refers to those educational development activities that lead to awards.
[11] The HCPC only regulates and approves pre-qualifying courses and post-qualifying Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) training, although, all pre and post-qualifying courses can apply for endorsement under a framework now held by the British Association of Social Workers.

framework was published (CCETSW, 1990; Higham, 2008)[12]. This is an

important strand of discussion as it teases out the foundations for the

context, structures and framing of PQ opportunities, which are subsequently

explored. Research into the outcomes from post-qualifying courses is

limited, although there are studies that suggest courses leading to post-

qualifying awards have helped social workers develop confidence and gain

knowledge relevant to their practice (Brown et al., 2008; Doel et al., 2007;

Masson et al., 2008; Moriarty, 2012). Some evaluations of specific courses

were hard to find as they were published as grey (informal) literature, before

electronic databases were available (Doel et al., 2008). This section

therefore refers to academic sources that report the content of grey literature

and refers to grey literature where copies remain available.

Section 2.1 includes discussion of competency based social work education,

the contribution of anti-racist perspectives to critical social work, and the

development of anti-oppressive practice. The introduction of the Professional

Capabilities Framework marked a change towards a holistic, developmental

approach to social work education and this change is discussed in the

context of the relationship between theory and practice. These

developments have run in tandem with the developments in social work

practice discussed in Chapter 1 as, for example, occupational standards in

social work education became a manifestation of a more managerial

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[12] The Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Workers (CCETSW) regulated social work education until 2001, when the Care Standards Act 2000 transferred responsibility for regulation and approval to the General Social Care Council. In 2012, responsibilities for approving pre-qualifying courses transferred to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (Bamford, 2015; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2013).

approach to social work education. The Chief Social Worker's statement of 'Knowledge and Skills for Child and Family Social Work' (Department for Education, 2014b) sets further requirements for practising social workers with children and families and has become the basis for new accredited specialist awards for qualified social workers (Department for Education, 2016a; Jones, 2016b). In addition, social work education is currently undergoing yet more structural reform as new teaching partnerships between employers and higher education institutions (HEIs) are being piloted (Department for Education, 2015b). As these most recent developments are in their early stages, the full impact on the curriculum is uncertain.

Section 2.2 draws on Argyris and Schön (1978) for their method of double-loop critical reflection. The discussion will consider the dialogic and democratic approaches that supported the pedagogical approach within the case study in this thesis, using Freire's (1976; 1996; 2008) work on creating conditions for critical reflection through dialogue. Interpretations and applications of Freire's work by Allman (2001; 2010) suggest that these approaches remain relevant to contemporary professional education. Allman (2010: 150) argued that critical education cannot create social transformation on its own, although it can be "pre-figurative," by providing as democratic an environment as possible for students to explore their potential to work for a more just society. Allman (2010) challenged professional education to go beyond helping people cope with the most stressful of frontline practice as, although this can be justified in terms of supporting individual practitioners, it can induce a passive resignation to existing, stressful, social conditions

(Allman, 2010). The transformatory potential of critical education is in developing awareness of self, in the context of wider social relations, echoing the understandings of critical reflection as reflexive practice, discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2).

To date, post-qualifying social work students' voices are not prominent in the literature about critical reflection, although Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis show that they do have a contribution.

2.1   Establishing post-qualifying social work education

2.1.1 The development of post-qualifying social work education

The Social Work Reform Board (2010) and Laming (2009) found inconsistent provision and little understanding of the Post-Qualifying Framework of awards amongst social workers and their employers, with too few social workers having the opportunity to participate[13]. The literature suggests that several factors contributed to low participation rates: issues arising in the broader development of social work education at pre-qualifying level; confusing and conflictual models of delivery; and barriers arising in the workplace. These factors will be discussed in turn.

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[13] In 2009, there were 78,635 social workers in England (House of Commons Children Schools and Families Committee, 2009). 4,747 (6%) were enrolled on PQ courses, with 2,296 (just under half) on the Children, Young People, their Families and Carers award (GSCC, 2009).

In the post-war period, priority was given to the pre-qualifying courses needed to supply qualified social workers for the new Children's Departments and Health and Welfare Departments (Payne, 2005). Post-qualifying courses developed slowly and, as recently as the late 1980s, only about 300 (0.5%) UK social workers attended CCETSW approved post-qualifying programmes each year (Cutmore and Walton, 1997; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014). Post-qualifying training was required for social workers carrying out statutory duties under the Mental Health Act 1983 but there were no similar statutory requirements for post-qualifying training in other areas of social work. This meant that there was no urgency to send social workers to PQ courses, other than from mental health services (Taylor, 1999). Employers often directed their social workers to their own 'in-house' short courses, run by the local authority training centres, with no expectation of the deeper theoretical work involved in writing academic assignments (Taylor, 1999). Those that attended courses at universities sometimes found that their awards were not accepted by new employers, if they moved jobs, implying that some social work managers did not trust the content of courses or the approval process (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014; Rogowski, 2010).

Rushton and Martyn (1990) identified a scepticism towards critical thinking in the workplace during their evaluation of two post-qualifying courses from the 1980s. The study reported that several managers thought that their social workers had developed more confidence, clearer thinking and new skills, whilst on these courses, and were better able to challenge poor practice in their agency. Students felt more confident, as a result of their learning on the

course, and more equipped to supervise less experienced social workers. Although their managers said they welcomed challenges to established practices, some students reported that their employing agencies were more receptive to their taking on new roles and less receptive to new ideas or changes to established models of practice. This led Rushton and Martyn (1990: 467) to speculate that the climate in some employing agencies was "inhospitable to critical thinking."

Rushton and Martyn's (1990) fieldwork took place before the report of the Cleveland Inquiry recommended improved training for all those involved in child protection work (Butler-Sloss, 1988). The momentum for reform that resulted in the Children Act 1989, also brought reform to social work education. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) became more accountable and responsive to employers' requirements through the introduction of competency based awards (discussed further in Section 2.1.2), and courses were to be managed in partnership with employers (Harris, 2003). By 1993, the competency based Diploma in Social Work, equivalent to two years of undergraduate study, became the only the pre-qualifying course for social workers in England and Wales, followed by the first post-qualifying (PQ) framework. The PQ framework reflected the increasing specialisation in practice, discussed in Chapter 1, by including role specific awards, for Practice Teaching, Mental Health, Child Care and Regulation of Care Services (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014).

The stability of partnership arrangements for pre-qualifying diploma courses was not matched for post-qualifying courses and this became a further obstacle to social workers' participation in PQ courses. Partnerships around pre-qualifying courses usually settled into a routine of one HEI leading the academic provision and the employers providing placements (Cutmore and Walton, 1997). Whereas the introduction of competency assessment for pre-qualifying courses tended to reduce the scope for variation in the curriculum, the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Workers (CCETSW) encouraged regional variation for post-qualifying education, with development of regional consortia. The consortia sometimes brought several HEIs and several employers together to interpret the framework according to local priorities, arrangements that were cumbersome to manage and, occasionally, conflictual (Cutmore and Walton, 1997). In addition, employers were under pressure to fill social work vacancies and often prioritised this over extending further training to their existing staff (Cutmore and Walton, 1997).

In 2003, an honours degree in social work became the minimum qualification for registered social workers in England (Department of Health, 1998; Department of Health, 2002; QAA, 2016), presenting an opportunity for a major review of the post-qualifying framework. The Climbié Inquiry (Laming, 2003) identified that social workers were carrying high caseloads and needed more training. The Inquiry recommended that:

> …all staff who work with children have received appropriate
> vocational training, receive a thorough induction in local
> procedures and are obliged to participate in regular continuing
> training so as to ensure that their practice is kept up to date.
> (Laming, 2003: 375)

A new PQ Framework was published in 2005 and became operational in 2007[14] (GSCC, 2005; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014) and the awarding powers transferred from consortia to the universities (GSCC, 2009a). These awards retained the specialist routes and could be offered at undergraduate, postgraduate diploma, or master's level, in recognition that many social workers qualified before the mandatory graduate qualification was introduced (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014). At all three levels, students would be expected to demonstrate criticality to achieve their awards (QAA, 2008b; QAA, 2014). It is pertinent to point out here that the participants in this study undertook the Advanced Leadership and Management Higher Specialist Award at post-graduate diploma level, under the 2005 Framework (GSCC, 2005), with the option of proceeding to undertake a dissertation at master's level.

Throughout the development of post-qualifying social work education there has been concern about completion rates, as well as participation rates. By 2008, only around 57% of PQ Child Care students were completing their awards, apparently due to a mix of work pressures and personal

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[14] The 2005 PQ Framework was revised in 2009 as the Mental Health Act 2007 replaced the Approved Social Worker (ASW) role with the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP).

commitments (Moriarty, 2012). Several sources identify workplace pressures as a persistent barrier to post-qualifying social work education, for example, through performance measures (Gupta and Blewett, 2007) and increases in stress (Masson et al., 2008).

The Social Work Task Force (2009a) estimated a high vacancy rate of between 9% and 12%, in local authority children and families teams and pointed out that this created onerous workloads and difficulties retaining experienced social workers. The most recent figures show a deterioration in the average vacancy rate in local authority children and families teams to 17% (Department for Education, 2016b). Baginsky et al. (2010) found that workload pressures made social workers reluctant to put themselves forward for PQ courses and employers hesitant to release staff to attend:

> …. updating your skills through training and research may seem slightly less attractive when you're overworked, with no cover for a heavy caseload if you're away from work. [Assistant director in a London borough]. (Baginsky et al., 2010: 119)

More recently, Baginsky and Manthorpe (2016) found that graduates from the employer led Step-up to Social Work programme were still experiencing significant workload pressures in children and families social work teams after qualification. All 138 social workers, who responded to the survey, reported that they considered workloads to be too high at some point

(Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2016). Whilst this was a self-reported, subjective measure, it is indicative of how social workers experience their workloads.

Social work is predominantly a female occupation (Parker and Crabtree, 2014) with 83% of local authority social workers recorded as women in 2012 (Department for Education, 2013). It is therefore unsurprising that personal commitments, for example family caring responsibilities, might also feature as a barrier to completing PQ courses (Bayley, 2009). A lack of study time, away from the workplace, featured as a barrier to completion in several studies of PQ courses (Brown et al., 2008; Carpenter et al., 2012; Cutmore and Walton, 1997; Kelly and Jackson, 2010; Moriarty, 2012; Pearce et al., 2015; Shirley Ayres Consulting, 2010). Kroll (2004) suggested that, by the early 2000s, many students' attempts to complete PQ courses were sabotaged by a combination of high workloads, a lack of workload relief for study, and a culture in social work agencies that devalued knowledge and theory.

2.1.2 Competence and criticality

Social work education had been subject to permissive, light regulation until the late 1980s, when reforms incrementally introduced more standardised curricula and regulation (Harris, 2003). One powerful strand of regulation was through the introduction of National Occupational Standards, or 'competencies.' The tension between the demand for role competence and the need for critical thinking became more apparent as social work education

developed in the growing managerial climate from the 1980s (O'Hagan, 2007). Employers required social workers who could carry out increasingly procedurally determined tasks, whilst the role demanded social workers who could draw on theoretical knowledge to analyse complexity within families, to question and probe information and to work in conditions of uncertainty (Lymbery, 2003).

CCETSW first linked professionalism and competency in 1977, proposing that courses should teach students a "system of shared professional values, to enable them to begin to practise competently" (CCETSW 1977, in Harris, 2003: 102). Diversity in the approaches of different courses survived throughout a lengthy period of consultation until competency statements were published in 1989, for pre-qualifying courses (CCETSW, 1989a) and, in 1990, for post-qualifying courses (CCETSW, 1990). Reformed courses were to assess students as competent if they could demonstrate the specified behaviours and skills required to " 'do' the job" (Seden, 2010: 58).

At all levels of social work education, competence driven standards tended to be applied in a "mechanistic and atomistic way" (Burgess et al., 2014: 2069), and knowledge of theory and research became less of a priority (Morris, 2011). Reducing social work education to a 'competent-or-not' binary oversimplified and deconstructed the complex, interconnected processes of working with people in difficult and stressful circumstances and detracted from the development of the reflective, intellectual thinking required for

working with the high levels of uncertainly encountered in social work (Dominelli, 1996a; Lymbery, 2003; Taylor and Bogo, 2014).

The failure to communicate with children is a common theme in inquiries and serious case reviews into child deaths and serious harm (Jay, 2014; Laming, 2003; Laming, 2009; Lock, 2013; Parton, 2004; Winter, 2011). For a social worker under pressure, compliance in meeting assessment deadlines might become a more urgent priority than listening to children and thoroughly analysing information about their lives (White, 2008). Whilst a child might be seen, in the sense that they are present, ethical practice requires meaningful communication with children. Often this takes time, persistence, creativity and the insights that critical reflection can bring to the encounter (Ferguson, 2011; McLeod, 2008; Winter, 2011). Munro (2011b: 6) argued that evaluation of practice against performance measures can reinforce a defensive impulse to prioritise managerial demands for "doing things right." Further reflective processes are needed to query whether the performance measures are the right targets for the specific piece of work and, for Higgins (2015b) and Munro (2011b: 6) this is the more complex, ethical thinking required for "doing the right thing." The implications for social work education were in the suggestion that social work competence became too much equated with procedural compliance, with too little encouragement for critical thinking and analysis (Cooper, 2011; White, 2008).

Whilst the introduction of competency-based assessment emphasised the importance of skills development, the analytical nature of social work practice

meant that the ability to think critically remained within the competency statements, in some form, throughout several reviews and reformulations. There was also recognition that a 'competent-or-not' binary was inadequate where professionals continued to develop beyond the point of qualification, from novice through to experienced expert (Eraut, 1994). For example, students were expected to take more responsibility for leadership at Advanced Level (Appendix 4), than at Higher Specialist Level (Appendix 3). Critical Reflection and Analysis is now prominent as a domain within the current Professional Capabilities Framework (The College of Social Work, 2012c) and will be discussed further in Section 2.1.4. Before then, it is important to acknowledge the role of anti-racism in maintaining a focus on structural inequality and holding the attention of social work educators and students through times when the place of critical theory in the curriculum was under pressure.

2.1.3 Competence in anti-racism

As competency statements were introduced into social work education, the anti-racist curriculum provided a home for radical and critical thinking. Equal opportunity policies, emanating from influential inner city councils (for example, Hackney), created a favourable microclimate of radical ideas that enabled CCETSW to develop similar policies (McLaughlin, 2005). Social work programmes were required to demonstrate anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies and practices in all aspects of their programmes (CCETSW, 1989b; CCETSW, 1989a; Lavalette and Penketh, 2014).

Campaigns by black social workers within the profession (McLaughlin, 2005; Walker, 2002) and a growing awareness of widespread, institutionalised racism (CCETSW, 1991b; Gilroy, 1987) supported an analysis of racism as a feature of British society that "permeates every aspect of our personal and professional lives" (Dominelli, 1988: 6). This analysis presented racism as more than individual prejudices about racial superiority and inferiority; racism thrived through the actions of those who had power to make decisions that affected people's lives (Dominelli, 2008; Lavalette and Penketh, 2014). CCETSW issued a combative definition of anti-racism:

> CCETSW believes that racism is endemic in the values, attitudes and structures of British society, including that of social services and social work education. CCETSW recognises that the effects of racism on black people are incompatible with the values of social work and therefore seeks to combat racist practices in all areas of its responsibilities. (CCETSW, 1991a: 6)

There was ferocious criticism in the press (Appleyard, 1993; Phillips, 1993; Pinker, 1993), albeit from a small number of commentators and social work academics, arguing that social workers were practicing a dangerous cultural relativism (McLaughlin, 2005; Walker, 2002). Social workers were accused, firstly, of failing to challenge "brutality" in black families, for fear of being accused of racism (Phillips, 1993: 17) and, secondly, that black and minority ethnic children in care were denied family placements that did not match their ethnicity (Appleyard, 1993). This media coverage is credited with moderating

CCETSW's combative anti-racism (Alibhai-Brown, 1993; Dominelli, 1996a; Dominelli, 2002b; Keating, 2000). In effect, the coverage produced another binary opposition in the profession, between anti-racism on one hand, reframed as political correctness, versus 'common sense' competency (Walker, 2002). Eventually the introduction of the social work degree, in 2002, removed the requirement to test students' understanding and strategies in relation to anti-racism (Bhatti-Sinclair, 2011).

Critical and emancipatory ideas, including anti-racism, remained within the curriculum under a broader heading of anti-oppressive practice. Social workers were asked to notice and challenge assumptions about superiority and inferiority in relationships (Turney, 2014a) and this also focussed attention on structural inequality faced by marginalised groups (Dominelli, 2002b; Dominelli, 2009; Turney, 2014a). This might mean avoiding and challenging abuses of power, for example, by being open with information and advocating for people's legal rights (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Pease, 2002; Rose, 2000; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005). Wilson and Beresford (2000), writing from the perspectives of service users, argued that social work academics and practitioners were in a dominant position in relation to service users and, therefore, had limited understanding about the effects of oppression on service users' lives. Practice could therefore only be anti-oppressive if social workers had a critical awareness of their professional power. In this way, aiming to work against oppression brought the social context for practice back into view and, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2), situated self in context (Fook, 2012a; Fook, 2012b; Fook and

Askeland, 2006; Fook and Askeland, 2007; Fook and Gardner, 2007; Turney, 2014a).

Assessment requirements have continued to require students to recognise diversity and difference and to promote equality of opportunity but within the narrower range of contemporary social work, dominated by complex and higher risk cases. At post-qualifying level, the 2005 Framework (at Higher Specialist and Advanced Levels) illustrates the presence of these elements in the requirements (Appendices 3 and 4). The current Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) provides greater detail about expectations in working with diversity than the 2005 framework (Appendices 3 and 4). Neither framework mentions racism, although the PCF mentions race as a component of diversity and expects that, at PQ level, social workers will challenge discrimination.

Discussion of increasing anti-Muslim racism (Guru, 2012) and rising concern about childhood radicalisation (Stanley and Guru, 2015), suggest social work education has a current role in supporting social workers to consider the impact of this context on their practice. New statutory powers, under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, add to powers under the Children Act 1989, to make radicalisation a current child protection matter (Department for Education, 2015a). Yet radicalisation is a contested term, now combining with other contested terms, for example, 'risk,' 'terrorism,' and 'abuse' (Stanley and Guru, 2015). A full discussion of these issues cannot be accommodated in this thesis but these developments suggest that anti-

racism remains relevant in a critical social work curriculum, despite losing its place in frameworks for assessing students.

The trajectory of competence assessment in social work has been complex, having gradually encouraged a narrower, skills focussed curriculum, whilst also enabling the development of critical analytical approaches through anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. The move away from rigid competence-assessment frameworks has been broadly welcomed in the profession (Higgins, 2015b; Higgins, 2015a), but binaries persist in how theory and practice are understood in social work. The discussion will now turn to attempts to overcome the gap between theory and practice, through the notion of capability rather than competence, and will consider how the literature informs these developments.

2.1.4 Capability: bridging the gaps?

The introduction of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)[15] followed from two critiques of social work education. Firstly, there was an argument that competency-based social work education reduced complex, nuanced social work to a series of fragmented tasks, tasks that had to be standardised and observable (Dominelli, 1996b; Lymbery, 2003; Wilson and Kelly, 2010). Secondly, there was a perception that courses did not support students well

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[15] The Social Work Reform Board introduced the PCF, as a major part of the reforms, and gave the PCF to The College of Social Work, for the College to make it operational. When The College of Social Work closed in 2015, the PCF was transferred to the British Association of Social Workers. The recent review of the PCF recommended minimal changes (Chand and Keville, 2015).

enough to connect theory, research and practice, particularly during placements on pre-qualifying courses (Munro, 2011b).

Referring to submissions from employers, the Social Work Task Force (2009b) specifically criticised university provision:

> … strong concerns have been expressed to the Task Force about the calibre of some lecturers and tutors. These concerns touch on, in particular, their understanding of how theory is applied in practice and of the current realities of frontline social work. Educators need to share in the real challenges posed in service delivery and avoid any temptation to criticise from the sidelines. (Social Work Task Force, 2009b: 19)

Again, the focus was on the demands of local authority social work, in particular the role of child protection social workers, rather than a broader social work role. This was consistent with Munro (2011b) who also concluded that:

> Theory and research are not always well integrated with practice and there is a failure to align what is taught with the realities of contemporary social work practice. (Munro, 2011b: 97)

Universities provide the vast majority of places for pre-qualifying social work students, through traditional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

(Skills for Care, 2015a). However, the government has supported new modes of delivering pre-qualifying social work courses and employers now have more influence in the curriculum, bringing social work education more into line with the demands of practice. Partnerships between local authorities and universities deliver accelerated programmes, for example 'Step-up to Social Work,' with academic study compressed into a shorter period of time for study (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2015). The Frontline[16] programme now designs and delivers its own curriculum, based on a single theoretical approach (Maxwell et al., 2016), and plans to reduce the involvement of a partner university to only accrediting the programme and awarding degrees (MacAlister, 2016). Narey (2014) presented the view of one Director of Children's Services as typical of current social work employers:

> Universities have been allowed to provide too much theory, too much sociology and not enough about spotting things in a family which are wrong. (Narey, 2014: 30)

Although Narey's (2014) report has been criticised for a lack of rigour in collecting data and relying on anecdotal evidence (Lymbery and Postle, 2015), it was significant in representing and promoting a view that social theory is an obstacle to skills development. Theory was presented as emanating from universities, in opposition to practice, rather than integral to thought and therefore part of thoughtful practice.

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[16] Frontline is a fast-track scheme for highly qualified graduates, aimed at training students for child protection social work. The training concentrates on practice skills, within one over-arching theoretical framework based on social learning theory and two approaches to practice: motivational interviewing and parenting programmes (Maxwell et al. 2016).

It has become commonplace to acknowledge a persistent gap between

social work theory and practice (Thompson, 2010), where theory is

understood as an explanation of the world around us and "practice involves

doing something" (Payne, 2014: 5). The notion of 'applying' theory to

practice has been criticised for implying that this is a technical-rational

activity, where the task is to select the appropriate theory and connect

practice in the correct way, as though theory were a template for action

(Thompson, 2008). If students are asked to apply theory to practice, this

implies that theory and practice are made in separate domains, yet social

workers, like other practitioners in other professions, not only apply

knowledge, they also generate a form of knowledge, as they carry out their

work and actively think about practice (Green, 2009).

Freire (1996) argued that knowledge and theory about the world develop

from reflection on action and require a reciprocal unity of theory and practice,

or praxis (discussed further in Section 2.2.3), which can be described as

"action full-of-thought and thought-full-of-action" (Evans, 2007: 554). By

"articulating the unspoken" (Pawson et al., 2003: x), practitioner-generated

knowledge can be exposed to critical reflection, alongside academic

scholarship. This provides the opportunity to emphasise the complex

interrelationships of the different forms of knowledge (from practice,

scholarship and research) and to challenge binary notions that one form of

knowledge is superior to the other (Garrett, 2013).

Social workers evaluate knowledge from many different sources, including families, inter-professional colleagues, theory, legislation and research. Munro (2011b) pointed out that social workers can expect some resistance when trying to use their expert knowledge in the field because "the situation itself 'talks back'" (Turner, 2005, in Munro, 2011b: 93). As discussed in Section 1.1.7, knowledge does not fit neatly to unique and complex human relationships, within changeable social contexts. Ethical practice would therefore involve critical appraisal of the relevance and limitations of knowledge in each unique situation, including research evidence, and transparency about how the evidence informed the judgements (Gambrill, 2012; Health and Care Professions Council, 2012; Health and Care Professions Council, 2016). Notions of capability encourage students to adapt to new circumstances, and to apply their range of knowledge, skills and ethical understanding in changing situations (Eraut, 1994). Munro (2011b) argued that social workers need to be able to see, and work with, the complex whole, including the integration of knowledge, theory and skills, and that a move to assessing capabilities would encourage this shift in emphasis.

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) replaced social work competency statements, and set out the expectations of social workers at different stages of their career (The College of Social Work, 2012c) (Appendix 1). As the PCF developed into a very detailed set of descriptors, there was a risk that these would be merely used as a longer list of standards, like competencies:

The need for these professional capabilities must drive the content

and delivery of social work initial training and continuing professional

development as well as performance appraisal systems, supervision

arrangements and organisational structures. But it is essential that

the Professional Capabilities Framework does not become another

bureaucratic burden which could hamper frontline practice…. this

should not be a box-ticking exercise. (Munro, 2011b: 97)

There is conceptual confusion and overlap arising from the way the terms 'competence', 'ability' and capability' are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature (Burgess et al., 2014; Taylor and Bogo, 2014). The PCF descriptors are not assessment criteria but require students to demonstrate their capability in the specified areas. Rather than meeting externally set, fixed criteria, students are asked to make choices, decisions and judgements that demonstrate a range of their abilities in different contexts (Lozano et al., 2012). This makes capabilities frameworks more suited to assessing development over time than frameworks based on assessing competency.

Social workers must also meet Standards of Proficiency (SoP) in order to become registered to practice (Health and Care Professions Council, 2012). The SoP are mapped against the PCF but, as they are occupational standards, competencies remain in a mix of considerations for assessing students (Taylor and Bogo, 2014). The College of Social Work (2012a) introduced the concept of 'holistic' assessment of capability, to avoid the 'box-ticking' approach associated with competency assessment and to

encourage assessors, at pre-qualifying and post-qualifying levels, to assess students' ability to do the whole of the job. In holistic practices the assessor weighs up the student's whole performance across the interrelated parts of the role, with an assessment of how the student has integrated knowledge, skills and values together (The College of Social Work, 2012c; The College of Social Work, 2012b).

Colley (2003) points out that holistic approaches could become intrusive. As students and their practice are assessed as an integrated whole, a student could feel more personally exposed than under the previous system. Challenges to taken for granted assumptions can be unsettling, making learning an emotional process that requires courage (Gambrill and Gibbs, 2009; Mezirow, 2009). Empathetic connection with emotions is thought to be helpful, possibly crucial, to learning through critical reflection (Brookfield, 2001; Fook and Askeland, 2007) and several studies indicate a growing interest in emotionally sensitive social work supervision (Howe, 2008; Morrison, 2007; Ruch, 2007; Ruch, 2012; Turney and Ruch, 2016). This means that a genuinely holistic approach would pay attention to power differentials, boundaries and ethics, when negotiating the terms of the relationship between assessor and student. Perhaps assessors and students could create shared learning experiences, where both parties critically examine their thinking, especially if the assessor is genuinely interested in surprises and novelty in the student's thinking and practice (Colley, 2003).

2.1.5. The Social Work Practice Placement

The social work practice placement has been described as a "signature pedagogy" (Parker, 2006; Wayne et al., 2010: 327) and placement forms a significant part of the prior experience of post-qualifying students. Signature pedagogies typically involve standardised features; for example, assessment criteria, one-to-one instruction, and supervision from a social work practice educator (Wayne et al., 2010). The aim is to integrate theory with relevant practical expertise (Shulman, 2005; Wayne et al., 2010). In the placement agencies, National Standards for Practice Educators, implemented in 2013, now require practice educators to be registered (therefore qualified) social workers, who have demonstrated knowledge relevant to social work and are capable to assess students (The College of Social Work, 2013; Wilson, 2012). These initiatives are relatively new, alongside the introduction of holistic approaches to assessment and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). As the reforms have been implemented, a mixed picture is emerging with recent studies showing both apparent improvements and continuing problems in linking theory and practice in social work placements (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2015; Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2016).

Firstly, Jasper and Field (2015) found that practice educators spent less time ticking boxes linked to occupational standards had more time to help students to discover their emerging social work identity. Domakin (2015) focussed on practice educators working with 'Step-up' students and, again,

demonstrated the persistent binary relationship between academic and practice domains:

> What I've picked up is a bit of a divide between the student who I've got for six months and the academic institution. I don't feel a close link with the academic or with the *actual* university or college. To me it's two separate entities. I feel very much in isolation. (Domakin, 2015: 404, emphasis added)

In the above quote, the practice educator identified a sense of marginalisation and abandonment by the more powerful "actual" academic institution. This echoes the concerns of practice educators in previous studies, who felt poorly prepared to support students. They felt isolated from the university, unaware of the curriculum followed by their students and had little workload relief to enable them to investigate and prepare for students (Bellinger, 2010a; Domakin, 2015; Mann, 2010). These studies suggest that, whilst the curriculum in universities is adapting to requirements of employers, experienced practitioners have not necessarily felt more connected to the universities. One way in which links could be established between experienced social workers and universities has been through post-qualifying courses and there are some indications that participation and completion rates have improved under the new arrangements, at least for Newly Qualified Social Workers in statutory settings (Department for Education, 2015c)

2.1.6 Development of the current Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework

Over the course of the reforms Munro (2011b) supported retaining a national framework of higher education accredited courses, as discussed in Section 2.1.1, especially for child and family social workers, arguing that such courses enabled social workers to develop expertise. Laming had originally recommended "a fully-funded, practice-focused children's social work postgraduate qualification for experienced children's social workers" (Laming, 2009:54), with the expectation that all social workers with children would complete the award and have protected study time. Research commissioned by the Task Force showed that the existing post-qualifying awards could be mapped across to the new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), inspiring some confidence in the currency of the awards and concern about losing them (Brown and Keen, 2012; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014).

During the Task Force investigation, the discussion shifted towards a more hybrid approach, allowing flexibility for social workers to include short courses and informal learning, as well as modular units of post-graduate study leading towards specialist qualifications at master's level (Social Work Reform Board, 2010). Studies were beginning to show that post-qualifying courses helped social workers to create space for critical reflection (Brown et al., 2008; Brown and Keen, 2004; Masson et al., 2008). Munro (2011b) argued that social workers needed access to more good quality CPD opportunities and that moving to a more flexible framework jeopardised the

progress made under the previous national framework of approved post-qualifying courses. Unlike the GSCC, the new regulator, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), would not accredit post-qualifying social work courses, except those that train social workers for the statutory role of Approved Mental Health Professionals. The HCPC was considered to be a light-touch regulator, at a time when the reforms were being implemented by a Coalition Government ideologically inclined to reduce regulation and, as anticipated, there is now no national framework of approved post-qualifying social work courses (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014).

The current CPD Framework was implemented in 2013, after the participants in this study completed their awards. Social workers are now expected to discuss their performance against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), in supervision and appraisal, and then find CPD opportunities that will support them to meet identified learning needs at their current level, or to enable them to progress to the next level (The College of Social Work, 2011, see also Appendix 2).

There are concerns about the future of CPD under this framework. As CPD can be met through a flexible range of provision, employers may choose not to fund social workers to attend university courses (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2016). This is more of a concern now that a new accreditation framework could become another competing cost for social workers and employers to consider, in a climate of reduced resources for CPD. The future accreditation scheme introduces assessment for three roles

in local authority children and families services: Approved Child and Family Practitioners, Practice Supervisors and Practice Leaders (Skills for Care, 2015b). Because accreditation is to be based on the Knowledge and Skills Statements, introduced by the Chief Social Worker, rather than the PCF (Department for Education, 2016a), the future relationship between the CPD Framework and the framework for accreditation is currently unclear.

This uncertainty extends to the future of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The ASYE has been major development in CPD provision, introduced in 2012 for newly qualified social workers and underpinned by the PCF (Social Work Reform Board, 2012; see also Appendix 2). The ASYE programme built on learning from the previous Newly Qualified Social Worker Programme (2008-11), which had achieved relatively high completion rates (around 78%) and a favourable evaluation (Berry-Lound and Rowe, 2013). A protected workload and regular supervision featured as helpful components of the programme, for some students (Berry-Lound and Rowe, 2013; Carpenter et al., 2012), and the ASYE Programme attempted to achieve more consistency by introducing clearer standards for supervision and workload management for NQSWs, with training and support for supervisors.

The ASYE is not compulsory, and is not a probationary year, as students are already registered social workers, but It is becoming an expectation, particularly for local authority social workers, and is encouraged by central government funding, currently £2000 per participant (Department for

Education, 2015c). It may become a probationary year in the future, depending on the outcome of further reviews of social work education (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Department for Education, 2016a; The College of Social Work, 2014). Almost all local authorities have ASYE schemes in place, although arrangements for supervision and workload reduction remain uneven (Berry-Lound and Rowe, 2013; Schraer, 2016). Newly qualified social workers in the independent and private sector are less likely to be supported through an ASYE scheme and, should more services be 'outsourced' as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.4), this could become a bigger problem unless addressed, for example, by making the ASYE mandatory (Berry-Lound and Rowe, 2013; Schraer, 2016).

I began this chapter by noting that, when this study began, post-qualifying social work education was characterised by inconsistent provision and little understanding (Social Work Reform Board, 2010). It could be argued that the current uncertainty and confusion about the future of continuing professional development show that things have not changed significantly. I suggest that there have been positive developments that have opened up opportunities for critical reflection, for example, in the support and education of newly qualified social workers and in moving away from assessment of competency towards a model based on holistic assessment.

In my practice, there have been times when teaching felt more holistic, and where the discussion in the room seemed to move between theory and practice and, sometimes, into higher levels of extended abstract thinking.

These examples are associated in my mind with dialogic methods in small groups, where more equal and appreciative relationship with students became possible (Allman, 2001; Freire, 2008). In the next section, I consider, through the literature, ways in which critically reflective dialogue has been developed in the classroom and whether this might be helpful in overcoming difficulties in connecting social work theory and practice.

2.2   Critical Pedagogy

2.2.1 Critical Reflection

The preceding discussion has outlined developments in social work and social work education, highlighting opportunities as well as resistance to a critical approach. Reflective practice has become a central part of social work education, derived in particular from the ideas of Schön (1991) and has created spaces for discussing critical ideas in a policy environment that has become suspicious of critical theory (Morley and Dunstan, 2013). Recently the pairing of the word 'critical' with 'reflection' has become common (Fook and Askeland, 2006), raising questions about whether this is a different kind of reflective activity (Taylor, 2013).

Writing about the development of critical ideas in social work, in Chapter 1, brought my own social work history to mind. I acknowledge that my thinking about critical reflection was influenced by living and working through debates about the role of social workers. I came to this study with an understanding

of critical reflection that situated practice within the context of wider social forces. This purposeful reflection aims to discover and challenge constraints on agency, for both service users and social workers, and is aligned with the emancipatory, ethical and political objectives of the broader, global definitions of social work discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.1). In the literature, these transformational aspects of critical reflection are set within references to the analytical powers of critical theory:

> … critical theory, and its development for use in critical reflection, is probably one of the major defining features of critical reflection, and therefore one of the major factors which may differentiate it from reflective practice. In this sense, critical reflection involves social and political analyses which enable transformative changes, whereas reflection may remain at the level of relatively undisruptive changes in techniques or superficial thinking. (White et al., 2006: 9)

The pedagogy of the case study, discussed in this thesis, draws on theorists of critical reflection, who argue that reflection is part of action, not a separate activity. Argyris (2004), Schön (1991) and Freire (1996) all suggested that reflection could have a transformatory impact on the individual and their practice, with a potentially wider impact on society as a result. All three emphasise the value of *critical* reflection. Freire (1996; 2008) suggested that critical reflection could be encouraged through dialogue with others who are also committed to problem solving and action. In seeking to make changes in practice, such dialogue guards against potential for inward looking

reflection to become negative and dispiriting, or narcissistic, as identified in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2).

Parker (2006) suggests that successful students on placement develop a greater sense of their own self-efficacy, meaning that they feel increasingly confident in their abilities as a social worker. Like Fook et al. (2000), I have found that students often remember reflective supervision as transformative experiences. I thought that students might have been familiar with the concept of reflection loops as these ideas, from Argyris and Schön (1974; 1978), are commonly taught in pre-qualifying social work courses and in-service social work courses. As Argyris in particular has been influential in developing practices of *critical* refelection (Antonacopoulou, 2004; Bokeno, 2003), it seemed both dialogue and double-loop reflection exercises could be combined to underpin the unit.

2.2.2 Double-loop reflection

Reflection can detect mismatches between what people say they do, or think they do, and what they actually do (Argyris and Schön, 1978) and learning occurs through noticing these 'errors' and attempting to join up the intention and action more closely. The difficulties in the process expose the barriers, such as power differentials and hegemonic ideas.

> An error is a mismatch between intent and consequence, or the
> production of something other than what was intended…. Single-loop

learning seeks to correct errors or reduce deviation without changing

the underlying assumptive parameters that produced the error in the

first place. Double-loop, by contrast, seeks to expose, question and

change the assumptive context itself. Most of the time in

organizational circumstances, errors are corrected via single-loop

learning processes. (Bokeno, 2003: 638)

Schön has been criticised for his focus on individual change, albeit in an

organisational context (Thompson, 2008), and for neglecting the situated and

social aspects of practice (Kotzee, 2012). However, his collaboration with

Argyris moved into the territory of more critical reflection on context. Argyris

and Schön (1974; 1978) developed the method of double-loop reflection to

help students move from *reflection* to *critical reflection* and, in this way, the

double-loop has emancipatory potential as constraints on thought and action

are discovered and confronted (Bokeno, 2003).

The powerful socialising pressure to 'fit in' and learn to do the job, as others

do it, are difficult to resist and so a reflection could merely serve to correct

minor deviations from organisational norms, rather than confronting the

powerful impact of normative practices (Antonacopoulou, 2004). After the

first loop has been completed, a double-loop of reflection is needed, to reflect

upon the first reflection, in order to look deeper and be less defensive. Not

only do individuals have an impulse to defend themselves, organisations can

induce defensive practices to prevent challenges to the 'status quo' (Argyris,

2004). This analysis of how defensive practices can be reinforced by single-

loop reflection is also present in Munro's (2010b) review of child protection, where she uses systems theory to show that a second loop of reflection is more likely to lead to deeper learning (discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.1.7).

In revisiting a reflective account of practice a number of times, in different ways, I hoped to support the students in developing a deeper and more critical reflection that challenged assumptions and understandings of contextual factors, as well as the actions that they had performed in practice. I hoped dialogue within the group would support students along the way. The reflective loops were integrated into the design of the unit, as will be shown in Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology.

2.2.3 Dialogue

For Freire, critical reflection exposes how oppression narrows our ambition for change, and makes us feel small, with little agency to effect changes to our lives:

> One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.
> (Freire, 1996: 33)

Freire built on Marx's work to point out the humanising effect of praxis (McLaren and Leonard, 1993). Praxis refers to a dialectical tension and an interdependent relationship between reflection and action: we think whist we act and thinking is also action (Allman, 2010; Gramsci and Buttigieg, 1991). Freire explained that merely revealing oppression by reflection only served to intensify it, as oppression can seem insurmountable. However, when reflection informs action and intervention there is the hope of making a difference (Freire, 1996; Freire, 2008).

Au (2009) examined a potential objection to Freire's conception of praxis as it seems to rest on an ontological assumption of human progress in suggesting that action will pursue anti-oppressive goals. However, people frequently do the opposite and act in reactionary and oppressive ways. Au (2009) argued that Freire (2008) recognised this subjective agency and saw praxis as a means of becoming conscious of the context in which we live. Praxis can give insights that enable us to make intentional, ethical choices (Glass, 2001). For example, Freire received criticism for discriminatory and sexist language in his work, but it is fair to say that he worked to change this, and agreed to retranslations of his earlier work into more inclusive prose (Taylor, 1993). Freire's ideas for educational practices need to be similarly adaptive to diverse and changing contexts.

A key element of praxis is the supportive role of dialogue with peers who are also genuinely engaged in reflection (Freire, 1996). Interactive and discursive methods are common in today's classrooms, but often combined

with didactic approaches and not dialogic in the Freirean sense. Freire's dialogic approach is not intended as a technical means of improving classroom dynamics (Au, 2009). Freirean education is more of a philosophical approach than a method (Aronowitz, 1993). For dialogue to be effective it should be between equals to prevent one person's view of the world being dominant. I tried to keep the following extract in mind as I prepared materials for the unit, conscious that my position as the unit leader, who designed the unit, already put me in a powerful position in relation to the students.

> If it is in speaking their world that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another; nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. (Freire, 1996: 69-70)

The above extract, contains the idea that dialogue between equals can act as a counterbalance to the (metaphorical) 'banking' method of teaching, whereby the teacher 'deposits' their knowledge and thoughts with the student. The student is treated as an administrator in the bank and "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving,

filing, and storing the deposits." (Freire, 1996: 53). Whilst I recognise that most lecturers would probably reject the banking method as their preferred approach to teaching, I also recognise how much it dominates our current practices of lecturing and use of Power-Point presentations.

I anticipated that students would expect me to bring knowledge to the classroom and that this was a reasonable expectation of a lecturer. My own experience of dialogic learning, as a social work student in the 1980s, taught me that dialogue can work well through structured discussion, where students and teachers share their knowledge and perspectives. Structure includes shared responsibility for both contributing and leading discussion but an absence of these structures can create "intolerable anxiety and strain on both students and teachers" (Leonard, 1993: 164). It seemed to me that Freire (1996) was not suggesting that we hide or deny our knowledge, far from it, but that we use it in dialogue, recognising that all participants have knowledge of equal status, albeit different knowledge. Therefore, dialogue requires humility, on the part of the teacher in particular, and a willingness to learn from their students (Freire, 1996).

Dialogue provided the philosophical approach but method was also required. I was aware that pre-qualifying students were often taught reflection with reference to Schön's ideas of reflection-on-action (afterwards) and reflection-in-action (in the moment) (Schön, 1991) and, this could be a useful starting point for developing critical discussion of constraints on action. Constraints, both contextual and internalised, are embodied within practice but we can be

unaware of their impact on our actions. For example, when moving a child from their familiar family home to an unfamiliar foster placement, it is important to reflect on how to do this with sensitivity to the child's emotional needs. Reflection could be limited to an examination of the more technocratic aspects of the process; looking for the child's familiar toys, asking permission to take their bedding and clothing, recognising and protecting their important objects. Whilst this would be promoting best practice in difficult circumstances, and clearly important to the child's welfare, hegemonic ideas, for example, about the causes of child neglect, are left intact (Allman, 2010).

Within social work, common-sense notions of 'family life' and 'good enough parenting' are typically fertile areas for reflection in relation to their influence on judgement making (Hoghughi and Speight, 1998; Howe, 2008). Most families living in poverty do not neglect their children. However, the stress and deprivation that come with low income and insecurity can affect parenting and, where child neglect is a concern, the context is often one of poverty and social inequality. Despite this:

> … the dominant political and policy discourse is unequivocal in its
> presentation of neglect as being about parental pathology and
> individual blame. (Gupter, 2015: 3)

The damaging impact of income inequality on child wellbeing is now well known (Pritchard et al., 2013; UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007;

Wolfe, 2014). It can seem overwhelming to attempt to tackle these structural issues, making it tempting to remain focused on the technical aspects of practice. Deeper reflection could, at least, lead to recognising social relations that affect decisions about children's welfare and bring pressures and biases to our attention.

2.2.4 Dialogue and power

In 2010, as I was preparing this project, I attended a reading group led by Professor Helen Colley, where a small group of lecturers and research students discussed two books by Allman (2001; 2010). The first of these books, "Revolutionary Social Transformation" (Allman, 2001), contained an introduction to Freirean education. The second, "Critical Education Against Global Capitalism" (Allman, 2010), argued that a revival in critical pedagogy was still possible and suggested that finding opportunities for dialogue was a form of counter-hegemonic resistance to neoliberal economies of scale in higher education. I recall noticing that these ambitious programmes were enacted through small-scale projects using dialogical methods, where teachers did their best to value students' experiences as valid knowledge, alongside academic knowledge (Hegar, 2012). For example, Allman (2001) suggested that, because inequality permeates educational contexts, there is always a struggle to attain open dialogue.

In her well known paper "Why doesn't this feel empowering?", Ellsworth (1989) reports on her work using critical pedagogy with media students in

Wisconsin, USA in 1989. This was in the context of a university-wide programme to counter an increase in visible acts of racism on campus and in the wider community. Like me, Ellsworth (1989: 299) also found students were puzzled by requirements for critical analysis in unit descriptions and they asked her "what was meant by critical - critical of what, from what position, to what end?" She worked with an ethnically diverse group of students to develop a course on Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies, using dialogical methods and, during this experience, developed a number of criticisms of critical pedagogy. These criticisms centred on the power of the teacher and the discriminatory assumptions that some students brought with them, as both seemed to have a potentially silencing effect on students from marginalised and minority groups.

Within the critical pedagogy literature, advocates recognise that teachers are often the ones who make the initial choice to move into the arena of critical pedagogy and there is recognition that teachers have knowledge to bring to the subject under consideration (Giroux and Mclaren, 1987; Shor, 1993). Ellsworth (1989) argued that dialogue can give the appearance of empowering students but, if the reasoning in the discussion begins from oppressive assumptions about the superiority of the teacher's opinions, empowerment can only be an illusion. In addition, students occupy socially constructed positions of superiority and inferiority, in relation to each other, and might choose the safety of silence, rather than risk having their opinions dismissed as less worthy of attention. Ellsworth's (1989) account suggested that both students and lecturer did indeed struggle with some of these issues:

…participants expressed much pain, confusion, and difficulty in speaking, because of the ways in which discussions called up their multiple and contradictory social positionings. Women found it difficult to prioritize expressions of racial privilege and oppression when such prioritizing threatened to perpetuate their gender oppression…. Asian American women found it difficult to join their voices with other students of color when it meant subordinating their specific oppressions as Asian Americans. I found it difficult to speak as a White woman about gender oppression when I occupied positions of institutional power relative to all students in the class… (Ellsworth, 1989: 312)

The above quotation suggests that attempts at dialogue brought insights about intersecting experiences of oppression to the surface and illustrates how challenging and uncomfortable that can feel. Au's (2009: 227) response to Ellsworth has been to suggest that she mistook dialogue for a "hands-off, laissez faire approach" and was silenced by an assumption that she could not understand what she had not experienced. This reminded me that dialogic approaches might accentuate the responsibilities of the teacher to discuss power differences, as part of co-creating a supportive environment with students. Further, as I discuss in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1), Bhaskar (1979: 201) argued that, that even if we interpret other people's experiences "in our own terms," we can learn something from trying to understand their meaning.

Turney (1997) specifically explored the possibility of using dialogue to develop understanding of oppression. However, whereas I had drawn on Freire (Freire et al., 1998), Turney (1997) drew on Gadamer's hermeneutics. In a hermeneutical approach to dialogue, participants look to develop a deeper understanding of the different traditions and viewpoints in the conversation. There seem to be common ground between the approaches, for example, in using dialogue to understand and value difference and in recognising the dialectical possibilities in the encounter, as both parties could change their views (Turney, 1997).

Again, it is noted that dialogue is likely to falter unless participants address imbalances of power in their relationships:

> Dialogue can simply become another means of control if it fails to take account of power imbalances between the conversation partners. Do the participants in a dialogue contribute equally to the exchange? (Turney, 1997:120)

Both Turney (1997) and Ellsworth (1989) refer to hooks[17] (1989), who asserts that, though students might feel silenced in class, they are not voiceless, and might be very vocal elsewhere, where they feel listened to. Hooks (1994) drew on Freire and experimented with critical pedagogy during her teaching, making it clear that she saw universities as very much part of society, reflecting the social conditions around them and not set apart. Hooks (2003)

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[17] hooks prefers lower case for her name.

has been particularly interested in how black students could thrive in education, where there is potential for educational practices to intimidate and shame students who might feel that they do not belong. She promoted dialogue as a means of respecting students and developing trust but this cannot merely be stated; from the beginning, the teacher must demonstrate that they "genuinely value everyone's presence" (hooks, 1994: 8).

It can be a challenge to find opportunities for democratic dialogue as marketization of higher education creates pressures to teach increasing numbers of students in lecture theatres (Amsler and Canaan, 2008; Brown, 2013). Those who have had the opportunity, point out the challenges they faced in trying to create a learning environment where students and teachers felt free to speak as equals. Further, dialogue "includes a range of emotions from humour to compassion to indignation" (Shor, 1993: 34). It may be that emotional responses are more apparent within dialogical methods than didactic methods. Alternatively, it could be that the affective responses are deeper and more powerful in response to the reflexive, dialectical nature of dialogue. In either case, this suggests that dialogic approaches demand a responsible and careful approach, from both students and teachers.

2.3   Conclusion to Chapter 2 and Research Questions

Social work education seems to be continually at a watershed, in anticipation of the next set of reforms and always a work in progress (Dickens, 2011). In the last 26 years post-qualifying social work education has developed through a series of complex frameworks of awards to arrive at the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), currently under review. Critical reflection and analysis has won a prominent place in the PCF and, although the descriptors orient more towards reflection on social workers' own practice, rather than contextual and social justice issues (Taylor and Bogo, 2014), there is still potential to combine both through a critically reflective examination and exploration of the issues encountered in practice.

Letting go of competencies has not been difficult, given the consistent analysis of the problems they have caused for social work students and educators. The idea of holism offered a more optimistic approach to integrating both the academic and practical aspects of social work education but our understanding of how to apply holistic teaching, learning and assessment is still developing. Although the future for continuing professional development in social work is uncertain, it is important to note that programmes for newly qualified social workers have created opportunities for critical reflection, through more structured supervision and attendance on higher education courses.

Social work educators can continue to play a role in creating the space for social workers to reflect critically on the context of their practice. Dialogic approaches offer a way of valuing the knowledge and expertise that students bring from practice, alongside academic knowledge. Creating conditions for dialogue in this project was a testing and imperfect process, for both teacher and students. Through investigating this process, and analysing the learning from it, I aimed to contribute to our knowledge of the potential for developing criticality in contemporary social work education and contribute knowledge about the potential and limitations of dialogue as a means of developing critical reflection in particular. Specifically, I will address a number of questions (below) arising from the discussion of policy and literature in Chapters 1 and 2. The next chapter offers my methodology as I to put these thoughts into practice.

Research Questions

1. How have critical ideas developed in social work practice and education?

2. How do experienced social workers understand and apply criticality?

3. What helps or hinders post-qualifying social work students to develop their critical and reflective capacities?

4. How does post-qualifying social work education contribute to critical practice in social work?

Chapter 3:   Research Design and Methodology

Introduction and outline of Chapter 3

"All projects begin in a kind of stuttering." (Schostak, 2002: 11)

Research is an heuristic process that looks into the unknown and attempts to find answers to questions (Su et al., 2010). Research involves working with uncertainty and requires a willingness to learn and adapt as the project unfolds. Research with human subjects must also recognise that people have rights, needs, concerns and agency, adding further complexity to an already uncertain process (Macfarlane, 2010).

The aim of this thesis is to inform and develop future practice, including my practice, by exploring understandings of criticality in social work, through the literature, and from the perspectives of post-qualifying social work students. This chapter explains the research design that will serve this aim. The purpose of the fieldwork phase of the study was to learn about criticality from the participants' points of view. Initially, qualitative, interpretivist approaches seemed suitable for this study, due to their explicit focus on researching participants' views (Creswell, 2013a; Somekh et al., 2011). Further, qualitative researchers welcome diverse views amongst participants, as a means of discovering the multiple meanings held by participants about the research topic (Creswell, 2013a; Lorenzo, 2010). This chapter explains and justifies my decision to use a qualitative approach to address the research

questions and to apply this approach through a methodology that combines case study with thematic analysis.

Qualitative methods allow for flexibility as the research progresses, through 'emergent' research design (Creswell, 2013a). Qualitative approaches encourage researchers to reflect on how they become part of the research, how their decisions impact on the research and how their values and interests could potentially introduce bias into the project (Bryman, 2012; Cousin, 2010). In this thesis, the term 'reflexivity' indicates a form of reflection that asks how my position within the field of the research, might have affected the study (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a; Gardner, 2014; Rhynas, 2005). Reflexivity was important to the study as I had a dual role, as researcher and lecturer, in relation to the participants, although it is important to note that I stopped being their lecturer before I asked my former students if they would participate in this study (see also Section 3.3.3: Ethics, Power and Consent).

Reflexivity involved creating a degree of distance from the project (Mayo, 1998) so that I could look back and identify influences on my decisions and in my interpretation of the data (Elder-Vass, 2007). Although reflexivity brought new awareness and insights to the research, it also indicated the possibility of errors in drawing conclusions from the research findings. For example, some influences might have been unconscious and "enacted unthinkingly," meaning that even thorough reflexive thinking might not bring these into awareness (Adams, 2006: 514).

When the participants had been my students I had assessed their assignments and the legacy of differences in power and status could have impacted on our relationships during the study (Shaw and Gould, 2001). I considered these ethical issues in the early stages of the project (see Section 3.3.3), but I needed to remain alert to the impact of my presence throughout the project. My subjectivity would have been present in the decisions I made, in the questions I asked, and in my interpretation of the findings.

Decisions about research methodologies are influenced by attitudes to knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007; Gredig et al., 2012; McLaughlin, 2012) and such decisions are part of a deliberate, methodical, careful and justifiable approach to an investigation (Sayer, 1992). This chapter sets out the rationale underpinning key decisions in the research design and explains the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that influenced my thinking during the study. This chapter establishes the connections between the different elements of the study, from the initial research questions, to the research strategy, the methods of inquiry and the analysis of empirical data (Yin, 2009).

Section 3.1 explains why I chose to use critical realist ideas. I have drawn on Bhaskar (1989; 1997; 2008; 2013) in particular, to consider how my research might address both the individual agency of my participants and the social structures surrounding them as they grappled with academic work and practice. I have considered Bourdieu's (2007c) contribution to understanding the relationship between structure and agency, through his

concepts of habitus and field. I found that it is possible to align Bhaskar and Bourdieu, through their interest in the relationship between subjective human agency and objective structural context. In addition, both drew on the critical theory traditions of challenging the structural inequality arising from social and political relations (Gardner, 2014).

This chapter is structured around three supporting, conceptual pillars for the thesis: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Wellington, 2010). Section 3.1 takes the discussion into ontological, philosophical, questions of *'being'* and *'existence,'* and is particularly concerned with the nature of reality (Creswell, 2013b; Crotty, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Somekh et al., 2011). Section 3.1 explores the interaction of real events and subjective interpretations, in the context of social work. Section 3.2, concerning epistemology, develops a philosophical discussion of our *knowledge* of 'being' and 'existence' and asks, for example, how explanatory theories about our world are constructed (Bryman, 2012; Wellington, 2010). This structure follows from Bhaskar's (1979; 1991) recommendation to address ontological questions separately from epistemological questions to avoid confusing "that which exists with the knowledge we have about it" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 40).

Section 3.3: Methodology, forms the third pillar and asks: "How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013: 26). Methodology is more than a description of the practical methods of gathering data: it is the "whole system of principles, theories and values that underpin

the particular approach" (Somekh and Lewin, 2011: 326). Critical realist research is not prescriptive about methodologies (Corson, 1991a; Corson, 1991b; Maxwell, 2012) and allows for "an eclectic assembly of methods and approaches that capture the rich ontology of social life" (Houston, 2010: 89). The discussion of methodology will show how the philosophical and theoretical working (ontology and epistemology) connected with my decisions to a use case study research strategy, together with thematic analysis of the data, a strategy that aimed to discover participants' views in relation to the research questions. Section 3.3 explains the rationale for the case study approach, ethical issues, the scope and conduct of fieldwork and my approach to thematic data analysis.

3.1   Ontology

Participants in this study were local authority social workers, working with vulnerable children. Social workers necessarily work with many different interpretations of a child's circumstances; indeed they are mandated to do so, as they must consult the child, family and other professionals working with the child (Department for Education, 2015a). They work with ambiguous concepts, such as 'neglect,' 'risk,' 'parenting,' in a context where the consequences of mistaken judgement can be catastrophic for the welfare and safety of a vulnerable child (Kemshall et al., 2013; Munro, 2010a; Pithouse et al., 2012). Social workers deal with real facts of "life in extremis," for example, an injury inflicted on a child is real (White, 2001:

112). Evidence is tested, observations discussed and explanations investigated and yet, the fact of the injury remains.

Several different accounts may claim to be a true representation of the facts but each interprets and reproduces the facts in their own way (Taylor and White, 2001). Social work judgements about truth are made in the context of several interconnecting relationships with families, managers, colleagues, organisations and, sometimes, courts (Rutter and Brown, 2015), where the interpretation of events by those in powerful positions can prevail (Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; Taylor, 2010). The interpretative and subjective nature of social work suggests that it is fertile ground for investigation from a position that views truth as relative and problematic. However, social workers, who are confronted daily with empirical evidence of reality, for example, in cases where children have been harmed, might need to use knowledge urgently and pragmatically and "save problematising for the weekends" (Rorty, 1996, in White, 2001: 113). Having been a social worker myself, I have sympathy with this view, but I also recognise the value and necessity of problematising the relationship between facts, reality, truth, and knowledge, even if at weekends.

Relationships, with people and structures, mediate how people understand facts, as they make judgements about the truth of explanations (Houston, 2001; Taylor and White, 2001). In social work, there are powerful, intersecting structures, influencing and constraining these relationships, from the micro to macro level. Social workers practice where individuals meet the

state, where they encounter family structures, line management hierarchies, child protection systems and wider social structures (Houston, 2016). These structures are not necessarily directly observable, particularly if they become internalised as "deep structures" of belief, thought or emotion (Houston, 2005: 8), for example, in attitudes to attachment (Ainsworth, 1978), or parenting capacity (Sheppard, 2000). I needed an approach to the research that acknowledged both the real experiences and subjective interpretations encountered by social workers in their everyday practice. I looked for theoretical approaches that would accept the subjective interpretation inherent in qualitative methods and yet recognise that real events and deep structures, could influence experience (Houston, 2001).

Philosophical attitudes to reality can fall into polarised positions about what constitutes a valid *approach to* research and what knowledge of reality we can gain *through* research (Gage, 2007). Natural sciences are assumed to focus on *explaining* real causal mechanisms through empirical investigation of how things appear to the senses (Williams, 2006). Natural sciences usually collect data by systematic observation and use data to test theoretical hypotheses about causality, to prove or disprove a theory (Bryman, 2012; Shaw, 2010). Social sciences have become more concerned with discovering and creating *understanding*, using a variety of empirical and reflective, approaches. Social scientists interpret data to enable meanings to emerge and to be understood (Gredig et al., 2012). However this polarisation could be a false and reductive dichotomy (Fairclough, 2005), based on faulty ideals:

> … we must either be foundationalist, and believe that knowledge can
>
> be logically derived from indubitable premises, or we must accept
>
> that there is no universally valid knowledge, that truth is solely a
>
> matter of judgement or consensus or power. (Hammersley, 2004: 61)

Critical realists see the polarisation between the empirical, realist paradigm and the interpretivist, relativist paradigm as a "split ontology" (Corson, 1991a; Bhaskar, 1997: 139), implying that each of the two positions is less than whole. Bhaskar (1989; 1997) claimed that this split can be bridged by a holistic ontology, situating subjective experience within the operation of wider structures in society. Critical realists see both explanation and understanding as legitimate objectives for social research (Houston, 2001). I will refer to an example from my data analysis, to show how such a bridge has been useful in this study. I will come back to this extract in Chapter 4 (Organising theme: Building confidence in practice) but I have included it here to show how critical realism has supported this project's methodology, as an "underlabourer" to analytical work (Joseph, 2002: 26).

In the extract below, Participant B[18] indicated that wider ideological, legal, and procedural structures influenced individual social workers in her team.

> The thing I'm conscious of, with the workers I supervise, is that
>
> they've come into safeguarding at a very pressured time, much more
>
> so than when I was young. Although, you know, we did have the

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[18] Transcripts of interviews with participants are included as Appendices 16 – 21.

sort of perspective of blame but that is very much more around now,

in terms of, you need to cover your back….

You need to make sure you've written up on 'Care First' and god

forbid that, you know, you're caught without doing a stat. [statutory]

visit. And they're driven by that almost, and it fits with this Munro

stuff doesn't it, that I want to see them having the time to step back

from that and experiment a bit more with families and interventions.

(Participant B)

Participant B suggested that naming and criticising individual social workers

in the media has affected the climate for practice. Statutory responsibilities

had priority and social workers must comply with a managerial approach to

monitoring their work through an electronic database (called 'Care First').

These powerful structures made it a "very pressured time" and social

workers feared being "caught." Participant B interpreted this experience as

being "driven" and, for me, it conjures a metaphor of social workers feeling

chased and hounded.

Participant B's own subjective response was a reflective one. She has read

Munro's (2010a; 2010b) analysis of how procedurally driven approaches can

undermine social workers' confidence to use their judgement and she

wanted to support her team to find time for their own reflection. Participant B

suggested a causal relationship between the structural context, the thinking,

and behaviour of individual social workers. She suggested that the structural

context affected her too, and prompted her reflection. This appears to bear

out the possibility that representations of the causal powers, emanating from structures, might be brought to the surface, or uncovered, through analysis of subjective experience.

Subjective experience is nearer the surface, for example, as represented by speech or text. Beneath the surface, critical realists distinguish between reality, actuality, and empirical experience, visualised as overlaying strata:

> … the 'real' is the domain of structures with their associated 'causal powers'; the 'actual' is the domain of events and processes; the 'empirical' is the part of the real and the actual that is experienced by social actors. The 'actual' does not in any simple or straightforward way reflect the 'real': the extent to which and ways in which the particular causal powers are activated to affect actual events is contingent upon the complex interaction of different structures and causal powers in the causing of events. (Fairclough, 2005: 992, see also Section 6.1, Table 5: Stratified Ontology)

Critical realists see a dynamic relationship between the strata and propose a cautious correspondence between objective reality and subjective interpretation, albeit an imperfect correspondence, for example, through our efforts to represent reality through language (Gredig et al., 2012). Reality is not confined to the observable and could include abstract, intangible experience such as ideas (Bhaskar, 1997), which might only become known through their effects (Sayer, 2000). Participant B found words to represent

the effects of media coverage of the profession on her social workers. She

expressed how technological methods of monitoring their work intensified

fears of making mistakes and falling behind. Participant B's words implied

that her world of social work included real physical and mental entities, real

things, real events and real thoughts (Callinicos, 1995). Participant B

exemplified how critical realist ontology could work to structure qualitative

inquiry. However, I was aware that critics question fundamental aspects of

the approach, for example, from the different perspectives of relativism,

realism, and Marxism.

From the relativist paradigm, critics of critical realism suggest that attempts

to portray a *singular objective* reality are futile, impossible, and risk imposing

a false, mistaken construction of their life on those who may reject it (Denzin

and Lincoln, 2013). However, critical realism does not propose singular

causal relationships and insists that explanations can only be tentative

because there is always the possibility of new knowledge adding to, or

changing, the explanation (Sayer, 1993). Bhaskar (1989) proposed that, by

rational interpretation, research aims to discover causal powers, the

mechanisms that begin, tentatively, to explain the complex mix of causes of

social phenomena. These mechanisms are open systems, and it is the

assumption of openness that allows for complexity and prevents such

singular explanations. Social systems remain open because they are

"necessarily peopled" (Archer, 1998: 190) and, therefore, they can be

affected by other systems, through human relationships (Houston, 2001).

Because numerous mechanisms can influence experience, the explanations

can never be deterministic predictions of behaviour. Instead, critical realists aim to suggest 'tendencies' (Houston, 2001).

An example of a complex open system can be found in an analysis of 139 serious case reviews (where a child has been seriously injured or harmed) showing that, in 86% of the cases, one or more of a 'toxic trio' of mental illness, substance misuse and domestic abuse, were present in the child's home circumstances (Brandon et al., 2012). It is clearly important that social workers know and understand indicators of risk to a child's wellbeing, and the implications for others, who also might be at risk. However, this cannot be a simple cause-and-effect relationship between risk factors and outcome, as other mechanisms, such as wider family and social relationships, availability of support services and resources, will also play a part (Houston, 2001; Houston, 2016). Consequently, in assessing the risk to children, social workers need the critical capacities to situate these pervasive and damaging social problems within the structures of power affecting the particular family, community, and wider society.

For Bhaskar, discovering causal mechanisms is transformatory and potentially emancipatory, enabling people to know more about their world and to act to change it (Bhaskar, 1979; Bhaskar, 1989; Corson, 1991a). From the realist paradigm, Harré, (Harré and Bhaskar, 2001; 2009) disputed that social structures, for example, systems of money or economics, have causal powers in their own right, arguing that such structures are created discursively and only create effects through the narratives that people use to

describe them. Harré (Harré and Bhaskar, 2001) argued that Bhaskar's emphasis on structure minimised the effects of human agency. Bhaskar (Harré and Bhaskar, 2001) responded by pointing to the causal effects of social structures such as poverty and unemployment and suggested that knowledge of how social structures work enhanced human agency.

Also from the realist paradigm, Hammersley (2009) takes issue with the critical, transformational aims and the potentially distorting impact of ideological allegiances amongst critical realist researchers. Hammersley (2009) points to Bhaskar's commitment to purposeful research, aimed at human emancipation (Bhaskar, 1989; Corson, 1991a; Graeber, 2014) and argues that researchers have no special right to impose their critical view of society on others. For their research to be valid, researchers should strive to be "value neutral" (Hammersley, 2009: 7).

Bhaskar referred to western scholars who were sceptical of attempts at objectivity, from Descartes to Freud. These "masters of the hermeneutic of suspicion" (Bhaskar, 1997: 141) argued that the representation of reality, through language, is always approximate and mediated by human subjectivity. This suggested that I should not expect interview transcripts to be a fully accurate representation of reality and I might expect to find multiple possible meanings in any one part of the data. My own work with this data would add another layer of interpretation. Critical realists regard such mental constructions and meanings as part of lived experience and hence

are *part of reality*, and these different perspectives are central to developing understanding from the research (Maxwell, 2012).

Bhaskar (1979: 201) reminds us that, although subjectivity leads us to understand meaning "in our own terms," the purpose of research is usually to try to understand something about other people. If subjectivity is accepted, as an inevitable component of research, reflexivity becomes a way to be open about the effects of subjectivity on how the researcher collects and understands the data. Reflexivity is therefore a means of gaining insight into biases in the research and could be a means of improving future practice.

> … every philosophy, if it is to be adequate, [needs] to be capable of reflectively situating itself - which entails its own production and context as well. (Bhaskar, 1997: 141)

I needed to consider, firstly, how I impacted on the project, through my dispositions, values and actions (considered further in Section 3.3.3) and, secondly, how the research affected me, because this aspect of subjectivity could bring new insights to the topic (Bhaskar, 1989). The concept of transformation, through achieving insight, gives reflexivity a central role in my practice as a teacher and researcher. I hoped that insights from this case study would help me to develop my teaching of critical reflection, so that I could support students more effectively to use their learning in practice. It could also help me to become more aware of my practice as a researcher.

Bhaskar (2000) drew criticism from Marxists for attempting to integrate spiritual, theistic ideals into his later work (Bhaskar and Callinicos, 2003). In suggesting that a God-like being forms the ultimate structure with ultimate casual powers, Bhaskar limited the potential for human agency and undermined the transformatory potential of his earlier critical realist theory (Creaven, 2014). Arguments for integrating spiritualism into critical realism move away from logical investigation and into "ontological speculation" about the existence of God (Creaven, 2014: 410). However, in the spirit of openness, I know that my own disposition, as an atheist and materialist, means that I am reluctant to follow Bhaskar (2000) and others (Collier, 2013) through the 'spiritual turn' and I have therefore made more use of his earlier work.

In summary, critical realism supported a reflexive approach and a qualitative methodology. Critical realism encouraged discovery of meaning through reflexive dialogue with research subjects (Corson, 1991a) and this fitted well with the dialogic, reciprocal, relationships I hoped to develop with my students during the teaching. Critical realism suggested the possibility of developing tentative explanations (Ackroyd and Karlssson, 2014) about structures and processes that affected my students, and me. However, I needed to remain mindful that critical realism is accused of over emphasising the effects of structures and minimising the human agency evident in the different ways people respond to social structures (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). I hoped students would share experiences and insights that would help me to see the teaching and learning from their point

of view. I hoped to gain more insight into meanings that participants attached to criticality, so that I could teach criticality more effectively in the future.

3.2   Epistemology

Critical realism argues for an ontological realist position, recognising that experiences have a basis in reality, but with a critical, interpretivist view of how knowledge is constructed (Sayer, 1992). The interpretivist aspect of critical realism argues that knowledge *about* reality is constructed, mediated and represented by people (Maxwell, 2012; Sayer, 1992). I could therefore accept that my research participants' experiences were real, and that they worked with children and families who had real experiences, whilst I recognised that knowledge of these experiences, through this study, would be constructed through layers of interpretation. My own subjectivity and that of my participants would affect how each party to the data understood these experiences.

Critical realists assume that researchers cannot be detached from their work (Ackroyd and Karlssson, 2014). Researchers in this tradition are often committed to bringing about change and, in this study, I was seeking insights that would help me improve my work with post-qualifying students. Critical realist research accepts subjectivity as an inevitable and potentially creative aspect of human agency. Sayer (1992) argues that the two main ways in which people develop knowledge are, firstly, through working on their

environment and, secondly, through communicating their experiences, both creative expressions of human agency. Like Bhaskar (1979), Sayer (1992) is influenced by Marx in arguing that people both learn about their world and create their world, through these interactions. This is a dialectical relationship whereby human agency and social structure are bound together in dynamic tension, both changing and constraining each other (Allman, 2001; Bhaskar, 1993; Creaven, 2002). Sayer (1992) references a well-known quotation to illustrate the transformatory potential of human agency, in the context of constraining social structure.

> Men [sic] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. (Marx and Engels, 1968: 96)

I accessed participants' experiences of their agency and circumstance through interviews, written transcripts, and written analysis. My subjectivity and that of participants permeated the process, for example, as we co-constructed the conversation during the interview, prompting a cautious approach to making claims about knowledge generated from the study (Fairclough, 2005).

If there are subjective influences on knowledge construction, it follows that researchers should be cautious and critical about selecting knowledge to inform and underpin their study. A critical realist approach assumes that any theory is an incomplete explanation and therefore encourages researchers

to draw on multiple theories (Maxwell, 2012). I have tried to take a critical and reflexive stance to using theory in the different stages of the project from the design and delivery of the taught unit, the fieldwork, the data analysis and in writing the thesis. I have drawn on a number of theorists of critical reflection, to inform different stages of the project and there has been some inevitable blending of theoretical knowledge across the boundaries of the different aspects of the project.

Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2) explains how reflexivity became part of the formative assessment phase of the unit, prompting students to revisit their reflective writing to develop further insights into their practice (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Argyris and Schön, 1978). Reflexivity was also important to the validity and trustworthiness of the research (see Section 3.3.4: Trustworthiness). I sent each participant a copy of the written transcript of her interview so that she could check the accuracy of the raw data. I checked and rechecked my findings against participants' words, in the audio recording and written transcript, looking for anything that I might have missed or misinterpreted. I discuss the students' response to the pedagogy and the knowledge introduced during the unit in the data analysis (see Chapter 5: Organising Theme 5). Below, I discuss the theoretical support underpinning my data analysis.

Early in the data collection, even as I was listening to the interviews I realised that Bourdieu could be relevant to the analysis. Bourdieu and Bhaskar both worked on the relationship between human agency and social

structure, from the late 1970s into this century. They made little reference to each other but others have thought about the connections (and differences) between Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' and the critical realist concept of reflexivity, both concepts relating to the potential for human agency in the context of constraining social structures (Adams, 2006; Elder-Vass, 2007; Houston, 2001). I will explain my understanding of habitus after explaining how I came to see its relevance to the data.

Reay (2004: 432) notes a "tendency for [the concept of] habitus to be sprayed through academic texts….bestowing gravitas without doing any theoretical work." Reay (2004) explains that Bourdieu is sometimes used superficially, when researchers make references to Bourdieu in their work without actively using his concepts as tools in the analysis. I had used Bourdieu's concept of habitus in reflecting on my own practice (Appendix 5) but had not fully settled on a theoretical framework for the data analysis at the time I began the interviews. Once I began the interviews, it became apparent that I should give space to Bourdieu's work in thinking about my data. I include an extract here, to illustrate how the relevance of Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' emerged during this first interview.

Participant A[19] spoke about her thinking as she began the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit, particularly the impact of past educational experiences on her academic confidence:

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[19] Transcripts of interviews with participants are included as Appendices 16 – 21.

… I don't believe myself to be particularly academic and I don't have an awful lot of confidence in my student, in the student me, there's something particularly terrifying about putting yourself out in front of a group of students. And, you know, some of those students are very, very capable, very knowledgeable…. and you just think, oh my god, what are they going to say about me? (Participant A)

In the interview, Participant A reflected back on her thoughts at the start of the unit, having successfully completed it. She brought a range of previous social and educational experiences to the surface, indicating that she felt poorly equipped in comparison to other students, and that this affected her academic confidence. She indicated that she felt vulnerable and, possibly, powerless in presenting herself and her practice to other students through an activity that I had set for students. Participant A took responsibility for how she felt. She seemed to see this as a problem located within her, rather than arising from deficits in her educational experiences, lack of opportunity, or arising from my practice in setting the presentation task.

Habitus is a key concept in Bourdieu's (2007c: 279) work, and relevant here as the embodiment of history, an internalised "active presence of past experiences." These experiences are inscribed within us and expressed through lasting dispositions, affecting our thoughts and behaviours and our habits of "standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990: 70). The habitus does not operate mechanically by merely

reproducing a person's history, but adapts to the field of social circumstances that the person inhabits at a particular time.

Bourdieu's methodology uses three co-constructed concepts: habitus, field and capital:

> … with none of them primary, dominant or causal. Each was integral to understanding the social world, and the three were tangled together in a Gordian knot which could only be understood through case-by case deconstructions. (Thompson, 2012: 67)

Bourdieu explained his concept of field as "a critical mediation between the practices of those who partake of it and the surrounding social and economic conditions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992b: 105). They encounter each other in specific, objective, historical, geographical and relational context (Bourdieu, 1998b; Thompson, 2012). Subjective habitus therefore encounters the outside world through relationships within fields, such as the fields of higher education and social work, where individual agency and objective social structure are entangled. The agency-structure relationship is therefore dialectical, reciprocal, as each affects the other: the social world produces practices, which in turn affect, and sometimes reproduce, the social world. In the social work field, the professionalisation of social work, followed by the introduction of business methods (discussed in Chapter 1), could be seen as creating dialectical tensions. Individual social workers might feel that their values, or dispositions, are in a tense relationship with

an increasingly codified, regulated and budget driven occupation (Bourdieu, 1981; Carey, 2008; Carey, 2014; Jones, 2001; Spolander et al., 2014).

Bourdieu suggested that people gradually acquire a familiarity with how to behave and think in particular fields; they adapt as they learn the rules and learn how to play the game (Bourdieu, 2007a; Thompson, 2012). However, Bourdieu's field metaphor is not the benign meadow, but a battlefield, a field of forces, a sports field, a field of knowledge, where people take up and compete for positions of power (Bourdieu, 1998b; Thompson, 2012). Each specific field is affected by wider fields of power relations, for example, those of social class and economic power.

'Players' occupy different positions in more than one social field at once. During the interviews, I invited participants to provide demographic information about themselves (see Interview Schedule: Appendix 13). This means that the categories they chose, for example, their social class identification, are subjective identifications and not based on objective categories of, for example, occupation, income and so on (Table 1: Profile of Participants). Participant A identified herself as a student, in the educational field, and working class in her wider social relations. Later, she suggested that holding these different positions created a tension for her, when she commented: "people like me don't come to University."

Bourdieu built on Marxist analysis of economic capital to argue that different forms of capital, for example, cultural capital, confer advantages (Bourdieu,

2007b; Bourdieu, 2007a). Habitus becomes an unconscious familiarity and an adaptation to the structures around us (Bourdieu, 2007c). In this way, familiarity with how to operate in dominant cultures brings advantage and unfamiliarity brings disadvantage. Bourdieu argued that all fields contain their own rules of the game and, without familiarity with the rules, people feel like a "fish out of water" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a). Bourdieu's metaphor seemed particularly apt as Participant A used a similar metaphor, later in the same interview, to describe how she was "stumbling through the desert without water" during her studies.

Bourdieu had an enduring interest in education (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Nash, 1990). His work frequently underpins analysis in educational research, because it provides a conceptual framework for examining how dominant forms of academic knowledge and skills, become reproduced, even by those who seek to challenge the hierarchies of knowledge (Wagner and McLaughlin, 2015). Bourdieu suggested that educational institutions both set criteria for educational success and are complicit in limiting access to the cultural and linguistic skills required to compete effectively in the educational field (Grenfell, 1998).

Participants in educational fields learn the rules of writing, for example, to avoid colloquial and vernacular language and to achieve the appearance of objectivity through distance, by writing in the third person. Rather than being a means of liberation, the educational system uses rules that replicate a

social class structure by valuing and teaching the culture of privileged classes (Bourdieu, 1988). Reay et.al (2009a) found that working class students, in four UK universities, worked hard to fit in, actively managing the discomfort and tension between working class habitus and an unfamiliar field. Paradoxically, it seems that working class students at an 'elite' university had felt like a 'fish out of water' during their early schooling, as their studiousness marked them out as different from their peers (Reay et al., 2009b). By the time they got to university, they were more at home in this new cultural pool and their habitus had adapted to fit into the expectations, relationships, and structures of educational achievement.

Bhaskar (1989; 1997; see also Section 3.1, above) worked to develop a holistic ontology by situating subjective experience within the operation of wider structures in society. Bourdieu also showed how we might attempt to bridge the duality between objective structuralism and subjective agency (King, 2000). However, Bourdieu has been criticised for over emphasising the power of structures at the expense of human agency and for not giving sufficient weight to our reflexive capacities in pursuit of change (Archer, 2010). Bourdieu (2007a: 291) recognised the possibility of change because "a field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles, tending to transform or conserve this field of forces." Burawoy (2012) argues that, although Bourdieu was committed to social change, his theory of habitus can seem too deterministic with limited prospect of individuals or groups effecting social change against prevailing structures. If this is the case, then aiming for equality in education, whilst social inequality persists, is futile and utopian

(Burawoy and Von Holdt, 2012). Our best efforts towards equality would be to support disadvantaged students to play the education game as well as possible.

Of course, it is a reasonable expectation that a lecturer should equip students to succeed and it is definitely reasonable for students to want to do as well as they possibly can. However, in taking a critical approach to the pedagogy of the unit and to the aims of the research, I hoped that the learning from the project would do more than merely reveal oppressive practices. I hoped knowledge would equip us to question practices that were oppressive, including our own practice, and to work towards making changes. There is explanatory power in the theory of habitus, particularly in drawing attention to the effects of embodied dispositions. However, the practical application to this project, also recognised the power of reflexivity, questioning and creativity in social relationships (King, 2000; Sayer, 2009).

As I was designing the teaching and learning activities I noticed the connections between the work of Bourdieu (1988) and Freire (Freire et al., 1998). Both highlighted the oppressive role of formal education, both theorised the roles of the teacher or lecturer in symbolically communicating the dominant culture that students must learn, if they are to succeed (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1988; Burawoy, 2010; Mayo, 1998). Whereas Bourdieu suggested the habitus hides oppressive educational practices deep within us, so that we do not notice their impact, Freire brought one

such practice into focus: the didactic 'banking method' of pedagogy (Burawoy, 2010; see also Chapter 2: Section 2.2.3).

The 'banking method' assumes a hierarchy of knowledge, with the teacher having access to more and better knowledge than their students (Mayo, 1998). The teacher is active in passing on this knowledge to their students and this makes students passive "receiving objects," rather than subjects in their own learning (Freire, 1996: 58). In my own practice, this would have discounted the knowledge, expertise, and authority that participants bought to class, whilst elevating my own: the opposite of what I had intended. Instead, Freire advocated dialogue as a form of pedagogy aimed at enhancing critical understanding of social relations (Allman, 2010; Freire, 1976; Freire, 1996) Freirean concepts, used in the pedagogy of the unit, therefore have a part to play in the analysis of students' experiences, particularly in exploring and evaluating the role of dialogue in the student-teacher relationship.

This project has drawn on a number of theoretical positions to inform the different stages of the project from initial research questions through to analysis of findings. Freire (Freire et al., 1998), and Argyris and Schön (1974; 1978) supported the teaching phase, through their writing on dialogical methods and reflexive practice. Bhaskar helped clarify the ontological stance and provided 'under-labouring' for the project's methodology, complemented by Bourdieu's work on habitus, field, and capital. These approaches can be aligned through their common interest in

the relationship between agency and structure, especially in education, their interest in theorising the operation of power in social relations and their emphasis on reflexivity during investigation of social life (Burawoy, 2010; Burawoy and Von Holdt, 2012; Elder-Vass, 2007; Sayer, 2011). The next section justifies the progression from these ontological and epistemological positions to the strategy of investigation and discovery through a case study and thematic analysis.

3.3   Methodology

> We cannot escape from our language (or time), that system of differences we exploit to produce meaning and in virtue of which meaning is produced for us. (Bhaskar, 1979: 201)

Language is central to the process of discovery as the means of communicating experience and, therefore, a route to understanding the meaning of experience (Corson, 1991a). Beliefs, attitudes, arguments and other expressions of thought, become data which imply causal mechanisms, or tendencies, that influence us (Houston, 2001). Critical realism suggests several *stages* that could aid the process of researching this data but is not prescriptive about the *method* of research (Corson, 1991a; Corson, 1991b; Maxwell, 2012). This section justifies my decisions to combine critical realist ontology with case study and thematic analysis, but begins with an outline of the reasoning that supported different stages of the project.

3.3.1 Reasoning

Critical realists suggest that different analytical processes support different stages of an investigation (Hutchings et al., 2013; Sayer, 1992). Often this process starts with 'abduction' (Bonnington and Rose, 2014). I think of abduction in research as seizing an issue, particularly noticing phenomena that surprise us and challenge our existing theories. Through abduction we speculate (Houston, 2010) and look for explanation through closer examination of the issue (Lipscomb, 2012; Thomas, 2010). I see abductive processes in my initial thinking at the beginning of this project. I had often noticed students' bewilderment when asked to be more critical in their assignments (see Introduction to the thesis). Students' questions, about what critical analysis meant and how to apply critical thinking, indicated that this might be a common problem. I was interested in finding better ways to support students' learning about criticality.

Initially, I pursued my interest in criticality through a literature search to support the development of the new unit: Critical Thinking and Analysis, then through attending the reading group discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.4). I extended the search, using a systematic series of Boolean searches (see Appendix 6). The literature review, as represented in Chapters 1 and 2, informed the proposal for the study, the research questions and the fieldwork. A further literature search informed the discussion of theoretical perspectives and methodology in this chapter (see Appendix 6).

After focussing on an issue, reasoning can proceed along different paths, typically following either deductive or inductive lines of inquiry. Theory making, using deduction and induction, is a common every-day human activity, as people make sense of their experiences by testing their knowledge against experiences (Sheppard, 1995). In research practice, deductive reasoning can be seen as 'top-down,' beginning from a pre-existing theory. Deductive reasoning helps in forming a hypothesis about causality (Houston, 2001), or merely suggesting areas of investigation, from which we could develop initial research questions (Brown and Rutter, 2008; Fook, 2002). In contrast, inductive reasoning is 'bottom-up,' looking to develop understanding from the data. Theory can then develop, starting with what the data subjects communicate (Fook, 2002). Qualitative studies often need a mix of abduction, deduction and induction in their reasoning: abduction focuses our attention, deduction suggests the direction of the research, yet induction is essential to ensure participants' diverse views are the main focus of the analysis (Creswell, 2013a). In exploring research questions, theorising develops through interplay between data (as a form of observation) and concepts (Sheppard, 1995), for example, though the process of coding and theming from the data.

3.3.2 Case Study: location, outline, participants

This case study investigated one unit of study in depth and explored perspectives from six students in detail (Creswell, 2009; Gibson and Brown, 2009). The case study took place during 2010-2011, when participants were qualified social workers, employed in three North West Local Authorities: one city authority and two metropolitan boroughs. Participants were six of the seven students studying a 20-credit unit entitled 'Critical Thinking and Analysis,' as part of their post-qualifying course: PgDip/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work. One student declined to participate in the study.

Case studies can be described as an approach, rather than a method, as case studies typically draw on a variety of research methods and tools to suit the particular features of the case and the type of data being collected (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011). Consequently, the term 'case study' has come to be understood as a range of widely differing research practices (Eckstein, 2009; Gomm et al., 2009), including in-depth studies of single person case histories, comparative studies of two or more cases, studies of a family, a group, an organisation (Gerring, 2007).

Creswell (2013a) advises that case study research is suitable where there are boundaries that delineate the case, and where the researcher is interested in developing an in-depth understanding of phenomena contained within the boundaries. The boundary limits the extent of the investigation in a

case study, in both context and time and Mjøset (2009) suggests that case studies often begin by identifying a problem, before working out the scope of study to investigate it. This study can be described as a single, instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). It is a single case study, in that participants were all attending the same classes, as part of the same course, and marked out by those particular circumstances. The case study is instrumental because it was designed to investigate a problem, rather than to investigate the case intrinsically (Creswell, 2013a).

The Introduction to the thesis explains that the prospect of teaching criticality brought the problem of how to support students' understanding and practice of criticality into focus. There was an element of serendipity in 'being in the right place, at the right time' to develop a case study with an apparently pre-formed group. However, even where a boundary exists independently of the research study, and where participants in the study already share some distinctive property, Carter and Sealey (2009: 69) point out that "the coherence and boundaries of a case are still not self-evident," but are constructed by the researcher through the design of the case study. It follows that cases are not only 'identified,' they are also 'made,' or created, by marking out particular populations for study. Carter and Sealey (2009: 76) use the term "casing" to emphasise that this is an active, decision-making process, and they argue that the researcher should acknowledge their central role in setting the study's boundaries.

The immediate context for this case study was the place of the unit within the students' wider post-qualifying programme. To achieve their postgraduate diploma, students took five mandatory units and one elective unit (set out in Appendix 8). They could achieve the award at master's level by also completing the Research Methods Unit, followed by a research project and dissertation. The Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit was one of the five mandatory units and students had flexibility about when to take the different units. All but one student had been together during previous units (sometimes within a larger group of students from both Adult and Children's Services) and several students were intending to continue with further units. It therefore seemed relevant to include the opportunity for participants to reflect on their broader post-qualifying study in the interviews and I included a prompt for this in the Interview Schedule (Appendix 13). In the subsequent data analysis, Section 5.3.1 refers to participants' experience during the wider PQ Programme, in particular, having developed a shared culture of trust through their experience of the previous units.

Case studies are useful for investigating complex topics with many variables (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011; Thomas, 2016; Yin, 2009) and this study was complex in several ways. There were at least two professional discourses within the study: social work and education, and the study took place at a time when social work and social work education was undergoing rapid change. Beyond the immediate context, there were seemingly infinite layers of wider context to the case study, including the developments in social work practice and education, and the social context in which

participants lived and worked. The case study engaged with the wider context, through the literature discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and through the discussion in Chapter 6. However, whilst the interviews asked participants about these areas of their experience, I did not broaden the sample in the case study by seeking participants from outside the single student group.

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) suggest that the notion of sampling can be a confusing and, possibly, inappropriate concept to apply in small scale qualitative studies, as participants are not drawn from, and are not selected to represent, a wider target population. Rather, participants are included because of their particular characteristics, in this case, their experiences of a particular unit of study. My decision not to extend the case study beyond the six participants introduces limitations to the study. For example, the perspectives of other contributors to the students' learning have not been included. In the future, a larger case study could broaden the sample and seek the views of participants across different locations and in different roles, for example: tutors, practice supervisors and service users. A future study could also extend the range of participants by including multiple cases of student groups who are studying critical thinking and analysis. The strengths and limitations of this study are considered further in Section 6.5 and recommendations for future research are put forward in Section 6.6.

The Introduction to the thesis introduced the rationale for exploring students' understanding of criticality and their response to specific teaching. The small

sample enabled me to analyse each interview in detail, aiming to develop a "fine-grained, in-depth inquiry" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 483). Case studies typically explore an issue from multiple perspectives (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011; Stark and Torrance, 2005). In this study, despite having characteristics in common (for example, their professional and student status), the six participants had unique histories, identities, and experiences. These differences were important to the case study as I was interested in exploring meanings, perspectives and identities, from the point of view of each individual participant (Schostak, 2002).

The profiles of the participants are set out below (Table 1), followed by an indication of the reflective activities that the students experienced during the Critical Thinking and Analysis sessions and that we discussed during the interviews.

Table 1: Profiles of (Student) Participants (self-defined)

	Sex/gender	Ethnicity	Social Class[20]	Year of qualification	Professional Role
A.	Female	Mixed heritage: Scottish/ Jamaican	Working Class	2005	Acting Team Manager: Children and Families Team
B.	Woman	Not stated	Not stated	1983	Deputy Manager: Safeguarding Team Children's Services
C.	Woman	White British	Middle Class	2000	Team Manager: Children and Families Duty Team
D.	Woman	White British	Working Class	2006	Independent Reviewing Officer
E.	Female	White British	Middle Class	2007	Social Worker: Safeguarding Team
F.	Female	White British	Middle Class	1996	Children and Families Co-ordinator: Multidisciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team

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[20] Social class is self-defined here, in the words participants chose, when asked for demographic information.

The case study investigated participants' experiences of the teaching and learning during the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. The unit was taught from 9:30am to 4:30pm, for 6 days (12 sessions) with the class meeting fortnightly. I taught nine of the sessions, one with a young person who had been in care, and my colleague taught three sessions (Appendix 7).

In Chapter 2, I explained the rationale for applying reflective and dialogical approaches in the pedagogy of the unit. Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2) discussed the potential for developing deeper and less defensive analysis of practice by returning to reflections for a second time (Argyris, 2002; Argyris, 2004). Opportunities for applying double-loop reflection, with dialogue, were structured into the unit through a series of activities and reflective writing. The process of developing these reflective loops in explained below.

<u>First reflective loop</u>

The first reflective loop involved an activity and a short written piece. These explored the influence of students' values and priorities in their practice, alongside other influences, for example: organisational priorities, national and local policy, knowledge, research. During this loop, students had the opportunity to consider, firstly, whether their intentions for practice were realised in the example and, secondly, the relative weight of different influences on their judgement making (as discussed in Section 2.2.2).

1. Students worked in groups of three or four and supported each other to analyse influences on their judgement, through a structured

exercise. Each student recounted an example of their professional judgement to two or three other students, who listened and noted (on cards) any influences on the judgment making that they thought might have occurred. These influences could have been explicit in the account, or hypothetical. The cards were given to the student who had recounted their judgement making, so that they could arrange possible influences in a visual way that made sense to them. The process of arranging the cards was to prompt reflection on the example, as discussed further in Section 5.3.2.

2. Students produced a short written reflection (1500 words) on the professional judgement (as in 1, above) and shared their writing in pairs. The paired discussion was followed by a group discussion about influences on their judgment making. I provided formative written feedback on the short written piece, to be discussed in individual tutorials, later in the unit (see 4, below).

Second reflection loop

Students had the opportunity to develop a deeper analysis of the example that they had been working on in 1 and 2 (above), through a second cycle of reflection, discussion and feedback.

3. Students presented their ideas for their written assignment in class and the student group discussed each presentation. I participated in the group discussion. The presentation did not contribute to the unit

mark but was intended to help students use the unit content and
further oral feedback, from the presentation, to prepare their
assignment.

4. I met students for individual tutorials to discuss the formative feedback
   from the short reflective writing (in 2, above) and presentations (in 3
   above), and to discuss assignment plans.

5. Students submitted the unit assignment for summative assessment.

The unit ended when students received their summative unit mark and
feedback on their assignments. My role in assessing students' assignments
meant that I needed to work out the ethical issues for the case study before
the unit began.

3.3.3 Ethics, power, and consent

The Faculty Ethical Approval Committee granted approval for the study
following submission of an Ethics Check Form (Appendix 9) and a full
Application for Ethical Approval (Appendix 10), which explained how I would
address the ethical issues of researching the experiences of my students.

Macfarlane suggests that it is common for researchers to treat their
participants as vulnerable, influenced by a discourse of research ethics that
emphasises protection (Macfarlane, 2010). It would have been patronising

and disempowering to consider competent social workers in this way, yet it was important to acknowledge the significance of the power imbalance in our relationships throughout the taught unit and into the research study. Clarke (2005) makes the point that competence is not static but contingent, fluctuating according to context. This suggests that adults, who are competent decision makers in most areas of their lives, could feel vulnerable if their lecturer asked them to participate in a research project. I intended that students should feel free to make their decision about whether to participate, but I also appreciated the potential for coercion.

In the field of education, lecturers hold power by virtue of their position, or standing, in the educational field (Grenfell, 2014). I had learnt academic orthodoxies, for example, how to speak and write about social work in an academic manner. In addition to acquiring this academic habitus, I had gained educational social capital through academic qualifications, and knew the rules in the academic field (Bourdieu, 1998b). I planned the unit for students, organised the content, assessed their work, and awarded marks for their assignments and my position of power, relative to my research participants, was obvious. I discussed these ethical tensions with my supervisory team early in the development of the study. I took advice from the Head of Social Work Programmes and the Chair of the Faculty Ethical Approval Committee before submitting the proposal for the study and this advice informed the Application for Ethical Approval (Appendix 10).

Duncan and Watson (2010: 49) suggest that ethical qualitative inquiry strives for authenticity in being transparent, reflexive and representative of participants' views. To address transparency as early as possible, before the unit began, I sent all seven students the Information Sheet (Appendix 11), ensuring that they had time to think about it before the unit began. The Information Sheet explained the purpose of the research, how I would safeguard their data, how the research might be used, who would have access to it and their right to withdraw at any stage.

I explained the project again during the first session. To minimise the risk that students would feel coerced, I explained the measures I had taken to ensure that no student would be disadvantaged if they declined to participate. Firstly, I would not invite students to participate until all their work for the unit had been assessed. This meant that I would not know who the eventual participants would be, until after the teaching and marking were completed, so that their decision could not affect their marks, or our relationships, during the teaching. Secondly, I gave assurances that their progress on the course would not be affected and, as participants' data would be kept confidential, other tutors would not know about their decision.

As well as the potential for coercion, there was also the possibility that students could be persuaded to participate through subtler processes, due to the relationships we developed during the teaching. One disruption to the usual lecturer-student binary was the social work expertise that the students brought to their studies. Participants' social work experience was more

current than mine was and, in the first session, I acknowledged that this might reduce, but not remove, the power difference between lecturer and student. I was aware that working with smaller groups, using dialogue, could lead to both lecturer and students sharing more of their personal and professional experiences than they would in a more formal session, leading to a more trusting, reciprocal relationship.

When I invited students to participate, six students agreed and one declined. All six participants signed the Consent Forms (Appendix 12), which I have kept secure. Participants gave consent for their semi-structured interviews to be audio-recorded and for their written work to be included. My role had been to support students to learn, but participants could have felt under pressure to reciprocate, by helping me with my research. With trust comes responsibility and I did not want to take advantage of generous and helpful students. Although participants gave permission to include their written work in the data for the study, I realised that this would raise further ethical challenges. Students' summative assignments referred to anonymised examples of their practice that might be recognisable to colleagues and wider communities where they worked. This meant that I could not include the summative assignments in the appendices for the thesis and, consequently, did not include the assignments within the data set. I have referred to student assignments (in Chapter 6) and these are available for scrutiny by my examiners.

The study therefore uses semi-structured interviews as the main source of data for the study and the main representation of participants' views. In addition, I re-read writing that arose in the course of formative reflective exercises prior to conducting the interviews and, again, as I was analysing the data. This included student writing, records from class activities, and my own reflective writing. Where I have referred to specific items, they are included as anonymised appendices. I formed a word cloud from the text of participants' unit evaluations, together with my feedback on their formative exercises. This was used as a resource in the semi-structured interviews, to prompt discussion (Appendices 13 and 14).

3.3.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has arisen as a concept in qualitative research in response to questions about the validity and reliability of qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012; Gibson and Brown, 2009). An assessment of validity in quantitative research usually asks whether the researcher has investigated what they intended to investigate (Somekh and Lewin, 2005) and this can be a problematic measure for qualitative research as inductive processes can take the research in unexpected directions. Demonstrating reliability is similarly problematic. In quantitative research, the reliability of the research might be tested by replicating the study through collecting new data to test the accuracy and the stability of the results (Bryman, 2012; Lewin, 2012). In qualitative case studies, replication is difficult, due to the uniqueness of the participants and the specifics of the context (Thomas, 2010; Thomas, 2016).

The validity of qualitative research depends on the vigilance and integrity of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2012), their ability to reflect on their research practice and to adjust their practice to form the best conditions for authentic data to be freely given (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). In this way validity is not dependent on procedural compliance, for example, through replication, and is reframed as trustworthiness, demonstrated through the authenticity of the data, the accuracy of representing the data and the coherence of the study (Creswell, 2013a; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Maxwell, 2012).

I considered the possibility that participants could adapt their contributions to the research environment, consciously or unconsciously. For example, participants might want to please me, or to present a good picture of themselves or their agency, or the opposite. Whilst it was impossible to eliminate the risk of reactivity of this kind, it was possible to reduce the risk by ensuring confidentiality, waiting until I had marked the assignments before asking students to participate, and through discussion and preparation with the participants. Participants checked the interview transcripts, to ensure that they were an accurate representation of what they wanted to say.

In this study I maintained coherence by justifying the methodology and theoretical concepts (see Sections 1 and 2) and by making only those claims from the study that can be justified. I recognised that the specificity of a case study makes it difficult to draw conclusions that can be generalised beyond the case (Thomas, 2016). At the start, I was aware that this case study was

not a representative sample of the wider population of post-qualifying students (Bryman, 2012; Gibson and Brown, 2009). Like many small qualitative studies, I sought rich, detailed data that would enable me to develop 'thick' description of the contextual, structural and cultural issues that emerged in the study (Somekh et al., 2011). In a classic text of ethnographic anthropology, Geertz (1973: 21) sees thick description developing from "extended acquaintances with extremely small matters." The value of this is not to try to generalise, to present the "world in a teacup" (Geertz, 1973: 23), but to understand how people make meaning in their specific context.

The concept of 'practice validity' (Houston, 2001; Sheppard, 1998) adds a further facet to an understanding of validity by asking whether the study produces anything of consequence to practice. Rather than making broad generalisable claims, qualitative research often draws attention to findings that are recognisable in other cases and draws conclusions that are helpful elsewhere (Bryman, 2012). With this in mind, I aimed for a degree of practice validity in developing understanding for situations that have similar properties to this case, for example, in my future teaching. Thomas (2010: 214) calls this "phronesis;" a term derived from Aristotle (Rutter and Brown, 2015; Kinsella and Pitman, 2012), meaning the wisdom that combines a reflective ethical thinking with knowledge to aid practice. The purpose is to discover understandings that are applicable and helpful in similar situations, to improve practice (Carter and Sealey, 2009; Sellman, 2012).

3.3.5 Data collection: semi-structured interviews

Case study data is usually collected in naturalistic settings, settings that are not constructed solely for the research and where participants can feel 'at home' (Stark and Torrance, 2005). Naturalistic settings help participants feel comfortable when they are providing data. Participants feel more in control of their contribution, and work more in partnership with the researcher (Bryman, 2012; Stark and Torrance, 2005). In this study, all participants said they were happy for me to interview them in a private room in their work setting, and this meant that they were in familiar surroundings, but not overheard by colleagues.

I conducted semi-structured interviews, each lasting about one hour, with six participants. Interviewing has an important place in critical realist research in enabling participants to express themselves so that the researcher might gain insight into the meanings that participants bring to an issue, their reasoning, and motivations (Houston, 2010). Bhaskar (1997) argued that these mental processes are real to the person whom we are trying to understand and can have casual effects in their own right, for example, in prompting further thoughts and behaviours (Bhaskar, 1997; Houston, 2010; Maxwell, 2012). Interviews are therefore a means of investigating participants' subjective agency and reflexivity, in both making their world and making sense of their world (Smith and Elger, 2014). However, as critical realists are interested in bridging the ontological split between subjective experience and the operation of wider structures (Bhaskar, 1989; Bhaskar,

1997; see also Section 3.1, above), interviews become a way to access participants' understandings of their multi-layered social world (Smith and Elger, 2014). The interviewer invites participants to explore the relationship between structural context, causal mechanisms, and experiential outcomes by structuring the interview around areas of interest (Machin and Pearson, 2014; Pawson and Tilley, 1994; Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This makes critical realist research interviews informed by the researcher's interests, to some extent, but the interview needs to enable participants to express their thoughts freely.

I used semi-structured interviews to initiate areas of discussion but also to enable participants to raise issues and follow their own interests (Bryman, 2012). I structured the interview schedule to address the research questions, a deliberately deductive process, influenced by the literature review, the formative teaching and learning activities and the research questions. I aimed to develop the coherence and trustworthiness of the study (as explained in Section 3.3.4) by asking a core set of questions about key issues in each interview.

Semi-structured interviewing allows for an interactive and dialogical approach, where both researcher and participant are active in co-constructing the conversation and where the researcher can probe and draw out issues (Smith and Elger, 2014). I sent the interview schedule to participants, in advance of the interview, so that they could be prepared and control what they shared with me. In co-constructing the interview,

participants can also gain insights and learn from the interaction, as illustrated below, where Participant D[21] offers a reflection on the interview process:

Participant D: …. just to say that this hour's been very strange to talk about myself so much, because you don't sit down for an hour and talk about yourself do you? So it's been a bit odd, but I don't mind doing it obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have agreed. *[Raises issue not on the schedule]*

Interviewer: So it feels unusual to you to do this? *[Surprised, reflecting back and probing]*

Participant D: Yes, it feels, I know it sounds daft, it feels a bit like you're having some kind of counselling session because you're being asked to talk about yourself. Not that I've had counselling in any great depth, but do you know what I mean? To sit and talk about yourself and your education history and how you felt about it and your work, your studying. *[Conversational]*

Interviewer: So it wouldn't be sort of a normal part of kind of social work practice to…? *[Hesitant, further probing]*

Participant D: No, it would be the other way round wouldn't it? I'd be asking all the questions, as a social worker…. I'd be asking the questions not answering them. So yes, there you go, critical analysis. I'll have to think about that next time I'm asking all the questions won't I? *[New insight]*

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[21] Transcripts of interviews with participants are included as Appendices 16 – 21.

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Later chapters will show that other participants shared Participant D's experience of having little time to reflect in practice. In this particular reflection on the interview, Participant D noticed that, in her social work role, she usually asks other people about their experiences. She noticed that it felt like counselling, to talk about her experiences for an hour and wondered how other people felt, when she was asking questions.

I was used to conversational interviewing, as a social worker, but the process of listening to recordings and reading the transcripts helped me see where I could improve, particularly in probing for more detail. It may be that Participant D had come to the end of what she wanted to say, but I could have asked a further question to elicit more of her thoughts about being the interviewer and the interviewee. Nevertheless, despite some missed opportunities, the interviews generated the rich data that I had hoped for and made it possible to move into the thematic analysis phase.

3.3.6 Thematic analysis: method and process

Within the case study, I used a specific form of thematic analysis, based on the work of Attride-Stirling (2001) to, firstly, code data from semi-structured interviews and then to construct thematic networks. The activities of coding and constructing themes from the data are found across a range of qualitative research methodologies, where researchers organise segments of data into categories, looking for connections, differences and patterns in experiences (Fook, 2002). Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) argue that thematic

analysis should be considered as a flexible method in its own right "for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data." However, the form of thematic analysis should be consistent with the ontological position of the research and capable of rendering data in a form relevant to the research questions

I conducted a literature review, using ASSIA and Scopus databases, to find reports of research combining critical realism and thematic analysis (see Appendix 6: Search Strategy). The search revealed 16 social science studies (published in English) combining critical realist ontology and thematic analysis in the five years between 2006 and 2010. Ten of these were published in 2010, just as this study was beginning. In the five years since 2010 there have been a further 21 social science studies (in English) combining critical realism and thematic analysis, indicating a small but growing interest.

Within the studies, I looked for reports of research that had similar properties to my study, for example, with social workers, or in adult education, or case studies. Several studies used a combination of critical realism and thematic analysis successfully, indicating a reasonable prospect that I could proceed in this way (Capri et al., 2013; Crawford, 2010; Hutchings et al., 2013; Ussher et al., 2014). Capri et al (2013) was particularly illuminating, as a case study of South African social workers, working with children traumatised by sexual abuse. In this study, a critical realist approach enabled the researchers to acknowledge the realities of practice, as the social workers "hurtle from one

case to a next, stifling distress over one child to focus on another" (Capri et al., 2013: 383). There were clear similarities with issues raised by participants in my study in terms of the pressure and pace of the work and the emotional impact on the social workers. Capri et al. (2013) used semi-structured interviews with social workers and examined the data using thematic analysis, also similar processes to my study. The researchers then used further theory, from the psychoanalytic tradition, to analyse how the social workers built psychological defences against the impact of their work on themselves, defences that were indicated during interviews. The study cautiously indicates possible causes of these psychological effects and makes recommendations to improve emotional support for the workers.

Braun and Clarke (2006) caution against expecting themes to 'emerge' from the data, as though the themes are ready made within the data, ready to float to the surface. The researcher constructs the themes, through working with the data. Initially, Bourdieu (2007c), Freire (1996) and, of course, Bhaskar (1993) played on my mind as I read the interviews and I found it difficult to put theory aside (temporarily) and concentrate on what the participants communicated. It took several attempts to shift the balance towards an inductive analysis that began from what the participants said.

I am grateful to my colleagues (Marshall and Goldbart, 2008) for recommending Thematic Network Analysis as a method of organising my data analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The method produces "thematic networks: web-like illustrations that summarise the main themes constituting

a piece of text" (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 386). There are five thematic networks in this study. These are presented as Figures 1-5, illustrating the five main themes in the findings and reported in Chapters 4 and 5. The structure of Chapters 4 and 5 are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Structure of findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5

Chapter	Main themes
Chapter 4: Impact of prior social work education and practice	Thematic Network 1: Learning theory separately from 'doing' practice
	Thematic Network 2: Becoming a social worker through coping under pressure
Chapter 5: Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis	Thematic Network 3: Intersections of study and workplace
	Thematic Network 4: Understandings of reflection and criticality
	Thematic Network 5: Pedagogy within the case study

Thematic Network Analysis structures the process through a series of steps, first dissecting the interview transcripts into categories of text (codes) and using the codes as the source of 'basic themes.' Further steps involve organising the basic themes into networks of data contributing to the presentation of thematic networks that demonstrate the main themes, termed Global Themes[22] in Attride-Stirling's work (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Attride-Stirling et al., 2001; Attride-Stirling et al., 2004). I used NVivo (computer-assisted, qualitative data-analysis software: CAQDAS), as a means of

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[22] I decided to use the term 'main theme,' rather than Global theme in my analysis, as this is a more familiar term in thematic analysis.

holding and coding the interviews electronically. One concern is that the process of extracting segments, through the coding process, strips the context from them, distorting meaning through abstraction and that this is a greater danger when using CAQDAS, because the software makes it easy to create files that contain only fragments (Gibson and Brown, 2009). To guard against this, I returned to the whole transcripts of the interviews periodically, through the coding process. I also reread all the transcripts after the thematic networks were completed to check that the networks still represented themes within the interviews.

Step 1: Creating Codes

Having read the transcriptions of all six interviews several times, I was able to start coding, a process of identifying and marking meaningful sections of the interviews and extracting issues into conceptual categories (Marshall and Goldbart, 2008). This resulted in codes containing numerous short sections of text, each relating to that particular code, from the six interviews. After merging those codes that held similar issues, there were 33 codes in total (Appendix 15: Codes to Basic Themes).

Step 2: identifying themes

I grouped the codes into five clusters (Appendix 15). Each cluster was a loose grouping of codes about a particular aspect of participants' experience:

1. Their social work pre-qualifying course;

2. Their practice experience;

3. Their current work role;

4. Their understandings of critical analysis and reflection;

5. Their experience of pedagogy (during the critical analysis unit).

The names of the clusters were descriptive, naming a common thread holding the codes together in a network.

I re-read the data held within each code with a view to firstly, naming the issues within each code and, secondly, stating basic themes occurring in relation to the issues. I wrote the basic themes as statements that expressed an insight, supported by the text segments. These basic themes can be seen as the lowest order of ideas abstracted from the text (Stormer and Devine, 2008). This resulted in the 35 basic themes (Appendix 15) that I thought could be supported from within the data, even if only by one or two short extracts of text.

Step 3: Constructing networks

Step 3 involves organising, or grouping, the basic themes by naming an area of interest that they held in common. These areas of interest are the organising themes within the thematic networks, joining basic themes into

patterns that begin to build the networks. Thorough this process, the original clusters yielded the five thematic networks named in Table 2 (above).

I used the first thematic network to test this analytical approach. From re-reading Basic Themes 1-7, I considered that the main theme, that stood out from these text segments was that, during their pre-qualifying courses, participants remembered academic learning, sometimes referred to as theory, as being disconnected from practice. What students said about the theory-practice relationship and what they said about their learning strategies, employed during their pre-qualifying courses, seemed to support this claim.

The network diagrams in Chapters 4 and 5, labelled as Figures 1-5, represent the process of constructing the networks. Table 3: Thematic Network Diagram (below) illustrates the relationship between basic themes, organising themes and main themes.

Steps 4 and 5 involve describing and exploring each thematic network, followed by a summary of each network. These steps formed the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, grouped into five thematic networks. Chapter 4 presents the first two thematic networks, relating to participants' prior experience of study and practice, including the recent experiences of social work practice that participants brought to their post-qualifying study. Following this, Chapter 5 presents three remaining thematic networks relating to participants' experiences of the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit.

Specifically, Chapter 5 presents themes relating to the intersections between participants' experiences of PQ study and their workplaces, their developing understandings of criticality and reflection and their experiences of the pedagogy within the case study.

Step 6 consists of interpretation of the full complement of networks, leading to a presentation of the key findings throughout the networks and relating these back to the research questions. Step 6 will therefore form Chapter 6 of the thesis: Discussion and conclusions.

Table 3: Thematic Network Diagram

Basic
Theme

Basic
Theme

Organising
Theme

Main
Theme

Organising
Theme

Basic
Theme

Basic
Theme

Codes to Issues, to Basic Themes, to Organising Themes, to Main Theme.
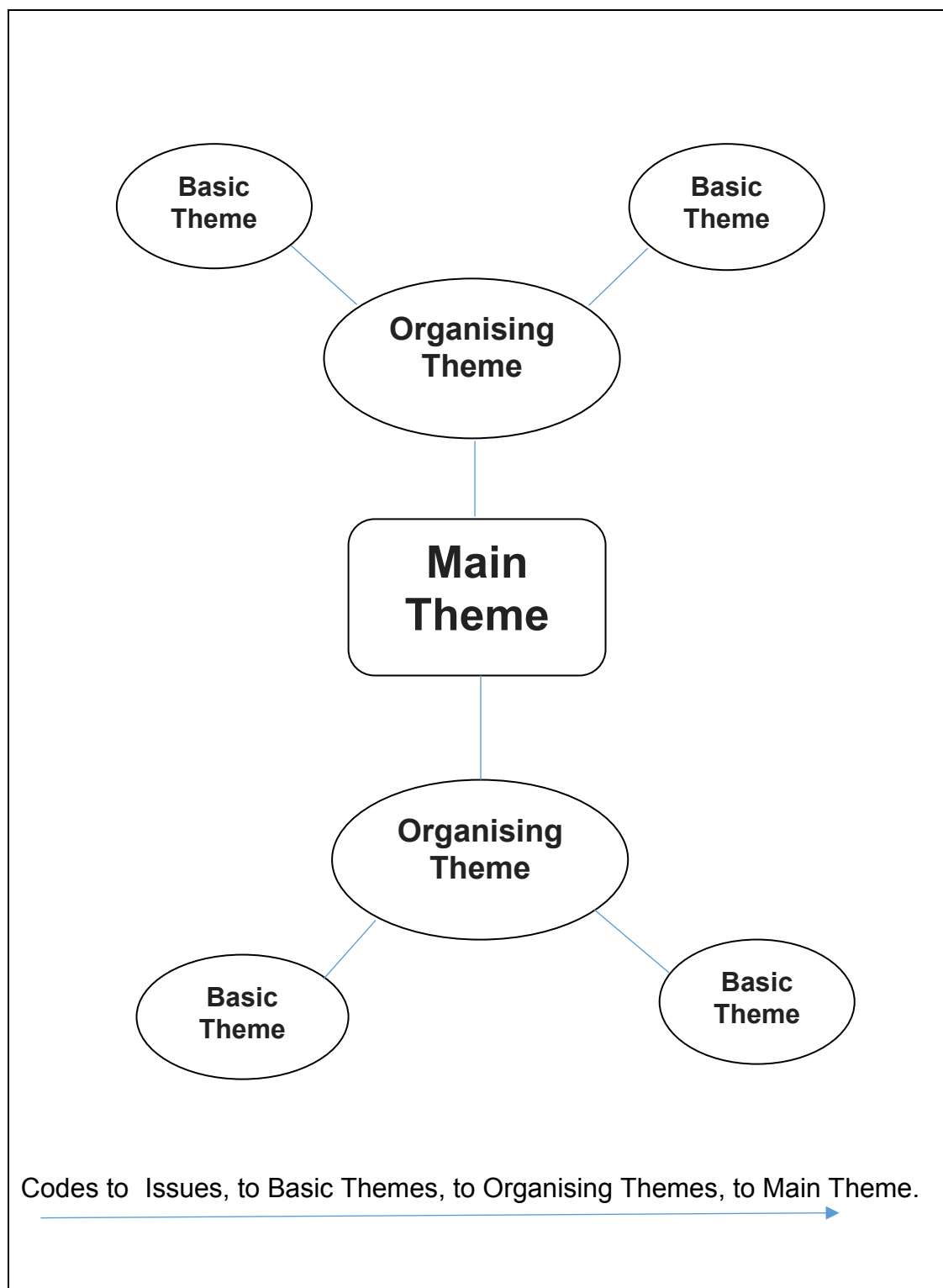
3.4 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter explained the theoretical support for the case study and the methods of practical application. I have discussed the alignment of Bhaskar's (1979; 1989; 1991; 1993; 1997) critical realist ontology with an epistemology that draws concepts from Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1988; 1990; 1992a) and pedagogy influenced by Freire (1998). This alignment emphasises the relationship between objective, structural factors and subjective agency, and draws attention to the emancipatory potential in understanding the how structural factors can both constrain and facilitate human action.

I designed this case study to focus on participants' experiences of studying the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit and to protect the authenticity of their accounts. Given my relationship with participants, this presented challenges that were addressed before the study began, and at several key points throughout the study. These challenges prompted me to consider power issues carefully throughout the study.

This chapter discussed my commitment to produce an ethical, trustworthy, and valid interpretation of the data collected during the study, meaning that I took a reflexive approach through into the analysis of data and discussion of findings. Chapters 4 and 5 describe and interpret the data; Chapter 6 will discuss the findings in relation to the research aims and the policy, practice, and theory discussed in the preceding chapters.

Chapter 4 (Data and findings): Impact of prior social work education and practice

This chapter describes and explores two main themes relating to participants' experiences before they began the post-qualifying course:

4.1 Thematic Network 1: Learning theory separately from 'doing' practice
4.2 Thematic Network 2: Becoming a social worker through coping under pressure.

Thematic network diagrams give a visual representation of the structure of each main theme.

4.1   Thematic Network 1: Learning theory separately from 'doing' practice

At the time of the study, all participants had been qualified social workers for several years. This thematic network explores participants' recollections of their experiences on their pre-qualifying social work courses. The network comprises of two Organising Themes: 'Prior learning strategies' and 'Relationship between theory and practice', with three and four Basic Themes respectively (Figure 1).

Students on social work pre-qualifying courses embark on an extended period of transition that takes several years and brings about a change of status, for example, from experienced care worker to newly qualified professional social worker. Participants recalled heuristic learning strategies from their pre-qualifying course, including approaches to learning that could impact on their learning later in their career. These recollections may be

affected by distortions of memory and interpretation in the light of experience, but are valuable nevertheless for the insights they give into participants' thinking about their pre-qualifying learning, around the time of their PQ studies.
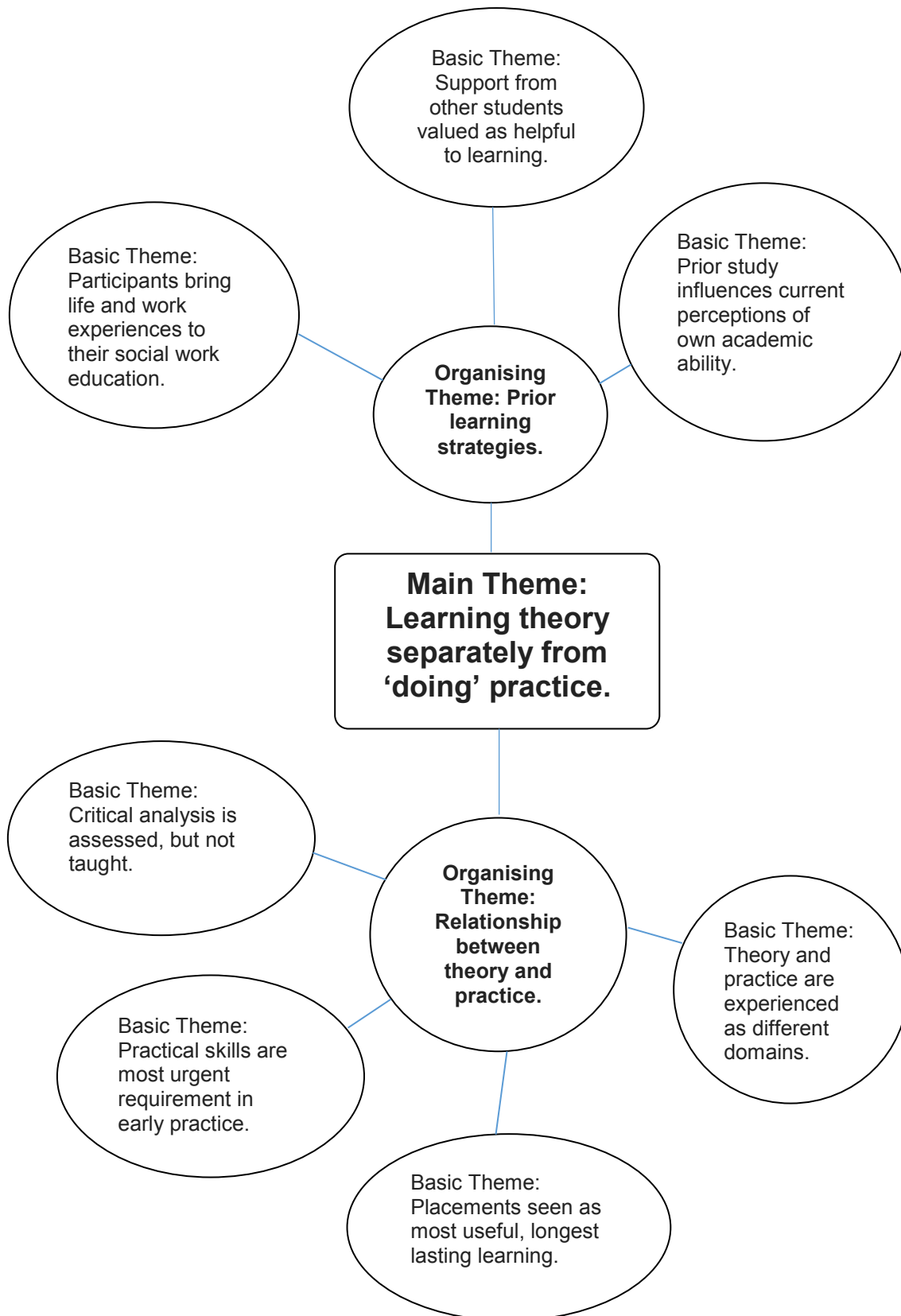
4.1.1 Organising Theme: Prior learning strategies

Participants' had powerful memories of the relationship between their personal experience, practice experience and academic learning from their initial pre-qualifying courses. Participants recalled both helpful and unhelpful experiences and strategies from their pre-qualifying courses, some of which they felt had endured into their more recent studies. All participants were already mature students when they embarked on their initial social work education and the data reveals the range of experience that participants brought with them onto their pre-qualifying courses:

> I trained whilst I worked, I trained part time and worked, I was working as a contact worker with [local authority] contact service, doing family contact, court directed. And before that I was a nursery nurse for ten years. (Participant A)[23]

> I started off working with children with disabilities…. I've done outreach work, I've worked with preschool children, I've worked with children with complex disabilities, I've worked on a residential unit, I've worked on a short break care. I did a couple of years as an Assistant Manager, managing a respite unit for children with disabilities. (Participant D)

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[23] Transcripts of interviews with participants are included as Appendices 16 – 21.

I did, I think it was, two and a half years working for a charity, two years in this country and about six months abroad, which was working in therapeutic communities for people with mental health needs….and I had a job working in the children's home for about a couple of years, and then I did about seven or eight months working in a leaving care service in a different local authority from this one. And at that point, I'd applied to do the social work course. (Participant F)

I was already a mum with a bit of experience behind me, which probably helped. (Participant B)

Participants readily recalled practice experience that seemed relevant and helpful to them on their pre-qualifying courses, whereas an absence of relevant practice experience could make the academic learning more daunting. Two participants, who studied at different universities, cited Law as a subject area where they found it difficult to connect their learning to their previous experience. The extract below illustrates one participant's memories of trying to learn this new subject without feeling able to apply it to their experience:

… The law stuff was just like a fog. I remember the tutor and he was really good, but it didn't mean anything to me because I couldn't apply it to anything I knew. And I think I've always struggled with law from then because it's all so technical. If you can't apply it, it

becomes scary…. And even doing this module on the PQ in Law, the technical bits of it leave me cold, you know, it's so remote from what I feel good at. And yet, using the court process and providing quality reports…. I'm quite good at that side of things….

I know some other girls really got it because they'd had a couple of years in practice. And they were making the links and they were joining in the discussion and I found it really hard to join in any discussions because I felt, I don't know what this is all about.

I think the tutor assumed knowledge or assumed some experience really, which you know, yes I'd had some experience but it was with homeless girls in a hostel, not in a law court. (Participant B)

As an experienced social worker, Participant B described how she felt confident in working with cases that require action through the courts, although she still found the technical parts of studying Law left her "cold." Legislation is written in a formal language and the powers and duties of local authority social work services are set out in a complex arrangement of sections, subsections, schedules and associated statutory guidance. Added to this, new legislation brings amendments to existing laws and legislation evolves through case law as courts make judgements on real cases. Participant B referred to these technical aspects of applying legislation, as a detached, unemotional process, requiring an expert view of the case. This process measures evidence (for example, observed patterns of parenting behaviour) against thresholds for legal action and is less concerned with intuitive feelings concerning a child.

Participant B recalled feeling that other students had "got it" because they had experience that brought them into contact with social work law and this seems to be reinforced by Participant D.

> …when you're given legislation to read and try and understand, unless you're doing the job and implementing it, it's really hard to understand what it is you're doing. (Participant D)

Participants B and D seemed to have been left with a feeling that it was their responsibility to bring relevant experience to the subject to make connections between the academic learning and practice.

Experience could act as an anchor for learning, but could also become a source of uncertainty, particularity in relation to experiences that were from personal, rather than professional, life. Participants recalled challenges to re-examine their personal experiences and an expectation that social work education would provoke personal change:

> And going back into education after, what must I have been, thirty something…. Really, a new challenge for me…. And I probably led quite a sheltered upbringing really with my parents. And a lot of, the assumptions that I had about life... were around, that I'd learnt from my parents.
>
> So when I got onto this social work course… and I remember reading the history of racism and thinking, you know, this is the first

time that I've actually challenged myself and looked at something like

that. So it was a really big learning curve and made me start to think

about, you know, my value base and assumptions that I've made,

and looking at other people's experiences other than my own.

(Participant C)

Participant C remembered that her assumptions and values were challenged

by "looking at other people's experiences" and "reading the history of racism"

that was new to her. This new learning prompted her to question aspects of

her "sheltered upbringing." The extract points to an attitude of mind, a

curiosity and willingness to critically examine formative aspects of her life, to

be open to transformation. Moving away from shelter can involve a degree

of risk and this learning appears to have been uncomfortable and unsettling

but she could look back, having successfully navigated a "big learning

curve."

Participant C identified other students as a source of support in overcoming

these challenges, a strategy that all participants returned to later, in relation

to their PQ studies (discussed in Chapter 5):

… there were times when I wondered whether I'd ever get through

[my pre-qualifying course] really. But one of the really good

supportive networks, were the other students that were with you. So

the fact that everybody was feeling a bit the same was actually

easier to manage. (Participant C)

Participant C remembered the shared feelings of uncertainty. Knowing that others also felt uncertain made it more manageable, as a normal part of learning something new. All participants had been successful in completing their pre-qualifying courses and therefore could perceive themselves as academically successful:

> I knew I wasn't a bobbins at academic life: I got a 2:1 in my first degree and I had a grammar school education. I assimilated it to some degree; it must have paid off, the learning from my first degree. (Participant B)

Participant B already had a measure of her ability, having succeeded at grammar school, undergraduate level and qualified as a social worker with a master's degree. Participant D qualified with an undergraduate degree that confirmed she had done well:

> I did really well, academically, I came out really well and I was really pleased with myself. Because I'd never been, going to University was never an option when I left school…. you know, my mum never said to me, 'why don't you go to University?' So to then, go to University when I was in my thirties and then come out with a qualification, I was very pleased with myself. (Participant D)

Participants had taken different routes to qualification. Only one participant had completed the BA Social Work and two completed

the MA Social Work. Three participants qualified with a Diploma in Social Work, having become qualified before the introduction of the social work degree. One of these students had a master's degree in a related subject. Post-qualifying social work education is assessed at master's level and, for students who had qualified with a diploma; this represented a jump in academic expectations. One student expressed the uncertainty she felt about making this jump:

…when I started the course, for me, there was a feeling of, god what am I doing here, I can't do this, people like me don't come to University and don't do degrees and certainly don't start thinking they can do a master's. And that stayed with me for a little while as well, but now I'm kind of four units in, I've passed all the units, some of them just, but I've passed them. And I'm kind of thinking, I can get to the end of this and I can see the tunnel bit, the light at the end…. it wasn't just about the subject and the course and the words used, it was, some of it was about me personally as well… (Participant A)

The extract above gave voice to the participant's internal world, where her awareness of social class distinctions told her that people like her "don't come to University" and that she was aspiring above her station in life to approach a master's course. At the time of the interview Participant A had passed four units and she had begun to have confidence in her ability to succeed, but qualified her achievements, noticing how close her work was to the pass mark. There was still no indication that she felt a sense of

belonging to the University world. "[T]he subject, the course and the words used" encompassed the major elements of the student's experience in the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. This suggested that the area of study and the way it was delivered, "the words used", connected with experiences in a way that caused difficulties for Participant A. During the teaching, I was not aware of the weight of self-doubt that this participant was carrying and the courage she must have had to confront these feelings and to succeed.

The participants' reflections on their experiences of pre-qualifying social work education emphasised that much of what students bring into the classroom is hidden from their tutors. Prior educational and personal experiences impacted on participants' approach to further study, affecting their perceptions of their academic ability and their confidence to study at a higher level. Participants expected social work learning to be applied and some anticipated more difficulty where the connections to practice were less apparent. Participants had sometimes felt that it was their responsibility to make such connections. Participants reported that they expected to be personally challenged through their learning, having learnt to take responsibility for supporting themselves through these challenges, for example, through their relationships with other students.

4.1.2 Organising Theme: Relationship between theory and practice

A consistent theme, for all participants, was a memory of academic learning from their pre-qualifying course being separated from practice in several

ways. Participants A, B, D and E expressed this most powerfully. Students on pre-qualifying courses often receive teaching on aspects of knowledge required for practice, such as law, human development, and social work theories, before they begin their first placement. In participants' accounts, theoretical, intellectual learning became seen as that which took place in an academic setting, such as university. Practice was located in a different domain; that of placement, where the first real test of a student social worker was expected to take place. Participant D thought that the teaching about children and families social work was "more about teaching you how to think rather than how to do a job" and she felt unprepared for practice. Although learning how to think could have been a preparation for the complexity of social work practice, practice had been detached from learning how to think. Several students expressed the relationship between knowledge and action as a binary, almost as an oppositional relationship between learning and doing:

> ... the academic modules just seemed so far removed from the day to day reality of child protection and social work. And I don't know if there is a course, academically, that can prepare you for just how hard it is when you begin. But then when you then start as a social worker, it really is sink or swim….
> You're either in it, doing it, or you're learning about it. And I guess that's part of what critical reflection and analysis is. Maybe it's trying to bring the two together a bit more.

But yes, in my head… I kind of separate it into classroom learning

and placements, when I think about it. (Participant E)

Participant E remembered the academic learning as far removed from a

social work reality. That reality was so hard for a beginning social worker

that she used a metaphor to emphasise the experience as an existential

struggle to survive, to "sink or swim."   The experience of "doing it" in such

stressful circumstances seemed to be all consuming, leaving little energy for

reaching across to the academic domain where "learning about it" takes

place. Participant E offered the insight that critical reflection could be a

bridge between learning and doing that she did not notice at the time.

Two students remembered that lecturers, who were also practitioners,

provided insight into what practice would be like. Again the phrase "doing it,"

in the first account, referred to activities in the practice domain, where social

work became real, and the academic, theoretical activity was seen as

separate:

There were a couple of lecturers who lectured part time and worked

in practice, and those seemed to be more realistic… you can relate

and see that, actually, that was really useful, because they're still

doing it and it's very current. (Participant A)

I know we had some speakers who came in, who were in practice

and they had, they specialised just in certain, they had an interest in

certain things… a lot of our full time lecturers were full time lecturers. And I just think, because I know they've got lots of experience, but I sometimes think, you don't really know how something works unless you're using it. (Participant D)

Practitioners were "speakers who came in," in contrast to lecturers already in the academic domain. Participant D appreciated that lecturers had past experience, but questioned the efficacy of their teaching, if they were not currently using their knowledge in practice. In both accounts, lecturers who spanned both domains achieved more credibility, through continuing to do social work.

In relation to their pre-qualifying courses, participants could remember more from periods of practice on placement than they could remember from their academic learning. They mentioned feelings associated with new experiences and the welcome support from practice teachers[24]:

I enjoyed my placements; they really bring it to life don't they? And I remember the first time I was going out knocking on doors…. I used to get on the bus and go to all these different places…. but mostly down where the deck access flats were, you know,
So I remember that placement well. I remember having quite a patient teacher and just stuff that's coming up for me now, you know, we've been looking at the Harry Ferguson new book again this week,

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[24] Current standards now refer to "Practice educators… [who] supervise, teach and assess social work degree students" on placement (The College of Social Work, 2013: 1).

just last week. And talking about knocking on doors and the feeling

content of learning, I think that's, you know, I'm almost looking at big

circles really…. I suppose the very fact that I can remember how it

felt to be a new social worker is quite important. (Participant B)

Participant B referred to Ferguson (2011), a text we had used on the Critical

Thinking and Analysis Unit. Ferguson (2011) discusses the visceral and

sensory nature of social work with families, and the feelings of both empathy

and revulsion that can permeate this work. Child protection practice can

evoke fear and a desire to avoid the unpleasantness of conflict. Ferguson

(2011) points to the impact this can have on our actions and judgement and

Participant B suggested that these strong emotions stayed with social

workers, particularly those emotions arising from early social work

experiences. Participant B recognised that being able to recall these feelings

could help her in working with new social work students, a circular process,

through which she had become the practice educator. In this extract,

Participant B reflected on connections between recent learning from her PQ

studies and her previous experience of her first placement. Further reflection

linked this to her current experience in supervising new social work students

by foregrounding the emotional impact of beginning placement. Participant B

suggested the possibility of adaptations to her practice in the light of this

reflection.

In several accounts, the sudden immersion in new and stressful practice

situations was associated with an urgent need for technical, practical skills

during placements, when every new task brought uncertainty. Students looked to practice teachers to teach the practical skills necessary for their particular practice setting:

> I think that's probably where I learnt most of my report writing skills and assessment skills, or further developed assessment skills, from the experience of that final placement, with that particular practice teacher. (Participant A)

In the account below, Participant D described the frustrations of looking for important documents in an unfamiliar and messy filing system:

> I had absolutely no idea of the job I was doing. And I'd be looking at care orders and things like that and I didn't know what they were…. You know what paper files are like, they're just terrible. But when you know what you're looking for you can find it straight away, because visually you know what a care order looks like once you've seen it. But as someone who's never done the job before, given a file and say, 'just find such a body's care order,' well what does it look like? I had to go through it all page by page. I was stupid there, I should have said, 'just show me one please,' so I know what I'm looking for.

Students typically begin reading the relevant files, sometimes consisting of both paper and electronic documents, soon after a case is allocated to them.

Participant D had learnt about law in her university teaching, but did not know what a court order looked like and was not familiar with how records were kept. On the surface, this minor gap in her knowledge could have been rectified easily as, once she had seen one care order, she would always know what they looked like. Participant D reflected that all she had to do was to ask someone, and admonished her former self for not doing so: "I was stupid." As an experienced social worker, she knows it would have been more efficient to ask but, at the time, it would have exposed her inexperience and, instead, she looked at each page in the file, a process that would have taken a very long time.

The urgency of acquiring practical skills and procedural knowledge relevant to the placement setting understandably dominated the early part of the placement, yet all participants also remembered placement as opportunity to reflect on aspects of their practice. Whilst the expectation of producing reflective accounts of their work was common, experience was mixed about whether they were supported in university or college, and/or on placement, to reflect. None of the participants remembered any specific teaching in college or university about critical analysis or critical reflection; though several remembered that they were assessed on their ability to produce critical analysis in their written work:

> I think, reflection, yes because I think that was part of the practice
> teaching style…. So I think those skills came through the practice
> side. I don't remember formal teaching and I even remember

thinking more recently, that critical thinking analysis was more like a new topic, you know, when we came on to PQ really… (Participant B)

On my pre-qualifying course, we didn't study them in their own right. So we didn't say, you know, 'what is critical reflection?' …. I think the concepts, certainly, the theory of reflection underpinned a lot of what we did and was encouraged throughout, particularly like after placement. We had to produce portfolios about our work and that was, you know, we were encouraged to reflect on what we had done. We weren't necessarily given like a theoretical framework of, this is what reflection is and this is what, this is the ways in which, these are the ways in which you could reflect, or this is the value of reflection. I think maybe it was almost as a given that, you know, reflection is good and you will write a reflective essay on your placement, without necessarily giving us the detail of why that was important, or why that was a good thing, or how it could be done……But I do think, you know, reflection is popular, you can't escape that. And it was when I was studying, you know, you're encouraged to look back at what you did and why you did it, and room for improvement and so on. (Participant E)

These extracts, from Participants B and E, show a taken-for-granted expectation of reflection in the students' work at qualification level although participants struggled to recall any specific teaching in university to help

them meet this expectation. Participants explained reflection through the products that they had generated to demonstrate their competence in practice, such as a portfolio. In this way, reflection was associated with looking back over individual practices to identify skills, rationale and where there was "room for improvement."

Whereas participants recalled little specific guidance about reflection, there was even less clarity about the expectations of criticality on their pre-qualifying courses:

> I can't remember being told, 'right this is critical analysis and this is what it is.' But again, everything that we looked at, say if we were looking at law, we'd be encouraged to, I'm trying to think, really delve deep into things and consider, yes consider different perspectives and different theories on everything, which I think is what critical analysis is. So I think we were encouraged to do it, without it necessarily being framed as critical analysis…. (Participant E)

For Participant E, at master's level, there was some awareness of being supported to "delve deep" and "consider different perspectives" whereas a Participant A, who studied at diploma level recalled criticality as a mysterious and intimidating aspect of assessment criteria:

> I don't ever recall having any specific teaching about how to analyse information or how to be critical about information or how to reflect

on information. I don't ever recall having anything specific about

that. But I do remember being told that all my assignments would be

marked in that way, that any contributions that I made in the

classroom environment would be seen in that way, but I don't ever

remember being told how to be that way, if that makes sense.

(Participant A)

Here the participant distinguished between the production of tangible

outcomes of critical analysis and reflection, in assignments, and the

developmental changes she had to make to "be that way." There was a

sense that someone must have known what to do to achieve criticality but no

recollection of this having been shared with her. As participants expressed

their memories of what criticality might have meant to them during their pre-

qualifying course, two areas of interest emerged, which the discussion will

return to, later in the analysis. Firstly, as above, it appeared that the subject

of critical analysis could feel intimidating. Secondly, the activity of doing

critical analysis required a degree of personal and professional confidence,

because it required the ability to challenge:

I wouldn't have called it, critical analysis. I would have said, maybe,

'thinking critically' or, maybe a day to day word we use a lot is

'challenging.' You have to be able to challenge things, which is a

useful way of connecting it to critical analysis. It's about challenge,

it's not just, you might have a parent tell you something and you

don't know if that's the case or not; you have to look at the children.

What do the children say, what do the teachers say and what do you

see? Not just what is said, but what do you actually see?

(Participant E)

Participant E referred to the necessity of testing information, an heuristic

strategy of double checking that Bailin et al. (1999) suggested is a

component of critical thinking about knowledge. Participant E suggested that

she would have learnt to do this as part of her pre-qualifying course, looking

for evidence that might support, or challenge, a hypothesis about a child or

family. In the extract, Participant E associated critical analysis with

challenging. For some students in the group, the prospect of challenging

each other about their judgements concerning families was a source of

anxiety that they talked about later in the interviews. To be open to such

challenges, students needed confidence in their professional identity, to

welcome suggestions and alternative viewpoints, without feeling undermined

by them. In the extract below, Participant C drew a distinction between her

internal reflective thoughts and expressing thoughts publically, which she

saw as more akin to being critical:

I don't know whether I'd have been critical, I might have had my own

thoughts about reflecting on things and thinking about them, but I

don't know whether I'd have actually had the confidence to start

putting things down and being critical about it.

Because, you know, when you're in that environment, you see

people, you see academic scholars, if you like, as somebody that's,

they're professional, it's quite an important role, and for you to start

challenging that… we should be able to be doing that, as

experienced practitioners. But at that time I don't think I would have

been able to. (Participant C)

Participant C had qualified through a Diploma in Social Work and she

remembered her feelings of deference to "academic scholars" during her pre-

qualifying course. This acted as a brake on her confidence to express her

thoughts, especially as this could constitute a challenge to someone with

professional status. Again, reflection was private at this stage in her career

and, it seems, mostly unspoken and unrecorded in written work. Her current

status, as experienced practitioner, seemed to be eroding the perceived

difference in status between herself and her lecturers, perhaps indicating a

readiness to engage with them on more equal terms.

4.1.3 Summary of Thematic Network 1: Learning theory separately from 'doing' practice

As students, participants developed expectations that social work education

required a background in practice, but felt that they were often on their own

in making connections between what they learnt in college or university and

what they experienced on placement. This echoes the discussion in Chapter

2 (see section 2.1.4) about the difficulty in breaking down established binary

understandings of the connections between theory and practice. Students

cited other students and their practice teachers as valuable sources of

support for learning. All participants had been successful on their pre-qualifying courses, but those who had qualified with diplomas, rather than a degree, spoke of a lack of confidence to be critical in their academic work. Diplomas were not graded beyond a pass grade and, often, assignments were not graded beyond a pass grade either, so diploma students may not have had a clear sense of how well they had done academically.

Participants remember academic learning and practice learning as being separate. Academic learning was associated with time spent in university gaining knowledge that they found hard to remember and apply. Practice concentrated on doing social work on placement, in social work settings, supported by practice teachers. Where practice was taught in college or universities this was seen as "coming in" from outside the university or college. Participants spoke warmly about their placements and had strong memories of early practice experiences. They had found support in placements to overcome difficulties, but reported the priority given to performing tasks and demonstrating skills in doing the job.

All participants had experience of reflecting on their work as students during their pre-qualifying courses. Reflection was mainly spoken about as a means of thinking whether their practice could be improved, and as a means of evidencing their practice in portfolios for assessment. Reflection also included some private thinking, for example, about their personal and professional values. For some participants, there seemed to be a lack of

clarity about whether their courses supported them in developing reflective writing.

No participants recollected clearly defined teaching on critical analysis, though some had a sense that tutors were helping them to consider a range of perspectives and to take a critical approach to what they read. Participants felt that it was an expectation that they should demonstrate critical writing in assignments. Critical analysis therefore became situated within the academic domain, to be demonstrated by writing and, for some, a source of stress and puzzlement.

4.2 Thematic Network 2: Becoming a social worker though coping under pressure

> ... you know [about social work], it's become a really big part of me…
>
> (Participant B)

In this section, the data suggested that internalising a social work identity takes place primarily in the practice domain and in a context that is constantly changing. This thematic network explores themes from participants' accounts of their post-qualifying practice. In their accounts, participants identify significant experiences that shaped them as social workers. Again, the network comprises of two basic themes: 'Changing organisational context' and 'Building confidence in practice,' each supported by with two and six basic themes respectively.

4.2 Figure 2 Thematic Network 2: Becoming a social worker through coping under pressure
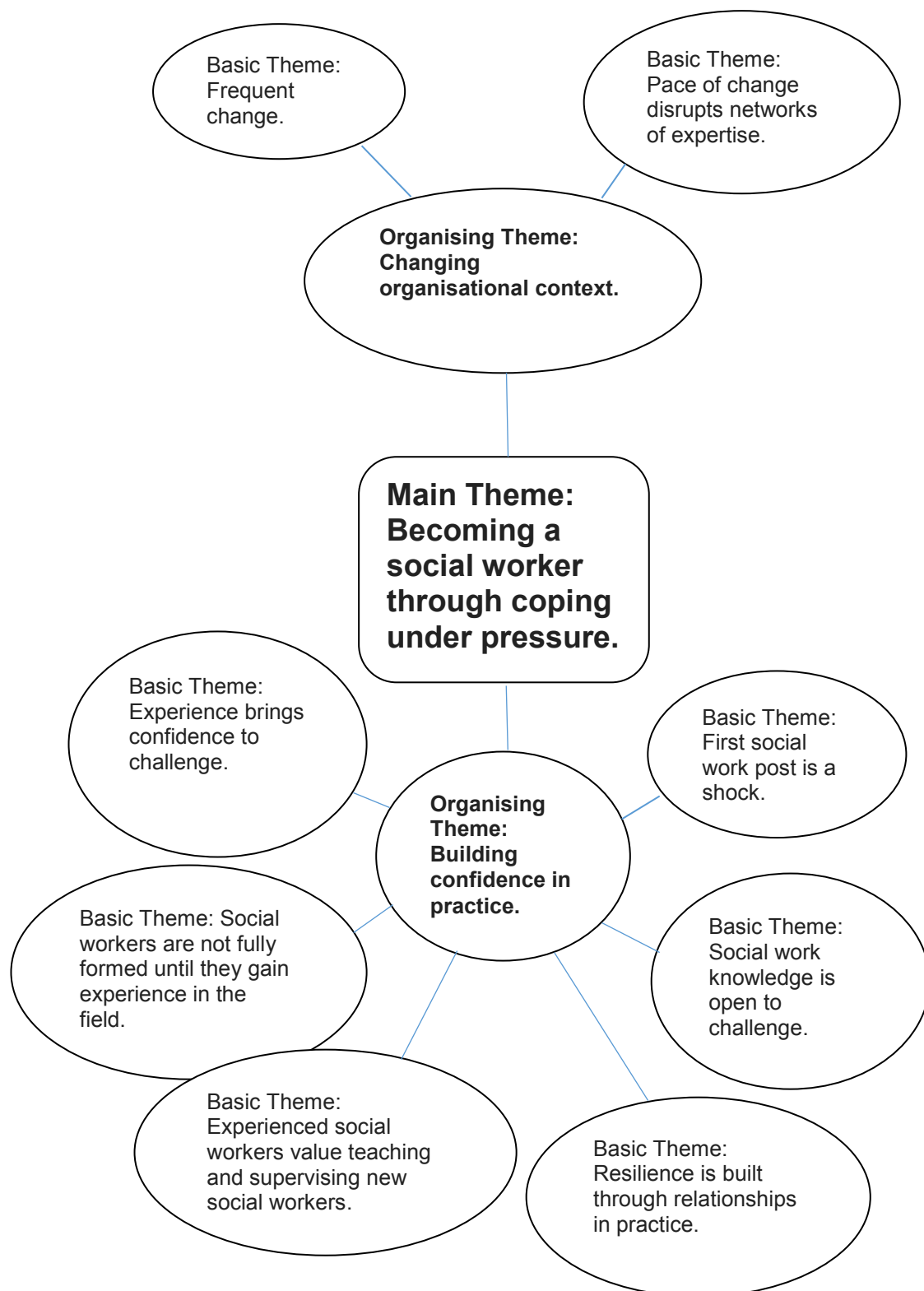
4.2.1 Organising Theme: Changing organisational context

All participants had been qualified social workers for between 4 and 28 years. The number of years of post-qualifying experience for participants in the sample was: 4, 5, 6, 11, 15 and 28 years, giving a median of 8.5 years of post-qualifying experience (average: 11.5 years). During their time in practice participants had experienced changes in local policies and practices, influenced by successive national government policies. Participants were working in departments that were relatively newly formed as a result of the reforms following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, and as discussed in Chapter 1 (Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Laming, 2003). There was a sense of frequent reorganisation and changes of staff. The study took place as Munro (2010b) was reporting on child protection systems in England, also discussed in Chapter 1 (Sections 1.1.2, 1.2.2). There was anticipation of further changes in the near future, but uncertainty about how the review recommendations would be implemented (Edmondson et al., 2013). Frontline social work teams were dealing with increases in new referrals and applications for care orders (CAFCASS, 2014) and, at the same time, austerity measures by the then Coalition Government were being implemented within communities served by social work teams. The accounts give a sense of frequent restructuring and reorganisation of social work teams, with staff moving between teams more often than in the past:

> So in the last few years I've had more posts than I've had in the
> previous two or three decades, so that's really weird. (Participant B)

The unsettling and disruptive impact of restructuring is captured very well in the account below:

> We used to have specialised teams that dealt with children with disabilities and a specialised team that dealt with asylum seekers and those are no longer separate teams, those teams have been disbanded and the work is coming into the district. So we're now finding that, where particular pieces of work would have been managed by people with lots of expertise in that area, we're now having to develop that expertise and kind of stretch ourselves a little bit more, which is very, very difficult. We're finding that we're struggling with some of that work a little bit at the moment. ….and that's all happened very, very quickly and all at the same time. So we're kind of finding that we're having to find this information, find this knowledge, you know, kind of like that and we've got nowhere, we're feeling that we've got nowhere to go to. The workers are still around but we've got to go and find them, to get that information and get that knowledge and then kind of internalise it so that we can use it again ourselves, and that's been really difficult. (Participant A)

Participant A managed a team that took new cases from one geographical area, cases that required social workers to have knowledge that had previously been seen as specialist knowledge. At the same time the specialist workers, who had built up expertise, knowledge and experience,

were more difficult to find as they had been dispersed. There was disruption to established ways of working and a sense of abandonment because of having "nowhere to go" to obtain the knowledge that the team needed. The team felt under pressure to gain knowledge and expertise that was previously held by others, in order to cope with a generic social work role, in an area where families were complex and diverse and the work was demanding. However, using knowledge required more effort, firstly to find it and, secondly, to learn it. References to change happening quickly and "all at the same time" suggested that Participant A felt she had little influence on the volume, nature and pace of change, but must help her team to absorb and adapt to the change.

4.2.2   Organising theme: Building confidence in practice

All participants held strong recollections of their first social work post as a qualified worker and recalled the intensity of the demands. Participants described different ways in which they coped with the shock of being immersed in stressful practice situations, whilst feeling unprepared and unknowing. Participants' accounts of learning their skills in frontline (child protection and safeguarding) social work conveyed a sense of pride in having come through this experience. Conversely, Participant B described herself, with humour, as "cowardly" for temporarily moving away from frontline social work and now felt "safeguarding is where I'm building up my credibility again and I need to keep on doing that and I enjoy it."

These participants all weathered the early experiences that are discussed in this section and developed resilience and confidence. They identified collaborative learning and the support of experienced colleagues as an important component in their development:

> I just felt that I didn't know what I was doing, and that I was just bluffing, not bluffing everything, but just hooking everything together and just hoping I was doing it right and then coming back and checking that I'd done it right. And sometimes I hadn't and I had to go back and redo things or, you know, I'd give the wrong advice and have to go back and give the right advice…. But I think, until you feel confident in doing it, you just feel a bit like you're, oh, a bit out of your depth I suppose really. (Participant D)

Participant D used a metaphor: "out of your depth", to describe her feelings as a newly qualified social worker. This was similar to the "sink or swim" metaphor used by Participate E to describe her experience of placement as a social work student. These metaphors pointed to the immersive experience of practice for beginning social workers, a sense of danger and the amount of exertion required to survive. Participant D recalled a feeling of bluffing her way through visits to families. When social workers visit families, they may already have some information, and might have sought advice about how to approach issues that they anticipate. However, there might be unexpected issues that only become apparent during the course of the visit. Participant D seemed to use the word "bluffing" to hint at incongruence

between how she felt she should present herself, as knowledgeable and able to advise families, and the lack of confidence that she felt inside. She then recognised that she was "not bluffing everything" because she could retrieve parts of her learning that might be relevant, but this learning needed to be connected ("hooked") together. For example, Participant D (along with Participants A, B and E) remembered retrieving aspects of their Law teaching once in practice, even though it was sometimes a struggle to apply it to particular situation. Having then gone back to the office to check her advice with colleagues, Participant D then sometimes had to return to families to give further advice, so her work took longer to complete.

Several participants reported their attempts and difficulties in linking their academic learning to their current practice. There was a sense of shock at feeling unprepared and unable to retrieve relevant learning from their course:

> When I started practicing, I felt completely inadequate and couldn't draw on anything, other than the lectures about legislation and law…. Things about…. how families relate to each other and all those things, there probably was a lot more of that in the back of my mind, which was learning from college, rather than, you know, as I thought, oh god I've learnt nothing and this has not prepared me at all. (Participant A)

Again Participant A remembered drawing on teaching about legislation but remembered feeling inadequate to the task as she began to work with

families and unable to remember her learning from college. Looking back, from her position as a team manager, she felt that she had probably absorbed learning about family functioning and relationships but did not recognise it at the time.

Struggles to locate relevant knowledge were compounded by a feeling that social work knowledge and opinion was open to challenge, often in very public arenas, such as multidisciplinary meetings and court proceedings. For newly qualified social workers, one of the most stressful events is to give evidence in care proceedings at court, where lawyers can call a social worker's knowledge into question. Participant C recognised the dilemma this could pose:

> ….the reason that sometimes we're not taken seriously, or valued, is because we're not evidencing and using …..our skills and our practice and reinforcing that with people……And we're good at doing that, you know, we're good at saying, well actually, I'm professional at this and this is what I'm thinking and these are the tools I've used and this is why I think this is the case.…..I think people are frightened of that because, obviously, you're leaving yourself open to challenge, particularly if you start using evidence based practice in assessments or court referrals. (Participant C)

Participant C reflected on social workers' relationship to 'evidence.' There were two kinds of knowledge evidence referred to in this passage. Firstly,

evidence was the knowledge of a child's needs and circumstances. This evidence was collected during a child and family assessment, from spending time with families, commissioning reports from other agencies and using assessment tools, such as, activities or observation. The second reference, to "evidence based practice," seemed to refer to research evidence that might have been relevant in a particular case. Participant C suggested that using both these forms of evidence could make social workers vulnerable. However, Participant C also suggested that reluctance to display the skill and professional knowledge that was deployed in the assessment could undermine the credibility of the evidence and the social work opinion that flowed from it. Secondly, if research was mentioned in the report, it was very likely that the author would be closely questioned about the reliability of the research, a potentially frightening prospect for an inexperienced social worker. Participant C recognised that, difficult though this may be, social workers need to be confident in using both forms of evidence, from conducting the assessment and applying research, if they are to be taken seriously in these more formal arenas.

As newly qualified social workers, participants relied on their managers and experienced colleagues to help them through the early part of their career. The pressure to acquire practice wisdom from more experienced social workers was apparent in the accounts, and these relationships appeared to foster resilience building. Participant F talked of a supportive environment in her immediate team, where she could work alongside colleagues during the early stages:

… being able to produce coherent reports, that was quite good and we had a good grounding in legislation. And I suppose, you know, generally, through looking at social issues, that was quite a thorough part of the course. I think in terms of the day to day meeting children and parents and family members, dealing with different organisations, schools, health and so on, I don't think I'd got a clear grasp of what that would entail really. And I was fortunate, that when I started work, you know, I had experienced colleagues around me and a supportive team manager, so that I could develop those skills gradually and then sort of work alongside colleagues. But yes, I did feel as though it was quite a challenge to start with. (Participant F)

Participant F thought her course had helped her to "produce coherent reports" and again linked this to her academic learning about legislation. She also recalled teaching in "social issues" being thorough. Whilst Participant F felt unprepared for the demands on her practice skills, she could look to her manager and immediate colleagues to help her grow into the role. Participant A described a more fraught experience and she had to find her own sources of support:

Oh I was absolutely terrified… as a newly qualified worker, within four or five weeks in post, I had twenty plus cases, I had removed a child, I had done all sorts of horrendous things that I thought a newly qualified worker shouldn't be doing. My manager wasn't around an awful lot, so I had kind of a poor start, in terms of supervision…. I

didn't know how to write, I didn't know, what was I analysing. Why

was I analysing it? And it was, it was a lot to do with, I think, a lack

of support from a manager and workers on the team, who were

absolutely exhausted……Yes, the team kind of pulled together and

supported each other. And we were all fairly inexperienced and we

kind of developed ourselves. And we went out and sought

assistance from other teams, from other more qualified workers on

other teams. Because our manager wasn't available to do that and it

was really difficult, it was a really difficult time. (Participant A)

The demand for writing stands out in Participant A's account of her first post.

Writing was a means of recording assessments and the analysis

underpinning opinion. It was therefore a means of accountability for the

quality of practice, and a permanent record of a social worker's thoughts and

actions. Writing up assessments and case notes was also an opportunity to

clarify thoughts, to reflect and to allow further questions to surface about the

case. Participant A felt she had "poor start" as she did not have support from

her manager, whilst having to carry out distressing practice, such as

removing a child from their family into local authority care. She did not feel

supported in developing the analysis of her cases. Participant A found

support from immediate colleagues who were also "exhausted" and

"inexperienced" and they turned to more experienced staff elsewhere.

Participants' accounts of their first social work post conveyed a busy working

environment where, similarly to their experiences of placement as students,

they felt an urgent need for practical skills that fitted their new working environment. The recollections did not initially give prominence to reflection on practice. When prompted, one participant recalled that reflection took place after work, on the way home:

> If I'd been asked what reflection was, I'd probably have said, I reflect when I'm, I don't know, I'm on a drive home at the end of the day in my car… there's not really the time to do it. I would say reflecting is thinking about the kind of day I've had, that's what I would have probably said. (Participant E)

Participant C spoke of the pressure to get though the day, leaving no time for reflection:

> … you'd expect [reflection] would be via supervision and discussing; I don't think that was encouraged. I think it's a very much, again, a learning time for you because when you start, it's again, a daunting time emotionally for you. And… you're quite nervous and it's quite a nervous environment to be in for newly qualified workers. And I think what you do then is, you try to get through each day and it's probably not there, the reflection time. (Participant C)

As a Team Manager, Participant C recognised that newly qualified social workers face daunting experiences that take an emotional toll at the same time as being expected to perform as a qualified professional. Supervision

meetings would be an appropriate time for reflective discussions, for example, about how cases were progressing, the emotional content of the work, and anxieties. However, the pressure to get through the work each day took precedence. Perhaps there was a hint that getting through the day was a strategy for coping with a nervous environment. Being busy could keep the nervousness unspoken and hidden.

Five of the six participants had progressed into a role that included managing, supervising, teaching or mentoring student social workers or newly qualified social workers. There was evidence of their commitment to providing support for new workers at this crucial time, to provide a nurturing environment, with time to "step back:"

> The thing I'm conscious of, with the workers I supervise, is that they've come into safeguarding at a very pressured time, much more so than when I was young. Although, you know, we did have the sort of perspective of blame but that is very much more around now, in terms of, you need to cover your back…. You need to make sure you've written up on 'Care First' and god forbid that, you know, you're caught without doing a stat. [statutory] visit. And they're driven by that almost, and it fits with this Munro stuff doesn't it, that I want to see them having the time to step back from that and experiment a bit more with families and interventions. (Participant B)

This extract made reference to the fears of making mistakes within the profession, not only because mistakes could be catastrophic for individual children, but also social workers have been named in the press and have faced disciplinary action including dismissal (McGregor, 2010; Press Association, 2013). Here, keeping up with case recording on the electronic database: Care First, was seen as a priority, as was completing statutory visits to children on time; both would be subject to monitoring by managers and be a means of meeting departmental targets. As a supervisor, the participant was aware that when targets become a key measure of practice in the system, meeting targets could become a substitute for good practice, a point that echoed Munro's investigation into child protection systems (Munro, 2010b; Munro, 2011b).

As participants reviewed their social work careers, they had all weathered the storms and stress of their early practice and gone on to become experienced practitioners with confidence in their abilities:

> ….. do we get this feeling about something, when you first start work with a family, you get this feeling? Well my view would be, it's not a feeling, it's something you've learnt over time and you've built up as your experience. (Participant C)

Participant C valued the practice wisdom that developed over time and indicated that, with her practice experience, she was gaining the confidence

and perhaps gaining the right to be critical of other people's work, including the work of academics.

> Actually being able to criticise…and think about what somebody else does and using my professionalism really. And I think you only get that with time, as you develop and you become an experienced practitioner. Right at the beginning you've not got that obviously… (Participant C)

Participant C had felt reticent about being critical of theory on her pre-qualifying course and had expressed a degree of deference to the knowledge of her tutors. Here she suggested that, in post-qualifying education, she could draw on experience to support a critical discussion about practice, including about what "somebody else does."

4.2.3 Summary of Thematic Network 2: Social work identity is built in conditions of coping under pressure

This thematic network explored participants' recollections of their social work career from newly qualified social worker up to the point where they embarked on their post-qualifying course, beginning with their transition from student to newly qualified social worker (NQSW). This network illustrated the ways in which participants felt unprepared for aspects of practice. There were anxieties about their skills, for example, in working with families, and a lack of procedural knowledge. There was also a lack of confidence in their

professional knowledge base, through not being able to recall knowledge, or feeling that their knowledge could not withstand scrutiny.

All participants in this study had their first social work posts in children and families social work teams, working with the most vulnerable children. As such, these were formative experiences, where they tested their developing competence under pressure and found out if they would 'sink or swim.'

Participants in this study had achieved longevity in their profession and had learnt the value of supervision that supports social workers under pressure. They had experienced frequent organisational change that made demands on them to continue to learn quickly. They had come to post-qualifying education as confident practitioners, used to working with less experienced social workers and, in turn, were committed to supporting them to develop.

4.3   Conclusion to Chapter 4

This chapter presented data about significant prior educational and practice experiences that participants brought to their post-qualifying studies. Specifically, participants reported experiences from their pre-qualifying courses and their experiences of social work practice in child protection and child safeguarding.

Participants were accustomed to bringing practice experience into their academic studies. Although they welcomed lectures from academics with

practice experience, this was not an expectation, and they took responsibility for contributing from their own experience. Participants remembered more of their early practice experiences than from their academic learning and recalled a separation between academic learning and practice experiences that was unhelpful once they were qualified. Knowledge, thinking and action became separated into learning in university and doing practice on placement. Participants were able to recall subject areas from academic learning more readily where there were clearer links to practice experience, either on placement, or in their first post as a qualified worker.

Participants expected academic study to be a challenge. There was some evidence of habits of mind, such as curiosity and inquiry, having been developed through their pre-qualifying social work education. Their accounts of practice showed evidence of heuristic strategies, such as testing evidence and seeking advice from more experienced practitioners, as a student and as a newly qualified social worker.

Participants recalled experience of reflection, associated with being on placement as a student social worker. Reflection was often associated with producing reflective evaluations of their practice and showing where their practice could improve. Reflection could also be a private activity for considering the personal transformative changes that might be occurring. There was a lack of clarity about how courses supported participants to reflect or to produce the required reflective products. No participant could

recall specific teaching about criticality or critical analysis, although there was awareness that they were expected to write critically in their assignments.

During their student placements, and as newly qualified social workers, Participants remembered feeling overwhelmed by the expectations and responsibilities. The pressure was to gain technical skills and procedural knowledge that enabled them to function in their new roles. Although reflection played a part in student placements, participants had little time for reflection once they were in practice in their first qualified post. Participants found that the demands of social work, especially in child protection work, were significant in testing, developing and confirming their abilities. Having come though these experiences all participants reported a commitment to supporting new social workers who could benefit from their experience.

Participants suggested that their experience of prior study could affect their confidence to study at master's level. There was evidence that collaborative ways of learning were welcome, helpful and even necessary for some participants, in supporting their learning and building confidence, both in university and in practice.

Chapter 5 will present findings concerning participants' experiences of studying the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit at master's level and Chapter 6 will then discuss the implications of the findings, from both Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 5: (Data and Findings): Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis

This chapter develops the second part of the data analysis relating to participants' experiences of the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. There are three thematic networks in the chapter:

5.1 Thematic Network: 3   Intersections of study and workplace

5.2 Thematic Network: 4   Understandings of criticality and reflection

5.3 Thematic Network: 5   Pedagogy within the case study

As in Chapter 4, each thematic network begins with a short descriptive introduction, followed by an exploration of the network, illustrated by the data. Each thematic network concludes with a short summary. The findings from the data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 are synthesised and discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.1   Thematic Network 3: Intersections of study and workplace

During their time as post-qualifying (PQ) students the pace of work in the workplace continued to be a pressure. This thematic network explores participants' thoughts about the intersections where workplace and the PQ course met and contains two organising themes: 'Post-qualifying course has utility in work role' and 'Connecting study to practice,' each with three basic themes.

Basic Theme: Intrinsic motivations valued over extrinsic influences.

Basic Theme: Managing study and work.

Basic Theme: Motivation to study arises from work role.

Organising Theme: PQ course has utility in work role.

Main Theme: Intersections of study and workplace.

Organising Theme: Connecting study to practice.

Basic Theme: Experience of PQ prompts reflection on practice.

Basic Theme: Support from line manager.

Basic Theme: Own supervision is overwhelmingly case focussed.
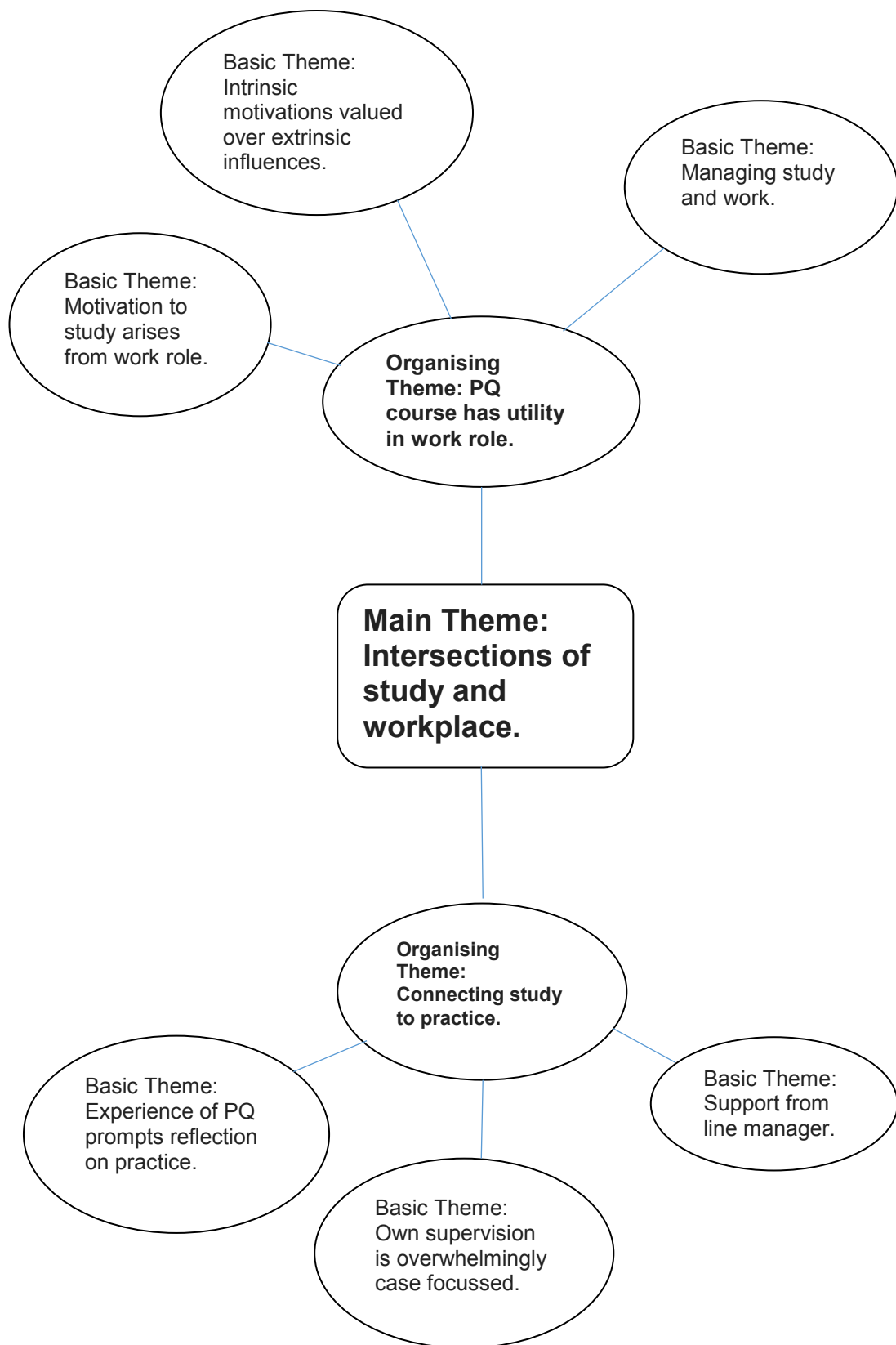
5.1.1 Organising theme: Post-Qualifying course has utility in work role

All participants were sponsored by employers and consequently their employers could reasonably expect that this investment would benefit the service in some way. Participants consistently identified that their motivation to join the PQ course originated in their work role. On joining the course, participants hoped that study would help them to improve their practice and help them to reflect on their work. All participants reported feeling ready to study again and made reference to their work role when describing their main motivations to study at PQ level:

> I really wanted to study, study social work whilst doing it, because studying it before I actually became a social worker felt very different and a bit more removed. Whereas trying, again trying to bring the day to day practice and reality with the theory, I think is what makes it interesting, what makes the course interesting. (Participant E)

Participant E hoped to bring theory and practice together in time by "studying social work whilst doing it," hoping to remedy her previous experience of learning about social work away from day to day practice, where social work becomes real. The emphasis on trying to make connections between theory and practice suggested that this was difficult to achieve, but worth the effort, because the process was interesting.

Participants came onto the PQ course through different arrangements specific to their employing local authorities. Sponsoring local authorities selected students, from their qualified social workers, for places on the course. Some students were simply nominated, for example, by a team manager, and some went through an application process. There could be a degree of serendipity to getting on the course:

> … we go round our office every so often, every year probably, and say, 'right… who's not done the PQ yet?' ... And I expressed an interest… And I think someone else was actually due to have my place but she was on maternity leave. I said, 'oh I'd be interested in doing that' and they thought I'd be, because I'd done a master's before, I think they thought I would enjoy it… I genuinely, I'm a bit of a geek, I quite like studying, so I'm quite interested in doing it for its own sake, not just as a means to get more money or because it's something to put on my CV. (Participant E)

Participant E put herself forward and took advantage of this opportunity, because she enjoyed study. She acknowledged the incentives (increments), offered by several local authorities in recognition of achieving the award, but dismissed these extrinsic motivators as being less important to her than the intrinsic enjoyment of study and the anticipation of learning. There seemed to be an assumption that qualified social workers would complete PQ study at some point, when their turn came, that experience of study at master's level would be good preparation and that a positive attitude to study would

be helpful.

In the next extract, Participant A had won a place on the course, having been interviewed as part of a competitive selection process in her local authority. A significant aspect of her motivation to study was to acquire a master's level qualification, as she felt this would be valued within her organisation. This led to a complex mix of workplace related motivations:

> I've been trying to get on a PQ1 course for a very long time….
> We were interviewed and… for me it's very much about, it was initially about, I can't get up the ladder without additional qualifications. Because on paper, I don't have an awful lot of, well I do, that's not quite true, I don't have the same level qualifications as people in the next offices. And that, for [local authority], is quite an important thing…. And things like getting over pay barriers…. I do think there is going to be a point where social work will be as professional as, you need a management qualification to be a manager. So I'm going to need to go some way to improving my qualification status….
> But it's also about, because I enjoy learning: what can this course teach me that I can bring back to my team and make my team a little bit better? So it's a bit mixed really. (Participant A)

Participant A had been trying to obtain a place "for a very long time" and the mention of a competitive selection process suggested that she had

overcome hurdles to gain her place. As social work became a graduate profession, Participant A recognised that her social work qualification was at a lower academic level that of her peers and this was a pressure on her. She was a team manager already but anticipated that even the graduate social work qualification would not be sufficient for a social work manager in the future. Consequently, the leadership and management aspects of the PQ course might help her to demonstrate qualification in these areas and at master's level. The perceived deficit in qualification seemed to stem from her assessment of cultural changes within the organisation, concerning relevant qualifications for promotion. Participant A identified her main motivation was to obtain the qualification, but only "initially." Towards the end of the extract, Participant A added that she was also motivated by her enjoyment of learning and the prospect of bringing learning back to her team. These aspects of motivation occupied less space in the explanation, but this could be because Participant A felt they were less specific to her and therefore required less explanation.

All the participants expressed a link to making improvements that related to their work role and a desire to be a conduit for bringing aspects of the course into their own practice and that of their team. Participants consistently explained that their drive to study had primarily come from within themselves:

> I mean I suppose there's a general encouragement from my
> managers… who've encouraged me to attend relevant training
> courses. In terms of more in-depth study, I think that's probably

more of a self-motivated course of action really for me. So it's something that I feel is what I want to do, to keep me up to date with the work, but also to sort of help me develop my thinking around the work. (Participant F)

Participant F differentiated between training courses and in-depth study, which she anticipated would occur through PQ study. Again Participant F expected to use this to benefit her practice by developing her thinking about her work.

Employers demonstrated their support for participants to study by paying their fees and allowing time out of the workplace to attend the course. Post-qualifying social work students have various arrangements with their employers to enable them to manage and study work but, in common with many students in higher education, students on this programme were balancing work, personal and study pressures; "trying to succeed in education and work full time and manage a family" (Participant A).

Some employers provided support for study by allowing both study days and adjustments to their caseload, as well as time to attend the course:

I do get support, as in I get the five study days [per unit]. And my caseload is reflective of a four-day week, not five-day week, because of the time I spend in Uni and then five study days. So that's been very helpful obviously… (Participant D)

In addition to day release to attend university, the number of study days allowed to participants varied, from none to five per unit. For some, no adjustments were made:

> … [PQ is] encouraged and it's seen as a good thing, but you still have a huge workload and… there's no real let up in that. You're expected to do it alongside everything else… there isn't really the room made for you to do it. You have to fit it in and you end up doing a lot of it in your own time. (Participant E)

Participant E came to the PQ course motivated to enjoy studying again alongside working. She found that studying alongside responsibility for a full case load was a strain, as there was no let-up in the demands and, consequently, study was marginalised into her own time. The next organising theme shows that participants made strenuous efforts to connect their learning to practice, through developing critical reflection, despite the pressure of managing their workloads.

5.1.2   Organising Theme: Connecting study to practice

Supervision, in the social work sense, includes administrative and accountability functions, oversight of work undertaken and emotional and developmental support. All participants were supervised by their line managers and supervision meetings could have provided an opportunity to discuss their development in view of their PQ studies. However, only one

participant indicated that their manager was interested in discussing their learning. Line managers were expected to read participants' assignments to verify the authenticity and accuracy of practice examples within the assignment but participants mainly experienced this as a bureaucratic, rather than a reflective, process:

> She obviously reads my assignments and signs my verification, but I don't have any support, as in we don't talk about it in supervision. Obviously we talk about my caseload and what I'm doing with cases, but there was no in-depth discussion…. If I'm honest, I do feel a little bit like, I'm just getting on with it, it's a separate thing from work almost now, apart from having to get my manager to sign my verification form and read it. (Participant D)

Participant D explained that she and her line manager talked about her ongoing work but gave the impression that she reported what she is "doing with cases" with little further discussion. The process of pursuing her line manager to sign her work had become a dispiriting chore, rather than an opportunity to reflect on how learning connects to practice.

Where line managers did not make time available for discussing participants' learning on the course, this was a source of disappointment, as the sequence below illustrates:

... at the beginning I wouldn't have been able to express it. I just would have said, oh my god it's mad, and everyone saying different things. It would have been a bit more chaotic…. now I have practiced for a few years and I'm able to be a bit calmer about it, I would probably reflect more on it because I feel I'm a bit calmer. I'm not just in the middle of it all the time, feeling a bit anxious and mad panicked, which I probably was when I started, a bit out of control. (Participant E)

In the past, Participant E felt overwhelmed. It is not clear what felt out of control, but she remembered chaos and feeling anxious in her early days in practice. Now she has become better able to express her thoughts. Having survived the shock of initial practice some years ago, and having developed a maturity in practice, Participant E identified that a calm space was needed for reflection and in the next extract she requested feedback from her supervisor, as an opening to reflecting on her practice in supervision:

… I discussed a bit in supervision…. And I said, oh it would be really useful to look at, like, areas of improvement. It just got me thinking about things you can be better at…. I think it was a unit that inspired me to do that. I felt it would be really useful to have some honest feedback about, you know, areas to work on. And that was probably brought about by writing about the case I'd worked on as well, thinking about myself, what I would have done better. And again, it's a shame, he was very keen on the idea, but in the event, we've not

had the time to do that really. Supervision's just, you know, is very much case focused… (Participant E)

Participant E had asked for a reflective discussion about her work, prompted by writing about practice in the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. She made a point about asking for honesty, perhaps signalling that she was receptive to suggestions for improvement to her work. In the end there had not been time to pursue reflection with her supervisor. For Participant E, supervision focused on cases, on their progression, but was not reflective in nature, suggesting that case focussed supervision was different from reflection. In the extract below, Participant E linked reflection to her "personal feelings" about her work:

It's not everyone's priority and it is hard, I think, saying, 'right can we just have twenty minutes to discuss, you know, my personal feelings about my work' …. So maybe, I'll probably end up doing that more with my colleagues. (Participant E)

Participant E wanted to use her learning to improve her practice with families but found it hard to claim her supervisor's time for reflection as she associated this with her personal feelings about work, how the work was affecting her, rather than reporting on the progress of cases. Instead, Participant E looked to her colleagues for exploring her feelings about her work.

Participants, who were supervisors themselves, provided space for discussing feelings and recognised this as a source of information about a piece of work. They were conscious of the reflective, inquiring, aspects of supervision in their approach to supervising less experienced social workers:

> … always inquiring and finding out, alongside the workers… if we don't know anything we find out together. (Participant B).

> … trying to unpick [feelings about a family] and pull out… why are you thinking that, what's your evidence? (Participant C)

Participants B and C conveyed a sense of shared inquiry. Participant C went on to suggest a meticulous approach that probed how a social worker felt about their work with a family, bringing feelings into the open, to set them against more concrete evidence, for example, about how a child's needs were met. Then, following a discussion in class about supervision and judgement making, Participant C wanted to check that her social workers felt free to challenge her and come to their own autonomous judgements.

> I was listening to somebody else talking about how they were managing a situation, and when I reflected on that and thought about it, it made me think, is that what I'm like, is that my style? Is that how I might be perceived?... Yes, I think challenging some of the thoughts I had around the language that I might be using, does it influence social workers when they're thinking about families, when they're

thinking about why something's happening?... and we did explore it

with a few of my workers in supervision, around, you know, if that

happened, would they feel able to challenge me? (Participant C)

Participant C listened to another manager talking and used this account to

reflect on her practice with her own team of social workers. She identified a

possibility that she could have undue influence over her social workers

because of the power she held as team manager. Participant C wondered if

she might communicate using language that precluded challenge to her

views, possibly preventing a contrary view being expressed, or even

influencing the thinking of her social workers.

Participants' accounts consistently conveyed their sense of responsibility to

take learning back into their workplace:

… And being enthusiastic about learning and about reflecting on

what impact we're having on service users etc.… one of the things

I'm learning at the moment, through this course, is actually that's OK

that I've learnt this module, but what am I then going to do about it?

I have a responsibility to make sure that I use it and it impacts on

practice. And I feel more responsible as a manager because it's not

just about me; it's about how I'm able to empower others.

(Participant C)

For Participant C, the end goal of developing the capacity for reflection in her team was the "impact we're having on service users." She took responsibility for disseminating enthusiasm for learning and for developing a culture of reflection in her team. Participant C used reflection to explore power in the supervisory relationship (in the preceding extract). Specifically, she used her reflection as a means of discussing power differences in case discussions, in the interests of good decision making.

5.1.3 Summary of Thematic Network 3: Intersections of study and workplace

Participants were recounting their experiences of coming onto the PQ course from a position of having completed a substantial amount of the course. In addition, participants were sponsored by their employers, who were paying their fees and allowing them time out of the workplace. Participants could therefore have felt that it was incumbent on them to notice connections between the course and their current work role and to identify these as primary motivators. However, evidence of self-motivation and the desire to gain learning that would connect with their work role is sustained throughout the accounts

Participants had made a positive decision to engage in study at PQ level and several had submitted to an application process. Having acquired a place on the course, participants were allowed different amounts of time away from work to study and received varying degrees of support and interest from their

line managers who supervised them. Whilst one participant appreciated the shared interest that both she and her manager had in learning together, in the main, line managers did not go beyond verifying the practice within participants' assignments. Participants found opportunities to develop reflection in their work elsewhere, for example with colleagues, or with social workers that they themselves supervised.

The accounts give a clear sense of participants' readiness to develop their reflective capacity for the benefit of their practice. Participants spoke of returning to study at a time when they had experience and maturity in practice that would make study different this time, different from when they studied during their pre-qualifying courses and they intended to make use of it to improve their practice for the benefit of service users.

5.2   Thematic Network 4: Understandings of reflection and criticality

This thematic network describes participants' thinking about the focus of the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. The network contains two organising themes. The first organising theme concerns participants' thinking about reflection, supported by two basic themes. The second organising theme is about criticality, including participants' thoughts about both critical analysis and critical reflection, supported by five basic themes.

The network develops the discussion begun in Chapter 4 (Thematic Network 1), concerning both the apparent lack of explicit teaching about criticality during participants' pre-qualifying courses and the perceived separation between academic learning and social work practice. The network explores participants' understandings of reflection and criticality within their accounts. Some of the accounts surprised me with glimpses of the participants' thinking and strong feelings during the unit that I was unaware of at the time.

5.2 Figure 4 Thematic Network 4: Understandings of reflection and criticality

Basic Theme: Reflection is familiar.

Basic Theme: Reflection can be private.

Organising Theme: Reflection.

Main Theme: Understandings of reflection and criticality.

Organising Theme: Criticality.

Basic Theme: Study of criticality builds confidence for future study.

Basic Theme: Critical reflection is personally risky.

Basic Theme: Critical analysis is academic and difficult.

Basic Theme: Academic.

Basic Theme: Criticality.

5.2.1 Organising Theme: Reflection

Looking back to the beginning of the unit, participants attributed different meanings to reflection and critical analysis. Several noted their unfamiliarity with the concept of critical analysis but were more familiar with reflection.

> But I think the word, critical analysis would have, I would remember that really well… we did about reflecting… and analysis, but I don't particularly remember anything about critical analysis. (Participant D)

Participants had been expected to demonstrate reflection during their previous courses, even if it was not explicitly taught (Chapter 4, Thematic Network 1). Participants recognised a thread that linked experience of reflection from their pre-qualifying courses, especially from their placements (Chapter 4, Thematic Network 1), through their practice experience, into the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit.

Chapter 4 showed that participants recognised reflection as a process of thinking about practice, about what they did in practice and how it could be improved. Participants recognised that reflection could happen during supervision (albeit infrequently) or in conversation with colleagues and it could be a contained and private activity:

> I think it was a very personal reflection journey for me. I remember, I gave somebody a lift home from University quite a lot… and I

remember spending that time talking to the other student and

reflecting on what we'd done that day thinking about things and

challenging things… but I don't know that that came out in my written

work or in the lectures really. So it was reflection as in, thinking

about my, you know, thinking. (Participant C)

Participant C remembered using the time with another student to talk about

their day at university and to go back over her thoughts about the day, to

think about her thoughts again. She could not identify how this process

informed either her written work or the contributions she made in lectures.

The metacognitive processes of thinking about thinking might be expected to

help Participant C to develop insights into her learning. However, if the

articulation of these insights involved "challenging things," Participant C

hinted that she might not have had the confidence to communicate her

thoughts at the time.

5.2.2 Organising Theme: Criticality

Reflection was anticipated, accepted and familiar but participants viewed

criticality as a new area of learning and involving unfamiliar language.

Several participants spoke about the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit as

both academic and difficult.

The first session was, for all of us, 'wow, this is academic,' and how

useful would that be, because social work is a very pragmatic

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subject? Reflection is always a huge part of it and I thought it would

click, but it was daunting. (Participant B)

Participant B identified social work with the pragmatism necessary for

working in a children and families setting and wondered if the unit would

connect with these everyday realities. She recognised reflection as a familiar

term and, as reflection was discussed in the first session of the unit, this

seemed to offer hope that the subject would "click" for her and bring a

"daunting" subject to within her reach.

Participant F initially used the word "cerebral" to describe the subject matter,

and then qualified this by using the word "academic," as an alternative:

> I thought, this is going to be more, I suppose more cerebral or more
>
> kind of academic perhaps... this is going to be a challenge, but I was
>
> looking forward to it because, I guess I was hoping to, wanting to
>
> develop different ideas and new ways of thinking about things. …..
>
> And I think it's difficult to achieve that on any sort of in-house training
>
> course. I mean they're very much directed at work-based, practice-
>
> based issues. And so I was pleased really that we had that module
>
> to open things up a bit.
>
> (Participant F)

Participant F anticipated and welcomed the intellectual challenge, looking for

"new ways of thinking." She contrasted this with work-based training,

indicating that this new thinking might emanate from somewhere other than practice and, coming from a different source, it could "open things up". Participant F had studied at master's level previously and seemed optimistic that she could meet this new challenge and that opening up a new way of looking at practice would be achievable and useful.

Participant E, however, was out of her "comfort zone," although her previous experience of working with new concepts and theories had given her strategies that had succeeded before.

> … There were lots, there were kind of new concepts and theories that I wasn't aware of before. And I felt quite, just like a bit of my brain had been re-awakened really and I thought, oh this is interesting…. I thought, oh it's quite academic, it's quite rigorous theoretically, but that didn't, I didn't feel too overwhelmed by that. But I'm quite comfortable with that sort of approach to things anyway. I'd rather have a lot of things I don't understand and think, oh I can go and find out about that…. I like being pushed out of my comfort zone a bit. And I think it did a little bit, it did at the start, but that wasn't a bad thing for me." (Participant E)

Participant E suggested that the unit might have been overwhelming at the start, again emphasising the unsettling impact of new learning. However, she remembered how it felt to learn something new; she remembered how to

reinforce new learning from her own independent study and knew that she could meet these kinds of challenges.

There were different levels of academic confidence in the group and, given that the subject was perceived as academic, whilst some students could feel optimistic about succeeding in this challenging area of study, others were experiencing self-doubt.

> When I started on the course…. I sat in the classroom and thought, what on earth am I doing, I can't do this…. It stayed with me for a long time. It stayed with me for a long time and it usually rears its head in the first lecture of each unit. (Participant A)

Participant A found her fears at the beginning of the course were reawakened as each unit began. At the beginning of the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit she explained that, though she was familiar with reflecting on her work, the insertion of the word 'critical,' as in 'critical reflection,' provoked considerable anxiety.

> What concerned me about reflection was, everything that we were given, in terms of what evidence we would have to provide, how we would have to provide it, assignment titles, the criteria for assignments, everything talked about critical analysis, critical reflection, critical this, critical that. And I kind of thought, I don't actually know what that means; I don't know what that means. I can

reflect, I can sit and I can think about something and I can say, 'oh god, I wish I'd done this for this reason,' but I don't know if that's critical, I don't know what that means. And that bothered me, and still bothers me to some extent, now, because I don't see myself as being particularly academic. (Participant A)

Participant A noticed that the assignment question and assessment criteria were peppered with 21 instances of the word 'critical' (see Appendix 7), linked to reflection. She associated criticality with academic ability and this presented a difficult prospect, as she did not see herself as academic. Her previous understanding of reflection involved taking time to sit and think, implying that reflection meant making time to be still, rather than busy. As an activity, reflection was understood as looking back over her actions but she wondered if *critical* reflection meant finding reasons for an alternative course of action that might have been preferable. There was no sense that this reasoning might produce affirmation of the original course of action but there was the possibility of her work being open to criticism:

If I make a comment in a classroom, in front of students, where the object of the game is to critically analyse what's been said, I potentially open myself up to criticism….

…. if you're going to reflect on your practice, if you're going to critically analyse your practice, you might not like what you find... or other people might not like what you say, what you see…. So you need to

be able to not take it personally… you have to be open to it.

(Participant A)

Participant A saw critical analysis as something that would take place publically, bringing accounts of her practice into a public setting, where they would be open to criticism from others, and where she herself might not like what she finds. Thus, the perception of criticality being public made reflection personally risky, because it became *critical* reflection, associated with criticism. Participant A implied the effort and courage needed to be open to a critical discussion, where criticism was anticipated. The unit was taught at a time of public criticism of individual social workers and the profession in general, through public inquiries, serious case reviews and media comment. In this context it would be understandable if participants were defensive and careful about exposing their practice to comment. Participant A recognised that there was value in being open to these experiences, difficult though they may be.

The account suggested that the experience was like a game, where the consequences of joining in were unknown and risky, and someone might get hurt. Indeed, the same participant later stated that the anticipation of this terrified her. I remember that I had asked students how they were feeling about starting the unit and the word terrified came out in the responses. I did not fully appreciate the nature of this participant's fears until we met after the unit, for the interview, especially when we looked at the word cloud (Appendix 14):

… it's really interesting and I don't know whether it's just a trick of the, the computer's done it or whether it's intentional, but terrified and truth are right next to each other….

It's interesting because when we first started this unit, there was a question asked in the very first session, how are you feeling about the unit? And my response was, terrified. And the reason I was terrified, which is why I point out, it's interesting to see truth next to it, is because what if the truth is I'm just no good at this and I'm not, you know, I analyse myself and reflect on myself and the truth is I'm just no good and people don't think that I'm any good. And I just get a lot of critical analysis and criticism and I think that's one of the things that I was terrified about, apart from not understanding really what it was going to be about. But I did know, the fact that there was some analysis and the fact that there would be some reflection, that I would have to be talking about my practice, what I do, why I do it, who I do it with etc., and people would be asked to make comment about that.

And that terrified me, because what if the truth was, they didn't like it or I'm no good? That's the first thing, looking at that, that's what's caught my eye. And that makes me sound really insecure in my job and I'm not really, or I don't think I am.

As the participant spoke, I felt stunned by what she was telling me about the depth of her anxiety at the start of the unit. Although Participant A remembered being unsure what the unit would be about, she realised that

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there would be discussion of practice. Again, the assumption that criticality means criticism stands out. Rather than critical commentary coming from within her account and under her control, Participant A anticipated that critical comments could come at her, from others. The prospect of discussing practice in an analytical way ("what I do, why I do it, who I do it with"), either in class or in written work, therefore became threatening.

I later looked back at my own reflections about this session, aware this act of looking back could be defensiveness on my part, but also a curiosity to find evidence of my own thinking about this point in time. I had written:

> ... students said they were more anxious about this unit than the previous ones. When we explored this it became clear that the words 'critical' and 'analysis' are causing concern. For some, these words are associated with academic territory that appears intimidating, unfamiliar and unsympathetic to practitioners who are busy with decision making and managing rapidly changing situations…
>
> ... I think I anticipated the anxiety, I am aware that I probed for it to be expressed. I believed it was necessary for students to air concerns and to confront the fears that I expected this unit to hold for them. I was aware at the time that the tension and worry in the room was a potential block to the learning that I had prepared for the

students and I felt that it was in all our interests to bring it to the surface. (Personal Learning Log, 0ctober 2010)[25]

It seems I thought I had done well in 'probing' for what I anticipated but, looking back, I am disappointed to find my former self sounding a little smug. I wonder if my probing had been helpful at all. As a lecturer, I was bound to influence the topics under discussion and I could have introduced the topic of anxiety into the classroom: was it there anyway, or did I bring it in? On balance, I think the anxiety must have been there before I spoke. I think there is evidence, in the participants' accounts, that the subject matter of the unit introduced students to language that provoked these strong feelings. Participant E, who had felt confident in her ability to handle the unit content from the beginning, also looked at the word cloud and remembered some anxious feelings:

> Anxious jumps out at me, again I put it in my essay. When you reflect on what you do, you think, oh god, it's hard thinking about what you've done because all the mistakes jump out and you think, well what could I have done differently? And just acknowledging, yes the difficult nature of what we do and the emotive nature of it. I think you can only be honest and try and dig deep, it is quite anxiety provoking. (Participant E)

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[25] I kept a Personal Journal of rough notes to capture my thoughts during the Critical Thinking and Analysis unit. This is available to my examiners on request.

Participant E reminded us that working with vulnerable people, who have unmet needs, is emotionally stressful. If reflection digs deep it can remind social workers of their feelings about a particular piece of work, as well as introducing anxiety and uncertainty about the quality of the work. Reflection applied the lens of hindsight, using knowledge that might not have been known at the time. Reflecting back on past practice makes practitioners vulnerable because "mistakes" are brought into focus and there will always be room for improvement. In noticing "mistakes," it is not clear whether Participant E was influenced by the concept of 'error,' the mismatch between intention and action (Argyris and Schön, 1978), as we discussed this during the course. However, a possible binary emerged in her account, implying that there could have been a correct alternative to the mistakes, making reflection a potentially dispiriting experience. Despite this, all participants spoke of their commitment to use criticality developing as they progressed through the unit:

> …. critical to me then and now, just makes me think of critique, in the sense of trying to, yes trying to take something apart and look at the different layers of it and question, and question every bit of it, rather than just taking anything at face value. It's kind of trying to separate out, layers of meaning, I definitely wouldn't have said before, but looking at, yes trying to understand something by questioning every aspect of it …. Just looking at all the different layers of everything really. (Participant E)

As Participant E had already said that she wanted to use her studies to think about practice, I understood that this extract referred to a critique of practice. Participant E now took an active approach to being critical, by integrating specific activities into her thinking. She saw that meaning was constructed in layers and therefore more meaning is hidden under the surface ("face"). If layers could be identified and deconstructed this could expose more information that could aid understanding. Questioning played a part in this process, possibly as a means of identifying the layers, the different component parts of a scenario. The process of questioning was potentially infinite through "all the different layers of everything."

All participants passed the unit through a written assignment that required critical reflection in a complex case (Appendix 7). In their assignments, participants achieved success in handling criticality as a concept and discussing critical reflection in practice.

> Towards the end I kind of thought, actually, this is not as difficult as I thought it was. I mean that's not to say I didn't struggle with it still, but it took me the length of the unit to realise, actually this is not as difficult as I thought. (Participant A)

Five of the six participants had completed other units before Critical Thinking and Analysis and this was the first unit for only one participant. Participants suggested that developing their understanding of criticality helped them with analytical writing in subsequent units:

I might have thought, oh it's quite a difficult unit, am I going to get

through this course? But I feel more confident now…. I'm not

daunted by the fact that I've got to think about critical analysis in

my next assignment. (Participant C)

Participant C thought that the subject of criticality could have put her off the

whole course, had it come earlier. It seems that recent academic success

might have helped her to engage with a subject that she saw as difficult.

**5.2.3 Summary of Thematic Network 4: Understandings of reflection
and criticality**

Although all participants had previous experience of academic success on

their pre-qualifying courses, post-qualifying programmes at master's level

confronts some students with new expectations of a higher level of academic

study than they have previously experienced. As reflected in participants'

accounts, all their pre-qualifying courses had introduced them to the activity

of reflecting on their practice and aspects of their personal histories. For

some, this had been a private activity, shared with a trusted friend or

colleague. However, reflection was primarily concerned with thinking about

practice and looking for ways to improve their performance.

Criticality was mostly thought of as a new area of study that would be difficult

or challenging because it was both new and academic. Some challenges

seemed to be in understanding the language used in critical discussions, and

in discussing concepts and theories. Other challenges were in the anticipation of a public discussion of practice. There was some anxiety about unearthing practice that could be criticised, either by self or others and this made engaging in critical reflection feel risky, potentially undermining, rather than liberating. I was unaware of the range of participants' previous work and study experiences, and unaware of the extent of their anxieties at the start of the unit. I recognise this as a mismatch between my own intention to get to know my students and the realisation of how little I knew about them. This has led me to further questions about what is reasonable, ethical and possible in getting to know our students, discussed further in Chapter 6.

Confidence in tackling the unit varied. Participants' perceptions of their academic ability could intensify their anxiety, especially where participants had not previously studied at postgraduate level. There is evidence of moving from uncertainty and, in some instances, a fear about components of criticality, to a position where participants both passed the course and expressed more confidence in their abilities to be critical in future assignments. Thematic Network 5 looks at how the group worked together to achieve this, and how they experienced the teaching in the unit.

5.3   Thematic Network 5: Pedagogy within the case study

This thematic network explores participants' views of the teaching and learning opportunities within the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit and the pedagogical approach, as explained in Chapter 3. Three organising themes were developed from the data within this thematic network. The first organising theme considers forms of support for participants, the second examines the provocations and challenges experienced by participants, whilst studying this unit, and the third organising theme concerns the connections that participant made between their practice and study.

5.3 Figure 5 Thematic Network 5: Pedagogy within the case study

Basic Theme: Students knew more of each other than I knew of them.

Basic Theme: Trust helps students learn.

Organising Theme: Supporting.

Basic Theme: Formative activities enable students to learn.

Main Theme: Pedagogy within the case study.

Organising Theme: Provoking.

Basic Theme: Disrupted students' established study routines.

Organising Theme: Connecting.

Basic Theme: Using ideas to support change.

Basic Theme: Reflection for a purpose.

5.3.1 Organising Theme: Supporting

This organising theme revolves around factors within the unit that supported

participants' learning and promoted dialogue. Participants knew that their

assignments were to be assessed against criteria, as set out in the Unit

Handbook (Appendix 7), rather than graded against the work of other

students in the group. Whereas norm-based assessment usually includes

some element of ranking, relative to the performance of others, criteria-

based assessment makes it possible to be more open and explicit about how

assignments will be graded by discussing the criteria early in the course

(Sadler, 2005). In this case, Section 5.2.2 showed that bringing the

assessment criteria to the attention of the group seems to have contributed

to some anxiety in the group, particularly as the word 'critical' was prominent

in the assessment criteria. Nevertheless, it seems that participants'

understanding of criteria-based assessment also supported the group to

work together:

> …we're not competing with each other, but we can learn from each
>
> other and that's to everybody's benefit. (Participant F)

The size and nature of the group was clearly helpful and we were fortunate

that there were broadly supportive and trusting relationships within the group.

I think with it being a small group…. a lot of the learning has gone on through sharing and discussion, and that's something I've really valued very much from doing the PQ. (Participant B)

….. everybody is generally interested in everybody else's role and knowing what they do and what department they work for and what authority. So any feedback from the other students is valid and valued by, well it is by me. And I feel whatever I contribute is valued by the others as well. (Participant D)

Students knew each other better than I knew them: one student was new to the course but five had been together through several units. Students felt respected during previous units and were used to discursive ways of working. At the beginning of the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit we re-visited the protocols for working as a group, for example, in establishing boundaries for confidentiality. I noticed that the students worked well together, listening to each other, referring to each other by name. I felt relaxed in their company:

Perhaps because of the size of the group and what they share, the group seemed comfortable talking with each other in some detail about their thoughts as they approach this unit. (Personal Learning Log October, 2010)

Although some students felt more anxious than I realised at the time, I thought they were comfortable in each other's company; the group was "special in the way of sharing and using each other's experience" (Participant B).

Whilst participants did not use the word trust explicitly, their accounts suggest that they enjoyed being with each other and the relationships of trust within the group helped them learn. Thematic Network 4 showed that the balance between comfort and discomfort varied between participants, particularly at the start of the unit. The account below again referred to feeling sufficiently "comfortable" to speak in the group and to sometimes challenge each other.

> … it's been really helpful to have a small enough group that everybody can contribute… in a larger group, because of confidence issues, you might only get a sort of minority of people who are prepared to speak out, whereas with a group this size, we've all been able to contribute. I think it's felt comfortable and, you know, even to the point where you know it's OK to challenge each other to some extent, and that's managed within the group. (Participant F)

Preoccupation by fears and anxieties would feel uncomfortable and could interfere with concentration in class. Participant F felt that a comfortable learning environment was one where it felt safe to contribute, where students did not feel personally undermined if their contributions evoke disagreement

or difference of opinion. Participant F felt the group was able to work together to manage discomfort that comes from such exchanges.

As described in Chapter 3, I hoped there would be opportunities for moments of parity between students and myself to support dialogue on as equal terms as possible. Participants suggested three aspects of the unit supported them in this way: sharing an example of my own critical reflection (Appendix 5), working with a service-user and active learning exercises:

> I found it very interesting looking at the piece of work that you'd done, around professionalism… thinking about you learning and reflecting and going back over work. And it makes it easier for me to think about, well it's alright for me to do that. And that layering of going back and looking at something and going back over it again, because you've done that in your piece of work haven't you?
> And it broke down, I think, some of the barriers that you might maybe have between yourself and a tutor really… it's a learning process that we're all going through. (Participant C)

I used the example of my own reflective writing (with my reflective comments in the margin) as an example of double-loop reflection. The account provided information about my early experiences as a social worker and highlighted my own feelings of dependency when I needed to learn quickly. With hindsight, I highlighted how I could have introduced 'errors' into my work, though constructing a reputation for being reliable and a desire to be

liked. We went back over it in class and I asked for further suggestions for where I could extend the reflection, drawing on their knowledge, insights and experience. Students were supporting me to improve a piece of work, a role reversal that was not lost on Participant C.

Further opportunities to cede control came in working with a young post-care adult (care-leaver) to design a session on integrating children's rights perspectives. The young person was a member of a group of young post-care adults[26], who have attended training for this work. The young person led the session, with my support, beginning with active 'ice-breakers' to establish her leadership of the session. Most participants, though not all, enjoyed this as something different and fun, with a serious message.

> … she was very engaging and delivered some really useful
> information… I enjoyed it. It broke up the dryness of the unit…. I
> think it was probably because it was a young person doing it or it
> could have been because she wasn't delivering information in the
> same way as we'd had. Because we were engaging in it, we were
> getting up out the chair and doing whatever she wanted us to do.
> (Participant A)

Whilst most sessions included active learning in some way, the ice-breakers in this session were more like games. These games act as 'levelling' activities and, by not requiring academic expertise, they place students and

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[26] Young people who have been looked-after by their local authority, as defined by the Children Act 1989 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

tutors momentarily on the same level with the young person. Whilst this was not comfortable for everyone, it provided a platform for a discussion of how to engage young people through activities, in order to hear their perspectives, to promote dialogue.

> … And being in the middle of that... but it's just me, I'm not that comfortable in that environment. But, you know, it's another thing to learn… (Participant C)

In this session I could have responded to every point a student made and attempted to answer all their questions, but this would have undermined the young person, by silencing them. Instead, my challenge was to vacate the space and make room for the young person to speak and to trust her to make an impact that would last.

> I'm just remembering the girl from Children in Care Council, she really stands out…. But she was very memorable, I think just because it was her, it was her poise and her confidence and the way she spoke, she was just fantastic, really, really good. (Participant E)

> ... it's easy to convince yourself that something is going to work or that it's the right way of doing things. But when you hear it from somebody who's been through that experience, yes, it has more credence… (Participant F)

In leading the session, the young person actively challenged low aspirations for looked-after children, whilst communicating her understanding of the legal framework for children's rights. Her personal experience asked students to think about the weight they give to service user perspectives in their work and the status of service user knowledge, relative to academic sources.

5.3.2 Organising Theme: Provoking

Dialogue was structured into the unit through opportunities provided within the reflective exercises. This organising theme will focus on participants' recollections of two reflective exercises within the unit. The first was a short written piece (1500 words) reflecting on an example of a recent judgement they had made. The written piece was a formative task and was not contributing a mark to the summative assessment for the unit. The second reflective point came towards the end of the unit and comprised of student presentations of their ideas for their assignments.

In preparation for the written piece one exercise involved students talking in turn with two other students about a judgement that they had made. The two students listened and noted on cards any influences on judgement that they thought might have been present, either as mentioned in the account, or hypothetical. The cards were then given to the student who had recounted the narrative of their judgement making, so that they could arrange them in a way that made sense to them, for example, in order of most to least influential, as a spider diagram, and so on. The room was very quiet whist

the cards were being arranged. The following week students brought in their written piece about judgement making.

> Especially, there was one where we wrote things on cards for each other and then we kept each other's cards about a piece of practice we'd talked about, which I found really useful…. I used that in my assignment. So I actually kept the cards and they were useful for writing the assignment. (Participant D)

Despite enjoying the preparation activity, participants initially viewed the prospect of writing 1500 words as an unwelcome extra task.

> … we did a piece of written work early on, and initially, thoughts were, oh my god, another piece of written work…. And it was quite good because it was at a point where I'd not started anything and it actually made me start thinking about what I was going to write about and it was very useful…. in the next module, we suggested that as a group. (Participant C)

> ... I definitely didn't like having the extra task; I didn't like that at all. After I'd done it and I'd got the feedback, that's when I thought, actually that was just quite valuable because, the original plan that I had was way, way too big, in terms of the content for the assignment. (Participant A)

Participants recalled that the process of writing early in the unit had focussed them on thinking about a practice example well in advance of the assignment deadline, as the unit was developing and, for some students, this was helpful. However, the expectation had disrupted students' established study routines as the next extract shows.

> The written piece threw me because, with every module, I get five days' study leave, so for me, once I know when the assignment's due in, I get my diary out and I book a week off work with my five days' study leave, and in that week I write the assignment…. I'm usually very organised and very planned and I work on my assignment 9 till 5, Monday to Friday, as if I'm going to work……So when you asked us to write part of the assignment…. I'm thinking, I can't do that yet. I can't, I don't know what I'm writing about, don't know what I'm talking about, it's not my study week…. I felt like I was writing it just to appease you really, rather than to learn from it.
> (Participant D)

Participant D felt she was writing for me, rather than for herself. Reactions to producing the written piece prompted questions about whether applying a method of repeated reflective cycles had taken precedence over developing dialogue. I was aware that some students were not happy about the expectation of writing so early in the unit and that insistence on my part could damage the positive atmosphere in the group. Insistence would have been futile as the written piece was not formally assessed and was meant to be

helpful. In the end, we agreed a flexible hand in date for this short piece. All students submitted it for written feedback though it did not feel an empowering experience for all the participants at the time. In contrast, the formative student presentations to the group were remembered positively by all participants, even though not all participants welcomed them at the time.

> … the other thing about showing and talking about our assignment plans and ideas, I found really useful. Because that was sort of like just before I was ready for writing. (Participant D)

The timing of the presentations, towards the end of the unit might have helped students to focus as the assignment writing was approaching. Presentations can provoke anxiety but, for experienced social workers, they are also familiar. Some anxiety was centred on being in the focus of attention, particularly in relation to critical reflection on practice and the association of criticality with criticism because "nobody wants to be critically in the spotlight" (Participant A)

> … it's not the easiest thing to present something like that, you know, in terms of your own practice and feel that you're opening yourself up to other people to question… (Participant F)

> I think the presentation was again, a good learning tool to use. It wasn't daunting at all, it's something we're used to…. I think what's really useful is the discussions that go on and the feedback that you

get. Because it's an opportunity to listen to what other people are saying and their thinking around them. You might not have thought about that way of thinking about issues and that's very good. And again, it's a safe environment to do that in. (Participant C)

The presentations could have happened by negotiation, but under protest, as with the written piece. However, there seems to be a number of factors that might have helped students engage productively with the presentations. Firstly, trust within the group made the presentations helpful because students felt they could give and receive feedback from each other. Secondly, I took the role of scribe during the presentations, recording the feedback from the group for students to use later and students could see the feedback developing on the page as the discussion developed. Thirdly, because their presentations were not marked, participants felt able to listen to other student's presentations in order to learn from them and to give considered feedback.

We had to do it for Law and it was marked -- I couldn't hear anyone else's with it being assessed. With Critical Analysis, it was purely to share and help each other, so I could listen to them. (Participant B)

Looking back to what had been gained from the written piece and the presentations, participants felt they had gained from the process in developing and clarifying their ideas:

When you give something words and you have to formalise it, when
you're explaining something to somebody else, I think you really
have to understand it yourself if you're going to describe it in a way
that they can, you know, that makes sense, that they can
understand. (Participant E)

Participant E recognised the struggle to represent experience using
language. "Formalise" could refer to a process of giving meaningful form to
elusive thoughts, but it also suggested making a commitment to the words
used, by reproducing them in a formal manner, on paper or in public.
Participant E saw the process of communication, using language, as a way
to clarify her thoughts.

Participants consistently referred to the opportunities for feedback afforded
by the reflective exercises. Initially an unpopular idea, even the written piece
was recognised as a point where early feedback can help to develop more
confidence.

I wasn't totally enamoured with having to do this piece of writing
and do this presentation, absolutely not, because I thought, god I'll
make a right fool of myself. But that was, and at the points that
we did that, was the thing that…. I found a bit of an oasis if you
like. I've done this written piece, I've got some feedback, right I'm
sort of going the right way but I need to just shift course a bit. And
then we get to the presentation, and again it's that confirmation,

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I'm sort of doing sort of the right thing and I'm sort of

understanding this the way I need to understand it. Still not

feeling that I can do it but I'm sort of getting there. And those are

the things that picked me up and kind of got me through to the end

of it…… it is nerve wracking, but I enjoyed it and I'm glad that I did

it and didn't take the easy option of not being available that day.

(Participant A)

Naively, it did not occur to me that students would absent themselves rather

than participate. Participant A overcame her reluctance and fears about the

formative writing and the presentation and made use of the feedback from

both activities. There was an "oasis" after completing these activities, where

she could find some security. However, the extract shows that, whilst some

students feel secure in a trusting environment, other students must find the

courage to engage in public discussion, against an impulse to withdraw.

5.3.3 Organising Theme: Connecting

This organising theme presents examples of connections that participants

made by taking learning from the unit back into practice. Participants spoke

of adjustments that they had made in practice that they attributed, in part at

least, to developments in their reflective thinking. Several examples

illustrating participants' support for social workers in their teams were

discussed earlier in this chapter, in Thematic Network 3. This network

explores how participants used ideas from the unit to support change in practice.

Participant C had asked for a budget to make social work literature more accessible to social workers in her team:

> Let's get some new books… let's choose some for ourselves instead of waiting for the library at Training to get them…. Let's have some here, where we can pick them up and use them with families…
> (Participant C)

Participants gave examples of deliberately "trying to think differently" (Participant F), looking for other perspectives and questioning more. Participant E describes how she was working to understand her emotional responses to her work differently, referring to Morrison's (2007) work on emotional intelligence:

> … emotional intelligence and kind of verbalising a lot of the things I've been struggling with in work, in terms of managing the emotion day to day as a job… also it was quite reassuring really… people saying in a formal academic sense, that it is very anxiety provoking and there is a lot of emotion… used positively, it can make you a more effective practitioner. And if ignored can, you know, make you less effective.

So it was ways of giving structure and meaning to something that can be quite intangible sometimes, when you just feel a bit upset or a bit angry or a bit anxious…. It often feels like it's a hindrance, rather than part and parcel of what you do. (Participant E)

Participant E recognised that her emotional responses carried information. When academic writers of stature have paid attention to emotional intelligence, she felt justified in thinking about the significance of her emotional responses to her work. She found that it could be a struggle to find the language to express these "intangible" feelings about her work but there was a purpose to doing so, as a positive force rather than a constraint, or hindrance.

Participants had remembered reflection from their pre-qualifying courses as being something that they did on placement, not taught by academic tutors. Within the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit, the insertion of the word *critical* into *critical reflection*, a subject of academic study, had created the impression of an academic and difficult subject. The account below shows awareness of the constraining impact of a lack of confidence. Participant F indicates her growing confidence to act, to use reflection for a purpose that draws on both academic knowledge and practice wisdom.

….. it's perhaps given me a bit more confidence to, it seems strange in a way to say it, but to trust my instincts. To think that, if I feel uncomfortable about something, either that I've written or said or that

I've heard, that I feel more confident to reflect on that and think about, you know, what could I do differently and how can I apply my thinking really to address that?... you obviously can't turn the clock back and change what's happened, but you can do things in a different way for the future. (Participant F)

The importance of questioning was prominent in participants' accounts, as illustrated below where key elements of Schön's (1991) theory of reflection, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2), were questioned in a sequence that went on to develop a series of questions about the value of reflection itself.

I had to write about this to get my head round it really, but this idea of reflection in action versus reflection on action, I just found really hard to get my head round…. I just thought, well how can you reflect in action?... is that possible?... and I found different theories that said, 'actually is it possible to reflect in action?'… I think some of the concepts are tricky like that… and the unit teaches you to do this anyway, but there's sometimes assumptions that you're taught something and that is the way it's done and that it's good without saying, 'well hang on a minute.' Like reflection, you know, critical reflection is a good thing. I thought, well, is it necessarily? And I think it is, but maybe that's something that could be discussed…. Why is reflection popular?... But what does reflection give? Is reflection ever, I don't know, detrimental? We did discuss that a little

bit… you're just wallowing in, is it procrastination?... So sometimes I need to stop reflecting and just get on and do it. Like stop thinking about everything and just take action. (Participant D)

Participant D had made good use of the writing opportunities in the unit to explore theories of reflection. She had found theorists who echoed her own question: is it possible to reflect in action? She wondered if we can reflect and adjust during the course of doing practice. She wanted to challenge the taken for granted assumption that reflection was helpful. She wondered if it could be a diversion from doing what was needed to be done. In the end Participant D came back to the importance of action in social work: reflection might be helpful, but it needed to be purposeful and not a substitute for action.

5.3.4 Summary of Thematic Network 5: Pedagogy within the case study and concluding comments for Chapter 5

Previous sections of Chapter 5 showed that participants were motivated to gain learning that would connect with their work role and be of benefit to social workers that they supervised. They would have liked the opportunity for reflective supervision whilst they were studying, but received varying degrees of support and interest from their line managers. Nevertheless, they expressed commitment to develop reflective approaches with the students they supervised.

Study at master's level confronted some participants with new expectations of a higher level of academic study than they had previously experienced. Criticality was mostly thought of as a new area of study that was seen as academic and associated with theoretical learning. There was some anxiety about engaging in criticality. The reasons for this varied, from anxiety about unearthing practice that could be criticised, to the perceptions that it was both a new area of study and one that involved academic theory at a higher level that previously studied. Participants' perceptions of their academic ability could intensify their anxiety.

The group was small and cohesive, with trust between students. Students varied in the extent to which trust alleviated their anxiety in approaching the activities structured into the unit. My responsibilities to develop and facilitate the unit indicated my greater power in the project than that held by students. It seems that this power differential was reduced to some extent by a willingness to expose my own attempts at critical reflection and to enable others to take control and leadership during different sessions and activities.

In making use of structured critical reflection, my lack of knowledge of the extent of students' anxieties and established patterns of study could have compromised the trust between some of the students and myself but, despite this, we seemed to have maintained dialogue, particularly through activities that generated feedback on their ideas. Students found early feedback helped them to develop confidence in their abilities to understand the unit

content and pass the assignment. The feedback primarily arose from reflective activities and was from both myself and other students.

Participants gave examples of using the reflective exercises to make connections between the unit and their practice as social workers and supervisors of social workers. Within their accounts, they noticed constraints on their actions and described acting on their reflections. Ultimately, reflection itself was called into question.

The next chapter will bring the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 together with the relevant literature and develop detailed conclusions from the study, with reference to the research questions.

Chapter 6:   Discussion and conclusions

Introduction to Chapter 6

The purpose of this case study was to explore teaching and learning criticality in post-qualifying social work education. The aim was to inform and develop future practice, including my practice, by exploring understandings of criticality in social work. The thesis has reviewed relevant policy and literature and has reported the perspectives of post-qualifying social work students on the topic.

In this final chapter, I aim to tease out the contribution that this research offers to the field by contextualising the main findings from my research within the wider literature and theoretical approaches discussed in Chapters 1-3. Section 6.1 reflects on the influence of critical realist ontology in the research. Section 6.2 discusses participants' accounts of relevant experiences prior to their post-qualifying study and Section 6.3 discusses their accounts of post-qualifying study in the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. I will reflect on short sections of data, from the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, to illustrate the discussion of the findings. Table 4 sets out the structure of the chapter. The chapter addresses seven issues (Table 4: 6.2.1- 6.3.3) that emerge from synthesis of the two data chapters and enable the data to be discussed in relation to the research questions (Table 4: 6.4).

Table 4: Structure for the discussion of findings from the study

6.1	**Critical Realism as an underlabourer in the analysis**
6.2	**Learning and resisting the theory-practice binary**
6.2.1	Learning the binary
6.2.2	Resisting the binary
6.2.3	Learning reflection in practice
6.2.4	Transition and transformation
6.3	**Bridging the gaps**
6.3.1	Intentions and actions
6.3.2	Private and public
6.3.3	Power and dialogue
6.4	**Summary of key findings and contribution to knowledge and practice**
6.5	**Strengths and limitations**
6.6	**Recommendations and implications for further research**
6.7	**Concluding comments**

The discussion draws attention to the study's contribution to knowledge and practice, notes any unexpected findings, and identifies the implications for teaching critical reflection in post-qualifying social work education. Each section considers how the learning from this study addresses the research questions, summarised in Section 6.4. The research questions are restated below for ease of reference.

Research Questions:

1. How have critical ideas developed in social work practice and education?

2. How do experienced social workers understand and apply criticality?

3. What helps or hinders post-qualifying social work students to develop their critical and reflective capacities?

4. How does post-qualifying social work education contribute to critical practice in social work?

6.1   Critical Realism as an underlabourer in the analysis

In Chapter 3 (Section 3.1), I discussed my approach to developing understanding through exploring the diverse meanings and perspectives that research participants bring to an issue. I explained how critical realist researchers aim to contribute to knowledge through developing both understanding of phenomena and explanations that could imply causal mechanisms. However, because human social systems are open and complex (Archer, 1998; Bhaskar, 1979), with many variables interacting, it becomes impossible to identify causal explanations with any certainty. Rather, research might discover a tendency for social phenomena to occur in particular circumstances (Bhaskar, 1979; Houston, 2001).

Critical realism was an underlabourer in supporting, rather than determining, the combination of methods used in this project (Houston, 2010; Joseph, 2002). Chapter 3 (Introduction and Section 3.1) explained that my

ontological framework, from critical realism, began from the proposition that the real world exists independently of our knowledge and interpretation of it. Bhaskar (1979) points out that "all science would be superfluous if the outward appearances and the essence of things directly coincided" (Marx, 1966, in Bhaskar, 1979: 10). It follows that we should expect to be surprised and challenged by what is under the surface. This is not unique to critical realism, as researchers from both realist and interpretivist paradigms welcome surprising new insights from their work (Su et al., 2010). The reflective approaches, discussed in Section 2.2.3, suggested that paying attention to unexpected disparities between intentions and actions could provide a rich seam of analysis. Specifically, for critical realists, a surprising finding raises questions about how dynamic forces beneath the surface are impacting on experiences (Joseph, 2002).

Critical realist ontology alerted me to the possibility of unexpected perspectives and meanings in the data. In gathering and analysing the data, I focused on a number of findings that were surprising to me, making my subjective standpoint a factor in the analysis. Because critical realists also recognise that research is an interpretative process, where the subjective standpoints of participants and researchers affect the findings, any discovery is considered to be partial, and claims to knowledge are tentative (Sayer, 2000).

In my research, I had not anticipated some of the experiences that participants reported in their interviews. For example, in Section 3.3.5, I

noticed that Participant D said that the interview had felt strange to her "because you don't sit down for an hour and talk about yourself do you? So it's been a bit odd…" I probed the issue in the interview by reflecting: "So it feels unusual to you to do this?" and I noticed Participant D's new insight from the conversation:

> No, it would be the other way round wouldn't it? I'd be asking all the questions, as a social worker…. I'd be asking the questions not answering them. So yes, there you go, critical analysis. I'll have to think about that next time I'm asking all the questions won't I?
> (Participant D)

The data analysis pursued a number of areas, where I might have had a hunch about an aspect of participants' experiences but, nevertheless, the detail, or depth of feeling, about an issue surprised me. In Chapter 4, the persistence of binary understandings of the relationship between theory and practice was one such issue. Critical realists consider emotional experiences to be real, with real effects on thoughts and actions. In Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2), the students' emotional responses to the teaching contained some further surprises and prompted analysis of power relations in the classroom and within wider social relations, for example, during students' prior experiences of formal education.

Bhaskar's (1991) stratified ontology emphasises the overlapping layers of context in human relationships to their wider social context, as explained in

Section 3.1: Ontology. I have based my Table 5, below, on Carter and Sealey's work (2009: 8, Figure 3.2), showing experience as the surface layer, and the starting point in data analysis.

Table 5: Stratified ontology

	Empirical	Actual	Real
Experience	x	x	x
Events		x	x
Mechanisms			x

The generative mechanisms are not necessarily observable but might cause events to occur, events which people experience and which we *can* observe empirically. For example, messages about social class embedded in our educational structures might be one example of hidden mechanisms in the experiences of Participant A and discussed in Sections 4.1.1 and 6.3.2. However, establishing causality is much more complicated than extrapolating singular relationships from empirical observation, for example, if X is present then Y occurs. Rather, experiences emerge from the interaction of the different levels and causality is understood as a tendency for a phenomenon to occur in certain conditions (Elder-Vass, 2006). Importantly, human agency is a significant factor in how experiences emerge, as people respond to, and transform, conditions around them (Bhaskar, 2006). This chapter highlights how participants interacted reflexively and intentionally with their environment, to bring about transformation in their thinking and practices.

In this research, I aimed to develop understanding of criticality through communicating my interpretation of the perspectives that participants brought to their learning about critical reflection, and the meanings they attached to criticality. I discuss the range of experiences that participants brought to their post-qualifying studies, and the apparent impact these experiences had on their approach to both learning and using criticality. Through this research, I developed insights into participants' thoughts about their prior experiences that were less apparent to me whilst I was teaching them.

Within the analysis, there are a number of tendencies, or similar threads in participants' accounts of their experiences. Participants identified the lasting impact of prior learning experiences, for example, during their pre-qualifying social work courses, suggesting that it could be helpful for post-qualifying students to explore their perceptions of what has helped or hindered their learning about criticality in their past. This is particularly so as participants in this study also tended to see criticality as a new area of learning, associated with theoretical academic knowledge, rather than practical social work. The findings suggest a further tendency in persistent binary understandings of the relationship between theory and practice, as discussed in Chapter 2, and demonstrate that participants in this study were motivated to overcome the limitations of such understandings.

6.2   Learning and resisting the theory-practice binary

6.2.1   Learning the binary

Findings reported in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1) suggest that participants'
thinking about the relationship between academic learning and practice
experience may be significantly influenced by learning during their pre-
qualifying courses. I identified two strands of thinking in their accounts of
pre-qualifying social work education, concerning the relationship between
their theoretical learning, which participants described as 'academic,' and
practical social work. Firstly, participants had grown to expect theory and
practice to be taught and learnt separately. Secondly, participants had
sought to make connections between theoretical learning and practical social
work during their pre-qualifying courses, expressed in two accounts as a
pressing need to make a connection. Although participants emphasised
either the first point, or the second, they were consistent in remembering
their pre-qualifying courses as a time when theory and practice were
separate entities that were difficult to bring together.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the persistent binary opposition between theory
and practice in the language of social work (Healy, 2000), and participants in
this study expressed this as an oppositional relationship between 'learning'
and 'doing.' Learning was on one end of the binary and doing was at the
other end, with participants recalling awareness of this binary once they were
on placement.

... the academic modules just seemed so far removed from the day

to day reality of child protection and social work... You're either in it,

doing it, or you're learning about it. And I guess that's part of what

critical reflection and analysis is. Maybe it's trying to bring the two

together a bit more. But yes, in my head … I kind of separate it into

classroom learning and placements, when I think about it.

(Participant E)

I noticed that participants found academic learning, from their pre-qualifying

courses, more difficult when they could not easily connect it to practice

experiences. Participants reported negative memories of learning social

work law in particular. Participant A remembered that she "hated" her law

teaching and described it as "just academic." Participants B and D attributed

their struggles with social work law to their lack of practice experience that

directly related to the subject at that time:

…it didn't mean anything to me because I couldn't apply it to anything

I knew. (Participant B).

…when you're given legislation to read and try and understand,

unless you're doing the job and implementing it, it's really hard to

understand what it is you're doing. (Participant D)

During their initial social work education, despite expecting to connect theory

and practice, participants had come to view practice as separate from theory,

which they saw as emanating from academic study on university courses.

Those lecturers who were also practitioners were described as "part time" (Participant A) or "coming in from outside the university" (Participant D). Teaching by practitioners mainly happened on their placement, rather than in the university or college. Participants qualified between 1983 and 2007 and were looking back at experiences of their pre-qualifying courses prior to the recent changes. Four participants began their pre-qualifying courses prior to undergraduate degrees becoming the mandatory minimum level of qualification. However, participants' accounts of their struggles to connect academic and practice learning are consistent with studies of more recent social work graduates, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Domakin, 2014; Domakin, 2015; Tham and Lynch, 2014; Walton, 2005). As in these studies, participants in this study also wanted better correspondence between theoretical learning and practice experience.

Participants' recollections, though hazy in places, clearly pointed to the enduring effects of pre-qualifying social work education, particularly the long-lasting impact of placement learning (Domakin, 2014). Alongside recently published studies (Domakin, 2014; Domakin, 2015), findings in this research suggest that binary understandings of theory and practice might be reinforced during pre-qualifying courses. At least, for these participants, they seem to have brought this understanding with them into their PQ studies. As a result of this research, I am now more careful to use phrases and examples that might help students visualise connections. For example, a recent tutorial with a post-graduate social work student, discussed how we

might recognise "action full-of-thought and thought-full-of-action" (Evans, 2007: 554). In developing this discussion, I have found it helpful to ask students about what surprised them in a piece of work, as thoughts about the unexpected seem to be easier to recall. It seems to be more difficult for students to recall their thinking during less dramatic episodes of practice, but no less important. I remind students to record their thinking as close to the event as possible to capture their thinking for later reflection. These tutorials are not part of this study, but could provide rich data for further investigation into the longstanding puzzle of how to help students overcome binary understandings of theory and practice, during their pre-qualifying courses.

In relation to Research Question 3, these findings suggest that working with students to develop critical reflection requires specific attention to how theory and practice are understood. For example, lecturers and practice supervisors working with students in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE, explained in Chapter 2) might explore students' prior experiences of connecting academic and practice learning, as this study suggests they may not have experienced strong linkage previously. In my teaching with this group of students I now ask about their previous experiences of making these connections. I have adapted activities from working with participants in this study for the ASYE teaching. I also use more child observation activities, as I find that these can stimulate critical discussion of received theories and generate theories from the students themselves, about what they observe. I find that students readily discuss their struggles with theory, once this topic is opened up.

6.2.2 Resisting the binary

Fook (2012b) suggests that where one side of a binary is afforded more value, people can feel marginalised and fixed to an enduring lower status identity. Chapter 2 showed how successive reforms to social work education gave employers increasing influence in determining the social work curriculum and assessment of students (Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2015). Chapter 2 also noted that the current context for social work education is complex, with several different partnership models of delivery at different stages of development. Within this complex and changing context, the 'holism' of the Professional Capabilities Framework (The College of Social Work, 2012c) has been broadly welcomed by practice educators, as giving them more opportunity to develop reflective conversations with students about the context of their practice (Jasper and Field, 2015). However, these developments do not necessarily lead to practitioners feeling like equal partners in social work education and practitioners can still feel marginalised in their relationships with universities (Domakin, 2015).

In this study, although there appeared to be evidence of an unhelpful binary relationship between academic and practice learning, understanding how this binary operated, for these participants, was not straightforward. There was some evidence that participants both identified and resisted a higher status for academic learning over practice learning. The findings suggested that the esteem and status of higher education could be one of the deep structures that participants encountered during their pre-qualifying courses

(Houston, 2001) and, as Bourdieu (1998b; 2007c) suggested, deep structures are carried into the future, as embodied history, or habitus. This appears to be significant in supporting students to think critically about their attitudes to knowledge and therefore has relevance to Research Questions 3 and 4, to be discussed in Section 6.4.

Bourdieu's (2007c) concept of habitus also draws attention to the active, reflexive aspect of agency, as discussed by Adams (2006). Participants' perceptions of the status of higher education were expressed in different ways, but their reflexivity in looking back, is also apparent. Participant D, who had not expected to go to university, was pleased that she had done well on her social work degree and her academic success gave her confidence, whereas, in the extract below, Participant C felt intimidated by tutors and academics during her pre-qualifying course. The interview took place after the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit had finished and when Participant C was completing her final unit:

> ... you see academic scholars, if you like, as somebody that's, they're professional, it's quite an important role, and for you to start challenging that, [pause]. And we've been thinking about that even more now, you know, obviously within this learning that we're doing now, that we should be able to be doing that as…. experienced practitioners. But at that time I don't think I would have been able to. (Participant C)

Participant C felt an expectation that her years as an experienced social worker and social work manager would give her sufficient status to challenge ideas and theories introduced during the PQ course, yet the pressure of this expectation still seemed to weigh heavily. This short extract from the transcript implies a great deal about the relations of power, as experienced by Participant C, through her academic study. Chapter 3 referred to Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a), who argued that assets, such as qualifications and positions of authority, are a form of cultural capital that confer a symbolic form of power. Here the symbolic power of academics seemed to have had a silencing impact on Participant C, a form of domination that Bourdieu referred to as symbolic violence (Cowden and Singh, 2013). However, Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a: 167) stated that symbolic violence is "exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" and, in the extract above, Participant C questioned her former compliance.

Participant C was looking back at her experiences and appreciated that she had earned social capital of her own, in the practice field. Although still hesitant, she recognised that the PQ student group had valued her practice experience and this gave her a voice. The role of the group, in facilitating critical reflection, is discussed further in Section 6.3.3. In the above extract, Participant C shows how critical reflexivity has potential for exposing and challenging fatalistic, deterministic, compliance to symbolic power (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Participant C said that she could engage with academic scholars on more equal terms, once she recognised her status as an

experienced practitioner. As a beginning social worker, she had not felt

confident to challenge her lecturers, or criticise what she read, but she now

recognised that, as a post-qualifying student with many years' practice

experience, she had earned the right to engage with academics on more

equal terms.

During their pre-qualifying courses, participants suggested that reflection

tended to focus on being critical of their individual practices (Chapter 4:

Section 4.1). In response to Research Question 4, post-qualifying social

work education provides an opportunity for practitioners to be critical of

received knowledge, when they might not have had the boldness to do so

during their pre-qualifying courses.

Chapter 2 discussed the problems in technical-rational approaches to

'applying' theory to practice, as though theory were a template for action

(Thompson, 2008), because this implies that theory and practice are made in

separate domains. Social workers, like other practitioners in other

professions, not only apply knowledge, they also generate a form of

knowledge, as they carry out their work (Green, 2009). Participant A

illustrates this point in her summative assignment as she writes about her

developing knowledge of how biases can operate in the selection and

presentation of information:

> As I know from my own practice, in approaching a team manager for
>
> a decision, it is possible to present the case, should a social worker

chose to, in a particular way, in order to achieve the decision they

are looking for… (Participant A: Summative Assignment 1[27]).

Participant A, had reflected that, as a social worker she had selected

information to construct a case and noticed that others also select, prompting

her to consider this in her new role, when supervising social workers in her

team.

Chapter 3 explained theory-making as an everyday activity, as people make

sense of their experiences by testing their knowledge against experiences

(Sheppard, 1995). This is not necessarily a process that people are aware of

and, in Chapter 2, I discussed Freire's (1996) approach to becoming more

aware of how knowledge is both used and generated through reflection on

action. This reflexive, reciprocal approach aims to create a unity of theory

and practice. Schön (1991) was helpful to this project in pointing out the

frustrations to be expected in working towards such unity. Many theories do

not fit neatly with the messy nature of human practice and this can be

puzzling, prompting deep thinking. As discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.7)

social workers are under pressure to predict behaviour in complex and

unpredictable systems (Fish and Hardy, 2015; Stevens and Cox, 2008).

Practitioners might encounter situations specific to their profession, for

example, social work assessments and child protection inquiries, but each

occasion will be unique (Schön, 1991; Schön, 1992). Lack of fit is to be

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[27] Students submitted one summative assignment and the 6 scripts, numbered 1-6, are available for scrutiny by the examiners. These are not in the Appendices for reasons of data protection.

expected, and the puzzle of trying to connect theory and practice is fraught with inherent frustrations and struggles. This can be useful to critically reflective practitioners, who can use the lack of fit to reflect on their practice and develop insights (Schön, 1992).

In her summative assignment[28], Participant E referred to Ixer (1999), who had argued that a lack of clarity about the meaning and nature of reflective practice gave ground to those who would use the concept to give work-based learning equal status to classroom-based learning. Participant E took issue with the implied lower status of learning from practice. This did not fit with the priority that she gave to learning from families about their children. For example, she considered Ben, a new-born baby, who was fostered soon after his birth:

> A response to Ixer's critique could be to ask why pedagogy 'in the field' of social work shouldn't be legitimate, and afforded equal status to (if not higher status than) classroom learning. I would personally claim that I have learnt more from having a discussion with Ben's family about his future than I would ever have been able to learn if the incident had solely been considered in abstract within a classroom setting. (Participant E: Summative Assignment)

Participant E almost reversed the hierarchy by proposing that knowledge gained in practice is more important. She puzzled over what knowledge

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[28] Available for scrutiny by examiners.

should be given higher status, resisting a perceived arrogance in the academic field. She recognised and asserted the value of knowledge gained in the practice field, but did not seem to see that theoretical classroom learning also originated in experience, puzzles and questions about human practices. In relation to Research Question 3, this example from the data is a reminder to be explicit about how the journal articles we discuss in class often originate in questions and curiosity about social work practice and, therefore, the relationship between theory and practice is not quite as disconnected and hierarchical as it may appear.

Participant E's account of her work with Ben reminded me that Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.7) made reference to examples of children being marginalised by the systems designed to safeguard them. There is therefore an argument for consciously prioritising knowledge that gives insight into their world (Barnes, 2011; Dillon et al., 2015; Winter, 2011). However, social workers consider children's voices in the context of a wide range of knowledge, from practice, empirical research and academic theory (Turney, 2012; Turney, 2014b). There are now concerns that it has become very difficult to integrate knowledge from so many diverse sources, especially as these fragments of knowledge are brought together to make sense of the frequently changing and, often, highly emotionally charged contexts in which children live (Turney and Ruch, 2016). This makes it difficult for social workers to be transparent in their use of knowledge because they risk being challenged in an area where they can feel vulnerable.

Chapter 2 discussed how ethical practice involved critical appraisal of the relevance and limitations of knowledge in each unique situation, including research evidence, and transparency about how evidence informs judgements (Gambrill, 2012; Health and Care Professions Council, 2012; Health and Care Professions Council, 2016). Participant C reflected that "the situation itself 'talks back'" (Turner, 2005, in Munro, 2011b: 93) and noted that transparency requires courage:

> I think people are frightened of that because, obviously, you're leaving yourself open to challenge, particularly if you start using evidence based practice in assessments or court referrals.
> (Participant C)

In relation to Research Question 4, post-qualifying social work education can provide space to reflect on the effects of binaries and privileges inherent in using different forms of knowledge. Through critical reflection, it might be possible to make visible some of the "hidden persuasion" affecting epistemic thinking in social work and, consequently, influencing decisions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a: 168). In relation to Research Question 3, Wacquant (2007) referred to Bourdieu in arguing that this kind of epistemic reflexivity moves reflection away from any narcissistic or self-blaming tendencies. For social workers, this is explicitly critical territory of exposing the "dominant professional constructions influencing their practice" (White, 1997: 748). Examples of such influences, identified in participants' accounts will be discussed further in following sections.

6.2.3 Learning reflection in practice

Chapter 2 discussed the social work placement as a signature pedagogy for
social work education where the aim is to integrate theory with relevant
practical expertise (Shulman, 2005; Wayne et al., 2010). On placement,
during their pre-qualifying courses, participants had to adapt to the field of
practice and to demonstrate the required aspects of the professional and
knowledgeable social work habitus (Bourdieu, 2007c). Despite demands to
perform well in the technical aspects of the role, for example in completing
assessments on time, recording in files and navigating complex and messy
filing systems, participants recalled placement as where they began to
reflect. Participants recognised that reflection was an accepted part of
formal understandings of social work professionalism and remembered being
required to demonstrate reflection during placement:

> ….it was almost as a given that, you know, reflection is good and you
> will write a reflective essay on your placement, without necessarily
> giving us the detail of why that was important, or why that was a
> good thing, or how it could be done…… (Participant E)

Participants understood reflection during placements as a method for
improving their individual daily practices, as a single loop of reflection on
practice, after the event and with a focus on self-improvement (Bokeno,
2003). This kind of reflection can be valuable in improving practice, and
transformative for the practitioner (Mezirow, 2009) but, without a critical

element, it risks the immobilising effects of self-doubt and self-blaming (Turney, 2014b; Wacquant, 2007). Participants did not appear to see reflection during placement as a means of achieving change beyond their individual caseloads and did not readily recognise reflection as a consciously critical activity during their pre-qualifying courses (Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2009). All participants remembered reflection as being part of their placement experience, but were less confident that they had experienced critical reflection:

> I think reflection yes, because I think that was part of the practice teaching style…. So I think those skills came through the practice side… critical thinking analysis was more like a new topic, you know, when we came on to PQ really… (Participant B)

Participants remembered providing "analysis but not specifically critical analysis" (Participant F). No participant could remember any specific teaching about criticality on her pre-qualifying courses from either academic or practice education. One participant highlighted the intimidating impact of being assessed on the critical content of her work, whilst feeling that she had not been equipped with a conceptual framework to help her:

> I do remember being told that all my assignments would be marked in that way, that any contributions that I made in the classroom environment would be seen in that way, but I don't ever remember being told how to be that way… (Participant A)

However, having completed the PQ unit on Critical Thinking and Analysis, several participants could identify that criticality was encouraged during their pre-qualifying courses, even though they did not recognise it at the time:

> I can't remember being told, right this is critical analysis…. But again, everything that we looked at, say if we were looking at law, we'd be encouraged to… really delve deep into things and consider, yes consider different perspectives and different theories on everything, which I think is what critical analysis is. (Participant E)

The reference to considering other perspectives, in Participant E's account (above), suggests that her master's programme introduced a critique of dominant ideologies and theories (Brookfield, 2009). This was not confined to participants who qualified through postgraduate study. Participant C took the Diploma in Social Work as the Macpherson Report identified the "corrosive disease" of institutional racism (Macpherson, 1999, para. 6.34; see also Chapter 2: Section 2.1.3).

> … I remember reading the history of racism and thinking, you know, this is the first time that I've actually challenged myself and looked at something like that. (Participant C)

In this study, participants suggested that social work educators cannot assume that their post-qualifying students have had the opportunity to recognise and practice the critical aspects of critical reflection through their

pre-qualifying courses. On their pre-qualifying courses, students may have been exposed to critical ideas, for example those that challenge structural inequalities, but might not have recognised the potential of integrating those ideas into their reflective practice once on placement. They may not have had access to the critical conceptual frameworks to enable purposeful, conscious, critical thinking (Gambrill and Gibbs, 2009). Chapters 1 and 2 discussed the influence of a range of critical ideas that have become established in social work theory. Social work students are required to demonstrate critical reflection in order to qualify as professional social workers yet, on returning to post-qualifying study, they may see criticality (as explored in Chapters 1 and 2) as a new area of learning, whereas the concept of reflection is more familiar.

There is not necessarily a large gap to bridge between seeking to improve one's own practices and recognising the structural constraints to improvements. In relation to Research Question 3, it might be helpful to support students to see a developmental step between the more familiar individual reflection and less familiar critical reflection, rather than emphasising a difference between these activities.

6.2.4   Transition and transformation

In their recollections of learning from placements, participants referred to the emotional content of learning in practice, and this thread will be developed

next, alongside a discussion of the transition from student to competent social worker.

In line with discussion in Chapter 2, participants indicated that practice placements were transformative and memorable (Askeland and Fook, 2009; Fook et al., 2000). As Parker (2006) also found, they valued the involvement of their practice educator in reflective discussions:

> … I remember that placement well. I remember having quite a patient teacher and just stuff that's coming up for me now… talking about knocking on doors and the feeling content of learning… (Participant B)

Participants remembered more about placements and early practice than they did about academic learning or in-service courses. They became confident in their social work identity through coping under pressure and managing complex cases. Knowledge was built heuristically, case by case, but "the feeling content of learning" in practice stands out in Participant B's account, above. As identified in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.4), Mezirow (2009: 28) suggests that "transformation is often a difficult, highly emotional passage" and participants' accounts of learning, through both practice and study repeatedly come back to this point. The vocabulary of feelings and emotions are used interchangeably in participants' accounts, as Participant E illustrates, when she spoke about her early practice with the benefit of hindsight:

> … having done now a module on critical analysis… at the beginning I
> wouldn't have been able to express it. I just would have said, oh my
> god it's mad, and everyone saying different things. It would have
> been a bit more chaotic… now I have practiced for a few years and
> I'm able to be a bit calmer about it, I would probably reflect more on it
> because I feel I'm a bit calmer. I'm not just in the middle of it all the
> time, feeling a bit anxious and mad panicked, which I probably was
> when I started, a bit out of control. (Participant E)

Parker (2006) suggests that successful students on placement develop a
sense of their own self-efficacy, feeling increasingly assured and confident in
their abilities as a competent social worker, and that reflective supervision
plays a part in this. However, participants in this study found that the
transition to qualified worker shook this newly found confidence and, at the
same time, they lost reflective supervision, as the focus shifted to monitoring
the progress of cases.

> And I think what you do then is, you try to get through each day and
> it's probably not there, the reflection time. (Participant C)

This reflects concerns in the literature that, especially within statutory
children and families teams, the time for reflection is under pressure as
workloads rise (Bellinger, 2010b; Domakin, 2014). Chapter 1 discussed how
the focus on working with the highest risk cases, with home visiting as the
dominant method of intervention, orientates practice towards effecting

individual change and adaptation to social inequality, made worse by welfare cuts (Winter and Cree, 2016). Pressure is intensified by the objective conditions of longstanding problems in recruiting and retaining social workers in children's social work services (Department for Education, 2016b; Webb and Carpenter, 2012). Participants mentioned the disruptive impact of restructuring, with changes happening "all at the same time" (Participant A). As Jones (2001) showed 15 years ago and Ferguson (2014) showed more recently, pressures in frontline child protection practice leave little time for even the most fleeting reflection.

A sense of shock and abandonment comes through in participants' accounts of their early practice and they looked for support from colleagues and supervisors, when available. Participants gave examples of retrieving knowledge from their pre-qualifying courses to transfer into their first post, although they remember this being a struggle:

> … not bluffing everything, but just hooking everything together and just hoping I was doing it right and then coming back and checking that I'd done it right. (Participant D)

Turney and Ruch (2016) make the point that critical thinking can be encouraged though paying attention to both cognitive and affective aspects of supervision. Whilst it is important to think in detail about information gathered during assessments, for example through observation, there is also useful information in the social worker's emotional response. Critically

reflective supervision helps social workers to work holistically, to consider all the information about a child and it can also be a space where troubling feelings about the nature of the work can be acknowledged (Ruch, 2007).

Chapter 2 noted that the development of more structured support programmes for newly qualified social workers had arisen from concerns about the exposure of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) to the most complex, demanding and stressful child protection practice. The findings in this study are consistent with these concerns. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is the current means of providing this support although places tend to be taken up by social workers sponsored by local authorities, rather than those in the private and voluntary sector (Schraer, 2016). This adds to concerns about support for NQSWs, should the outsourcing of children's social care proceed as indicated in Chapter 1.

Participants in this study were all supervisors or mentors to newly qualified social workers, but had a mixed experience of support from their own supervisors, whilst they were post-qualifying (PQ) students. Nevertheless, they wanted to provide space for reflection for their social workers and this was one of the motivations for undertaking further study. ASYE students are unlikely to be supervisors, so early in their career, but students undertaking further PQ courses might be supervisors for social work students or qualified social workers.

Early evaluations of ASYE, discussed in Chapter 2, showed that "significant numbers" of those who supervised NQSWs received no training for this role (Berry-Lound and Rowe, 2013: 19). In relation to Research Question 4, participants in this study suggest that post-qualifying courses have an important role in refreshing and developing supervisors' confidence in critical reflection. Little is known about the impact of CPD on practice generally, and the current framework has only been in place since 2012 (Halton et al., 2014; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014). This study suggests that there could be further research to investigate how CPD, including post-qualifying social work education, affects students' confidence to deliver reflexive supervision to the social workers they supervise.

6.3   Bridging the gaps

This section discusses participants' views and experiences of post-qualifying study, in particular, their thoughts about the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit and their experience of dialogic pedagogy.

6.3.1   Intentions and actions

Participants in this study were all experienced practitioners, who had themselves supported students and newly qualified social workers, as practice educators, managers or mentors. In all their interviews, participants identified intentions and hopes for their future development, thus suggesting that deliberate reflexivity was part of their professional identity and a response to their individual agency.

Participants had come to the PQ course by putting themselves forward, either through expressing and interest or through a more rigorous selection process by their employers. There was therefore some degree of self-motivation in all participants' accounts of how they came to be on the course and, in all their accounts, there was a sense of hoping to use the experience to bring theory and practice together:

> I really wanted to study, study social work whilst doing it….
> (Participant E)

For ethical reasons (Chapter 3: Section 3.3.3), the interviews were taken after participants had completed the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. It is therefore possible that their recollection of experiences, from before the unit began, were influenced by their recent experience of the unit content. However, participants' recurrent references to a theory-practice divide imply both its persistence in metacognitive processes and their motivation to find bridges.

The findings in Chapter 5 show that participants felt a responsibility to make connections between their post-qualifying learning and their workplace:

> ... And being enthusiastic about learning and about reflecting on what impact we're having on service users etc.… one of the things I'm learning at the moment, through this course, is actually that's OK that I've learnt this module, but what am I then going to do about it? I have a responsibility to make sure that I use it and it impacts on practice. And I feel more responsible as a manager because it's not just about me; it's about how I'm able to empower others.
> (Participant C)

Chapter 2 and Section 6.2.4, above, discuss the role of professional reflective supervision in supporting beginning social workers to develop confidence (Parker, 2006) and criticality (Turney and Ruch, 2016). For participants in this study, supervision provided a means of taking aspects of the course back into their workplace, either to discuss in their own

supervision or to use in supervising and mentoring other social workers in their teams. Supervision could have helped identify examples of practice for critical reflection and to bring into the classroom for discussion with other students. However, once on the PQ course, participants reported mixed experiences of supervision and those who had little opportunity for reflective supervision seemed disappointed:

> …. it's a shame, he [supervisor] was very keen on the idea, but in the event, we've not had the time to do that really. Supervision's just, you know, is very much case focused… (Participant E)

> If I'm honest, I do feel a little bit like, I'm just getting on with it, it's a separate thing from work almost now, apart from having to get my manager to sign my verification form and read it. (Participant D)

Only one participant, of the six in the study, reported that she had received reflective supervision from her manager. Participants found other opportunities to develop reflection with colleagues or with social workers that they themselves supervised:

> It's not everyone's priority and it is hard, I think, saying, 'right can we just have twenty minutes to discuss, you know, my personal feelings about my work' …. So maybe, I'll probably end up doing that more with my colleagues. (Participant E)

In relation to Research Question 3, this study suggests that PQ students would welcome opportunities to have reflective supervision, concurrent with their studies. ASYE and CPD initiatives include arrangements to train more supervisors in delivering reflective supervision. This is to be welcomed but this study supports Berry-Lound and Rowe's (2013) view, that unless there are workload reductions for supervisors, competing and more urgent pressures in the workplace are likely to continue to scupper the best intentions.

Chapter 2 noted that there has been little attention paid to the role of team members in supporting their colleagues through post-qualifying courses (Moriarty, 2012; Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2014) apart from the recent interest in action learning sets (Machin and Pearson, 2014; Revans, 2011; Skills for Care, 2014). In relation to both research Questions 3 and 4, the potential for reflective discussions with trusted colleagues could be explored with students more explicitly at the beginning of post-qualifying courses, with a view to strengthening this link between workplace and classroom discussion.

6.3.2 Private and public

Chapter 2 identified the emotional impact of learning and recognised that challenging taken-for-granted assumptions is unsettling and takes courage (Gambrill and Gibbs, 2009; Mezirow, 2009). I anticipated that the Critical Thinking and Analysis would seem daunting to students, with 15 references to the word 'critical' in the learning outcomes alone (see Appendix 7), but I

did not appreciate the depth of anxiety that this unit provoked. To me, this was one of the most revealing aspects of the research, yet in two interviews it only came to light in response to the word-cloud, presented at the end of the interviews (see Appendix 14). Luckily, this happened in the first interview, and I was then careful to present the same the word cloud in each subsequent interview to aid the conversation and to be consistent with each participant.

If there had not been such a powerful response to the word-cloud in the first interview, I wonder if I would have been less keen to offer it in subsequent interviews. This has been a learning point for me, about interviewing in particular. Participants respond differently to ways of asking for their views and they should have the same opportunities to comment on stimulus material during the interviews. This is important so that all the different responses from participants are captured, to make the study trustworthy and credible, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Bryman, 2012).

The word-cloud facilitated a brief period of silence and apparent reflection, as we looked at the patterns. It showed that semi-structured interviews do not need to rely only on questions and spoken prompts to encourage conversation. The brief silence offered space for participants to pay attention to their thoughts and to decide whether to vocalise them, knowing that they were being recorded.

As participants began the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit, reflection was a familiar, if rusty, concept, experienced in discussion with supervisors or trusted colleagues, written about in portfolios on pre-qualifying courses and learnt in practice settings. Participants thought of criticality as a new subject and an academic concept, requiring academic study, not easily correlated with practice:

> … up to that point we'd been discussing law and organisations and management… which although sometimes they can seem a bit removed… they usually have a sort of direct correlation to what you're doing in your day job. Whereas, with critical thinking and analysis, I thought, this is going to be more, I suppose more cerebral or more kind of academic perhaps. (Participant F)

Participant F participated in regular multi-disciplinary case discussions in her team. Other participants had few opportunities to discuss their reflections, once they were qualified. Reflection was mostly a private and personal experience, sometimes shared with trusted colleagues. In contrast, the prospect of open group discussion worried students, especially if their initial understandings of criticality suggested that there would be a focus on deficiencies in practice. Participant A noticed the proximity of 'truth' and 'terrified' in the word-cloud:

> …what if the truth is I'm just no good at this and I'm not, you know, I analyse myself and reflect on myself and the truth is I'm just no good

and people don't think that I'm any good …. I would have to be

talking about my practice, what I do, why I do it, who I do it with etc.,

and people would be asked to make comment about that.

(Participant A)

The beginning of new learning can be both worrying and exciting and there is

evidence of this mix of emotions in the group. I had expected there to be

anxieties about set tasks within the unit, especially the presentation and

summative assignment. At the beginning of the unit, the discussion focussed

on how we could conduct group discussion in a supportive and ethical

manner, moving towards a discussion of emotional containment towards the

end of the unit (Ruch, 2007; Ruch, 2009a; Ruch, 2009b). Perhaps we had

not developed sufficient dialogue during these discussions for these fears of

personal criticism to surface. I think the more important point is that we

cannot really know how students experience the combined impact of

cognitive and affective processes and that much of their emotional response

remains hidden.

Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.4) referred to studies that suggest, dialogue can be

oppressive if students do not feel safe to speak, and if they feel pressured to

disclose experiences mainly for the benefit of others in the class (Ellsworth,

1989; hooks, 1994; Mayall et al., 2015). In relation to Research Question 3,

although students might be invited to bring their feelings to mind we need to

tread carefully, recognising that students can choose to keep their feeling

private, but that some of these feelings might inhibit their learning (Ruch, 2007).

The analysis, in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1) and Chapter 5, reminded me that students who have become confident in their social work identity in the field of practice can feel less secure in the field of study, especially if they feel that their academic qualifications have not equipped them to meet expectations (Bourdieu, 1998b; Thompson, 2012). In her interview, Participant A said "….people like me don't come to University and don't do degrees," reminding us that those who have not seen themselves as academically able bring their history with them (Bourdieu, 2007c).

There are implications for practice in social workers' perceptions of who belongs in higher education. As care-leavers are less likely to go to college or university than their peers, social workers have an important role in encouraging looked after children to achieve at school and in promoting their access to further and higher education (Driscoll, 2013; Mayall et al., 2015; Shaw and Frost, 2013). It is therefore important that social workers challenge elitist views of higher education, in their thinking, and in their work with children. Success in completing a post-qualifying programme could play a part in this.

In relation to Research Question 2, if criticality is perceived as attached to the academic and theoretical side of the binary, this might cause students to doubt their critical abilities as they began the course. In relation to Research

Question 3, whilst it is good practice to inform all students about academic expectations, including the role of the lecturer in the formal assessment of their learning, students might also find it helpful to pay particular attention to negotiating the 'rules of the game' for classroom dialogue, emphasising the importance of discussing such matters as confidentiality, and respect for each other during discussions.

6.3.3 Power and dialogue

> The group was special in the way of sharing and using each other's experience. (Participant B)

Participants were skilled and experienced in supporting other social workers and the study's findings showed that they brought this disposition to working with other students during their PQ studies. Participants were curious about how other social workers practiced and wanted to take new ideas back to their workplace. These qualities helped the process of establishing a positive atmosphere for dialogue and participants mentioned that being in a small group (of seven students) helped them to feel comfortable enough to discuss their practice, knowing that they would be questioned about it.

I felt a responsibility to lead and facilitate but participants made it possible to avoid the didactic banking methods of education discussed in Chapter 2 (Freire, 1996). Participants made dialogue possible by their active participation in sessions and a willingness to take responsibility for

presenting cases for discussion. Participants noted that the group

atmosphere helped them to engage with presenting to each other and felt

that they benefitted from a shared approach to giving feedback that was

structured into the unit in this way. One key point, mentioned several times

in the interviews, was that the presentations were not formally assessed and

were for formative feedback only. This gave participants a freedom to listen

to each other, rather than worrying about achieving a pass standard in their

own presentation.

Assessment criteria and learning outcomes serve to remind both students

and tutors that their relationship is, ultimately, unequal, placing limits on the

extent of dialogue. Chapter 3 made use of Bourdieu's (1998a) concept of

social capital to consider the lecturer's power relative to their students. The

discussion so far, has identified different sources of social capital operating

in the field, for example, from practice experience, qualifications, and social

class. I held a powerful position, as the unit leader who would assess

students' assignments, but the findings in Chapter 5 suggest that there were

several activities within the classroom that helped create temporary periods

where students and I were on more equal terms.

Service user involvement in social work education is not the main focus of

this thesis, and a wider discussion of literature on service user involvement is

beyond its scope. However, I am aware that service user involvement

becomes tokenistic if academic staff overtly, or subtly, take control of a

session away from a service user (Allain et al., 2006; McLaughlin, 2010).

This can happen when their contribution is confined to speaking about their experiences of powerlessness, rather than leading activities that challenge students to think critically about their interactions with young people. There is often a mismatch between low expectations of looked-after children (Department for Education, 2014a; Mayall et al., 2015; Stein, 2006) and the capable young person in front of the class. I expected the session with the young person to have a 'levelling' impact, as the young person led both students and myself through activities (Appendix 7: Unit Programme, 4th November 2010) and this was confirmed in the findings.

I was more surprised by the response to sharing my own reflection in one of my previous assignments. It seems that this conveyed something about my student identity that students do not often see in their lecturers and they found it useful to know that I was also subjected to a critical gaze. Given that I now know that several students were worried about negative appraisals, I would be more careful about the language I used in reviewing my first reflection. It appears I had accused myself of laziness in pointing out where my first reflection had been limited. I cannot find this in the written reflection, so I might have written it on the flipchart.

> When you shared the bit you did, it was useful, and people still say…
> it said she was lazy, when she put that… (Participant B)

Participants gave a mixed response to the reflective activities within the unit. At the time, I felt that some students did not want to compile a written piece

to receive formative feedback, nor did they welcome the prospect of a presentation. Participants confirmed this in the interviews, but also elaborated on the reasons. Again, I had not been aware of this detailed information at the time. Participants reported that they generally found these activities helpful, but this was in retrospect. The formative feedback helped participants focus their writing and gain confidence. I had not realised that it also disrupted students' established study routines, which were organised to make best use of their protected study time away from the workplace. I was concerned to check students' progress towards the assignment and to give feedback that would help them, so the unit requirements were clearly a factor in my thinking. Though I realised that I was applying a method too rigidly, and made adjustments, I might have adjusted more quickly had I asked about study routines earlier in the unit.

In relation to Research Question 3, dialogic approaches were valuable in recognising the knowledge and expertise that participants brought to the unit and assisted participants to develop their critical reflections of practice. The findings suggest that there were limitations to achieving dialogue between equals, in the Freirean sense (Freire, 1976; Freire, 1996), perhaps this was particularly so as students were working towards qualifications and I assessed their work. Nevertheless, although I was always, inevitably, responsible for the session, working with a small group of broadly willing students made it possible to integrate learning activities where the lecturer's dominance was, temporarily, set aside.

6.4　Summary of key findings and contribution to knowledge and practice

6.4.1 Research Question 1: How have critical ideas developed in social work practice and education?

This research took place as changes were being implemented in post-qualifying social work education and austerity measures were beginning to be implemented in local authorities. Though addressing social inequality and promoting social justice remains in the Global Definition of Social Work, for social workers in England, these ambitions are lost in recent iterations of Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) (Department for Education, 2014b). The KSS align child and family social work with the requirements of statutory social work and concentrate social work education on preparing social workers to work with a narrow range of high risk cases. However, in all social work settings, and at all levels of capability, the Professional Capabilities Framework expects social workers to be able to use critical thinking to address the complexity in their practice and to use critical analysis in their assessments of a child's needs, wishes and feelings (Chand and Keville, 2015; The College of Social Work, 2012c).

This study contributes to understanding the context for practice in local authority social work teams. Time for reflective supervision has been limited and some participants in this study did not experience reflective supervision as qualified social workers. Experienced social workers might not need the frequency of supervision that a newly-qualified social worker requires, but

this study shows that there is much to be gained from critical professional discussion amongst colleagues and peers. The study found that social workers would welcome more opportunities for reflective supervision to encourage a critical reflexive approach to their work. This implies that post-qualifying social work education provides significant opportunities for social workers to refresh their learning about criticality and to practice critical reflection.

The data in this study were collected before the implementation of the Professional Capabilities Framework and the introduction of the KSS. It is currently unclear how the KSS will influence further reforms in social work but it is already a component of courses linked to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). There is potential for further research into (ASYE) students' understandings of criticality and their approach to critical reflection, in the light of these changes.

If the KSS becomes the defining statement of social work practice for child and family social workers, those who work with children and families in a non-statutory capacity, for example in the voluntary sector, may begin to feel marginalised from the core of the profession. It would be of interest to investigate how social workers in the non-statutory sector understand criticality, their view of the KSS and their experience of post-qualifying social work education.

6.4.2 Research Question 2: How do experienced social workers understand and apply criticality?

Post-qualifying students might have encountered critical theory and critical approaches to practice during their pre-qualifying social work courses, but are likely to be more familiar with reflection than critical reflection. Criticality is likely to be seen as a new area of learning and perceived as academic, attached to the theoretical side of a theory and practice binary (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4). This might cause students to doubt their critical abilities as they begin post-qualifying courses.

This study contributes to teaching post-qualifying students by highlighting that students might be anxious about the concept of criticality. Students in this study suggested that experienced social workers can be highly motivated to connect theory to practice but this can seem daunting if they have developed unhelpful binary understandings during their pre-qualifying courses. The findings in this study are consistent with previous studies that also report binary relationships between theory and practice (Domakin, 2014; Domakin, 2015; Garrett, 2013; Healy, 2012; Parton, 2000) and suggest specific implications for teaching PQ students that could be tested in other similar cases. I have already begun to integrate these insights into my teaching as indicated below.

It is helpful to support PQ students to explore the relationship between theory and practice before attempting to reflect on subjective attitudes to the

knowledge and values that inform their judgements. The findings suggest that working with students to develop critical reflection requires specific attention to how theory and practice are understood. Consequently, I intend to be more explicit about how the journal articles we discuss in class often originate in questions and curiosity about social work practice. This is aimed of reducing and reframing the perceived binary between theory and practice.

Where students are at ease working with reflection, it is not helpful to create a new binary relationship between reflection and critical reflection. If a hierarchy is created in understanding the relationship between reflection and critical reflection, students could feel that their pre-existing reflective abilities are less worthy of consideration and insignificant in an academic context. The implication for pedagogical practice is that it may be helpful to affirm the reflective abilities that students bring with them to the course before, and alongside, challenging them to include relevant structural and contextual factors in their reflection.

6.4.3 Research Question 3: What helps or hinders post-qualifying social work students to develop their critical and reflective capacities?

Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) are likely to be under intense pressure in practice and just beginning to establish their identity as competent practitioners. Evidence from this study suggests that more experienced practitioners on post-qualifying courses are likely to have forged

an identity through coping under pressure. Coming back into university can be exciting but, for students who feel they do not belong in an academic environment, this can also be an anxious time and these feelings might be hidden from lecturers. This implies that it is worthwhile to pay particular attention to negotiating the 'rules of the game' for classroom dialogue, and to make it as clear as possible that criticality is not about finding faults in practice and attributing blame.

This study contributes further to the gradually expanding literature from teachers who experiment with critical pedagogy. Dialogue is a means of exploring students' approaches to reflection and can be used to recognise students' knowledge and expertise. Dialogue is an opportunity to challenge any higher status afforded to the academic domain over practice and small group teaching makes it possible to integrate learning activities where the lecturer's dominance can be temporarily set aside. Economies of scale in higher education, discussed in Section 2.2.4, put dialogic approaches under pressure but findings from this research confirm that teaching critical reflection in this way can be valuable in supporting a consciously critical approach to social work practice.

Findings suggest that PQ students would welcome opportunities to use reflective supervision, concurrent with their studies. However, there are implications for social work employers here as, unless there are workload reductions for supervisors, competing and more urgent pressures in the workplace are likely to continue to take time away from supervision. There

are implications for Higher Education Institutions in monitoring support for students in their workplaces. There are also implications for lecturers and PQ students in trying to explore the potential for reflective discussions with trusted colleagues, at the beginning of courses, with a view to strengthening this link between workplace and classroom discussion.

6.4.4 Research Question 4: How does post-qualifying social work education contribute to critical practice in social work?

It is not clear how the proposed accreditation scheme for qualified social workers in children and families services will fit with the Professional Capabilities Framework (The College of Social Work, 2012c). Consequently, the current framework for social workers' continuing professional development (CPD) is also uncertain.

This study supports Croisdale-Appleby's (2014: 76) view, that pre-qualifying social work education cannot be expected to supply "ready-for-practice NQSWs" and that newly qualified social workers benefit from support in making the transition from student to novice (Zeira and Schiff, 2014).

A significant finding from this study has been to show the value of specific teaching in criticality to unravel barriers to learning and promote deep understanding. This is a complex area of study, where post-qualifying students might not have had specific teaching in the past, or might not recognise it as such from their previous courses. Post-qualifying social work

education provides an opportunity for practitioners to examine both personal and contextual influences on practice and to be critical of received knowledge, when they might not have had the boldness to do so during their qualifying courses.

Post-qualifying courses also have an important role in developing criticality in those experienced social workers who go on to become practice educators. This can contribute to pre-qualifying social work education, for students on placement, by supporting practice educators to develop confidence in connecting theory and practice.

6.5   Strengths and Limitations

This case study succeeded in gaining access to the thoughts of six experienced social workers as they reflected on their experiences of studying criticality on a post-qualifying course. The interviews provided rich information about their views and experiences, which yielded the insights and understanding discussed in depth in this chapter. The combination of case study with thematic network analysis, discussed in Chapter 3, was effective in bringing issues into view that were not apparent during the teaching and might have remained unspoken.

Although this case study has strengths in investigating these unique thoughts and experiences in depth, the methodology also introduces limitations:

Realism is… necessarily a fallibilist philosophy and one which must be wary of simple correspondence concepts of truth. It must acknowledge that the world can only be known under particular descriptions, in terms of available discourses, though it does not follow from this that no description or explanation is better than any other. (Sayer, 2000: 2)

The first limitation, therefore, arises from the interpretative nature of the research, which here relies on the work of a single researcher. It is important to recognise that any description of experience is potentially mistaken, as it relies on several layers of interpretation: the participants' account; the researcher's recording, analysis and description of the research; the reader's understanding of the description (Creswell, 2013a).

The second limitation is the size of study, which limits the generalisability of the statements arising from discussion of the findings. As Geertz (1973) wisely reminds us, the purpose is to understand how people make meaning in their specific context, so that we can take this understanding forward into future practice (Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4). In this way, the study draws attention to issues that are recognisably relevant beyond the case study, for those who teach and learn criticality within a framework of professional education, and for further research.

The third limitation arises from my relationship with participants and possible bias that could be introduced as a result. This was discussed in the

Introduction to Chapter 3 and in Section 3.3.3. I took measures to reduce the impact of my role as the participants' lecturer and to take the interviews in a way that enabled participants to express their views as freely as possible. However, this meant that I could only interview participants after the taught unit had finished. In future research, I would like to interview participants at the start of the unit to investigate their thoughts at that point, and interview them again as they move through the unit. My ideas for how to do this in future research are included in the recommendations in Section 6.6.

The fourth limitation is that the researcher and all participants were from within the social work discipline. This introduces the possibility of conscious or unconscious bias, through prioritising questions, answers and issues that reflect perceptions of what is desirable within the profession (Bryman, 2015). Within the scope of this project, this limitation underlined the need to be careful and tentative in drawing conclusions from the data. A larger project, with more researchers and multiple cases, could mitigate the possibility of this kind of bias, for example, by working across academic disciplines and selecting cases from different professions.

This study has been carefully supervised by experienced researchers and carried out with vigilance and integrity (Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2012). The goal has been to produce a trustworthy contribution to critical social work and suggest new areas of investigation for future research.

6.6　Recommendations and implications for further research

The recommendations below distil contributions to knowledge from the study into a concise form to indicate the key areas for practice development and future research. This study contributes to knowledge about criticality and its position within the changing field of social work, emphasising its relevance and role within the field. Specifically, the study offers deep understanding of the pressures faced by qualified and experienced social workers and the barriers to using consciously critical reflection in their practice. There are several recommendations relevant to pedagogical practices in critical social work education. These are set out below, moving from the micro-level to the macro-level, followed by the implications for further research.

1. **In teaching criticality**, it can be helpful to students to pay particular attention to acknowledging anxiety about the subject, discussing power differences and negotiating the terms for engaging in classroom dialogue. Explicitly affirming students' reflective capacity, through reflective exercises, could serve as a helpful a starting point to prevent a hierarchy developing between reflection and critical reflection.

2. **Support the development and retention of spaces in the curriculum for dialogical methods**. This could be through developing cross-disciplinary networks at institution level, and within partnerships with social work employers.

3. **Tutors could explore students' use of reflective discussions with their trusted colleagues** as part of their development, with a view to strengthening links between workplace and classroom discussion.

4. **Higher Education Institutions could take a proactive role in monitoring support** for post-qualifying students in their workplaces, in particular, support for reflective supervision.

5. **Post-qualifying programmes could consider specific teaching on criticality and developing critical reflection.** This could be explored as an opportunity for cross-faculty, inter-professional programmes, to add more diverse professional discourses to the discussion and open the possibility of further research, involving a broader range of perspectives.

6. **It would be helpful to have more stability and a national framework of approved post-qualifying social work education.** This requires resolving the uncertainty about the current framework for continuing professional development (CPD) in a way that promotes the value of educational opportunities in partnership with universities.

7. **The implications for further research** initially arose in considering the limitations of this study as indicated in Section 6.5. However, I can see creative possibilities in developing future qualitative case studies of dialogical approaches to teaching criticality. At this point I am assuming that lecturers would be the interviewers, although, if resources were available this might not have to be the case. It might be possible to

develop a multi-case study in one of several ways. Within one university it might be possible to involve two disciplines, either where courses are taught separately or through an inter-professional course. This would open the possibility of students being interviewed by someone from outside their professional discipline during the course of the case study. Alternatively, case studies could develop through collaboration between two or more universities. This opens the possibility of researchers interviewing students who are not their students and, therefore, interviews could take place before the unit was completed.

8. **In addition, there is potential for further research into newly qualified social workers'** understandings of criticality, and their approach to critical reflection, as the arrangements for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment develops. As the new Knowledge and Skills Statements become the basis for accreditation of qualified social workers, it would be important to include the views of social workers outside the statutory local authority social work teams.

6.7   Concluding comments

The study began from student's questions about criticality and my problem of how to help students develop understanding and confidence to use critical reflection in their work. I aimed to contribute to future practice by exploring understandings of criticality in social work from the perspectives of post-qualifying social work students. To this end, this thesis is complete but my

interest and work in this field offer rich opportunities for future developments,

in social work education, research and practice.

65,846 words.

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Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers
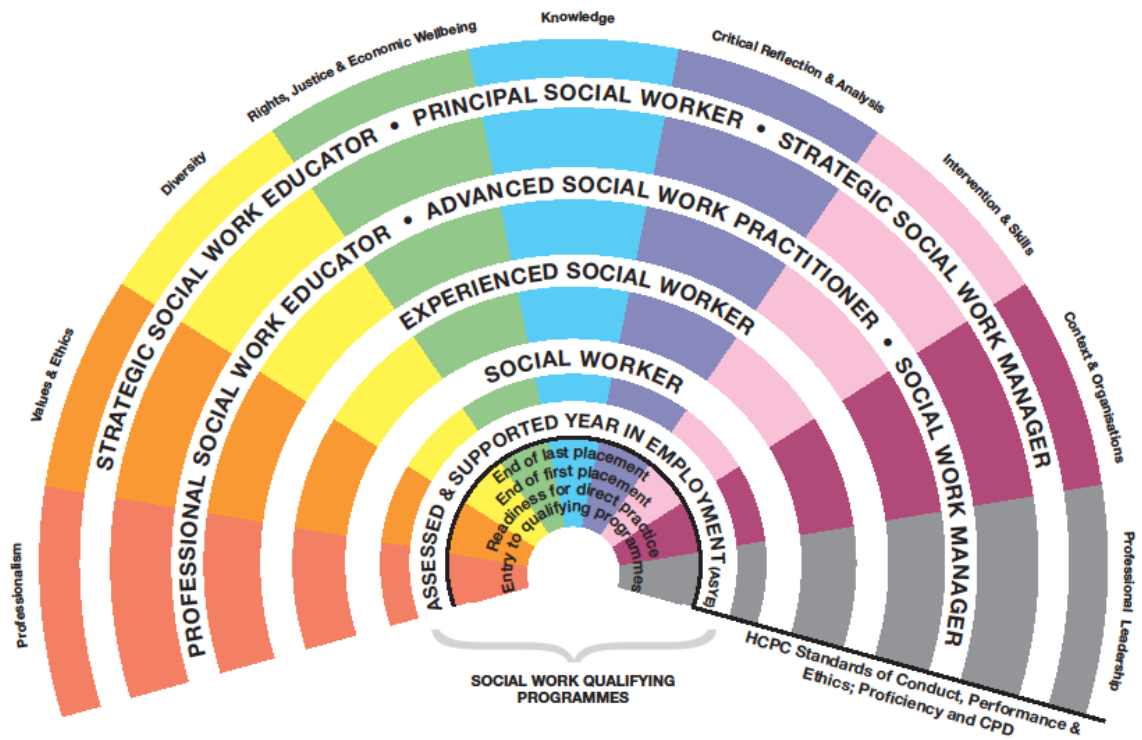
Appendix 2: Professional Capabilities Levels: Qualified Social Workers

By the end of the ASYE social workers should have consistently demonstrated practice in a wider range of tasks and roles, and have become more effective in their interventions, thus building their own confidence, and earning the confidence of others. They will have more experience and skills in relation to a particular setting and user group, and have demonstrated ability to work effectively on more complex situations. They will seek support in supervision appropriately, whilst starting to exercise initiative and evaluate their own practice.

In the Social Work role they progress to practice effectively, exercising higher quality judgements, in situations of increasing complexity, risk, uncertainty and challenge. Through growing understanding they expect and anticipate, but do not pre-judge, the issues that may develop. They have greater confidence and independence (whilst accessing support when needed), and use their initiative to broaden their repertoire of responses; they have expertise in one or more areas of practice, be familiar with local resource networks and be recognised by peers as a source of reliable knowledge and advice.

Experienced social workers are more autonomous in their role. They demonstrate expert and effective practice in complex situations, assessing and managing higher levels of risk, striking a balance between support and control, liaising with a wide range of professionals, including more senior levels. They manage complex caseloads, and offer expert opinion within the organisation and to others. They chair a range of meetings, offer expert support to case conferences, and produce high quality assessments and reports for a range of functions. They model good practice, setting expectations for others. They start to take responsibility and be accountable for the practice of others, mentoring newly qualified social workers, and supervising the work of junior staff. They undertake capacity-building with individuals, families, communities, user groups and voluntary organisations, and contribute their views on service provision to commissioners.

The PCF at an Advanced Level: The level descriptors at the advanced and what will be the 'senior' level within the PCF are under review, and are likely to change in response to consultation.

At the next (advanced) career level, three pathways are available: Advanced Practitioner, Social Work Manager and Professional Educator (Practice Educator). The three pathways, or areas of expertise, whilst distinctive, will not be mutually exclusive, and many social workers will wish to develop capabilities across the three pathways, reflecting their expected career progression. In different ways, all social workers at this level engage in the development of evidence-informed practice, quality assurance, staff development, management and leadership and they contribute to strategic development.

Advanced Practitioners have their practice with a specified user group recognised as exemplary, and provide leadership and professional wisdom to their colleagues and other professionals for work in situations of high complexity. They provide constructive challenge to enhance practice, procedures and policies, promote innovation, and introduce new ways of working from recognised sites of excellence. They contribute to knowledge in their field of practice, and make use of sophisticated, critical reasoning. They both model and facilitate reflective practice.

Professional Educators facilitate the learning of others (students on qualifying programmes, those in ASYE and those undertaking CPD), enabling them to develop their knowledge, skills, values and practice. They support and develop other practice educators in their work, and identify and resolve difficult situations in respect of learning and practice development. They positively mange the interface with providers of education and training, by contributing to arrangements for selection, curriculum delivery, assessment and evaluation. They will be able to draw on contemporary research practice and best educational practice. They contribute to workforce development strategies in the agency.

Social Work Managers lead, motivate and manage a team (social workers and others), ensuring the service provided is effective, managing performance and quality assurance, resources and budgets appropriately, in collaboration with others in the agency and in other professions. They are knowledgeable about management within the public sector and in social work; contribute to the development of practice, procedures and policy and specifically the professional development of the team they lead. They are accountable for the practice of others.

Appendix 3: 2005 PQ Higher Specialist Award and 2012 PCF Experienced Social Worker	
GSCC (2005) Post Qualifying Framework for Social Work Education and Training, Sections 51 & 52 (implemented 2007)	**The College of Social Work (2012) Professional Capabilities Framework**
Generic level requirements for programmes leading to a post-qualifying award in higher specialist social work.	**Experienced Social Worker (Level 7)** Where capability statements are in italics this indicates that they should have been met at a previous level and do not need to be met again. However, the expectation should be that social workers will maintain capability in that area of practice.
51. The higher specialist level of the PQ framework is associated with complex decision making and high levels of professional responsibility. Higher specialist programmes are for those who have already demonstrated competence in-depth. In order to satisfy approval requirements, higher specialist programmes will need to show how they will enable qualified social workers to: **i.** Meet the academic standards for work at level M in the QAA framework. **ii.** Use independent critical judgement to systematically develop their own practice and that of others in the context of the GSCC codes of practice, national and international codes of professional ethics and the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional work. **iii.** Demonstrate a substantially enhanced level of competence in a defined area of professional practice, professional management, professional education or applied professional research to the agreed national standards for higher specialist work in this area. **iv.** Demonstrate a fully-developed capacity to use reflection and critical analysis to continuously develop and improve own performance and the performance of professional and inter-professional groups, teams and networks; analysing, evaluating and applying relevant and up-to date research evidence including service user research.	**1. Professionalism** Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator. 1. Be able to meet the requirements of the professional regulator. 2. Model the social work role, set expectations for others and contribute to the public face of the organisation. 3. Expect supervision that covers practice, organisational and management aspects of role, applying critical reflection throughout. 4. Model and help others to demonstrate professionalism. 5. Model and help others with effective workload management skills. 6. Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and skilled use of self. 7. Maintain awareness of own professional limitations and knowledge gaps. Establish a network of internal and external colleagues from whom to seek advice and expertise. 8. Contribute to a learning environment for self, team and, colleagues. 9. Recognise and seek ways to promote well-being for team and colleagues. 10. Promote up to date expectations about practice norms, identifying and helping resolve poor practice issues. **2. Values and Ethics** Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through

v. Use a critical knowledge and understanding of service user and carers issues to develop and implement service user and carer rights and participation in line with the goals of choice, independence and empowerment.

vi. Work effectively as a practitioner, researcher, educator or manager in a context of risk, uncertainty conflict and contradiction where there are complex challenges and a need to make informed and balanced judgements.

vii. Take responsibility for managing aspects of complex change processes, including those involving other professions or other agencies, in the context of professional practice, professional management, professional education and training or applied professional research.

viii. Support, mentor, supervise or manage others enabling them to identify and explore issues and improve their own practice.

ix. Develop and implement effective ways of working in networks across organisational, sectoral and professional boundaries, taking responsibility for identifying, analysing and resolving complex issues, problems and barriers, promoting partnership, collaboration, interprofessional teamwork, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary communication, and ensuring the delivery of integrated and person centred services.

partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.

1. Demonstrate confident and critical application of professional ethical principles to decision-making and practice, supporting others to do so using a legal and human rights framework.
2. Model and support others to reflect on and manage the influence and impact of own values on professional practice.
3. Provide guidance and support to analyse, reflect on and work with ethical dilemmas.
4. Demonstrate confident application of an understanding of the benefits and limitations of partnership work, support others to do so, and promote service user and carer participation in developing service delivery.
5. Promote and advance wherever possible individual's rights to autonomy and self-determination, providing support, guidance and challenge to others.
6. Demonstrate skills in the sensitive exploration of issues of privacy and information-sharing in complex or risky situations, offering support and guidance to colleagues in managing such these dilemmas.

3. Diversity
Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.

1. Inform, guide and model good practice in the application of understanding of identity and diversity to practice; identifying and taking up issues when principles of diversity are contravened in the organisation.
2. Model critically reflective practice and support others to recognise and challenge discrimination, identifying and referring breaches and limitations in the ability of your own or other organisation's ability to advance equality and diversity and comply with the law.
3. Demonstrate and model the effective and positive use of power and authority, whilst recognising and providing guidance to

others as to how it may be used oppressively.

4. Rights and Justice

Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

1. Provide guidance and challenge to others about applying the principles of social justice, social inclusion and equality to decision-making.
2. Demonstrate ability to interpret and use current legislation and guidance to protect and/or advance people's rights and entitlements, balancing use of different legislation to achieve the best outcomes; support colleagues (both inside and outside the organisation) to do so.
3. Be able to communicate legislative issues to other professionals and agencies.
4. Model best practice in applying human and civil rights, providing support to others and challenge where required.
5. Support others to enable individuals to access opportunities that may enhance their economic status (e.g. education, work, housing, health services and welfare benefits).
6. Promote access to independent advocacy, ensuring best practice and critical review, and contribute to the evaluation of independent advocacy.

5. Knowledge

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

1. Develop knowledge in one or more specialist areas of your practice. Expand your knowledge to inform the connections between this and other settings or areas of practice.
2. *Demonstrate knowledge and application of appropriate legal and policy frameworks and guidance that inform and mandate social work practice. Apply legal reasoning, using professional legal expertise and advice appropriately,*

recognising where scope for professional judgement exists.

3. *Demonstrate and apply to practice a working knowledge of human growth and development throughout the life course.*

4. *Recognise the short and long term impact of psychological, socio-economic, environmental and physiological factors on people's lives, taking into account age and development, and how this informs practice.*

5. *Recognise how systemic approaches can be used to understand the person-in-the-environment and inform your practice.*

6. *Acknowledge the centrality of relationships for people and the key concepts of attachment, separation, loss, change and resilience.*

7. *Understand forms of harm and their impact on people, and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, ==risk== and resistance, and apply to practice.*

8. *==Demonstrate a critical knowledge of the range of theories and models for social work intervention with individuals, families, groups and communities, and the methods derived from them.==*

9. *==Demonstrate a critical understanding of social welfare policy, its evolution, implementation and impact on people, social work, other professions, and inter-agency working.==*

10. *Recognise the contribution, and begin to make use, of research to inform practice.*

11. *==Demonstrate a critical understanding of research methods.==*

12. *Value and take account of the expertise of service users, carers and professionals.*

6. ==Critical Reflection==

==Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.==

1. ==Model critical reflection and evidence-based decision-making, and support others in developing these.==

2. ==Provide professional opinion, giving the rationale and knowledge-base.==

7. Intervention and Skills

Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and

intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.

1. Communicate skilfully and confidently in complex or high risk situations. Model and help others to develop communication skills.
2. Sustain and model engagement with people in fluctuating circumstances and capacities, including where there is hostility and risk.
3. Be able to gather information quickly and effectively so as to inform judgement for interventions including in crises, and in response to challenge, or in the absence of complete information.
4. Use assessment procedures discerningly so as to inform judgement.
5. Maintain and expand a range of frameworks for assessment and intervention.
6. Demonstrate skilled use of a range of frameworks for assessment and intervention.
7. Actively support and initiate community groups and networks, including professional ones.
8. Contribute to the development of the organisations information strategy and systems
9. Model and help others with appropriate information sharing.
10. Model and help others to manage changing circumstances.
11. Recognise and appropriately manage the authority inherent in your position.
12. Anticipate, assess and manage risk, including in more complex cases, and support others to develop risk management skills.
13. Undertake assessment and planning for safeguarding in more complex cases, and help others with safeguarding skills.

8. Contexts and Organisations
Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their

	professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities. 1. Contribute positively to the dialogue about opportunities and constraints for social work practice arising from changing local and national contexts and model proactive responses. 2. Model and demonstrate the ability to work within your own organisation, and regularly work with relationship between the organisation, practice and wider changing contexts. 3. Demonstrate sound working knowledge of all relevant legal requirements, and their implications for practice; support and advise others to interpret and use the law. 4. Engage positively with and contribute to organisational development. 5. Identify the need for the development of specialist roles and their contribution to team learning. 6. Model and encourage positive working relationships in the team, promoting strategies for collaboration and a supportive team culture. 7. Maintain and develop liaison across agencies at a more senior level. **9. Professional Leadership** The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual's contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals. 1. Contribute to organisational developments. 2. Play leading role in practice development in the team and help sustain a learning culture. 3. Provide supervision to colleagues as organisation determines. Support others to manage and prioritise work. 4. Assess and manage the work of social work students and ASYE. 5. *Practice Educator Standards Stage 2: Domain B & C (see also capability 1).*

Appendix 4: 2005 PQ Advanced Award and 2012 PCF Advanced Social Worker	
GSCC (2005) Post Qualifying Framework for Social Work Education and Training, Sections 51 & 52 (implemented 2007)	**The College of Social Work (2012) Professional Capabilities Framework**
Generic level requirements for programmes leading to a post-qualifying award advanced social work:	**Advanced Social Worker (Level 8)**
52. The advanced level of professional competence will incorporate and build on higher specialist competences, aiming to produce individuals with the ability to lead the further growth and development of the social work profession, drawing on in-depth knowledge of a specialist area of work and experience of conducting research and applying research to practice. The additional requirements associated with the movement from higher specialist to advanced work are indicated by the use of italics in the criteria listed below. Overall, programmes of advanced social work education and training allow qualified social workers who have demonstrated competence in depth and been assessed as capable of working at a higher specialist level to: **I.** Meet the academic standards for work at level M in the QAA framework. **ii.** Use independent critical judgement to *take a leading role* in systematically developing their own practice and that of others in the context of the GSCC codes of practice, national and international codes of professional ethics, the principles of diversity, equality and social inclusion in a wide range of situations including those associated with inter-agency and inter-professional work. **iii.** Demonstrate a substantially enhanced level of competence in a defined area of professional practice, professional management, professional education or applied professional research to the agreed national standards for higher specialist work in this area *and take a leading role in promoting good practice*. **iv.** Demonstrate a fully developed capacity to *take responsibility for the use of* reflection and critical analysis to continuously develop and improve own performance and the performance of professional and inter-professional groups, teams and networks in the context of	**1. Professionalism** Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator. 1. Be able to meet the requirements of the professional regulator. 2. Model the social work role; promote social work and decision-making within and outside the organisation. 3. Model and use critical reflective skills in management, practice or organisational supervision settings to enhance your own and others practice. 4. Model and demonstrate professionalism, ensure professional social work standards are maintained throughout your area of responsibility. 5. Model and take responsibility for the positive use of workload tools; using workload data to inform the organisation's workload management and risk management approaches. 6. Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and the skilled use of self in more complex situations. 7. Maintain awareness of own professional limitations, knowledge gaps and conflicts of interest, actively seeking to address issues for self and others. 8. Develop and maintain a network of internal and external colleagues, with whom to seek and share advice, expertise and new developments in social work. 9. Foster and support an environment that promotes learning and practice development within the work place. Foster and maintain a work environment which promotes health, safety and wellbeing of self and others. 10. Identify and collaborate to resolve concerns about practice, following procedures as appropriate.

professional practice, professional management, professional education or applied professional research; analysing, evaluating and applying relevant and up-to-date research evidence including service user research.

v. Use a critical knowledge and understanding of service user and carer issues to *actively promote*, develop and implement service user and carer rights and participation in line with the goals of choice, independence and empowerment.

vi. Undertake research designed to address issues or problems in the context of professional practice, professional education, applied professional research or professional management.

vii. Work creatively and effectively as a practitioner, researcher, educator or manager *and take a leading role* in a context of risk, uncertainty conflict and contradiction or where there are complex challenges and a need to make informed and balanced judgements.

viii. Take *a lead* responsibility for managing *key* aspects of complex change processes, including those involving other professions or other agencies, in the context of professional practice, professional management, professional education and training or applied professional research.

ix. Support, mentor, supervise or manage others, exercising practice, research, management or educational leadership to enable them to identify and explore issues and improve their own practice.

x. *Take a leading role* in the development and implementation of effective ways of working in networks across organisational, sectoral and professional boundaries, taking *a lead* responsibility for identifying, analysing and resolving complex issues, problems and barriers, promoting partnership, collaboration, inter-professional teamwork, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary communication and ensuring the delivery of integrated and person-centred services.

11. Contribute to the development and implementation of procedures that are fit for purpose, enhance best practice and contribute to better outcomes.

4.   Values and Ethics
Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.
1. Model and promote confident and critical application of professional ethics to decision-making, using a legal and human rights framework, and support others to do so.
2. Model and promote a culture which encourages reflection on the influence and impact of own values on professional practice.
3. Demonstrate confident management and arbitration of ethical dilemmas, providing guidance and opportunities for professional development.
4. Promote and support a partnership approach to working with individuals, communities, families and carers, providing clarity and reasoning when this approach is not appropriate.
5. Promote people's rights to autonomy and self-determination, supporting, challenging and guiding others as appropriate.
6. Provide support and leadership when dealing with the sensitive exploration of issues of privacy and information-sharing in complex or risky situations, offering support and guidance in managing such dilemmas.

5. Diversity
Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multi-dimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.
1. Promote positive approaches to diversity and identity in your area of responsibility, providing guidance and challenge as required. Contribute to and implement policy development and decision-making.
2. Create and sustain an environment where people feel supported to challenge on issues of discrimination and oppression.

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3. Provide or seek out expert professional advice so that the law is complied with. Contribute to the development of relevant organisational and professional practices and procedures.

4. Model and contribute to the development of best practice in use of power and authority within your sphere of influence. Provide challenge in situations where power is used inappropriately.

4. Rights and Justice

Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

1. Monitor, review and evaluate practice to ensure application of the principles of social justice, social inclusion and equality to decision-making. Contribute to policies and development opportunities to support these principles.

2. Ensure that practice is compliant with the law through the provision of or access to expert professional social work advice. Challenge situations where the interpretation of the law seems neither fair nor proportionate.

3. Model best practice, provide or seek out expert professional social work/legal advice, applying human and civil rights in complex situations where there are competing issues. Contribute to policy and practice developments to support service improvement.

4. Model and guide others on accessing appropriate opportunities that may enhance economic status. Advocate for the development of opportunities for people within your sphere of influence.

5. Offer professional SW consultation and liaison to independent advocacy. Support others to identify when independent advocacy is appropriate, and advocate for necessary resources. Provide review and challenge as necessary.

9. Knowledge

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this

	knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice. The capitals in brackets indicate the capability pathways that apply:(PSWE)- Professional Social Work Educator, (ASWP) - Advanced Social Work Practitioner, SWM)- Social Work Manager
	1. Encourage a culture of professional curiosity.
	2. Maintain a well developed understanding of knowledge relevant to your area of practice, and a confident self awareness of knowledge limits.
	3. Be able to access and make critical use of relevant knowledge from a variety of sources, and apply this knowledge in practice.
	4. Maintain a strong socio-cultural knowledge base, (including in relation to law, human development, social, psychological and spiritual issues) and apply confidently in practice.
	5. Use knowledge to hypothesise and make complex judgments in uncertain and ambiguous situations, supporting and challenging others to do the same.
	6. Enable and challenge others to develop their knowledge base and make knowledge informed judgments.
	7. Have an in-depth knowledge of adult learning and its application to practice. (PSWE)
	8. Have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of holistic assessment processes and theory. (PSWE)
	9. Have a good knowledge of team dynamics, resources, and the ability to maximise people and team potential. (SWM)
	10.Develop and maintain expertise, informed by knowledge, in both established and emergent areas relevant to their field of practice. (ASWP)
	11.Support others, through consultation and shadowing, to apply knowledge to practice. (ASWP)
	12.Build and maintain a confident body of knowledge that informs team management practice and style. (SWM)
	10. Critical Reflection Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge.

They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. The capitals in brackets indicate the capability pathways that apply:(PSWE)- Professional Social Work Educator, (ASWP) - Advanced Social Work Practitioner, (SWM)- Social Work Manager
1. Maintain an environment where critical reflection and analysis is valued and supported.
2. Provide critical reflection, challenge and evidence-informed decision-making in complex situations. Support others in developing these capabilities, and finding their own solutions. (ASWP)
3. Model good practice and reflective supervision skills.
4. Develop and maintain a system within which all social workers (including you) are able to access professional supervision from appropriately experienced social workers.
5. Ensure protected time is available for professional social work supervision.
6. Routinely provide professional social work opinion, based on clear rationale and advanced professional knowledge.
7. Support and empower others to develop the confidence and skills to provide professional opinion.

11.Intervention and Skills
Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgment, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with. The capitals in brackets indicate the capability pathways that apply:(PSWE)- Professional Social Work Educator, ASWP) - Advanced Social Work Practitioner, SWM)- Social Work Manager
1. Model and promote a culture of clear communication, supporting the development of effective communication skills in others.
2. Communicate effectively in highly charged, complex or challenging circumstance to a wide range of audiences for different purposes and at different levels, including public speaking.
3. Model effective engagement with a wide range of people in challenging situations, and support others to develop and maintain

	effective engagement, including in situations of hostility and <mark>risk</mark>.
	4. Promote a culture which supports empathetic compassionate relationships with other professionals, people who use services, and those who care for them.
	5. Be able to gather, analyse and review complex and/or contradictory information quickly and effectively, using it to reach informed professional decisions.
	6. Support and encourage professional decision-making in others. Identify when more strategic/expert advice or decision-making is needed. (SWM/ASWP)
	7. Maintain and provide expertise in specialist assessment and intervention, acting as a resource to others within the organisation, supporting social workers to develop. (ASWP/PSWE)
	8. Engage in and facilitate research and evaluation of practice. (ASWP/PSWE)
	9. Develop and maintain a culture that supports social/professional networks, for individuals, communities and professionals.
	10. Evaluate and analyse recording and the use of information systems. Use evidence gained to inform good practice and maintain a focus on positive outcomes for service users, families, carers and communities. (ASWP/SWM)
	11. Advise, model, and support others to share information appropriately and in timely ways, including in complex situations where there are competing or contradictory rights involved.
	12. Manage organisational change, supporting others to do so in ways which maintain a focus on positive outcomes for people who use services, families, carers and communities. Model the appropriate use of authority across a range of situations, supporting others to understand and work with the authority inherent in their positions.
	12. Promote use of evidence and theory to support practice in complex and changing circumstance. (ASWP/PSWE)
	13. Support effective interventions in the lives of people experiencing complex and challenging change. (ASWP/SWM)
	14. Model effective assessment and management of <mark>risk</mark> in complex situations, across a range of situations, including positive <mark>risk</mark> taking approaches.
	15. Support and enable staff to have conversations with service users and others to manage <mark>risk</mark> decision-making themselves where possible.
	16. Be able to work with and contain the anxiety of others in relation to <mark>risk</mark>, ensuring that there is a positive balance between

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perceived risk and protection from harm when necessary. (ASWP/SWM)

17.Ensure risk assessment and management reflect current best practice and research developments, including supporting service users and others to manage their own risks where possible. (PSWE/ASWP)

12.Contexts and Organisations

Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

1. Maintain an awareness of changes in national and local contexts and their impact on practice, and communicate this effectively within and outside of the organisation. Positively influence developments that affect social work practice.

2. Provide professional leadership and facilitate collaboration within a multi-agency context as appropriate.

3. Maintain a sophisticated knowledge of the law relevant to your area of practice, advise others and facilitate access to and dissemination of more specialist advice where necessary.

4. Contribute to and provide professional leadership of organisational change and development, including the identification of gaps in service.

5. Influence organisational development, pro-actively using feedback from your areas of responsibility.

6. Address and oversee performance management issues that arise, supporting people to positively resolve difficulties where possible, taking action with HR/the regulator where necessary.

7. Promote positive working relationships in and across teams, using strategies for collaboration and contribute to a supportive organisational culture.

8. Develop and contribute to liaison across agencies at a local and regional level, maintain a collaborative working approach, resolving dilemmas actively where necessary.

9. **Professional Leadership**

The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities

	such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual's contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals. The capitals in brackets indicate the capability pathways that apply:(PSWE)- Professional Social Work Educator, (ASWP) - Advanced Social Work Practitioner, (SWM)- Social Work Manager

1. Promote and develop professional leadership within your area of responsibility.
2. Promote a culture of professional curiosity embracing research within your area of responsibility, encouraging the exploration of different cultures, concepts and ideas.
3. Contribute to the identification, planning and meeting of staff development needs within the workplace, informed by the PCF.
4. Take responsibility for ensuring individual and workplace practice is informed by and informs research and current professional knowledge.
5. Promote, articulate and support a positive social work identity.
6. Have regard to the requirements of the standards for Employers of Social Workers
7. Ensure systems are in place to provide high quality professional and line management supervision (as appropriate to the role), using critical reflection and a range of other supervisory techniques.
8. Assure high quality professional supervision for all (including those providing supervision) within your area of responsibility.
9. Provide professional, reflective supervision and support to others. (ASWP)
10. Be able to identify and develop potential within other staff.
11. Understand concepts of holistic assessment of professional capability, and be able to apply to appraisal processes/performance reviews of social workers within your area of responsibility.

Appendix 5: Reflection and Professionalism

Written by Helen Mayall (Tutor), with additional comments added in the margin. Looking back to my time as a beginning social worker in 1978, I defined my working self with reference to more experienced colleagues, mainly by observational learning. I can think about this as the process of socialisation as explained by Giddens (2008) and many other sociologists, as a process by which I became aware of myself and my social work identity, gained knowledge and acquired professional skills from both those around me and from the institutions within which I worked. I could also attempt to understand this process in the light of Bourdieu's (1977)work on Habitus, as suggested by Atkinson and Delamont (1990).' Bourdieu wrote:

> 'The habitus – embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product' (Bourdieu, 2007c: 281)

The habitus operates in the unconscious, spontaneously. Prior experiences, some from childhood, are brought to bear on present existence. However, my focus here is on the early professional experience I carry with me today. Though I am aware that childhood experience is embedded in adult identity, I do not have the space to do it justice here. Perhaps when I started work, a collective 'habitus of the occupation' influenced me (Atkinson and Delamont 1990: 106).

I was soon aware that both colleagues and service-users considered some social workers more dependable.

> *Comment: Interesting choice of word. I was aware at the time that independence was considered a desirable outcome in our work with services users. My practice here predates the GSCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers, which insists that independence is to be promoted. Is my choice of word here just about wanting to be seen as reliable or is there a desire to be liked? Building relationships at the same time as challenging behaviour is difficult and wearing and requires skill and experience. Several inquiries point to the difficulties of working with complex cases for newly qualified social workers. My memory is fallible & subjective but I remember the pressure, insecurity and my own dependence on others early in my career.*

I have strong recollections of family members' accounts of what 'good' social workers had done to help them.

> *Comment: As above is Social Work about helping? Was it then and is it now? How much does the desire to help affect us, and create biases? Did I favour those who responded positively to my 'help?'*

I wish now that I had collected these narratives, but I must rely on my subjective and fallible memory. I am sure that I selected and carried forward some of these messages and that they are still with me today. I am less sure about how my own subjectivity influences these selections. Peshkin cautions that subjectivity is stuck to us like a 'garment that cannot be removed' (Peshkin, 1988, in Savage, 2007) and it distorts all that we see and do.

> *Comment: Does an awareness of subjectivity challenge my biases?*

Truth therefore becomes a slippery concept, objectivity difficult, probably impossible

to achieve, and we all attach our different meanings to a single event. My own subjectivity therefore affects all the selections and interpretations I make, including all those involved in the construction of this assignment. However, rather than invalidating reflection as a method of inquiry, awareness of subjectivity suggests that <mark>reflection</mark> is necessary for professional practice, including research. We need a conscious awareness of past and present influences in order to understand our present identity and current priorities (Savage, 2007).

> *Comment: Is reflection a defining aspect of professionalism?*

As a beginning social worker, I do not think I identified myself as a professional. My status, as an unqualified social worker at the start of my career, might have had a bearing on my initial lack of professional identity. However, I remember there were debates amongst experienced and qualified social workers about whether social work was a profession at all. At the root of this question were differences of opinion about the role of social work, as either emancipatory or controlling (Corrigan and Leonard, 1978). Those who favoured an emancipatory approach thought that professionalism distanced the social worker too much. Today the use of authority in social work practice is an almost daily occurrence, though the debates about the role of social workers continue. Commentators grouped around the newly formed Social Work Action Network (of which I am a member) continue to argue for a more committed emancipatory approach, but see this as part of a professional identity. I think my own identity as a professional became clearer as I acquired my professional qualifications. I believe the old argument about whether social work was a profession was <mark>settled</mark> at about the same time, in the early1980s, as social work became an occupation requiring a qualification.

> *Comment: Not sure now that it was settled back then. Social Work still seems to be struggling to assert itself as a profession. Laming recommended that Social Workers need to develop the confidence to challenge other professionals and this demands autonomous thinking.*

Appendix 6: Literature Search Strategy

Boolean searches were carried out using electronic databases via Manchester Metropolitan University Library.

Databases carrying social work and social care content were included as follows:

- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

- SCOPUS

- Social Care Online

- Web of Science

Databases carrying educational content were included as follows:

- British Education Index

- Education Abstracts

- Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC)

- SCOPUS

- Web of Science

Databases carrying social policy content were included as follows:

- Applies Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

- Emerald

- Sociological Abstracts

Examples of topic search terms

1.	Social work Or social work education		And	Critical	Or critical analysis	
2.	Critical reflect*		And	Social work	Or social work education	
3.	Social work Or social work education		And	Post-qualifying	Or post-qualif*	
4.	Social Work		And	Modernisation	Or neo-liberal*	Or managerial*
5.	Social work education		And	Formative		
6.	Critical realis*		And	Thematic		
7.	Critical realism	0r realist	And	Theme	Or Thematic	

Search Refinements

Examples of criteria for inclusion:

- Higher education;

- Social Work;

- Health and social care education;

- Social Sciences;

- English language;

- Journal article, book review, conference proceedings, newspaper/ journalism;

- Case studies.

Examples of criteria for exclusion:

- Secondary or primary education;

- Prior to 1978, unless significant influential sources;

- Prior to 2010, for critical realism and thematic analysis;

- Disciplines other than health and social care or education;

- Language other than English.

Items were read in order, either beginning with the most recent, and /or the most relevant, using the tools available on the database. Screening and selection began with reviewing the title and abstract, moving to read the full text of selected items. References within selected items were followed if they appeared to be further relevant sources.

Websites

The following websites are relevant to social work education and were searched using the search facility on the respective site:

- British Library e-theses online (Ethos): http://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do;jsessionid=35F126FD6B4D88FA47E7057E9E121116

- Community Care: http://www.communitycare.co.uk/

- Gov.uk: https://www.gov.uk/

- Higher Education Academy:

  https://www.international.heacademy.ac.uk/

- Social Care Institute for Excellence: http://www.scie.org.uk/

- The College of Social Work: http://www.tcsw.org.uk/home/

Appendix 7: Extracts from Critical Thinking and Analysis Handbook 2010-11

PgDip Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Higher Specialist PQ Award)
MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Advanced PQ Award)

Unit Aims

Welcome to the Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit. The overall aim of this unit is to provide a systematic and critical exploration of the concepts of critical thinking, critical analysis, critical reflection and critical reflexivity. The unit will provide opportunity to develop skills in the application of these concepts to law, policy, practice guidance and research. There will be a focus on the application of these concepts and associated skills in practice, with service users and carers, in supervision and in continuing professional development.

Unit Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit students will be able to have attained and demonstrated:

1. a systematic understanding critical awareness of the concepts of critical thinking, critical analysis, critical reflection and critical reflexivity

2. a systematic understanding and critical awareness of the application of critical thinking and critical analysis to law, policy, practice guidance and research

3. a systematic understanding and critical awareness of the application in practice of critical thinking and analysis in the workplace, and with service users and carers

4. a systematic understanding and critical awareness of the use of critical thinking, critical analysis, reflection and reflexivity in supervision

5. a systematic understanding and critical awareness of the methods and strategies to take critical thinking and analysis forward into advanced practice and leadership.

Date	Morning 9:30 am – 12:30 pm	Afternoon 1:30 am – 3:30 pm	Afternoon 3:30 am – 4:30 pm
7th October	Introduction to Unit. Concepts of critical thinking, analysis, reflection and reflexivity. (HM)	Professional, practitioner and student: constructing professional identity. (HM)	Learning sets: Review what works well in learning sets and how we might develop criticality in collaboration with others. (HM)
21st October	The context of social work practice: critical thinking and analysis of law, policy and guidance. (XX)[29]	Professional judgement. Social work practice as art &/or science: contemporary debates about evidence based practice and reflection. Reflective group activity. (HM)	Learning sets: Ideas for assignments. (HM)
4th November	Maintaining service user focus: critical thinking and analysis in the practice of observation, listening and working with service users, carers and families. (HM)	Service user / carer contributions. (Young person and HM)	Learning sets: short written piece & small group discussion. (HM)
18th November	Supervision and the development of critical thinking, analysis, reflection. (XX)	Supervision continued. (XX)	Learning sets: Flexible session. (HM)
2nd December	Student outline presentations on ideas for assignment. (HM)	Review of unit. Making use of learning in practice: creating the conditions for practice development. (HM)	Learning sets: Unit evaluations. (HM)
9th December	Tutorials (HM)	Tutorials (HM)	Tutorials (HM)

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[29] My colleague taught three sessions of this unit.

Assignment

Discuss the relationship between criticality, professionalism and social work practice, with reference to your practice.

The discussion should include the following elements:

- Illustrate your discussion with an example of your critical reflection in a complex case. The example should include reflection on a judgement you have made, a decision you have taken or been party to, or an action you have taken.

- Demonstrate your theoretical understanding and application of critical thinking within your discussion.

- Include critical analysis of relevant law, policy, practice guidance or research.

- Include critical reflection on the use of supervision in relation an example from practice.

- Include consideration of methods and strategies for your future development, as a critical thinker, in advanced practice and leadership.

Word Length: 4500 words

Assessment Criteria

It is important to obtain confirmation from your practice educator/assessor that the examples of your practice have taken place. The assignment will be assessed against the Master's Level marking criteria, as set out in the course handbook, and the Unit Assessment Criteria (below). An analytical approach is required and you should show that you are able to use relevant theory throughout.

Specifically, the assignment must meet the Unit Learning Outcomes, which means that assignments need to show evidence that you have:

1. demonstrated systematic understanding and critical awareness of the concepts of critical thinking, critical analysis, critical reflection and critical reflexivity

2. demonstrated systematic understanding and critical awareness of the application of critical thinking and critical analysis to law, policy, practice guidance or research

3. demonstrated systematic understanding and critical awareness of the application in practice of critical thinking and analysis in the workplace, and with service users and carers

4. demonstrated systematic understanding and critical awareness of the use of critical thinking, critical analysis, reflection and reflexivity in supervision

5. demonstrated systematic understanding and critical awareness of the methods and strategies to take critical thinking and analysis forward into advanced practice and leadership.

Appendix 8: PgDip/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work: Programme Structure

PGDIP/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work		
MANDATORY CORE UNITS (60 ACADEMIC CREDITS and 10 PRACTICE CREDITS)		
Critical Thinking and Analysis (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY CORE	Risk, Uncertainty and Decision Making (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY CORE	Critical Issues in Inter-professional Practice (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY CORE
Direct Evidence (10 Practice Credits) MANDATORY CORE		
UNITS FOR SPECIFIED ROUTES (60 CREDITS)		
Children and Young People, their Families and Carers	**Leadership and Management**	**Social Work with Adults**
Advanced Practice with Children, Young People, their Families and Carers (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY	Leadership and Management (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY	Personalisation (Level 7 20 credits) (* see note below)
Child and Family Law for Advanced Practitioners and Managers (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY	Human Resource Management and Workforce Development (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY	Working with Older People (Level 7 20 credits) (* see note below)
Fostering, Adoption, Looked-after Children and their Carers (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Independent Study (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Independent Study (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE
Children and Young People, Rights and Participation (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Elective from Children and Young People, their Families and Carers or Social Work with Adults (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Leadership and Management (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE
Leadership and Management (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Immigration, Asylum and Professional Practice (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE	Immigration, Asylum and Professional Practice (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE
Independent Study (Level 7 20 credits) ELECTIVE		
MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (only)		
Research Methods (Level 7 20 credits) MANDATORY		Research Study (Level 7 40 credits) MANDATORY

Appendix 9: Ethics Checklist

Manchester
Metropolitan
University

This checklist must be completed for every project. It is used to identify whether there are any ethical issues associated with your project and if a full application for ethics approval is required. If a full application is required, you will need to complete the 'Application for Ethical Approval' form and submit it to the relevant Faculty Academic Ethics Committee, or, if your research falls within the NHS, you will need to obtain the required application form from the National Research Ethics Service available at www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/ and submit it to a local NHS REC.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University's Academic Ethical Framework (www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/ethics/mmuframework) **and the University's Guidelines on Good Research Practice** (www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/rdegrees/goodpractice.doc)**.**

Project and Applicant Details

Name of applicant (Principal Investigator):	Helen Mayall
Telephone Number:	0161 247 2111 (work)
Email address:	h.mayall@mmu.ac.uk
Status: (please ✓ as appropriate)	Postgraduate Student (Taught or Research)✓
Department/School/Other Unit:	
Programme of study (if applicable):	Doctor of Education
Name of supervisor (if applicable):	Dr Jonathan Savage
Project Title:	Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis with Advanced Social Work Practitioners
Does the project require NHS Trust approval? If yes, has approval been granted by the Trust? Attach copy of letter of approval.	No

Ethics Checklist (Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box)

	Yes	No	N/A
1. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS, or involve NHS resources? If yes, you may need full ethical approval from the NHS.		✓	
3. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)?	✓		
4. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, nursing home residents)?		✓	
4. Will the study involve the use of participants' images or sensitive data (e.g. participants' personal details stored electronically, image capture techniques)?	✓		
5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?	✓		

		Yes	No	N/A
6.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		✓	
7.	Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?		✓	
8.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?		✓	
9.	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?		✓	
10.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		✓	

		Yes	No	N/A
11.	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and informed consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)?		✓	
12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		✓	
13.	Is there any possible risk to the researcher (e.g. working alone with participants, interviewing in secluded or dangerous)?		✓	
14.	Has appropriate assessment of risk been undertaken in relation to this project?			✓
15.	Does any relationship exist between the researcher(s) and the participant(s), other than that required by the activities associated with the project (e.g., fellow students, staff, etc.)?	✓		
16.	Faculty specific question, e.g., will the study sample group exceed the minimum effective size?		✓	

If you have ticked 'no' or 'n/a' to all questions, attach the completed and signed form to your project approval form, or equivalent. Undergraduate and taught higher degree students should retain a copy of the form and submit it with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the end). MPhil/PhD, and other higher degree by research, students should submit a copy to the Faculty Research Degrees Sub-Committee with their application for registration (RD1) and forward a copy to their Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. Members of staff should send a copy to their Faculty Academic Ethics Committee before commencement of the project.

If you have ticked 'yes' to *any* of the questions, please describe the ethical issues raised on a separate page. You will need to submit your plans for addressing the ethical issues raised by your proposal using the 'Application for Ethical Approval' form which should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. This can be obtained from the University website (http://www.rdu.mmu.ac.uk/ethics/index.php).

If you answered 'yes' to question 1, you may also need to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, via the National Research Ethics Service (NRES), found at http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/, and send a copy to the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for their records.

> Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Guidelines on Good Research Practice and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.** Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the relevant committee (either Faculty Academic Ethics Committee of Local Research Ethics

Committee if an NHS-related project) and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Approval for the above named proposal is granted

> I confirm that there are no ethical issues requiring further consideration.
> *(Any subsequent changes to the*
> *nature of the project will require a review of the ethical consideration(s).)*
> Signature of Supervisor (for students), or Manager (for staff):

Approval for the above named proposal is not granted

> I confirm that there are ethical issues requiring further consideration and will refer the project proposal to the
> Faculty Academic Ethics Committee.
> Signature of Supervisor (for students), or Manager (for staff):
> _____
> Date: _____
> Approval by Faculty Ethics Committee September 2010 following full Ethical Approval.

Separate page for ethical issues: -

3. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, your own students)?
15. Does any relationship exist between the researcher(s) and the participant(s), other than that required by the activities associated with the project (e.g., fellow students, staff, etc.)?

The study involves participants who are my own students during the delivery of a unit on Critical Thinking and Analysis. This is a unit of study for the PgDip Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Higher Specialist Award)/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Advanced PQ Award. The participants are not anticipated to be particularly vulnerable, indeed they are all competent professional social workers employed in agencies in Greater Manchester. However, I will be teaching 9/12 of the sessions and assessing the students work for the unit. In order to minimise the risk of the study impacting on my assessment of the student's work I would collect but not process any data for the study until after the student's marks for the unit have been agreed. In addition, my marking will be moderated by the programme leader.
All students will have information about the study before they are asked to consent. Any student who refuses consent would not be included in the data collection and I would be careful not to allow this to prejudice my practice with them. Students will be informed that they are free to withdraw without the necessity to explain their reasons and without prejudice.
There are 7 or 8 students taking this unit and, as this is a relatively small number, I can ask permission for including each piece of work in the study separately. This is a way of double checking that informed consent is freely given.
During the course of preparing teaching materials for the unit I anticipate using service user testimony and this will be referred to during the study. The service users are young people, over the age of 18. Service user participation for this unit will be via social care agencies that will support the young people and help them to consider informed consent. Those service users who are independent of agency support are themselves trained to deliver training to practitioners. Part of my role in the Faculty of HPSC is to develop service user involvement. I was CRB checked in my previous job (for XXXX MBC) for this kind of work. I am currently awaiting a new CRB Check to be completed for my MMU work with young service users.
All data will be anonymised.

4. Will the study involve the use of participants' images or sensitive data (e.g. participants' personal details stored electronically, image capture techniques)?

I will have students' contact details, and their email addresses. This is for the usual communication purposes to enable the smooth running of the unit, (e.g. for sending out reading and preparatory tasks). Student contact details are kept securely on my MMU 'H' drive and my MMU email system. Therefore, the contact information is password protected, and is consistent with practice for all other student contact details in my tutorial groups. During the process of my teaching I may photograph flipcharts that are produced during the sessions. This would be for students to refer to via Web CT. These images are only captured and reproduced on Web CT with the students' consent and are available to the student group though password protected Web CT.

5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?

This is a qualitative study of students' development of critical thinking and analysis of practice. As such it is possible that students will disclose sensitive information about themselves and their practice though I will not deliberately set out to encourage disclosure. This is normal territory for social work training and the ground rules will be discussed and agreed at the start of the unit, both for the teaching, learning and assessment activities and for my use of the material in my research. As the unit will expect a degree of reflective practice I will ensure that students are aware that any disclosure in the reflective activities is their decision. I will ask for permission for each piece of work to be included.

Appendix 10: Application for Ethical Approval

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF Health Psychology and Social Care

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Introduction
All university activity must be reviewed for ethical approval. In particular, all undergraduate, postgraduate and staff research work, projects and taught programmes must obtain approval from their Faculty Academic Ethics committee (or delegated Departmental Ethics Committee).

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The form should be completed legibly (preferably typed) and, so far as possible, in a way which would enable a layperson to understand the aims and methods of the research. Every relevant section should be completed. Applicants should also include a copy of any proposed advert, information sheet, consent form and, if relevant, any questionnaire being used. The Principal Investigator should sign the application form. Supporting documents, together with one copy of the full protocol should be sent to the Administrator of the appropriate Faculty Academic Ethics Committee.

Your application will require external ethical approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee if your research involves staff, patients or premises of the NHS (see guidance notes)

Work with children and vulnerable adults
You will be required to have a Criminal Disclosure, if your work involves children or vulnerable adults.

The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee meets every (insert period) and will respond as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will operate a process of expedited review. Applications that require approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee or a Criminal Disclosure will take longer - perhaps 3 months.

1. DETAILS OF APPLICANT (S)

1.1 Principal Investigator: (Member of staff or student responsible for work) Name, qualifications, post held, tel. no, e-mail

Helen Mayall
Senior Lecturer
Department of Social Work and Social Change
Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care
Manchester Metropolitan University
Didsbury Campus
799, Wilmslow Rd.
Didsbury
Manchester
M20 2RR
h.mayall@,mmu.ac.uk
0161 247 2111

Qualifications: BA (Hons) Politics, MA Applied Social Studies, Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Fellow of Higher Education Academy, Registered Social Worker.

1.2 Co-Workers and their role in the project: (e.g. students, external collaborators, etc.) Details (Name, tel. no, email). The Programme Leader, xxxxx, will also teach on the unit but will not take part in the research project. The Programme Leader is aware of the research project and has agreed to the research taking place. The Head of Social Work, xxxx, is also in agreement with the project taking place.

1.3 University Department/Research Institute/Other Unit:

I am a Doctor of Education Student in the Institute of Education. I am a member of academic staff in the Department of Social Work and Social Change, Faculty of Health Psychology and Social Care.

2. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Title: Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis with Advanced Social Work Practitioners

2.2 Description of Project: (please **outline** the background and the purpose of the research
project, 250 words max.).

The study involves participants, who are my own students, during the delivery of a unit on Critical Thinking and Analysis. The unit is part of the PgDip Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Higher Specialist Award)/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Advanced PQ Award). The purpose of the research is to investigate my practice in teaching critical thinking and analysis to experienced social workers studying for a post-qualifying award in social work.

Critical analysis and reflection are assessment requirements in the regulations for post-qualifying social work education (GSCC, 2009b). Critical analysis is also a requirement for successful study at Level 7 in higher education.

Serious Case Reviews into child deaths and injury, from abuse or neglect, highlight the complexity of working with vulnerable children and their families (Ofsted, 2008; 2009). In response to the death of Peter Connelly, Laming again emphasised the need for 'sound analysis and professional judgement' (Laming, 2009: 33).

The research questions will focus on:
- How is critical analysis framed in the literature, including in research, policy and recent debates?
- What is my own understanding of critical analysis and its place in professionalism?
- How do understandings of critical analysis in social work compare with those in education?
- How is critical analysis understood by experienced social workers?
- How can experienced social workers be supported to develop their critical abilities and understandings, with particular focus on formative feedback?

2.3 Describe what type of study this is (e.g. qualitative or quantitative; also indicate how the data will be collected and analysed). Additional sheets may be attached.

This is a qualitative study. There will be a literature review and a detailed consideration of methodology, with reference to a broad range of qualitative research literature as discussed in the first four assignments of my Doctor of Education course. I intend to use action research methods (Brown and Jones, 2001; Kemmis, 2007; Somekh and Zeichner, 2009). The data collection will be from a small cohort of 7-8 students who are all experienced social workers employed in Local Authorities in Greater Manchester. None are employed by the NHS. The taught unit under consideration is designed to develop and assess their critical and reflective abilities.
The data collection will take place in two phases. The first phase will analyse my practice and the student learning from data collected during the taught unit.
Students will attend lectures, group discussions and action learning sets. The action learning sets will focus on examining examples of practice and supporting students to develop critical analysis of policy and practice in preparation for their written assignment. Students will present a short written analysis of their practice to their learning set and a short oral presentation to the class as their ideas for their assignment develop. The short written piece and the oral presentation provide opportunities for formative feedback, from myself and other students. These will be through written comments on their analytical writing (from myself) and through verbal feedback in action learning sets (from myself and other students).
Data will consist of material generated by students in during the unit, especially in relation to the formative and summative assessments. I am hoping to collect data as the unit progresses, and to use reflective processes myself as the unit develops to examine my own practices. Data will be naturally occurring material generated during the course of the unit.
I intend to discuss my ideas for this research project and provide the students with information about the study at the start of the unit. I intend to ask permission to include students' work in the study after their work has been marked and the marks agreed through internal and external moderation. This is to prevent any possibility, or perception, that a student's decision regarding their permission to include their data could in any way affect my practice with the students or my assessment of their work. Though assignments are marked anonymously, in reality it is likely that I will recognise students' in their use of practice examples that they have discussed in class.
After the students' work is assessed and marks agreed, I will ask for permission to use the students' writing and my feedback to them during the course of the unit. I will analyse the

data collected from the students' work, my feedback on it and my own reflective writing, looking for themes and issues that emerge.

During the second phase I propose to follow up the students by individual unstructured interview and possibly with a focus group. The purpose of the follow up is to look for longer term impacts of specific training on critical analysis and the impact on practice. The follow up will take place prior to my planning from the unit to run for the second time and so will help inform changes that I might make for the second cohort.

2.4 Are you going to use a questionnaire? NO
   (Please attach a copy)

2.5 Start Date / Duration of project: **October 2010 – December 2011**

2.6 Location of where the project and data collection will take place:

Most data collection will take place on the Didsbury site of Manchester Metropolitan University, during taught session, tutorials, action learning sets and during the production of written feedback on students' work. During the second phase of the research I anticipate focus groups and some of the interviews will also take place at Didsbury as most of the students will attend the University to complete other units. Some interviews might take place at the student's place of work, depending on their preference.

2.7 Nature/Source of funding
No funding necessary.

2.8 Are there any regulatory requirements? NO
If yes, please give details, e.g., from relevant professional bodies

No requirements over and above those generally required for a qualified social worker to abide by the regulatory requirements of the General Social Care Council (to be transferred to The Health Professions Council). This would be a normal consideration in my practice in teaching this unit.

3. DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS
3.1 How many? 7 or 8

3.2 Age: over 18 years

3.3 Sex: All women, though one further student might join the group and, at this point, I am not sure who this will be.

3.4 How will they be recruited?
(Attach a copy of any proposed advertisement)

The study involves participants who are my own students during the delivery of a unit on Critical Thinking and Analysis. This is a unit of study for the PgDip Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Higher Specialist Award)/MA Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Advanced PQ Award). Participants will be recruited to the study after their work for the unit has been assessed. Student's writing, and my feedback to them, will only be analysed with the consent of the student.

3.5 Status of participants: (e.g. students, public, colleagues, children, hospital patients, prisoners, including young offenders, participants with mental illness or learning difficulties.)

Students see 2.2 above.

3.6 Inclusion and exclusion from the project: (indicate the criteria to be applied).

All students will have information about the study before they are asked to consent. Any student who refuses consent would not be included in the data collection. Students will be informed that they are free to withdraw without the necessity to explain their reasons and without prejudice.
There are 7 or 8 students taking this unit and, as this is a relatively small number, it makes it possible to have individual discussions with participants to check their understanding of the study and answer questions.

3.7 Payment to volunteers: (indicate any sums to be paid to volunteers).
No payment.

3.8 Study information: Have you provided a study information sheet for the participants?
YES
    Please attach a copy of the information sheet, where appropriate

3.9 Consent:
(A written consent form for the study participants MUST be provided in all cases, unless the research is a questionnaire.)

Have you produced a written consent form for the participants to sign for your records? YES

    Please attach as appropriate.

4. RISKS AND HAZARDS
    Please respond to the following questions if applicable

4.1 Are there any risks to the researcher and/or participants?
(Give details of the procedures and processes to be undertaken, e.g., if the researcher is a lone-worker.)

 No risks.

4.2 State precautions to minimise the risks and possible adverse events:

N/A

4.3 What discomfort (physical or psychological) danger or interference with normal activities might be suffered by the researcher and/or participant(s)? State precautions which will be taken to minimise them:

No dangers or significant interference with normal activities during the course of running the taught unit. I will make some short time available for brief discussion during the first day of the unit, to clarify the relationship of the research to the unit and to deal with any questions and issues.

5. PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED AND HOW YOU INTEND TO ADDRESS THESE:

The ethical issue in this research arises because participants are my students and I will both teach the unit and assess the student's work. My assessments will be moderated by both internal and external moderators in the usual way. However, any student data for the research will come from material generated during normal teaching, learning and assessment activities. I anticipate that this data will be reflective writing, supporting material for presentations, feedback from myself and other students, and unit evaluations. I would expect that this data would be held by students or myself for a period after the unit ended regardless of whether it was to be included in the research study. Consequently, although I will inform the students about the research at the start of the unit, I will not need to ask permission to include their data until after the unit has ended. This will avoid any possibility that their decision could affect my work with an individual student during the time when the unit was running or in marking their assignments.

All students have a personal tutor. Should any student feel unhappy about the research, or my conduct in carrying out the research, I will advise them that they could speak to my supervisor or their personal tutor.

In the course of working with social work students, information about risks to vulnerable people is sometimes disclosed. I anticipate that this group of experienced social workers will be used to the usual professional protocols about confidentiality and will appreciate the limits to confidentiality where such risks are apparent. Nevertheless, I will discuss confidentiality protocols for the research with the participants and I anticipate that they would expect this discussion to take place.

6. SAFEGUARDS /PROCEDURAL COMPLIANCE
6.1 Confidentiality:

(a)   Indicate what steps will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of participant records. If the data is to be computerised, it will be necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

- Data will be anonymised.
- Data on hard copy or audio recordings will be stored in a filing cabinet in a locked room on the Didsbury Campus of MMU.
- Data in electronic form will be password protected.
- Data, or information gathered, will not be disclosed to anyone else without the consent of the participant, unless there is an overriding reason to share the information (for example risk to a child).
- Data will only be kept for as long as is necessary for the completion of the research, the assessment of the thesis and to demonstrate the veracity of the data should it be questioned.
- I will check the accuracy of personal information with the participant.
- I will make it clear that participants will have the right to see information that I hold about them.
- I will work in accordance with the MMU Data Protection Policy.

Entities holding personal information are required to have adequate security measures in place. Those include technical measures (such as firewalls) and organisational measures (such as staff training).

Subjects have the right to have *factually incorrect* information corrected (note: this does not extend to matters of *opinion*)

(b) If you are intending to make any kind of audio or visual recordings of the participants, please answer the following questions:

a. How long will the recordings be retained and how will they be stored?
Audio recordings will be stored in the filing cabinet in my locked office. I will retain them for the duration of the research and assessment of my thesis. I will destroy the tapes after five years' maximum.

b. How will they be destroyed at the end of the project?
The recording will be erased from the Dictaphone and my computer.

c. What further use, if any, do you intend to make of the recordings?
It is possible that the recordings could be used in presentations e.g. at a conference, but this would only be with the permission of the participant(s).

6.2 Human Tissue Act:

The Human Tissue Act came into force in November 2004, and requires appropriate consent for, and regulates the removal, storage and use of all human tissue.

NO

b. Will this be discarded when the project is terminated? N/A

If NO – Explain how the samples will be placed into a tissue bank under the Human Tissue Act regulations:

6.3 Insurance:

The University holds insurance policies that will cover claims for negligence arising from the conduct of the University's normal business, which includes research carried out by staff and by undergraduate and postgraduate students as part of their courses. This does **not** extend to clinical negligence. There are no arrangements to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of claims for non-negligent harm.
Will the proposed project result in you undertaking any activity that would not be considered as normal University business? If so, please detail below:

The research will be covered by University normal business.

6.4 Notification of Adverse Events (e.g., negative reaction, counsellor, etc.):
(Indicate precautions taken to avoid adverse reactions.)

Please state the processes/procedures in place to respond to possible adverse reactions. N/A

In the case of clinical research, you will need to abide by specific guidance. This may include notification to GP and ethics committee. **Please seek guidance for up to date advice**, e.g., see the NRES website at http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR   DATE: 9/9/10

Helen Mayall
....
SIGNATURE OF FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS   DATE: September 2010
COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON:
Approved by Professor Bill Campbell
....

APPENDIX

Checklist of attachments needed:
1. Participant consent form
2. Participant information sheet
3. Full protocol
4. Advertising details
5. Insurance notification forms
6. NHS forms (where appropriate)
7. Other evidence of ethical approval (e.g., another University Ethics Committee approval)

Appendix 11: Potential Participants Information Sheet

Helen Mayall
Senior Lecturer
Department of Social Work and Social Change
Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care
Manchester Metropolitan University
Didsbury Campus
799, Wilmslow Rd.
Didsbury
Manchester
M20 2RR
h.mayall@mmu.ac.uk
0161 247 2111
6th August 2010

Dear ....,

Research Information: Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis with Advanced Social Work Practitioners

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, I would like to explain why I am undertaking this research project and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?
I am currently a student myself, on the Doctor of Education programme at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). This is a professional doctorate and, as such, the focus of research is on developing professional practice. In my case, my practice is in social work education.
My supervisor is Dr Jonathan Savage in the Institute of Education at MMU.

I would like to research my experience of teaching the forthcoming Critical Thinking and Analysis Unit on the PgDip Advanced Practice and Leadership in Social Work (Higher Specialist Award).

The purpose of the research is to investigate my own practice in teaching critical thinking and analysis. More specifically, the research will look at a number of issues relevant to the unit content.
For example, I am interested in how critical analysis is framed in the literature, including in research, policy and recent debates. I am hoping to develop my own understanding of critical analysis and its place in profession practice. I think there may be interesting comparisons between understandings of critical analysis in social work and in education. I would like to explore how critical analysis is understood and used by experienced social workers and, most importantly, how best to support experienced social workers to develop their critical abilities and understandings.

Who is invited to participate?
I will invite all the students in the group to take part.

Is this voluntary?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. I will not ask for permission to include you in the research until all your work for the unit has been marked. This is to minimise any

possibility that decisions about whether to participate or not could influence me during the course of the unit. The research is not in any way a compulsory part of your studies for this unit. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign and return the consent form (enclosed).

If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

I assure you that the research will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future studies, whether you agree to take part or not.

What will happen if you take part?

During the course of the unit, students will be asked to produce written work for formative (developmental) purposes and for summative (graded) assessment. This will be expected of all students as part of the normal teaching, learning and assessment activities. If you agree to take part in the research, I will aim to include your written work, and my feedback, in the research sample. I will only begin to analyse the sample for the research after your assignment has been marked and the marks have been agreed with the moderator.

The research should not involve you in any more work than would be normally be required for the unit. After the unit has finished, I would like to include you in follow up interviews and, possibly, focus groups, after the unit has been completed. Again this is entirely voluntary. I anticipate each follow up interview and focus group would last no longer than an hour.

How will data be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Confidentiality will be subject to the usual limitations arising from any concerns about risks to children and vulnerable adults. All data will be securely stored on password protected electronic systems, or as hard copy in secure storage. Anonymity will be ensured by erasing names from the data and replacing with random initials. Any report or publication of research material arising from the research will be anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research?

I intend to use the results of the research for the thesis part of my Doctor of Education. The thesis will be read by my supervisors and examiners, including external examiners. It is possible that the interim results will be reported at a student conference and there may be publications arising from the research in the future.

Further information

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this research further, or if you have questions. I will be very pleased to discuss it further with you.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Mayall, Senior Lecturer
Department of Social Work and Social Change

Appendix 12: Consent Form

<u>Confidential</u>
Research Study: Developing Critical Thinking and Analysis with Advanced Social Work Practitioners
Researcher: Helen Mayall, Senior Lecturer in Social Work
Manchester Metropolitan University.

Please delete as appropriate and sign below:

1. I confirm that I understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. Yes   No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. Yes   No

3. I agree to take part in the above study. Yes   No

4. I agree to my data being recorded in writing or by audio recorder. Yes   No

5. I agree to my formative and summative assignments being included in this study. Yes   No

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in assignments and publications Yes   No

7. I agree that my anonymised data gathered in this study may be stored securely and the storage arrangements have been explained to me. Yes   No

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date
    Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature
Thank you.

Appendix 13: Critical Thinking and Analysis with Advanced Social Workers: Interview Schedule

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of the research is to investigate and develop my practice in teaching critical thinking and analysis to experienced social workers.

I hope the research will contribute to a better understanding of how to teach and learn about critical analysis and so be of benefit to others.

Revisit the following:

- Many thanks for agreeing to take part,
- Confirm signed consent sheet and give copy.
- Reminder about information sheet with names of my supervisors?
- You are free to leave at any time, no need to give me an explanation.
- I will use a Dictaphone to audio record the interview and the recording will be erased on the completion of the research project, will only use the tape to produce a transcription and will only play back to myself, or for you to hear, or possibly my supervisors; I will keep the recordings safe.
- You will not be identified individually in any report or research article arising from this research.
- The interview will last for approximately ¾ hour to an hour.
- I do have some themes to explore, so I have an interview schedule, and you might have themes of your own to discuss, but I thought we could develop a conversation about how you found the Critical Analysis Unit and we can go off schedule if you like.
- Please do say what you want to say, I know I taught the unit, but I am genuinely interested in understanding more about how you experienced it.

1. Current social work role:

2. Do you have any supervisory responsibilities?

3. Your demographic information, how do you describe yourself...gender, ethnicity, social class etc...

4. When did you become qualified as a social worker?

Section 2: Experience of Social Work:

This section asks about your experience of social work.

5. Could you tell me something about your career, maybe from before you qualified, up to your current position?

Section 3: Experience of Social Work Training and Education

This section asks about at your experiences of social work education in particular prior to coming onto the PgDip/MA.

6. How would you describe your experiences of your qualifying social work course?

7. Is there anything that stands out for you from your qualifying social work course? What makes it stand out? What makes it memorable?

8. Was there anything that you particularly enjoyed or disliked in your social work course?

9. Do you remember learning about 'reflection' or 'critical reflection' on your qualifying course?

10. Looking back, can you remember how you thought about 'reflection' when you were newly qualified?

11. Do you remember learning about 'critical analysis' on your qualifying course?

12. And can you remember how you thought about 'analysis' or 'critical analysis' when you were newly qualified?

13. What about any education or training since qualifying, but before the PgDip Critical Thinking and Analysis course? Is there anything that stands out for you from this? What makes it memorable?

14. Have you had any encouragement to study, from anyone, during your social work education and training?

Section 4: PGDip/MA

15. What brought you onto the PGDip.?

16. Did you study other units before the Critical Thinking and Analysis unit?

17. At the point where you came onto the PGDip/MA can you remember what you thought about 'reflection?'

18. And can you remember what you thought about 'critical analysis?'

19. At the point when you began the Critical Thinking and Analysis can you remember... what were your thoughts about the unit?

20. What are your thoughts about the unit now?

21. Does anything stand out for you from the unit? What makes it stand out?

22. What, if anything, was helpful to your learning?

23. And what, if anything, was unhelpful?

24. What about the written piece early on in the unit, was it in the right place? Did it help or hinder your progress?

25. And the presentation...your thoughts about doing this?

26. The assignment: any thoughts?

27. Were there any of the exercises or sessions that you liked...or loathed?

28. It was a small group, so there was opportunity to discuss with colleagues is most sessions, what part did that play in your learning.

29. And was there opportunity for informal learning, outside the sessions?

30. Did you get support from your workplace? If so how did that contribute?

31. Is there anything on the words list or the word clouds that connects to your thoughts about the Critical Thinking and Analysis unit?

Section 5: After the unit finished...

32. How do you feel now about the Critical Thinking and Analysis unit?

33. What advice would you give to others who were just about to start it?

34. If there was one thing that you had to change in the unit what would it be?

35. If there was one thing you would keep the same, what would it be?

36. What advice would you give to a future tutor, someone who was going to deliver the unit to future students?

37. Is there any way it is has had an impact on you or your practice?

38. Is there anything else you would like to add that you have not had chance to say?

Concluding remarks

- Many thanks for agreeing to be interviewed – it is appreciated
- I would like to meet again for further follow up interviews and will contact you again to ask...
- Reminder about confidentiality and anonymity of all participants
- Reminder about disposal of audio recording
- All participants will receive a copy of the final report

Before the interview closes, is there anything else you wish to say or ask?

Thank you and close.

Appendix 14: Word cloud

Most common 100 words in feedback on student assignments and student
unit evaluations.

Appendix 15: Codes to basic themes

	Codes (Step1)	Issues discussed in cluster (Step 2)	Basic Themes identified in cluster (Step 2)
Cluster 1: Social work qualifying course	1. Qualifying course	Perceptions of own academic ability	1. Prior study influences current perceptions of own academic ability
	2. Demographic	Being a mature student	2. Participants bring life and work experiences to their social work education
	3. Knowledge	Linking academic and practice learning	3. Theory and practice are experienced as different domains
	4. Placement	Lectures by practitioners	
		Theory practice relationship	4. Practical skills are most urgent requirement in early practice
	5. Practice Teacher	Placements	5. Placements seen as most useful longest lasting learning
		Emotional reaction to learning	
		Practice teachers	
		Relationships	6. Support from other students valued as helpful to learning
		Critical analysis	7. Critical analysis is assessed but not taught

	Codes (Step1)	Issues discussed in cluster (Step 2)	Basic Themes identified in cluster (Step 2)
Cluster 2: Practice experience	6. First social work post	Anxieties about practice	8. First social work post is a shock
		Support from colleagues	9. Resilience building through relationships in practice
	7. Training	Support from manager	
		Practice wisdom	10. Social workers are not fully formed until they gain experience in the field
	8. Statutory	Practice setting	
	9. Experience	Barriers between tutors and students	11. With experience, PQ students feel more equal and able to challenge tutors
	10. Expertise	Organisational context	12. There is frequent change
		Change	13. Pace of change disrupts networks of expertise
	11. Evidence based practice	Inhibitions in using knowledge	14. Overt use of specialist knowledge is open to challenge
		Hierarchies of knowledge	15. Social work knowledge has less status than that of other professions
	12. Career decisions	Supervision of students	16. Experienced social workers value teaching and supervising new social workers
		Targets	
		Change	

	Codes (Step1)	Issues discussed in cluster (Step 2)	Basic Themes identified in cluster (Step 2)
Cluster 3: Current work role	13. Current role	Volume of work	17. Managing work and Study
	14. Motivation for PQ	Route onto PQ	18. Motivation arises from work role
			19. Intrinsic factors valued over extrinsic
	15. Encouragement	Support from manager	20. Managers are perceived as supportive in attitude but limited in offering actual help
	16. Very busy team	Pace and volume of work interrupts reflection	21. Experience of PQ prompts reflection on practice
	17. Practice	Frustrations	22. Own supervision is overwhelmingly case focussed

	Codes (Step1)	Issues discussed in cluster (Step 2)	Basic Themes identified in cluster (Step 2)
Cluster 4: Understandings of critical analysis and reflection	18. Academic	Perceptions of own academic ability	23. Experience of prior study impacts on academic confidence
	19. Critical analysis and Reflection	Thoughts at the beginning of the unit	24. Critical analysis perceived as academic and difficult
		Critical analysis	25. Reflection is familiar
			26. Criticality is new
			27. Reflection can be private
	20. Truth	Personal nature of critical reflection	28. Critical reflection is perceived as personally risky
	21. Word cloud	Being terrified, anxious, worried	
	22. Anxiety	Impact of study on future learning	29. Study of criticality builds confidence for future study

	Codes (Step1)	Issues discussed in cluster (Step 2)	Basic Themes identified in cluster (Step 2)
Cluster 5: Pedagogy	23. I didn't know that	Student's prior experience	30. Students knew more of each other than I knew of them
	24. Failure	What helped learning?	31. Trust helps students learn
		Power	
	25. Enjoyed	Active learning exercises	
		Service user participation	
	26. Student Presentations		
		Anxieties about presentations	32. Formative activities enable students to learn
		Presentations were formative not summative	
	27. Confidence	Size of group	
	28. Teaching and learning		
	29. Written piece	Early feedback helps develop confidence	
	30. Feedback	Formative written task	33. Disrupted students' established study routines
	31. Power		
	32. Dialogue	Discussion at work	34. Using ideas to support change
	33. Questions, questioning, challenging	New ideas	
			35. Reflection for a purpose

Appendix 16: Interview Transcript

Participant A

1. Q: So I've got some questions to ask but if there are things that you want to say, that are not on the themes that I've developed, that's fine, you can go off on the tangents you want to go off. And, obviously, I taught the unit but I suppose what I'm trying to say to people is, that if there are criticisms, I'd rather hear them than not hear them. So any kind of issues that you want to raise, that would be fine.

2. So shall we start with some of the basic information that would be helpful for me to capture. So at the moment, what's your role?

3. A: My job title is Acting Team Manager and I've been doing that, how long have I been doing that, since June last year. And hopefully, will do that in a permanent capacity sometime in the very near future.

4. Q: So you've got supervisory responsibilities?

5. A: I have, I manage six social workers currently, full time workers, two of which are newly qualified. One of those workers is an advanced practitioner and I also am supporting, or supervising, two student social workers and a family support worker as well. It can be hard work sometimes.

6. Q: So it's quite a busy team?

7. A: Very busy team. We do everything from front door duty referrals from the public, professionals, etc., right through to permanence plans and then it moves to a permanence team. But we do everything in between: court proceedings, looked after children, child protection conferences, children in need, all of those sorts of things.

8. Q: And it's an inner city situation here is it?

9. A: It is, we're about twenty minutes from the city centre, we are
          main route through from the airports, the bus station, several other
          local authorities. We're quite close to the borders for three other local
          authorities, so we have a lot of movement in and out of the authority
          as well. We've also got really high levels, compared to the rest of [city
          local authority], of unemployment, poor health, people on benefits, all
          of those sorts of things. We've also got some housing for asylum
          seekers and, you know, we're managing influxes all the time of
          travelling families, transient families I should say, which can be quite
          difficult as well.

10. We've also, we've recently, [city local authority]'s restructured and
          we've had a change in the kind of remits of the teams. We used to
          have specialised teams that dealt with children with disabilities and a
          specialised team that dealt with asylum seekers and those are no
          longer separate teams, those teams have been disbanded and the
          work is coming into the district. So we're now finding that, where
          particular pieces of work would have been managed by people with
          lots of expertise in that area, we're now having to develop that
          expertise and kind of stretch ourselves a little bit more, which is very,
          very difficult. We're finding that we're struggling with some of that
          work a little bit at the moment.

11. Q: That's interesting really. So you're actually needing to expand
          the range of kind of knowledge and skills within the team quite rapidly
          really?

12. A: That's it and that's all happened very, very quickly and all at the
          same time. So we're kind of finding that we're having to find this
          information, find this knowledge, you know, kind of like that and we've
          got nowhere, we're feeling that we've got nowhere to go to. The

workers are still around but we've got to go and find them, to get that information and get that knowledge and then kind of internalise it so that we can use it again ourselves, and that's been really difficult.

13. Q: So you're managing social workers who are having to expand their range very quickly because of the reorganisations that are happening?

14. A: Yes, and a third of my team is newly qualified, with less than six months' experience. So, you know, of the six workers that I manage, two of them, one's four months in post, one's six months in post. So their knowledge is still in early stages in any event. So we're now finding that they're having to expand it even further and the experience of those areas particularly on the team, isn't there yet, so there isn't anywhere for them to draw from. And I have to say, that's the same for me, because it's not learning that I've ever needed to have because we had those specialist teams.

15. Q: So just tell me again then, in terms of the composition of the team that you supervise. You've got?

16. A: I've got six social workers, one of which is an AP, Advanced Practitioner, and two newly qualified.

17. Q: So you've got three with more experience?

18. A: Three with experience, yes.

19. Q: So in terms of yourself and thinking about the demographic, you know, your own demographic information, if you like, identity issues. How would you describe yourself?

20. A: I'm a female, although I'm not sounding particularly female at the moment with my sore throat. Female, single mother, three small

children, mixed heritage, Scottish/Jamaican, a little bit different. I would say I was, I would like to describe myself as working class, fairly well educated, always worked, good work ethic. Yes, I think that's how I would describe myself.

21. Q: So when did you become qualified?

22. A: I qualified as a social worker in 2005, that was, I trained whilst I worked, I trained part time and worked, I was working as a contact worker with [city local authority] contact service, doing family contact, court directed. And before that I was a nursery nurse for ten years, which I trained whilst I was working.

23. Q: So when you were a nursery nurse, when you did your nursery nurse training, you must have done quite a lot of child development work in that?

24. A: I did an awful lot of child development, yes.

25. Q: So do you think that's?

26. A: That's been, for me the work as a nursery nurse and the child development work and kind of the workings of family functioning, that sort of observing how families function. And then three years whilst training as a social worker working with the contact service and seeing how families function in that instance, that kind of a bit of a flavour of children services and the court arena and things. That has been, for me, the biggest influence on my social work practice, I would say. And I think those things were the things that were hugely missing when I qualified, on the course to qualify as a social worker.

27. Q: Go on, say a bit more about that?

28. A: Things like child development seemed to me to be just kind of glossed over. And I know at the point that I was training as a social worker and doing the child development kind of part of the course, I had obviously worked as a nursery nurse for ten years. I was much further along than that anyway and I realised that it's, you know, it has to be kind of an all-round knowledge and not a three year course about child development, in terms of social work, but it wasn't enough I didn't think. I didn't think there was enough kind of focus around families, family functioning, relationships. It kind of just, I don't think it prepared, I don't think it prepared people for what social work is, you know, when you get into the job and it's a lot more than the court procedures, the legal frameworks. It's an awful lot more than that and I don't think the course prepares people for that.

29. But then I'm not sure if there is a course that could be designed that could prepare a worker for social work as a task, as a job. I'm not sure there is a course that could do that. I think that it's a lot about the personal skills that people need to be a good social worker and to work well with families. I'm not sure that's something that can be taught, things like confidence, you can't teach somebody to be confident. You can't teach somebody to ask a particular set of questions in a particular way. You can teach them, tell them what questions to ask, but you know, it's how you interact with people. How you are able to talk to people, how you have that dialogue, and I'm not sure you can teach that. I don't know if that makes sense?

30. Q: It does make sense and it's made me think of a lot of things actually, because I don't know whether I knew that you'd got early years training and qualifications, I don't know whether I knew that. And I'm wondering whether, I mean it's immediately made me think that, one of the things that would help the teaching of critical analysis, because that's kind of what I'm trying to investigate here is, and it's almost like one of the basics really, is about getting to know the students and where their starting points are and their background.

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And although I think I thought I'd done some of that, I need a better way of doing it. And maybe something at the beginning of the course where, and I don't know whether students would have liked to have done this, because it might have meant more writing, but something about a kind of biography, a professional biography, which would then help you to kind of, as a teacher, to kind of draw more specifically on what students are bringing really and helping them to share that in the classroom.

31. Because I think, you know, you must have brought all that with you, into the classroom, and I don't know whether we made the best use of it really. I mean because it's obviously part of you and your background and you must be using it all the time here.

32. A: I mean that's, it's kind of my, I mean I, personally I'm family orientated, I've come from a big family, I've lots of children around, you know. I've always worked with children, I've always been around children and young people, but not everybody has. And I think there are particular ways of looking and reading a situation, a set of information, and sometimes, if you haven't experienced that particular situation, you can read it a very, very different way or not pick up on particular things.

33. A lot of that is about experience and, you know, for new workers particularly, they do have to have those experiences to develop the experience and knowledge. But I'm not sure that there's any part of that that can be taught, in terms of teaching social work. Because some of that is about, for me anyway, is about intuition, my experience, using what I know, what I've seen, you know, what I've learnt as well in part. And being able to ask what I think are the right questions in the right way, to get the information.

34. Simple things, I was having a conversation with workers on my team only a couple of weeks ago, about child protection visits, and how to

be able to do a successful child protection visit, statutory visit. To be able to look in a child's bedroom and look in the kitchen cupboards without causing aggravation and upset in the house. And we had lots of different varieties of what people were going to do and say. The newer workers were going to go in cold, on a visit, and say, can I look in your kitchen cupboards because I've got to. My view is that would start, you know, get people's backs up and it wouldn't be a very good start. The more experience workers were going to ease into it, you know, and how were you going to wipe chocolate off somebody's face, off a child's face, how are you going to do that to make sure it was chocolate and there's no bruises underneath.

35. And those are the sort of difficult things that the course tells you you've got to do but doesn't teach you how to do it. And I think that's kind of around the office, picking up on people, experience, confidence, all those things that you can't teach.

36. Q: It's the practice wisdom and how you put it into practice isn't it?

37. A: Yes. I don't know if that falls into what we were talking about.

38. Q: Well we were looking at sort of experience of social work really and your social work career. So you've had early years experience and you're qualified, I suppose is there anything else that you would kind of focus on, in terms of your experience of social work, that's been kind of important, significant, interesting?

39. A: I'm a practice teacher as well and I've been a practice teacher, I'm on student number four I think. So I've done it for a little while and it has got to be, it's one of the hardest tasks, I have to say, it's one of the, for me as the manager and managing child protection things and duty referrals and all kinds of things. I would have to say, managing a student is one of the hardest things, personally, because I've got to, in some part, give up responsibility for some aspects of a case, to an

unqualified worker. And in some ways trust their judgement and what they're giving me.

40. Now I do that all the time with my social workers, but I'm now doing it with an unqualified worker, so that is difficult. I find I'm a little bit more vigilant about what they're telling me, what I'm asking them, how I'm directing them, what I'm seeing and what I'm writing down. I'm probably a bit more picky with them as well, about what they're recording. But it is absolutely one of the best things for me and my team, and I would whole heartedly advise anybody to do it. Because what it does, having a student on the team, you continually question what you do and why you're doing it. Because the student's questioning what you do and why you're doing it, you're also re-evaluating all your decisions that you make, whether you do it verbally or whether you do it in your head, you're doing it in some way because the students are constantly asking questions. And you've also got to be a bit sharper with policies, procedures, legislation, etc., etc. Because if you're not, the student will tell you you're not, hopefully.

41. So I think that is one of the best, best decisions that I made as a social worker, to become a practice teacher.

42. Q: Do you find students question you and challenge you or query?

43. A: Of the four students I've had, only one of them has challenged me. Students tend to, they first of all, I mean they come, first of all they come very grateful that they've got a statutory placement, that's the first thing.

44. Q: Oh yes, I can imagine that.

45. A: Yes, so we get sort of the first few days of gushing about, we've got a statutory placement, I never thought I'd get one, blar, blar,

blar. And then we get, right what can I do? And they're all very excited about what they can do. And then you give them a piece of work and there's a sudden almost realisation that the social work that they've just learnt about in the classroom, isn't what you've just given them. And there's this kind of a, I don't know what to do with that, I don't know how to approach that, how to deal with that.

46. So you kind of coach them through that and, you know, direct them. There tends to be an awful lot of direction in the first instance. And then it's more like they settle in and start to use their, you know, the experience of the people around them. And it's more a case of watching what's someone's doing and internalising it and either using it themselves or throwing it to one side but not challenging things. There's not enough challenge, I'm not suggesting that, you know, social work students are sent out and told, you must challenge and you've got to do that, but there's not enough challenge.

47. Q: Or questioning?

48. A: Or questions, you know.

49. Q: I'm just wondering if challenge or questions is the right word or sufficient anyway.

50. A: There's a lot of questions about process and about policy, procedures, not enough questions about why do you do that, why did you think that, how did you come to that, there's not enough questions like that, not enough by far. I try and provide that in supervision with students and when I go out onto, you know, the team area and talk to the students. So what have you been doing today, well why have you been doing that, why are you taking that? And I try and encourage that discussion but it's very much me doing it and it's not them challenging social workers or having those reflective discussions with the social workers. That doesn't happen very often.

51. Q: So just going back to your career prior to coming here, because you qualified in 2005 didn't you, and you were a social worker with children and families all the time between 2005 and your current post, is that right?

52. A: Yes.

53. Q: So you've done sort of mainly child protection, safeguarding?

54. A: I've done exactly the same, and I've in fact been on the same team, although some of the team members have changed, I've actually stayed on the same team. And a couple of the more experienced workers on the team, we've been sort of stable as a team throughout. And I started as a newly qualified worker, obviously then more qualified, advanced practitioner and now I'm Team Manager, Acting Team Manager.

55. Q: OK, so I'm going to come back to the how you felt as a newly qualified in a minute. Just thinking about social work training, and you have talked about this before, so this is kind of going back to this. So your experiences of the qualifying social work course that you did, and you have talked about this, so I don't know, is there anything you want to sort of add to that?

56. A: I mean I did, I didn't do a degree, I was one of the last years to do a diploma. So I have a diploma in social work. When I started practicing, I felt completely inadequate and couldn't draw on anything, other than the lectures about legislation and law. Couldn't draw on anything from the course that I'd had, the learning that I'd had at college, to bring into the job at all. And the experience that I brought to the job was from pervious employment, rather than what I'd learnt on the course, although now, as an experienced worker looking back, there was probably a lot more kind of in the back of my mind at the

time than I thought there was. Things about, you know, relating to how families relate to each other and all those things, there probably was a lot more of that in the back of my mind, which was learning from college, rather than, you know, as I thought, oh god I've learnt nothing and this has not prepared me at all. But there was an awful lot that I thought was not very useful at all, it didn't help.

57. Q: So in terms of the not very useful, is there anything you can pinpoint, without obviously naming names.

58. A: Well the course that I did was, it was a split course. We did part learning about things, all things relating to children, and part learning on things relating to adults. So virtually straight away the adult stuff was shelved because I didn't need that, although now, some of that legislation stuff that I did learn back then about adults, is coming in really useful. Because I'm able to, as a team manager, to say, well actually no, you know, care and capacity, you know, in things that relate to the parents or grandparents or whatever. But that's like six years down the line, at the time it wasn't useful.

59. And I was always going to work with children in my mind, so at the time of being in college doing that, I was thinking, this is a waste of time because I'm never going to use it. There wasn't enough around child development, it was literally a whistle stop one-day lecture in the morning and the afternoon, one day about child development. And when you're going into a career that is around child development, it's nowhere near enough. Because I think that's an area that we were let down really. And it was fortunate for me, that I'd had the previous experience that I'd had, because otherwise, you know, and I can only, there is actually another social worker that works at this office that trained with me, and that is one of the things that she has struggled with in her assessment work. Because she didn't have the same experience that I had prior to training, and didn't get it on the training.

So in terms of child development, it's something she's struggled with really.

60. Q: So is there anything that stands out for you from your social work qualifying course, anything that stands out? I mean you've talked about maybe something that stands out as being not particularly helpful, but is there anything that stands out as being useful or?

61. A: I think what was, one of the things, and it's not really about the course itself as such, but it was about the lecturers that we had. The more useful, would I say advice, more useful information was from, there were a couple of lecturers who lectured part time and worked in practice, and those seemed to be more realistic. At the time, as a student, it was great listening to somebody that's in practice and, you know, it's all wonderful. But when you actually come into the job, you can relate and see that, actually, that was really useful, because they're still doing it and it's very current. Obviously that depends on whether their practice is OK or not I suppose. That stood out for me. And the lectures around the amount of time that's spent doing legislation, law, stood out for me because I hated it.

62. We seemed to spend an awful long time doing it, and rightly so, you know, rightly so but it was very dry and it was very facts and figures and I'm not a facts and figures, I'm not particularly academic I don't think. And that was just academic, although I realise, obviously, I've got to know it.

63. Q: Were you taught anything, or should I say, how were you taught, were you taught about analysis and reflection, the more kind of analytical aspects of the job?

64. A: Not really, no not really.

65. Q: Do you think you were assessed on it?

66. A: Yes.

67. Q: Do you think you learnt about reflection and analysis?

68. A: I don't ever recall having any specific teaching about how to analyse information or how to be critical about information or how to reflect on information. I don't ever recall having anything specific about that. But I do remember being told that all my assignments would be marked in that way. That any contributions that I made in the classroom environment would be seen in that way, but I don't ever remember being told how to be that way, if that makes sense.

69. And it was very much a kind of trial and error and whether you had the confidence, particularly in the learning environment, in the classroom, whether you had the confidence to speak up and potentially, you know, be critically analysed by other students in the class. Because it was a very, very big group, and whether you wanted to speak up in that environment.

70. Q: Yes, because I was going to ask you if you were assessed on it, but you don't remember any specific teaching in it, it's kind of how you developed those skills, which would have enabled you to have passed the assignments really?

71. A: There was no particular teaching that I recall.

72. Q: What about on your, I wonder on your placements, whether you were given any help on placements with reflection? I mean I know it's some time ago.

73. A: I think the practice teacher that I had, I didn't have a statutory placement and that never bothered me at the time and it doesn't bother me now. Because, as far as I was concerned, your placement

is what you make of it and it's irrelevant whether it's statutory or not. But the practice teacher that I had on my final placement, was really, really good and had done lots of statutory work, although it was a voluntary, a private agency. She had done lots of statutory work prior, so was able to direct me and discuss with me how to analyse information in a way that a local authority would want you to do it, which was a little bit different to how the private agency that I was doing my placement with wanted things analysing. Because they wanted it analysing in there, to fit their criteria of their company and their service that they were offering. The local authority is a little bit broader than that.

74. But she was really, really helpful, really useful. And I think that's probably where I learnt most of my report writing skills and assessment skills, or further developed assessment skills, from the experience of that final placement, with that particular practice teacher. I'm not sure I would have got that from the placement with another practice teacher, but it was particular to that practice teacher I think.

75. Q: So when you were newly qualified, having had those experiences of the course and the placement, can you remember your thinking around how you thought about analysis?

76. A: Oh I was absolutely terrified. How was I, I mean I'd, as a newly qualified worker, within four or five weeks in post, I had twenty plus cases, I had removed a child, I had done all sorts of horrendous things that I thought a newly qualified worker shouldn't be doing. My manager wasn't around an awful lot, so I had kind of a poor start, in terms of supervision of me and support from my manager. So when it came to doing assessments and analysing information and kind of making judgements about families, I was absolutely terrified because I didn't know where I was going to get that information from. I didn't know how to write, I didn't know, what was I analysing. Why was I

analysing it? And it was, it was a lot to do with, I think, a lack of support from a manager and workers on the team, who were absolutely exhausted. I've obviously, I manage very different to my first experience.

77. Q: Is that the team where you spent the five years between?

78. A: Yes.

79. Q: So you stayed in that team?

80. A: Yes, the team kind of pulled together and supported each other. And we were all fairly inexperienced and we kind of developed ourselves. And we went out and sought assistance from other teams, from other more qualified workers on other teams. Because our manager wasn't available to do that and it was really difficult, it was a really difficult time.

81. Q: So I was going to ask, in terms of sort of, you know, since qualification up until recently, whether you'd been offered any further training, in house training, any other kind of support that's been helpful? I mean it sounds as though you got support from other colleagues in other teams, I mean what about any other kind of training or development opportunities, have you been offered anything else?

82. A: In terms of?

83. Q: Well sometimes there's in-house training courses. Sometimes there might be kind of short courses. Sometimes there might be, if you like, the more kind of educational sort of opportunities. And sometimes it's more the sort of practice learning and learning from colleagues, learning from other teams, learning on the job. I mean I can see, from what you're saying, that you've done quite a lot of

practice, learning in practice if you like. But I mean have you been offered any educational opportunities in the intervening period?

84. A: Well I actually, I love, I've always enjoyed doing training, so I do seek out quite a lot of training.

85. Q: So you've been on courses?

86. A: I've done lots and lots of courses. There was a course that was particularly good, in terms of, it was actually a course about supervising, about supervising people. Tony Morrison course, supervising for supervisors or something it was called, but it was a really, really good course.

87. Q: And did he present it?

88. A: He didn't actually, it was his course material and it was people from his training company or whatever. And I went down to London for a couple of days and did that training, really, really good. It was in relation to the newly qualified more formalised programme, when that first started with this.

89. Q: That would be a couple of years ago then yes?

90. A: Yes, but it was one of the most useful courses, in terms of, whilst it was specifically about supervising other people and how to use supervision effectively etc., what it did was help me, give me some of the learning tools to be able to support somebody else to analyse and reflect and do all those things. But I was also able to pick that up and use that myself. It was really useful and it was one of those courses that I wished I'd done a bit sooner. So that was good.

91. I've also done, it was a six-month course called, Leadership and Management, Level 5, I don't know what the Level 5 relates to.

92. Q: Is it NVQ levels I wonder?

93. A: I'm not sure, I think it probably is, I'm not sure to be honest, I've
got the course folder somewhere there. But that was again about,
there was a lot of reflection and analysis and being critical about what
you do and why you do it and how you do it and who you do it with.
There was an awful lot of that and that basically was what the course
was about, in terms of how you manage, how you lead a team and
how you develop a team. So that was a really good course as well.
But I've sought those out myself. Work have supported me to do
them but, I don't think there's anything that work have, that my
employer has asked me to do, that I haven't said I want to do it.

94. Q: So you've been quite self-motivating really to seek these things
out?

95. A: Yes.

96. Q: So what brought you on to the PG Dip then?

97. A: Because functionally, practically, there was a change in PQs
and, you know, I've been trying to get on a PQ1 course for a very long
time. Because I was told, you've got to start at one and work your
way up. So I've been trying to get on that for a very long time, never
been able to get on it. And then the very year that I'm told, yes it's
your turn, you'll get on it, it changes and they're no longer offering
PQ1.

98. So this came up, there were so many places offered for us, and we
were asked to put expressions of interest in. We were interviewed
and it was, for me it's very much about, it was initially about, I can't get
up the ladder without additional qualifications. Because on paper, I
don't have an awful lot of, well I do, that's not quite true, I don't have

the same level qualifications as people in the next offices. And that, for [city local authority], is quite an important thing on one level. And things like getting over pay barriers and all those things. And there is going to be, I do think there is going to be a point where social work will be as professional as, you need a management qualification to be a manager. So I'm going to need to go some way to improving my qualification status.

99. But it's also about, because I enjoy learning: what can this course teach me that I can bring back to my team and make my team a little bit better? So it's a bit mixed really.

100.   Q: And the units that you studied before, critical analysis on the PG Dip then, you did the, there was XXXX's unit wasn't there?

101.   A: Yes, we did the law unit and

102.   Q: Because not everybody's done the same, all the same units you see, but you did the law unit did you?

103.   A: I did the law unit; I can't remember what the units were.

104.   Q: Can you remember how many because I can track them back. I can look them up.

105.   A: The law was the first one, I've done all of them.

106.   Q: Right and you're currently doing one now?

107.   A: I'm currently doing

108.   Q: Is that with XXXX?

109.   A: That's with, yes, that's multi-agency, no we've just done multi-agency.

110.   Q: You've done the multi-disciplinary, yes.

111.   A: I've done that with XXXX.

112.   Q: But you've done four altogether?

113.   A: I've done four altogether.

114.   Q: So there's the law, the critical analysis, the multi-disciplinary, and there must be another one at the moment. No you're finishing the multi-disciplinary aren't you at the moment?

115.   A: No, we've just started doing one, we've just started it. The law was the first one that I did and then I've done all of them since then.

116.   Q: Don't worry about it because if I know you've done the four I can track it, it's fine. So when you came onto the PG Dip, can you remember what you thought, your ideas about reflection, can you remember what you thought, if anything, about reflection?

117.   A: I was absolutely frightened to death, if I'm honest. When I started on the course and there was a point where I sat in the classroom and thought, what on earth am I doing, I can't do this.

118.   Q: Yes, I don't know whether you can pinpoint that point or whether it just stayed with you a long time?

119.   A: It stayed with me for a long time. It stayed with me for a long time and it usually rears its head in the first lecture of each unit.

120.	Q:	I think that's, I have to say, I think that's quite common. I mean do you, so can you remember if reflection and critical analysis, if you had the same response to both those terms?

121.	A:	Reflection no. What concerned me about reflection was, everything that we were given, in terms of what evidence we would have to provide, how we would have to provide it, assignment titles, the criteria for assignments, everything talked about critical analysis, critical reflection, critical this, critical that. And I kind of thought, I don't actually know what that means, I don't know what that means. I can reflect, I can sit and I can think about something and I can say, 'oh god I wish I'd done this for this reason,' but I don't know if that's critical, I don't know what that means. And that bothered me, and still bothers me to some extent, but now, because I don't see myself as being particularly academic.

122.	And there was this, when I started the course, for me, there was a feeling of, god what am I doing here, I can't do this, people like me don't come to University and don't do degrees and certainly don't start thinking they can do a master's. And that stayed with me for a little while as well, but now I'm kind of four units in, I've passed all the units, some of them just, but I've passed them. And I'm kind of thinking, I can get to the end of this and I can see the tunnel bit, the light at the end. But there was an awful lot, it wasn't just about the subject and the course and the words used, it was, some of it was about me personally as well, if that makes sense.

123.	Q:	It does, you know, you've talked about your feelings about those particular terms, so can you remember, because that's kind of, that terminology kind of threads through the units doesn't it? So when you actually began the critical thinking and analysis unit, can you remember what your thoughts were about the unit at the beginning of it?

124.	A:	I didn't understand what it was about, I didn't understand what I would be doing. At the time of doing it, I didn't fully understand all of the information that was being given and asked to read. There was a lot of it kind of went over my head, or felt like it was going over my head. And I kind of, at that point, thought, if there's a unit I'm going to fail this will be it because I don't know what's going on, I don't understand this.

125.	I'm naturally, if I don't understand something, will ask questions but I didn't know what questions to ask because I didn't, I don't know if that makes sense.

126.	Q:	No it does actually, yes.

127.	A:	I didn't know what questions to ask to get the understanding that I needed, to understand what was going on. And I found it really, really challenging, really challenging.

128.	Q:	Because there must have been quite a lot going on for you at that point really?

129.	A:	Yes, it was really, really difficult and the relief when I got through it.

130.	Q:	Right, so there were those feelings at the beginning, there were those feelings at the end. So in the middle bit, I mean was there a kind of an arc, a sort of journey, was it?

131.	A:	No, it was more like a stumbling through the desert without water.

132.	Q:	Is that how you felt, you were stumbling?

133. A: Yes, it was, I could do, I felt I could do particular things like reflection, like looking at myself in a critical way. Looking at my performance in a critical way, but I couldn't, I didn't feel I could do it in the way that the course was demanding that I needed to do it. I didn't feel as though I was, it just felt like I was missing the point every time and couldn't really catch up with what was going on.

134. Q: So using that analogy of stumbling through the desert, I mean were there any things that really, was there anything that really kind of held you up, were there any experiences that kind of held you up and kept you going? Picked you up and dusted you off or supported you.

135. A: The, and I know it wasn't widely received very well in the lecture, in the course, but the written piece and the presentation piece. Because yes, I wasn't totally enamoured with having to do this piece of writing and do this presentation, absolutely not, because I thought, god I'll make a right fool of myself. But that was, and at the points that we did that, was the thing that, it kind of, it was like, you know, I found a bit of an oasis if you like. I've done this written piece, I've got some feedback, right I'm sort of going the right way but I need to just shift course a bit. So OK I'm understanding this a little bit more, not a great deal, but a little bit more. And then we get to the presentation, and again it's that confirmation, I'm sort of doing sort of the right thing and I'm sort of understanding this the way I need to understand it. Still not feeling that I can do it but I'm sort of getting there. And those are the things that picked me up and kind of got me through to the end of it.

136. Q: I wonder what it was then about those particular tasks, because you pinpointed the written piece and the presentation, that were difficult but were, you said you weren't enamoured with?

137. A: Oh I wasn't thrilled at all about the prospect of writing another piece of work.

138. Q: Right OK, so there was the kind of the work of having to, if you like, generate the words, there was the kind of hard work of that. I mean was it to do with the, was it to do with this task that you have to do, because I can quite understand, you know, having another task to do. It's not easy when you're very busy. Was it to do with the task, was it to do with something that was going to happen in class or was it something to do with the process of it?

139. A: I think, I mean what I didn't like, I definitely didn't like having the extra task; I didn't like that at all. After I'd done it and I'd got the feedback, that's when I thought, actually that was just quite valuable because, the original plan that I had was way, way too big, in terms of the content for the assignment. And I think had I waited until the end of the unit, of which I was feeling like I was stumbling around and walking through treacle or whatever, had I waited until that point to find out that it was too big, I would have really struggled and I wouldn't have got an assignment written.

140. So doing, although it wasn't something I would have chosen to do, doing it made me narrow that down a bit and kind of gave me that feedback, constructive feedback that was, you know, this is too big, you need to do this, this and this or whatever the feedback was, I can't remember now sorry, and that was really valuable. Doing the task before, for me and the mind-set that I was in was like, oh my god. And it really did feel like, when I was sitting writing it, it was like pulling teeth, like fog. It was just like so difficult but then afterwards I thought, actually that was really useful, really valuable.

141. Q: Both of those tasks were quite public as well weren't they in the group, do you think that had anything to do with it?

142. A: Yes, there's something about, because I don't believe myself to be particularly academic and I don't have an awful lot of

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confidence in my student, in the student me, there's something particularly terrifying about putting yourself out in front of a group of students. And, you know, some of those students are very, very capable, very knowledgeable and all the rest of it, and you just think, oh my god, what are they going to say about me? And I'm just splashing around on what I'm doing. So there was part of it that was quite, I don't really want to do that, but I'm glad I did, I am glad I did. And I actually enjoyed the presentation part of it.

143.   Presentations themselves don't phase me, that didn't phase me at all, it was more about what was I going to talk about, but I did quite enjoy the presentation.

144.   Q: I have to say, that sort of anxiety around presentation, giving presentations, I think is there for an awful lot of people. Whatever your experience of doing them is, I think for lots of people it's quite a common thing really.

145.   A: I mean I do get anxious about presentations and, you know, I've done, designed and delivered for lots of training sessions for different arenas and different groups of people, but it's still nerve wracking.

146.   Q: For me it's something about doing it with your peers as well. I think there's a different kind of dynamic when you're presenting to your peers, I always find that.

147.   A: Yes, the leadership and management, the six-month course that I talked about earlier on, there was a presentation part of that and that was the same, in terms of anxiety provoking, because it's a group of peers. The people on the course were all managers, far more experienced managers than me. It is nerve wracking, it is nerve wracking, but I enjoyed it and I'm glad that I did it and didn't take the easy option of not being available that day.

148.   Q: OK, it never occurred to me anyone would do that. So any thoughts on the assignment?

149.   A: Oh god, that was the single most horrific, it was just horrific. Trying to put together all of the information from the course, most of which I'd struggled to understand, in the context of the assignment that I was being asked to provide, using these words critical this, that, that I didn't know what they meant, it was just the most horrendous experience. And the relief when I got it back and it had just passed and I thought, do you know what, never mind just, it's passed, that will do.

150.   Q: I mean do you feel any more confident about using those words though now? I'm just wondering because I mean I can see that, you know, you've had a bit of a battle with them.

151.   A: Yes, I've actually started saying to my social workers, when I'm reading their assessments, you're not being critical enough. And I'm not sure I would be able to tell you now why, you know, what that means or what I mean by that, but I can recognise in a piece of work presented to me by the social workers on my team, if something's not critical enough or they've not reflected enough or they've not analysed it closely enough. I'm not sure I'd have been able to do that before, before I'd ploughed my way through all of this really intense material I didn't understand at the time. Yes, I do, I'm not sure I could explain it to you but I do use those terms now with workers.

152.   Q: Yes, because I was going to ask you a little bit about how you felt now about the unit and, you know, if there was any way that you're using any of the learning from it in practice?

153.   A: I do use some of the things from it in different ways. As I say, I'm more, looking at people's assessments, things that I'm being asked to sign off and decision make on, and being a bit more critical about what they're giving me and what information they're providing me and what they've done with that information, how they've analysed it. And I'm analysing it a bit more critically, a bit more closely. I'm also doing a lot more reflection with people in supervisions, in team meetings, you know, going and spending time with the team area, which is something that managers don't generally do in [city local authority]. Going and sitting with my social workers and seeing what's going on and listening to the conversations.

154.   I'm also starting to go out with social workers and do, you know, be the second person on a joint visit, for example, but in an observation capacity, so I can see what the social workers are doing. And it's kind of like multi-functional, in as much as supervising them, supporting their development, looking at things that they can, but it's also for me to be able to have a much closer discussion to support them to reflect on what they've done and why they've done it, if that makes sense. And I've started to do all of those things in the last few months. And they are as a direct result of being forced, kicking and screaming, myself, to critical analyse and reflect.

155.   Q: So I suppose, right supposing we were going to run this unit again, if there was one thing you had to change, what would it be or if there was one thing you'd keep the same?

156.   A: The tasks, the written piece and the

157.   Q: You would what?

158.   A: I would keep them the same.

159.   Q: I mean were there any exercises that stand out as being particularly useful or?

160.   A: I enjoyed the young person that came in, I enjoyed that. That was a good session, I enjoyed that. She was obviously, she was very engaging and delivered some really useful information but it was, I enjoyed it. It broke up the dryness of the unit, if you like. It didn't quite feel, and I think it was probably because it was a young person doing it or it could have been because she wasn't delivering information in the same way as we'd had. Because we were engaging in it, we were getting up out the chair and doing whatever she wanted us to do. It could have been any one of those things, but it didn't feel as heavy, as academic, as the rest of it and I enjoyed that.

161.   But then, looking back on it, I'm not sure that I would be doing what I'm doing now in practice, if I hadn't had the experience of doing the unit in the way that we did the unit. And having the information, I'm not sure how you would deliver the information that was delivered in a different way, I'm not sure if there is a different way to do that meaningfully.

162.   Q: I suppose that's what I'm looking at really, just because there may be different ways that I've not thought about.

163.   A: I'm not sure that there is and I think possibly the way that we had it delivered, was the best way to have it delivered. And the issues around, you know, my, personally being able to manage that, are just that, my personal problem with it, rather than a problem with the material on the course.

164.   Q: So what advice would you give to another student who was doing it, is there anything you would say to them?

165.	A:	Have an open mind and don't take it personally, I think would be my advice. Because you do, in any discussion in a classroom, if you add something to that discussion, you open yourself up to somebody commenting on it. In a unit that's called, critical analysis and whatever was the full title, the word critical means lots of different things to different people. If I make a comment in a classroom, in front of students, where the object of the game is to critically analyse what's been said, I potentially open myself up to criticism, potentially, depending on what somebody's understanding of that is.

166.	Q:	That's a really clear explanation of the difficulties, that's really helpful.

167.	A:	I think that was one of the difficulties for me, because I didn't, personally didn't fully understand the content of what was going on, making a comment about something, could potentially leave me open to criticism that I then wouldn't be able to respond to because I didn't understand it. And it was like this vicious, and I think that was, that created a lot of the anxiety for me. But I'm not sure that that was as a result of the teaching and what was being taught, I think that was a personal issue for me. I don't think it was

168.	Q:	It feels very personal, the subject area?

169.	A:	Yes, it does. And there's a, you know, if you're going to reflect on your practice, if you're going to critically analyse your practice, you might not like what you find. And you need to, or other people might not like what you say, what you see. So you need to be able to not take it personally and kind of, you know, be realistic about what your expectation from that is. If you want somebody to look at you and support you through that process, then you have to be open to it.

170.   And I think for me it was really difficult because I didn't understand, you know, what was going on. Towards the end I kind of thought, actually, this is not as difficult as I thought it was. I mean that's not to say I didn't struggle with it still, but it took me the length of the unit to realise, actually this is not as difficult as I thought.

171.   Q: And you passed the unit in this subject area at master's level?

172.   A: Yes, just, but I passed it. And, you know, for that it was like, you got the bottle out. But it was a challenge, I've got to say, it was definitely a challenge. But I'm not sure that there's a different way that it can be done.

173.   Q: We didn't use the list of words that I sent out, probably because we didn't really need them. I don't know whether there's anything on, these were meant really as triggers, in case we got stuck for something to talk about, which we clearly didn't. I mean there are various kind of words that I've extracted from the conversations around the written work. I mean I don't know whether there is anything there that triggers anything for you? I must say, we've not been stuck for anything to talk about really. So perhaps we didn't need that.

174.   A: I think, looking at this, it's really interesting and I don't know whether it's just a trick of the, the computer's done it or whether it's intentional, but terrified and truth are right next to each other.

175.   Q: Oh that's because that's in alphabetical order.

176.   A: Is that what it is?

177.   Q: But it means something to you that?

178.   A: It's interesting because when we first started this unit, there was a question asked in the very first session, how are you feeling about the unit? And my response was, terrified. And the reason I was terrified, which is why I point out, it's interesting to see truth next to it, is because what if the truth is I'm just no good at this and I'm not, you know, I analyse myself and reflect on myself and the truth is I'm just no good and people don't think that I'm any good. And I just get a lot of critical analysis and criticism and I think that's one of the things that I was terrified about, apart from not understanding really what it was going to be about. But I did know, the fact that there was some analysis and the fact that there would be some reflection, that I would have to be talking about my practice, what I do, why I do it, who I do it with etc., and people would be asked to make comment about that.

179.   And that terrified me, because what if the truth was, they didn't like it or I'm no good? That's the first thing, looking at that, that's what's caught my eye. And that makes me sound really insecure in my job and I'm not really, or I don't think I am.

180.   Q: What I can say in response to that is, in another context, in another piece of work, I have heard that said, not in those exact words obviously, but in a similar way about, from an experienced worker coming into education. And I think one of the things that I'm interested in really is, particularly in relation to this unit, some of those things that you've talked about, obviously we talked in class and I'm really interested in how to sort of support people with that. And I kind of, you know, I have heard something, you know, so I don't think you're alone in that, that's what I'm saying.

181.   A: I think it's that thing about, you know, your anxiety's raised as soon as you know you potentially could be in the spotlight. And nobody wants to be critically in the spotlight.

182.   Q: The thing is, unless we ask these questions, we don't know. And I think these, the things that you're saying, you know, unless we ask people about them we don't know. And I think maybe other people do think in similar ways and certainly, like I said, I've heard this, I've heard that kind of thing before about education from people who are very experienced in the social work roles that they have. And coming into education, you know, I think those anxieties might be more common than we know about. And I think, you know, it's part of our responsibility as tutors, to try and support people to, I don't know what the word is, but to kind of overcome or work with that. Because education's very emotional work isn't it?

183.   A: It is and when you're doing that, doing it, you know, trying to succeed in education and work full time and manage a family and do all of those, no different from what students are doing on placements and, you know, it is really difficult. I think for me, doing this course at master's level, all of the social workers on my team have got master's. The students coming in that I'm practice teaching, are on, heading towards master's course and I haven't got one and I'm still studying for mine. And I'm kind of, that just always seems a bit upside down to me as well. But then that doesn't take away my experience previously and what brings me to where I am.

184.   Q: I think probably we've overrun our time but this has been really, really helpful. I'm just wondering if there's anything else you would like to add?

185.   A: I don't think there is.

186.   Q: It's been really helpful; I really appreciate it.

Appendix 17: Interview Transcript
Participant B

1. Q: So I suppose the first bit's really to ask you about your current role and what your current social work position is, if you want to say something about that?

2. A: Well I've been Deputy Manager on the Safeguarding Team for Children's Services for, oh count up the months, it's June last year that I started. And it's a temporary two-year post because of the rate of work that was coming in to child protection. The Team Leader definitely needed some support with supervision and managing the team that was growing also, so the team grew.

3. We have ten social workers and I supervise four to five of them at any one time. We take joint responsibility for the number of cases that are in the team. So we jointly allocate and stuff like that. And, obviously, because of my past experience, I've got an eye to the development role, I like that side of management better than the other stuff. But I have, I think over the last twelve months, I've appreciated that social work skills are transferable into management and I'm still deciding whether that's something that I feel comfortable with.

4. Q: So do you want to say something about your previous roles now, since you were mentioning it then?

5. A: I've been qualified a long time, 1983 I think, yes 1983 I qualified and then I went to work for [previous NW LA] on a generic team. Quickly specialised in children and families and did quite well there really, progressed quite quickly over the six years I was there, became a guardian at the instigation of the panels. I think I developed too quickly, to be honest, because I sort of did a bit of a double take after six years. I was looking around for safer options

and I think that was about possibly levels of responsibility that I was carrying and feeling, I wasn't sure whether I was comfortable with it.

6. So I came into fostering and adoption work in [current LA employer], so that's when I first started working for [current LA employer], at the end of the Eighties, 1989. And I stayed with adoption and fostering, in a cowardly way, for a long time. And I loved it, I feel my knowledge base really increased, and it was the first time I'd really had any substantial training in attachment and that. And I loved the challenge of working with families in different combinations but in other ways I stagnated a bit as well. And I think, I went on and had a family as well, more family, I already had family. And it fitted very nicely with that but then it was hard to get back in.

7. So gradually I moved into a training role, and I think that was because of the knowledge I'd accrued. I did both for a while, fostering and training. And I do stay a long time in jobs when I like them. I stayed in training, it was ten years as well. So then it was even harder, I guess, to come back into practice. But other things in my life had changed, so I felt a bit freer to come back into practice. So in 97, no 2007, I came back into practice and came onto a senior practitioner's team.

8. And then they moved, they were disbanding the senior practitioner's team and we became part of the Think Family Project, because there was a dispute about whether we should have senior practitioners or not, in the role that we had. So it was convenient that Think Family came along and we could slot into those posts. And that was really good, it was challenging, because I came back to having a caseload, which I hadn't had for many years. Obviously a smaller caseload, doing more intensive work, but being able to put into practice some of the theory and the

knowledge base that I'd accrued over the years as well, so that was quite good.

9. But after twelve months there I think, it was longer, I don't know, 2007 to now I've had three posts. Senior Pracs., Think Family, and now this deputy post. So in the last few years I've had more posts than I've had in the previous two or three decades, so that's really weird. Because also recently, I got an opportunity, the adoption team manager here was finishing and he'd managed me in the past and was saying, you know, are you not interested? Well it would be a permanent team management post but I didn't feel I could leave safeguarding again at the current time, because safeguarding is where I'm building up my credibility again and I need to keep on doing that and I enjoy it. I love the team I'm managing, they're so young and enthusiastic, and I know I wouldn't have had that on the adoption team. They're older people who have got a different outlook on life. So I decided to stay where I was.

10. Q: That's interesting that, I wonder if the age profile in safeguarding is a bit younger.

11. A: Well very much so because I think most fieldwork teams nowadays, they're struggling to keep staff. But also in [current LA employer], we had quite significant changes to the children and families teams, they were split into LAC into safeguarding. And that had a big impact on a lot of the staff that were building up experience. And children and families actually moved at that stage into different things, and safeguarding was full of new recruits. And it was another reason why they created my deputy post really, it was to help with the numbers of newly qualified staff.

12. Q: So the social workers that you supervise now, are they mainly newly qualified?

13. A: Mainly newly qualified, yes. And my boss, my team manager, was quite happy to give me those people to supervise, which was really nice for me because I got, you know, the chance for the development side, as well as managing staff who are enthusiastic and keen and young.

14. Q: So would you say all of the ones, there's four isn't there that you supervise, would you say they're all newly qualified?

15. A: Yes, the two of the most experienced ones have now been qualified two years.

16. Q: So still quite recent really?

17. A: Yes.

18. Q: I mean I'm already thinking actually that there are things in your biography, if you like, your professional biography, that I wasn't aware of. Not that I necessarily should have been, but I mean it helps I think, in terms of teaching, if you've got kind of more knowledge really of the students that you teach. I mean a lot of the groups that we teach are quite large, they're 50/60/70, you know, and with the smaller group of students, I mean I think I kind of acquired that knowledge as I went through the unit. But I'm already thinking, you know, it might help really, in terms of pitching this teaching, to actually have maybe something at the beginning of a unit like this, which is around kind of professional biographies. Because it might help settle people in and help me sort of use and make better use really of people's experience. So yes, that's already really useful. I mean do you think that would have helped?

19. A: Well I think it's been a feature of my PQ Training anyway, even from, I did the consolidation at [NW University] quite early on, after I came back into practice.

20. Q: So I bet you've done that haven't you?

21. A: And that was useful, in terms of reflecting on, yes, why I was at this point in my career and it was quite good. But I think it's been part of the MMU course as well, in so far as the first module we did was Leadership and Management. And again, it was very much about, well you know, what skills and leadership role do you take and why? So I feel like the whole thing has been very much about us. And I think with it being a small group, we've done a lot of sharing. And a lot of the learning has gone on through sharing and discussion, and that's something I've really valued very much from doing the PQ.

22. Q: Do you think that's gone on outside of the formal sessions as well?

23. A: Not so much because we don't see each other. I mean I know I've had [name of student] and [name of student] around, but we have quite specific separate responsibilities and we don't socialise. So there's been no format really for us to take the learning outside. And the other girls, you know, are from different authorities, the only time we've come together has been at Uni.

24. Q: Really what you're saying is, well what I think you're saying, is there have been times on the PQ Training Course, that you've done a kind of resume of where you're up to. So I suppose in a way it's a bit like when service users say, they don't want to tell their story, we've got to bear that in mind. I mean it's a similar issue isn't it really? Like you have a number of agencies, a number of social workers involved with the family. The family gets

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tired of saying, well this is what I've done, you know, and telling their story over and over again. I mean why can't we, at the University, actually have a bit more linkage, in terms of knowing something about students who are coming onto the?

25. A: We found that a problem on our last module. The first three modules seemed to dovetail really well, but the last module was different. And it did feel as though we didn't get that opportunity to continue that development. I think it was during the critical analysis unit, I think it really came good. And we lost it again last module and hopefully picking it up again now with [name of course leader], but [name of course leader] knows a bit about our positions.

26. Q: So when you mean that it came good during that unit, what kind of things are you meaning there?

27. A: We were with six, I know we had [name of student] join us, but she came with enthusiasm and ability didn't she? So she fitted into the group really well, you know, sharing quite well. But the others of us had been together then for nearly twelve months on quite a challenging course and had done a lot of sharing. And I think, for me, it was, people had dropped off along the way, so on the earlier modules, you know, the Leadership and Management one, was quite a big module, in terms of personnel.

28. People then left because some of them were adult's workers and people dropped off. So by the time it got to the Critical Thinking unit, we were quite a cohesive little bunch of people who had withstood the traumas of doing study at that level. And we'd shared a lot and I think we were really functioning well as a group by the time we got into your module.

29. Q: Yes, I think so as well yes. So you've talked a bit about supervisory responsibilities, I mean is there anything else you want to sort of add about your supervisory responsibilities? You were saying you've got four social workers that you supervise but they're all newly qualified. And you've had supervisory responsibility have you before, in your other roles have you?

30. A: Not formally, I was made Deputy Leader on the Think Family Project, that was before I left and so a bit of supervision there. But no, more development work with other social workers, you know, across the department really, rather than formal supervision, which was quite new. It's been a challenge in so far as, you know, I've had to get my head round a lot of changes in practice and policies and procedures. And I think the saving grace is really that, you know, it can be part of your style to be always inquiring and finding out, alongside the workers that you supervise. And I hope that they don't find that too limiting, you know, if we don't know anything we find out together.

31. So formal supervision for me is still something that I'm learning about and getting comfortable with as well, because when there come to be issues that are more challenging to deal with, I don't like that end of management as much. And I think, you know, I've been really lucky with the girls that I supervise because of their attitudes and their abilities, and it's not been a problem at all. And I think, you know, managing some staff is a problem and it's always the only reason why I've shied away from management in the past. I've always felt it's been enough to get on with my own work and really not take responsibility for other people who maybe do things in a different way. I've come a long way from then, I don't feel like that now but it is, you know, I've obviously had a team. And it's not just our team because we share responsibilities for helping people on the LAC Team as well. So I don't just confine my role to the staff I supervise, I also deal with issues and

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try and help and support people on the LAC and the Safeguarding Team.

32. Q: So how would that work though, in terms of supporting people on LAC?

33. A: Well we have like a duty, we don't have a duty management system, but there's three managers for LAC and Safeguarding. There's team leaders on Safeguarding and LAC and myself as Deputy. And whilst I'm Safeguarding Deputy, we cover for each other. So if [name of team leader]'s off, [name of another team leader] or me both take over whatever that staff needs on those days. So if there's caseload issues or duty issues, you know, when people need a bit of direction or whatever.

34. Q: So it's like a management team across the two, across the two arms of the service kind of thing?

35. A: Yes.

36. Q: So what about demographic information then, how would you describe yourself demographically?

37. A: Old, yes that's a big issue for me I think because most people of my social group are thinking about, looking for the way out. My husband's retired, one of my best friend's is retiring this year. His wife is, also works for the Local Authority and would retire at the drop of a hat. Another friend, who works for the Civil Service, can't wait to retire. So I find it a big issue because I'm still buzzing really with my career and feeling like I've got a lot to offer. And I think that, it's a bit of an issue for me.

38. Q: I think I'm probably similar actually, age profile and sort of qualification time, because I qualified in 81, 1981. So yes, and I mean I'm still studying, you know, so.

39. A: Yes, and me too, you know, their attitude as well, if it's not going to lead to a pay increase, why on earth are you doing it? But it keeps me, you know, I think I have to do it because I need that information, I need to develop myself, even at this late stage in my career. And I am, I have up to ten years yet, so I don't want to stagnate and I do enjoy it. I love getting out for a day, I know it's not very many days we have in Uni, but it's really helped, it's really helped.

40. Q: Is there anything else you want to say about the demographics and identity type issues?

41. A: No, I'm still a mother, I've had, I spread my children over thirty years. My eldest is thirty and my youngest is twelve. So I think that's always been a challenge, being a working mum as well. And at the moment it's becoming easier because I've got a partner who's at home and soaking up some of that childcare responsibility that's gone on a long time really. Thankfully, you know, I'm really happy about it but it's also been a big responsibility and a big stretch really.

42. Q: You've said when you became qualified and you've also talked about your experience of social work in your career. I mean is there anything you want to add to that, is there anything maybe pre-qualification that you want to add in or anything else?

43. A: No just, you know, it's become a really big part of me really and it was, I guess, I fell into social work when I was at Uni the first time.

44. Q: When you say, you fell into social work at Uni the first time, does that mean that you didn't?

45. A: I didn't plan to do social work.

46. Q: OK, so when you say you were at University the first time, what was that?

47. A: When I did my degree, when I was very young.

48. Q: What was that?

49. A: I went to do sociology, I did economics and social studies at [NW University]. I went to do sociology because that was my passion from A Level, I loved it. And part of me would have liked to have continued studying, with hindsight, I'd have loved to have done sociology really and got that theoretical knowledge base. But I met my first husband, as you do when you're young and infatuated, he was two years ahead on the same course. If you do your practical stuff during your holidays you can have a career in social work, a job, you know. And I've always been easily influenced I guess and I did it.

50. I actually became pregnant before I got qualified, otherwise I would have gone straight from Uni into qualification. But I didn't because I had a child, I had a couple of years out, couldn't afford to do anything much different, and then went into residential work for twelve months. So by the time I did get qualified, I was already a mum with a bit of experience behind me, which probably helped.

51. Q: I'm sure it did. So, and again, we've touched on some of this, in terms of social work education, experiences of your qualifying social work course. I mean how would you describe the

qualifying social work course that you did, how would you describe your experiences of that?

52. A: It was really good again for me, because I'd been quite isolated as a mum in [area of current LA employer]. We'd lived in [name of city], moved out to [area of current LA employer], and I was a stay at home mum in my early twenties, that I'd never planned on being, and a marriage that was already going wrong. So to come into University and meet with other people who were starting out on their careers as well was great. I remember a couple of tutors off that course, [name of tutor], I don't think he had a lot of teaching to do with me, but I used to see him on the train going into Uni. And [name of another tutor], who was, he had a probation background, he was one of my tutors.

53. The law stuff was just like a fog. I remember the tutor and he was really good, but it didn't mean anything to me because I couldn't apply it to anything I knew. And I think I've always struggled with law from then because it's all so technical. If you can't apply it, it becomes scary. And applying it retrospectively when I was qualified, it was quite a challenge really. And even doing this module on the PQ in Law, the technical bits of it leave me cold, you know, it's so remote from what I feel good at. And yet, using the court process and providing quality reports and stuff like that, you know, haven't been a problem throughout, you know, I'm quite good at that side of things. So there's a lot of things, even though it was a long time ago, I do remember quite a bit about that.

54. Q: So there's something about the way the Law was taught on that course?

55. A: I know some other girls really got it because they'd had a couple of years in practice. And they were making the links and they were joining in the discussion and I found it really hard to join

in any discussions because I felt, I don't know what this is all about.

56. Q:	And presumably there'd be a fair amount of jargon in those discussion as well, I would imagine, because that's the way people tend to talk about legislation isn't it, and sections. And people describe actions by the section name that they're working under, you know, I'm doing a Section whatever and that can be quite

57. A:	I think the tutor assumed knowledge or assumed some experience really, which you know, yes I'd had some experience but it was with homeless girls in a hostel, not in a law court.

58. Q:	Again, I mean is there anything that stands out to you from your qualifying course? I mean clearly the law does, was there anything else do you think that stood out in your qualifying course?

59. A:	It's a real stretch of the memory this.

60. Q:	I know, mine was a similar time, I struggled. It's fine if nothing comes to mind. And was there anything you particularly enjoyed?

61. A:	I enjoyed my placements, they really bring it to life don't they? And I remember the first time I was going out knocking on doors and I was in [inner city LA], with the child psychological team, which was central, centrally based. And because I didn't have a car, I used to get on the bus and go to all these different places in [inner city LA], but mostly down where the Deck Access flats were, you know, in

62. Q:	xxxxx Road?

63. A: Off xxxxx Road, yes.

64. Q: We were probably working in the same area at that point actually because I was in [inner city LA] then.

65. A: So I remember that placement well. I remember having quite a patient teacher and just stuff that's coming up for me now, you know, we've been looking at the Harry Ferguson new book again this week, just last week. And talking about knocking on doors and the feeling content of learning, I think that's, you know, I'm almost looking at big circles really. And I'm thinking now for social workers now doing social work and what that means for them. I suppose the very fact that I can remember how it felt to be a new social worker is quite important. And I think we should capitalise on that and use those experiences much more, in terms of training and development.

66. Q: And those placements, those knocking on door placements from a statutory background, are few and far between these days as well. I mean I think it is important that sort of getting out there and making that first, you know, getting over the threshold really. Placements that offer that opportunity are so important really for safeguarding work. So on your course, do you think there was any teaching about reflection or critical analyses, can you remember any direct teaching about it or can you remember learning about it in some way?

67. A: I don't really, I think reflection yes because I think that was part of the practice teaching style, that you got a chance to reflect and to analyse and to think about what was going on there. So I think those skills came through the practice side. I don't remember formal teaching and I even remember thinking more recently, that critical thinking analysis was more like a new topic,

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you know, when we came on to PQ really. And that's quite amazing, considering I've been in training all those years.

68. And one of my son's, who's doing GCSEs at the moment, he had a book on critical reflection and analysis. And I'm thinking, gosh they're teaching this stuff in school these days, you know, which is, I don't seem to remember being taught it in a formal way.

69. Q: Yes, I think that would have been my experience as well really. I don't think it was on the curriculum and I don't think we had things like formal learning outcomes that we do now. I think kind of the terrain, in terms of social work, well any teaching really, and it's much more kind of formally structured and set out I think than it used to be. So yes, that doesn't surprise me really. So do you think, when you were newly qualified, do you think you thought about reflection?

70. A: Yes, I think I've always had great supervisors and that's been a saving grace really. I went to work in [local area], that was my first job, and [name of supervisor] was my supervisor. And he was very patient and very empowering and very gentle and encouraged reflection. I think there was gaps in the kind of support I got but it wasn't through lack of good supervision.

71. Q: And what about critical analysis, do you think?

72. A: That was less so and I think maybe, I think [name of supervisor] modelled good analysis, but I don't think I quite got it. I don't think I quite understood how he came to the conclusions he came to by the information I was giving him. It might have been, you know, it might have been valuable really to spend some time on analysis.

73. Q: So do you think you were feeding through information from the cases you were working with, and do you think that he was making something of that but you weren't quite sure what the connection was between?

74. A: Yes, and I remember once or twice feeling really let down because I wanted to support these people I was working with. And he was saying, oh we need to move into care proceedings or, you know, something quite, that I at the time felt was quite judgemental about somebody that I was working with. And it didn't marry up with where I felt I was up to in working with that person. And yet I think that, you know, in terms of how I work with people, I think my thresholds are quite high and I do try lots and lots of things before I give up on people. So it's maybe, you know.

75. But it's about understanding that isn't it? And I think at the moment, in the PQ I'm doing at the moment, in each of the modules I'm looking at thresholds quite a lot, because I want to understand why. Why we get to that position with people and what those judgements are all about.

76. Q: So do you think that's an area of interest for you at the moment, this thresholds thing?

77. A: Yes, definitely, it's a constant challenge.

78. Q: Do you think you might follow that up?

79. A: I don't know, I'm old.

80. Q: It sounds really interesting. So just pursuing that idea a minute about you as a newly qualified social worker and being aware of reflection and being aware that information was, that you

were bringing forward was being in some ways kind of made sense of, if you like, by another person. I mean I'm just wondering, but the question arises for me as to whether that impacts on your style now as a manager. I'm wondering, because you're working with newly qualified social workers, I just wondered really if you're conscious of anything from?

81. A: The thing I'm conscious of, with the workers I supervise, is that they've come into safeguarding at a very pressured time, much more so than when I was young. Although, you know, we did have the sort of perspective of blame but that is very much more around now, in terms of, you need to cover your back, you need to do it this way. You need to make sure you've written up on care first and god forbid that, you know, you're caught without doing a stat visit. And they're driven by that almost, and it fits with this Munro stuff doesn't it, that I want to see them having the time to step back from that and experiment a bit more with families and interventions. And have the knowledge to do some signs of safety work and other models of intervention.

82. But they haven't heard about it yet because they've not done their PQs. And OK they might have visited it briefly on basic training, but I don't think the reality for them is about that. The reality for them is about, tick, tick, tick, and then go into care proceedings if they don't do as they're told, and that's much more prescriptive. And what we've had on our district here is two different kinds of service. And our new Head of Service, who I've worked with for quite a long time, is very reluctant to give the go ahead for care proceedings. So we're having to dwell a bit longer on whether our interventions have been adequate before we get in. And I think that's going to be quite good in some ways, but it's also quite scary and risky for people.

83. Q: So I suppose that's a different set of questions then isn't it, prior to care proceedings, because there may be the formal processes but there's the informal processes about what people ask themselves. And what you were saying about it's this, this and this, and if they don't do as they're told it's care proceedings. I mean I know what you're saying there. I'm wondering if there's a different, if what you're saying is there's a different set of questions now about, rather than are they doing what we ask, if you like, more kind of is what we're doing...?

84. A: Good enough, helping or are there other ways of engaging with this family that they would find more meaningful? And it's also in a climate where our services are being cut back, you know, so it is challenging for people to be able to work in that way. But it's what we did when we were younger, it's what I did, and I think that's why I got onto it when you asked me that question. It's what I did, I went in week after week, you know, for a long time to families and it was never questioned. Well you've been working with this family for so long, you know, you've had your child protection plan for two years, you know, it's not worked. That was never questioned, we worked with them until that crisis brought it into a different arena really.

85. Q: Monitoring?

86. A: Yes.

87. Q: But very high caseloads I think as a consequence of that really.

88. A: Yes, and the lack of direction, you know, that you would carry on working with the family without as much direction as you needed.

89. Q: So I think we've covered quite a bit of this really. You've obviously been involved in quite a bit of education and training since qualifying. Is there anything that stands out, in terms of any in service or further training, in between the qualifying training and the PQ training, is there anything that's been helpful?

90. A: Yes, there's been certain milestones in the training I've received, have influenced me in my career. I remember really good [national voluntary agency] training in the early days, when I was, and without that I wouldn't have been able to function I don't think. But it was limited the amount of training we got but it was good.

91. Q: Can you remember what the [national voluntary agency] training focused on, can you remember the sort of areas? Are we talking 1980s, was it 1980s, when you were newly qualified?

92. A: Yes, there must have been some stuff around sexual abuse because I remember being a guardian and I got a very difficult sexual abuse case, it was a [inner city LA] case. And I was out of my depth really but I had [name of solicitor] as a solicitor, so he helped me and I didn't fill in a report because I read, you know, because I was out of my depth, I just read about the subject. But there must have been some training around that as well.

93. And I remember doing some training with [name of trainer] and it was very much about working with children, direct work. And coming into training when I was delivering training that was one of the things I really enjoyed. We did a course called, Community with Children, so there was, that was influenced by some stuff that [name of trainer] had done. It was a collaborative effort in the end, we had a good psychologist and people contributed to it along the way. So that therapeutic sort of work with children, I always felt was important to the way that I felt about social work.

94. And coming into family placement, we had [name of training officer], we had a training department here in [current LA employer], [name of training officer] came and told us about attachment theory. And I thought, how have I been in social work six to eight years and not known that, not known about attachment theory, because it was liberating to understand that. And then people like Vera Fahlberg used to come over from America and build on that. And in fostering and adoption that was wonderful, I really enjoyed that. And then I was moving on to the attachment, adult attachment, but I don't think I've ever really fully got to grips with that theory, but I just found it so compelling.

95. Q: So you've kind of absorbed quite a lot really, in terms of the different roles you've had. And I imagine that any staff development, training role, there's quite a lot of kind of ground work and the preparation and things, that you kind of absorb things through that don't you as well?

96. A: Yes, we got side tracked a little bit with NVQ, because I did a lot of the residential work under foster carers, the residential staff, and the social workers really loved the Community with Children Course. But then NVQs took over and we got sent down that path for quite a long time, which was sad really. It was sad for me because I did an NVQ 4 in Training and Development and I hated it. I hated that style of learning but I was dogged, I was determined to do it.

97. Q: I think we could probably both share a few stories about NVQ4 in Training and Development.

98. A: So I know what I don't like about the education I've had as well.

99. Q: Well go on then, OK, what do you not like, what do you particularly not like then about some of the training and development experiences, what would you say it was that you didn't like?

100.   A: It's all about all that procedural stuff, you know, NVQs was the start of it really wasn't it? Because it was making residential workers accountable for, I mean there was a good side of it, which was about training for residential staff, but there was also the oppressive nature of the style of training, you know. If you can say you've used a fax machine, you know, you can have a tick and trying to break it down into tasks that really doesn't fit very well with social work, which is about feelings and relationships and nebulous things isn't it? I think I've, that's why I'm enjoying the PQ I'm doing now because it is very much more looking at different, current theories about what social work is. And we've had the whole debate about the managerialist approach and the new wave, which is liberating us again I hope, to some extent.

101.   Q: So, I mean it sounds to me as though you've had a fair amount of encouragement to study really?

102.   A: Yes.

103.   Q: And has quite a lot of that been in terms of your work roles, has that...?

104.   A: Yes, I think, and it was also maybe the time, because at the time, when I went into fostering and adoption, there was a lot of training on offer, you know, through the consortium as well, [name of adoption society] and people. So training was very much more freely available, we had our own training department here, which I then joined, you know, through doing little bits of work. I needed a lot of encouragement to do that but it

complimented the fostering role where we'd been training in groups anyway.

105.   And then once in training, everything was possible at first, and it was only the latter years really that it dwindled dramatically and became a place where I didn't really want to be anymore. But I feel sad about that because I think there's much less on offer now for people.

106.   Q: Yes, training departments have made a big contribution haven't they, over the years?

107.   A: Yes.

108.   Q: OK, so onto thinking about the PG Dip, so what brought you on to the PG Dip in the first place, can you say something about that?

109.   A: Well again, I was thinking, since I came back into practice, again I was very fortunate really because I went into that senior practitioner role, where [name of manager: Head of Service] was really trying to skill us up. So I did get a lot of training then as well. I got all the triple P Training, which was alright. I got the solution focused stuff, a bit of opportunity to learn about and understand signs of safety, some of the Tony Morrison stuff. What else did I get? Some significant chunks really about, you know, sort of more modern interventions really because we were then going to teams and helping them with the more difficult cases.

110.   Q: So coming on to the postgraduate?

111.   A: You can tell I'm getting old because the newer stuff I don't remember as well as the old.

112.   Q: I think what I'm really asking about is the decision to do the PQ?

113.   A: Well it was part of the same cycle you see, because I did the consolidation module at [NW University] as well, which I found good.

114.   Q: So you've talked about the [NW University] route?

115.   A: Yes, and my Head of Service, [name of manager], who's coincidentally my Head of Service again, she, I guess she just nominated, she asked me would I be interested? And I said, well yes, I don't think I questioned it too much really because I felt like I needed to do PQ, and it was good for me to have an alternative to [NW University]. What isn't good for me is the travelling, you know, I don't know how they've done it at [NW University] really but I've lived in [area of Greater Manchester] and I love going back to [area of Greater Manchester] because that's where I did my CQ[CQSW]. I used to live down there as well, when my first baby was born. I do identify with that but it's a long way from [where participant lives] down to South Manchester.

116.   Q: Of course because you don't live here do you? So it's even further. And you've talked a bit about the units that you've done, have you done four units up to now? You've done the management unit haven't you?

117.   A: Leadership and Management, the Law, Critical Analysis and Inter-professional Practice.

118.   Q: Yes, and that's the four that you've done. And is there one ongoing at the moment?

119.   A: I'm doing Advance Practice now.

120.   Q: Which you're enjoying?

121.   A: Yes, well I'm looking forward to it, we've only had one session.

122.   Q: So when you came onto the PQ at MMU, can you remember what you thought about reflection at that point, if anything?

123.   A: I think the style and [name of tutor for first unit]'s module encouraged reflection right from the word go. It was quite, delivered at quite a personal experiential sort of level, which encouraged us to share and think about why we were doing what we were doing, why we were there and what we had, what skills we had, what we were offering. And obviously, it hit me quite early on that it was a big ask, that there would be quite a lot asked of us, in terms of studying and reading and reflecting, which was, I don't know if I was prepared for or not. But once started, I always finish, so I was in it really. It wouldn't have crossed my mind to sort of say, well I don't want that at this stage.

124.   Q: And do you think that was, you know, what were your thoughts around critical analysis then? It's a bit different to reflection, at the time when you came on the course?

125.   A: Yes, we had these study sets in the afternoon on that first module. And the groups were quite big at that stage, so they didn't work very well. You could see the group over there, they were getting stuck in and they were task centred. And one or two groups I was in weren't very, but we still had people who were sort of struggling with the commitment that was being asked of them. They would go off on tangents and I was finding it hard because I like to be task focused when I'm in a group. And I like

getting down to it, understanding the theory and applying it and analysing the bit that we needed to do then, in those afternoons. It wasn't happening as well as it could have done. Well I think I began to realise what I needed to do to study at that level, you know, to do the loop, to reflect and decide, you know, understand and conclude. And we also got some really good inputs early on in the course from [name of course leader] and the librarians, where they were, you know, talked to us about critical reflection and analysis. So giving us the tools really to study at that level.

The following is from handwritten notes, due to problems with the Dictaphone.

126.   Q: at the point when you began with Critical Thinking and Analysis, can you remember your thoughts about the unit.

127.   A: I went into the unit not knowing what we were going to study. The first session was, for all of us, 'wow, this is academic,' and how useful would that be, because social work is a very pragmatic subject? Reflection is always a huge part of it and I thought it would click, but it was daunting. But we unravelled it and spent time unpicking those learning outcomes. I would like to do it again now; it was interesting. It was a big ask; some of the feedback and sharing made it more understandable. I thought it would be abstract but it was meaningful. The styles and tools appealed to different learning styles; I like the interactive stuff, it made it more concrete than reading the books. That might tell you more about my learning style; I'm very hands on.

128.   Q: What are your thought about the unit now?

129.   A: It got better as we went on. The word clouds and translations made it accessible, made the concepts understandable. The other way we get that is by sharing

experiences and what we use and how we are applying it. The group had different dimensions and a new student joined the group, and quickly integrated. We could have done with this unit first off, but then, the Leadership and Management unit was, for me, was best first off: it prepared me for this job.

130.   We had a good grounding in the first unit it gave a good grounding. I knew I wasn't a bobbins at academic life: I got a 2:1 in my first degree and I had a grammar school education. I assimilated it to some degree; it must have paid off, the learning from my first degree.

131.   Q: Does anything stand out for you from the unit?

132.   A: I have done more than I thought I had done. The learning on the module has helped me to know about the learning I have done as a social worker. I have learnt a lot in my career, without me always being aware of what I have learnt.

133.   Having the space and opportunity to think about what I am doing, what I know, is what I have really valued in this.

134.   When you shared the bit you did, it was useful, and people still say....it said she was lazy, when she put that...

135.   It's like on the radio, Eileen Munro said on Radio Four, we make judgements in the here and now, but really, when we look back a family might be like others, patterns.

136.   Q: The written piece, early on?

137.   A: Excellent.... a huge and daunting task to do that assignment, a huge task, would feel I had left it too late and panic. I knew I would have to work hard to produce what was expected of me. There was a huge amount of work for the Leadership and

Management assignment. I got a better mark for that than the other ones. I put a lot of work into it to get the marks. That's why the written piece is good for me. The presentation was a bit too late for me. I had already got most of the work done, but others found it valuable. We had to do it for Law and it was marked -- I couldn't hear anyone else's with it being assessed. With Critical Analysis, it was purely to share and help each other, so I could listen to them.

138.	Q:	The assignment, any thoughts?

139.	A:	I've used skills from Critical Analysis unit for later units. I started [the later assignment] early, reflected on it, and went back to it again. I polished it. I know I get to the stage where I can't be bothered, I leave it, and I didn't with this, I polished it.

140.	Q:	What advice would you give to others who were just about to start it?

141.	A:	Give it a chance, suck it and see. It sounds off-putting, nebulous and airy fairy and removed from practice, but it isn't.

142.	Q:	What advice would you give to a future tutor; someone was going to deliver the units of future students?

143.	A:	Dialogue, it should be on the same level of process, should be facilitated by the leader. The group was special in the way of sharing and using each other's experience.

144.	Q:	Is there any way it has had an impact on you or your practice?

145.		A:	Impact on practice ... enthused by using, trying to develop people, in supervision. It fits with [name of tutor]'s session, in the Harry Ferguson Chapter, look at what went on in that visit, rather than have you done your stat. visit? It's helping social workers, think about their role in working with families, rather than collecting information about how families have failed to stop. They might be helping the kids, but not really helping the families.

146.		Q:	Word cloud?

147.		A:	I've done one of these in my last assignment, I couldn't see the key words at first....

148.		Interview notes end.

Appendix 18: Interview Transcript

Participant C

1. Q: So current social work role, do you want to say something about what you do at the moment here?

2. A: Yes, so I'm Team Manager at the moment and have been for about five years. I manage the duty service but I've also managed the child protection team as well, and I moved over about twelve months ago to duty. I supervise for eight social workers, two newly qualified social workers. And within that we do child protection investigations, Section 47s, court work, care proceedings.

3. Q: So two newly qualified, so the more experienced staff, how long would you say, have you any idea how long they've been qualified?

4. A: Yes, about, some of them about ten years, twelve years, some of them five years.

5. Q: So very experienced really.

6. A: Yes, and I've got a senior practitioner as well included in that.

7. Q: So you've clearly got supervisory responsibilities?

8. A: Yes.

9. Q: Is there anything you want to say about the supervisory responsibilities that you hold?

10. A: Obviously, I've got a good balance between newly qualified workers and level three workers. And one of the strengths in my supervision group, and that's not just about me as a manager, but as experienced social workers, is the fact that they are able to support

and nurture newly qualified social workers within that work. And it's actually beneficial for those workers to be in that environment I think. I've also got some more experienced workers, senior practitioners, who are able to support that role as well.

11. Q: So would you say you directly supervise the whole of the team or do your senior practitioners do some of that?

12. A: No, I supervise all of the team, yes.

13. Q: Because I think we've talked about this in the unit haven't we really, that your main responsibility, or should I say, one of the things that you do mainly at work is the supervision isn't it?

14. A: Yes.

15. Q: You spend a lot of time on that?

16. A: Yes, it's about 50% of my role is supervising and obviously case management. And because our cases are quite transient, it's new cases all the time really. And then the other 50% is probably managing the duty desk role, managing that.

17. Q: So your own demographic information then, how would you describe yourself demographically or identity wise?

18. A: White British, no religion in particular. I suppose middle class, something like that, although I'm not too concerned about that really. Probably spent a lot of time struggling to get where I am, you know, in sort of that role, in my current role really.

19. Q: So I suppose that leads to the next question really, sort of how long have you been qualified or when did you become qualified?

20. A: I qualified in 2000, so it's about 11 years now. I was a social
   worker for about four years, where I quickly, in my opinion, moved on
   to post qualifying. And I did PQ6, for enabling others and supervising
   two social work students and then moved on to Assistant Team
   Manager. So it was quite clear from early on in my career that that's
   where I would be leading, you know, really. It wasn't something I
   identified, it was other people encouraging me I think.

21. Q: So where did you get that encouragement from then?

22. A: Mainly from managers, from my managers really, because
   [metropolitan borough LA]'s a very sort of learning environment
   culturally around, you know, that we want to promote and encourage
   people to grow. And they have this saying about growing your own
   really, about nurturing people and moving them on professionally and
   keeping experienced social workers and managers within the service.

23. So I've always had the encouragement to do that from senior
   managers, even though I think I've needed a bit of pushing with that. I
   don't think it's something I would have, after four years of being a
   qualified social worker thinking, well actually I'm going to be team
   manager one day. I wouldn't have thought that without people
   promoting that and encouraging me really.

24. Q: So the next section asks about your experience of social work.
   I mean you've kind of talked about this actually, about your career, but
   I mean is there anything else to add really, maybe from before you
   qualified or anything you want to add post qualification?

25. A: Before I became qualified?

26. Q: Well yes, I suppose it's just anything generally sort of from your
   career, is there anything else?

27. A: Yes, I mean I suppose the reason I came into social work is because I worked originally for the probation service, within a probation hostel for offenders. And at that point it was quite clear to me that I wanted to do something to that role. But it was about the time when you have to make a decision if you wanted to do probation or if you wanted to do social work, so I had to make a decision at that point.

28. Q: Yes, because there are different routes aren't there?

29. A: Yes, and I was Assistant Manager in a bail hostel and that's as far as I could go career wise in that environment. So I made the decision to go into social work then. I went to look at working with children in particular. But a lot of the experience that I'd had around that was quite valuable. And during the time, while I was doing my qualification, I was working in residential social work, you know, area, which was quite a good learning experience.

30. Q: And that was here was it?

31. A: That was, I worked for an agency, so it was for different areas and it gave me opportunity to look at different areas of social work and decide what was right for me and what wasn't really. And what I could contribute to, in other areas of social work that I knew I wasn't suited to. So it was quite valuable in both ways really.

32. Q: So moving on to look at social work training and education. So we're looking at experiences of social work education in particular, that's prior to coming on the PG Dip. I mean how would you describe your experiences of your qualifying social work course?

33. A: Doing the actual social work course?

34. Q: Yes.

35. A: I think when I went onto the course, it was sort of a really new experience. And going back into education after, what must I have been, thirty something, so even though I was quite mature in that respect, it was going back to education and thinking about academic writing and being involved in that process. Really a new challenge for me and new experiences, both around life experience and also the learning that was part of that training. And I probably led quite a sheltered upbringing really with my parents. And a lot of, the assumptions that I had about life and about different areas, I suppose, where around, that I'd learnt from my parents.

36. So when I got onto this social work course and I learnt lots of, and I remember reading the history of racism and thinking, you know, this is the first time that I've actually challenged myself and looked at something like that. So it was a really big learning curve and made me start to think about, you know, my value base and assumptions that I've made, and looking at other people's experiences other than my own.

37. Q: It sounds like quite a sort of big experience, quite a powerful experience really?

38. A: Yes, I think it was.

39. Q: So is there anything, I mean again, you've partly explained this really but there might be other things. Is there anything that stands out for you from your qualifying social work course and what makes it stand out?

40. A: I think just the learning around oppression and disadvantage and learning about other people's life experiences really and the impact of that. And about choices, about the choices that I had as an individual compared to what others, some other families may have.

And also looking at behaviour, at human behaviour and things like that, that was quite instrumental really.

41. Q: And is there anything you particularly enjoyed or disliked in your social work course? Often there's things on the dislike side but I'm just wondering about the other side.

42. A: I mean it's not a dislike, it was a challenge and there were times when I wondered whether I'd ever get through it really. But one of the really good supportive networks, were the other students that were with you. So the fact that everybody was feeling a bit the same was actually easier to manage. So every time an assignment came up, there was that anxiety around whether or not you could achieve it really. So I quite surprised myself actually, getting through and getting to the end of it, you know, it was quite a proud thing to have done, a proud achievement for everybody and my family really. It wasn't a dislike but it was a challenge. I wouldn't say it was an easy thing to go through.

43. Q: And was it the BA that you did?

44. A: It was a Dip. SW.

45. Q: And then did you do anything after the Dip. SW?

46. A: I did the post qualifying award, just through work, a couple of years later.

47. Q: So did that top it, did you top up to a degree?

48. A: No I didn't, no.

49. Q: So it was the Dips, then the PQ?

50. A: PQ1 as it were.

51. Q: And then you've come onto the PG Dip?

52. A: Yes.

53. Q: So going back to the Dip. SW then, do you remember learning about reflection or critical reflection during the course? I know it's some time ago.

54. A: I mean I do remember learning about reflection and obviously, starting to look at what other people were saying about things, so about what academic readers were saying. But also about what my thinking was, but not feeling confident to challenge any of that really. So I don't know whether I'd have been critical, I might have had my own thoughts about reflecting on things and thinking about them, but I don't know whether I'd have actually had the confidence to start putting things down and being critical about it.

55. Because, you know, when you're in that environment, you see people, you see academic scholars if you like, as somebody that's, they're professional, it's quite an important role, and for you to start challenging that, [pause]. And we've been thinking about that even more now, you know, obviously within this learning that we're doing now, that we should be able to be doing that as a practice, experienced practitioners. But at that time I don't think I would have been able to.

56. Q: It's interesting actually, do you think there was an encouragement of reflection at all then on the course that you did? I mean it sounds as though you're saying, it was quite difficult to reflect, do you remember any sort of discussion or prompting about reflection?

57. A: I probably don't remember that. It's not to say that it wasn't there, it's just not stuck in my mind.

58. Q: It's interesting because what I'm thinking is, what you're saying is that there were some reflective points that were bubbling up for you, but it's kind of getting them out, even getting them on paper or getting them out into conversation. I'm just wondering if, it's fair enough if you don't remember because it's some time ago, but the question for me is whether it was kind of asked about or prompted, and yet there was some difficulty actually articulating it or whether it wasn't there. And I suppose we won't necessarily know that but it's kind of a question.

59. A: I don't think it was ever there, I think it was a very personal reflection journey for me. I remember, I gave somebody a lift home from University quite a lot for the three years we were there, and I remember spending that time talking to the other student and reflecting on what we'd done that day, thinking about things and challenging things. So there was that opportunity, but I don't know that that came out in my written work or in the lectures really. So it was reflection as in, thinking about my, you know, thinking.

60. Q: When you were newly qualified, can you remember how you thought about reflection at that point? Again, it's kind of going back isn't it, so at the point where you've got your qualification and you were in your kind of early career, your first post as a qualified social worker. Can you remember anything about how you thought about reflection, if at all?

61. A: I don't think it was there within the supervision process. So one of the areas you'd expect that would be via supervision and discussing, I don't think that was encouraged. I think it's a very much, again, a learning time for you because when you start, it's again, a daunting time emotionally for you. And I think what you're doing at that time, is you're quite nervous and it's quite a nervous environment

to be in for newly qualified workers. And I think what you do then is, you try to get through each day and it's probably not there, the reflection time.

62. Q: So do you remember anything around critical analysis on your qualifying course, was there anything there about critical analysis?

63. A: I think we might have looked at it, obviously about when you're working with service users and you're using, you know, some of the evidence base that you've got and some of the information that you've got, that you've learnt from theories. And thinking about critical analysis in that respect, about making sense of a service user's situation and what might be happening for them. So I certainly remember that. But I know that as an organisation, it's not one of our strengths and that we..., we're continuously trying to achieve that really.

64. Q: So do you think on the course it was present, the critical analysis part, you know when you were talking about theories?

65. A: I don't remember it being but I mean it is quite a long time ago and I wouldn't want to

66. Q: No, it's alright. I think what I'm, I know it's hard to remember, I would be hard pushed to remember, but I think I'm kind of looking at kind of now, what people are conscious of drawing from different experiences really. So it's fine.

67. A: I think it was really around the PQ1 time when that started to come out.

68. Q: Yes, so that takes us on to the next bit really. So education and training since qualifying really but before the current PG Dip. Is

there anything that stands out from education and training in between your qualifying course and the course you're on now?

69. A: Obviously I did the post qualifying. So that was the first time, when you start thinking about your practice and looking at how that fits in with academic work really, rather than just writing about situations that might or might not happen. So that was the first time, when you actually start looking at yourself and reflecting and using critical analysis about how you're working with service users. And we get the service user feedback, which is a really important part of it.

70. Q: So it there anything that particularly stands out from any of that training? It's fine if not because there's a kind of general sense that you, on that post qualifying course, that you're sort of digging into the kind of reflective and the analytical side of social work, so I mean that's fine. It's just if there was anything that you thought that was really useful or that really made me think or anything particular?

71. A: I can't remember anything, sorry.

72. Q: So I mean you've talked about the encouragement to study from people within the organisation, is there anything that you want to add to that, you know, without names, is there anyone who's been particularly encouraging, not necessarily work but?

73. A: I think your emotional encouragement comes from your line manager really. And I've had quite a few line managers in my time and there's certainly more encouragement at the moment around learning and development. It's certainly something that [metropolitan borough LA] promotes and I know that, when you have a manager who's quite open to that, open to learning and developing and also thinking about themselves in that. So the manger that I've got now is very much about, let's learn together and let's achieve things together.

So there's not an assumption that because she's the senior manager, she will not need to learn, but she's in the same process as me really.

74. And I think if they want to move on and develop, that's quite interesting, they'll encourage you to do that as well. So I've been quite lucky, I think, with managers. And even from my first ever service manager, there was around, well this is what you need to be looking at and one day you'll be sat here in my chair doing this job. That's quite a strong thing to say to somebody who's only been there twelve months. And you think, oh, you know, so yes.

75. Q: I'm getting quite a sort of strong sense of the organisation supporting you to develop your career and develop your thinking and to take opportunities?

76. A: Yes, and it's more, and it is more operational management, rather than the training section. Not that they're not there for you but, you know, it wouldn't be somewhere that I would go for support really.

77. Q: And the people that you're talking about who are encouraging, are people that you're in contact with fairly frequently anyway.

78. A: Yes, and I'll talk about that maybe a bit more when we talk about the course now.

79. Q: Well I suppose we're kind of coming onto this section, looking at the current course, the PG Dip. So I mean do you want to say something about what brought you on to the PG Dip?

80. A: I was thinking about career progression obviously, feeling very strongly that it's time for me to move on from team manager role, even though I have mixed feelings about it. So part of that was, you know, it's a long time since I've done any academic work, it's a long time since I've been back and challenged myself. I think it's really

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important that you keep doing that as a professional, you know, as a practitioner, whatever your role is. So it really was a challenge again for me to go on and think about it really.

81. I wanted to enhance some of my management and leadership skills, but also some of the things around advanced practitioner and thinking about how I use that with my staff. Because it's feels not just about me, it feels about things that I'm learning and, you know, contributing then to other people's learning as well. And actually, when I went for the course, I found that my supervision group really valued the fact that you're going out and learning something. So at the same time you've got newly qualified workers and you've got workers doing PQ etc., etc. And having that dialogue with them and sharing things, so it doesn't matter that somebody's just qualified and you've been qualified a long time, you can still both learn new things together, sharing those experiences. And they really, you know, they value that as a management.

82. Q: So your team that you supervise, they see you actually participating in education and your own further development, they've actually commented favourably about that?

83. A: Yes, so we're learning new things together and looking at them. And I feel like they're supporting me through the course and I'm supporting them in whatever they're doing, learning and development wise. So it's quite useful, it's a good balance to get.

84. Q: It sounds great, yes. So can you remember what you thought about reflection, at the point where you joined the course? Were you sort of aware of any thoughts about reflection at all and how would it, what it involved, what it was?

85. A: No, not initially. We did the first unit, which was leadership and management, that was a very good unit, I enjoyed that, that module.

86. Q: And what you're interested in particularly as well isn't it?

87. A: It is, yes. And it made me think about myself and reflect on my own, particularly around power and influence on other people really. I started thinking a lot about emotional intelligence and how that impacts on other people. And seeing myself and thinking about that and reflecting on that, as me as a person, and how I'm in that position really, quite powerful position. So I started thinking about that quite early on and reflecting on that.

88. Q: And can you remember what you thought about critical analysis at that point? Because it may well have been there in that.

89. A: Yes, I mean it was a time when we were starting to do the first assignment, about using that skill. A time where we started to challenge and look at, critically challenge other people's thoughts on things and obviously backing that up. It was a challenge around not being too descriptive really, which I think is a theme that I've had all the way through. I seem to be getting better at it, so I'm feeling able to do that really. And the course does empower you as a practitioner, so you feel that you've got those strengths to be able to do that.

90. Q: So I suppose it's that confidence thing isn't it, about this is something that I can do and I can do this in this piece of work?

91. A: Yes.

92. Q: So the units that you've done, you've done the leadership and management haven't you?

93. A: Yes.

94. Q: You've done the law unit?

95. A:	I've done the law one.

96. Q:	And the inter-professional multidisciplinary one?

97. A:	Finished that one, yes.

98. Q:	And the critical analysis one?

99. A:	Yes.

100.	Q:	So that's four isn't it?

101.	A:	Yes.

102.	Q:	So when you actually came onto the critical analysis, critical thinking and analysis unit, what were your thoughts about the unit at that point, can you remember?

103.	A:	Yes, it was quite a scary time I think. I think when we started the unit, and when you look at the questions and you look at what's included in the unit, the language that's used is sometimes quite difficult to get your head round, I suppose. It's only when you're actually there to, as a tutor to support us, picking that language out and breaking it down into something that is manageable. I remember feeling a lot better about it after we'd done that and after we'd looked at the subject, picked it apart a little bit, because it is quite daunting when you look at that first.

104.	Q:	So you're saying you felt a little bit better about it, was that after the first session?

105.	A:	Yes, it was, when we'd looked at it and looked through. It was, I think, the most difficult unit of them all so far, but that was

because it's a challenging unit. And when I say difficult, it's a good learning curve. So some of the other units, there's things I've learnt and things I already knew but I've been able to reflect on. But I think that was the first time when I've really thought about reflection and critical analysis to that extent really.

106.   Q: And it was the third unit wasn't it that you've done?

107.   A: Yes.

108.   Q: So the first kind of impressions of the unit were, you know, brought some feelings to the surface really. And it sounds as though you were quite aware of how you were feeling about the unit. I think I remember picking that up really in the first session and we had quite a discussion about all of that, and then maybe sort of settling down a bit after that first session.

109.   A: Yes.

110.   Q: So jumping to the end of the unit and beyond, because you've completed a further unit since. I mean looking back at the critical thinking and analysis unit, what are your thoughts about the unit now? Again, you've talked about some of this but what would be your thoughts now?

111.   A: Some of the really, I could talk about some of the useful learning parts I've found from it. I thought the work we did on looking at the different concepts was useful. I know we did that quite quickly, that was an exercise where we looked at putting different words under different headings. And obviously there was a lot of sharing and a lot of discussion about that, and it is a very good group for that. And because we've been together all this time and we've come through so far, it actually makes it easier to be open and honest with people and discuss the different areas of work.

112.   So that was very useful, and in particular when we did the work on, putting down some of our ideas for the assignment and what we might cover. If you remember, we did a piece of written work early on, and initially thoughts were, oh my god, another piece of written work. But actually, once you'd sat down and it made you do it. And it was quite good because it was at a point where I'd not started anything and it actually made me start thinking about what I was going to write about and it was very useful. And we've used that learning tool, if you like, for want of a better word, in the next module, we suggested that as a group. So we've taken that idea from your lecture at that point.

113.   And also, we did the work on looking at the concepts and some of the information around some of the wording that we'd used.

114.   Q: Yes, we did that bit of a glossary didn't we in the end?

115.   A: We did and that was useful, where we put that up and we looked at it. And also the presentation made us think about it and put it in some kind of order really. It was very useful to get feedback for that. So even though it was a difficult subject, we spent quite a lot of time thinking and learning about the different areas and the different words and what things meant really.

116.   Q: I was quite aware that that written piece was early on, and that there's quite a workload isn't there, on a course like this. And the assignments, you know, are quite a hefty piece of work, it's four and a half thousand words. And to do another written piece in the run up to that, you know, it felt like quite a big ask really. So I mean I'm glad it's helpful.

117.   A: It was, I mean initially you think, don't you, your reaction is, oh no. But actually, once we'd done that, and it was so useful that we've used that again. And when you look at the other modules,

they've all got something in. The law assignment had a descriptive piece of work around what case study we were going to use. So it developed us as a group around starting to write and starting to think about it early on and it's been really valuable.

118.   Q: And I suppose all the units will have something to enable feedback, whether that's group feedback or tutor feedback or, you know, something to look at again yourselves. There's always going to be something to hang the feedback on before the assignment. You've answered quite a lot of this really, anything else that sort of stands out from the unit, what makes it stand out? Is there anything else that you'd, I mean you've talked about the description, reflection analysis exercise that we did.

119.   A: Yes, I quite enjoyed looking at the concept around professionalism and breaking that down. I found it very interesting looking at the piece of work that you'd done, around professionalism. And it was quite interesting thinking about you learning and reflecting and going back over work. And it makes it easier for me to think about, well it's alright for me to do that. And that layering of going back and looking at something and going back over it again, because you've done that in your piece of work haven't you? So that was very good, I enjoyed looking at that and thinking about us as professionals and where we are and the challenges.

120.   And it broke down, I think, some of the barriers that you might maybe have between yourself and a tutor really. My perceived barriers, I suppose, you know, it's around, well it's a learning process that we're all going through.

121.   Q: So on that point then, the kind of sharing of learning, that a tutor's undertaking, does something or did something at that point, in terms of breaking down a barrier or making sort of equivalents really?

122.   A: Yes.

123.   Q: I'm just thinking that sort of links into what you were saying about you working with your team really and you studying. I think there's something that you were talking about, in terms of kind of barriers between the students and tutors. And I suppose, I don't know whether that's to do with expertise or whether that's to do with?

124.   A: Yes, it's about expertise and how I might perceive somebody else in that role. So thinking about, are the tutors very experienced in lots of academic work and where would I come in, in that really? Where would I be about? Actually being able to criticise and think about work and think about what somebody else does and using my professionalism really. And I think you only get that with time, as you develop and you become an experienced practitioner. Right at the beginning you've not got that obviously, but it's very useful thinking about other people learning in those situations.

125.   Q: Because I think at this level, I think there is more kind of equivalence between the experience, well expertise of a tutor and the expertise of a practitioner. And, you know, perhaps we've started off in a similar way, in terms of being social workers, and branched out in different ways. And I mean I think that means that we're both bringing something in. So I clearly don't have your practice experience and supervisor experience and, you know, the things that you've been involved in, because I've been doing the teaching side of things. I think at this level, it's a lot more to do with bringing people together.

126.   A: And it's quite refreshing to hear that isn't it, as a student, when you get that. And, you know, this course as a whole, we've had a lot of that, every tutor we've met so far have said, well actually, we're going to learn from each other, and that's quite a valuable thing to say.

127.   Q: Was there anything else that was helpful to your learning particularly, that you wanted to talk about?

128.   A: Yes, we did some reflection on pieces of research didn't we? We had some examples where we were given, to go away and read a particular piece of work and then to come back and discuss our thoughts as a group really. And that was very, very helpful because it actually made you sit down and go through things and think about them and reflect on them and come back and say what your opinion was. So that was a useful learning tool.

129.   And all the way through, because we do things as a group, rather than, it doesn't feel like a lecture, if you like, not that there's anything wrong with that, but the group discussions with you involved are very useful and you keep us on track.

130.   Q: So was there anything unhelpful?

131.   A: The only thing I was a bit uncomfortable was, was the exercise that we did about the sun shining, if you remember?

132.   Q: Oh I do, yes.

133.   A: Now it wasn't that, because it wasn't the session in it all, it's just that kind of environment I'm not comfortable with, but it's not my comfort zone. I need to do that a bit more really. And wondering how that fit in with what we were learning about.

134.   Q: So that was the ice breaker?

135.   A: It was, yes.

136.   Q: With the young person?

137.   A: The young person that came.

138.   Q: It involved a lot of kind of physical moving about didn't it?

139.   A: And being in the middle of that, you know, but it's just me, I'm not that comfortable in that environment. But, you know, it's another thing to learn, for me to get through and you do it.

140.   Q: We've talked about the written piece and was it in the right place and did it help or hinder, is there anything you want to add to that at all?

141.   A: No, just that it was a help and it was a good way of learning.

142.   Q: And the presentation, again I wondered what you were thinking about the, what you thought about the presentation really and whether it was in the right place and what was kind of helpful or not about that?

143.   A: I think the presentation was again, a good learning tool to use. It wasn't daunting at all, it's something we used to do, as experience in different roles, you know. I think what's really useful is the discussions that go on and the feedback that you get. Because it's an opportunity to listen to what other people are saying and their thinking around them. You might not have thought about that way of thinking about issues and that's very good. And again, it's a safe environment to do that in.

144.   Q: I mean I enjoyed the presentations, I thought they were really interesting. Any thoughts on the assignment?

145.   A: I mean, obviously, it's a difficult assignment to do but again, really enjoyed the reflection part of it and thinking about, because if I remember rightly, I was talking about a supervision session. So really getting down to thinking about what I'm saying, what language I'm using and how I'm reflecting on that with my staff really. And having that time to do that, so that was really useful, and thinking back to my impact on that.

146.   Q: Do you think it enabled you to discuss things that you wanted to discuss?

147.   A: Yes, it did.

148.   Q: Again, you've talked about some of the exercises or sessions you liked or loathed, kind of I don't know whether loath is too strong a word, but something you weren't keen on really. And you've talked a bit about the part the group played, is there anything that you want to add about the part the group played in your learning in the unit? Because I think we probably relied a lot on the group really for the process of the unit. And it's a small group and, you know, a really nice group to work with actually.

149.   A: Yes, and you need contributions don't you, from that group. I suppose it's got smaller, the group's got smaller since we started. I think we started with eleven, and that's because some people have opted in and out haven't they, at different stages. But everybody's in a position where they can share experiences and learn from each other really. And it certainly starts me thinking, when I see other people that are just coming into management and how they're thinking. It gives me time to think back about how I experience things, you know, listening to them about their management of staff now and things around that really.

150. Q: Because I think everybody in the group's got some, not everybody actually, but most people have got some supervisory experience. And I suppose everybody's got some kind of experience of kind of sharing ideas with their team. But for you, I suppose there's a number of people in that group who've got a similar kind of role and perhaps doing things differently, and that comes out in the discussion.

151. A: Yes, I remember one instance, I might have spoken to you about it in a tutorial, was when I was listening to somebody else talking about how they were managing a situation, and when I reflected on that and thought about it, it made me think, is that what I'm like, is that my style? Is that how I might be perceived? Because how I was perceiving that, I was wondering whether other staff might be perceiving it that way as well, so thinking about that. Yes, I think challenging some of the thoughts I had around the language that I might be using, does it influence social workers when they're thinking about families, when they're thinking about why something's happening?

152. Q: Because I suppose there was discussion, which included, I suppose, a little bit of challenging really, you know, quite a bit of challenging really of each other. And I think, what you're saying there, is that you were taking those challenges, you know, taking them onto yourself really, in the sense of how does this relate to what I do?

153. A: Yes, because obviously, I've listened to somebody who was talking about managing a new case and the worker, and how they would start off managing that case. And I suddenly thought, I was uncomfortable with that, because I felt that the manager was influencing, possibly influencing how the social worker might go about meeting this family for the first time, about how they presented themselves. Preconceived ideas about where this particular issue was going to go. And it made me really think about, I must make sure that I don't do that and think back and check out. And I did come back

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on that instance and we did explore it with a few of my workers in supervision, around, you know, if that happened, would they feel able to challenge me? And it reminded people, it's alright to challenge. So if they think I'm maybe inappropriate or they want to test, challenge my thinking, that's fine to do so. Just because I'm the team manager, it doesn't mean that they can't do that. Am I explaining myself?

154.   Q: You are very clearly, yes that's interesting. I'm just thinking about it really but yes, interesting. So quite a lot of learning within the group and in the sessions really and quite a lot of intense thinking then. I mean what about sort of outside of the sessions, any sort of opportunity for informal learning outside of the sessions? I don't know whether that includes, it might include your own work place, but sort of outside of the formal teaching, if you like. Do you think there was any opportunities for learning?

155.   A: Obviously, you've got your study time, so you've got your reading. And I did do reading at home and reading, and I'm quite fortunate that I'm in a position where my son's older and my husband works a lot. So I do get a lot of time to myself, if I so choose to have it. So there is opportunities for that, for me as an individual, but probably not with anybody else. And I probably wouldn't choose to do that, you know, I'd probably prefer to be having the group sessions and then doing some learning by myself.

156.   Q: And you've talked about the learning that's gone on for you in your work place and the sort of discussion with your team, for example. I think that must have been very valuable really.

157.   A: Yes, it was. And I've talked within the management team as well. In fact, I'm always talking about what I've learnt and what we've done and come in quite excited about things. And they probably think, oh she's been to Uni again. And I'm anxious to share

those learning with other people you see, ordering those books and things.

158.   Q: Oh so you've ordered books from here?

159.   A: Yes, from what we've looked at and, you know, some reading that we've done on the different modules and the units. So if we've had a piece of reading that's been given, because it's quite useful isn't it, for somebody to find something that's interesting for you to read and just fishing that. And that sounds really lazy, not looking for stuff, you know, but it's actually useful for somebody to do that. And that makes you, you know, I've been bringing that back and saying, well how can we share it with the team, what can we learn from this? Let's get some new books, let's get some, let's choose some for ourselves instead of waiting for the library at Training to get them, which is at [name of training centre], the other side or [metropolitan borough LA]. Let's have some here, where we can pick them up and use them with families, you know, and things like that.

160.   Q: So this is for your team isn't it, your social workers?

161.   A: Yes.

162.   Q: I'm interested to know what you've got, if you can remember?

163.   A: Yes, I'll let you know.

164.   Q: And you've clearly had support from your work place and you've talked a lot about how that's contributed, is there anything you want to add to that?

165.   A: No, I don't think so.

166.   Q: We've not used this word cloud, we've not really needed it, but I just wondered if there was anything on it? I don't know whether there's anything on there that jogs your memory?

167.   A: Yes, I've looked at it again and we've talked about the concepts and knowledge around that really, quite a lot of learning for me around different concepts of thinking about critical analysis, reflection, thinking about judgement, in that making a judgement about different areas. And thinking about my perspective of things and my influence, I think about that quite a lot. And professionalism, looking at that as well, that was useful.

168.   Q: Just on that point about professionalism, what are your thoughts about that, in terms of what we covered on the course or anything that sort of stands out?

169.   A: I mean I'd already started to think about it a little bit in the law assignment, because one of the challenges we talked about, was about how you're perceived as a social worker and how within the court arena and working with solicitors, about how you're perceived and your professionalism there really. So I'd started to thinking about it then. So then again, when we did it in this unit, it very much reinforced about the position that we the social workers and being professional people, but about what we can do about that really. So it's the reason that sometimes we're not taken seriously, or valued, is because we're not evidencing and using the, you know, our skills and our practice and reinforcing that with people.

170.   And we're good at doing that, you know, we're good at saying, well actually, I'm professional at this and this is what I'm thinking and these are the tools I've used and this is why I think this is the case.

171.   Q: Do you think there is an issue about the court arena and the social workers, the perceptions of social workers?

172.   A: Yes, I mean I think people are frightened of that because, obviously, you're leaving yourself open to challenge, particularly if you start using evidence based practice in assessments or court referrals. And it's getting that balance within that and making it service user readable and friendly as well.

173.   Q: And is it about expertise and things or perceptions about expertise? Because if social workers, I think what that's pointing to is a kind of anxiety about using expertise or exposing expertise, but saying, this is the evidence I'm basing this on?

174.   A: Yes, and I think that's still around now for people, you know, when they're practicing around what's OK to use and what's alright to say, you know. And using theories and challenging. We talked a lot about, do we get this feeling about something when you first start work with a family, you get this feeling? Well my view would be, it's not a feeling, it's something you've learnt over time and you've built up as your experience. So it's about evidencing that and we're good at that really.

175.   Q: I suppose it's, are we good at articulating those feelings? Because sometimes people say things about, I can't put my finger on it or I've just got this feeling or there's something not right, you know. It's those kind of phrases that means there's something there, that people are kind of aware of at some level, but it's kind of bringing it out.

176.   A: It is and bringing it out in a way that's informing people really. And I know we do a lot as managers, of trying to unpick that and pull out what people's, why are you thinking that, what's your evidence? Because at the end of the day, you know, that's what we need to be sharing with other professionals. And, of course, it's all around the media perception of social workers and their status and

trying to challenge some of those things. Because we can't shout about the positive outcomes for children as much can we, as some people can do in other professions.

177.   Q: So is there anything else from the word cloud that you wanted to mention?

178.   A: No, I think we've talked about them.

179.   Q: So after the unit's finished then, again you're ahead of me with these questions really. Anything else you want to say about how you feel know about the unit, the critical thinking and analysis unit, anything else you want to add?

180.   A: Yes, I think it was a, you know, it's a very good learning opportunity. I think it was the unit I learnt the most on, only because there's other areas that I've covered before. So, you know, I've done management courses and things, so a lot of things were covered in that. Obviously, I'm working with the law all the time, but actually challenging my thinking about critical analysis and reflection, was something for the first time that I've really started to do that really.

181.   Q: There is a debate whether critical analysis and critical reflection should be taught as kind of a separate skill or a separate, you know, to be taught separately basically, or whether it should be threaded through. And I think what you tend to find at a certain level within Universities, is that this language around demonstrating critical analysis, comes into the assessed units and there's an expectation there that it's kind of threaded through, in terms of the teaching. But there is an argument that, even if you thread it through, that it should also be taught as a discrete subject. I suppose that's part of what I'm trying to explore really, as to whether it is valuable for people to have kind of concentration on this as an area?

182.   A: I think it probably is valuable. I don't know whether there might be an argument for it to be done earlier on in the unit as a whole or whether I'm at the right stage in my learning and development to be able to learn from that in a better way than probably I was at the beginning. But actually now, when you go on to do the unit after that, it's much easier to think about critical analysis and reflection because we've done a unit, you know, that's covered that.

183.   Q: So when you say earlier, do you mean earlier in the PG Dip?

184.   A: Yes, so for example, would we do it as a first unit, I don't know. There's debate about it because the other side of that is, I might have thought, oh it's quite a difficult unit, am I going to get through this course? But I feel more confident now, having done that and being able to use it in further thinking. So I'm not, you know, I'm not daunted by the fact that I've got to think about critical analysis in my next assignment.

185.   Q: But those thoughts you had at the beginning of the critical thinking and analysis unit, would they have been amplified if it was the very first unit?

186.   A: Yes, and that's the limitation of doing it at the beginning. I might have, not just me, I suppose other people might have thought, well actually, it is quite a difficult unit and is this what it's going to be like for two years? Where actually, we've had a good balance haven't we, you know, from my learning perspective, I had a good balance where I've, you know, I've learnt different things from different units.

187.   Q: And I suppose you started with a unit that was kind of spot on for where you were in your thinking really, for your career.

188.   A: Yes, and I'm expecting myself to, hopefully, develop in my assignments around, you know, we've talked about now in this module we've just started, that we should be using critical analysis and thinking even more on everything we do really. And we should be at a stage where we're challenging and that we are in a position where we can contribute to that. For example, if you wanted to do a research project of some kind, and why shouldn't we be doing that?

189.   Q: As a part of social work?

190.   A: Yes, and working with academic people on that really. Because without the practice experience, it wouldn't be able to be achieved would it? But whereas at the beginning I probably wouldn't have thought that, I'd have probably said, oh heck, you know.

191.   Q: So what advice would you give to others who are just about to start the critical thinking and analysis unit?

192.   A: I'd probably acknowledge that it might seem a bit scary in the beginning, but to be enthusiastic about it because it was a really, a useful learning module to go through really and encourage them to do that.

193.   Q: And if there's one thing that you had to change in the unit, what would it be?

194.   A: I might have, and I know the opportunity was there, I might have had an extra tutorial. Because I think the tutorial was very, very useful and I think without it, I probably wouldn't have got the assignment done. Because it really made me focus down on, because I was able to bring an example of, you know, my ideas verbally and look at whether or not I was right really, thinking about that. And it made me go back and look at, and showing I've got the understanding of what critical analysis is about.

195.   Q: That's helpful actually, yes. I think that might be a good idea.

196.   A: Not that the opportunity, I mean I'm sure if I'd have asked, the opportunity's always been there hasn't it?

197.   Q: Yes, but it's kind of, I suppose there's a thing about, if it's actually part of the written documentation for a unit, I suppose people might feel more able to take advantage of that, to ask for that.

198.   A: Yes.

199.   Q: And if there was one thing you would keep the same?

200.   A: I mean there's lots of things that I would keep the same, lots of things, you know, strands throughout it really. The written pieces of work and the discussions.

201.   Q: Yes, I know you talked about the written piece, I've sort of picked that one up yes.

202.   A: Yes.

203.   Q: Any advice to a future tutor? Because we dole out so much advice don't we, do this, do that.

204.   A: It's really difficult to

205.   Q: To advise back?

206.   A: Yes, I wouldn't want to assume really.

207.   Q: But if there was anything that you thought about afterwards, you could always send it to me. Because in some ways we do, I mean we do get feedback in terms of the evaluations, I have looked at those and they are a way that students can advise us. I think we probably don't ask students enough about how we should approach units. One thing that I've been thinking about is, whether it would be useful to have like a, at the beginning of a unit like this, to have something, which is around sort of professional biographies. Because what I'm finding is, that the early part of this interview, I find out much more about student's experience. Because in the class setting, there's quite a lot you have to get through and you try and get to know people a little bit and your own experience, but actually there's a lot more in people's backgrounds that we could have, that perhaps it would have been helpful for you to know.

208.   A: That you've learnt through doing this, yes.

209.   Q: Yes, and I'm thinking that maybe I might put something in, in terms of kind of a professional biography type thing at the beginning, although perhaps if people have done PQ1, they've probably got those anyway. They've already done that, so they might not want to do that again. There might be some way of sort of bringing more

210.   A: They could add to it couldn't they? They could maybe reflect on what they've done before and add to that really.

211.   Q: Yes, and trying to do that without it necessarily being a burden to some of the students. So what about impact on practice? Again, you've talked about this, in terms of the discussions you've had in the team, you know, bringing books and the research to people's attention. Is there anything else you want to say about impact on practice? I mean you have said quite a lot about it already.

212.   A: Just really reinforcing that it's, you know, it's so valuable being in that learning environment and then bringing it back and challenging your thinking around things really. And being enthusiastic about learning and about reflecting on what impact we're having on service users etc. And sharing that, so it's not just, one of the things I'm learning at the moment, through this course, is actually that's OK that I've learnt this module, but what am I then going to do about it? I have a responsibility to make sure that I use it and it impacts on practice. And I feel more responsible as a manager because it's not just about me; it's about how I'm able to empower others.

213.   So that's one of my challenges at the moment that I'm going through. So yes, what am I going to do about the things I'm learning?

214.   Q: And is there anything else generally that you want to add, that you've not had chance to say? Because I know you've come very prepared really, so I wondered if there was anything we've not covered.

215.   A: I think there's still some way for us to go as an organisation, around service user contributions to service delivery and things, and it's come up again in our recent inspection. So even though we've had an inspection that's been very positive this time, it's come up again about us using service user feedback. So I think that's a challenge for us to do.

216.   Q: And is, I mean are you having any sorts of support or advice with that?

217.   A: Yes, we are doing, yes. We've got an action plan but it's a, you know, it's a bit like what we're saying about students isn't it, it's about getting their input.

Appendix 19: Interview Transcript
Participant D

1. Q: So shall we start with your current social work role; do you want to tell me a little bit about what you do here at the moment?

2. A: I'm an Independent Reviewing Officer and I've been in post since July last year. I'm still referring to myself as being new in post but I'm not that new in post anymore, I don't suppose really. It's a very busy team, they've expanded by two posts, that's where my post came from. And it's very different from the social work role I had previously, I was on a child protection team, long term work, where I did predominantly court work and children on protection plans. So I obviously worked with the Independent Reviewing Officers a lot already, so I knew that side of their role but I didn't know anything else beyond doing the looked after children's reviews. And in (NW Metropolitan Borough) we also do the child protection conferences.

3. So I didn't know the other side of the role around challenging poor practice, as well as commenting on good practice obviously and, you know, the other side of the job. There's lots of strands to it that I didn't realise I suppose. So I'm still getting to grips with all that but I do like the job. I have to hold my hand up and say, I massively miss practice as a social worker, far more than I ever thought I would. And when I'm talking with friends and colleagues who are doing social work, and when I go to Uni now and we're talking about practice, I get a little bit, I suppose jealousy is the wrong word, but a bit, oh I don't do that anymore. And I've not really got anything current to contribute and it's all from sort of last year when I was in practice, so I do miss it.

4. Q: So what would you say are the big differences then in your role now and what you did previously?

5. A: I feel like I do even more paperwork and more time on the computer now than I did as a social worker. I enjoy it and it's really good because it's from a totally different perspective, it's about looking at other people's decisions and practice. Looking at how they've come to their decisions and why they've come to their decisions and how their assessments led to the conclusions that they did. And do I feel that they've done enough really and have they, are services in place for the child or the young person?

6. So it's very different, it's questioning other people's practice sometimes, which feels a bit uncomfortable. But other times it feels, it doesn't feel uncomfortable, I suppose that's the wrong word to use, I'm not used to it yet I don't suppose. I'm still learning how to address other people's practice to make sure that I do it in a way that people will accept. I suppose it's the thing about emails and making sure, because emails can be taken out of context or read, if you write something really quickly, you have to be careful about how you're writing it because it could be perceived differently to how you've meant it to be. And I know that once or twice I've upset people by being a bit too quick with my emails I think. So I make sure that I word things correctly, not that I word them wrong, but I word them sensitively.

7. I think, just before I got the job, I also applied for a deputy post on the team I worked on. And I got the interview for the IRO job, I got offered the job and then decided not to go for the deputy's post, but in hindsight, I think I might have preferred the deputy job. But I made the decision that I wanted the IRO post and went for that one.

8. Q: So what is it you miss then about being a social worker?

9. A: I think it's the contact with the families and doing the visits. Because when I review a case, I don't feel I know it well enough sometimes and I feel I need to get as involved as a social worker to be

able to make the comments and do my job as an IRO but that's not my job. It's to read everything and to look at the assessments and the outcomes and the care plans and practice and to make sure that it's been done. Not to go and get hands on and get stuck in, that's not my job anymore. But I think sometimes, to make some of the decisions I have to make, I need to know more and I feel like I need to know the family more. And I think it's that side that I miss, getting involved.

10. Because I know that social work isn't as hands on as it used to be years and years ago and we do spend a lot more time on the computers anyway. But I just do miss the contact with families I think and getting to know families and working with them. Because I do work with them as an IRO but it's very different. I get to meet more and get involved more at a conference I feel, than I do with looked after children sometimes.

11. Q: In terms of supervisory responsibilities, I suppose you've answered this really in a way, but I mean do you have any supervisory responsibilities?

12. A: I don't formally supervise, as in manage anybody directly, but I do informally. Because I will ring social workers and offer advice and guidance on their practice, or I will suggest, well I do suggest and I do make recommendations, which are documented and reported and responded on. But I don't have any direct management responsibility and supervising people.

13. Q: So you clearly have an advisory role, I mean is it kind of an overseeing role or is it a monitoring role?

14. A: Well part of it is very much monitoring because it's part of quality protects and quality assurance. Some of the information that we collate through the work we do and we record on the system, goes towards collecting that kind of information. So it's both really but

again, recommendations that I make might not necessarily be acted upon because the social worker and/or the manager might not agree with my recommendation. But that would be obviously then, I would question why and we would discuss it and hopefully come to an agreement before it goes any further.

15. Q: So your opinion probably carries quite a bit of weight really but in terms of authority, supervisory authority for the case, I mean that's still with the team manager isn't it?

16. A: Yes, I don't have any case responsibility.

17. Q: So demographic information about yourself then, how would you describe yourself, in terms of demographic or identity?

18. A: White British, middle class, sorry not middle class, I'm working class. I suppose that's me really unless you want any more than that? I'm not religious in any way, I don't attend any church, I don't get involved in anything, any faiths or anything like that.

19. Q: So when did you become qualified?

20. A: I qualified in 2006 and before that I worked, I've always worked within social care, I worked with children with disabilities for twelve years and then I went onto Uni and qualified.

21. Q: And was that the BA or was that the Dip SW?

22. A: The BA, we were the first year to do the degree and I did it at [NW University]. I did it full time as well, which was very lucky because I got a secondment from [NW Metropolitan LA] to study full time. And then, obviously, I came back to [NW Metropolitan LA] and got the first social work post.

23. Q: Yes, so I was going to ask you about your experience of social work really, post qualification, and your career really, maybe even from before you went on the course?

24. A: Like I said, I've always worked for [NW Metropolitan LA] since I was 21 and I've never worked for any other local authority. And I started off working with children with disabilities, it was then a residential social worker. But I've worked within the same service, I've done outreach work, I've worked with pre-school children, I've worked with children with complex disabilities, I've worked on a residential unit, I've worked on a short break care. I did a couple of years as an Assistant Manager, managing a respite unit for children with disabilities.

25. I think I'd sort of exhausted children with disabilities, that's why I sort of decided to go on and do something else. But before I worked with children with disabilities, I didn't have what I would call a career. I've worked in factories and I'd done warehouse work and shop work and things like that. So I hadn't really done anything, I hadn't found what I enjoyed doing really until I got the job working with children with disabilities.

26. Q: So all your time in working with children with disabilities, that was prior to you going on the BA?

27. A: Yes.

28. Q: And was that all within what would have been social services then?

29. A: Yes.

30. Q: So within the same department and then there was the split and now, is it children services and adult services here?

31. A: Yes, that's the way we do it yes.

32. Q: And again, you've talked a bit about this, since qualifying you've been a social worker, so what's happened since qualifying then, that's brought you to this role?

33. A: Well I qualified in 2006 and then just before we finished University I'd applied for the job at [NW Metropolitan LA] on the long term team, which I got. So I did that for nearly four years. At first I didn't like it, if I'm honest. It probably took me a year, if not a little bit longer, to decide, yes I do like it, it took me quite a while. I toyed with the idea, should I be doing this job, should I look for something else? And then I saw the job for an Independent Reviewing Officer, and I'd had no plan to change jobs, I had no, I'd never aspired to be an IRO. It's just the job came up and I decided to read the job specification and once I read it I decided that I'd try to apply, well I'd try to get the job.

34. So I applied and I didn't get the post, the first time somebody else got it. And the jobs came up again and this time there were two new posts generated and the manager actually asked me to apply, said that I'd done, well I'd had my feedback anyway, so I knew I'd done well in the interview. But I was asked if I was interested and would I apply again? And I was very flattered and thought, oh well go on I will then, so I did and I got the job. So like I said, I had no plan to do this job, it was just sort of, it was just there, it was an opportunity, so I decided to have a go really.

35. Q: Just going back to when you were newly qualified and you said you didn't like the job at the beginning. And then there must have been a shift where you sort of settled into it, I mean can you remember what it was that you didn't like about the job?

36. A: I just felt that I didn't know what I was doing, and that I was just bluffing, not bluffing everything, but just hooking everything together and just hoping I was doing it right and then coming back and checking that I'd done it right. And sometimes I hadn't and I had to go back and redo things or, you know, I'd give the wrong advice and have to go back and give the right advice. And I do think, it's just a matter of growing in confidence in the job, you are doing it and you are doing it right and you're getting your supervision and your experience, you're getting knowledge from colleagues and talking about what you're doing. But I think, until you feel confident in doing it, you just feel a bit like you're, oh, a bit out of your depth I suppose really.

37. And then I sometimes question why I left, because then I felt very confident, I loved doing the job and then I changed jobs again and then started feeling very unconfident in the new job. Again thinking, am I doing this right, what am I doing wrong, should I have done something different? But it's just those feelings of being in a new job when you're the least experienced person isn't it? And you're trying to grab hold of everybody else's experience to make sure you're doing it right. It's a big thing is confidence I think, especially in the job of an IRO, when you're having to chair meetings, especially if you sit in a conference, a child protection conference, which can be very daunting and very upsetting for the professionals as well as family. Trying to keep everybody's emotions to a level that are manageable and that can be quite daunting.

38. Q: You must be balancing an awful lot of different things in those particular meetings?

39. A: Yes.

40. Q: Including yourself really and your own emotions?

41. A: Yes, and it's information that's being shared as well. Sometimes if there's complex medical information that you don't understand, you know what I mean, how's the family supposed to understand? You get lots of people using terminology and abbreviations and I'm, because I don't, even education, if education start using abbreviations and start talking about child development centiles, I have to stop them and ask them to explain. And that's for my benefit more so than anybody else's sometimes, but it's about being able to ask all them questions and make sure that, you're perhaps sometimes asking questions that other people want to ask but don't feel that they can. And checking that everybody else is alright and understanding what's being talked about and discussed as well.

42. So there's loads of things you have to try and remember, you never remember them all. There's always something that gets left out or forgotten or afterwards you think, oh I didn't ask that question or I didn't check that out with mum.

43. Q: So moving on to look at kind of social work training and education in a bit more detail. We're looking at social work education in particular prior to coming on the PG DIP now. I mean we are obviously going to get to the PG Dip but we're looking at sort of your experiences of education prior to that. So how would you describe your experiences of your qualifying social work course?

44. A: I quite enjoyed it but I think that's because I did it full time as well, I don't think I'd have liked to have done it part time. And I think I was very lucky to have been seconded to study full time for a degree. And I did enjoy it, I made lots of new friends, some that I still have now, some are colleagues. I didn't realise it at the time but now, with hindsight, I don't feel it teaches you the job. I can remember the children and families module that we did and I don't feel in any way that prepared me to do children and families work. I think it's more

about teaching you how to think rather than how to do a job. And I sometimes, I don't even think it did that sometimes.

45. But I did enjoy it, I found lots of the topics interesting. I enjoyed lots of the lecturers, some obviously more than others, and I enjoyed some of the units more than others. And I did really well, academically, I came out really well and I was really pleased with myself. Because I'd never been, going to University was never an option when I left school. I mean I went to college and did something called a PCSE Certificate, which is a Preliminary Certificate in Social Care, when I first left college. But after that, you know, my mum never said to me, 'why don't you go to University?' So to then go to University when I was in my thirties and then come out with a qualification, I was very pleased with myself.

46. So yes, I did enjoy it. It was a long three years I think and I couldn't wait to finish really because then I could get a new job. But again, when I started doing the degree, I never thought I would become a social worker. I thought, I know I can have a degree and do various things with a social work degree, I don't have to be a social worker. But again, it's a bit, there was just a job opportunity there and I thought, well I might as well apply and I'll get that job and see what else I fancy doing once I get some experience. But I seemed to just fall into it and stayed there eventually and did start liking it. But yes, I did enjoy it, I think I enjoyed the social side just as much as studying really because, like I say, I did make some new friends and things like that.

47. Q: Did you move nearer the University?

48. A: No because I lived in [NW Metropolitan LA] anyway and I went to [NW University], so it's only a train ride away. And I was fortunate, like I said, that I was seconded, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to study for a degree because I wouldn't have been able to afford to.

Because we had a house, obviously, and a mortgage and bills and my husband's wage wouldn't have allowed me to go studying really. So I feel quite fortunate in that.

49. Q: So you know you mentioned in particular the children and families unit that you studied, you don't feel it really prepared you for social work, a children and families social work role. That it was more about teaching you how to think, I mean do you think that it should, that that teaching should provide more of a foundation for practice?

50. A: Yes, I do because a lot of the things, especially court work and legislation, I mean we did the law module obviously, but again it feels so far removed once you get into practice, what you learnt academically. And I find it really hard to link the two a lot of the time but there obviously has to be a link. I mean there's got to, I've got to have learnt something there that I've used, there's got to be loads of stuff that I've learnt. But I think, like I said, when I think about the legislation that I work with, I think it's because you're not in practice. So therefore, when you're given legislation to read and try and understand, unless you're doing the job and implementing it, it's really hard to understand what it is you're doing.

51. I suppose if you've already done the job and had a taste of the job and then do it the other way round, it might make more sense. And I think it was the same of some of the modules as well. You'll know whether this is a really far-fetched idea, but I sometimes think that lecturers maybe should still be in practice or have a, you know, be doing something in practice, current practice, to be able to teach, because again, it just feels that the academic side is too far removed from the practical side.

52. Q: That's an interesting idea, I mean it does happen in some cases, you know, some lecturers do carry on practicing.

53. A: I know we had some speakers came in who were in practice and they had, they specialised just in certain, they had an interest in certain things. And I couldn't tell you any off the top of my head, but I know we had guest speakers who would come in and do lectures and they were in practice. But I know, well I don't know for definite, but I know that a lot of our full time lecturers were full time lecturers. And I just think, because I know they've got lots of experience, but I sometimes think, you don't really know how something works unless you're using it.

54. Because I worry, in my role as an IRO, that when new legislation comes out and new tools of working and practice, that because I'm not doing it as a social worker I won't fully understand it. So when new legislation and everything is coming out now, I'm really conscious that I don't use it like a social worker does. So I want to make sure that I understand what I'm talking about and then maybe ask, some people might think I ask too many questions because I want to fully, make sure that I fully understand what's being done or how something's being used, to be able to do my job correctly as well.

55. Q: When you did the children and families unit on your qualifying course, did you have a children and families placement?

56. A: Yes.

57. Q: Was the teaching before the placement?

58. A: Yes, because my hundred-day placement, my last placement, was in a long term social work team, which was, that was south and I got the job at north. So it was the same job just in a different team. And all the teaching had finished by the time we did the last placement I think.

59. Q: I'm wondering whether things clicked a bit on placement, in terms of linking the academic side and the practice side?

60. A: No because then I had absolutely no idea of the job I was doing. And I'd be looking at care orders and things like that and I didn't know what they were. And I'd be given files to read and I'd be saying, but I don't understand this file because where's such a thing and where's such a thing? You know what paper files are like, they're just terrible. But when you know what you're looking for you can find it straight away, because visually you know what a care order looks like once you've seen it. But as someone who's never done the job before, given a file and say, just find such a body's care order, well what does it look like? I had to go through it all page by page. I was stupid there, I should have said, 'just show me one please,' so I know what I'm looking for.

61. But even on a file, sometimes a care order would just be a photocopy of the original, the original could be somewhere else anyway. And people asking you to find that, I remember being given stacks of paper files to go through and just thinking, oh my god, feeling that I had to rearrange them and put them in some kind of order. But once you're in the job, you know that doing your filing is sort of like the lowest priority. But as a student, I was given all this thing and thinking, why don't people put things away properly? Why is everything in such a mess? But once you're doing the job you know it's different.

62. Q: That's interesting actually, what you said about care orders, I'm going to retain that little bit because just actually showing students what different documents look like, might be quite a big help really yes. So is there anything that stands out for you from your qualifying social work course, that stands out for you in a good way or otherwise, anything that you've not mentioned?

63. A: I don't think so.

64. Q: Anything you particularly enjoyed or disliked on your course?

65. A: No, on the whole, I did enjoy studying. It's quite an anxious time, like it is now, the build up to handing in an assignment and then getting your results back. But I was a little bit preoccupied, because I started getting good grades I was like, oh can I come out with a First, I mean I didn't but you get a bit anxious about your marks then. Whereas, when I first started I just remember thinking, I just hope I qualify.

66. And I do remember on one assignment, I actually questioned my mark and some of the feedback, because I was told that some of my referencing was wrong. And I thought, that's fair enough but I'd like to know what and then I can know for next time. And something else had been commented on, and I can't remember what it was now. But when I did meet with, I didn't meet with the tutor, I think I met with the Head of Year, and I was told that they wouldn't remark because it wasn't their policy and if they remarked for one they'd have to remark for everybody who requested it. And I remember being quite disappointed, the fact that I asked them to go through my feedback and they couldn't point out my errors that was in the feedback, as in you'd made some mistakes in your referencing. Would you just please show me where I've made the mistakes? And they couldn't find it.

67. And there was another comment that I disagreed with, like I said, and I can't remember, it might have been about the structure or something. But whatever the comments that I disagreed with, the person I spoke to couldn't back up the comments nor back me up with my complaint, I suppose. So I was a bit disappointed about that because I thought, you know, it could be a massive difference if somebody else marks a piece of work. Because it hadn't been second marked, because sometimes you knew your work had been

because it would be a double signature and mark at the bottom. But I mean it didn't bother me to the point where it affected my studying or anything like that or my relationships with any of the tutors or lecturers. So there wasn't a huge problem.

68. Q: But I get the impression that you realised at some point, that really you could achieve pretty well academically. And that perhaps that feedback that you puzzled over, I mean in a sense maybe you're still puzzling over it really, I don't know, you know, what on earth was, what was wrong with this piece of work? And also, wanting to learn because if you're kind of aspirational, if you like, in terms of your grades, I suppose there is that eagerness to know, how do I get to the next grade?

69. A: Yes, and I think that particular piece of work, I think, was a lower mark than I'd got before, which is why it probably threw me a little bit as well. But, like I say, it didn't affect my attitude towards finishing the course or anything like that, it wasn't a problem.

70. Q: Yes, the importance of feedback really. So can you remember learning about reflection or critical reflection?

71. A: I can remember doing reflection because we did that from the first year and we did it very basically and built up each year. We did, I think it was called, personal development and reflection, and we did that module every year, but obviously each year it became more in-depth. But I can't remember the critical aspect of it, to be honest.

72. Q: It may well not have been called that you see, because some courses don't, we don't all use the same terminology.

73. A: But I think the word, critical analysis would have, I would remember that really well. I mean some of the, we did about reflecting analysis and things like that and analysis, but I don't particularly

remember anything about critical analysis. But we definitely did lots of work on reflection, like I say, because I remember on placements we had to keep reflective logs and things like that. And we did pieces on reflection throughout the course. And reflection was quite often just one component of many of the assignments. Because you could get the question, it would be broken down for you in word count, how much weighting they would expect and there was always a section on reflection.

74. Q: So can you remember when you were newly qualified, whether you had any thoughts about critical analysis or reflection?

75. A: I don't think I consciously thought about it, no. I know that I did obviously, because it's the kind of work that you come back and think, oh did I do it right, should I have done this, oh I didn't say that, I didn't do this, I did that right, I did that wrong, I'll remember that next time, I did that well. So I've always done that but I've never done it consciously. I've never sat down and thought, right, let me just think about what I've done. I've never done it constructively, I suppose is the word, but it's always done. I don't think you can do social work and not reflect really, otherwise you would never improve your practice.

76. And it's not something, which shocked me, is ever done, well I've never been asked in supervision, formal supervision, to sort of reflect on something or feedback. Well obviously you get asked to feed back, but the supervision's never, that I've experienced, never been structured in a way where reflection is part of your supervision. It is but it isn't named, if you know what I mean. So you will feed back and talk about cases and what happened and how you did it, but it isn't actually named in your notes or in the agenda, that we're going to reflect on this piece of work because it didn't go very well or it went very well, what did you do that went well? Do you know what I mean? I've never had it structured in like that.

77.Q: So what about any education since then, since your qualifying course but before the PG Dip?

78.A: I haven't done any formal qualifications; I've done training with the department.

79.Q: Yes, it might be training, is there anything that stands out for you?

80.A: Well I did the consolidation module, which is obviously

81.Q: The PQ1?

82.A: Yes, I did that at [NW University], which I found very boring and very tedious because it was all linking it to your key roles and your evidence workbook and all that, which was just like University, which takes you forever to do with all the cross referencing and writing down the side. Where you've met what key role and very time consuming.

83.Q: Do you think there's any reflection in that?

84.A: In the consolidation module?

85.Q: Yes.

86.A: Yes, because there was a piece on reflection I think that we had to do in there as well. It felt very much like an extension of doing the degree, because you had to put it all together in a file, you had to section it off certain ways, which is exactly like doing the degree, putting your files together for your placements on the degree course, which I found really time consuming. You're supposed to be doing a degree, not a, you know what I mean, a course on how to arrange a file. And I know it sounds really silly but it was quite complex in the

end, trying to put these files together and your evidence work book and cross referencing everything. But that's the only formal thing I've done, apart from the department training.

87. Q: Is there anything from the department training that stands out for you as being interesting, helpful?

88. A: No, not really. I suppose one thing I have done, which I didn't, it was called Storm Training. And I can't remember what it stands for but it's about addressing feelings of suicide in young people. And it was two days training and I was petrified because you had to be videoed on it, talking to a young person about suicidal feelings. And that was part of the course and then you had to watch it back with everybody and you all had to sort of give feedback. But again, it went really well in the end. But I was the person who nominated myself to go first, so I could do it first and get it out the way. Because I wouldn't have been able to wait until the end of the two days because I would have been, I wouldn't have been able to have enjoyed the course and watch everybody else because I would have been worried too much about what I had to do. But yes, that was unusual, I hadn't expected to do that.

89. Q: Have you had any encouragement to study from anyone during your social work education training or since, have you had encouragement from anybody?

90. A: Not on a professional level no.

91. Q: A lot of what you've talked about has been very much about you kind of being self-motivated really and sort of taking chances and, you know, making moves to change job or, I mean it seems very much about sort of you pushing yourself really. So there hasn't been any particular sort of?

92. A: No, I mean we do get emails round that there's training available and we can request to go on it, but it's all in-house kind of training. There's nothing external at the moment but I think that's the same for most people at the moment anyway.

93. Q: That's kind of given me a really good insight into your professional life and development before the PG Dip. So now looking at the PG Dip, which is the course you're on at the moment. What brought you to the PG Dip?

94. A: I didn't get a place initially. I applied and two colleagues got on the course but then one of the colleagues, we found out, hadn't been qualified long enough. So then it got offered to another colleague, not me, who then decided she didn't want to do it and then I got offered it. So I think I was last in order for that particular course. So yes, I decided to take it. But originally I was going to apply to [NW University] to do the, I don't know what the other course is, the 2 - 6 at [NW University]. And this was the first time that we'd been offered the opportunity to do it at Manchester on this current course. So I decided to choose this one.

95. When I did the application, and fortunately the place was at Manchester and not [NW University] that became available. So I did get it a bit by default really. And then there was a bit of confusion whether or not I could accept it because I'd just got the job as an independent reviewing officer and the training place was for, on a social workers' team. But I didn't know I'd got the post as an IRO, so I said I wasn't refusing the place on the course on the chance that I might get the job, that I'd not even had the interview for yet. So I don't think management were very happy really that this, well they weren't not happy that I got the job, but the training place then ended up being on a different team to where it had been originally allocated, which is all politics I know.

96. So yes, that's how I ended up getting a place really. A bit by default but I was very pleased. But then once I started the course, I think it was a real panic that it was then an MA and not a degree course, so obviously it was going to be that much harder. And it is far harder than I thought, to be honest, when I compare it to the degree course.

97. Q: Harder in what way do you think?

98. A: In, because I can read pieces of work from when I studied the degree, and I can see now where they're requesting more information and why and it's more around, they wanted more analysis, they wanted it to be more critical. And I can see that and think, oh yes, I would need to have padded that bit out to get more marks and that bit. And I think I could probably write a piece of work now and know it's not very good but struggle and not know what to do, if that makes any sense, in how to make it better. I know sometimes that bits need to be more analytical and critical, but I don't know how to make it like that.

99. Q: At the moment are you saying?

100.   A: Yes, because sometimes I think I need some research that backs that up or I need something that disagrees with that and I can't find it and I don't know where to go to find it. So sometimes I have an idea or well everyone's agreeing with that bit there, I need some research or some author that disagrees, so I can have a bit of an argument going on. But then I can't find, I don't know where to go to find that information. So that's sort of how I struggle with it.

101.   Q: Have you any idea what would help you with that? Because you're saying you can spot where the discussion could expand.

102.   A: Yes, not all the time but sometimes I think, well I need more there. I suppose the only way I could do it is by asking one of the lecturers or a tutor to read it but they're not allowed to do that, and then signpost me to an author or a piece of research. That's not what tutors and lecturers are there to do is it? Unless I just had a verbal discussion with them.

103.   Q: Would you use tutorials do you think?

104.   A: Yes, and I do, I do have tutorials. Saying that, I didn't have a tutorial on the last assignment we did, but I usually do.

105.   Q: So you could ask verbally, I'm wondering if there's not enough opportunities for that, or if you've not, or maybe if you've not formulated your ideas at the point where the opportunity is, if you like, to ask? Because there seems to be something going on. I mean if, I mean this is quite a key point really because if there is a way of sort of supporting a student to fill in the gaps that you're noticing, if you like, we need to think about how to do that really.

106.   A: But I don't notice them gaps probably until my assignment is almost finish, like oh I could just do with something more there. And I know what literature I've got from the library and I know how to get onto the journals. So it's sort of like towards, it's probably when the module's even finished, when we're in those weeks of writing and submitting. It's my responsibility really to contact somebody isn't it, to sort of have that verbal discussion really.

107.   Q: Well I supposed it's a shared responsibility, you know, at this level of study really, that we need to make the opportunities available at the right times really. We need to make the opportunities available, we need to be able to facilitate the learning, we need to be able to stimulate that learning at the right times. And, obviously,

there's a student responsibility to kind of access that. I might want to come back to that later, if not today, at some point.

108.   So in terms of the units you've done then, the leadership and management, the law, the critical thinking and analysis?

109.   A: Yes.

110.   Q: The interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary studies, have you done that one?

111.   A: No, we've just done inter-professional practice.

112.   Q: Yes, that's the one.

113.   A: Yes, we've just done that one.

114.   Q: OK, so all four?

115.   A: Yes.

116.   Q: And at the point where you came on to the course, can you remember what you thought about reflection then, if you had thoughts about reflection then?

117.   A: I hadn't really, it's not something that I do in a structured way, I know I've said that once haven't I? But I don't, I know I do it and when I look at my work, because I mean you even reflect in personal things and personal life and home stuff. It's not just a work thing is it? So it's, and I think maybe, I don't know thinking about it now, maybe it's something that you do that often that you don't even, it's not something that you do consciously anymore because you're just doing it all the time.

118.   Q: Can you remember what you thought about critical analysis, if you had thoughts about that?

119.   A: I'd never thought about it, until I saw it on one of the modules, but I didn't ponder over what it would be or what it would involve.

120.   Q: Can you remember at what point you saw it?

121.   A: It would have been in the handout, on the first day, on the introduction day. Because I remember we got all the details of what modules we were doing. So we got a list of modules. But, like I say, I didn't read any and think, oh I wonder what that is, I wonder what we'll be doing in that one? I just sort of had a list and knew them were the modules that we were doing.

122.   Q: So you were looking at the unit titles, the module titles?

123.   A: Yes.

124.   Q: So at the point where you started that particular unit on critical thinking and analysis, the unit where you read it together. Can you remember what your thoughts were, at the point where you started, about that particular unit?

125.   A: On the first session, again I probably wouldn't have thought anything too in detail because I wouldn't have known what to expect really until after the first lecture anyway. And once we'd met you, obviously then you can tell us what it's all about and what's expected of us. The big question of, what's the assignment going to be. So no, until after the first lecture I probably hadn't given it any thought at all to be honest.

126.   Q: So looking back, what are your thoughts about the unit now?

127.   A: On a whole I enjoyed the unit, there are some bits that I preferred more than others. But yes, I did enjoy the unit, more than I thought I did because I didn't really know what it was going to be about, like I said, I'd not really given it much thought. And it was more interesting and more thought provoking than I thought, well I hadn't thought about it, but it was, it was more of an interesting topic than I thought it would be.

128.   Q: Do you want to say now about the bits that you enjoyed more than others?

129.   A: Yes, I found, with this module, that there was a lot of exercises where we had to get up and do things and we were writing things. I mean because it's a small group, we do a lot of talking anyway and feed back to each other. But there just seemed to be more sort of exercises we were doing, which I really, as well as I enjoyed doing them, I found them really good for my learning. Especially, there was one where we wrote things on cards for each other and then we kept each other's cards about a piece of practice we'd talked about, which I found really useful. Because that was, the example I gave, I used that in my assignment. So I actually kept the cards and they were useful for writing the assignment.

130.   There was another exercise that we did about what's reflection, what's analysis and what's critical analysis? I think it's, anything that gets you up and moving, rather than just doing a power point, a hand out thing really I like, I find it much better. I liked the exercise we did with the videos, with the different kinds of observation, where we all took different terms, observing in different ways. There was another exercise as well that I found useful and I can't remember what it was now. Oh it was the coming in with our assignment plans, which I

thought was a stupid idea at first. And I kept thinking, oh why do we have to do this? But no, I found it very beneficial to have, it wasn't just like a tutorial with yourself or another tutor, it was a tutorial with the group. So you got everybody's feedback and ideas. And we gave feedback, obviously, and ideas on other people's and you could take from, as well as feedback from your own assignment ideas, you got feedback from other people's, which helped with my assignment as well. So I found that really useful.

131.   Q: I mean there are two points that could have been really, I suppose they both link. One was there was a written piece very early on.

132.   A: Oh that's something I didn't like.

133.   Q: And the second was a presentation.

134.   A: Yes.

135.   Q: So go on then.

136.   A: The written piece threw me because, with every module, I get five days' study leave, so for me, once I know when the assignment's due in, I get my diary out and I book a week off work with my five days' study leave, and in that week I write the assignment. And I'm very, I'm usually very organised and very planned and I work on my assignment 9 till 5, Monday to Friday, as if I'm going to work. Now obviously if I'm struggling with it, I will extend those times, or if I need to nip to the library for more things, do you know what I mean, obviously other things impact. That's how I like to do my studying.

137.   So when you asked us to write part of the assignment, sort of like quite early in my mind, I'm thinking, I can't do that yet. I can't, I

don't know what I'm writing about, don't know what I'm talking about, it's not my study week. So it did throw me and I just felt like I was, I felt like I was writing it just to appease you really, rather than to learn from it. But that's just me because it sort of interrupted with how I like to write my assignment because that's the routine I'd got into and it's worked for me so far.

138.   So I was resistant to doing it, thinking, no I don't want to because I don't know what I'm writing about yet. But, like I said, the other thing about showing and talking about our assignment plans and ideas, I found really useful. Because that was sort of like just before I was ready for writing.

139.   Q: So the unit was kind of going at a certain pace and it wasn't really fitting with your preferred arrangements for completing the unit was it?

140.   A: No probably not, because like I say, I don't usually start writing until the unit's finished and I've got a week, because then I don't worry then. If I know I've got a full week, because obviously I've got ten days really, well seven, I've got nine days if I'm using my weekends as well, if I am struggling with something. But I try to do Monday to Friday, 9 till 5. So it's like going to work every day and I'm quite structured with it and I know that's what I have to do, so I can't be lazy about it.

141.   So I felt like I was asked to write something when I didn't, I wasn't ready in my head and I didn't quite understand what I was going to write about. Because I know for quite a while, I kept going off at tangents with the assignment question, because I remember when we did have the tutorial, everything I was coming up with, I was trying to sort of fix things and find solutions and problems, rather than talk about what I was thinking and feeling and how I was practicing, if that makes any sense. And I kept going off at

142.   Q: In the presentation to the student group are you talking about, when you were presenting?

143.   A: No, when I came to see you for a tutorial. I remember what I had written, it wasn't, you obviously didn't say, this is all wrong, but you made me realise I was trying to fix a problem and talk about how to fix this problem in my assignment, when actually that's not what the assignment was about. It's about looking at how this came about, what you did and what you thought and looking at it from a different perspective. Where I was just thinking, right, this was a problem, this is how we need to fix it. So it was probably the eleventh hour before I thought, oh right, now I know what I'm doing.

144.   Q: So you've talked a bit about what was helpful to your learning, in terms of the exercises and the discussions at certain points. I mean is there anything else that you want to add, in terms of anything helpful to your learning in the unit? I mean you have talked quite a lot about that, I just wondered if

145.   A: I know the sort of references and guidance you gave regarding literature and pieces to read was very useful, because I used quite a few of those. And the reading list obviously, it goes without saying, I always use a reading list and usually pull some books off there as well.

146.   Q: And you've mentioned the timing of things and the written piece being, it didn't really align with the way you sort of tackled this kind of work. I mean is there anything else that was unhelpful?

147.   A: No.

148. Q: We've talked about the written piece; I mean is there anything else you want to say about that?

149. A: I was pleased with my mark.

150. Q: Right, so that's the assignment yes.

151. A: Yes.

152. Q: The big written piece?

153. A: Yes, I mean it wasn't brilliant but my marks are steadily going up and I got, I think it was 56 or 58. So I'm just creeping up a few marks every time. I think, now is that because I'm improving in my academic ability to write or is it just that this subject, I got to grips with it better than others? So I don't know, we'll see. But yes, I was pleased. And the feedback that you gave was very good, I found it really helpful. There was a lot in there to sort of think, oh right yes, OK. So it was very detailed, which was useful.

154. Q: So on that question of feedback then, because there was a few points at which students get feedback in the unit. There was feedback on the early written piece, the shorter one. There was feedback, so there was some written feedback, some notes on that, I think I sort of wrote on people's scripts.

155. A: Yes, but I didn't do it, I didn't do the written piece for you. I brought something to the tutorial at the end, because even then I wasn't really ready for writing and I'd struggled to do something. So I didn't do that until quite late on but I did get feedback from you, obviously, when we did the little presentations that we did.

156. Q: So there was feedback in the presentations and there was feedback from the students in the presentations as well wasn't there?

157. A: Yes.

158. Q: And we'd done some scribbling in the class hadn't we?

159. A: Yes.

160. Q: And then there was feedback on the assignment at the end?

161. A: Yes.

162. Q: And so you've been able to make use of the feedback on the assignment in particular by the sound of it, in terms of the next piece of work, is that right?

163. A: Not necessarily in the next piece of work, because the next piece of work, I wasn't interested in it and I didn't, what's the word, I didn't enjoy it as much as I've enjoyed other modules. So I struggled with it but not because of, just because I didn't find it as motivating and as interesting, not because of any other reason. So I'm hoping it will be more helpful maybe the next time I'm doing something that I'm more interested in.

164. Q: I suppose the question that follows from that, is kind of how would it be helpful do you think?

165. A: Feedback?

166. Q: Yes, how do you think you might use the feedback, I mean you might not be able to sort of remember specifically, because

I suppose we're adding a question in here really, that you might not be prepared for.

167.   A: I think with feedback, sometimes you can read feedback from an assignment and not, you think, I don't know what you mean I could have said more or I could have been. But what I found was, when I read your feedback and I re-read the bit of the assignment, I thought, oh yes I see what you mean. I did need a counter argument there or I'd used, not slang, but I'd used words that perhaps were more like a local saying than academic words.

168.   Q: I know what you mean.

169.   A: I can't remember what I'd used now, but I didn't even realise that it was not a term widely known, nationally known.

170.   Q: I might have put colloquial.

171.   A: No you hadn't put that, I can't remember, I can't remember what the word was.

172.   Q: No, it doesn't matter anyway.

173.   A: But them kinds of things, which I will probably never be able to eradicate because, like I said, I can't remember what word I used but I remember thinking, oh I didn't realise that. And on one thing, I'd put a reference in and not put it in my reference list, which totally, I don't know how I'd managed to do that. Because I tend to, as I put a reference in, I put it in the reference list, I don't do it at the end, I do it as I go along. So I was quite surprised I'd done that. And obviously there was some positive feedback, where you'd put things like, a good use of research or something like that. I thought, oh right, well what was good? So I read what I'd written and thought, right I'll

try and remember how I've used that for the next time I'm talking about research.

174.   So yes, it was useful and I understood, which I think is, obviously it's the idea of feedback. You need to understand it to be able to do something with it, which was, I understood what you'd said to me about my piece of work, which sometimes, like I said, I've read feedback and not agreed with it or not understood it. Thought, what do you mean, what have I not done? And that again, that's my responsibility to go and speak to whoever the feedback's from. But sometimes you just think, well I've passed, it doesn't matter now, it's OK.

175.   Q: I was interested in that really because I was listening to some students talking yesterday. They were talking about how they, they're BA students, how they get feedback and what they do with it. There were two students, they both said, they just look at the mark, they don't read the feedback. And they said that they consistently, that's what they do. They look at the mark; they don't read the feedback. And I mean I think that, my impression of students at this level and this kind of course, is that they do read the feedback. I'm kind of wondering what happens between the BA and Master's, where students are more focused on the feedback and perhaps, I don't know, maybe more open to it possibly, I don't know. I think it's something that I'd be interested in exploring at some point, in some way really. That, you know, we put quite a lot of effort into giving feedback to BA students, but I'm not sure that they

176.   A: Do you think it might be linked to their age?

177.   Q: It could be; it could be yes. And I suppose that's partly why it's so useful to kind of go into people's kind of professional biographies really and kind of the previous experience of practice and education. To try and sort of, I suppose I'm looking for kind of what it

is that kind of helps practitioners link the learning in a University setting to practice. And it goes back to what you were saying, about some of the difficulties as a BA student and an early practitioner, of sort of making sense of the University education and making sense, and linking it through into the practice. I mean that is such a struggle and at this level, with very experienced practitioners, I mean what I'm interesting in, what this project I'm involved in is about, is trying to do that better. And I think particularly with experienced practitioners, because there's a kind of willingness, you know, to sort of, you know, I think within the group a lot of interest in sort of trying to make the best use of the learning. It seems like a very rich kind of source of information about how to do that better, you know, from our point of view. How to make those learning experiences as positive as possible for practitioners.

178.   So in terms of the group, I mean there was lots of opportunities to discuss with your fellow students. I'm just wondering what part that played in your learning, in the critical analysis unit group sessions. And we talked about the exercises and doing activities....

179.   A: I think it's got a lot to do with learning because it's a small group as well. And by the time we did the critical analysis, we knew each other, it was like the third module. So everybody's very relaxed, very comfortable, we know, you know, there's been no issues with confidentiality, there's been no personal clashes. And I think everybody is generally interested in everybody else's role and knowing what they do and what department they work for and what authority. So any feedback from the other students is valid and valued by, well it is by me. And I feel whatever I contribute is valued by the others as well.

180.   So yes, I think it's really good. And it's even, removing it from the academic stuff, just listening to other people's practice and things

they have and haven't done, gives you ideas for practice yourself as well. So it's beneficial both academically and professionally.

181.   Q: And I mean for us as tutors, I mean it's great working with this small group. You can really get into some interesting discussions, it's great for us. So did you get support from your work-place do you think during the time?

182.   A: Yes, I was on this new team then wasn't I? Because I crossed over from one team to another mid-way, and the assignment and this module was the first one I'd done on this new team. So I now have a new verifier, who is my current manager, but I don't think she's up to speed with the University in her role. She obviously reads my assignments and signs my verification, but I don't have any support, as in we don't talk about it in supervision. Obviously we talk about my caseload and what I'm doing with cases, but there was no in-depth discussion about that particular case I spoke about in that assignment. And how I was linking my practice to the assignment and things like that.

183.   If I'm honest, I do feel a little bit like, I'm just getting on with it, it's a separate thing from work almost now, apart from having to get my manager to sign my verification form and read it. So I don't get any academic support via work, no.

184.   Q: Do you get support from elsewhere at all for studying, encouragement, has there been anybody else?

185.   A: Yes, I use a lady at our training centre, who deals with the University. She's read my last two assignments for me. My critical analysis one, I was concerned about the structure, so I restructured it and then asked her to read it for the structure element. And this last time she's read it as well. So I do get some support, I'll correct myself there. But it's from the training centre side of work, not

my team. I mean I do get support, as in I get the five study days. And my caseload is reflective of a four-day week, not five-day week, because of the time I spend in Uni and then five study days. So that's been very helpful obviously, and they've kept to that as well, well they've tried to keep to it, that I don't have a full time work load.

186.   Q: I mean you talked about it being, because you changed jobs, you were kind of concerned about whether the content of the course was going to link into your new role and whether that would be a struggle. I mean I think you were saying that it hasn't linked that well or there were some difficulties linking it. I'm just wondering, in terms of the critical analysis unit, whether you found that, or to what extent it linked really to your current role?

187.   A: I ended up feeling OK about the practice and linking it to that piece, what I struggled with was, like I said before, thinking about it from an IRO perspective. I was trying to solve it and fix it and sort it out. And I think that was because I'd changed jobs, I'd gone from one to the other. The last module wasn't a problem in this new role, but I think the module I'm doing now might be with this new role. But the critical analysis I don't think, no it didn't become an issue, once the penny had dropped with what I was writing about and from what perspective I was coming from.

188.   Q: So is there anything that you can sort of point to that helped that penny drop?

189.   A: I think the penny dropped when I was in that tutorial with you. And I can't remember exactly how the conversation went, like I said, but I suddenly realised that I was coming from it from the wrong context. Like I said, I was trying to fix a problem, rather than write about it and around it and into it and research and everything. I was just looking at how to, procedurally correct everything in the scenario, rather than more personal stuff.

190.   Q: So just coming on to this, I mean I'm not sure we really need it hugely, but I've brought it just as a trigger really, just to see if it sparks anything else off, any other thoughts.

191.   A: I did have a look at it before but, like I said, I've got it in black and white, so to me it was just all the darker text stood out. But if I'm honest, no it's not, I haven't used them, although I find them really good when you showed it to us and how to use it. But no, I can't say that I look at it and think, oh yes, that really stands out for me regarding this module.

192.   Q: That's fine, we're just having it in reserve really. So looking back on the critical analysis, critical thinking and analysis unit, is there anything about how you feel about it now that you haven't been able to say, haven't said yet?

193.   A: No, no I think everything's been covered really.

194.   Q: And what advice would you give to others who are just about to start it?

195.   A: Bear with it because at first you just, because I didn't know what it was, well I do know what critical analysis is, obviously, but just to look at critical analysis as a subject. It sounds a bit, oh, but when you start the lectures and you start to understand it and you start to think about it in the context of the assignment question, I mean I know, like I said for me, it took me a while for the penny to drop what I was actually doing, but I still found it very interesting and very relevant and enjoyed learning what I learnt.

196.   But it's the kind of module that I would certainly recommend to somebody and say, you know, you will enjoy it. It does make you think about an awful lot of stuff and sometimes you think it's a little bit

mind boggling, but it does come together. There'll be a point where it does come together for you and it sort of, it might not make sense, but you'll understand why you're there and what you're doing and which bits of it you can use for you. It was very interesting, like I said, and it was certainly something that I would recommend other people to study, or a module to do if they had the option.

197.   Q: So when you were saying it sounds a bit, oh I think is what you said. Is there a word, it sounds a bit, what would you say it sounds a bit like?

198.   A: Well, like I say, when you just think of critical analysis on its own, you don't know, you don't know how it applies to your work or what you're going to study about critical analysis. What are you going to do with this subject, how are you going to apply it to my work and what am I going to be expected to write? So even, every time, when you get a new module, you read the assignment questions and it's, for me the critical analysis one didn't make any sense because I didn't know about critical analysis. Where inter professional practice, I know what it is. So when I got the question, I knew from day one, right I know what I'm doing now, I just need the extra information from my lectures and some signposting about information and research. And some advice about whether my piece of practice is going to fit the question.

199.   But with the critical analysis, like I said, it was slightly different, it works the other way round. But, like I said, it was still something that I did enjoy, even though I didn't know what I was doing at first. Saying that, although I didn't fully understand it, the lectures and the information are not, you don't think, oh my god, this is so academic I'm not going to be able to do it. It's very tangible, you can get in there and start to understand it and apply it quite easily really. I think it was just making the connection with the written piece and what I was going to do for that that was my problem.

200.   Q: And if there was one thing that you had to change in the unit, what would it be?

201.   A: That written piece.

202.   Q: You're not keen on that at all really.

203.   A: No but it was only because, it just sort of threw me and I didn't. I think as well; I was probably a bit intimidated by having to write something when I didn't know what I was writing about. And I didn't want to write something and you think it's terrible. Do you know what I mean? I didn't want you to think that I was not going to be able to do the assignment or to come across as being incompetent, I suppose, but that's all about me.

204.   Q: Well it's about being ready to do it as well isn't it I think? That's what I've thought from what you were saying, because there's a kind of a way that works for you, of tackling these units. And because that written piece was something that you hadn't, that hadn't previously been factored in, if you like, and it came early on. And it sounds to me as though you kind of gather material and then you, you know, you apply it to the assignment in this particular period of time. And perhaps I was disrupting your way of working that had worked for you previously. And also, because it was early on, that you'd not gathered enough together perhaps. And, you know, what you were saying about, you know, you didn't want to, I'll have to look at the tape to find what you said, but something around sort of not being ready to do it or getting some, you know, that you were not going to be able to do it well enough or something if it was too early.

205.   A: Yes.

206.   Q: So one thing you would keep the same?

207.　　A:　　If it was just one thing then I'd say the assignment plans, where you gave feedback and we got feedback from other students and we gave feedback to each other.

208.　　Q:　　Presentations?

209.　　A:　　Yes, but I also, like I said, the exercises that we did, that I spoke about earlier, all those kind of things I find, for me, are really useful and I enjoyed doing them.

210.　　Q:　　So would there be any further advice that you'd give to a tutor, who was going to run this again?

211.　　A:　　I don't think so. I think, like I said, the lesson plans went really well, everything, nothing seemed rush, nothing seemed missed. But again, it's a new subject to me, so maybe someone who's done it at one level already, might have more to say I don't know. But for me, no everything felt at the right level, at the right pace.

212.　　Q:　　In terms of impact on you or your practice, is there anything that you could say about impact on practice? You have said things already but I'm just wondering if there was anything else?

213.　　A:　　I suppose from doing assignments, which is obviously not just for this module but for others. I'm hoping it's improving my writing and my reports, because obviously the kind of things that we write are for courts and conferences. So I'm hoping that having done more academic writing, that that's sort of rubbing off within the written work I do in work. Because I don't consider myself to be very good at spelling and grammar, and it's something that I feel, well I know, I can't even proof read my own work because I just don't see my errors because it reads right according to me. So I just hope that that's improving as well as, obviously the practice, from a practice point of

view, as in hands on practice, I don't, because I don't do the hands on work anymore. It just feels a bit, not like it's not applicable because obviously I do come into contact with families and young people, but it feels more like it's to do with improving my writing and my confidence and my presentation about myself and things like that, within the new job that I'm doing anyway.

214. Q: In terms of your practice with other social workers, would you think there's anything there that's rubbed off? Because your practice is very much about working with social workers isn't it and thinking about what they're doing.

215. A: I suppose it does link because a lot of, when I am reading other people's work, I'm looking at decisions other people have made and reading other people's assessments and how they come to conclusions. I don't just think, oh I wouldn't have done that, my conclusion would have been, or I wouldn't have done that, I'd have done this. I do look at why they've done it the way they have and how they come to their conclusion. I don't think it's wrong, I just think it's different.

216. So I suppose it's, it makes you, I don't know if it's from the course or not, it must be I suppose, partly linked to it, about looking about things from other people's perspectives, how other people come to their decisions. They're not necessarily wrong, because to me you can have three or four social workers all work the same case and they might all come out with something different anyway because we're all using different ways of working. And they've got different managers guiding them, they've studied at different places. They've got more interest in different parts of the job than others.

217. So I do think quite widely about things, I don't sort of stick to my little bit of what I know. I look at what other people know and how they know it and how they got their information and their knowledge,

as well as how I've got mine. Because, like I say, it's not necessarily wrong what their conclusion is, it's just different to something I would have done. So I will question how they've got to their decision, just to make sure I'm confident with the knowledge that they've used to get there, if that makes any sense. So that I'm confident in it, even though I might not know about it because it's different from what I would have used.

218. I feel like I've waffled terribly, does it make any sense?

219. Q: It does, that's great honestly. So is there anything else you'd like to add that you've not had chance to say?

220. A: No, just to say that this hour's been very strange to talk about myself so much, because you don't sit down for an hour and talk about yourself do you? So it's been a bit odd, but I don't mind doing it obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have agreed.

221. Q: So it feels unusual to you to do this?

222. A: Yes, it feels, I know it sounds daft, it feels a bit like you're having some kind of counselling session because you're being asked to talk about yourself. Not that I've had counselling in any great depth, but do you know what I mean? To sit and talk about yourself and your education history and how you felt about it and your work, your studying.

223. Q: So it wouldn't be sort of a normal part of kind of social work practice to?

224. A: No, it would be the other way round wouldn't it? I'd be asking all the questions, as a social worker or as an independent reviewing officer, I'd be asking the questions not answering them. So

yes, there you go, critical analysis. I'll have to think about that next time I'm asking all the questions won't I?

225.   Q: I'm going to think about that actually, I hadn't thought about that. So anything else?

226.   A: No, I don't think so. Certainly nothing else that, I mean I think the questions that you came up with covered everything didn't they?

227.   Q: Yes, thanks ever so much.

1. Q: Do you want to say something about your current social work role, what you do here?

2. A: Yes, I'm a social worker on a long term child protection team, it's called, the Safeguarding Team. So I've got a caseload of child protection cases and cases in care proceedings at the moment. And some children that are looked after but as a consequence of care proceedings usually. And one looked after child, our team used to be, we used to have a mixed caseload of looked after children and safeguarding cases, it separated a couple of years ago into safeguarding and looked after children's teams, but I was able to hold on to one little boy, in the interest of continuity. So I've got one looked after child from old.

3. Q: So you're very much sort of a fieldworker?

4. A: Yes.

5. Q: And do you have any supervisory responsibilities?

6. A: Not formally but informally on the team, quite a lot. Helping out students, they might come along with me on visits or discussing things with them. I've done quite a lot of court work, so I might help people out with court work and Section 47 inquiries and things.

7. Q: So would you say that's a kind of mentoring role, sort of informally?

8. A: Yes, informally helping out the students and newly qualified social workers on the team.

9. Q: So when did you become qualified?

10. A: September 2007.

11. Q: What about your demographic information, what do you want to say about that, how would describe yourself?

12. A: I would describe myself as female, white British, middle class.

13. Q: So I'd like to ask about experience of social work and of your career before you became qualified really. So do you want to say something about your career to date?

14. A: My career to date, I had a lot of experience doing direct work with children in different guises before I became a social worker. I was teaching children rock climbing and I was working with children, Child Line, I was a volunteer there. I worked with adults as well, the National Autistic Society. Just lots of different roles, sort of direct work and support work type roles really. And then I decided to do my Master's in Social Work and yes, started working on the team I'm on now as a student in January 2007. And there was a vacancy on the team, so they, you know, I managed to get a vacancy and started working in the September and became qualified then. I managed to fit in a dissertation in between. It's gone so fast, absolutely flown by, I've never known time go so quickly since then. I never clock watch ever really.

15. Q: Yes, there's never enough time in the day really is there, yes. So in terms of your career to date, you've got a variety of experiences kind of prior to qualification, and then since qualification you've remained in this team, although your role, or should I say, your caseload has changed in nature, somewhat more towards the safeguarding and less of the long term work?

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16. A: Yes.

17. Q: So looking at experiences of social work education then now, particularly before you came on to the PG Dip. How would you describe your experiences of your qualifying social work course?

18. A: I did a master's, so it was two years. I did, it's really hard to think about it, because I enjoyed the course but I suppose, being truthful, the academic aspects of it and the academic modules, just seemed so far removed from the day to day reality of child protection and social work. And I don't know if there is a course academically, that can prepare you for just how hard it is when you begin. But then when you then start as a social worker, it really is sink or swim.

19. I mean I had quite good placements. I had, the first one was bereavement counselling work, which in terms of direct work with kids was invaluable, very, very useful. My second was, I was at [NW LA], I was at the same council but it was a family support role. So again, a lot of direct work with families and children and seeing some of the circumstances where social workers would be involved. But then not that intensity of going in, where there are those child protection concerns and making decisions about what's safe and what's not safe for kids.

20. So yes, the course was good but maybe not enough, not enough information about, you know, just from social workers in the field at the time saying, this is what it's like. This is what a week, you know, a week in the job is like, a day in the job is like.

21. Q: So I mean obviously the question that follows from what you first said would be a kind of, do you think there's anything or how do you think it could have been made more relevant? Now I know you've made a couple of suggestions, one being it would be very difficult, the

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second being bringing in experienced practitioners. I mean is there anything you want to say more about that, how a qualifying course could potentially be made more relevant to newly qualified practice?

22. A: I think the second one of those is the key. There must be some way of giving more of a taste of what it's like to practice, I don't know, even some sort of video footage or something, you know, interviews with social workers, sort of on DVD. Social workers that have just qualified maybe coming in to a new cohort of students and saying, you know, I want to just describe to you the kind of day I might have in this role.

23. I think just something to make the reality of it known. Because I think you go into it, everybody goes into it with very good intentions, you know, you want to work with people and be, have relationships and do something real and tangible. But also to have an awareness of the difficulties of it I think and the hostility and the conflict and just how busy you are, I think that would have been useful and helpful. Although maybe people that decide to do child protection specifically, you know, you must know to a degree, the kind of thing that you're letting yourself in for. I don't think anyone goes into it completely naively, expecting it all to be straight forward and it be easy day to day.

24. Q: But I suppose it's how you know that really, whether that's a kind of word of mouth thing or whether that's something you pick up from placements that might give you some insight, even if you're not in that setting. And it's interesting that you've talked about the academic units and you've talked about the placements and experiences, almost in a separate way. Is that how you understood those, as being quite separate?

25. A: I think there are obviously connections you can make between the two. And some of them, some of the academic units would tie in

more closely than others. Maybe, I mean we did a unit on law and legal practice, and so when you're then seeing some of the legalities, even as a family support worker, the child involved in care proceedings, having studied the law behind it, you get a bit of insight into what that means and the processes and so on. I suppose there were, you know, we looked at theories and approaches, different social work approaches and different theoretical approaches and again, there's links there. But sometimes it does feel, they do feel a bit separate. You're either in it doing it or you're learning about it. And I guess that's part of what critical reflection and analysis is. Maybe it's trying to bring the two together a bit more.

26. But yes, in my head, when I think about the, I kind of separate it into classroom learning and placements, when I think about it.

27. Q: So is there anything that stands out from your qualifying social work course, is there anything that stands out for you in any way?

28. A: There was just a particular module we did, which I really enjoyed, I suppose that stands out. That was a, it was just something that appealed academically. It was called, the Life Course, and it was sort of sociological and psychological perspectives on childhood. And I suppose, yes childhood through to adulthood, just different theoretical and academic views on what makes us who we are and gender and equality, and all that I found very fascinating. And again, there's loads of resonance in what you do day to day with that, but just as a standalone unit it was interesting. The tutor was very motivated and very engaging and dynamic, so that was a strong factor in it as well.

29. Q: I suppose you've been talking about this really, was there anything you particularly enjoyed or disliked in your social work course that you've not had chance to say?

30. A: I think I enjoyed, particularly after we'd done our, we'd done some placements, after we'd done our first placement. I think comparing different experiences with different students, being able to discuss what day to day practice had been like at all the different agencies we were with. And I enjoyed when we had those discussions with tutors as well. And some tutors had more recent relevant social work practice than others.

31. I suppose what, the things I disliked a little bit more, sometimes was when the tutors felt, I don't know, it felt like they were very, very far removed from practice. Like it was almost all about study and the academia, without then linking it in to what it, you know, to being a social worker day to day. And it felt like those connections weren't being made. Maybe people hadn't been in practice for years and years and years, didn't have that need or drive or want to discuss practice, sort of modern day practice.

32. Q: I mean I know this is kind of going back a bit really, but can you remember what some of those areas were about or the kind of discussions that you had in the areas that you weren't so keen on really? I mean it's difficult isn't it because perhaps you've not retained it as much.

33. A: Yes, I know. I can remember we talked a lot about, like there was one module where we talked about like the welfare state and the origins of that and like Bevin and the NHS. And we wrote an essay on the NHS and the underlining principles of that and Bevin and, you know, through access at the point of use. And all those, they were things, it's very interesting all the principles behind that, but then that was it. We didn't then make the connections through to sort of politics in the present or how that connected to social work. And you can find those links, I would have thought that that is where the interests would lie, but it was just considered in isolation that period. Rather than, yes

making the links through, being able to, yes tie it more closely to present day.

34. So again, it felt very sort of, just sort of quite isolated and a bit dry really, that particular unit or module. It felt more like ticking a box to say we'd looked at historical perspectives on social reform and social welfare, rather than how that was then relevant to social work practice in the present day.

35. Q: So do you remember learning about reflection or critical reflection at all? We're talking about your qualifying course.

36. A: On my qualifying course, we didn't study them in their own right. So we didn't say, you know, 'what is critical reflection?' But having now done a module in it and you look back, I think the concepts, certainly the theory of reflection underpinned a lot of what we did and was encouraged throughout, particularly like after placement. We had to produce portfolios about our work and that was, you know, we were encouraged to reflect on what we had done. We weren't necessarily given like a theoretical framework of, this is what reflection is and this is what, this is the ways in which, these are the ways in which you could reflect or this is the value of reflection.

37. I think maybe it was almost as a given that, you know, reflection is good and you will, write a reflective essay on your placement without necessarily giving us the detail of why that was important or why that was a good thing or how it could be done. And, obviously, you can go out and look for those things yourself and research the reflection as a concept in its own right. But I do think, you know, reflection is popular, you can't escape that. And it was when I was studying, you know, you're encouraged to look back at what you did and why you did it and room for improvement and so on.

38. Q: I get the sense of you being expected to do quite a lot of your own kind of learning, self-directed in a way?

39. A: Yes.

40. Q: Was it a two-year course?

41. A: It was a two-year course. In terms of the reflecting on work we'd underdone, or we'd undertaken on our placement, yes a lot of that was self-directed. But at the time we were all spread in different work settings and we had to produce a portfolio. We were given more direction on the other academic units, but we didn't have a specific standalone unit focused on reflection or critical analysis in its own right.

42. But it was a master's level course, so at every point, you know, in all the other academic units we were encouraged to look at different critical perspectives, different competing theories. To look at research, the validity of research and, you know, not just accept things unquestioningly, we were taught that as a basic, you know, throughout the course. To not just quote a research study for the sake of it, but to say, this is a methodology that was used, this is maybe why you might question whether that was appropriate methodology and so on. So we were encouraged to think in a critical way when we were learning.

43. Q: So you mentioned critical, I don't know whether you said critical analysis actually, but sort of looking at research critically. So would you say you were aware of critical analysis being part of the course or an expectation of the course?

44. A: Yes, I was aware there was an expectation yes.

45. Q: And do you remember learning anything about critical analysis?

46. A: Again, I can't remember being, I can't remember being told, 'right this is critical analysis and this is what it is.' But again, everything that we looked at, say if we were looking at law, we'd be encouraged to, I'm trying to think, really delve deep into things and consider, yes consider different perspectives and different theories on everything, which I think is what critical analysis is. So I think we were encouraged to do it, without it necessarily being framed as critical analysis in a particular, those particular words basically.

47. Q: So at the point when you were qualified, the point of qualification, I mean can you remember how you thought about critical analysis at that point, can you remember anything about that? How would you have thought about critical analysis, if at all?

48. A: I think, actually it holds a lot of relevance in social work, because you have to be able to, and again, I wouldn't have used that as a concept. I wouldn't have called it, critical analysis. I would have said, maybe, 'thinking critically' or, maybe a day to day word we use a lot is 'challenging.' You have to be able to challenge things, which is a useful way of connecting it to critical analysis. It's about challenge, it's not just, you might have a parent tell you something and you don't know if that's the case or not; you have to look at the children. What do the children say, what do the teachers say and what do you see? Not just what is said, but what do you actually see?

49. And again, it's all those different layers I think, that make up the whole of what's actually going on. It's not just as simple as, you know, mum said, no I didn't drink last weekend, you know. There might be bottles in the bin or the kid says, oh mum was at the shop last weekend buying lots of juice. And the teacher might say, oh she wasn't quite herself on Monday. And again, you get all these different perspectives and theories that create a complex multi layered picture and you have to try and figure out what's going on from that. It's not

just one dimensional. So I think that's where critical analysis comes in, in day to day practice really.

50. Q: And is that, do you think that's how you thought of it then, at qualification point?

51. A: Probably not, I wouldn't have phrased it in that way. I think probably having done now a module on critical analysis, and also I would say about those complexities, at the beginning I wouldn't have been able to express it. I just would have said, oh my god it's mad, and everyone saying different things. It would have been a bit more chaotic. But now, I suppose now I have practiced for a few years and I'm able to be a bit calmer about it, I would probably reflect more on it because I feel I'm a bit calmer. I'm not just in the middle of it all the time, feeling a bit anxious and mad panicked, which I probably was when I started, a bit out of control.

52. Q: Since that point of qualification and the point at which you came on the PG Dip, in terms of any education and training, is there anything that stands out in that particular period?

53. A: What, sort of on the job training between?

54. Q: Well it might be on the job or, yes I mean it could be anything else. But I mean I suppose typically we are talking about in service training, on the job training, yes.

55. A: I don't know if anything stands out in relation to looking at critical reflection and analysis particularly.

56. Q: Or anything really that has been helpful or made an impact on you? I mean there might not be, that's fine, I'm just wondering if there is.

57. A: I think the training, like we had some court training that was really good. And again, that felt quite real, it was sort of mock giving evidence, being cross examined, that was quite, it felt quite valuable, you know, putting you in that position and you have to try and do your best really. That felt quite relevant, yes I suppose that's the one that stands out really.

58. Q: That's kind of as close as possible to reality, role playing isn't it?

59. A: Yes, very much.

60. Q: You have to construct a report and submit it on time, yes.

61. A: The role play, people can be a bit funny about role play but because that was, I think it was in a formal setting, we had magistrates there as well, it felt like a step above somehow. It felt quite, it felt very close to how it would be and how it is.

62. Q: Yes, it's more a simulation than a role play isn't it?

63. A: Yes, I suppose so.

64. Q: And have you had encouragement to study from anyone at work or elsewhere?

65. A: Yes, I think we're well supported here to do the PQ course and there's certainly good training opportunities as well. The only problem is, it's encouraged and it's seen as a good thing, but you still have a huge workload and there's not really much, there's no real let up in that. You're expected to do it alongside everything else. You're not really, there isn't really the room made for you to do it. You have to fit it in and you end up doing a lot of it in your own time.

66. Q: So what brought you on to the PG Dip?

67. A: It was, we go round our office every so often, every year
probably, and say, 'right who's not done, who's not done the PQ yet?'
And I know there's two different types of course and there's one that a
lot more people are on and this one was slightly new. And I
expressed an interest because I knew, I'd heard about this course, I
knew there was a vacancy. And I think someone else was actually
due to have my place but she was on maternity leave. I said, oh I'd
be interested in doing that and they thought I'd be, because I'd done a
master's before, I think they thought I would enjoy it.

68. So yes, I ended up starting the course. But I know there's some
people in the office that have no interest in doing the PQ, they've been
here years and years, just not something they want to do. There's a
lot of other people that have done it or are in the midst of doing it,
where, because they have to do it to get the extra increments.
Whereas I genuinely, I'm a bit of a geek, I quite like studying, so I'm
quite interested in doing it for its own sake, not just as a means to get
more money or because it's something to put on my CV.

69. Q: So do you think there's a kind of organisational expectation that
social workers will do it?

70. A: Yes, I think so.

71. Q: And is there two increments for successful completion?

72. A: I think so, yes.

73. Q: So there's a kind of expectation, there's a financial recognition
to it, but apart from that, you're saying that you genuinely, I'm not
saying that any of that's not genuine, but you really wanted to study it
for its own sake?

74. A: Yes, and I thought the course was interesting and new. Also, I really wanted to study, study social work whilst doing it, because studying it before I actually became a social worker felt very different and a bit more removed. Whereas trying, again trying to bring the day to day practice and reality with the theory, I think is what makes it interesting, what makes the course interesting. So I thought it would be good to study from that perspective, yes.

75. Q: And in terms of the units that you've completed then, because you came?

76. A: I had critical thinking and analysis for my first one, and then we've done inter-professional collaborative perspectives. It's got a long title hasn't it, I can't remember it.

77. Q: So it's the two units, yes OK. So at the point where you came on to the course, that was the point you started the critical thinking and analysis unit, which is a bit different from the rest of the group really. So you were kind of first in, as that as being your first unit. So at the point where you came in, can you say anything about how you, or what you thought about reflection at that point?

78. A: When I came into it?

79. Q: Yes, at the beginning.

80. A: If I'd been asked what reflection was, I'd probably have said, I reflect when I'm, I don't know, I'm on a drive home at the end of the day in my car. I'd like more time to reflect in work but there's not really the time to do it. I would say reflecting is thinking about the kind of day I've had, that's what I would have probably said.

81. Q: So critical analysis then, because these were in the title of the unit weren't they, can you remember when you joined the course, what you thought about critical analysis, what you thought of it?

82. A: It's hard because I've sort of studied it, actually I don't think they probably differ that much now and then. But again, critical to me then and now, just makes me think of critique, in the sense of trying to, yes trying to take something apart and look at the different layers of it and question and question every bit of it, rather than just taking anything at face value. It's kind of trying to separate out, I've definitely, layers of meaning, I definitely wouldn't have said before, but looking at, yes trying to understand something by questioning every aspect of it. And not, trying to question, well what does that mean and why does it mean that and, well where did that definition come from or where does that word play a part? Just looking at all the different layers of everything really.

83. Q: Again, at that early stage, coming on to the unit, what were your thoughts about the unit as such?

84. A: When I first started learning?

85. Q: Yes, or when you first came onto the critical thinking and analysis unit, because that was like your first taste of the PG Dip as well wasn't it?

86. A: Yes.

87. Q: Can you remember what you thought, if anything, about the unit that you were just about to start?

88. A: I remember when we very first started learning, you know, those initial sessions, I felt quite stimulated by it. There were lots, there were kind of new concepts and theories that I wasn't aware of

before. And I felt quite, just like a bit of my brain had been re-awakened really and I thought, oh this is interesting, there's lots to try and get stuck into here. I thought, oh it's quite academic, it's quite rigorous theoretically, but that didn't, I didn't feel too overwhelmed by that. But I'm quite comfortable with that sort of approach to things anyway.

89. I'd rather have a lot of things I don't understand and think, oh I can go and find out about that, than feel like, oh well, now I know about that and yes that makes sense. I like to be challenged rather than just feel like, oh that's OK, that's very straight forward. I like being pushed out of my comfort zone a bit. And I think it did a little bit, it did at the start, but that wasn't a bad thing for me.

90. Q: And I think there can be, well I certainly found this, the bit at the start of a course, it can be sort of quite an exciting time really because, you know, you put it really well, in terms of awakening bits of yourself, bringing them back to life or re-energising bits of yourself. The thing is though, in your situation, it's quite difficult to disentangle the, you know, what would perhaps be a lot of interest or excitement around starting to study again and moving on and moving up and that kind of thing, from what your feelings about that particular unit might have been. So I mean that's quite interesting really because I think your position is different to the other students.

91. A: Yes, because it was the first one I did.

92. Q: I must say though, you know, because the group was really lovely to teach, you know, really nice to teach. I mean part of that is it's a small group, but also very experienced practitioners. And people seemed to gel very quickly, you know, I mean I think the group worked really well together. So coming in as a, if you like a new student, because the others had been quite established as a group, that it didn't seem to be a problem really coming in as a new student?

93. A: No, it was very welcoming because it was such a small group. I suppose I would have been slightly anxious when I first, you know, first couple of times. Just being the newer person but then it felt very comfortable very quickly.

94. Q: Yes, it seemed so. So looking back on this particular unit, critical thinking and analysis unit, what are your thoughts about the unit now?

95. A: I think it was, I mean again, I've only done one other unit since then, but it felt a lot more rigorous academically than the one we did subsequently, the inter-professional perspectives ones, again in a positive sense. I enjoyed the theoretical stuff behind it and just, you know, and I like that looking at the nitty gritty, so even like looking at language and words and culture. Because again, bringing things down to very basic levels but it's the questioning everything really, why, why, why, I like that. I like looking at the finer detail of things.

96. Q: So does anything stand out from the unit when you think about it, when you look back, is there anything that you would pick out?

97. A: I think the bit that stood out, which had some real resonance for me, was the kind of Morrison stuff about, and I can't remember how much of it I read on my own and how much was through the unit, about kind of emotional intelligence and kind of verbalising a lot of the things I've been struggling with in work, in terms of managing the emotion day to day as a job. And how, I don't know, also it was quite reassuring really, that kind of people saying in a formal academic sense, that it is very anxiety provoking and there is a lot of emotion. But that can be used in a positive way and that's what makes you, used positively, it can make you a more effective practitioner. And if ignored can, you know, make you less effective.

98. So it was ways of giving structure and meaning to something that can be quite intangible sometimes, when you just feel a bit upset or a bit angry or a bit anxious. It's not always easy to measure that and kind of see how it could be valuable in your practice. It often feels like it's a hindrance, rather than part and parcel of what you do.

99. Q: I suppose the kind of powerful emotions that crop up in this work, I suppose they are quite consuming aren't they really? So it can be quite difficult in the moment to step back from that and actually think about it in that sort of intellectual way that you've just described. So I can see why, having reading around that area, could be very helpful really, to kind of prompt you maybe to come out of that emotion, recognise what's happening.

100.   A: Yes.

101.   Q: So was anything helpful to your learning, I mean you've mentioned that obviously, you've mentioned lots of other things. But I'm wondering if there's anything else that was helpful?

102.   A: I'm trying to think, I think some of the, we were given some more recent things and it was useful tying those in. We looked at the Munro, the first stage of her report. And there was a really recent one, it was like House of Commons debate or discussion around the baby Peter stuff, that was given in, what's her name, Sharon Shoesmith. And just discussions then about, it was like accountability and responsibility, all of that I found really interesting again. Because we were able to look at that, things happen in day to day sort of changes, day to day, but then tying it back to the sort of theories we'd looked at about reflection and meaning and analysis. And again, just looking at everything from the perspective of, well why has Munro written a report, who's commissioned her to write the report? It's a new, you know, Michael Gove or whoever, you know,

new government, new agenda. What are her leanings, is that relevant, is she independent, can she ever be independent?

103.   So again, it was taking something that was interesting in its own sake, but then critically analysing it and making it, yes actually, that's a valid question. Sometimes you don't have answers to a lot of those questions.

104.   Q: I suppose things are changing very rapidly aren't they?

105.   A: Yes.

106.   Q: Things like the pace of change, it's increasing really. And you were doing that unit at that time when things were, well I suppose it was the calm before the storm really, if it is going to be a storm. Where there were kind of lots of changes being muted and I suppose since the unit's finished, there's been even more change really. I mean I think the terrain is becoming very different. So yes, so it's probably helped to have up to date material.

107.   A: Yes.

108.   Q: So what, if anything, was unhelpful, can you think of anything that was a problem or an interference or a difficulty?

109.   A: I'm trying to think if there's anything. I found some, and I had to write about this to get my head round it really, but this idea of reflection in action versus reflection on action, I just found really hard to get my head round. I'm not sure whether that's because it's a concept, I don't think it was unhelpfully taught. But I just thought, well how can you reflect in action, is that not like, is that possible? I think there were, and I found different theories that said, actually is it possible to reflect in action, in my essay, which helped me a bit.

573

110.	I think some of the concepts are tricky like that. And also, sometimes, and the unit teaches you to do this anyway, but there's sometimes assumptions that you're taught something and that is the way it's done and that it's good without saying, well hang on a minute, like reflection, you know, critical reflection is a good thing. I thought, well is it necessarily, and I think it is, but maybe that's something that could be discussed. Why is reflection, is reflection popular, why is reflection popular? Is it on this course because it's on the GSCC syllabus because it's popular, it's a buzz word, it's something that's been around in recent years? But what does reflection give? Is reflection ever, I don't know, detrimental? We did discuss that a little bit, you know, you're just wallowing in, is it procrastination? I don't know, just playing devil's advocate a bit really.

111.	Q:	And it does tend to focus very much on individual rather than context doesn't it?

112.	A:	Yes.

113.	Q:	Which is a point I'm sort of interested in as well because it can sound radical but it's kind of, what does it change? What are we looking at changing and is it about individual change or is it about, you know, we're back to that essential debate really in social work about the individual and the structure.

114.	A:	I think as well, personally, I probably over analyse and think about things too much anyway. So sometimes I need to stop reflecting and just get on and do it. Like stop thinking about everything and just take action.

115.	Q:	I mean that point about reflection in and reflection on, I mean I will probably think about that a bit more really. I suppose there is the point about, as soon as you notice they need it it's passed. And

so where do you draw that distinction and is there any point thinking about it really?

116.   A: Yes, how do you know if you're thinking about it if you're not then, oh it just makes my head spin if I think about it too much.

117.   Q: So the written piece then, just thinking about that, because that came quite early on in the unit. I'm wondering whether it was in the right place, whether it was a hindrance or it was helpful?

118.   A: I actually found it really helpful because it made me just put pen to paper and start doing it. And because there wasn't the pressure, at that time, of it being an essay, I just started writing. Whereas sometimes, if you know you've got to write an essay, it's really hard to just get that initial flow going. And in the event, what I had I was quite happy with and I used a lot of it in my essay anyway. So it was useful from that point of view, definitely.

119.   Q: And I suppose it was a point at which you got some feedback on your early ideas?

120.   A: Yes, and that was quite reassuring. And it was the first thing I'd written for the whole course, so I didn't really know what, you know, how it would be.

121.   Q: Of course, because you'd not written anything for that course, for this particular course, so yes. So I suppose it had, potentially had a double function really at that point for you?

122.   A: Yes.

123.   Q: And the presentation, what did you think about doing the presentation, that was with the group wasn't it?

124.   A: Again, it was quite useful. I think when you have to put anything into words, it kind of crystallises your own ideas really. It's like doing this interview now, it kind of makes you think, well yes that's what I, I've put this in my essay as well, but it's creating meaning isn't it? When you give something words and you have to formalise it, when you're explaining something to somebody else, I think you really have to understand it yourself if you're going to describe it in a way that they can, you know, that makes sense, that they can understand.

125.   You get a bit nervous because it's new people, very experienced social workers, everyone, well most people much more experienced than me. So you think, oh, what will they think about this, but it was OK, it was useful.

126.   Q: Did you find being in that small group was a help?

127.   A: Oh yes, yes, presenting to a whole big group of people would have been very different, much more kind of like a test, whereas it felt a quite nice and informal discussion.

128.   Q: We couldn't have done that with a big group. I mean we could have done action learning type groups, but I don't think we could, we could not have had a whole group,

129.   A: You wouldn't have had the time.

130.   Q: No, well there wouldn't have been the time but also, I mean it would have been a totally different experience. So I think it's the luxury of having a small group.

131.   A: Because it becomes more about the presentation rather than what you're saying then. People get nervous in a big group and it's about speaking, rather than content a bit more.

132.   Q: So were there any of the exercises or sessions that you liked or loathed?

133.   A: I struggle to remember the individual sessions.

134.   Q: That's fine, it's absolutely fine, because if there isn't that's fine, we just leave it really. It's just the opportunity to say if there was anything. I'm not going to prompt.

135.   A: No, I'm just trying to remember, I'm just remembering the girl from Children in Care Council, she really stands out and it goes in your head which session we did what. But she was very memorable, I think just because it was her, it was her poise and her confidence and the way she spoke, she was just fantastic, really, really good. That really, she really stood out. I'm trying to think which other exercises; oh I know which one stands out. That very initial one of sharing, actually that was quite, that was a good exercise but very intense, you know, sharing possessions.

136.   And I think we all, everyone was quite emotional really, unexpectedly so. But no, that one lingers because of the emotions associated with it. And, of course, the ties with, well this is just you having chosen a few items, what must it be like having a social work assessment when someone's asking about every past relationship you've ever had? So that was really, that was very good from that point of view. And again, it's about a time, what you feel and those thoughts into maybe some simulation of how it could be for a family member that you're working with. You can't say it would ever be the same, but some sense of that anxiety. And you feel it, you know, when you're sort of there going, oh this is important to me because it's all my family, you know, it is quite intense and it's not something you do very often. So that was a good exercise. And again, that was very early on in the session, was it the first or second? I didn't really know anybody, so it was really like this is me.

137.   Q: It was the first session. And I'm now conscious that I really didn't think about that very much actually.

138.   A: Well I think, I mean it was good in a sense, and again linking it to just meeting somebody, you know, as a social worker and asking them a load of questions about themselves.

139.   Q: Again, you've talked a bit about this, kind of the learning that takes place outside of the classroom. And I mean you've talked about this, in terms of your previous study. But I'm just wondering, was there anything that was, that you took up that happened outside of the taught sessions, if you like, that was helpful? I don't know whether there's anything at work or any other?

140.   A: You mean kind of tied into the unit, sort of at the same time?

141.   Q: Yes, and helped you with the unit, anything really that helped you with that work that you were doing with this unit?

142.   A: I think I discussed a bit in supervision about, you know, about trying to make time for reflection. I think what I did say was, would be really useful, was to have some feedback on what I could improve on, you know, in my practice and stuff. And I said, oh it would be really useful to look at, like, areas of improvement. It just got me thinking about things you can be better at.

143.   Q: Do you mean feedback from your supervisor?

144.   A: Yes, feedback kind of all

145.   Q: Colleagues?

146.　　A:　　Yes, then feedback from like my manager about areas of improvement and things I could be better at with families and kind of, I think it was a unit that inspired me to do that. I felt it would be really useful to have some honest feedback about, you know, areas to work on. And that was probably brought about by writing about the case I'd worked on as well, thinking about myself, what I would have done better. And again, it's a shame, he was very keen on the idea, but in the event, we've not had the time to do that really. Supervision's just, you know, is very much case focused and there's not, I mean I'm quite hot on trying to make the time for the other side of it.

147.　　It's not everyone's priority and it is hard I think saying, right can we just have twenty minutes to discuss, you know, my personal feelings about my work or whatever. So maybe, I'll probably end up doing that more with my colleagues. I'll say, now what areas can I get better at?

148.　　Q:　　So it sounds as though you're kind of prompted or you're confident to kind of ask your supervisor for that kind of feedback?

149.　　A:　　Yes.

150.　　Q:　　But actually, I suppose, I wonder if it is that time, I wonder if it's kind of not part of the routine of supervision, you know, within social work. Because I think for lots of people it is very case focused isn't it, for all the reasons that we understand, in terms of the accountability for the work and the level of risk that people are working with really. I suppose the case focused side, but then you go back to the Tony Morrison material and there is an important place, in terms of risk management, for the kind of supervision that you're pointing to really.

151.　　A:　　Yes.

152.   Q: So I suppose I did this because, I did this word cloud just in case we didn't have much to talk about, but I did think we would have lots to talk about. This is me over preparing I think, but I mean is there anything on there that triggers for you.... any thoughts?

153.   A: About critical analysis?

154.   Q: Yes, about the unit. So these are words that have been drawn from some of the, well they've come from me looking at the evaluations, and they've come from me, my ideas around the feedback that I've given to people. So it's kind of feedback from the students and my feedback to the students. And these are some of the words that have cropped up. Maybe it doesn't particularly trigger anything that you haven't already said.

155.   A: Anxious jumps out at me, again I put it in my essay. When you reflect on what you do you think, oh god, it's hard thinking about what you've done because all the mistakes jump out and you think, well what could I have done differently? And just acknowledging, yes the difficult nature of what we do and the emotive nature of it. I think you can only be honest and try and dig deep, it is quite anxiety provoking.

156.   And the other one that jumps out for me is management styles again, I just think there's such different ways of working and dealing with what we work with day to day and where your focus is and what's key really. And again, that balance between case management and risk management and individual sort of feelings. Like we said, that gut feeling that you get, and I think there's a lot to that but you do need to have the structure to it and make time to discuss it. Yes, they're the ones that jump out.

157.   Q: So how do you feel about the critical thinking and analysis unit now?

158.   A: I feel positive about it; I'd say if I didn't or I'd say if I wasn't. But I think it was probably the best unit to start with, I know I've not done the others but I know what they are. But I'm aware that, you know, different people have different perspectives and it fits with my, the way I like to think about things and the way I think that an academic course should be. It's giving you the skills isn't it, to then go off and apply them yourself in other capacities. So it's giving you those skills of looking at something from a political perspective or a cultural perspective and then asking questions about it.

159.   I'm trying to think what else. I think as well because it was, I mean I enjoyed that one a lot more than the next unit, I felt a lot more challenged by the first one. So I feel quite positive about it, having looked at a different unit that was maybe not as rigorous academically.

160.   Q: So what advice would you give to others who are going to do the critical thinking and analysis unit? Would you give any advice and what would it be?

161.   A: I suppose my advice would be, if you, oh I don't know, I'm trying to think how to describe this. If you feel something or think something, then use that feeling or thought. So if you go in and think, oh my god, what the hell is all this about? Then use that, you know, think, well I'm confused, why am I confused, is this confusion, am I overwhelmed by the concepts? Try and make use of your own responses to things. Because I went in thinking, oh god, it's hard thinking about my work, I find it a bit intense and it makes you anxious. And then that was the first thing I started writing about in my piece of writing and I was away. I was like, it makes me feel really anxious, well that's a good starting point and I just kind of went from there really. So I suppose that would be my advice.

162.   Q: I've not asked you about the assignment actually, so what did you think about the main assignment?

163.   A: I quite enjoyed writing it. I find the, and I think this is more to do with the structure of the course than that particular assignment, I find the remit a bit broad to be honest. There's a lot to write about, because there's so many competing perspectives on everything, I was way over the word limit, that was also a time issue, you know, I didn't have as much time as I would have wanted. But trying to write about my own reflection on what I'd done, the theories of critical reflection, a bit about supervision and a bit about service user perspective, I just thought, how are you supposed to do all of that at a level? I didn't feel I was able to do it at the level at which I wanted to. I would rather write about something really specific in a lot of depth, look at lots of different angles, than write about lots of different things a little really.

164.   So it felt like you had to write, yes a little about a lot, which I, that was the main thing I struggled with. But I don't mind, you know, I quite enjoyed doing the assignment. I didn't struggle with things to say.

165.   Q: I would think that is a good point actually because really, the nature of this unit, in many ways it would be better to focus on something very, in a great amount of detail. And I'm not sure that the learning outcomes for the unit allow people to do that. And I think that's a really good point and it's something that I'm going to think about. Because when it comes to the point of re-evaluating and rewriting the units, I can take that into account. Because there are, I mean periodically we do get the chance to, I mean every five years we get the chance to re-write units, at which point I will think about that yes. Because I don't know if people, I don't know whether I said this actually, but I mean although I taught this unit and I implemented it

basically, I didn't actually write the brief, I wrote the assignment brief, but I didn't write the learning outcomes.

166.   A: Yes, I think someone else told us they're all from, yes.

167.   Q: Because, you know, that's in

168.   A: It's all kind of prescribed.

169.   Q: Yes, in the University often that's what happens, is that units are written for particular deadlines, and so the staff who can do that, at that point, do that. And then the staff who will teach, are then brought onto the unit and that's what happened really. Yes, so I think between us, as a group of people, I think we've probably done very well with the unit as written, but what I'm gaining from the insights of people who did the course, is how we can make it better really, so that's great.

170.   So if there's one thing you had to, I think you might have answered this but there might be something else, if there's one thing you had to change in the unit, what would it be?

171.   A: I can't think of anything else other than what I've already said really.

172.   Q: Because you have given a fair amount on that really. One thing you'd keep the same?

173.   A: Probably that initial exercise we did. I think it was a way into it as well, I liked that, I thought that was good.

174.   Q: Any advice to a future tutor that you've not already said I suppose, who was going to deliver the unit?

175.   A: I don't think so. I know people had really mixed reactions about it, like particularly mixed, as in some people really enjoyed it and other people find it very, like the concepts just a bit overwhelming really or just didn't trigger anything for them. I don't know how you can advise somebody to manage that, maybe it's something that generates quite mixed reactions. Again, I don't know if that's the nature of the topic or the way in which it's presented.

176.   Q: Well I suppose it's perhaps about being aware of the diversity of responses to the subject area really. And in terms of impact on practice, I know you've talked about the ideas for supervision, would there be anything else do you think in how that unit's impacted on practice?

177.   A: I've actually found it quite helpful because you're reflecting on your practice and then you have to find theories for it. I find it quite, I suppose it's, I don't know if it's changed my practice, but it's just been quite reassuring really. And kind of lessening some of the anxiety when the things you're dealing with day to day have some basis in what people have written about, or there's an acknowledgement of what you do out there I think. So maybe it's helped me feel just a bit more, maybe a bit more confident in things.

178.   Q: Because you mentioned the Tony Morrison reading, I think you sort of said something, I'll have to go back over the transcript to find it, but you said something about that being very relevant to your experiences here. I mean is that what you're talking about, in terms of the reassurance?

179.   A: Yes, I think that's the main one really. Yes, it's around the emotional intelligence stuff.

180.   Q: So is there anything you'd like to add that you've not had chance to say?

181.	A:	I don't think so, I've said loads.

Appendix 21: Interview Transcript

Participant F

1. Q: So could you say something about your social work role here?

2. A: My job title is Children and Families Coordinator and I was seconded to the team, so my substantive post is Senior Practitioner. And within the team, there's one other social worker who is on a social work grade. We also have a service manager, who's from a social work background and he's due to retire shortly, so I'm going to be taking over his responsibilities. So that will involve a change, but currently I'm having a sort of coordination role where I coordinate a number of cases, chair some meetings and have some sort of input with other agencies, sort of consultative but also chairing meetings, multi-agency meetings.

3. Q: Can you say something about the service that you're involved in?

4. A: So it's a CAMHS service, multi-agency. So we have education, mental health and social care, working on a co-located basis. And we cover the whole of the geographical area of the local authority. But we only work with a small number of children, up to about thirty children at any one time. And those children should have their own allocated social worker. So I'm not the first port of call, in terms of case responsibility.

5. Q: I mean you've mentioned about co-ordination and supervision, I mean is there anything else you want to say about sort of supervisory, advisory?

6. A: We have six therapeutic children's workers on the team, although I'm not directly supervising them, in terms of being a line manager at the moment, I do offer some supervision in relation to the

individual children that we're working with. So I've got a caseload of about ten children and I would work with the children's workers who are involved.

7. Q: And your demographic information, how would you describe yourself, gender, ethnicity etc?

8. A: Female, white British, middle class.

9. Q: And when did you become qualified?

10. A: 1996.

11. Q: So we're looking first at experience of social work and your career to date, maybe from before you qualified, you know, whatever you want to say really. Could you tell us something about that?

12. A: I suppose I had always wanted to go into social work, although I didn't aim to be qualified straight away. So I did a first degree, a BA in Social Policy and Administration. And then after that I did, I think it was two and a half years working for a charity, two years in this country and about six months abroad, which was working in therapeutic communities for people with mental health needs.

13. Q: Where abroad?

14. A: In [abroad], that was a good experience. The first place I worked in this country was a family centre, sort of therapeutic community for families, but the one in [abroad] was for young adults with mental health problems. So that was really interesting and I lived in the sort of move on accommodation with some of the service users. So that was interesting, in terms of boundaries really.

15. And then I came back to the UK and did some further study that was not directly connected to social work, but I did that part time and then I started working in children's homes, just sort of getting experience for a while. And I had a job working in the children's home for about a couple of years, and then I did about seven or eight months working in a leaving care service in a different local authority from this one. And at that point, I'd applied to do the social work course. So I got that training.

16. Q: So what was your further study?

17. A: That was an MA in, well it was basically in feminist theology but it was social and pastoral theology really, was the general course and then I specialised in the feminist theology. And we had several lectures and seminars that were shared with social work students. So it was quite closely connected really.

18. So then I did the social work training, I didn't do a master's at that point and I just did the Dip SW. And on completing that I came straight into employment with my current employer.

19. Q: And have you stayed with the current employer since?

20. A: Yes.

21. Q: Has it been in this post?

22. A: No, I started off in a district social work team working with over elevens. And that involved duty and assessment work, but also long term care proceedings and permanence work. So it was a range of different types of work but from the age of eleven upwards. And then there have been several reorganisations or restructurings, so I've moved around as a result of those. Moving into a permanence team and also into a locality team, which was more about sort of

assessment and care proceedings, so a bit of everything really. And I've been in my current post five years.

23. Q: I mean that's making me think quite a bit that there's an awful lot there in your career that I wasn't aware of. I mean not that tutors are usually aware of actually, the kind of full background of their students, but it does make me wonder whether there's some value in learning a bit more about students really, in order to make best use of that. That experience in the classroom. It's very difficult with a large group, because some of our groups are sixty/seventy students, forty/fifty, is more common. But with the group like we had, potentially I think there's a bit of a role for some biography maybe at the beginning. I don't know whether that would have been, I mean it's something I'm thinking about really, although I think if people have done prior courses that have asked for professional biographies, it might be just more of the same for no good reason sort of thing. It might just feel like; oh we're doing this again. Yes, it's making me think as to whether I need to sort of illicit more information at the beginning.

24. A: It's interesting how it's evolved really because most of us have remained in the group for several modules. I suppose we have shared certain things, often at the beginning of each module. It might be more or less the same information but occasionally it varies a bit. I think probably there'd be a general interest in thinking about that a bit more, among the group as well.

25. Q: Yes, because you knew each other, I mean there was a new student in the group I know, but most of you knew each other quite a bit really didn't you before you started. So we're going to look at social work education before you came on to the PG Dip, so how would you describe your experiences of your qualifying social work course?

26. A: I think it was quite an academic course but it was very mixed, in terms of the make-up of a student group. And it was at a time when, people who were going into youth offending work or probation work, were sort of required to do a social work course. So that was quite interesting, in terms of having that component to the group as well.

27. I remember enjoying, having a sort of generic component, but also then being able to specialise in children and families work. I think for me, the academic nature of the course wasn't a problem as such, but I think some people found it quite a challenge. And in terms of placements, I mean I personally had a good experience of placements, although I don't think they prepared me very well for coming into local authority work with children and families.

28. Q: You don't think the placements did?

29. A: Not especially because I did one placement with a voluntary sector organisation, working with young people who were mostly homeless. And although that was interesting, they were generally sort of above the age range that I would come on to deal with in children's services. And then the other placement I did was in a hospital, attached to a ward where people were admitted following strokes. So that was mostly elderly people and, you know, again really interesting, but in terms of getting into doing assessments and so on with children and families, I didn't really have much opportunity to do that in either of my placements. So I was more or less in at the deep end when I started work.

30. Q: How well do you think the course overall prepared you for your first role as a social worker, the academic components as well?

31. A: I think, in terms of being able to produce coherent reports, that was quite good and we had a good grounding in legislation. And I suppose, you know, generally through looking at social issues, that

was quite a thorough part of the course. I think in terms of the day to day meeting children and parents and family members, dealing with different organisations, schools, health and so on, I don't think I'd got a clear grasp of what that would entail really. And I was fortunate, that when I started work, you know, I had experienced colleagues around me and a supportive team manager, so that I could develop those skills gradually and then sort of work alongside colleagues. But yes, I did feel as though it was quite a challenge to start with.

32. Q: Is there anything that stands out for you from your qualifying course, what would that be? You have mentioned some things but I just wondered

33. A: Yes, I mean I think, to some extent, the legal input was very good, very thorough. That was a strong part of the course really. Just generally, like I've said, the sort of more informal aspect of being with a range of people who were looking to qualify for different types of social work. It provided quite a broad spectrum for discussion and debate.

34. Q: I mean you have talked about what you enjoyed on the course, I just wondered if it was anything you particularly enjoyed or disliked on the course?

35. A: I suppose for me it was having, wanting to go into social work for quite some time really, I think since I was at school. It felt as though I was really getting towards my goal, so I was kind of excited about it and enthusiastic and, you know, wanting to learn and all that. And I think it suited me because I suppose I felt reasonably comfortable within the academic context, that was manageable. And so it was the sort of practice area that was the less familiar part but it was enough of a good balance that I felt it was manageable. Yes, so it was a good experience on the whole.

36. Q: Yes, because you'd given yourself quite a good grounding really hadn't you, before you'd gone on the course, because you'd done lots of other things, academic and practice. So I suppose having succeeded in other areas, that might actually help, in terms of confidence and being able to perhaps focus on the content. I mean I'm speculating here, but maybe focus on the content of the course, rather than too much worry about, will I succeed, will I make the grade, will I be able to do this, which can sort of interfere with absorbing the content. I suppose it's that thing that it's difficult for people to learn when they're worried. If you've succeeded in lots of other ways and are confident that you will get through this, that you will succeed at this, then it can take that worry away.

37. So do you remember learning anything about reflection or critical reflection, anything like that on your social work course?

38. A: I certainly remember learning about reflection and I remember writing a reflective log when I was on placement, although I don't think I was very diligent about it always but I had a go. But in terms of critical reflection, I don't have a clear sense of having addressed that really.

39. Q: So was the reflective log part of the portfolio then or was it something aside from that, that you did for yourself?

40. A: I think we just did it, yes for ourselves. I don't think we had to submit a full reflective log. I think we might have perhaps included a piece of work that demonstrated some of the reflection but it wasn't the whole thing.

41. Q: And do you remember, I'm just thinking about how reflective logs are used really, I mean was it used in any context?

42. A: It certainly, I don't think it was used in supervision when I was on placement. I think it was more that I used it for my own benefit to just record my own reflections, perhaps at the end of a day. And then to think about what I might do differently or, you know, that sort of thing. It wasn't really built into the process of the placement as such.

43. Q: Do you remember, I mean I know it's going back a bit really, but I just wondered if you remembered being taught about reflection?

44. A: I don't have a strong memory of it really. I'm sure it was part of the course but I don't have a clear sense of what was said really.

45. Q: And critical analysis, do you remember learning about critical analysis at all?

46. A: Again, I'm not sure that I did, or at least if I did I've lost that learning. Not a clear memory of that either. I suppose I do remember thinking about analysis and, obviously, that was part of the expectation for assignments and so on, that we would demonstrate the ability to provide analysis but not specifically critical analysis.

47. Q: So you've got a recollection of being assessed on your ability to analyse in some ways and that might have been a portfolio, it might have been in the assignments, but it was there. You were aware that it was an expectation but not really aware of it actually being taught as a particular skill or a subject area during the course?

48. A: I don't have a clear sense of that, no.

49. Q: Since you qualified, just thinking about educational training you might have undertaken since qualification, is there anything that stands out on that?

50. A: I suppose; I mean I've done a range of in-house training courses. I guess quite a broad range over the years that I've worked here, but I also did the practice teacher award a few years ago. So I suppose that was quite a significant piece of work because it was over a period of nine months and we were asked to submit a portfolio for that. And I think, you know, being examined on having a student in placement and sort of thinking with the student about their work, and also then thinking about my work with the student. So there was quite a lot of, I guess, critical analysis around that at the time and I think that was much more part of that course.

51. Q: And when you have students, I mean I'm wondering if they are expected to do critical analysis, your students when you're supervising them and reflection?

52. A: Yes, certainly more recently. I mean I think reflection has been a part of a student's placements, you know, with all the students I've had, but it's only probably in the last, well for the last three students, so probably the last three or four years that I've noted that there's been more emphasis on critical analysis. And I think part of that might be that those students were all studying for an MA, whereas the previous ones haven't been I think.

53. Q: So have you been encouraged to study from anyone, during your career?

54. A: I mean I suppose there's a general encouragement from my managers, you know, successive managers who've encouraged me to attend relevant training courses. In terms of more in-depth study, I think that's probably more of a self-motivated course of action really for me. So it's something that I feel is what I want to do to keep me up to date with the work, but also to sort of help me develop my thinking around the work.

55. Q: We're moving on to look at the PG Dip now and just thinking about what brought you to that course, you know, what the run up was, what was the motivation, the reasons for coming on the course?

56. A: I think I'd been in my current post a couple of years at the point that I received the email, which was a sort of broadcast to all senior practitioners in the authority, offering potentially a place on the PG Dip. And I guess there's been something about working in a multi-agency service, that's really sort of prompted me to think a bit about that aspect of social work and how things work or don't work really, and wanting to look into that in a bit more detail. And having perhaps a bit more space in this job than I might have done in previous jobs to reflect. And the fact that we regularly discuss, as a team, not just individual cases, but also the way that we work and reflect on that. And we've been changing over the years to adapt to circumstances or what the priorities are seen to be and so on.

57. So I was immediately interested when I saw the email and then I think it just so happened that there were three of us from this authority who applied and there were three places being offered. So there was actually no competition from that point of view and I got a place on the course.

58. Q: Just focussing a bit on what you were saying about the inter-professional discussions that you have here. Because that might be something that's quite special to this particular setting or settings like this really. So how does that happen?

59. A: Well we have, I suppose, a number of forums for that really. We have a team meeting every week, which as far as possible, all the members of the team attend. So even though some people on the team may only have one day a week with us, they'll be here for that team meeting. And we will do case updates on a proportion of the children that we're involved with, but we'll also have discussions about

other aspects of how we work, in terms of perhaps sort of making links with other services or issues that perhaps arise in a number of cases where we're recognising there's a pattern or a theme. And thinking about how we can work more effectively around that, so that's one forum.

60. For those of us that are involved in case coordination or perhaps more sort of strategic thinking, we have a meeting once every couple of months, coordination meeting. So that's another forum where we talk more, like I say, more strategically really about how we work as a team. And then there are more sort of, I suppose more of a therapeutic slant on things would be available, because we have, about again every two months, we have a family therapy worker who comes to provide consultation to the team. And that's usually focused on a specific case but it can be on broader issues as well.

61. And we've previously had a psychotherapy consultant meeting with us on a similar basis, although that's not happening at the moment, but we have a psychotherapist on the team as well. So there's quite a lot of scope really for reflecting as a team. And then just informally as well, through discussions with colleagues, that happens quite regularly. And then in supervision as well, you know, we'll talk about those sort of issues too.

62. Q: Yes, because you're actually looking for patterns perhaps, in terms of what's happening with a number of cases. I mean if there was a pattern, I mean what are the kind of things that might happen as a result of identifying a pattern?

63. A: I suppose we'd look to understanding the pattern really and thinking about whether there could be some collective way of responding to that and working with that, whether that might involve other agencies as well. And so it might need to be fed into a sort of more senior level of management, to reach the relevant people. And

sometimes, you know, it can be about recognising, through work with a number of children, that there's perhaps, you know, for example, one situation we had was where there were a number of children in different children's homes in the city who were linking up and absconding and meeting up and then were considered to be at risk. And so it was about sort of thinking, how can we support those specific children's homes to work together to manage that risk? So that was one example of how we had an input.

64. Q: And when you talk about individual cases and people present sort of a selection of cases at the team meetings, is that kind of a discussion that other people provide advice or thoughts or support on the management of that case or the intervention in that case?

65. A: Yes, it can be. So, for example, we have an educational psychologist and a psychiatrist, two clinical psychologists and the psychotherapist who are sort of, perhaps I'd say more specialist workers in some respects. And so they're not necessarily directly involved with every child or young person that is known to the team, but when we have a discussion in the team meeting, they might say, that sounds like we need to do this or there needs to be further assessment there because it sounds as though there might be some traits of a particular disorder, you know, whatever from a psychiatric point of view.

66. So that's really helpful to get that input. But I mean I think it works from a social work angle as well because, I guess, myself and my social work colleague have perhaps more of a thought to the sort of ecological environmental aspects of people's lives. And thinking about how to support children and families with those, in addition to more intrinsic difficulties really. I find it a helpful model, that there's always that balance between, a sort of more health based focus and then more of a social care context.

67. Q: So there's kind of maybe different perspectives, different professional perspectives and perhaps different kind of traditions of working?

68. A: Yes, and I think there's also an element of, I suppose having confidence really as a worker. I remember when I started on the team, that I was more deferential to the mental health workers perhaps because it was something, although I'd had some experience of working in that field, I didn't feel as though I was as qualified as they were to understand some different issues. But I think over time I've become more confident about, you know, managing that. But among the children's workers, who are not necessarily professionally qualified but have a lot of experience, I think we've tried as a team to look at how they can feel more confident about contributing to those discussions.

69. I think the emphasis now is that when we do discuss a particular child in the team meeting, that we'd always invite the children's worker to feedback on their involvement, often as the first part of the discussion, so that they're encouraged to make that contribution really. And I think over time that has actually shaped the way that we all work because there's a lot of respect for what the children's workers do, and the kind of close relationships they develop with the children. So it's really seen to be a valuable part of what the team does.

70. Q: So at the point where you came on to the PG Dip, can you remember what you thought about reflection at that point?

71. A: I remember thinking, oh good, this is going to give me a chance to kind of have a space away from what I do each day and sort of reflect a bit on that. And just be able to think about things in a different way, you know, think about why we do things the way we do and can we do them differently? And just to perhaps learn about some new ways of thinking that might inform our practice really.

72. Q: Can you remember what you thought about critical analysis when you first came on the PG Dip?

73. A: I suppose, for me, there'd be something about, I think I know what analysis is but I'm not sure how to do the critical analysis. And, you know, I wasn't really a hundred percent sure that I'd be able to achieve that straight away. I guess I felt that there'd be input throughout the course, that would help me develop those skills really. Because I think, you know, it was a long time following my previous sort of MA course and because it was quite a different focus, you know, I didn't really have a sense of already having those skills. So yes, that was about developing that really.

74. Q: And when you began the critical thinking and analysis unit, what were your thoughts about that particular unit at the beginning?

75. A: I think, I was actually quite keen on what I perceived to be the purpose of the module and looking at the way we think about things. Because I think up to that point we'd been discussing law and organisations and management and so on, which although sometimes they can seem a bit removed, you know, they usually have a sort of direct correlation to what you're doing in your day job. Whereas with critical thinking and analysis, I thought, this is going to be more, I suppose more cerebral or more kind of academic perhaps. And I just thought, this is going to be a challenge, but I was looking forward to it because, I guess I was hoping to, wanting to develop different ideas and new ways of thinking about things.

76. And I think it's difficult to achieve that on any sort of in-house training course. I mean they're very much directed at work-based, practice-based issues. And so I was pleased really that we had that module to open things up a bit.

77. Q: You know when you first started the PG Dip, because you've done other units haven't you, have you done all four of the units up until now, there's the leadership and management, there's the law and policy, there's the critical analysis unit and then there's the inter-professional working unit isn't there? And I think there's other units to come.

78. A: Yes, so we've just started the children and families unit, yes.

79. Q: So that's the four that you've done to date and then you're moving on to the next one. So going back to when you first came on the course, I mean were you aware that critical analysis was part of the expectation right at the beginning?

80. A: Yes, and I suppose, you know, I'd sort of picked up on those ideas from the beginning but I didn't feel as though I'd got sort of a clear sense of how to make the best of that. And obviously, I read the material that was provided, in terms of, you know, what was expected from assessments and so on. So that I'd got a guideline as to what I was working towards. And, obviously, it was included in part of the teaching but again, because that was more focused on perhaps more practice based areas, I guess it didn't provide the same opportunities really as the critical thinking module has done. So I was pleased that we had that.

81. Q: So focussing on the critical thinking and analysis unit then, what are your thoughts about that unit now?

82. A: I found it very stimulating really and I think some things were quite difficult and some of the readings quite difficult. But I think unless you try, you know, you're not going to stretch yourself and find that you can do things. So I was quite happy with that. And I think it really stimulated some interesting discussion among the group and it really made me look at my own practice in more detail, more

thoroughly and made me ask questions in a different way perhaps than I had been doing before.

83. And I think, you know, particularly, things like the double loop thinking, you know, it sort of helped because I could see that it's not just a linear process, but actually going back over something and sort of seeing it from a different angle or seeing it with the benefit of hindsight and then thinking about how you apply your learning into a similar situation. I guess it's all part of reflective practice but it sort of spelled it out really, in more of a helpful way. So yes, I felt very positive about it as a whole. As I say, I think it did sort of stimulate the group and I think in some ways it helped us develop as a group doing that module together.

84. Q: Is there anything that happened that did help you develop as a group?

85. A: I think the pieces that we did for, you know, the written piece and the presentation, that was, it was quite challenging but it was good because I think we felt we were all having the same challenge. We were all going through the same experience and there was a supportive environment, which made it feel safe to do that. But, you know, it's not the easiest thing to present something like that, you know, in terms of your own practice and feel that you're opening yourself up to other people to question that. But it felt really helpful to do that.

86. Q: So that was the written piece early on, which people shared in the sub groups?

87. A: Yes.

88. Q: Do you think that was in the right place then, that written piece?

89. A: Yes, I think so.

90. Q: Because it was quite early in the unit, I'm aware of that.

91. A: I mean I guess, you know, speaking for myself, it was fine. I wonder if, because there was one person that was fairly new to the course at that point and whether it might have been a bit more of a challenge for her because she didn't know the rest of the group so well. But certainly for me, it felt as though it was in the right place.

92. Q: I suppose you've been touching on these next themes really, but does anything stand out for you from the unit, anything that you want to say about that?

93. A: I suppose, I mean I was thinking about some of the reading, I guess I'd not expected Foucault to appear on the reading list in this course. And I really found it very challenging and interesting to have a look at that, I'm not sure I understood all of it at all but I think it's just really healthy to look more broadly and not just look at social work texts. And to think about, you know, how do people think about life more generally, rather than just about social work. And that there are ways that you can apply that sort of thinking really. And just the whole, you know, questioning about research, how research is done and what methods you use in different situations.

94. And I suppose because, you know, it does relate to my work here, because we collect data and we present it in an annual report each year. And it's about, how can we justify really the information that we share in that way? So yes, it gave me lots of food for thought.

95. Q: Because now I think, having heard about, a bit more about what you've done in the past, I'm wondering if you've studied philosophical texts before on previous courses really. Have you come across Foucault before?

96. A: Yes, I have.

97. Q: Because I think you did say that actually in the session, I think I remember you saying that, now I'm thinking about it.

98. A: I mean I'd done, I suppose a sociology A Level when I was at school and then I did a bit more sociology in my first degree. And then with the theology, I guess there was sort of, it was a spectrum of things really, but some if it was more on the philosophical side. I guess, yes perhaps I wasn't put off by it because I'd had that experience and was perhaps more open to the benefits that it could offer, yes.

99. Q: So was there anything that was helpful or anything unhelpful?

100.   A: I mean I don't have a sense that anything was unhelpful really. I think the good thing was that there was a range of learning opportunities. So there was some reading in your own time, there was some sort of input from yourself and other contributions to the course. And there was group discussions and presentations. And I think that one of the things probably that does stand out quite well, is the young woman who came in to give a sort of service user perspective. And I think that's sometimes quite hard to achieve in social work education, but I think it's always really valuable when it happens because, you know, it's easy to convince yourself that something is going to work or that it's the right way of doing things. But when you hear it from somebody who's been through that experience, yes it has more credence really. So that was a really positive session.

101.   Q: Because you must be working with a lot of looked after children here, I mean you've mentioned some of the context before. I

imagine that a lot of the children using this service will have experience of being in care?

102.   A: Yes, about 75 or 80% of our children are looked after. So yes, that was really helpful from that point of view, you know, it is something that we try to do as a service, to involve children and young people and the parents and carers. And I think we try to be quite creative about how we do that, but it's always good to hear about other experiences and other ideas of what works.

103.   Q: And do you think there were, I mean I know this is sort of trying to remember really back to the session and your thoughts about that session, but do you think there was anything in that session that prompted you to look at anything differently or do anything differently?

104.   A: I suppose, thinking about not necessarily having to use formal methods of consultation or whatever. I mean one thing we have done as a team, was actually one of the students I had on placement, who set up a group of young people who devised a feedback form, which we then have used subsequently. And that's been really positive, but you know, there are some young people who either emotionally or in other ways, don't want to complete feedback in that way. So it's about how you can sort of get some sort of feedback that's meaningful from service users. And I think, you know, it's something that's going to be ongoing really, in terms of how we manage that.

105.   I suppose the main thing for me was just not to give up on the idea that, you know, if you have one way of doing things, it doesn't mean it's the only way and you can try other things. And not to feel like you're never going to achieve it really.

106.   Q: So we've talked a bit about the written piece, is there anything else you want to say about that piece of writing, that early piece of writing?

107.   A: I suppose in some ways it felt a little bit of a challenge because with previous modules, we'd written an assignment at the end of the module and it wasn't shared with the group, whereas, obviously, this one was earlier on and it was shared. So I think there was a bit more of a sense of vulnerability about doing that, but that it was a really positive experience and worth doing.

108.   Q: I suppose there's some, in a way, I think we were using the luxury of being in that small group, and it does feel a bit of a luxury, but I mean it shouldn't be I think. I mean I think those kind of sizes of groups are really good for teaching and learning. But because we had that opportunity we could, and because, you know, I suppose I knew that people knew each other, it felt quite a comfortable group really. So yes, OK.

109.   So what about the presentation, any thoughts about doing the presentation?

110.   A: Again, I suppose that it's something that perhaps I don't do very often and it can feel like a challenge, but it is good to develop those skills. And I have done it occasionally in this job because we've sometimes been to conferences where we've perhaps led a workshop or something like that. So there might have been three or four of us who've collectively done a presentation. And then I've also done presentations with groups of social workers in the authority, to just inform them about the service.

111.   So yes, it's very helpful to have another experience of that, but in a sort of, in a different environment where we were looking at that in a critical way. And sort of examining what we were doing individually

and others within the group. So there was more learning really from that I think, than I would normally feel I've achieved from other experiences of doing presentations.

112.   Q: I mean can you say anything more about what prompted that learning, if there was more learning in the presentation than in, I suppose it's context possibly, but I mean if there was more learning in doing the presentation in that way, I suppose I'm interested in what facilitates that learning. Was there anything you could point to that?

113.   A: I think part of it is just the context of the course and knowing that that's what the focus of the course was. But also, I don't know, perhaps not, because generally if I've done a presentation say for social workers in the authority, I've not really had very much feedback. So it's a one off, sort of one-way process more or less, although there has been question and answer sessions at the end. But that's more just about practical things, like how do you make a referral? Whereas this was about, you know, about giving the presentation really, as well as the content I think. And so yes, I did feel as though I was probably examining what I was doing more closely, as well as getting the feedback from other people.

114.   Q: And the assignment then, any thoughts about the assignment?

115.   A: Yes, I think, I spent, I don't know whether it's going to happen through the course, that I spend perhaps longer on each assignment as I go on, but I certainly spent longer on that one than I had the previous ones. I think partly just because it provoked so much thinking and I was conscious that, you know, I was talking about critical thinking and analysis and I had to really demonstrate, to the best of my ability, that I could do that in the piece of work. So it was, I don't know, I think I was reflecting on the process as I was doing it,

more than I had done previously. And I think, I don't know, I was probably more thorough in some ways because of that.

116.   It felt like quite an intense experience writing it, I was kind of very caught up in it and had papers all over and, you know, just, yes I sort of lived it for a few weeks, which I couldn't do all the time. But I think it was really valuable and it felt right for that module.

117.   Q: Again, you've mentioned some of the sessions and exercises that you liked or loathed, well you haven't really said about loathed, but I mean was there anything you particularly want to bring out that wasn't so good for you or was particularly good for you, anything you haven't said?

118.   A: No, I don't think so. No, I think actually seeing the timescales there and the programme, the learning sets were really helpful. And I think that helped us to work more effectively as a group as well, and I think we were all quite committed to doing that and found it very productive. Because I suppose, in a way, you can see academic study as quite a sort of solitary pursuit, but that helped, me anyway, to have a look at it as a collective thing really. And that, you know, we're not competing with each other, but we can learn from each other and that's to everybody's benefit. So yes, that was really helpful.

119.   And it was good to do the review as well, because I think, you know, it's straight forward enough to have a form to fill in and provide comments, but to sort of talk about how things have gone and sort of have a group discussion adds to that really.

120.   Q: So we've talked a bit about the discussion with colleagues, I mean you've brought that out a number of times really. Is there anything you want to add about being in a smallish group and opportunities to discuss?

121.   A: I think just to echo what you said as well really, you know, in a larger group it's much more difficult to do that, to achieve that. So yes, it's been really helpful to have a small enough group that everybody can contribute. I don't know, I think sometimes in a larger group, because of confidence issues, you might only get a sort of minority of people who are prepared to speak out, whereas with a group this size, we've all been able to contribute. I think it's felt comfortable and, you know, even to the point where you know it's OK to challenge each other to some extent, and that's managed within the group.

122.   Q: Was there any opportunity for informal learning outside the sessions at all, was there anything else that happened that supported your learning with this unit?

123.   A: I think, probably as has happened with all the units, because we are a small group and we tend to spend breaks and lunchtimes together, we'll carry on conversations from the sessions and sort of develop the thinking really during those times. That's the main thing I can think of really, in terms of informal.

124.   Q: I mean I think that's quite important as well. I think sort of having a proper lunch break really, where you can spend a bit of time together is really valuable. What about from work, in your work place, was there any sort of, anything that happened at work that sort of supported your learning with the unit?

125.   A: I suppose there's perhaps a couple of things. I mean one obvious thing is obviously I was allowed the time to attend the course. I also had three study days to write the assignment. Other than that, I have access to the Community Care Inform website. And quite often have, you know, they send alerts of things because you can specify the areas that you're interested in. So I regularly get

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updates. So, you know, there's been, I mean I can't think of anything specifically that connects with the unit, but generally I do access those and anything that seems relevant I'll have a look at.

126.   Q: Yes, it is useful, I use it.

127.   A: Other than that, it's hard to say really. I think perhaps I haven't thought very clearly about whether there were ways that I received support that I've perhaps not picked up on. I mean my manager has read my assignments, so he sort of verifies what I've written about is what I do. So I guess that's another form of support, yes.

128.   Q: I did this word cloud just in case we needed it, I don't think we really needed it, but just in case there's anything on it really that prompts anything.

129.   A: I mean I think for me it's something I hadn't seen before doing this module and I really like word clouds. I've used them in other ways. And I notice, I just got the email through yesterday about the latest Munro report and there's a word cloud on the front of that. So I thought, yes she's jumping on the bandwagon.

130.   Q: Yes, they are really common these days.

131.   A: I don't think, it's interesting in terms of the things that come out and the words that appear. I think the one that maybe you did before, there were words of different size depending on how frequently they appear. And I think that's quite significant when you're looking at a text or a piece of text.

132.   Q: Yes, so what I've done here is, I've identified words that occur in my feedback to students and student's feedback in the evaluations. And I've just taken kind of the words that stand out. I

mean obviously I haven't been able to cut and paste all of the, and I wouldn't do anyway, because it would go on, it wouldn't be publicly available, but I wouldn't want to put students work through anything on the internet really. But what I did was, I took the words that seem to, so it is very subjective actually, words that seemed to me to crop up a lot in feedback and a lot in the evaluations. And then rather than making, because I haven't been able to count them up myself and work it out, I made them all the same. But jumbled them up and then put them into, there's like an alphabetical order kind of thing. There's nothing particularly that that's triggering that you haven't said by the sound of it or is there?

133.   A: I don't know, I mean just seeing the thing about science and then truth, I mean I suppose, you know, I perhaps referred a little bit earlier on, in terms of research and, you know, what counts and how do you measure things. And I guess that did provoke a lot of thinking around how to assess, you know, for example, for this service, who are we offering the service to and are we meeting the needs of those individuals? And, you know, how do we present information about what we do and is using scientific methods to do that the right way or are there other ways?

134.   And we have done things like sort of a case study to describe a more in-depth way of working, but I think it's good to have a balance. So seeing the science and truth, sort of makes me think of that really.

135.   Q: I suppose there's a lot of statistical data that's collected isn't there? That is one of the main ways of justifying expenditure and budgets etc.

136.   A: Yes, we have had a psychology assistant on the team at various times. So it will usually be for a sort of twelve-month slot and they often do a lot of that sending out questionnaires and collecting

them back in and collating all the information. So it is done from more of a medical model I suppose, that aspect of it.

137.　　Q:　　So we're coming towards the end now really. How do you think about the critical thinking and analysis unit now, how do you feel about it now?

138.　　A:　　It felt as though it was at the right point in the course, in that I think if it had come right at the beginning it might have felt a bit daunting. And also, I think at the beginning of the course, I was keen to just sort of think about social work practice in a more tangible way perhaps and more sort of day by day stuff. But at this stage, you know, when we did start the module, I think it was good timing really, for me anyway. It felt like I was ready to think about things in a different way and I'd got some basis, in terms of the previous modules for, you know, developing critical thinking skills but then I'd got something to build on with the module. So that felt really good. And then it's obviously informing my work and subsequent modules and in my day job as well. So it's something that I definitely feel I've sort of integrated into what I'm doing a bit more.

139.　　Q:　　So how do you think that has integrated because I mean I wanted to ask you a bit about impact on practice or on yourself. I mean that has come out in things that you've said already, but is there anything you can sort of specifically point to, in terms of impact?

140.　　A:　　Yes, I mean I suppose it's perhaps given me a bit more confidence to, it seems strange in a way to say it, but to trust my instincts. To think that, if I feel uncomfortable about something, either that I've written or said or that I've heard, that I feel more confident to reflect on that and think about, you know, what could I do differently and how can I apply my thinking really to address that? Even if you, you obviously can't turn the clock back and change what's happened, but you can do things in a different way for the future. So that's, I

suppose I just felt like I've got a bit more confidence to think in that way now.

141.   I suppose just a general sense of perhaps having a bit more, I don't know if it's objectivity or what, but trying to think differently, you know, not be sort of caught up with the minutiae of a situation always. And to sort of try and step back from that and reflect on what's happening, both with my own involvement, but also to look at how we operate as a team. And I suppose, because I'm going to be taking on more of a management role, you know, it's important that I can do that really anyway. So that's been valuable.

142.   Q: You know you were saying about using Community Care Inform, I just wondered, do you think, have you done that prior to coming on to the PG Dip, were you using Inform prior to that?

143.   A: Yes.

144.   Q: So it's always been a tradition? It's interesting actually, there's a tradition for you anyway, would you say in the team there's a tradition of drawing on research?

145.   A: I know the other social worker has access to the same website and she uses it too. Other than that, I think, to some extent, there is and various people have done further study on the team and sometimes have brought material from that into work. So we've kind of had, I suppose we have had a tradition really of people using their skills and knowledge in a range of ways to develop the way that we work, yes.

146.   Q: What advice would you give to others who were going to start the unit?

147.   A: I suppose I'm aware that some people in my group felt a bit daunted, and I think that's one of the words on here, you know, there's some sense of that, by the title of the course and also by some of the themes really. I suppose if I was going to say to someone who was just starting it, you know, don't worry about that. I think all will become clear almost, that it's worth sticking with it and persevering. Not feeling like you have to understand everything that you might read but that, you know, I was struck for that myself, you know, I did think that some of the reading, I'm not sure really I can fit that in, but over time it really did start to make sense. And I think it's definitely well worth persevering.

148.   Actually it was enjoyable, I mean it's not that it's a hard slog, it's just that it's a different way of approaching something than we're perhaps used to.

149.   Q: And if there was something you would change; is there anything you would change?

150.   A: I suppose, I mean I hadn't thought before but, you know, just from when we started talking today, in terms of personal experience within social work. Perhaps that might provide a good starting point for the module, to allow people to sort of share a bit more of their own personal experience. Because I think that's probably what people are quite comfortable with isn't it, and then moving on to other more challenging aspects of the module.

151.   Q: I'm thinking about that quite a lot because we started off with, there was an exercise where people brought in those objects. And I think that, I mean I think everybody realised and we talked about it, that was to sort of prompt discussion about identity and who you were as a person, and thinking about interpretation and how others interpret the information that you brought. I think, looking back and listening to people, I think there's something missing at the beginning.

And it may well be that you knew, not everybody knew each other very well, but there was a sense that people knew each other in the group but I'm not sure, as a tutor, I really knew enough at the beginning, or if I'd known more, perhaps I could have made better use of it. And that's what I'm thinking about at the moment, one of the things I'm thinking about really, so that's really helpful.

152.   So if there was one thing you'd keep the same?

153.   A: It's hard to single one thing out but I think the use of the learning sets was really helpful, so I'd be keeping, you know, if I was going to repeat the experience, I think I'd say I'd really want them to be part of it.

154.   Q: That's useful, yes. And you have talked about why that was helpful to you. And so, in terms of running this course in the future, what advice would you give to a tutor who was running it in the future?

155.   A: I don't know; I mean I suppose the thing about the sort of difficult reading is maybe the one thing that I'd say it might be worth having a different input somehow. I'm not quite sure how but I know there are books like, you know, philosophy for beginners or something like that. I'm just wondering whether there might be a way of just easing into that reading, that might help people feel a bit more confident about approaching it.

156.   Q: That's helpful, yes, providing some scaffolding and support really.

157.   A: Yes.

158.   Q: That's interesting. And you've talked about impact on practice, I knew this question was coming really, is there anything you want to add to that?

159.   A: I think I've probably said most of it really already.

160.   Q: Yes, you have yes. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you've not had chance to say? It's fine if there isn't.

161.   A: I can't think of anything. I mean, like I said, I did enjoy the course and I got a lot out of it and it's just kind of continued to inform further studies but also, you know, it's impacting on how I work as well.

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