Use of self in social work:

Practitioners' Perceptions

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Declaration

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo

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Acknowledgements

One rainy day in my office in Cambridge, England, a cascaded email arrived in my inbox that I nearly deleted. It suggested doing a PhD in Australia. I thought it might be a scam, but on further investigation I discovered it wasn't. I went home and asked my family how they would feel if I went to Australia to do a PhD. They said, "Why not?". So, the first people I have to give my heartfelt love and thanks to are my husband John, and two beautiful daughters, Louise and Emily for encouraging me to go on this amazing journey.

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Abstract

Use of self is a readily understood shorthand term between social work professionals that is nonetheless difficult to define. Literature on use of self is opaque with very little focussed on what it means and how it is practiced. The thesis sought to understand practice, policy and education applications of 'the use of self' in professional conversations with experienced social work practitioners in the UK (n=32). A literature and policy review addressed how self and use of self is conceptualised. This included examination of a new Professional Capabilities Framework for social work that has embedded use of self as a practice requirement. The findings indicate that use of self was meaningful to participants and could be identified as who they were, and through application of social work values. Participant practitioners thought their professionalism (including their use of self) was thwarted in government agendas leading to procedural selves in managerial cultures. This finding indicated time, space and trust to explore practice were thought critical for deepening social and emotional intelligence (important to the use of self). The findings demonstrated an impasse between UK governments and the profession about what social work is and what it should be able to do. Social work identity was believed by participating practitioners to be fragmented and this impacted on the way they thought social workers were educated and expected to practice, suggesting that the use of self they described was jeopardised in contemporary structures. It is recommended that a better descriptive conceptual framework is needed if use of self it is to remain an aspect of the profession.

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

The study focusses on use of self in social work; how self is theorised, how self is involved in social work processes and how it is applied in practice. Use of self is referred to as a soft skill (Taylor & Bogo, 2014) or as a wicked competence (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017), slippery in definition, tricky to assess, and dependant on a number of disciplinary perspectives and perceptions. Yet it is a tradition of professional development embedded in social work principles and has been strengthened as an approach in a recently developed competencies framework for England, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (BASW, 2018), which provides a focus for the study.

How use of self is practiced and understood varies in localised adaptations across different nations and settings (Barnard, 2012). Whilst self is given credence in global education and practice standards, varied interpretations of social work are encouraged to reflect different national, regional and local practices and customs, provided these are ethically responsive to anti-oppressive and human rights frameworks set out in its code of ethical principles (IFSW, 2018, point 9.1) .

The frameworks and theories of self as they are explained across academic disciplines have continually shaped and reshaped how use of self is understood by the social work profession. Self is an opaque concept derived from traditional psychological, sociological and philosophical paradigms scattered in numerous etymologies in postmodern and post-structural frameworks as well as feminism and critical theory. In the UK where this study is based, use of self as a concept of practice is influenced by neoliberalism and third way politics

that have particular resonances for social work and where socio-political factors have been brought into sharp focus.

UK political and policy contexts

Shaped within political, social and economic systems, social work has historically maintained its responsibility in global standards of education and practice to find a compassionate middle path that is challenging for itself and for governments. In the early 21st century it is argued that attacks on social workers by politicians and the media in the UK may have irreparably damaged the independent identity of the profession and reshaped it within technocratic organisations (Ferguson, 2004; Jones, 2014; Parton, 2014). Certainly, since the 1960s successive governments in the UK have struggled to provide frameworks that support social workers to effectively safeguard, protect and manage risk at the same time as advocating freedoms and rights within critical ethical agendas (Barclay, 1982; Butler-Sloss, 1988; Every Child Matters, 2003; Laming, 2003; Modernising social services, HMSO, 1998; Munro, 2010, 2011; Seebohn, 1968; Scarman, 1981; Younghusband, 1959).

The impact on social work of neoliberal forces is well documented and has had wide ranging global influences on public welfare (Ferguson, 2004; Jones, 2014). Neoliberalism signalled largescale restructuring of social services into quasi-privatised markets in the UK from the 1980s onward (Jones, 2014). Giddens's (Giddens, 1991, 1999) commentaries on late modernity at the beginning of the 21st century theorised a new notion of self that was no longer constrained by structures and was able to make life choices based on liberated global mobility and technological freedoms. His ideas influenced New Labour in the UK in the early part of the 21st century and demonstrate how new tenures of public, social and welfare services integrated ideologies of self in new political orders.

The Professional Capabilities Framework and UK standards and competencies

In 2000 the Diploma in Social Work qualification was discontinued and replaced with a new professional degree program. At the same time social work became a registered protected title. A new General Social Care Council (GSCC) was set up to register students and social workers. There were a number of developments in the education and practice of social workers over the next ten years culminating in the development and implementation of a new capabilities framework (Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), (BASW, 2018)). A number of reviews also influenced changes in the education and governance of social work as the decade progressed, that support the work in this thesis (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Munro, 2010, 2011; Narey, 2014).

Political conflicts arose in perceptions about what social work is and what it should be required to do leading to tensions between the profession and its governance. Two key institutions; the General Social Care Council (GSCC) originally set up to register social workers, and The College of Social Work (TCSW) for the development of social work professionalism and expertise were closed and the new PCF was swiftly jeopardised. There were a number of changes in social work governance and transfer of social workers registration to the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC). The PCF survived, but new skills definitions emerged. Somewhat indicative of political tensions, the PCF has only been adopted in England (Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) (DfE, 2014; DoH, 2015), along with mapped Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers (SoP) (HCPC, 2018). There are differing variations of standards of practice in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

The literature and policy review for this thesis references the frameworks and standards for education and practice introduced in the UK from 2010, ten years on from the introduction of the bachelor's degree qualification. The frameworks indicated that use of self as an aspect of learning may be fragmented, or at least have divergent meanings. A policy analysis raises questions about how the PCF is used as a tool for learning and developing practice, and how the capabilities for use of self were understood, integrated and interpreted in qualification and standards.

This anchored discussion points in a research project for the thesis which asked experienced professional social workers, educators and managers engaged in everyday UK practice for their perceptions.

Background to the study

This thesis is informed by my own professional experiences. The following sets out how I became interested in use of self during my career development and what has led me to undertake a comprehensive piece of work on a subject that I have become deeply interested in.

As a social worker in the UK I quickly came to understand how using myself was critical for maintaining my own sense of wellbeing and the implications of the unconscious self on practice. I qualified as a social worker in 1989 having spent ten years in youth work and working with young offenders. As a child protection social worker I was dedicated to supervision believing it to be critical for exploring cases and for my self-care in dealing with emotional content. However, I noted that it often didn't support me in ways that I'd hoped. In my advanced training I was introduced to group supervision which I found more helpful for reflecting and learning. Since then I have always been interested in supervision techniques

which raise unconscious feelings safely for examination. I began to see the power of creative techniques for reflection as my career developed.

In the early 1990s I managed a team that worked with children and young people in and out of home care and with children who were being prepared for adoption. The team included a qualified art therapist who taught us to use a sand tray play therapy technique for our direct work with children. At the time I was a practice educator of a student in the team who felt stuck on a case, in the traditional sense of not knowing what to do next following a critical incident in her direct work. Rather than sitting in didactic supervision we experimented in the art therapy room to examine her case in the sand with profound consequences. The student explored the personal anxieties she had working with the child and also how she saw structures around her as impediments to her self-esteem and confidence in carrying out her work. This allowed her to look at unconscious elements of her feelings that she had not thought of before.

In the following years I developed the sand tray exercise as a technique to use in practice supervision. It represented a way of making space for practitioners and students to sit with dilemmas in a completely different context to their usual supervision practice and examine their cases. I had already undertaken a course in drama dance and voice therapy and began to recognise how attending to myself using costumes, masks, art and movement in workshops could raise interesting aspects of myself for examination. Important in the exercises was the way in which the unconscious material belonged to me and the conscious decisions I could make to empower myself. My reflections in contained and safe therapeutic atmospheres and the self-work it produced was miraculous for me, with the mutual benefit of learning more about myself as a social worker.

I became an academic teacher of social work in 2005 where I began to develop the sand tray technique as a group work tool, using it to support students to explore their journeys to social work, and to examine learning outcomes (Amas, 2007). I also connected with other colleagues who were interested in creative techniques for learning and we successfully bid for a research project to run workshop sessions with social work students. This included recorded small group workshops that used movement, drama and creative arts techniques to prompt deep reflection. Students were given reflective diaries to record their learning experiences and their feedback became part of the research project (Amas, Hicks & Anghel, 2013). We attended conferences and used the techniques in workshops to introduce creative supervision techniques to supervisors, managers and practice teachers.

In 2013, I completed a master's degree in education, researching students' perceptions of self-awareness as an aspect of their learning and practice. At the time a new Professional Capabilities Framework (BASW, 2018) was being developed for social work education practice. The framework described capabilities rather than competences and replaced a National Occupational Standards Framework (BASW, 2003). I interviewed six social work students in different phases of their degree and posted an online survey to all social work students in one university, which was returned by 200 respondents. The research was focussed on the requirements of the course to self-reflect and how they provided evidence required to demonstrate self-awareness through their experience of learning in class and in practice education. Students reported mixed views on how personal information was managed by supervisors that conflicted with their university learning and impacted on their sense of 'trust' in supervision processes; a significant number stating they did not feel safe to explore self. However, they showed a deep commitment to supervision as part of their

education process, and thought it was important to integrate self into their professional identity as an aspect of their practice.

An opportunity to research self, and concepts of self for practice was presented to me in 2013 and I began the proposal for this project in a PhD thesis. I noted a growing interest in literature on the self of social work and a rekindling of creative practice. I wondered, as a proponent of use of self in my own career, how practitioners in the field viewed it, what their experience was and whether they saw it as a useful component of practice in contemporary social work.

I wasn't prepared for the political spheres I entered into as a result. Hence this project was developed in an atmosphere of turmoil in social work registration and competencies in the UK. The new regulatory body, Health Care and Professionals Council (HCPC) required the profession to map the newly created Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) with a new set of Standards of Proficiency (SoP) for social work. This dismantled a number of years work to create a single framework for social workers by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) in the earlier part of the 2010s (DfE, 2014). As the research project for this thesis unfolded refreshments of the PCF were frequent. New Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) were developed for social work with adults and children (DfE, 2014; DoH, 2015). The change in terminology from competencies to capabilities in the PCF has been reconverted to skills in the KSS framework and as proficiencies in the HCPC framework. These different frameworks raised questions for me about their influence on the ways in which the self of social work is characterized and what the expectations might be for use of self as a social worker.

Contribution to knowledge

The existing literature demonstrates that social workers have expressed an interest in how they use themselves for practice since at least the middle of the previous century (England, 1986; Gordon & Dunworth, 2017; Rapoport, 1968). But what self is and who the personal self of the social worker becomes in their practice remains elusive. This might be because self is re-conceptualised over generations and shaped by its environment; where we live, how we are governed, and how we relate to each other. Impacted by knowledge areas that observe and attempt to understand it, self has become a contested concept, argued about and discussed in academic, religious, cultural and spiritual communities that present diversities of ideas about what it is.

Social work, as a discipline, takes seriously how self impacts on freedoms and liberties, tested in ethics and values dilemmas that exercise social workers in their education and every day practice (Banks, 2001). The social contexts of self, based on psychological, sociological, political, economic and philosophical theory, are of central importance to social work practice. Further, the self is lived in, managed and controlled in political contexts. Apart from structural and systemic influences, how one lives one's life may also be contextualised by nuanced constructions that impact on life outcomes. Social workers are asked to support people experiencing distress and life challenges. This is a hugely complex task for which social workers use a range of skills and processes. The research conducted for this thesis was interested in finding out more about the connections between social work practitioners' professional and personal selves.

Self is temporal, developing in a context of personal and social history (Barnard, 2012). This history, in recent times, has resulted in social work in the UK being buffeted by

neoliberalism, which consistently attempts to locate the profession as a procedural rather than social change agent. (Parton, 2014; Warner, 2015). It is within these contexts that use of self is said to become a pivotal method for examining social problems, engaging not only knowledge, but the human qualities of encounters and how these are constructed (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017). However, different models of meaning and analysis engage different principles of self that are derived from pluralisms that have complicated ideas about how self should be used, making it difficult to understand (Kaushik, 2017).

These complex contexts have implications for the way in which social workers are expected know how to use themselves. Yet much of what is being assessed as use of self is said to be soft skills, or wicked competencies that create a "knotty problem" for the student or practitioners evidencing skills (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017, p.598) The focus of the research conducted for this thesis was an examination of experienced professionals descriptions about their understanding and application of use of self in generalised practice and with reference to policy contexts and recent reforms of social work and social work education in the UK. It seeks to understand more about how use of self is understood and demonstrated in current social work contexts.

Locating the study

Here I cite my own learning from the privilege of being a social worker and how it has opened my eyes to a world reaching further than my own doorstep. I have discovered how the global politics of neoliberalism impact on social work infrastructures in the UK and other western countries unequally to the rest of the world. There is much to be gained by recognising the contribution of other countries and cultures which are largely ignored in the west.

Use of self is a common terminology in social work, particularly in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and in central Europe. It was also noted that there is a growing literature in Asia and India related to connectedness to family relationships (Chow, Lam, Leung, Wong & Chan, 2011; Kaushik, 2017). In large geographical regions such as Africa and Eastern Europe, social work is more directly emancipatory, concerning itself with issues of immediacy such as poverty, water distribution, HIV, disease, famine, war and support for birth control (Gray, 2016).

The concerns of self-efficacy and self-determination are writ large in social work in many layered and diverse ways, and a project on use of self seemed superfluous coming as it does from such a privileged place. That is, a project about use of self in such pressing times of global impacts of war, poverty and their environmental impacts is limited, and typical perhaps of the west's obsession with inner issues and self-actualisation.

But Self as a subject, who I am, who others are, does not sit in opposition to wider social issues. In social work self is addressed within the structural and psychological frameworks that develop deeper recognitions of not just actualisation but of responsibilities. It recognises the differences and diversities in the way all of us conduct ourselves in everyday lives. It is also discussed in relationship contexts; the way social workers can develop as emotionally intelligent human beings and how they can help each other in continual improvement of lives and environments (Howe, 2008). For everyone in the world, humanity and its future is based on relationships, human connection, warmth, integrity and kindness. This is not just a social work concern; it is a concern for everyone.

My responsibility as a social worker for developing global awareness issues is also contained in the international principles of social work. The more that we address ourselves,

the more we think about the self we bring to our social work role and the more likely we are capable of addressing libertarian, humanitarian and emancipatory goals.

Global social work recognises global and environmental oppressions that are not as prominent in self-centric western cultures. In contrast this project is tightly focused and local. It demonstrates the powerful ease with which political assumptions are made based on the expansiveness of neoliberalism, seen positively as a global phenomenon in the freedom of capitalism, or negatively as neo-imperialism, all of which impact on the ideology of social work.

In 2010, I went to the world social work conference in Hong Kong and for the first time fully recognised my parochial view of social work practice. Five years later I've had this opportunity to travel to a country I had never been to before and be privileged to meet other social work PhD students from across the world who were examining a range of social work issues impacting the profession in diverse location and contexts. The impacts of social work in my own country are also of immediate concern, reflected perhaps in the denial of issues rather than a recognition of them; climate change, growing depression and suicide, economic and social disenfranchisement, homelessness and so on. It brought me in touch with the narrow focus of neoliberal politics impacting not only in the UK but across the world. Whilst a project on use of self in the UK may seem to focus on the particular and local, my research explores a number of vital links between self and the global political world of social work.

Structure of thesis

The thesis is structured in nine chapters. Chapters two, three and four form a literature and policy review which sets out landmarks from which the research study was conducted. Chapter five explains the methodology for conducting the research carried out for the thesis.

Chapters six, seven and eight report the findings using a thematic analysis that integrates discussion at the end of each of the chapters to address the research questions. Chapter nine concludes the research discussion together evidence from the whole thesis.

Chapter two explores theories and explanations of self that filter into definitions, standards, requirements and competencies for use of self-practice. The first section examines the underpinning theories of self as they inform social work. Psychologies of the self consistently figure in competencies and requirements for learning and practice that are said to inform use of self. There are two strands here; human development across the lifespan, central for understanding the psychological social and biological integration of self into everyday life, and the development of models and methods that help people recover from traumas associated with disruptions in their human development. Philosophies of self also inform social work values underpinned by virtue ethics and deontological ethics. Sociological traditions in post-structural analysis and feminist analysis, question philosophical frameworks that explain self and present influential models developed in anti-oppressive practice in the mid to late 20th century. These set the frameworks that inform the subject 'self' as an academic discipline.

The contexts in which self is understood to have informed social work education and practice lead into a discussion about the development of use of self in social work informed by political agendas. In the late part of the 20th century neoliberalism changed the nature of social welfare focussing new care structures on individualised rather than social need. Chapter two details how politics itself changed the nature of the theorised self in the new regime of neoliberalism. It focusses on particularly on Giddens's structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and indicates the localised nature that underpins the thesis of 'self' in

westernised neoliberal contexts. Giddens proposed self is individualised, constrained only by a sense of insecurity, with the potential to be liberated in new global freedoms. Structuration theory has informed some social work knowledge regarding how self is understood, sometimes seen as a useful contribution to inform social work theory (Ferguson, 2001; Kondrat, 1999). Hence Giddens requires attention because of his influence on social welfare in the politics of New Labour that succeeded neoliberalist policies of the previous Conservative era in Britain. The political agendas of the early 21st century are particularly important because of their impact on strategies for social agendas and how social work became more technocratic following from protections failures.

Chapter three details how neoliberalism and New Labour impacted on social work structures in a series of reviews and reforms from the early 1980s. From this time until the early 21st century social work in the UK was overwhelmed by reviews and reports prompting largescale professional reform. These were said to both conflict with and support its professional status with notable disruptions and questions about social work roles. The social work profession became closely scrutinised by New Labour during the first part of the 21st Century implementing a new techno-rational order in social work structures. Under a new conservative Government from 2007 there was interest in restoring the profession through two major social work reviews in child protection practice (Munro, 2010,2011) and social work education and training reform (DfE, 2014). The reform board created a new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) that included use of self in one of its domains of practice and is of interest in this thesis. The intertwined meanings and policy twists and turns that connect social work to 'self' are of concern in this chapter and underpin the some of the difficulties associated with understanding the term 'use of self' as it is set out in the new framework.

The PCF became generally undermined within the political tumults that surrounded it, but survived as a professional tool that continues to be mapped against standards underpinning social work registration. It developed domains of practice in a holistic model designed to support the social worker from their acceptance on courses to advanced and strategic career. Importantly, it lays out requirements for social workers to be self-aware, and to appoint a skilled, developing to sophisticated use of self (BASW, 2018, PCF, Domain 1,), making it central to the study of what self is and how it is understood as 'use' in professional social work practice.

Chapter four is a literature review that unpacks how overlapping concepts of self have emerged in knowledge for use of self. There is a small but growing research and knowledge base that explores the professional use of self, examined in this chapter. It also considers theories that underpin social work and how each of these explain psychology, social constructivism, creativity, intuitive and artistic functions of social work that are said to embed use of self. The literature raised questioned about whether knowledge about 'self' used in social work knowledge embeds one kind of social work self, or many kinds of social work selves, and how these influence expectations in practice.

Chapter five sets out the methodology for a research project undertaken to address the conundrums identified in the literature in a series of professional conversations conducted in interviews and focus groups. Ethics approval was obtained for the study and the process is set out in this chapter. It reports the epistemologies, design, data collection and methods of analysis. The research was conducted within a qualitative approach and was designed to allow opportunities for themes to emerge to contribute to use of self-knowledge. The findings were reported in a thematic analysis of the data. The participants were

experienced professionals engaged in education, management and practice who have current experience in modern social work organisations in the UK.

The findings were rich and descriptive providing a large amount of data that indicated use of self was complex and crucial for examining practice. The first theme, reported in chapter 6, indicated that participants saw use of self as an aspect of themselves that brought 'who you are' to their practice. It included the use of skills that were vital and unique to them such as empathy, developing conscious self-awareness, and examinations of power. It was also a soft skill that utilised vulnerabilities as strengths, requiring understanding and supportive networks to examine feelings and mistakes safely. Use of self was critical for understanding the impact of themselves on others using social work values and ethics for adapting self in their shared experiences with clients to be helpful in their relationships. The chapter demonstrated the personal was also professional, where aspirations for identifying an 'authentic' self were crucial in enacting social work values. Being authentic included values such as honesty, truth, recognising and questioning values and doing ones best to act ethically and sensitively to need.

Chapter seven reports on barriers to use of self that constrained participants' work. These included overwhelming technocratic, tick-box and managerial practices that dislocated them from social work values. Competing for scarce resources and being isolated in locations away from peers minimised opportunities for exploring practice. Critically, they identified a different kind of self that they believed was emerging in social work due to the emphasis on skills and procedural frameworks that they called a business-like or non-use of self.

Chapter eight explores participants discussions about the impact of policy and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for developing a use of self. There was evidence that the PCF had not yet bedded in and it was not understood by most participants that use of self was included. Participants saw use of self as embedded in their practice, something that they developed regardless of standards. They also implied that the new use of self emerging in politically re-engineered social work education and practice was not using a self that subscribed to social work values. Questions were raised by some participants that its lack of prominence in requirements raised serious implications for its maintenance as social work value in education and practice. For some, without locating use of self as a social work identity it is in danger of losing focus.

Chapter nine synthesises the literature and the findings. It identifies the importance of time, space and emotional safety that is needed if social workers are to use themselves well. It also identifies the knowledge concepts they found important in their work; reflection, ethics and values, psychology and the development of emotional and social intelligence, which required empathy, emotional engagement and relationship working. Use of self was valued by participants who demonstrated its centrality for improving practice, critical analysis and community engagement. The chapter returns to look at the PCF and suggests there is an urgent need to extend descriptors of use of self and embed them in practice learning.

CHAPTER 2:

Self and social work

"Self is anchored in conflicting discourses and competing dialogues and is shaped and formed in the discursive apparatus in which it is evoked." (Barnard, 2012, p.104).

Concepts of self inform social work (Trevithick, 2017) and are the focus of this thesis. Definitions of self are complex and include explanations from many disciplines. The chapter explains the formative ontologies of self that inform social work in psychological, ethical and political frameworks. The following discussion takes account of the ways in which the various critiques of self play a part in shaping social work identity. The discussion is limited to broad interpretations in a dense discipline as they were understood to be relevant to social work.

Self

There is a significant interest in disciplines that inform methodologies for social work practice. These come from embedded paradigms such as psychology, philosophy, sociology to more localised methods of social work using critical theory, reflection and various therapies. All of these examine self, asking practitioners to think about themselves in one way or another, whether that is their behaviours, their belief systems or about deeper emotional experiences. It is possible to locate social work's historic interest not only in wanting to understand self as a discipline, but also as leading professional proponents of conscious self movements in the mid to late 20th century.

The meanings of self for social work are overarched by epistemologies that shape it as a discipline. In 1968, Rapoport described social work as an "art" where self forms an agenda

for examining imaginative practice (Rapoport, 1968, p.153). England (1986) saw self as a mystery that demanded an intuitive response for social workers to use themselves. Dean and Fenby used meta-data to establish three contexts that they found to were central to social work self; empiricism which aims at technical control, a marginal voice of critical theory including reflection, and social change agency that questions the validity of structures (Dean & Fenby, 1989, p.46). Cushman, saw no universal truth of self with which social work could be associated. Instead, he saw social work and the self bound by cultures and localities where psychologies of self are not generalisable to a universal social work self (Cushman, 1990, p.599).

The different interpretations above are problematic because they contain applications from across the broad frameworks of social work and say very little in the end about what use of self actually means or how it looks. Cushman's view is that self is buried in the subconscious of psychologies dominated by internal values, belief systems and how these sculpt individuals within it. Importantly the self has also become globalised and individualised through the growth of technology and social media and wider freedom of movement. The indigenous localised self is now interrupted by global contexts that expose multi dimensions of self to each other. Questions are raised in western and eastern contexts whether these enrich or homogenise cultures and how this makes a difference to psychologies of self in human growth and development.

Thinkers about self, and what self is, have grown branches of thought that extend into marketized, techno/rational spaces that now serve an elaborate industry of postulations on self. These come through self-help books or social media that present images of what the self is or should be. They create possibly unfounded mythical notions, or empty sciences,

contained perhaps in popular culture. For everyone though, individual experiences of self are important for finding meaning for each other and for ourselves. It may be that the self is no more than the accumulated processing of experiences in a particular political/social/moral order. It is clear though that conceptualisations of self have many interpretations and these influence social work.

The following examines theories of self that are drawn from three distinct disciplines; psychology, philosophy and sociology. These branch into modern philosophies, post-modern political analyses in Giddens's theory of self in modernity, and post-structural interpretation, as well as feminist and anti-oppressive ethics that influence nature of the profession and its ongoing evolution as a profession.

Psychology and self

Psychology informs our understanding of what self might be. It explains how we grow into our bodies, minds and personalities based on neurological, emotional and psycho-social developments in our upbringing and formative experiences throughout our lives. It provides an explanation of what self is for informing social work practice and how it influences the way in which it defines practice with people.

The development of social work is connected to branches of psychology that inform explanations of self. Two strands of thought inform practice; the first is how human developmental theory explains self, the second is how those explanations are transferred into practice for working with others in therapeutic encounters. Theories of human development then explain what self is and understand people's interactions that the psychological sciences attempt to understand.

Psychological theories of self began to be influential in the early 20th century, following from Freud's examination of infant development in the ego, id and super-ego. The id is contained in impulsive primary urges that remain largely unconscious and unsatiated. The ego and super-ego may be able to locate any part of the exposed id that emerges into consciousness that governs morals, prompting a conscious reasoning state (McLeod, 2015). Freud described the id and the ego as a horse and rider, which requires the considerable struggle by the rider (the ego), to control the "superior strength" of the horse from which the personality is formed (Freud, 1923, p.5, from McLeod, 2015).

Freud believed memories of certain experiences became repressed as a result of emotional traumas and began a career developing psychoanalysis; a way to examine unconscious feelings that manifest as adverse behaviours and emotional thought patterns in peoples' lives. Psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, which developed later, attempted to uncover and treat emotional dysfunction caused by past trauma. The practitioner and the client were believed to be susceptible to unconscious repressed memories that played out in the psychoanalysis, where the self-concept becomes part of the clinical technique for practice understood to improve self-understanding for moving on in life. In psychodynamic practice unconscious emotions for examination are central for examination.

Pavlov (1927) and Skinner (1953), presented a contrasting psychological technique that initially experimented with instinctive reactions to stimuli. Behavioural approaches ignore introspection and concentrate on cognition as a focus for change. The development of behavioural therapies entailed reconditioned responses to previous behaviours. It has become a popular technique in the 21st century in the form of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

(CBT) that focuses on the here and now of events and how to change behaviour and cognitive thought patterns. (McLeod, 2017).

The differences are illustrated in the following example. A woman who had chronic agoraphobia is now bed ridden. A psychoanalytic approach would ask why she had got to her current state. It would probe past traumas in her life that may have made her afraid or anxious of open spaces. These are assumed to be buried in the subconscious and lay dormant until triggered by the therapy. The cure lies in understanding and overcoming the anxiety, through an examination supported by therapeutic techniques. In contrast a behavioural approach would set objectives and goals to gradually help the woman get out of bed and then out into the open. Although behaviours may be triggered by the unconscious, only the triggers are of interest. The therapies applied are to create new responses by changing the stimulus which might be for example a reward system, or a cognitive re-orientation. Both approaches are of interest to social work, usually in the development of specialisms, such as in clinical social work, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), family therapy, group work, and newer developed therapies in solution focused work.

Behavioural and psychodynamic approaches present as competing constructions of behaviour and meaning, but both seek to help others. They are of interest to social work as techniques that may be drawn upon in specialisms of social work practices.

Human developmental theories became important in the mid-20th century, looking at the ways in which primary relationships supported a healthy upbringing. Theorists such as Piaget (1964), Erickson (1950) and Winnicott (1964) in child development and Bowlby's (1969) work on attachment developed theories that have profoundly influenced a broad range of disciplines in health and social care professions. The dependence from birth of the child

initially on its main carer, usually the mother, and then its early environmental and developmental experiences have been extensively examined in social psychology as stages of development from which the self is said to emerge (Trevithick, 2017). Interventions informed by these theories are based on recognising disruptions in normative development arising from possible neurological or environmental factors that disrupt learning or cause emotional trauma.

Trevithick believed theories of human development were central to social work learning to locate a coherent framework for understanding use of self. Bowlby's work in attachment was influential in childcare cases because of its examination of the child's relationship with care givers. Bowlby believed babies and then children begin to form a working internal model about the world that they carry with them as they grow. The model was based on the way in which children were responded to by their mother in early infancy. An extension of Bowlby's work was carried out by Ainsworth (Main & Solomon, 1990) who filmed experiments with children and mothers. She asked the mother to leave her child alone in a room with a stranger and examined their responses when the mother returned. These responses were categorised as four attachment styles; secure, anxious, dismissive-avoidant and fearful-avoidant that indicated the development of the internal working model.

Bowlby's work was problematised in theory, including experiments that attempted to understand adult attachment styles, whether internal models can change and the influence of others including carers other than mothers, such as partners and peers. The role of learning is also contained in developmental theories, both internal and external models of development. For example, Piaget, Erickson, Freud and Kohlberg all developed models that examined moral, cognitive learning and behavioural growth that were understood to impact

on how humans develop their personality (Trevithic, 2018). Stern (1985) also considered a narrative self that weaves into the stages of development, the autobiographical material and the impact of reciprocal relationships as one goes through life.

Theories of self explain how we come to recognise ourselves in the neurological pathways of the brain, and interaction between ourselves and others in the different contexts we move through that become our personality (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008). The way we were nurtured in our early lives and how we develop in continuous interaction in environments as we are exposed to, and mature into them, are important studies for those in human professions. Psychological theories pivot on the notion that the human brain is more malleable than we imagine, and that people are able to change, shift and adapt to circumstances.

Who is the therapist?

As discussed, numerous therapeutic techniques have developed that draw on behavioural, human development and psychodynamic fields. Initially therapists were required to maintain a neutral stance in relation to the client, and their own personality was not considered to be important. In later discussions about therapy, the self of the therapist became more prominent. This was a critical change for social workers' development, particularly in the USA where clinical social work was developing.

In early psychoanalysis the therapist was encouraged to maintain a distance from the therapeutic encounter, seeing themselves as a neutral sounding board. Edwards and Bess (1998) note that even in the later part of the 20th Century an active disconnect between the client and the therapist was encouraged, so that the focus remained on impersonal techniques where the relationship between their own personality and the personality of the

client was not the major concern. It was in their own therapy, and only for themselves, that their inner life was examined, in the same way as for the client. The therapist then becomes a client. Modern practitioners who train in clinical techniques are expected to have personal therapy as well as clinical supervision.

Psychoanalytic therapy stirred up what Freud referred to as transference. In his view the client transferred or projected their emotions onto the therapist that become examined as a technique of practice. The technique of therapy in its pure form as psychoanalysis is expected to bring unconscious information to the surface for examination that can be explored as part of supervision with another therapist. As new therapies developed however, the relationship with the client became of interest and contexts developed that took account of who the therapist was.

> In spite of traditional rules of technique mandating rigorous anonymity and neutrality on the part of the therapist in order not to interfere with the development of an adequate transference neurosis, seasoned and effective therapists kept experiencing that the disciplined use of their genuine selves resulted in remarkable and satisfying results in the growth of their clients. (Edwards & Bess, 1998, p.94)

Later, countertransference became an active construct in practice whereby examination of the interaction of events in the lives of both the client and the therapist was encouraged as a way of better understanding the dynamic of the relationship between them.

Edwards and Bess go on to point out that in the 1970s a number of authors began to recognise the inter-subjectivity of client/ therapist relationships and the power of the therapist in choosing their own therapeutic orientations from a growing menu of therapeutic options, particularly in the behavioural therapies, but also in new therapies that were

developing in humanistic psychologies developed by Carl Rogers in client centred therapy (Rogers, 1951).

The presentation of the self in modern psychiatric and psychotherapeutic techniques is as much concerned with who the therapist is as the patient. Levine discussed how the therapist constructs an “analytic persona” (Levine, 2007, p.82), the person the therapist presents during an encounter with a client. These are examined in supervision with the therapist, and in their turn more personas become exposed to each other as they discuss the client. In this way it acknowledges the primacy of self for everyone, as a filter or lens through which events and experiences flow and meaning is made. Therapeutic approaches, particularly developed in fields dealing with past trauma, identify strengthening and integrating the self as a key focus of work supporting improved wellbeing.

There is clearly a new question about who the therapist actually is and whether they too become a client, particularly as they engage in supervisory processes. However, more importantly it becomes more likely that therapists will construct themselves, or construct a number of selves in an attempt to help clients (Levine, 2007). In therapeutic settings choice of orientation, either neutral self or engaged as self as they came to be seen, was a matter of preference likely to be predicated on the personality of the therapist. This mirrored the therapist’s own learning experiences and the way in which they brought their past experiences into their practice (Edward and Bess, 1988).

The development of ideas about the self of the therapist were also of interest to social work as a related profession. Social work was closely associated with psychiatric techniques in its earlier development, particularly in America, and drew on case work and supervision models in those professions. However, social work was also involved in community models

of practice where social workers were becoming more critically aware of inequality and discrimination and involving themselves with human rights and social justice.

Psychology and social work practice

The way in which social workers thought of themselves in therapeutic fields of intervention as a growing profession is important because it paved the way for diverse views on professional roles that are discussed here. These are contained in a two-pronged history of social work within psychiatric and treatment models alongside its growing radical and community actions in the mid to late 1960s.

The self of the therapist remained an important study for social workers as their profession developed in the early 20th century in America and in the UK. These were shown in the development of casework models. In 1960s and 1970s social workers were often engaged in psychoanalytic traditions, especially in the USA where they worked in mental health services alongside psychoanalysts and the developing psychotherapeutic professions. These appointed clinical models that influenced early social case work models in diagnostic techniques and that tended to appoint treatment models.

At the same time social workers were developing community practices and recognising the role of discrimination that suggested poverty and marginalisation were the cause of problems in society. Some social workers believed psychiatric models that inferred human rather than social deficits were problematic and began to distance themselves from the psychiatric professions. The result was a rift in social work ideologies between its social and treatment approaches that split the profession into a “Functionalist school” and the “Diagnostic School” (Dorfman, 1988, p.14).

Functionalists saw themselves as actors within state welfare agencies to support social needs. They used the term “helping profession”, where the ethos was not to treat a client but to support them. Their interaction was considered to be a positive one where problem resolution in itself was something the client could gain from an assessment and interaction with a social worker, outside of diagnostic approaches.

> There was no exploration of the past, no interpretation and no setting of treatment goals. Most important, there was no diagnostic labelling. The worker in the functional school was not concerned with a specific outcome, because, in the context of the helping relationship, the client’s growth could not be predicted. It was believed that gains from the experience could be used in the wider spectrum of the client’s life. (Dorfman, 1988 p.14)

Functionalist practice could be seen to use task centred approaches, community action where environmental factors began to shape a new radical social work focus. Functionalist methods of practice engaged individuals in the world, rather than focus on individual treatment models. These created steps for individuals that supported community engagement. Radical approaches shifted the emphasis of practice to ones where environments and analysis of the structures people lived in were prominent. They addressed poverty and social deficits as political, rather than individual problems to engage in community action.

The diagnostic school, too, as they developed their therapeutic techniques, began to utilise problem resolution rather than “treatment” approaches, but they continued to favour clinical techniques over functionalist non-clinical examination. In particular, the diagnostic school were concerned to maintain an independent professional status outside of the institutions, whereas functionalists saw their place as working within agencies, recognising

bureaucratic constraints and limitations, but being in a position to question welfare policies on behalf of clients. By the mid-20th century these two groups began to re-align, but left the profession with a number of eclectic approaches still apparent in contemporary practice.

The reification of the two schools created eclectic theories that were resourceful and community oriented, whilst maintaining therapeutic approaches. Social work was believed to have evolved as an inter-related and inter-disciplinary field in critical theory as well as psycho-analytic methods. It appeared social work would take on combined activities, although the rift between the two schools appears to have caused a backlash in role confusion (Goldstein, 1973).

Shaw (1974) wrote an early social work book on use of self. He discussed the split between functional and diagnostic schools unnecessarily complicating the profession and taking it away from psychodynamic models which were themselves challenging treatment and human deficit models in the period when the rift happened. Shaw was looking very much at anti-theories of psychiatry which were prominent throughout the mid-20th century, including feminist critiques of Freud's original theses that he believed to have evolved over time into moderated practices of psychology. He referred to the psychiatric profession's own recognition of flaws and new foundational principles that potentially might be helpful to individual human beings and their healthy, emotional fulfilment.

Shaw drew on Jung's formulations of self (1958) that had sparked a self-actualisation industry, evoked for example in the work of Laing's anti-psychiatry movement (Laing, 1960) and Maslow's model of a hierarchy of need, the pinnacle of which was self-actualisation. Both these models articulated human need and were connected to life fulfilment and community engagement. He pointed also to the development of client-centred therapies that located

humanness, warmth and empathy as a place from which to work with troubled people, referring to the work of Rogers and positive regard (Rogers, 1951).

Shaw thought that these new therapies developed an acceptance of the reality of the client, allowing them to have their own feelings and supporting them to find their own meanings. He believed that community and individual needs should be of equal importance.

> The case for salience of "deficiency needs" supports the case made out by those in social work and other helping professions who argue that collective pressure on authorities to rid society of poverty, homelessness and unemployment is the single most important function for all who share a concern for the deprived and who want to see them developing towards full humanity. But equally, the argument that the social worker's role is to be concerned with the feelings, conflicts, relationships and roles of the client is also supported. (Shaw, 1974, p.94)

Through a thorough examination of humanist psychologies in "self-actualisation" and "positive regard", Shaw developed models that could underpin use of self as a "therapy through roles" that blended community and individual need and allowed social workers to be actively therapeutically involved (p.97).

The development of psychological techniques suggested by Shaw can be traced forward into human centred, clinical and relationship-based practice practices that are products said to be the products of use of self (Ruch, Turney & Ward 2010; Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008; Daley, 2013; Dewane, 2006). But they also maintain social worker's critical theory allowing them to recognise the impact of structures on self and to ensure their practice is ethical.

From the 1960s social workers were beginning to understand more about their observations of families by drawing on models of psychology and theories of human growth and development. Bowlby (1969) and Winnicott (1964) made in-roads as the profession developed. These theories were becoming more important to social work which had growing responsibilities in the fields of child neglect and abuse, as well as mental health issues. But equally, the shortcomings of working simplistically with individuals and families was apparent in the debilitating impacts of economic deprivation and social isolation, where workers were gaining a deeper understanding of stigmatisation and marginalisation in diverse communities.

As the century progressed social workers were becoming much more interested in ethical dilemmas posed by its state functions and restrictions of human liberty. Human rights and social justice frameworks were embedded into global and national social work codes of ethics and these became more prominent in their thinking. The rise of feminism also supported a new emphasis for engaging people in human and social services that incorporated new approaches in post-modern and post-structural analyses.

Ethics and self

The following examines ethics and how social work has been connected to philosophy, sociological thought, and a feminist ethic of care. Philosophy and sociology are disciplines that underpin social science's creation of ethical knowledge for practice. Shifts in knowledge in these disciplines have reshaped ethics in western cultures that have influenced social work thinking. There are also eastern and spiritual philosophies and existential notions of self that have an impact on social work.

Ethics as it is defined in philosophy enquires into the nature of the self and how people should live together and be governed. The regulation of self in the west is discussed in Kantian

deontology; these are the obligations, duties and rules of a civil life. Philosophy is a starting point for understanding self and social work (Clifford & Burke, 2009). Philosophy is commonly taught as part of social work courses and programs and underpins an examination of ethical dimensions of social work practice that requires students to think about their values.

Philosophy and self

In ancient western and eastern philosophies self is said to be the pinnacle of knowledge. Socrates (c. 469 BC – 399 BC), recorded by Plato (424/423 BC – 348/347 BC), said that to "know thyself" was the only true pursuit of wisdom which should come before all other studies. In Greece an inscription can be found at the entrance to the Oracle at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi translated as "To be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self would be ridiculous" (Eriksen, 2000, p.84). It begins a discourse about self and self-awareness that has been debated continually in western and eastern philosophies.

Yu (2005) suggested that similarities existed between western and eastern philosophies that identified the communal self; Aristotle's self was a "Political Animal" and Confucius said self was a "Relational Self" (Yu, 2005, p.281). For Aristotle, the importance of relationships between self and others was their union within a family and a community. Because humans were capable of moral reasoning the state was seen as a natural apparatus for rules of moral conduct and citizenship. For Confucius, social arrangements that supported the self, promoted virtues of "benevolence (ren), appropriateness (yi), propriety (li), and wisdom (zhi)" (Yu, 2005, p.285). Both Aristotle and Confucius saw morality and moral character as being connected to life with others in civil arrangements that were advantageous to the self, and where they could contribute socially.

The blending of different philosophies of self in social constructions are evident in modern structures that are both local and global, and is connected between ourselves and others extending into wider networks.

> In this inseparable relationality, the Western notion of self closely resembles the understanding of relational self in the various indigenous epistemologies and ways of being in the world (Adamowich, Kumsa, Reggo, Stoddart & Vito, 2014, p.132).

Relationality is social, civil and moral, connected to how we arrange ourselves in our inter-subjectivity with others. Relationships are a point of contact between people and becoming aware of each other's cultures and identities.

A rising western interest in Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and other transcendent philosophies/religions are evident, with a proliferation of "self-help" concepts, spiritualism, yoga and meditation and so on. Holistic therapies, said to present ways of working within health and social wellbeing such as mindfulness and relaxation, are of interest to social workers across western and eastern regions of global academia (Chan, Ying & Chow, 2002). In contrast disconnection is also evident created in the need to find self-fulfilment as an antidote to loneliness or social change.

In contrast modern western professionalism was also noted to have become secular and empiricist, ignoring the rich diversities of values and belief systems in communities and cultures (Darrell & Rich, 2017; Hodge, 2015). Darrell and Rich suggested a more diverse framework for social work education was needed to examine the ethic of spirituality and religion to identify faith in the social work classroom and in the field. Yang and Wong (2005) for example, argued that cultural competence as it is currently taught in the west assumes

neutrality, and that social workers could become “impartial culture-free agents”, denying both their own and their clients rich cultural heritage (Yang & Wong, 2005, p.181).

Morals become central for examining power, authority and judgement. Social work ethics support social workers’ understanding of responsibilities for exercising rules and moral judgements. In UK social work courses, students mainly examine philosophies that underpin their ethical codes of practice. These tend to emphasise traditional deontological ethics drawn from western philosophies.

Western ethics and social work

Modern social work studies are invested in works of Hobbes (1588-1679) who believed in absolute monarchy to centralise control and Locke (1632-1704) who considered that governments should serve people. However, both agreed that the human condition was selfish and required constraint. Kant (1724-1804) formulated deontological moralities of self that relied on duties rather than consequences. He believed rules should be formulated according to a categorical imperative that were regarded as just and absolute. This contrasted with Greek philosophers who saw the virtuous character invested in the person, rather than in deontological ethics and where living in a civil society embodies responsibilities to develop virtues and moral character. These become lessons for social workers in their early education because of the nature of serving justice and sound decision making; deciding what is right (Adams, 2009)

Ixer (2016) believed that social workers were faced with conflicts in deontological and virtue ethics in postmodern and post-structural analysis, that are examined as sound moral actions; a duty to act as a principle in the best interest of the client (Ixer, 2016, p.4). These

are imperative decisions for social workers who become professional arbiters of rules and regulations that could be used to restrict service users' lives.

Social workers can be regarded as agents who carry out state functions, and as such, deontological and virtue ethics are in tension. For example, in contemporary contexts it is recognised that the consequences of enforcing rules may oppress and marginalise humans, causing harm and suffering (Clifford & Burke, 2008). In these terms, Adams saw virtue ethics as being central to the examination of practice, the most important aspects of which were the moral character and prudence of the worker.

> In professional ethics, virtue-based approaches, including the Hippocratic ethics that prevailed in medicine for 2,500 years until well into the last century, look not simply to those virtues needed for the end of human well-being, but specifically to those virtues required for and developed by the profession in question, given its mission and purpose. Unlike general ethics, it addresses the question of the character and virtues of an excellent professional, whether physician, lawyer, or social worker (Adams, 2009, p.88)

Adams went on to examine how virtue ethics should resonate with social work use of self, which he believed had been discontinued as an aspect of social work practice standards. Adams believed that virtue and deontological ethics were the hearts and minds interpretations of moral problems. He thought there was a missing virtues interpretation in social work where meaning was not often transferred into action. Understanding a problem where something is ethically wrong requires the development of a sound understanding of professional values. There was concern that abstracting ethics from the virtuous character in

decision making failed to account for the complexity of morality that he believed was required for discerning virtuous discretionary social work powers.

Feminist ethics and social work

The adequacy of deontological ethics was questioned in contemporary, societies by western feminists whose debates contributed to a transformation of ethics in the 20th century. Feminist politics, and in a divergent way neoliberal politics, have rearranged ideas about self in global contexts that further antagonise ethical dilemmas. Their arguments have become social and political analyses that change the nature of views of self in the 21st century.

In the late 19th and early 20th century women were becoming more aware of the impact of male dominance and their lack of rights. In the UK, the suffrage movement was the first that considered inequality and growing analysis of oppression. The feminist movement grew in the 1960s and analysed the place of women in social and health sectors as clients and workers carrying out emotional labour on behalf of men. Philosophy, as it was discussed in western ethics was criticised for not being cognizant of women's issues over which they had very few rights.

From post-structural perspectives, feminists saw limitations of moral deontological ethics for exercising moral judgements (Teke-Lloyd, 2018). Feminist ethics were concerned with issues such as reproduction and sexual politics that were not considered in the philosophical debates that came before these perspectives. In the latter part of the 20th century feminists argued that moral, deontological traps and political controls were hierarchical and damaging to women and marginalised groups (Butler, 2001; Greer, 1970, 1984, 1999; Millett, 1970). Feminists examined traditional orders of philosophical, sociological and psychological thought that rendered them invisible.

> [R]eigning nonfeminist moral theories (utilitarianism and deontology) offer an abstract, authoritarian, impersonal, universalist view of moral consciousness. Whether a person is a utilitarian or a deontologist someone who insists that the aggregate social good, or duty for duty's sake, is the sole criterion for moral behaviour, he or she will view morality as a set of law-like principles, codes, or rules to apply impartially and rationally to the morally messy world in which human beings live. (Tong, 1999, p.201)

Further, the feminist critique suggests traditional ethical discourse creates synthetically constructed identities that puncture traditional ideas about self, causing major fault lines in its paradigms that assume male lineage; adopted within powerful hierarchies that ignore the experiences of women and marginalised groups. Self can only become known, or maybe less known, in the experiences that shape abstract concepts of identity such as gender, class, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender cultures (LGBT), diversity and difference (Butler, 2005). Porter suggested that “self understanding is morally significant and requires us to know each other in our self-defined specificity” (Porter, 2014, p23).

The complex inter-play between feminist and socially constructed individualism which impacts on social work when defining its agenda can be seen clearly in both care ethics and in anti-oppressive ethics (Clifford & Burke, 2005). These centralise a relational ontology at the centre of modern feminist ethics as care-focussed and power-focussed virtues. The first emphasises nurture, compassion, empathy and kindness flowing from child rearing and caring for others. The second flows from “our concrete social locations, which depend upon gender, economic status, race and other factors that distribute power and forms of recognition”

(Teke-Lloyd, 2018, p.257). In modern social work, feminist ethics accord with social work values (Dominelli & Campling, 2002).

Feminist critiques demonstrate the limitations of deontological ethics and suggest the adoption of a care ethic. They argue that self is neither defined nor undefined but should be acknowledged in the specificity in which it is explained to another self. This was important for the development of recognising diversity and difference. It was also noted that cultural competences are limited by western empiricist and secular examinations that assume professional neutrality of the self. These involve anti-oppressive ethics and care ethics defined in professional knowledge for social work (Clifford & Burke, 2009).

However, ethics are impinged on by sociologies and modern politics that have redefined self in neoliberalism and third way politics and impact on social work in two ways, firstly in the restructuring of social and welfare services, and secondly on breaking down traditional social sciences analysis of practice. The next section examines dilemmas in social sciences, before going on to examine how political contexts inform constructions of self in modern society.

Sociology and self

The human subjective and objective relations of self remained an important aspect of study in the developing discipline of sociology in the early 20th century. Sociology was a new discipline interested in empirical research that considered social structure and order originally thought of as functionalism (Dean, 1994). Importantly, sociology regarded the self as being reproduced by social structures, believing that it was from such constructions that these freedoms are controlled. These thoughts were important for studies of the symbiotic relationships between self and the society, which were founded in contemporary sociology.

The maintenance functions of class structures for example, was a feature of the work of Karl Marx (1818-1883) who utilised social theories to examine how societies were able to produce capital through the labouring classes for the benefit of middle and upper classes; the reproduction of their health and wealth and so on.

Marx's work was important for understanding self in social work because of how its ideas extended in later theories to study the relations of self in constructed systems. Bourdieu for example, considered the self as a reproduction of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). In this construction Bourdieu believed the self gained capital within its birth culture and within its own social order, which satisfied it to such an extent that opportunities for self-development were denied. Theories of social order continue to inform social work in modern sociological educational contexts and are of interest to social workers because they examine why people might maintain allegiance to their social milieu, or how they are able to break free of it.

Recognition of the individual in contexts has been of interest in both social and psychological sciences and has been built on in social work knowledge (Ruch, 2000). In the early 20th century social work knowledge began to incorporate studies of social systems. In these arrangements, self was seen as being shaped within social, psychological and physiological human development, the environments that social work was actively involved in (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). There was a developing conscious awareness in social and psychological professions that as practitioners they brought themselves and their own contexts as influences on their work. Human ethical contexts were of growing interest to post-modern, feminist and critical thinkers who contributed modalities that have provided significant contributions for re-examining morality and the self within it.

> Since self-direction, responsiveness to others and mutual accountability are ongoing features of normal human social life, actual people necessarily construct and sustain an "interpersonal understanding" of morality in the daily experience of interaction (Teke-Lloyd, 2018, P.265)

Contemporary politics and the individualised self

In the late 1970s politics in the UK became governed within a framework of deregulation of public services. Neoliberalism has since underpinned not only UK but global politics in having a profound influence on the ways people live, work and are governed. These were new structures that influenced new theories and politicisations of the self and public services as a privatised self (Ritzer, 1983).

Foucault (1926-1984) was a leading proponent of examinations of self in the exercise of power and knowledge, which give individuals at all levels of society the ability to be both the subject and object in power relations. For Foucault, Intimate relationships between knowledge and power are infused into our use of self, and power flows in different directions enabling individual and collective selves to resist and challenge existing power relations that:

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988, p.19).

These self-fulfilment properties exact a new way of being and counter-act forms of "subjectification" of the self. However, the forms of control are also invisible, enacted through subtle exercises of domination. Foucault's ideas about self informed subsequent theories and are of interest to social work in neoliberal and postmodern interpretations of self.

Barnard (2012) believed that Foucault's ideas regarding the way in which people become individualised as goals-oriented and self-seeking, to be central in modern life for defining self, or the "enterprising self" (Barnard, 1012, p.107). These represent liberties and entrapments of self through technologies and governance, at least in the modern west, making it more difficult to recognise what self is:

> As a subject, the self is not defined by a series of characteristic attributes or behaviours but is constituted by technology. As an objectified subject the self has become dominated by technologies of power to which human beings have already submitted themselves. (Barnard, 2012 p.109)

Structuration theory, Giddens, and identity politics

Giddens (1991) is an English sociologist said to have radically shifted socialist democracy in the 21st century (Jones & Karsten, 2008). He developed theories of self-governance that profoundly influenced notions of self-fulfilment in modern global political contexts. He drew on Foucault with the idea of making "subjectivism" visible as a way to recognise freedoms of the self.

Giddens's theories are abstract and often uncontextualized (Jones and Karsten, 2008). However, it is clear he was dealing with the symbiotic relationships between society and self. In modernity the self was seen as an active "agent" within the structures where it conducts its life.

> Giddens proposes that structure and agency are a mutually constitutive duality. Thus social phenomena are not the product of either structure or agency, but of both. Social structure is not independent of agency, nor is agency independent of structure. Rather, human agents draw on social structures in their actions, and at the same time

these actions serve to produce and reproduce social structure. (Jones & Karsten, 2008, p.129)

Giddens regarded self as being consistently held in a tension between "ontological security" and "existential anxiety" (Giddens, 1991 p. 35). That is, between the realities of and the belief in feeling secure. In his book, *Modernity and Self-Identity* Giddens presented a theoretical opportunity in post-modern thinking to fuse individual actions across social forces. In his thinking, reflexivity is used as the act of social reflection; its impact on self, others and wider institutions creating a new democratisation of self which offers opportunities to change life courses. Giddens argued that in early modernity, from some period around the early 20th century, people were constrained by their culture in patterned life courses. Progression from early to late modernity, particularly as the 20th century was coming to a close signalling, for Giddens, the decline of traditional post war orders. This change gave people technologies and freedoms which allowed them to navigate their own chosen life course.

Ferguson (2001) saw Gidden's notions of the newly reconstituted individualisations of self as being of interest to social work supporting people in "life politics". These emerged in feminism and other civil rights movements that took self beyond right-wing and left-wing divisions towards a "democratisation of personhood" (Ferguson, 2001, p.42). Whilst recognising that social work attempted to engage noncompliant service users, Giddens, he thought, offered opportunities for social workers to help people gain mastery over their lives, to be in control of their circumstances in ways that may have not been possible in previous orders. Doing so utilises everything at social workers disposal as tools and knowledge drawing from emancipatory politics:

> Constructing the self in a post-traditional order is a reflexive project in the sense that critical reflection and incoming information are constantly used by people to constitute and (re)negotiate their identities. (Ferguson, 2001, p.45)

Fergusson's (2001) argument clearly articulates the challenge for social work to maintain libertarian principles in modern political contexts.

Giddens's ideas advance more macro levels for understanding how self might be constituted in people's relationships within social structures. However, Giddens's analyses of reflexive modernity and the optimistic view of the fulfilled self was believed to be flawed because of its generalist approach:

> Selfhood as a vehicle for grasping the world in relation to itself is experienced far more ambiguously, during both the more mundane passages of daily life, and in the more "fateful moments" of one's life. It is characterised as much by a lack of definition and precision as it is by a calculable boundary and trajectory. (Adams, 2002, p.3)

Uncertainty then remained just as much a feature of people's lives as in traditional pasts. Also, it was a theory associated with westernised and neoliberal versions of self in modernity. There was an assumption in Giddens thesis of a global notion of self, that everyone was moving forward in at the same time, with the same level of technologies and freedoms available to them. Those critical of Giddens believed broad generalisations about the relationships between people, including the suggestion that patriarchal bonds were weakened in a new liberal modernity, were not empirically tested (Gross & Simmons, 2002; Mulinary & Sandel, 2009)

Further, Giddens broad and abstract thesis extended into new ways of thinking about governance. Since self was no longer predictable or secure, he thought governments would need to rethink about social welfare and began a thesis of third way politics.

Third way politics and self

Giddens (1991, 1998), theories of self in modernity marked the end of industrialism and social democracy and hence the end of a connected social self as a natural transition in modernity. In this view the old notion of the welfare state needed to be considered and was examined by Giddens in a thesis he called the third way politics, a theory that reformulated people politics within new insecurities and the untenable in growth welfare economies to support them. His third way ideas examined peoples lives in the organisation of their work and in their intimate everyday experiences. These were characterised through New Labour's politically reconstituted ideas for a new socialism, and hence embedded in the development of social work governance, as well as in new institutions in centre left politics (Ferguson, 2004).

In past welfare orders embodied in the National Health Service and Personal Social Services there was a calculable risk invested in public insurance as a means of achieving income redistribution. In post-war Britain the welfare state was a public commitment to equality which provided health and care as a social benefit available to everyone through National Health Insurance. Giddens believed that in the past welfare services were affordable as insurance against "external risk" generated in a past industrial society. So, disability, sickness and unemployment could be collectively managed against "accidents of fate" (Giddens, 1992 p.4). In new post-industrial order Giddens saw risk as manufactured, contained in the individual's own estimation of what made them secure, making welfare spending both potentially very high and virtually impossible for governments to cover.

Manufactured risks are based on expansions of choice by individuals in society that are distributed through multi-layered technologies which presented opportunities and differential incomes. For example, choosing private schooling to help children in a competitive job market, or the use of private health care to access particular treatments, are choices that can be made by individuals to better themselves. Giddens recognised choice variation based on income. It was therefore justified to have a mixed economy of private and public welfare, health, education and care systems. He writes:

> In a world of more active engagement with health, with the body, with marriage, with gender, with work - in an era of manufactured risk – the welfare state cannot continue on in the form in which it developed in the post 1945 settlement. The crisis of the welfare state is not purely fiscal, it is a crisis of risk management in a society dominated by a new kind of risk (Giddens, 1999, p.7)

Giddens further connected this new kind of risk with responsibility; the individualised responses of people to taking care of themselves contained in an ethical agency of "reflexive modernity" (Giddens, 1999, P.7).

Giddens was clear that people are able to take risks and are, or at least should, be encouraged to take initiative to move themselves forward ambitiously. This applies even in situations of high risk, or where their circumstances might seem difficult. For example, risk included moving out of sickness benefits cultures into employment or removing oneself from abusive relationships (Giddens, 1998). The decisions to do things rest with individuals who are motivated by external factors such as technologies, or on other networks that support them. He doesn't mention social workers but observes the proliferation of self-help and therapies available. These are for things he believed that people may require help with for

going on with life as a self-based philosophy of creating a self-identity that is motivated by individual choices.

New Labour in the UK utilised the theories of Giddens and implemented third way agendas which acknowledged technologies of self and the individual freedoms now invested in individuals, rather than in the welfare state. These ideas completely reverse the ideology of the welfare into one where the ethic of care is turned into an ethic of individual responsibility, and hence impacts on social and public policy. As a result, there have been notable political and social changes in the nature of self from one of "social subject of solidarity and citizenship" to, in more recent years, "the autonomous subject of choice, self-realisation and self-agency" (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000 p.42).

In a speech given at the Academy of Social Sciences in 2007, Giddens insisted he was not part of a movement that intended to direct the government, but was simply theorising new social orders in global and technological ages. He believed that these evidently needed different responses to outmoded industrial society and industrial labour from which the Labour movement originally sprung:

> First of all, I think the way the term 'Third Way' is bandied around hardly anyone seems to really understand what I mean by it. First of all, for me it was a strong exhibition of social democracy… 'The Third Way' is simply a label for the updating of left-to-centre thinking in the world which we all deal with. (Giddens, 2007, p.123)

Importantly here, the assumption of Giddens that he was dealing with global issues in politics of the self seems entirely wrong. Third way politics were quintessentially localised; they were an analysis of British class and welfare systems. They dealt with ways for governments to insure themselves against risks to a self that represented a small portion of

populations; a generally wealthy person able to be in control of their own destiny. Inequality in this view is acceptable and imposes a view in political spheres that people are empowered to simply choose their own path.

Impact of Third Way politics on social welfare

Harris (2003) argued that as a result of New Labour politics social welfare has been reconstituted as a business model. The place of self in social welfare is complicated by third way politics and New Labour's mechanistic managerial approaches. Jones (2014) argued that as a result of third way politics new functions came to control social and health professions recreating them as techno-rational business models that changed the nature of social work (Jones, 2014).

Barnard (2012) noted, that Giddens's individualised self was asked to be continually self-actualising. Who they were could be now be defined by their end results as it were, which he believed had become central to policies and in the training and education of social workers to be outcomes focussed:

> In its application to social work, this enterprising notion of the continually improving, accountable, responsible, choosing and autonomous self is written into the journey in the competence framework. Professional capabilities for progression to advanced practitioner, practice educator and social work manager have a process but goal orientated definition of the self, defined by external structures. (Barnard, 2012, p.107)

Important here are the externally defined structures that determine progression and how these impact on the social work ethos defined within anti-oppressive and ethical analysis that we discussed earlier in this chapter. This is a feature of the "enterprising self" (Barnard, 2012, p.107) that he believed social workers that social work should encourage.

The compounding and overlaying of structures presented in this chapter appears to have caused major rifts in social work identity. What is social work and what does it do? Has its radical character been eradicated and how do should social workers use themselves? The following complex example comes from the Centre of Social Work Practice, a group of social workers who are dedicated to relational social work and advocate modern psychotherapeutic principles and techniques for guiding social work. Cooper (2012), an influential member of the centre spoke about use of self at a conference held at Essex University. He related an encounter he had with an audience member at a previous conference that is worthy of note.

> A social worker who identifies with any of these perspectives 'relationship based social work', 'therapeutic' social work, 'clinical social work', 'casework', and to the now almost forgotten traditions of psychiatric social work, psychoanalytic casework, and psycho-social therapy will probably say that *any* kind of social work practice must have the 'use of self' at its core – how could it not? But not everyone thinks like this. About ten years ago I led a workshop at an Association of Directors of Social Services conference, and proposed a general definition of social work as (something like) 'the provision of a relationship to facilitate service users in the handling or negotiation of personal, family or community conflicts, transitions and tensions'. One Director shot back at me, saying 'I don't think the people in my area want a relationship, they just want a service'. (Cooper, 2012, p1)

In this example one detects echoes of the earlier rift about what social work is and how it should work with people. But also there are resource implications, a sense of a growing dissatisfaction at the diminishing returns in social work in being able to provide services. What social work is and how this translates to a self of practice formed in neoliberal and New Labour

policies are also underpinned by new theories of self in post modernity. These are related to ethical and postmodern, post-structural notions of a social work that also centralises its politicisation as a profession.

The realities of self reflect an inner and outer identification of the person and their environment; what control we have over it and what control it has over us. Further, the self is mirrored back into populations in structures that tell us what self-actualisation is. Giddens saw self in postmodern neoliberal orders being achieved through opportunism, or what were discussed as emancipatory political 'projects' of the self. Central to this thesis was how Giddens was able to re-interpret self in late modernity, how this was taken on in early 21st century politics, and how that has had a profound influence on social work.

Giddens's theories have reconstituted self within global and technical orders that redefined social welfare. His notion of modernity has created ideas about what self means in the constitution of the social work profession. It could be seen as an opportunity for life mastery using structuration theory, or as a way to marginalise people in the social welfare structures of New Labour's third way politics.

Chapter conclusion

The chapter provided an overview of the ways in which concepts of self are thought to inform social work. It considered the formative disciplines and underlying theories of self, psychology, ethics and politics, examining the grounding of disciplines in contemporary understandings, that is the post-modern, post-structural (feminist) ontologies of self that frame contemporary social work practice. It demonstrated the complex ideologies that have significantly influenced social work as a profession, how it views self, and is therefore critical for framing knowledge in this study. Learning about the nature of self, how it is understood

as a concept and how it impacts on practice between the social worker and service user, is embedded in studies on social work courses. Traditional and contemporary knowledges of self are highly significant in a study of how social workers understand use of self because human interactions are a central feature of their work.

Self it seems is made up of a multiplicity of inner dynamics that cannot be easily explained. It would seem natural that social workers, with their interest in human wellbeing, would invest themselves in topics of philosophy, sociology and humanistic psychology, from which ideas about self flow. Theories of human development deeply inform social workers and they are connected to contemporary therapeutic techniques. These have also connected it from its early inception in the psychiatric professions. Social work's identification with communities of practice caused an early rift in the profession in America between a diagnostic and functional school. Although these schools later merged, they signified the diversity of practice from community action to individual support.

In the middle of such discussions one must consider the ethics of social work and its contribution to professionalism. Ethics are rarely discussed in relation to self in social work literature, but they are central to examining what is right and just, which goes to the heart of social work values and social work identity as a caring and compassionate profession. Feminists discuss the limitations of deontological morals for making decisions because such morals fail to take account of the lives of women and to account for the diversities of peoples in contemporary society. Feminists identified with ideas central for social work analysis that locates women in care and power focussed ethics. These value both their nurturing role and their right to challenge dominating hierarchies that poorly serve them.

Ideas about self, have shifted traditional paradigms in contemporary literature through the interjections of post-structural feminist critiques, politics of neoliberalism and Giddens's notion of self in global capitalism. These indicate a new age of freedoms and restrictions derived from the privatisation and insecurity of self that question what identity is and how we might now be said to choose it for ourselves.

The redefining of self in neoliberal contexts and third way politics show a new politicised self that is claimed in policy governance and restructured social welfare. Meta-frameworks refer to the influences; political and legal arrangements in institutions that govern people, but also the possibilities; for freedoms described in Giddens's theorising of the reflexive self in late modernity, criticised for its narrow cultural focus. This overarching governance of self appears now to be embedded in political frameworks in the UK, and possibly globally, where social work itself is identified as a political tool. Fault lines could be detected in these complicated notions of self where potentially conflicting values could be identified for social work. The following chapter examines the policy, requirements and standards frameworks that address use of self.

CHAPTER 3:

UK social work standards and requirements for use of self

This chapter examines the contexts of social work education and practice as they are understood to inform use of self practice in the UK. It sets out some historical contexts in the development of social work as a profession, particularly as it developed from Victorian poor laws and as a practice associated with political movements. Global contexts provide formative standards and principles frameworks that are used in countries to define their codes of ethics and requirements. These developed social work's character in social justice and rights movements.

The chapter then goes on to discuss the development of social work standards and requirements for practice. It looks at the development of a new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), developed in the UK. The PCF was introduced within a period of changing governments where political questions arose about what social work is and what social workers should be able to do. These questions led to some fragmentation of the central ambition of social work to create a coherent unified framework for the profession in the PCF. This is examined to provide a context explaining the complexity of requirements and standards frameworks currently in place for social work education and practice.

The chapter teases out some of the difficulties, both politically and professionally, that the PCF model has experienced in social work contexts. Interestingly, the PCF appears, as far as I am able to tell, to be the first framework for education and practice that requires social workers to use themselves in their practice. The chapter explores how self and use of self is laid out in the framework.

Global contexts and use of self

Developments in political and policy implementation have influenced use of self in UK contexts. These are informed globally and managed locally through standards that shape social work. UK social work is defined by global benchmarks set in place by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) with characteristics guided by global definitions, ethical principles, training and workforce standards (IFSW, 2018)

In the UK, as in other countries, social work takes on complex defining characteristics that, regardless of national/regional variation, are underpinned by the values of social work and an international definition:

> 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. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels. (IFSW, 2018)

The global education standards require the social work student and graduate to develop as a "critically self-reflective practitioner" who "shares responsibility with the employer for their wellbeing and professional development, including the avoidance of 'burn-out'" (IFSW, 2018, Domain of the Social Work Professional 4.2.2). Social work courses are required to demonstrate how their curriculum will develop "self-awareness" and "critically self-reflective practice" (IFSW, 2018, school standards 2.5) Furthermore, the profession is located within

critical analytical theory that asks social workers to recognise oppression and inequalities, and to act as a "change agent" in response to marginalisation:

> …[C]ritical consciousness through reflecting on structural sources of oppression and/or privilege, on the basis of criteria such as race, class, language, religion, gender, disability, culture and sexual orientation, and developing action strategies towards addressing structural and personal barriers are central to emancipatory practice where the goals are the empowerment and liberation of people. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty, liberate the vulnerable and oppressed, and promote social inclusion and social cohesion. (IFSW, 2018, 4.2.2.; 8.4).

UK social work policy contexts

The tone of UK policy contexts set in motion successive governance regimes and the struggles in social work during the late 20th and early 21st centuries to develop its own competency frameworks. Interestingly, government policies are also derived from notions of a privatised self, developed through neoliberal and New Labour agendas in the late 20th and early 21st century set out in the previous chapter, that have impacted on the structure of services and ideas about what social work is and what it should be able to do (Stevenson, 1998). Relevant to this thesis is the interplay between how self is now understood as a socio-political phenomenon as set out in the previous chapter, and how this impacts on the way it is understood in social work. Discussions require a historical reference for the development of social work in the UK.

Historical policy contexts of social work in the UK

There are a number of books that analyse the history of social work over the last century which have informed this condensed version (For fuller accounts refer to Pierson, 1994; Davis, 2008; Parton, 2009; Dickens, 2010) This short history is an overview of developments.

Social work in the UK emerged from the setting up of charities commissions and Victorian poor laws (1834). The laws were set up to remove beggars from the streets, reduce the cost of looking after the poor and to encourage people to work so they could look after themselves (The National Archives, 2018). Early social reformers such as Octavia Hill (1838–1912) in the UK who was concerned with improving housing and sanitation in poor areas and Beatrice Webb (1859-1947) in the US who was critical of ineffective policies in reducing poverty, were both influential in early social work movements. Both reformers centralised family and community as being crucial for improving social and economic conditions of the poor and working classes, immediately signalling the importance of family as a means of social and state control (Baigent & Cowell, 2016). These were the early beginnings of social work founded on charities initiated mainly by middle-class women who became concerned about poverty, but who also maintained authority in social hierarchies as assessors of the deserving and undeserving poor (Baigent & Cowell, 2016).

Social work is considered still to be a relatively new profession with much of its formative development in case-work based practice developing from the middle of the 20th century. From their inception the middle class and often Christian based charities devised roles for assessing the deserving and undeserving poor and made decisions about their future wellbeing. Charities also identified neglect and abuse of children and family poverty. Social work was even then rooted in complex community settings where dualisms emerged as

charities addressed poverty and unjust treatment, but maintained authority within social hierarchies (Davis, 2008).

Following the World War Two, social workers began questioning oppressive systems and the blaming of individuals for their condition. Their groundwork paved the way for social work to develop radical stances that took up causes as well as cases in the 1960s (Davis, 2008). A new character of social work in Britain emerged, as in other countries, alongside social models of welfare. However, social workers continued their role as assessors and resource allocators in social hierarchies working for local governments (Davis, 2008)

In the 1960s a radical stream of social work emerged promoting rights-based approaches concerned with challenging governments and working in communities to improve lives. At the same time social workers were beginning to become a professional body working within local authorities and statutes to uphold the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) was formed in 1970, in common with a number of countries developing professional associations (BASW, https://www.basw.co.uk/). The organisation laid the foundations of a professional identity for social work in England through joining other national and international bodies. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) was founded in 1970 and continues to formulate global standards and professional codes.

Despite its own long history in Victorian and post war welfare social work was, and still is, considered to be a new profession (Dickens, 2010). One challenge in the development of social work was its attempt to define itself within the political tumults of two world wars, the development of the welfare state and then the systematic dismantling and privatisation of public services over the second half of the 20th century and first decades of the 21st century.

An emergent identity as a radical profession dominated the 1960s and clashed with ideologies of neoliberalism as they began to take hold in the early 1980s (Parton, 2009) Questions and debates about the role, parameters, governance and direction of social work took shape over the closing decades of the 20th century and early years of the 21st. A number of reviews, reports and evaluations of social work appeared during this time. (Seebohm, 1968; Barclay Report (Barclay, 1982); Care matters: time for change (DfES, 2007); Statement on the roles and tasks of social work (GSCC, 2008); No More Blame Game – The Future for Children's Social Workers (Conservative Party, 2007); Munro, Reviews of child protection systems (Munro, 2010, 2011)). The collision of politics and the remit of social workers are a feature these reviews, policies and legislature that have shaped the profession and been underpinned by two important factors; the failures of social work protection systems and the rise of neoliberal cultures.

The Seebohm report (1965) was commissioned by the UK government following concerns about families and the lives of young offenders (Parton, 2009). The review centralised new roles for social workers to be active in communities and to engage in preventative family practice. The review recommended that social workers should be in locality teams governed by local authorities close to families where practice would be carried out.

> The new department will, we believe, reach far beyond the discovery and rescue of social casualties; it will enable the greatest possible number of individuals to act reciprocally, giving and receiving service for the well-being of the whole community. (Seebohm 1968, para. 2)

The ethos of bringing social workers closer to communities was contained in government commitments at the time to engage generically with families from structures in local authorities as locality teams. There were no specialisms, and teams would carry mixed caseloads across child, adult, mental health, disabilities, youth and parental support. The report envisaged that the new departments would eventually be run and managed by qualified social workers who would grow expertise in welfare practices and work alongside other professionals in housing, education and health. They would be mandated to form relationships with 'difficult' or 'complex' families in new personalised social service departments to improve lives, outcomes and community services. These favoured the functional approach to social work and supported the ethos of the National Health Service and Government's social welfare reforms (Parton, 2009).

Parton (2009) noted that it took many years to structure the departments in the way suggested, punctuated by controversies due to the death of a child, Maria Colwell and leading to the questioning of roles and the adequacy of the new structures (HM Government, 1974). A new Conservative administration commissioned The Barclay Report (Barclay, 1982) to examine the roles and tasks of social workers. It continued to recommend the restructuring of departments into generic, community-based teams. Community based practice was still considered to be important but was minimised by a remit to improve the quality of people's lives through assessment and intervention practices. The report advocated working with families holistically and began, along with a number of psychological professions, to see the value of systems theories and family therapeutic approaches. Social work was to maintain its commitment to rights and advocacy activities in the new departments.

There was a shift in the Barclay report, from the radicalism expressed in the 1960s to a professionalism that continued to locate social workers within state mechanisms and where, it was thought, assumptions about poverty, marginalisation and illness could be challenged from within government departments more effectively whilst also empowering individuals and groups. Statutory requirements in family welfare provision in the Barclay Report largely defined social work as a "change agent" working to support humanitarian models, as well as rights based decisions, with the aim of championing the rights of marginalised populations, eradicating oppression and arguing for equality (Barclay, 1982).

There was however a dual statutory function that required the profession to act as a state arbiter, along with courts or with police and medical professions, as well as simultaneously negotiating within human rights and social justice agendas. In many ways this dual role hasn't changed, but the structure of services suggested by the report was never fully actioned. Instead, by the end of the 1980s specialisms were emerging as a result of new welfare practices in neoliberal structures that divided adult and children's care. These took place against a background of complicated privatisations of public and welfare services and a growing mistrust of social workers by New Labour, discussed later in this chapter.

The Seebohn and Barclay Reports sought to strengthen the professional social work role. However, tensions between politics and media regarding a number of widely reported child protection failures in the 1980s arguably weakened social agendas which depended on a critical stance, for example postmodernist or feminist analysis. As a result, social work became increasingly focussed on case work, risk management and crisis-oriented practice. A brief history of the re-construction of social work along these lines is outlined below before going on to examine how self became reconstituted in the political context of the 1990s. It is

posited that self became underpinned by notions of individualism under the New Labour government that signalled a new era of social work identity in the twenty first century.

In the 1980s, public understanding of social work began to be punctuated by a series of child deaths that attracted media attention and a focus on child protection systems. Social work subsequently became shaped by new policies and legislation which emerged through prominent serious case reviews in child protection, and then adult protection, that influenced the re-construction of social work in the latter part of the 20th and first part of the 21st century.

The deaths of Jasmine Beckford (1984), Heidi Koseda (1984), among others, signalled this shift. Each of these children was known to relevant services and had been allocated social workers. Blom-Cooper's review into the death of Jasmine Beckford (Blom-Cooper, 1985) was widely reported by the press and was influential in debates that contributed to changes in statute. At the same time news also began to spread regarding children in the Cleveland area being removed from their homes following a controversial diagnostic technique performed by a paediatrician, Dr Marietta Higgs, which suggested to her that they had been sexually abused. 121 children were removed from their homes and placed into the care of the local authority by social services. Parents came together and protested about the removal of their children, some of whom were foster children in homes where the removed children had been placed. The Cleveland case was investigated by Butler-Sloss (1988) who made recommendations leading to new documentation called 'Working Together' an important guidance framework that supported multi-procedural processes today (DfE, 2018)

The evidence base about non-accidental injury and expertise around its identification was also growing during this period. Government reforms implemented multi-disciplinary approaches and more vigilant child protection procedures were put in place. The Working

Together guidance (DfE, 2018) emphasised the importance of working directly with children and listening to them, as well as working to assist marginalised and oppressed families in need, within multi-professional working arrangements. It also laid out social workers' duties to advocate for parental rights and responsibilities as well as the rights of the child to have a healthy life and sustainable future. At the same time, social workers were also required to act quickly when children were thought to be at "risk of significant harm" (The Children Act. HM Government, 1989).

The context in which children's services developed from this time, were framed by statutes and working arrangements which served the profession well until the early 21st century. It was in the opening years of the 21st century that another cluster of safeguarding and protection failures, similar to those of the 1980s, came to the attention of the public. These were the deaths of Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003), Peter Connelly (Haringey Local Children Safeguarding Board, 2009), and Daniel Pelka (Lock, 2013) in the children's sector. It was also becoming apparent that there were failings of protection in the adult sector leading to abuse of older people and those with mental and physical disabilities. The deaths of Margaret Panting (Sheffield Safeguarding Adults Board, 2001) and Stephen Hoskin (Flynn, 2007), becoming prominent public cases. As a result of adult deaths, a review of services called 'No Secrets' was produced to provide guidance to support staff monitoring vulnerable adults' safety (DoHSC, 2000). In the children's sector new statutes (The Children Act 2004 – HM Government, 2004), following a number of recommendations and a new children's charter called Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003).

The following section briefly charts the rise of neoliberalism and New Labour and its as an understudy to developments in social work policy that arose from the above actions.

Neoliberal contexts

In the UK, neoliberalism was embedded in Conservative government policies which took hold in the 1980s and have continued since. Central was the notion that service provision should be organised around a focus which facilitates individual freedoms for people to pursue their own goals. It largely disconnected the notion of community and was consistent with Margaret Thatcher's edict based on the idea that society did not exist, but rather individuals were the primary unit for social policy. Self, in this era, was defined as opportunistic and capable of being self-fulfilled if only individual freedoms were more completely enacted. Such ideologies led to deregulation of public industries in the early 1980s, with the welfare state seen as a form of socialism which colonised and oppressed marginalised working people, whereas opportunities for individual ownership had the potential to liberate them.

Large public organisations were held to be unwieldy and ineffective, limiting the choice and freedom of individuals. The Government began to restructure public services in health and social welfare. These were privatised via internal care markets said to give the National Health Service (NHS) choice in the provision of services that could be purchased in newly created independent sectors (Turner and Powell, 2010). In Personal Social Services between 1991-1999 large scale structural changes divided social work into children and family and adult sectors within specialist legislation through The Children Act 1989 and Community Care Act of 1991 (HM Government, 1989; HM Government 1991).

Community social work teams recommended in both the Seebohn and Barclay reports were quickly displaced by specialist teams, regarded at the time as being necessary to counter-act ineffective protection of vulnerable people through previous social work structures. Specialism was also underpinned by neoliberal agendas which emphasised

individualist policies and the growing privatisation of public services in complex purchase/provider split agendas seeking to privatise public care sectors as business models (Henderson & Knapp, 2003). Policies impacted on numerous professional bodies both inside and outside of social work by splitting services into private skills entrepreneurships where, over time, specialisation tended to create a market of privatised care provision:

> In Britain, social work's intimate connection with the state turned to dependency in the post-Seebohm era when generic social work in large, well-resourced local authority departments assumed many of the responsibilities for personal social services which were formerly furnished by voluntary organizations and women caring at home. This relationship is being redefined through the privatization of the welfare state which has introduced a mixed economy of care and paved the way for private providers to replace public sector ones. (Dominelli, 1996, p.154)

One benefit of specialism and commissioning for social work has been the development of stakeholder partnerships and multi-collegiate practices said to engage energetic professional social work practice (Beresford & Croft, 2001). New partnerships between people who used services and their providers were encouraged, including the setting up of small social enterprises by service users themselves, and their inclusion on advisory panels in health and social welfare organisations that democratised services (Beresford & Croft, 2001, p.57).

There were also shifts in views about how social work should be shaped (Ferguson, 2004). Beresford and Croft (2001, 2004) believed internal markets and adult/ children divides created a schism of roles for social workers who were asked to be both libertarian and regulatory in their practice (Beresford & Croft, 2001, p.53).

New Labour policies

New Labour is the term given to the Labour government of 1997-2007. And it was during the term of this government that social work became very closely scrutinised. Fierce criticism following safeguarding failures, mentioned above, led to widescale reassignment of social work during their tenure in multi-collegiate health and social care sectors and new technocratic bureaucracies (Ferguson, 2004, p.3). The profession was largely disregarded in the consultation and implementation of new measures in public protection and strategies for working with marginalised groups that now focussed on monitoring workforces in tracker systems to improve outcomes (Ferguson, 2004). As Parton reports:

> From the beginning, New Labour had a fundamental mistrust of local authorities' capabilities to modernize and an ambivalence about the future of social services departments which reflected severe doubts about the value of social work as a professional arm of social policy where social workers would act as autonomous practitioners, exercising professional judgement based on knowledge, expertise and experience (Parton, 2009, p.70)

New Labour's policies were further criticised for having reconnected social work with "a specious 'deserving' 'undeserving' conceptual dichotomy'", especially as it was directed at poverty reduction and inclusion projects for marginalised groups (Goldson, 2002, p.685). Butler outlined this situation in 2001, writing:

> Social work has, under the New Labour government (1997–), become part of an incorporative agenda whereby the function of social work is predominantly to ensure that difficult and troublesome individuals are made to accept prevailing social norms,

> rather than inclusive in a way that permits a radical practice to better serve the recipients of social work services. (Butler, 2001, p.7)

It was posited that New Labour projects radically changed the landscape of social work into techno-rational driven services that altered both the nature and perceptions of the profession (Ferguson, 2004; Goldson, 2002; Parton, 2009,2014; Jones, 2015). The ways in which social work was being governed and viewed in this period also came under the scrutiny of the Conservative party in opposition which influenced its directions when they came into power in 2010.

Conservative party reviews of social work

Whilst in opposition the Conservative Party commissioned a report, 'No More Blame Game - The Future for Children's Social Workers' (Conservative Party, 2007) which found the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) definition of social work to lack clarity and fail to support the realities of British social work in the 21st Century. The Report noted:

> There was a strong feeling from submissions and witnesses that, in practice the social work role is poorly defined. Some witnesses called for a public debate which would focus on the need to recognise that the role of workers involves maintaining a balance between helping families, being accountable for the use of resources and providing protective services, when necessary through the use of coercive powers (Conservative Party, 2007, p15)

The profession was considered to contain outmoded or "nanny state" mentalities (p.15), arguing that instead, social workers should support people to assume "personal responsibility" (P15). In this view accountability and professionalism were not commensurate

with social justice activities, even though they were defined as legitimate activities by the profession itself. The report argued that radicalism was irresponsible and not useful for helping individuals move through their problems. It reflected popular images of social work portrayed in social media as a mistrusted profession with outmoded anti-oppressive agendas. By the end of 2010, when the Conservative Party was in government doubts began to be expressed about the role of social work itself.

However, the Conservatives were also critical of New Labour's technocratic social and welfare reforms, prompting them to commission a review by Professor Eileen Munro, a social work academic who had written extensively on child protection systems. She recommended a unitary approach to children and families practice based on the London Borough of Hackney, colloquially known as the 'Hackney Model', (Cross, Hubbard & Munro, 2010). Such approaches had been embraced in England during the 1970s (Pincus & Minehan, 1973; Specht & Vickery, 1977). They built on team knowledge that was locality based and developed community relationships. Teams worked together as consultancies designed to increase skills and knowledge using systems approaches focused on children, families and communities.

Munro sought to give social workers space to work directly with children and utilise regular weekly team meetings to discuss cases, consider risk and use a group supervision model to improve knowledge and skills (Munro, 2011). Social workers were to be allocated families as teams rather than individual case-loads, and unit supervision meetings were held each week with everyone present to discuss cases with a specialist consultant supervisor. The consultant could also carry out individual professional supervision and provide specialist information to the team. The model suggested an integrated approach that combined specialist social work expertise to develop skills and knowledge through group practice.

In three reviews and a summary report Munro (Munro, 2010, 2011) was critical of rigid bureaucratic and over-procedural systems, suggesting that in their place social workers needed reflective space and supportive supervision for carrying out their role. She recommended provision should be made for social workers to spend more time in direct work with children, their parents and carers. The notions of a direct work approach, relational practice, child-focussed approaches, use of good evidence base and double loop reflection (i.e. critical self-reflection and organisational learning) indicated an integrated systemic approach recommended for motivating positive social work practice (Munro, 2012). She consistently called for self-regulating systems able to adapt to feedback from its workforce to improve organisational structures (Munro, 2010, p.1136). Her work resulted in some restructuring of local authorities across the UK, although to date there has not been widespread implementation (Jones, 2015).

British Association of Social Work and UK political frameworks

Neoliberal and New Labour policies created structural changes that undermined social worker professional autonomy causing major frictions between The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and successive governments since the 1980s. The association have had significant difficulties in maintaining a central voice for the profession (Taylor & Bogo, 2013).

In 2000 a new social work bachelor's degree was introduced, and social work became a protected title. BASW were sidestepped as the natural choice to be the registration agency. However, they welcomed the setting up of the General Social Care Council (GSCC) for social work registration in 2000, and the long-awaited College of Social Work (TCSW) in 2011. Unfortunately, both of these institutions were closed in 2014 by the Conservative administration. BASW were again dismissed from taking on responsibility for registration

which was passed instead to the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) made up of a number of related health professions.

The rise of specialist professions impacted on all public care and health services in the UK alongside the breaking down of national welfare systems within the neoliberal policies of individualism, the privatisation of public services and in more recent times austerity politics. Social work is a profession associated with social challenge which has further weakened its position within neoliberal political contexts (Parton, 2009). These contextualise difficulties that have compromised the profession in the UK.

UK standards and education frameworks

In 2009 the Conservative Government set up a Social Work Task Force (SWTF), (DoH & DfE, 2009) followed by a Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), (DfE, 2014) with the express aim of improving the education and training of social workers. It began the development of a new single-entry professional framework designed to support social workers from student through to qualified, advanced and strategic levels of practice, creating new a Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), (BASW, 2018). The PCF focussed a critically reflective and self-aware agenda which was in stark contrast to previous occupation and skills-based requirements. The character of social work as a "socially critical" profession was prominent in the new PCF and polarised debates about its roles and responsibilities examined in this section (Burgess, 2004; Taylor & Bogo, 2014). An overarching objective in creating the framework was to set out:

> [F]or the first time, consistent expectations of social workers at every point of their career and will be used to inform the design and implementation of education and training and the national career structure (DfE, 2014, p.3).

It was suggested this would address what was understood to be a “double curriculum” for social work that previously used a generic Occupational Standards guide (Higgins, 2015, p.1985).

The Professional Capabilities Framework

In 2009 The Social Work Task Force (SWTF) was established to consider ways to assess student readiness to practice and their professional development following the procedural reforms. The task force produced one report before being re-formed into the Social Work Reform Board. The Board consulted widely on its plan to develop the qualification framework for Social Work. This used the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) launched alongside a new College of Social Work as a single point of entry into the profession.

The Professional Capabilities Framework was designed to support social workers learning and practice development throughout their social work careers (DfE, 2014). The Social Work Reform Board wanted to generate a professional tool that supported social workers from the time of their education and throughout their development into senior and management roles, creating a single entry for the entirety of social work career development.

The PCF set out key benchmark professional capabilities laid out in nine domains of practice; professionalism, values and ethics, diversity in the application of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice, rights and justice, application of knowledge, critical reflection, intervention and skills, contexts and organisations, and professional leadership. The nine capabilities are scaffolded on four core skills of; partnership working with service users and carers, knowledge and application of the law, communication skills, and use of evidence and research. Student progress is set through 'Domains', which develop abilities/skills in critical theory, moral philosophy and ethics to ground knowledge from earlier learning.

At entry-level applicants to Social Work courses in England are required to have "awareness of self" with the ability to develop rapport with people in a range of circumstances (BASW, 2018, PCF Level 1 entry descriptor). In developing self at "Readiness for practice stage", students are required to "identify the factors that may create or exacerbate risk to individuals, their families or carers, to the public or to professionals, including yourself" (BASW, 2018, PCF Level descriptor 1). By the end of their second placement students, entering practice should be able to "recognise the impact of self in interaction with others, making appropriate use of personal experience" (BASW, 2018, PCF level descriptor 1).

Following graduation, employed Social Workers undertake an Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE) that integrates learning for practice before going on to a fully professional role. During the year practitioners have a protected caseload with extra supervision where they are expected to produce a portfolio of evidence. Here, the level descriptor refers to the professional's ability to "Recognise and promote individuals' rights to autonomy and self-determination" (BASW, 2018, PCF level descriptor 1). At the social work level, the theme of client self-determination continues with a recognition of legal processes where safety and risk factors may restrain client freedoms. Here social workers are asked to "Make skilled use of self as part of your interventions" (BASW, 2018, PCF level descriptor 1). As experienced Social Workers they are then required to "Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and skilled use of self in more complex situations" (BASW, 2018, PCF level descriptor 1). At the Advanced level they are required to practice with a "confident integration of self and professional behaviours" (BASW, 2018, PCF level descriptor 1). At strategic level they are required to "Model and articulate use of self both within own agency and in multi-agency settings" and "Model the sophisticated use of self, and professional/personal boundaries in a range of complex situations, and ensure policies and

procedures recognise or reflect this approach". (BASW, 2018, PCF level 1). All use of self descriptors are contained in the level 1 Professionalism Domain.

Reviews of social work education

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) set up to register social workers in 2000 was closed in 2013 and responsibility was passed to the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), once again bypassing BASW, and with requirements at variance with the PCF. The College of Social Work (TCSW), who were responsible for the PCF at the time, were mandated to enter into a dialogue to integrate it with a set of HCPC Standards of Proficiency (SoP). There was some tension because the HCPC sought to regulate the threshold for safe and effective practice, while the language of the PCF sought a new developmental agenda. The mapping exercise undertaken was understood to generate an unsatisfactory and unwieldy set of compromised competencies, capabilities and standards. (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Narey, 2014; Taylor & Bogo, 2013).

The College of Social Work was also closed down in 2015 and responsibility for the PCF was passed to BASW. Analysis of developments since the early 2000s demonstrate that although BASW contributed to and in some cases was central to social work reform agendas in education, they have since been largely dismissed from government agendas as an organisation for centralising social work. BASW disagreed with the College of Social Work supporting the registration of social workers through the Health and Social Care Professionals Council, following the closure of the General Social Care Council. They were critical of the College of Social Work's agreement to fragment the governance of social work:

> We have been disappointed that the profession has not arrived at a point where it has a single unifying professional body, a central aspiration of the Reform Board. We have

> been dismayed by the public nature of the disagreements and differences of approach between BASW and TCSW (The College of Social Work). We recognise The College as the organisation that evolved from the work of the Reform Board and we will continue to work with The College to secure a productive relationship (31 October 2012) (in Bogo & Taylor,2014,p1413).

The dispute left BASW largely outside of political debates about the profession in reviews about social work and how it should be registered and structured (Taylor & Bogo, 2014).

Two reviews of social work education were commissioned by the Government (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Narey, 2014). They were critical of the PCF and agreed that a simpler framework was needed to explain what social workers should know and be able to do. It was clear these reviews saw social work as largely skills based and were concerned about the complexities of the model as it had been integrated into other frameworks for the registration of social workers.

Both Croisdale-Appleby and Narey, pointed to medical training and its qualification standards as a model worth emulating (GMC, 2009). Jointly, their reports made 36 recommendations, sometimes in accord, at other times, at variance with one another on prescriptive assessment, specialisation, and the role of professional judgement. The Conservative government did not replace the PCF but drew up two separate Knowledge and Skills Statements for the adults and children sectors (DfE, 2014; DoH, 2015) and developed new education routes into social work via programmes called Step Up and Frontline (Step Up, 2019; Frontline, 2019) . The knowledge and Skills Statements were carried forward for social work qualification and development and are now referred to in the PCF and SoPs.

In his review Croisdale-Appleby (2014) noted the importance of retaining self as an aspect of social work, defining it in the following terms:

> There was complete consensus in the evidence I received from all stakeholder groups that social workers require intellectual and emotional intelligence as a well as self-awareness, self-confidence and the ability out carry out self-reflective practice, and these attributes feature prominently in the curriculum and in the capabilities that HEIs aim to inculcate. (p.69)

The review goes on to re-iterate a commitment within the international context of use of self to maintain a healthy profession, in particular citing from his international inquiries in relation to self, of the ongoing need for the social worker to receive support:

> It is internationally, indeed almost universally recognised that a newly-qualified social worker needs support and supervision on entering practice. Qualification as a social worker is the start, and only the start, of a professional career. (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014, p.82)

However, the resulting Knowledge and Skills Statements do little to satisfy the above points. For example, direct work is emphasised in both statements (DfE, 2014, point 5, DoH, 2015, point 7) Only the adults statement uses the term use of self (DoH, 2015, point 7), but does not define qualities or meaning in relation to its professional development.

Both Narey (2014) and Croisdale-Appleby (2014) saw the global definition of social work with an emphasis on liberation, empowerment and social justice to be at odds with the skills needed to assess risk, echoing the sentiments of Government reviews of safeguarding failures. Narey (2014) considered theoretical learning to be a “waste of time” and argued for

the need to “get on” with the practical skills of social work (p.9). Further he did not see the value of the core definitions of social work citing them as potentially damaging to children:

> [S]ometimes, parents and other carers neglect and harm children. In such circumstances, viewing those parents as victims, seeking to treat them non oppressively, empowering them or working in partnership with them can divert the practitioner’s focus from where it should be: on the child (Narey, 2014 p.9).

There is clear variance with social workers responsibilities in statute to work in partnership with parents and children and balance regarding parental rights and responsibilities and the rights of the child. (The Children Act 1989 (HM Government, 1989) and Working Together Guidance 2015 (DfE, 2018)).

Both reviews reflected some misunderstandings about the nature of social work and its complex critical agenda that requires not only pragmatic but critical skills. The closure of important social work institutions that oversaw social work (GSCC and TCSW) and the side-lining of BASW appeared to contribute to a dilution of the critical agenda of social work. However, the PCF now under the guardianship of BASW remains a predominant tool for social work education.

The PCF and use of self

When the General Social Care Council (GSCC) began to register social workers in 2000 it required them to be, “self-aware and critically reflective” (GSCC, 2006:6). Further, the BASW code of ethics required, and continues to require, social workers to “strive for objectivity and self-awareness in professional practice” (BASW, 2018, code 12). They were concepts transferred into the newly formed capabilities framework (PCF).

The PCF focusses a number of critically reflective and self-aware capabilities for social workers to appoint "a skilful use of self" at the experienced and advanced social work level (BASW, 2018, Domain 2, p.47; Domain 1, p.53) and a "sophisticated use of self" at the strategic level (BASW, 2018, Domain 1 p.60). There is no signposting, but use of self is implied in other elements of the domains at various levels combined with domain six, critical reflection and domain one, professionalism, that combines critical reflection, creativity, imagination and curiosity with self-awareness. Table 1 details self and use of self in the current framework.

Although the framework has now been adopted by BASW which is a UK organisation, it is not utilised for the whole of the UK's frameworks for training. Northern Ireland and Scotland still predominantly use the National Occupational Standards. The standards for Northern Ireland produced in 2013 do not mention use of self. However, Scotland undertook a similar scoping and reform of social work Education as England. Gordon and Dunworth (2017) undertook a mapping exercise of the revised Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) (Scottish Government, 2003) and found the revisions to contain increased evidence of use of self. Although the Scottish version doesn't mention use of self, it integrates learning for social work with self-awareness, to reflect on, examine and critically appraise practice (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017, p.597).

Commentary on capabilities and competencies in the PCF

There were clearly disputes between the profession and governments over the extent to which critical approaches could be applied when social workers were mandated in protection practice and restrictive powers (Burgess, 2004). These required balancing of different elements of collaborative, responsible, complex and creative competencies in developing a

new framework for social work. Resolving ways in which to create a favourable requirements framework involved blended approaches that demonstrate progression described in a series of domains of practice using capabilities (Burgess, 2004; Burgess, Barcham & Kearney, 2014).

The Social Work Reform Board (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017) drew on Eraut (1994) who saw competencies as a blunt instrument and capabilities as predictive of future progression in professionalism, a recognition of deepening personal/professional understanding, behaviours and professional ethics in qualitative assessments of values and practice. The College of Social Work (TCSW) saw the decision to reframe occupational competencies to capabilities as a defining moment for social work. It was a design for the whole of a social work career that moved away from the technocratic and mechanistic approaches that the profession was critical of during the period of New Labour. Capabilities supported a synthesis of ethical and critical social work characteristics. Assessment of capabilities included skills but was deepened in contextual "higher order" abilities as social workers moved through their career (Burgess, Barcham & Kearney, 2014):

> The PCF has recognised the complexity of social work practice, the interrelationship of different aspects and offers a means to assess holistically and contextually. The framework promotes development across all areas of practice for social workers in a wide range of settings, and progression to more senior levels. The concept of a 'capability' framework meets that aim, and helps students, practitioners and managers to think differently about their development needs and aspirations. (Burgess, Barcham & Kearney, 2014, p.2069)

Taylor and Bogo (2014) criticised the term of capability and believed the framework, although widely consulted, was produced with scant reference to critical literature (Taylor &

Bogo, 2014, p.1403). Their review suggested that competencies, abilities and capabilities were used interchangeably and cautioned that conceptual confusions between capabilities and competency had a tendency to cause overlap, adding a layer of complexity in assessment and performance measurement (Taylor & Bogo, 2014, p.1407). Problems arise because of potential variances of predictability.

Although not focussing on use of self, Taylor and Bogo (2014) identified some difficulties in assessing soft skills in the new PCF. In their discussions they note that social work is context bound, dependent on attentiveness to self and "critical curiosity" which are soft skills that include use of self. The language of the PCF changes the nature of tasks and roles in its critical arrangements. In Domain 6, Critical Reflection and Analysis, it asks social workers to engage "imagination, creativity and curiosity" to their practice. In the advanced levels this is applied to creative problem solving that involves people who use services. These become not just soft skills but high-level techniques (Taylor & Bogo, 2014). The College of Social Work recognised the challenges:

> The capabilities are much broader than competences and are not designed or intended to be 'assessment criteria'. We do though have to be sure we know what the capability statements mean and how we can judge whether they have been demonstrated or not. In some cases particularly where these are soft skills such as communication, this can be challenging to do. However we do believe that we need to do this. We've got to make what's important assessable, not make what's assessable important (TCSW, 2012, p.2).

However, the statement is somewhat contradictory and contains little guidance on what needs to be measured and how to measure as a soft skills.

Further, PCF capabilities require organisations to absorb meta-competencies that respond to feedback. The use of creative, imaginative processes requires organisations to respond to workers in mutual arrangements. Munro (2010), discussed the combination of practitioner and organisational learning as “double-loop learning” (Munro, 2010, p14.). Earlier parts of this chapter indicate the difficult political terrains in UK social work and how it is received as a profession in the minds of the public, the media and in Governments. Burgess, who was a member of the reform board, noted the complexities of implementing new education frameworks that need complex adaptive systems in order to be effective (Burgess, 2004).

The assessment of complex wicked competencies, soft skills and meta-competencies require mature responses in the power bases at the centre of institutions that govern social work. Taylor and Bogo (2014) saw the pluralities in the adoption of the PCF as a complex one size fits all solution that they believed would cause fault lines in social work education and practice in the UK. Burgess, Barcham and Kearney (2014) responded to Taylor and Bogo’s criticisms and defended the capabilities framework, but noted the political intricacies within which was developed:

> In England, the PCF was generated in a complex, sometimes politicised context, through the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), set up in 2010 with government support. There was input about the priorities for the professional development of social workers at every level, including initial education, from a wide range of stakeholders (academics, practitioners, employers, unions ,and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) (Burgess, Barcham and Kearney, 2014, p2068).

They recognised that changes in registration and the mapping exercise to Standards of Proficiency posed a challenge to the PCF. They were also cognizant of criticisms to change terminology from competencies to capabilities defending the nature of capabilities that challenged social workers, educators and managers to "think differently" about the complexities of practice and how to analyse it (Burgess, Barcham and Kearney, 2014, p.2069)

Howe (2008) suggested that emotional intelligence and empathy are the cornerstones of use of self. They draw on the psychologies of the self and require constant examination to remain self-aware and emotionally competent (Howe, 2008). Use of self requires high levels of emotional maturity. It requires critical analysis and examination of belief systems, recognition of personal traits and behaviours that are emotionally demanding in social work practice (Howe, 2008). Emotionally supportive atmospheres for social workers create conditions for developing complexity, which Howe thought was critical for affecting the change agent role. Understanding self engages complex and competing ethical, social, psychological, structural analysis and emotional sustenance, often personal and unconscious to others without triggers. Recognising and defining it as a competence, skill or capability must therefore be a tricky business (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017).

Gordon and Dunworth (2017) conducted a review of social work skills and competencies to look for terms associated with use of self in current frameworks outside of England and the jurisdiction of the PCF. They found that although the term use of self wasn't used, there was a growing change in the language of self and how it should be recognised for practice. They also identified use of self as a "wicked competence", a competence that is difficult to define and hard to recognise in others and in ourselves due its unconscious nature (Gordon & Dunworth, 2017, p.598). Because use of self is difficult to identify, evidence of it

may involve achievements that appear to please someone but are actually derived from unconscious, or even manipulative efforts (Knight & Page, 2007). This indicates the power base from which use of self operates within systems that require measurement of competencies or capabilities. Use of self has become a capability but its complexities in definition question how it might be demonstrated and fairly assessed.

The PCF has placed self, how self is examined, and self-awareness in the middle of competing dynamic forces where it has probably been emphasised more than in any previous schema for the training and education of social workers. Taylor and Bogo (2014) noted that capabilities were chosen to support self-assessment that were not necessarily observable but integrated through reflection, critical reflection and ethics (Taylor & Bogo, 2014, p.1409). However, use of self is opaque, associated with the impact of personal beliefs and values on practice, self-care and critical reflection. Use of self is sown into the PCF requiring practitioners to show progression from a skilled to a sophisticated capability with little understanding of how this might be achieved or observed.

There is strong evidence that clashes in ideology in current socio-political contexts have caused rifts in understanding about the nature of the self required for practice and how this then might be viewed in the assessment of students and the performance of practitioners. These are reflected in the current frameworks that differentiate the knowledge and skills required for social work between the HCPC which registers social workers, the Knowledge and Skills Statements that regulate performance of social workers and the PCF which manages education and development requirements throughout their career. The subtleties in emphases between skills, competences and capabilities raise dilemmas in

discussions about what exactly social workers are asked to demonstrate, whether these are behavioural, or critical and then how fitness to practice might be measured.

As it advances through the levels of domains there appears to be a subtle shift in the use of self that integrates it as a professional persona for working in modern multi-dimensional structures, such as multidisciplinary teams in the management of health and social care settings. The way in which self is presented in the PCF for use in contemporary structures is worthy of note. Its lack of definition though demands improved clarity about what is expected in the presentation of self; evidence of prescribed behaviours, juxtaposed with critical analysis of organisations that are objurgated by the profession for their technocratic approaches.

Use of self and self-awareness appears and disappears in the PCF domains, described in various ways depending on the domain and level of self in the descriptor; associated with words such as creative, imaginative, critical reflection and professionalism. Further, self and use of self are not connected together in the framework but 'self' is subsumed in professional identity and ethical values dimensions which subtly alters the position it takes in each of its articulations, whether it is a behaviour, a skill, or a wicked competence. This is not so much a problem of identifying a capability as it is for recognising how examinations of structures potentially collide with the frameworks where use of self resides.

Use of self has been fitted squarely into the PCF alongside other interchangeable terms also contested such as reflection, critical reflection, use of imagination and creativity. It relays use of self as both skills adaptations, implying behavioural examinations, and sophisticated adaptations, implying critical, self-analytical approaches. Whilst it would seem appropriate to examine these dimensions, behaviours indicate conformity, whilst critical

examinations indicate challenge. It is here that the rich and varied explanations by different people and their perspectives in understanding and assessment become problematic. How does one recognise or predict future capabilities as the framework suggests it should, in self-awareness, self-reflection and personal/emotional capacities to comprehend practitioners' use of self?

What is use of self?

A question that remains unanswered is exactly what use of self is for social work and how it can be recognised? The next chapter looks more fully at the literature, but here questions are raised that suggest concept of self for social work are complicated in the political ideologies that frame it and have hence become muddled as an ideology for practice related to confusion in the profession itself; how it views itself and how others view it.

Post-structural feminist analysis criticises outcomes-oriented processes as ones that deny the experiences of the self. These are the psychological histories, personal traumas and how we come to be where we are. Butler, Ford and Tregaskis, (2007) believe that contemporary social work structures have "deconstructed the notion of self to the point where it is now difficult to refer to it as a social work tool" (Butler, Ford and Tregaskis, 2007, p.282). They went on to argue that the removal of broader competencies of social work have removed its responsibility to "seek to engage with service users in a process of negotiating meaning through intersubjectivity and attention to individual experience" (Butler, Ford and Tregaskis, 2007, p.281) that needed stronger emphasis in social work practice competencies, standards and policies.

Chapter conclusion

The chapter began by setting out global definitions of social work and standards that set benchmarks for using self in practice. These are located in global educational standards and social work definitions that require countries to develop critically self-reflective practitioners who examine structural oppressions. In the UK, where neoliberalism began in the early 1980s the profession has been beleaguered with difficulties in asserting the global definitions of practice, although they underpin learning on social work courses.

Neoliberalism created internal privatised markets in new economies of social care and deregulated public services based on the idea that large scale bureaucracies had created unwieldy hierarchies that limited individual freedom and choice. Although the markets created opportunities for the development of healthy self-involved service user practice it also created some confusion about social work roles in the newly structured technocratic services created by New Labour towards the end of the last century (Beresford and Croft, 2001). It was a time when social work became largely ignored and mistrusted after fierce criticism of its ability in safeguarding practice.

The Conservatives were critical of New Labour's interventions in social work and commissioned their own reviews. One of these suggested that social work needed to modernise, believing its critical agenda was ill informed in modern practice (Conservative Party Commission on Social Workers, 2007). They believed a new age of evidence-based practice was needed that asserted the authority because of its coercive role. The Munro Reviews (Munro, 2010, 2011) recommended the setting up of unitary authorities that provided high quality consultation and shared responsibility for cases. There has only been patchy implementation of these recommendations nationally with a mixed economy of

technocratic, managerial and unitary provision. These no doubt confuse roles in social work alongside the continued demands for privatised social work (Jones, 2015).

The British Association of Social Work (BASW) has been weakened in neoliberal and New Labour agendas, its criticisms of the widening gap between its professional identity and what it is expected to do largely unheeded. It was passed over as the regulator of the new bachelor's degree in 2000 and for taking responsibility for registration of social workers. Although it welcomed the setting up of the General Social Care Council to take on this role, and the long-awaited College of Social Work, these too were short-lived. BASW were once again side-lined from the registration and regulation responsibility, the role falling to a conglomerated allied Health and Care Professionals' Council (HCPC). BASW has consistently appealed for a unified profession which has failed to materialise, but where aspirations were contained in the development of the PCF, which BASW now manages.

In the midst of turbulent forces, the profession led a task force and a reform board which fixed a critical agenda in the PCF that met the aspiration of creating a holistic framework for social work. Unfortunately, this framework was heavily criticised in two government reviews which saw it as over complex and at odds for serving the needs of the profession in the everyday practice of social work (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Narey, 2014). The government produced skills sets for practice used within local authorities and new entry points for training and education. Further, the mapping against the HCPC Standards of Proficiency were thought to have watered down its impact. However, the PCF has survived and has embraced other skills and proficiencies as learning for social work.

The PCF is designed to follow social workers throughout their career from the time they enter onto courses with expectations to demonstrate descriptors of practice in nine

domains of practice. It incorporates use of self as a skilled and then sophisticated use of self within the domains of professionalism and critical reflection indicating its significance to practice as a widely consulted professional document that included wide reaching focus groups with social workers. It requires social workers to be creative, imaginative and curious, as well as critically reflective. It includes structural examinations, reflections of personal values and belief systems in order to become self-aware for practice. These are hinted at in other structures, however the PCF is the first competency framework to acknowledge use of self.

Although use of self is embedded in the PCF, the range of language associated with it is unclear and related to development through self-awareness, critical reflection, belief systems, values and self-care, with no clear defining features. Further, the diffusing of the PCF in the mapped HCPC Standards of Proficiency and skills-based competencies provides no clear understanding of what this means for using self as an aspect of practice. Use of self is defined within particular contexts and juxtaposed in fluid and fractured interpretation across disciplines and in governing politics with little agreed understanding of what it means for practice. There is little guidance regarding how students and social workers might evidence wicked skills, a meta-competences and emotional tools, as suggested in the container domains of use of self.

Table 1: PCF descriptors (BASW, 2018)

PCF Level and domain	PCF descriptor
Entry Level	By the point of entry to SW qualifying programmes, prospective students/candidates should demonstrate awareness of social context for social work practice, awareness of self, ability to develop rapport and potential to develop relevant knowledge, skills and values through professional training. demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for our conduct, practice, self-care and development.
1st Placement **Domain 7 Intervention and skills**	With guidance identify the factors that may create or exacerbate risk to individuals, their families or carers, to the public or to professionals, including yourself
Last Placement **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Recognise the impact of self in interaction with others, making appropriate use of personal experience
Last Placement **Domain 7 Intervention and skills**	Recognise the factors that create or exacerbate risk to individuals, their families or carers, to the public or to professionals, including yourself, and contribute to the assessment and management of risk
Assessed Readiness for Direct Practice Level **Dimension 7 Intervention and skills**	Select, use and review appropriate and timely social work interventions, informed by evidence of their effectiveness, that are best suited to the service user(s), family, carer, setting and self
Qualified Social Worker Level **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Make skilled use of self as part of your interventions
Experienced Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and skilled use of self
Experienced Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Contribute to a learning environment for self, team and, colleagues Linked to Practice Educator Standards Domain 9 Professional Leadership: Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management
Advanced Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Model and help others to maintain professional/personal boundaries and the skilled use of self in more complex situations
Advanced Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Maintain awareness of own professional limitations, knowledge gaps and conflicts of interest, actively seeking to address issues for self and others.
Advanced Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	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.
Advanced Social Worker **Domain 5 Knowledge**	Maintain a well developed understanding of knowledge relevant to your area of practice, and a confident self-awareness of knowledge limits.
Strategic Level Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	Model the social work role at a senior level, taking a strategic approach to representing and promoting the profession within and outside of the organisation.
Strategic Level Social Worker **Domain 1 Professionalism**	model the sophisticated use of self, and professional/personal boundaries in a range of complex situations, and ensure policies and procedures recognise or reflect this approach
Strategic Level Social Worker **Domain 5 Knowledge**	Maintain a well developed understanding of knowledge relevant to your area of organisational practice, and a confident self-awareness of knowledge limits.
All levels **Domain 6 Critical and analysis**	reflection enables us to challenge ourselves and others, and maintain our professional curiosity, creativity and self-awareness.

CHAPTER 4:

Use of self and practice

This chapter examines how use of self has been discussed where overlapping and connected elements between its different components abounded. Definitions and theories of self are discussed across various schools of social work thought and practice perspective with no one prescribed framework of definition or operationalisation (Kausick, 2017; Trevithick, 2018; Mandel, 2007). There are fractured views across the literature about what self is in social work knowledge and practice. There is a correspondingly diffuse body of literature about the social work self, leading to complex questions about whether a unique social work use of self can be identified from the array of knowledge available.

What self is a social work self?

An examination of literature indicated that use of self in social work is generally found across the disciplines as critical analytical, reflective or therapeutic processes where some blended approaches are apparent. These include complex structural analysis for identifying oppression, personal belief systems, personal experiences, personality and self-awareness (Adamowich et al, 2014; Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008; Daley, 2013; Karpetis, 2014 ; Mandell, 2008; Powell, 2011; Reupert, 2007; Trevithick, 2017). A study of what self is and how it is understood is therefore important as it informs use of self.

Self-awareness

Because social workers are concerned with a number of human rights based and non-discriminatory practices they are asked to think about the impact their own lives might have on those they work with. In their education and training they are likely to be asked to examine

their values and belief systems where unconscious prejudices may have powerful influences (Gardner, 2001). Much of self is unconscious and finding a self for practice is said to rely on relationships between the self and other in learning and in experiences by reflecting on them (Fook, 2002) Kondrat (1999) saw the first stage of self-awareness as a recognition of objective processes:

> The practitioner is expected to be as objective as possible in reflecting on practice behaviors, attitudes, interactions, and accomplishments. He or she is called upon to increase the distance between the reflecting-self and object-self and to reduce any negative impact of the subjective self on the practice setting. It is within this frame of reference that many introductory textbooks advise social work students to become aware of their values, needs, and biases in order to serve clients more consciously and objectively. (Kondrat, 1999, p.455)

As their education and practice education matures, expectations for self-awareness develop in deeper reflective processes and the interpretation of inner-realities. Understanding personal constructs and the constructs of others is a matter also of critical reflection and connecting inner and outer worlds for identification with a professional self for practice (Gardner, 2001). For Kondrat (1999) the object/subject relation becomes more complex as practice develops into higher order understandings, which she believed required critical reflectivity, a combination of conceptual self frameworks across sociological and psychological disciplines.

In social work education, self-awareness is seen as the cornerstone of practice learning across a range of contexts in relational, structural, values, cultural and post-structural analysis (Gardner, 2001; Nathanson, 1962; Bender, Negi & Fowler, 2010; Schuldberg, 2005). Although

students and social workers are asked to be self-aware for practice there is little understanding of how the awareness translates into practice. Kaushik (2017) suggested that asking social workers to locate an “authentic” or “true” self for practice implies there is an opposite self, a “false self” that has to be found and excised (Kaushik, 2017, p.22). Extending to the unconscious self, unformed or uninformed self, this might cause difficulties for supporting each other in learning since the learner needs to rely on the authentic self of the teacher. This relates also to the self we choose to be, or the self either unknown to ourselves or to others, implying we each are able to contain multiple selves any of which could true or false dependant on circumstances:

> Self-awareness is often directed to know the characteristics of the false self. Knowing the true self is our birthright as well as our prime duty. Knowing the real self is the pre-condition to using the self in social work. Lastly, acceptance of ignorance about our true nature would pave way to authentic knowledge. (Kaushik, 2017, p.28)

Finding the real self for practice is the concern of social work education in classrooms and practice education. In her study Gardner (2001) reported that students were more likely to find supports for becoming self-aware in small group settings, making connections in formal and informal interactions with other students to learn about their experiences, introductions to new knowledge and through role modelling by educators and lecturers. Techniques in any setting are self-reported learning, where students and practitioners ‘feel themselves’ to have learned something more about their real selves. Recognising that self as an ‘authentic’ self is far more complex. It requires an ongoing open and honest exploration which can only be taken on by a person if they decide to do so.

It would seem difficult to demand a practice self that is 'real' or 'authentic' because it's only definable as view points, thoughts and feelings as estimations that may be made by the person themselves or by others. Trevithick (2017) discussed multiple selves that are contained within the self of one person; the private, public, personal, professional, true, false selves; the self we choose to present and the self we either choose to or unconsciously close off, related to the circumstances we find ourselves in. Trevithick thought that responses to situations showed the potential for an adaptive self, where multiple and varied selves can utilise knowledge and activities to find a safe, ethical practice. To do so required learning about conceptual frameworks of self and recognising them in professional spheres.

Social workers are asked examine self within a number of frameworks. The first is contained in individual techniques such as those in psychotherapy, which requires personal space to examine the personal aspects of self. Both Urdang (2010) and Ferguson (2005, 2018) have argued for the need to integrate psychodynamic practice methods in supervision and learning. Urdang believed self had faded as an aspect of studies in current educational skills focused educational contexts. Ferguson thought that anxieties of practice in overburdened social work contexts required facilitated space that draws on psychodynamic theory. Gardner (2001) thought becoming more self-aware supported creative and artistic processes of practice which are central for developing social work ethos. Learning to be self-aware through a structural interpretation of inner belief systems was believed by Yan and Wong (2005) to support cultural competence. Essential areas of self open up complex discussions in social analysis often practiced as reflection and critical reflection (Askeland & Fook, 2009). All of these incorporate a view that practitioners become intellectually, socially and emotionally aware of the situations of their practice.

Learning to become self-aware relies on developing a self that is understood within the complex theories of psychology, sociological, philosophical and political analyses, further compounded by individual interpretations; the self who the person is or becomes as they develop their professionalism. As a result, use of self itself has become diffused in social work knowledge, difficult to locate. Trevithick believed that at present self and use of self is without a coherent framework for social work teaching, practice and understanding. (Trevithick, 2017).

Use of self literature

Awareness of self is said to be integrated with social work knowledge in order to use it as a practice skill (Beddoe, 2011; Daley, 2013; Karpetis, 2014; Levy, Shlomo, & Itzaky, 2014; Meihls & Moffatt, 2000; Moorhead, Bell, & Bowles, 2016). The worker is required to be open to exploring self as part of professional practice where personal past experiences play a role (Cooper, 2012).

Interpretations of use of self

There are many interpretations of use of self in the literature examined here. These put into place how self is said to become part of the practice context and how it might be expected to play a role.

Walters (2008) believed that teaching student social workers about use of self, required them to "take time to fully understand who they are as individuals, as well as their identities as professional social workers" (Walters, 2008, p.2). Unpacking belief systems, recognising their own world view and respecting the world view of others was said to inform ethical assessment and intervention. She defined use of self as:

> The use of self in social work practice is the combining of knowledge, values and skills gained in social work education with aspects of one's personal self, including personality traits, belief systems, life experiences and cultural heritage (Walters, 2008, p.1)

Daley's (2013) quantitative study asked social workers in clinical practice (n=57) what use of self meant to them and found that therapeutic settings were a key defining context for discussing self which included; skilful self-disclosure, using the therapeutic relationship, sharing self with clients, working through counter-transference and having experience of being a client (Daley, 2013, p.2).

Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2008) discussed use of self as being centred in the psycho-social and socio-political influences that shape it. Alongside these were also developments in neuro-biological science which examines neuro pathways in the brain, and human developmental psychology that measure infant and human growth. Like Howe (2008) they suggested the engagement of humanistic practices of empathy and warmth set within contemporary ethics and non-judgemental practice were models for use of self.

Psycho-social models of self by examine structural realities between social workers and clients (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008, p.236). Sociological models reframe self-examinations as symbolic interactionism; examinations of language in the relations between people and society to inform self-involved practice (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008; Parton & O'Bryne, 2000; Trevithick, 2017). Symbolism and gestures are believed to form the 'social beings' of the worker and the client for examination, providing a further dimension to the encounters within critical theory. Processes involve reflection, reflexivity and inter-subjective interpretations. Further a synthesis of the various interpretations of use of self invites a way

to pull techniques together for locating co-creation of meaning (Kondrat, 1999; Saari, 1991). These include constructionist, sociological, relational, psychotherapeutic, and attachment theory (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008. P.236). As previously noted, Kondrat called the synthesis of models “critical reflectivity” (Kondrat, 1999, p.452).

Trevithick (2017) thought a coherent use of self framework could be identified through three schemas; human development and attachment theory, related to Bowlbys internal working model, gendered interpretations based on feminist ethics, and the contribution of language and nonverbal communication. Both Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2008) and Trevithick (2017) saw merit for pulling together sociological and structural examinations of practice. Yan and Wong (2005) believed that traditional cultural complexities of structural oppression required “higher order” conceptual frameworks of self-awareness to work with hidden prescriptions and controls of practice (Yan & Wong, 2005, p181). In this view privilege, disadvantage and even discrimination remains unconscious in the encounter, where interpretations in westernised contexts remain largely individualistic, based on self-actualisation models that focus on the individual of the client and practitioner.

Reupert (2007) reported the individualistic nature of use of self by respondents (n7) in her study, where she found the self of practice they described as “central and unique” (p,112), not necessarily examining social construction beyond the therapeutic encounter. Ruepert found her respondents tended to underplay critical theory, cultural awareness and critical reflection utilising much more personal influences for their practice such as, “humanism, family therapy, psychoanalysis and Buddhism” (Reupert, 2007, p.109), suggesting this reflected their own assumed goals of self-fulfilment. Assumptions about clients and their aspirations without examinations of structures were considered to limit

analysis, for example, “how racism is woven into their self-narrative” (Reupert, 2007, p113). She agreed with Yan and Wong that psychological models needed to attend rather more deeply to structural oppression. However, her finding contrasted with Powell (2011) whose sample of ten master’s qualified and experienced social workers viewed their use of self within “collective” and “constructive” natures (Powell, 2011, p.iv).

The studies above identify dualisms between sociological and psychological interpretations of self that the authors above believed required synthesis. The level and depth required in each discipline to learn from each other in this view is extensive. Karpetis (2014) interviewed three clinical social workers in Greece. They reported that generic social workers, who tended to utilise sociological interpretations, were wary of their specialist psychological skills. They believed field social workers were ambivalent about their abilities to offer helpful work with clients assuming they would take on an individualistic tone. Karpetis related this to the identity of social work. The respondents in this small-scale study were reported as believing they had retained the nucleus of their social work identity as trained clinical social workers, but that they were aware of feeling different and differentiated following their clinical training. Karpetis believed these emanated in ambiguities between clinical and community practice.

Supports for using self

The literature reviewed indicated that understanding the self of practice needed the containment of therapeutic spaces that drew on psychologies of the self to understand the anxieties of social work and for building inner resilience for the self of practice (Dewane, 2006; Howe, 2008; Urdang, 2010; Trevithick, 2017).

Social workers practice in unpredictable and emotionally complex situations said to need high-level support in order to acknowledge unconscious aspects of themselves and to use themselves effectively. (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Ruch, 2000; Yelloly & Henkel 1995). Good supports help practitioners to find a professional identity that integrates personal narratives, belief systems and lived experiences for use of self (Leigh, 2014; Rajan-Rankin, 2014). Leigh (2014) discussed the development of professional identity in organisations as being pivotal for creating "a coherent social reality" for practice (p.630). Rajan-Rankin's participants emphasised emotional support for working through the tricky dilemmas of self and self of others that brought personal and professional together (Rajan-Rankin, 2014, p.2426). These indicate that support should be evident from the top to the bottom of organisations.

Karpetis (2014) reported how a respondent's decision to enter into clinical social work from field practice had integrated psychotherapy. They found the requirement of personal therapy increased their sense of satisfaction in their social work role because it had given them better space to explore themselves more deeply. Daley (2013) also found that social workers in her sample valued personal therapy as self-care and to avoid burnout, which they believed improved their practice as social workers. Ruch (2000) suggested safe spaces were required where workers feel open to exploring mistakes and examining their feelings to make sense of their personal, professional and organisational experiences (Ruch, 2000, p. 108). Ward (2008), thought this involved the creation of "holding environments" (p.76) that provided forums to explore the more anxious aspects of working through difficult personal interpretations, beliefs and values, in preparation for self-practice (Ward, 2008)

Howe (2008) suggested that emotional intelligence and empathy are the cornerstones of use of self. These develop through spaces that draw on the psychologies of the self and require constant examination (Howe, 2008). For Howe, encouraging the emotionally supportive atmospheres for social workers creates conditions for developing complexity, critical for affecting the change agent role; utilising kindness, positive regard and supporting service users to be able to recognise demanding aspects of their own lives and environments, to ease their discomfort and give them tools for managing their own emotional self-experiences. Ruch (2000) thought development of self should be supported by psychodynamic approaches in "messy, complex and ambiguous situations" where social work operated (Ruch, 2000, p.104). Ward (2010) suggested that in order to enhance understanding of difficult emotional circumstances students and practitioners needed support to recognise the relevance of themselves in their practice that helped them to examine:

> 'resonance' or similarities between a service user's situation and some issue in our own past or present concerns, how to remain focused on the difficult judgements despite emotional pulls one way or the other, and how to cope with the unconscious communications which may leave us feeling confused or angry after a difficult exchange (Ward, 2010, p.47).

This involved practitioners looking at processes and the place of themselves within them as they developed formative relationships in their practice. Rossitter (2007) suggests that practitioners must look at processes within themselves as they develop formative relationships in their practice:

> Clearly, we all respond based on our own experiences, values, expectations, etc., and that use of self fairly asks us to differentiate our responses from the needs and realities

> of our clients. However, the liberal humanist conception of self stops the investigation at the "personal," while the concept of use of self as subjectivity allows for a "whole self" that is thoroughly social, invested in power relations, given through history. This concept self complicates use of self by asking us to interrogate our responses in light of our social selves. I argue that such a use of self facilitates greater possibility for respectful recognition, and thus orients practice in justice. (Rossitter, 2007, p.31)

Support networks in contemporary practice

There has been a growing interest in how social workers can be given qualitative space in which to examine their practice (Ferguson, 2018; Munro, 2010; Ruch, 2000; Trevithick, 2017; Urdang, 2010).

In the previous chapter we discussed the growth of technocratic social work and the need, identified by Munro (2010, 2011), for reflective spaces to examine practice, which she attempted to reintegrate through a recommendation of unitary models. These were professional, knowledge based and integrated personal arenas for examining practice in a consultation process that was team oriented. The model did not necessarily recommend psychodynamic orientation, but was more akin to systemic and ecosystems models that contained therapeutic aspects. She recommended the model as an antidote to growing techno-rationalism and technocratic bureaucracies in UK social work.

Ruch (2000) identified a growing gap between psychologies of practice, the deeper examinations of the way people experience their life, and the realities of practice in technocratic and critical examinations undertaken in modern contexts. The original resistance in social work to psychodynamic principles was its emphasis as treatment, that is, practice which locate 'problems' in the person. However, Adamowich et al (2014) thought there had

been a good enough synthesis between psychoanalytic approaches and constructed approaches that transcended traditional approaches:

> [E]ven in psychoanalysis, theorizing has moved beyond counter-transference into the areas of co-transference and co-construction of reality, thus articulating the intimate relationality and intersubjectivity of self and other (Adamowich et al, 2014, p.132).

Current theorising of self in technocratic organisations, and perhaps also more so within its political contexts in the UK, are said to remove practitioners from the psychologies of self (Ferguson, 2005; 2018). Further, as pointed out earlier, there is a proliferation of knowledge across disciplines which have led to varied definitions and dualities of use of self knowledge contained in the questions about whether it is individual or structural and whether these two aspects can be blended. Some clues are provided in an examination of the ways in which use of self developed, perhaps particularly relevant to the UK, that influenced social work character.

The intuitive use of self

Early literature called for an intuitive use of self, examined in creative and post-structural contexts that drew on the art of practice. In contemporary practice this has been understood as constructivism and critical social work practice where use of self is emancipatory.

Early discussions about use of self, centred around creative and imaginative approaches that were considered to be the "art" of practice (England, 1986; Rapoport, 1968). Tyler (1952) saw the place between art and science as the site of professional practice that involved, "complex tasks which are performed by artistic application of major principles and concepts rather than by routine operations," which was a combination of, "individual judgment and imagination as

well as skill." (Tyler, 1952, p. 56). Rapoport (1968), thought it of importance to give equal weight to science and art, science being the intellectual informant of the artistic creative self:

> Social Work, like art, is engaged in problem solving, be it the problem of expression, communication, transformation, or change. They deal with human materials or human themes and both require intimate 'knowledge and contact' Both call for creative and imaginative use of self. Both require a special kind of distance and objectivity. Thus, in social work, we are accustomed to thinking about the need for objective appraisal as well as the compassionate response (Rapoport, 1968, p.153).

Rapoport suggested that science was valued because of its status in professional realms, whereas art was undervalued. An important determinant in the development of social work was where it should locate itself as a profession between these two positions of status. However, she thought that arguments about whether social work was an art or science were doing "violence to the sense of wholeness and process" (Rapoport, 1968, p.139). Instead she saw the merging of a new "scientific arts" in social work as one that would drive a need towards "ego mastery" creating calming influences in "client chaos" (Rapoport, 1968, p.152). In this way social work could inhere its holistic realms of practice that involved techniques and craft, and where scientific arts would provide the tools for social workers in their work with clients that blended their approaches (Rapoport, 1968, p.152). England (1986) went on to associate creativity and art in social work with the intuitive self, that:

> Requires a high capacity in the social worker for the tolerance and absorption of all sorts of negative feelings, massive anxieties and needs by clients and groups; it calls for a high degree of self-awareness and self-control. In order to master the controlled, conscious and imaginative use of self, the social work practitioner must possess a high

> degree of maturity and a deep sense of personal and social responsibility." (England, 1986, p.44).

The rise of arts to explore the existential world were of interest to England, as were radical ideas about how social workers should practice as it developed in the 1960s (Gray & Webb, 2008). These went on to be discussed in constructionist approaches related to emancipatory principles (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007; Schubert & Gray, 2015).

Unlike Rapoport, England (1986) thought science attempted to remove social work from its constructionist and creative approaches. He indicated a much stronger defiance against the social sciences believing them to be embedded in imperialism and Eurocentric governance. Criticisms levelled at social work's supposed inability to find a place for itself among the professions were met, he believed, with reductive scientific processes that social workers struggled with and which didn't support their profession. However, England thought that social work itself claimed that it needed a more ordered scientific purpose to become a respected profession. He referred to the recognition in the profession of its "idiosyncratic character" that nonetheless failed to adequately "give it explanation or analysis":

> The result of such an omission in the past has been a failure, by social workers as well as others, adequately to understand this basic character and thus to misconstruct the organisations and institutions which govern social work. (England, 1986, p.47)

There was, England (1986) suggested, an urgent need to recognise that "uncertainty and subjectivity are necessary features of social work" and that instead of attempting to objectify it, there was a need to define its unique and authentic qualities as a creative profession (England, 1986, p.47).

England envisioned social work as a profession focussed on the constructions of experience. For him, the social work self invited further attention in terms of theoretical thinking in order to reclaim it from being “misunderstood” and “undervalued” (England, 1986, p.40). Social workers he argued, draw on and examine the construction of lives created through experience, through ongoing analysis and reflection located in the context of practice. Such activities challenge notions of objectivity and are instead intimately connected with how professionals understand themselves and recognise conscious and unconscious processes of co-construction in their work (England, 1986).

Both Rapoport and England were concerned with the liberational and emancipatory qualities of social work. Both used reason to justify an artistic use of self. However, for Rapoport, relationships were constructed by distancing self and using objective sciences that flowed into the art of practice, whereas for England the artistic process was constructed from inside practice. They each identified a different way of going about using an intuitive self for practice, emphasising the differences in the identity of social work, and also highlighting debates about how, or how far, the artful use of self can or should be scientifically based and what kind of science it should appoint.

England’s notion of social work as art covered a broad spectrum of practice developments drawn from the arts that connects co-construction, post structural and phenomenological approaches to social work. Here, terms such as creativity, imagination and curiosity are problematised in critical theory that overlap with critical reflection and reflexivity discussed as we go through the chapter.

Radical social work and use of self

Radicalism in social work was influenced by values as they developed in the profession during the 1960s and 1970s. Further, it was linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the developments of the profession in social justice and anti-oppressive practice. Feminist discourses were influencing discussions about how science should look inside social work practice where, as a politicised and political profession, social work began challenging positivist and empiricist positions (Oakley, 2000). This raised continued debates for social work about how it should draw on knowledge for its practice that gradually became engulfed by early developments of neoliberalism and the changing nature of social work within government services.

Parton and O'Byrne (2000) noted that after a long period of silence in the 1980s and 1990s a reawakening of questions appeared in new political orders which created uncertainties and freedoms for self in postmodern structures, referred to in the work of Giddens (1991). In contemporary literature creative social work has evolved as a constructionist or what Parton and O'Byrne, (2000) termed a "constructivist" approach. It builds on perspectives associated with social and socially critical practice and has particular resonances in UK political contexts:

> It is argued that modernism's promise to deliver order, certainty and security has been unfulfilled and increasingly it is felt there are no transcendental and universal criteria of truth (science), judgement (ethics) and taste (aesthetics). The overriding belief in reason and rationality is disappearing as there is a collapse of consensus related to any 'grand narratives' (overarching theories or explanations) and their articulation of

> progress, emancipation and perfection and what constitutes the centres of authority and truth (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000 p.19)

For Parton and O'Byrne (2000) the artistic, creative and intuitive use of self were aligned in the "search for meaning" (p.5); the ways that social workers recognise, understand and transact themselves through the use of language, in relationships and in communicating. Here language is key for influencing the way in which practice is interpreted. These signalled that a new social kind of socially critical agenda was needed (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000).

Gray and Webb (2008) discussing the works of England and Rapoport argued that social work practice is art and that this art is transformative. For them it was art that triggers the emotions and feelings of the person engaged in it. The feelings evoked are varied, the art itself may be beautiful, ugly, subversive or even risky, but always provokes a reaction. In a similar way they saw social work practice as a transformative art in which the medium is experience and narrative through which lives are changed. Social workers use self in this art as they integrate their own practice, theoretical knowledge and experience to work with clients. Their discussions examine the importance of an ethic of care and relationships between client and worker that enact the "art" of caring social work self (Gray & Webb, 2008, p.1). They suggest that social work, like art, can become playful and rebellious; hence creativity in this sense should remain un-constrained; that which is experienced within the being of the person(s) taken into the professional realm.

The attuning of art practice allows the practitioner to become a creative tool. Heydt and Sherman (2005) saw self is an instrument of practice in social work:

> Just as artists clean their paint brushes and firefighters inspect their equipment to keep their instruments in perfect working order, every social worker needs to examine

> his or her own attitudes, personal habits and interactional patterns in order to enhance the conscious use of self and become the most effective instrument of change as possible for as many of their clients as possible. (Heydt & Sherman, 2005, p.28)

This seems close to what England (1986) and Gray and Webb (2008) might mean about the practitioner, because it calls for inner tuning of self, a recognition that the worker has at their disposal the tools of the trade.

Gray and Webb (2008) allied themselves with the work of Ferguson (2001), who weaved his understanding of use of self into Giddens's (1991) ideas about the politics of self in modernity as a new form of self for social work that could support people to "find healing and gain mastery over their lives" (Ferguson, 2001, p.42). His view was that social work had been distracted by risk averseness in state work where it was difficult to address "moral questions and existential dilemmas posed by the new choices, new decisions and the strategies to shape meaningful lives and relationships that now face people in their daily lives." (Ferguson, 2001, p.47). As discussed earlier he suggested a new domain for social work in "life politics" (p.41) which created new forms of storytelling and narration, asserting the identity of those who had previously been denied such opportunities.

For Ferguson, autobiographical narratives articulate, through politics and identity, a form of artistry which gives power to unheard or marginalised stories. Emancipatory stories create, "intimate citizenship"; pride in sexual orientation and gender rather than shame, recovering and surviving abuse, rather than being a victim and so on, which assert individual freedoms and make a stand against exploitation and oppression (Ferguson, 2001, p.48). For

social workers, these stories are political narratives which focus on ways to "re-story" previously silenced or marginalised experiences (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis 2007, p.281). This co-locates experiences as use of self in the other, the client's, experience:

> [W]e wish to argue that the use of self in relationship building should continue to be central to a profession such as social work. We will make our case for the ongoing utilization of self in working with service users and, drawing on the mental ill-health experience of one of us, will demonstrate our belief that an understanding of our own frailty can enable us to better support the service users with whom we work. Further, as feminists we share the belief that the political also needs to be personal (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007, p.282)

An example given by Schubert and Gray,(2015) discussed small group social work with women who had experienced domestic violence highlighted in an art installation made for exhibition in a local community park. The project indicated a theoretical possibility for artistic endeavour as an intuitive creative medium for emancipatory social work. It changed the relationship of the women from being labelled as victims to being experienced informers. The work, facilitated by a social worker and an artist, gave the women who shared a common experience opportunity for companionship, engagement and to share ideas in positive form. This is an example of a liberational role which personally political and closely connected to expressions of self for the women involved as well as for the artist and social worker.

Chamberlayne and Smith (2009) explore this connection between expressions of use of self, creativity and social work practice. They argue that social work operates at the borders between art and science and that the focus of this work is intimately connected with notions of self:

> Both social work and art often work at the borders of the sayable, the thinkable, the knowable. Affinities between art and science and social work abound: imagination and creativity enable experiences of trauma, metal illness and everyday confusion to be opened up, recognised, explored and communicated; because is it so very personal, artistic expression can strengthen a sense of self and of self-esteem; it mobilises energy and passion; it can act as an effective means of intercultural dialogue and appreciation. (Chamberayne & Smith, 2009, p.2).

Similarly, Charon (2017) argued for the importance to social workers of sharing narrative practices as a way of locating and examining the contours of a professional self. For these authors, meaning making in collaboration with people was at the heart of social work practice and this was grounded in sharing self through shared narratives. In this process three important duties for social workers interested in the self are identified; the autobiographical map of the client and practitioner, the ability to comprehend intersubjectivity in the relationship, and to deal with the risks entailed in doing so that entail an in depth understanding of what is happening. Doing these things entails a "surrender to meaning-making of the teller rather than be defeated by his or her assumptions or biases." (Burak-Wiess, Lawrence & Mijangos, 2017, p.xi).

Butler Ford and Tregaskis (2007) discussed tools in use of self which enable evidence to be identified regarding the importance of inter-subjective dimensions. Their position located social work as a profession ideally suited to bringing science and art together through explorations of self. As they state:

> We believe that a framework that explores and sanctions the complementarity of evidence obtained through scientific method in association with interpretative or

> constructionist research mutually informs and considerably strengthens both traditions (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007, p.283)

A number of authors examine the threats or restrictions on the creative use of self in social work including Schubert and Gray (2015) who thought the constrained role of the social worker as a bureaucratic agent that had taken them far from their world of artistry and "squeezed out room for creativity" (Schubert and Gray, 2015, p.1351). Without action they inferred that the tools of self would be diminished to behavioural assessments within social work structures, where self becomes unconsciously enacted as a professionalised, rather than professional self.

Stevenson (1998) suggested that political underscoring of social work led to surplus requirements for understanding what was on offer to the intending social worker to apply in their day-to-day work, believing the pressure to be a procedural agent rather than on having creative discretion was overwhelming (Steveson, 1998). These arguments lead to a view that social work has moved away from professionally understood holistic goals towards, "achievement of measurable outcomes in relation to practice" (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007, p.282). They infer self is fractured, rather than fluid or iterative, and infers some difficulties in finding an authentic self for practice (Kondrat, 1999; Ruch, 2000).

The following examines the different ways in which use of self is prompted in practice, the tools and the ways they are used, in reflection, critical reflection and relationship based practice, said to help find and support use of self.

Reflection and use of self

In general terms reflection is a learning tool that attends to the inner beliefs and values of the student or practitioner to examine personal/professional thoughts that result from

experiences. It is said to raise “useable” emotional content for examinations of self in order to become self-aware for practice (Askeland & Fook, 2009; Davys & Beddoe, 2009).

Reflection draws on the similar knowledge sources as theories of self, using psychology, philosophy, social and critical theory. Reflection has developed complex knowledge frameworks with interchangeable terms; reflection, self-reflection, critical reflection, reflexivity, reflectivity and more, for its understanding and learning practice, many of which are associated with learning about self (Moon, 2013). These complicate the simple form of reflection shared in common with everyone, the simple ability to think about (reflect on) a subject, or ourselves, or some problem we are facing. There are different levels of thinking, or reflection, to support some deeper recognition of ourselves that connects us to an understanding or action. In our everyday lives we choose how we reflect on ourselves. In education reflection has become an activity that promotes learning and has an historical association with educational sciences to develop its facilitation.

As a science for education reflection developed two traditions, thinking as objective reasoning on a problem, or examining deeper levels of observation of the self and actions. Dewey (1933) and then Habermas (1971) are key theorists associated with developing reflection for professional practice (in Moon, 2013, p.11). Dewey’s was an empiricist approach that emphasised reasoned objective scientific method to reflect on one's thought processes to affirm belief in one’s observations. In contrast, Habermas used hermeneutics; that is, knowledge connected to perceptions where self, the person, their context, culture, upbringing and their current contexts, plays a role in understanding the world being studied (Zimmerman, 2015).

Both approaches aimed for a clarity to emerge through the process of reflection, that appointed logical and abstract thought. For Habermas (1973) though reflection was said to be contained in the symbols, languages and concepts that legitimised perception of integrated knowledge as an inductive process. Whereas for Dewey, the process was contained within an epistemology of positivist deduction; taking what is understood to be true and applying it to presented problems. One produced practice from evidence, the other produced evidence from practice, which connects us with the ongoing social work question of where knowledge for use of self is derived (England, 1986; Gray & Webb, 2008; Kaushik, 2017; Trevithic, 2017).

Since the 1980s reflection has become an increasingly prominent tool in social work education connected to the work of Donald Schön (1983). Reflection is a process which involves examining the actions of practice, which are messy and complex, by distancing oneself from it in a space to examine those actions. In social work learning and practice this is normally the supervisory process. Reflection on action was said to develop as "knowing in action" (Schön 1983, p. 49). In this way practitioners developed an internal reflective model for practice, akin to developing an internal supervisor, that supported their ability to become more skilled and competent in their next encounters.

Reflection is also discussed as a vehicle that triggers feelings, often involving discomfort or deep seated emotions (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997), often referred to as the "critical incident" (Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 2000; Savaya, Gardner & Stange, 2011). The incident includes anything that catches the attention of the practitioner of any encounter which brought up feelings about their own life events. Critical incidents can come from inside practice and from personal or professional experiences the practitioner believes

will inform their professional lives (Fook & Gardner, 2007). These are drawn from hermeneutic sources as well, denoting relational and more intimate aspects of practice.

Ruch (2000) drew on Van Manen (1977) to identify three sources of reflection; "technical, practical and critical" (P.101). These corresponded to Habermas (1973) who centralised hermeneutic sources, qualitative higher understandings that drew on knowledge evidence and emancipatory processes. Ruch also identified a fourth source called "process knowledge" that brings reflection into closer contact with psychodynamic theory (Ruch,2000, p.101). For Ruch (2000), the examination of relationships enables iterative and fluid dialogue that opens space for connecting autobiographical narratives that legitimates analysis of critical material for understanding the experiences of clients and the ways in which social workers can use self in practice, which are in fact multiple selves:

> As social work students and practitioners we identify with multiple 'I's, multiple subjectivities which impact on our behaviours and responses. Reflective learning in many ways compliments post-modern and feminist thinking which endorses individualism, diversity and difference and seeks to acknowledge the multiple realities which exist, not simply between individuals but within one individual (Ruch, 2000 p,109)

Alongside social work training reflections are said to develop an understanding of the professional self, to become self-aware, and the growing ability for an innate internal monitor; the multiple "I"s of practice. Professional feedback on the performance and examinations of values, attitudes and personal beliefs is commonplace in contemporary social work education (Gardner, 2001). These are complex measurements of ability across technical, practical and critical areas of practice. For example, practitioners may reflect on number of

technical issues such as wearing appropriate clothing and practical reflection such as personal professional boundaries; physical and emotional position of self in relation to the client, whether to comfort or touch a client, awareness of facial features and responses. These are interlinked with more intimate personal aspects and belief systems that are likely to bring up complex material including emotional discomfort and differences in views about what is appropriate. There may be conflicts in self-perspectives resulting from organisational perspectives where views on approaches may be at odds with each other.

Diversities of social work approaches and its agenda within critical postmodern and structural analysis create ethical dilemmas for examining what is appropriate, especially since social workers are required to examine discrimination or oppression in their practice (Clifford & Burke (2005). This complicates the social worker's role in organisations where they are also asked to demonstrate organisational behaviours that may be odds with social work values:

> [T]he tension for educators will always be to manage the modernist perspective of seeking to demonstrate attainment of measurable outcomes and the postmodernist perspective of seeking to innovate and be responsive to changing developments (Taylor & Bogo, 2014, p.1415)

Self is connected with reflection which attempts assessment of wicked competencies such of use of imagination and creativity, or other soft skills such as emotional intelligence and self-awareness, and even team cohesion. These are complex measurements in reflection on professional behaviours which have the potential to become muddled with emotional or even psychodynamic examinations that require high order skills. Knight and Page (2007) noted that using reflection for the assessment of wicked competencies was problematic because of the unconscious and powerful natures of the cultures within which they are being

assessed (Knight & Page, 2007, p.14). Practice that is artistic eschews behavioural approaches, preferring to problematise its work in complex empathic intersubjective and emancipatory weaving, connected also to the deeper and more complex developments of emotional intelligence. There is potential for conflict in reflection without a willingness to examine alternative views or to find unconscious prejudices.

Yip (2006) thought reflection could be destructive and cautioned its use for assessment and measuring practice believing it was a poor tool for professional development (Yip, 2006). Three issues are identified; the first being that workers were likely to draw on comparisons of their performance against that of their peers; secondly, the practitioner was then reliant on ethical management structures not to abuse their trust, and finally, the way that social workers are treated when they find themselves at odds with each other regarding ethical issues is critical to their wellbeing and safety. Importantly, Yip was concerned about the exposure of the self that required them to explore personal information and how this measures up in hierarchical, and even political examinations of their practice. Yip argued that under the wrong conditions, a poorly managed team or in poor working cultures, social workers were vulnerable in reflective process that emphasised performance in ways that could become oppressive rather than analytical (Yip, 2006, p.780).

Reflection has been taken up in many health and social organisations which are hierarchical in nature. Extending Yip's discussion, Gilbert (2001) thought reflective supervision acts a "confessional" that constructs or disciplines professional activity (Gilbert, 2001, p.200). Gilbert likens reflection practice to one that could exercise power and control through complex discourses, proposing that reflective supervision was designed to mould their professionalism (Gilbert, 2001, p.202). In this view practitioners in state mechanisms were

managed through codes and systems creating regulated selves, rather than self-regulating autonomous selves (Gilbert, 2001, p.199).

Ixer (1999, 2012) went further in his criticism of reflection, believing it to be intimately connected to the vulnerabilities and emotions of practice that could negatively impact on individuals when undertaking performance and assessment requirements. He saw reflection as somewhat of a "cult" in mainstream social work education where its use to examine practice could be based on power differentials not easily identified in the political and organisational hierarchies where it is learned and practiced, and where power is exercised (Ixer, 1999,p.513). Ixer writes:

> The danger this poses to vulnerable learners in the assessment relationship, when assessors' own conceptions of reflection may be poorly formed and may not match those of their students, is worryingly likely to compound the imbalance of power between them. It is arguable whether social work programmes should be assessing reflection at all. Until such time as we can state more clearly what it is, we may have to accept that there is no theory of reflection that can be adequately assessed. (Ixer, 1999, p.29)

Further, Ixer (2016) thought reflection failed to account for the discourses of 'art' and for the ontologies of self in postmodern discourses. He noted that Schön (1983) thought inner and outer reflection developed through intuitive thoughts, but he firmly expected reflection to define something that was eventually "knowable". He asserted practitioners were exploring what may remain unknowable, or at the least be difficult to know, in postmodern and post structural eras, making personal/practice struggles emotionally volatile and highly ethically charged whilst undergoing testing professional assessments.

Further, Ixer (2016) posits that reflection as inner and outer epistemological examinations is impossible, not only because of the contradictions in the nature of self, but also because the practitioner is integrated within political discourses that undermine social work values. In this way using reflection conflicts with ethical analysis:

> As a social worker our moral code is developed by social work values. We learn moral language to express intention to act and perform in a certain way as part of this process. However, there may be a conflict between two competing moral imperatives. One is the internal belief of being right as part of western culture and social history. The second is externally driven to compel us to do the right thing as part of the consequential nature of professional codes and values (Ixer, 2012, p.11)

In this view reflection becomes a discourse on conformity, rather than one of professional creativity and moral responsibility.

Ferguson (2018) found untenable environments for practice that he believed now existed in contemporary social work that adopted a "naïve and flawed theory of self" (p424).

> [W]hile we each have a unique persona the 'self' that is being used by social workers is not a unified, coherent entity with a limitless capacity to be reflected upon in the manner suggested by the literature. It is a self that is fractured; a defended self that is principally concerned with protecting itself from unbearable levels of anxiety (Ferguson, 2018, p.418)

He was referring here to the sometimes-violent realities that take place in practice where more technical aspects of contemporary organisations were not able to contain anxieties for

social workers, suggesting the need for better therapeutic spaces and psychodynamic models for examining practice.

Adamowich et al (2014) found participants expressed a “disjunct” between their personal experiences and the professional behaviours that were expected of them (p.140). These were seen as a denial of the contributions of self where, “oppression demands change but the status quo requires unreflecting and unquestioning docile bodies” (Adamowich et al, 2014, p.140). Similarly, Butler, Ford & Tragaskis (2007) discussed the struggle of reconciling personal and professional identities which they saw as a source of tension in modern social work technocratic contexts (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007, p.281). Further, Beddoe (2019) believed that neoliberalism and global neo-right radicalism were endangering populations which she believed legitimised “short-sighted and cruel policies of exclusion”. She suggested a shift from reflective practice that she saw evading the questions of social work’s new age which demands neutrality and suggested a reawakening of radical and political awareness. (Beddoe, 2019, p.106).

Reflective practice is part of the acculturation of social workers, or even induction, which can be used to examine professional behaviours and cognitive abilities. The issues of power in assessment and education are writ large in critiques set out in the previous section that are believed to subvert reflection (Gilbert, 2001; Ixer, 1999, 2012, 2016; Yip, 2006). The progression from demonstrating behaviours in professional competencies to an examination of values and beliefs that question practice are not straight forward, since the former presumes neutral professional learning and the latter calls for complex critiques that may challenge their professional learning. Such involves also discussions about self; leanings, belief systems, upbringing, and culture, all of which influence perspectives. Further, it is possible to

reflect on many things that do not necessarily have to be related to self, which implies reflection on use of self would need to be explicit in the reflection encounter.

Critical reflection

In social work the term critical reflection is commonly used to intentionally connect the act of personal introspection and analysis with broader critical social analysis. Critical reflection is contested in the literature, just as use of self is, with contributions from across the multi-disciplines of practice in health, social research, critical theory and socio-political theory (Fook, White & Gardner, 2006).

Fook (1999) suggested reflection was a process of orthodox thinking, whereas critical reflection generated new knowledge from self-reflection in an examination of constructed relations of power that not only analyses but resists structural limits on thinking (Fook, 1999 p.202). In contrast to reflection critical reflection interrogates the professional and the personal asking students and practitioners to examine assumptions in the broader contexts of political landscapes. These are set out in the literature as ways to merge personal accounts, cognitive and emotional aspects of practice with an examination of structures (Askeland & Fook, 2009; Fook, White & Gardner, 2006; Gardner, 2014; Kondrat, 1999; Ryan, Hawkins & Fook, 2000).

According to Fook (2006, 2009) critical reflection problematises the practitioner's autobiographical material with the client's and the client's systems, through systematic reflective processes designed to understand the structural relations of practice. It is also related to the co-constructed, intuitive self discussed earlier (England, 1986; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000). Fook and Gardner discuss this further:

> It becomes important to value intuitive moments in order to pinpoint the assumptions that may be involved and subject them to scrutiny. Artistry may be involved in the creative way different elements of professional knowledge may be combined to suit a unique situation or in the way new methods may be created to address a new problem (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p.25)

It becomes then an inductive process that creates knowledge from practice acknowledging cognitive, structural and emotional ways that meanings are interpreted (Fook & Gardner, 2007)

Critical reflection incorporates positionality within personal/professional constructs (Peas & Fook, 1999; Ferguson, 2001). It takes account of inter-subjective personal-political domains of critical theory, anti-oppressive practice and ethics (Kondrat, 1999; Ruch, 2000; Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007). Critical reflection extends into analysis of social justice and liberation politics to re-awaken emancipatory roles in social work. As a result, the inter-actions problematize examination, and support an understanding of complex life realms.

Critical reflection is also discussed as a form of instrumental self that relies on humanistic and relational theories as well as structural ones, seen as useful for becoming self-aware and developing use of self (Kondrat, 1999; Ruch, 2000). Self-reflection, for example, recognises the potential of unconscious material, which includes analysis of self within both a constructed and psychological realm believed to be part of the critically reflective process (Fook, 1991; Ruch, 2000). Kondrat (1999) created levels of reflection which flowed from reflection processes through to critical reflection and then as reflexivity and critical reflectivity, that she believed linked self to critical theory as well as reflexive analysis, seen as pivotal to ways in which social workers become self-aware. Reflexivity is said to connect the

inner and outer worlds of the social worker, which means it is intimately connected to furthering personal/professional links in social work practice.

Both Kondrat (1999) and Ferguson (2001) associated critical theory with a new kind of use of self in social work drawing on Giddens's (1991) "emancipatory politics", (Kondrat, 1999, p.460) that potentially reconciles in life politics and individualisation:

> At the heart of late-modern life politics, it is argued, is a new relationship between the personal and the political, expertise and lay people, in which social work increasingly takes the form of being a methodology of 'life planning' for late-modern citizens (Ferguson, 2001, p.41)

The above ideas also inform and are informed by social work and critical theory (Parton & O'Byrne, 2014; D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007). They also connect critical reflection to epistemologies that link self with broader social justice oriented practice in reflexive practice, discussed next (Askeland & Fook, 2009; D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007; Gardner, 2001, 2014; Kondrat, 1999).

Critical reflection has gone on to encapsulate a spectrum of terminologies examined across structural analyses of theoretical ideas, reflexive practice and action learning (Meihls & Moffatt, 2000). Examples also include examining institutional harms that negatively affect the clients, and the impact of shared experiences, difference or privilege (Bender, Negi & Fowler, 2010; Leigh, 2014; Powell, 2011; Rajan-Rankin, 2014). It has been noted that critical reflection is term used interchangeably and indiscriminately with reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity and the rise of new terms such as reflectivity and critical reflectivity (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez; Fook, White & Gardner, 2006 Ixer, 2016). The lexicon of reflection remains fluid in these accounts, and no consensus on distinct and clear definitions

exists. However, Askeland and Fook (2009) believe these are necessarily competing and demanding concerns of a new and flexible discipline which should not call for uniformity.

Reflexivity

The word reflexivity has been used frequently in this section on reflection. But like reflection there are questions about its use and meaning. Reflexivity flows from qualitative research traditions which consider the position of the researcher in the relations of the research but has been associated with social work as an activity that examines a deeper acknowledgement of self in practice (Fook, 1999). It overlaps in the literature with reflection and critical reflection discussed as activities that are self-reflexive (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007). Reflexivity, like critical reflection examines the co-constructions and constructions of self, relationships and values, but is concerned also with the depth of inter-subjectivities that attempts to deconstruct the personal and professional with "sensitivity to the management of power in the relationship" (Butler, Ford & Tregaskis, 2007, p.218). Reflexivity is also thought to synthesise constructive and critical approaches to practice (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007, p.74)

D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez found three complex variations of reflexivity that indicate the intertwined self in the helping processes. The first variation is contained in theories of self in modernity that hinge on Giddens's structuration theory (Giddens, 1990). As already discussed this notion identifies new interpretations of self that redefine it as "self-defining processes" (Elliott, 2001, p.37) offered by new individual freedoms in postmodernity where social worker are reappointed as helpers to support people in "life planning" (Ferguson, 2001, p.41). The second variation problematises taken-for-granted assumptions of practice and examines, "relations of power" that are "complicit in knowledge creation in

social work practice" (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007, p.78). This variation was adopted from qualitative research, but also reframes practice as emancipatory, similar to those found in constructive social work. The third variation is a reflexive understanding of the emotionality of practice that is tacit, a recognition of the plasticity of emotions and how they play out in practice. This involves the development of empathy and emotional intelligence (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2006, p.86). Here the reflexive self of the social worker is said to be involved and crucial, rather than objective and removed (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2006).

Reflexive practice was seen to connect various elements of constructive social work, relationship practice and critical reflection that require complex examinations of self to become self-aware. These are abstract notions that develop a "self perspective" for practice contained in the individual worker. In post structural analyses reflexivity connects self with psychologies of self, where it is argued that the personal histories of both the client and the practitioner are critical to ensure emotional safety. Reflexivity takes account of social and personal positionalities of clients and practitioners and the importance of discursive, dialogical, and relational aspects in an analysis, but also utilises critical theory to examine constructions including self-examination.

An example demonstrates connections to reflection, critical reflection and the multiple selves that make up professional practice. Lafrenière (2007) used reflexivity to examine the integration of her career as a social worker alongside her changing personal identities, as a student, mother and professional, which required her to undertake what she referred to as "reflexive ethnography." (Lafrenière, 2007, p.146). This is an ethnography of self in practice, understood as personal inner examination of subjective thoughts on work and

life experiences connected to social identity. These can be shared or written down in personal diaries that support an in-depth recognition of self in relation to the client and their circumstances (De Montigny, 1995; Riemann, 2005). In this respect reflexivity is said to align with anti-oppressive practice and critical theory, because it includes an examination of one's own experience of privilege and/or deeply rooted oppression, contained inside ourselves and others to challenge and seek change, which is core to the social work identity (Mandell, 2007; Bender, Negi & Fowler, 2010).

However, D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez (2007) pointed out that reflexivity for social work is in its theoretical infancy. The three variations of theory they found indicated potential "richness" but also "confusion" in the approaches available to social workers (p.84). There were also various foci for reflexivity across disciplines in social research sciences that were only in early discussion as a social work concept.

Relationship based practice and use of self.

Social work is discussed as emotional labour which indicates practitioners will experience a range of emotionally demanding relationships likely to put them in touch with feelings of empathy, sadness, anger or fear for themselves and for others (Howe, 2008). The service user is also likely to have a range of expectations and assumptions that the social worker may or may not be able to fulfil. The coming together of participants in social work intervention inevitably lead to them engaging in relationships. The qualities of those relationships are considered to be central for both effective outcomes and process; supporting helpful work and containing trauma and anxiety.

Ruch, Turney and Ward (2010) offered three conceptual frameworks for examining relationships; psychoanalytic frameworks, systems theory and attachment theory. These

support the examination of deep-seated emotions that arise from trauma and manifest in social work relationships with service users. In this view relationships are examined in the ecosystems that surround them, their families, communities and formative professionals in the wider frameworks they come into contact with as a result of intervention (Ruch, Turney & Ward, 2010). Use of self is said to sit at the heart of relationship-based practice to fulfil satisfying interventions (Ward, 2010). These views would seem to suggest self-awareness is a precursor to finding a relational self for practice.

Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2008) thought the relationship was the central function of continuous co-creation of self and other selves as it progressed. In the service of others understanding one's own personality and what one is bringing of their personal qualities was seen as central to developing a helpful professional relationship. Examination is also a function of supervision which creates a "relational matrix" of whole systems and between all of those involved (Ganzer and Ornstein, 2004, p434).

Murphy, Duggan and Joseph (2012) suggested there were a variety of psychodynamic approaches referred to in relationship-based practice, but thought social work leaned towards person-centred therapies in the field of counselling and psychotherapy, principally because of its person-centred approaches (Murphy, Duggan & Joseph, 2012, p.3). They noted that person-centred approaches have an "actualising tendency", a feature that works towards service user fulfilment, but which requires ideal or optimum social environmental factor. Whilst the relationships in this view support empathy and positive regard, self-actualising was seen as problematic in protection and risk management functions. Further, the technocratic nature of social work structures impeded person-centred approaches, which require

particular principled approaches, such as positive regard and non-directive approaches (Murphy, Duggan & Joseph, 2012, p.7).

Evidence from research on service user experiences suggested that relationship-based practice has a positive impact across a range of traumas, including risk and protection issues (Mason, 2012; Spratt & Callan, 2004). There were also indications that although social workers recognised the impact of forming good relationships, they felt they did not have time to do so (Mason, 2012, p.370). The importance of having skills in approaching service user relationships is a key element of the relational approach; such as building trust, being open and honest about the parameters of practice, being reliable and creating shared goals. These are connected to finding an authentic self for practice which is a complex emotional task of human interaction (Ruch, 2005; 2010).

Is there a social work use of self?

What is meant by a social work use of self and, as implied by the literature, is there a blended personal professional personality that enacts it? The literature demonstrated that self is invested in active participation in professional behaviours, psychological examination, and intuitive, creative and ethical work. It is also emotional labour, implying dynamically skilled, responsive and emotionally intelligent approaches, seen as conceptually valid in therapeutic approaches and relationship-based practice. Ethics take place in structural relations of practice that include political oppressions (Clifford & Burke, 2005). In ethical practice use of self is morally defined within social work values and ethics. Clifford and Burke (2008) remind us that virtues cannot be assumed, since they are framed within the social worker's personal context; their upbringing, education and culture.

It is certain that the individual coming into social work will be asked to invest their personality and identity in their education and in their social work processes. They will be presented with opportunities of varying types and qualities for examining their own experiences and beliefs as part of the process to become self-aware. How they then use themselves will also be governed within acceptable personal professional boundaries, behaviours, communication skills and ethical analysis examined through in supervision and in required professional competencies. There will also be attempts to develop and examine soft skills of practice that are harder to identify. Use of self is one such skill and, as set out in this chapter, becomes complicated as an integration and evaluation of practice.

Conceptual Framework

This chapter identified the conceptual frameworks for a use of self. In essence, becoming aware of self is said to support a blending of personal and professional experiences for use of self in practice. These are intimate relationships which include private, public and personal personas related to structural, biographical and political discursive that impact on practice to become critically conscious. (Adamovich et al, 2014; Kondrat, 1999). Bringing the three strands of political, psychological and social together that were discussed in all three of the previous chapters indicates a broad range of ethical study for use of self, implying they should be pulled together as an examination of the "practice self" (Mandell, 2007).

It has been variously argued that the contexts of use of self; its instrumentality within social work, its location as a marker of professional identity, has deleteriously been taken at face value (England, 1986; Mandell, 2007; Kaushik, 2017). However as we have seen, self as it might be understood for social work is beleaguered by concepts that create many notions of self for social work, and many relatively unrefined classifications of self in requirements,

standards and literature that overlap sometimes usefully and sometimes in contradiction with each other; the skilled self, the appropriately behaved self, the reflective self, the reflexive self, the creative self, the professional self, the emotionally intelligent self, and then the self of practice, self-reflection, self-disclosure, self-care, practice wisdom and so forth. The list goes on as the imaginative, creative intuitive and even magic self (Dewayne, 2006). Further, the explanation of Gidden's insecure self, translated into new labour strategies for social work imply new forms of self in individual self mastery of the insecure self (Ferguson, 2001).

Reflection was suggested to be somewhat flawed for a complete understanding of use of self because of the complexities of organisational constraints, its association with acculturation and hegemony, and the overwhelming anxieties of contemporary social work practice. Authors were wary for example of reflection which they saw as being too caught up in assessment and performance cultures that threaten social work identity (Ferguson, 2018; Ixer, 1999, 2010, 2017; Yip, 2006). The political technocratic aspects of social work have been discussed in previous chapters and in this one, as a call to abandon reflective practice and work within virtue ethics and critical consciousness realms (Gray & Webb, 2008; Schubert & Gray, 2015).

Reflection remains a central tool used for demonstrating practice. How far it is able to measure use of self is unknown. The limited scope of reflection is also critiqued in what were seen as fluid, complex new disciplines of critical reflection and reflexivity. Nevertheless, for all its discussed faults, reflection was presented as a way of pulling together elements of psychodynamic and structural examinations as use of self in contemporary practice (Kondrat, 1999, Ruch, 2000).

The literature creates myriads of interpretations of self and whether use of self in social work is shaped by determinants that do justice to its emancipatory role. How self can be synthesised usefully for practice is examined in constructive social work, but even though creativity and imagination can be brought to bear it is unknown how these may be constrained by technocratic and behavioural professional demands. The literature and policy review demonstrated there were difficulties for determining what use of self is. Nonetheless it has been embedded historically in social work practice and now sits as a requirement in social work education and development in a newly created Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) in England. As such much more evidence is needed from professionals themselves about what use of self means to them and how they construct it in their practice.

CHAPTER 5:

Methodology

This chapter discusses the process of setting up a qualitative research project that explored concepts of use of self in social work with social work professionals. Procedures were underpinned by methodologies that determined appropriate research tools and provided a framework for presenting material extracted from interviews and focus groups. The methods were generated through ethical research protocols reported here. I write in the first person in the methodology in order to make my epistemological position clear and have set out in the introduction my connection to social work and social work values as a qualified social worker. These influenced my perceptions of use of self.

Identifying the research problem

Social workers process their use of self in institutions that manage their education, professional development and supervision of their practice once they are qualified. Studentships take place in undergraduate and post graduate educational establishments, and practice takes place in local government, voluntary sector, health, and social care organisations that subsequently employ them. The purpose of the research undertaken with groups of professionals in social work practice was to clarify descriptions and inconsistencies in the application of use of self with reference to policy contexts and recent reforms of social work and social work education in the UK. It focussed on a new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) introduced in England.

The literature in the previous chapters demonstrated there were varied conceptual frameworks that inform knowledge of self and the ways these are interpreted for use of self as it is applied to practice (Gordon & Dunworth 2017, Trevithick, 2017; Butler, Ford &

Tregaskis, 2007). It was said to be context bound, practiced in different ways and varying in prominence as an aspect of practice according to times and eras (Adamovich et al, 2014; Barnard, 2012). Kaushik (2017) saw it an elusive tool, consistently raised as an important aspect of practice, yet with little evidence about what kind of self is expected to be applied to it. On examination, there was very little research that evaluated how use of self made contributions in the everyday lives of professionals or how regulatory and knowledge frameworks fitted their understanding of it (Jacobson, 2001; Reupert, 2007).

In the UK a new capabilities framework introduced since 2010 requires social workers to develop a "skilled use of self" from qualified to advanced levels, progressing to "model the sophisticated use of self" at strategic level (BASW, 2018, Domain 1, Professionalism, ,p.47,53,60). Since its prominence had been raised in the new framework, it seemed a pertinent time to ask practitioners their understanding of use of self in social work and what kind of self might be expected.

Aim of the study

The practice of research is often located in disciplines that already contain dense theoretical information. Nonetheless a paucity of material is detected in subject knowledge around use of self for social work. In this research descriptions of use of self were opaque and interpreted in broad conceptualisations, with little practice-based knowledge for informing standards. The best means of improving knowledge appeared to be to ask professionals themselves how they experienced and understood use of self. I aimed for research that would provide an in-depth analysis that gave experienced professionals ample opportunities to explore a complex topic

I aimed to create a conversational space with professionals that shed light on their perceptions of use of self to report in a thesis. The overall aim was to examine how use of self was understood in regulation, knowledge and practice by exploring it with experienced practitioners from a range of social work histories and disciplines in English social work structures.

Purpose of study

The overall purpose was to make a contribution to knowledge that was useful for professional development and organisational learning (Shaw & Gould, 2001; Shaw & Holland, 2014).

Research questions

In order to inform the purposes and aims of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do social workers understand use of self as an aspect of their professional practice in modern social work?
2. How do social worker professionals interpret, use and sustain use of self?
3. How is professional knowledge about use of self understood?
4. How does social work policy impact on requirements and standards for use of self?

Justification of research method

Research is a tool for refining knowledge (Australian Research Council, 2009). It synthesises information from theoretical material on a subject to centralise a theme for study. An examination of the literature demonstrated a misalignment between practice, knowledge and policy for use of self. The research sought to understand the subject through in-depth conversations with social work practitioners in everyday practice.

There are numerous debates about the relevance of qualitative research in the professions, none more so than in social work where pluralisms regarding hard and soft sciences polarise practice debates. Social work knowledge is more likely to be constructed within inter-subjective interpretation and lend themselves to qualitative approaches in research. Doubts can be expressed about the merits of such research and its generalisability, especially to policy making audiences. Because of this Whitehead and McNiff (2006) argued that research about social work deters policy action. Lewig, Scott, Holzer, Arney, Humphreys & Bromfield (2010) noted there were three distinct difficulties; time lapses in communication between researchers and policy makers, how research is presented for professional purposes, and competing priorities in professional and policy making cultures.

It is suggested that obstacles to research communication can be overcome by linking researchers with decision makers through policy think tanks and knowledge forums, among other alignment activities to effect more useful communications. In the UK, there have been recurrent policy reviews of social work within competing political ideologies examining what social work is and what social workers should be able to do, some led by the profession and others by political parties with varying input and ideologies. As discussed in the policy review these have caused tense relationships between the profession and governments making it difficult for the profession's voice to be heard (Ferguson, 2004). There seem to be no answers to the conundrum other than a continuation of attempts to adjust relationships, justify professional aims and build trust.

I was interested in exploring new ideas about the self with practitioners, not least because the self suggested by Giddens (1991) in contemporary politics appeared to have complicated social work values. Giddens presents a double-edged sword in the contemporary

understanding of 'self' for the profession; as a possible source of life mastery and freedoms, but also, as a self with the potential to experience deep insecurity. Neoliberalism and New Labour have impacted on social welfare politics in ways that strike at the heart of ideas about self. As discussed, Giddens notion of self in new social orders is invested as risk in the person rather than in the state. I was interested in exploring how practitioners viewed self as an aspect of practice in contemporary social work organisations and how they located self in the profession. Qualitative research seemed natural for opening up conversations at a deeper level to try and ascertain what all of these ideas about self and use of self meant to those in practice.

Methodological considerations

Methodology maps the way the project was designed with my supervisors and other experts, but in the end it becomes a map of one's own where I took full responsibility for the choices I made in constructing and interpreting information during the research. As an educator and academic who had recently completed an MA, I was aware of the pitfalls in research projects. This was taken into account when trying to examine the many and varied methodologies and methods. The research contributes to academic disciplines where some tensions have been noted in literature regarding the value of the evidence they contribute in the professions they were meant to serve. In their social policy research, for example, Thomas and Harden (2008) noted strong contestations about what qualitative research is, and its ability to provide objective evidence for policy:

> Qualitative research, it is often proposed, is not generalisable and is specific to a particular context, time and group of participants. Thus, in bringing such research

> together, reviewers are open to the charge that they de-contextualise findings and wrongly assume that these are commensurable (Thomas & Harden, 2008, p.45)

Having conducted qualitative research though, they found a strong case for respecting the context and complexity of peoples experiences. They further suggested that ways should be found to bring findings together in a digestible form for policy makers. to be valuable for informing policy and practice believing ways should be found to bring findings together in a digestible form.

Qualitative research confronts researchers with a complex array of theoretical paradigms. I was easily lost in mazes of information that attempted to justify the markers regarded as suited to achieving a sense of authenticity; one that remained true to the stories of participants and examined the subject reliably. The only way to confront hazards was to try to understand them and then to justify actions. Balancing interpretation and evidence was tricky and involved judgement; making decisions about what ideas were important and exploring their relationships with knowledge.

Morse (2009) notes that qualitative research is not just a matter of producing audit trails or quantitative material from qualitative data, but of examining depth and meaning. Angen (2000) discussed the somewhat laboured debates regarding the superiority of one or another qualitative approaches finding it was far more important to be true to the subject and attempt to do justice to material than to find an ultimate recipe for efforts involved (Angen, 2000, p.379).

The qualitative researcher's journey takes place on rocky terrain, especially so for myself as a researcher also immersed in the profession. In this case my commitment as a professional social worker examining inter-subjectivity and constructivism within interpretive

procedures included insider knowledge, all of which complicate recognitions (Hesse-Biber,2014; Oakley, 2000). A key element of qualitative research is the continual evaluation of how individual life experiences and researcher experiences inform each other, containing complex subject object elements. I was influenced to carry out research in a particular way and this contained conscious and unconscious actions. I had to do my best to acknowledge the epistemology and to explain what approaches I had taken, and why I thought they were considered appropriate.

In order to ensure the research was transparent in its method and analysis I took account of how procedures were applied in research ethics. Mantzoukas (2004) recommended the adoption of an epistemology that validated shared interests and values in the research, including personal reflections and the reasons for making decisions in the research design. These led theories of knowledge I used to underpin the methods and techniques for gathering data for evidence (Naples & Gurr, 2014).

Epistemology

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest the main pre-requisites for designing a research project is to examine its epistemological stance. In this case my professional values and personal experiences of social work influenced the methodology. Ezzy (2000) pointed out that researchers engage in political as well as philosophical debates and are required to moderate but not deny their relationship to the material.

Social workers are required to challenge structures and systems when necessary in order to make well-grounded ethical judgements. I am committed to Global standards which emphasise human rights and social justice. As a professional social worker, I am aligned to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). I am also a registered UK social worker

signed to Standards of Proficiency (SoPs) with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) and the British Association of Social Workers Codes of Ethics (BASW). These are also frameworks I am investigating.

My epistemological stance is therefore central because it contains some biases in its location between neoliberal and social evaluations of social work, recognised in the literature as being at odds with each other. Studying use of self as it is understood in social work was complex for me as a researcher because, clearly, I use myself in different aspects of my life and work, as well as in my profession, and in this research. A requirement to use myself as a social worker, contained in the new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) was complicated for me to understand, so I wondered how others who were professionally qualified might understand it. With this in mind I set out to have professional conversations with peers.

As a person I identify the different aspects of myself as a woman, a mother, a social worker, a sociologist, an educator, wife and a feminist, among so many other conscious and unconscious, private, personal and public feelings and views that influenced my epistemological standpoint. As a sociologist and a feminist with an interest in research, my conscious standpoint comes from views about the way in which knowledge is constructed.

Feminist perspectives and sociological perspectives have come to challenge empiricist and positivistic approaches in social sciences. Social researchers, particularly women, challenged science that purported to be objective and true as they discovered more about assumptive empiricisms of masculine bias and Eurocentric imperialism (Scott, 1991, p.786). Being a feminist though doesn't require me to ignore embedded and successful research

models regardless of their origins. What matters is the perspective and the movement towards authenticity (Hesse-Biber, 2014).

I was interested in feminist standpoint theory developed in the work of Harding (1995) because of the way in which it situates women's experiences at the heart of knowledge. For Harding the examination of women in health and care cultures provided a platform from which to problematise social science, and for women to re-examine empiricist knowledge to make it more inclusive. The shift in knowledge centralises the viewer's standpoint to validate the researcher and the subjects of the research in order to create new perspectives from which to examine practices. This doesn't mean research must be unorthodox, simply that it recognises synergy and new energy for interpretation that comes other than from privileged standpoints. I conducted an orthodox qualitative research project, but my standpoint came from who I am and my attempts at inclusivity and the incorporation of social work values.

Harding (1995) noted that objectivity does a disservice to women, people of difference and service users, where despite its attempt at measuring, reducing and replicating it tends to produce little more than assertions of competitive knowledge. Naples and Gurr (2014) note that utilising well examined research tools in the social sciences serves as a basis for rigour.

Despite her own reservations, Harding went on to agree that objectivity is itself adaptable in its "sprawling" potential for research because of the way in which it has been subverted in meaning, such as object-subject relations in feminist poststructuralist thinking (Harding, 1995, p.332). Research may be considered flawed, but regardless, it maintains currency when used in democracies for negotiating evidence and making changes to systems. The research presented for this thesis acknowledges the difficulties objective and subjective

reasoning caused in analysing material. I aimed at explanations that I hoped would be understood by the institutions where social work is practiced, and to find ways to use findings to reason, debate and challenge knowledge.

It was not possible, or desirable to separate conversations or any personal/professional stories that might unfold in discussions about use of self from its knowledge base or its regulatory features. In this sense the participants were well aware of the frameworks that informed their work and were cognizant of use of self as an aspect of social work. Further, I was aware that as a researcher it was not possible to cut myself off from my own experience of discussing use of self, because I was also a qualified social worker with similar experiences in the field to those who were the participants. However, the research was directed towards establishing work that would be able to, "listen to and respect the voice and experience – the truth – of other people" (Ezzy, 2002 p. 9).

The pursuit of research is to make an impact on the world for which it was intended. For me, this was not just in the research, although the pursuit in itself brings about its own learning to oneself as a researcher and possibly to participants, but to provide knowledge in the world of practice and academia. These are arenas that supported me to bring issues to the attention of others and to have the power to alter things, which might be as simple as shifts in my own learning, delivery of results in articles or at conferences, or at a macro level to influence policy. Practice evolution happens through the research processes where there are discussions between people involved and dissemination of findings to be explored with other academics, policy makers and social workforces. In this case I had the privilege of talking to experienced practitioners in interviews and focus groups which, I hope, enhanced all our learning and knowledge.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity represented an ongoing quality that was intimately woven with theory and the way in which material is interpreted. Qualitative research seeks to peel back layers of content alongside an analysis which acknowledges complex inter-subjectivity for producing strong argument. Reflexivity is a legitimate activity explained as paying attention to details, constructs and views when carrying out disciplined work (Prosbt, 2015):

> The term "reflexive" is used to denote actions that direct attention back to the self and foster a circular relationship between subject and object. Nonreflexive actions, in contrast, are those that distinguish subject from object, cause from effect, in a linear or temporal relationship (p.37).

Reflexivity is practiced through processes that ask 'feeling' questions, such as, 'what was that like?', 'how has that influenced me?' and, 'how has my interpretation been influenced by my world view?' The researcher attends to knowledge and feelings involving self-questioning. In other words, continuously probing and problematizing issues whilst keeping an eye to the pragmatics of investigations.

Meaning is derived from patterns in data that move between the researcher's and the participant's perspectives to find stories, analogy, metaphors and models that sharpen focus for the purpose of understanding. Ezzy (2002) described how imagination is inter-woven in qualitative investigation as a kind of "interpretive dance" (p.26). The dance requires critical appraisal discussed by Padgett (2016) as skills that support emotionally intelligent and aware practice for examining inter-subjectivity and wider social constructs. Because of my relationship with the subject, I moved between my own perspectives and the perspectives presented others in the collected material. The technical procedures acted as tools to support

my interpretation and were not the interpretation itself. I drew Ideas for research authenticity from my social work ethical perspectives that also utilised feminism and symbolic interactionism. These are disciplines that influence modern qualitative methods (Ezzy 2000). In a sense reflexivity employs challenging and questioning techniques akin to social work. For example, in addressing complex post-structural issues and political interferences.

The habitual practice of making notes, voice memos and word searches in the nvivo project aided my discussions with supervisors and other professionals outside of the research activities. These helped me to make sense of what I was hearing, reading and observing. They also allowed me to examine any strong views and feelings from my involvement in social work over many years. I pondered the best location for myself as a researcher. Was it better to have insider knowledge or to be a complete outsider? I don't think there is correct answer to these questions. My social work experience was certainly a useful shortcut in recognising the regulatory frameworks colleagues discussed with me, but these also provided potential pitfalls in recognising subjective and objective relationships to the subject. All of the above activities were combined with peer conversations with academics, supervision, workshops and personal learning that contributed to contemplative reflection as the research process progressed.

I implicitly made use of a range of influences that came to the surface through reflexive practice. As such, my agency was already contained within the subject of use of self. As in social research, social workers ask questions of themselves when making decisions by bringing together knowledge and self-knowledge as well as their own experiences, history and culture in relation to their clients. These are akin to my understanding of use of self and were of concern to me as a researcher, what parallels and differences could be detected?

How strongly objective could my interpretations be? I identified with participants, characterised by shared corresponding roles and experiences. In this respect I was likely to be engaged in co-creating meaning (Latham, 2014). Reflexivity was an important undertaking, charting reasons for taking particular journeys in the design and subsequent collection and analysis of data.

Methods

Practical means of gathering data were appointed in a qualitative research project. All research involves similar processes that include identifying an issue, setting aims and procedures, referencing the literature, gathering data and generating evidence from validated material (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Generated data is interpreted to find meaning (Ezzy, 2002; Silver & Lewins, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008 p. 23). At the end of the project the researcher lays claim to new knowledge and disseminates the results (Flick & Gibbs, 2007; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Table 2 outlines the actions taken in the project:

Table 2 Actions taken in the research project

Interpretive Frameworks applied in the project	**Actions taken by researcher**
Ontological - Assumptions about what is real (Carter and Little, 2007)	• Examination of use of self in regulatory frameworks • Examination of research and literature • Verification of transcripts by participants • Inter-coder reliability utilising and triangulation • Use of Nvivo (CADQAS)
Epistemology - influences project design, the role of derived knowledge and how it will be presented (Carter and Little, 2007)	• Examination of researcher's professional knowledge and experience in use of self social work. • Use of reflexivity • Verification methods with knowledgeable experienced professionals to measure veracity • Acknowledgement of researcher's stances and professional embeddedness
Axiology – the role of values, or the elements that have value (Creswell, 2013)	• Examination of personal/professional relationships and 'agency' in use of self. • Utilising regulation and standards that guide use of self as a framework for analysing data • Exploration of professional perspectives to explore the above two aspects
Critical theory – examination of social structures (Creswell, 2013)	• use of social science methods to critically analyse data within social conditions and cultures • Examining contexts in which use of self is practiced
Analytical abduction (Silver and Lewins 2014) **Thematic Analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Maney, 2011)**	• Creating coding schemas in Nvivo (CAQDAS) • Generating themes

I was cognizant of social work agendas for generating useful knowledge for practice. I wanted to draw attention to issues in knowledge, standards and contexts that examined professionals' experiences, which I believed required a qualitative approach. I focussed on examining how experienced social work professionals linked their understanding of use of self

with practice, practice standards and knowledge frameworks. Silver and Lewins (2014) noted that qualitative studies are strategized within fluid a priori frameworks. That is, they are not merely abstracted from data but include embedded knowledge that require further activities to build information from a range of sources. In the first stage of the study I undertook literature and policy reviews that were reported in the previous chapters. The process of the research is reported in the methodology and underpin the research design.

Literature search

Methods appointed for the review included searches in library data bases and UK Government websites. Literature searches included the EBSCO MegaFile Premier and Proquest under the social work, sociology, politics and international relations subject titled databases. Research was also conducted in Google Scholar and Google search engines. Searches were made for books and articles on use of self in social, psychological and social psychology texts alongside related topics, such as relational practice, self-awareness, social work ethics and values and service user experience. Books and articles that discussed definitions of self from psychological, sociological, philosophical and political perspectives were chosen to examine the broad definitions of self in historical and contemporary milieu. The politicisation of the profession was also central to searches for material, since this has heavily impacted on the perceptions of social work and was relevant to the understanding the self of practice in neoliberal and new labour contexts.

Website data base searches were made of social work regulation including the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW). UK Social work and social work education reviews and Knowledge and Skills Statements for adults and children were found on government Department for Education website databases. The Professional Capabilities

Framework was on the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) website downloadable as a PDF. The Standards of Proficiency for Social Work were found on the Health and Professional Care Council website. The Professional Capabilities Framework refers to English requirements only, with different vocational frameworks in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The examination in the thesis was limited to English requirements in the PCF for use of self measured against the IFSW standards for its education and practice. The PCF was the only competency framework in UK regulation contexts that explicitly focussed on use of self and self-awareness language.

Keywords for searches in library data bases included social work, self, use of self, self-awareness, practice education, reflection and supervision. Findings from articles contributed to a continuous process of refining search terms. Other articles were identified though snowballing references. Further searches located classic texts in use of self that were more than 20 years old. Prior to carrying out the research I was already aware of books that examined use of self that were incorporated into the literature review. Searches were conducted throughout the period of the thesis with newer articles identified in the final year to submission that were of significance to the study. A standardised endnote tool was used for building references and resources.

Research method

Qualitative research collects raw data that lies beneath the surface of everyday realities to identify patterns and causal connections (Shaw & Gould, 2001). Actions undertaken, such as reviewing the literature and examining knowledge and regulation in use of self identified gaps in understanding about the topic. Gummesson (2006) noted that research projects are concerned with “fuzzy phenomena”, where research design should capture a “multitude of

factors." Useful in the pursuit of knowledge about a subject (p. 167). The literature and policy reviews demonstrated use of self was a complex subject in social work with competing recognitions and understanding, which lent itself to a project to 'find out' more about how it was understood by those in practice.

Qualitative approaches are iterative, requiring the researcher to go over the data many times in order to develop a deep understanding of material gathered in the research (Silver & Lewins, 2014; Ezzy, 2002). Importantly they create inferences from data that abduct, that is, find reasonable explanations meanings and applications from sourced material and from research data to synthesise information. The research was conducted in a continuous flow of writing and understanding, progressing to develop an in-depth knowledge of the subject. Having explored the territory, I designed a research framework to explore the topic with professionals in the field.

Research design

The research was designed as a qualitative study using semi-structured approaches in the question schedules with focus groups and in interviews. The following examines the ways that I went about designing the research project and choosing the instruments of data collection. It examines the evolutions in the design and sets out the final plan presented to the ethics panel, the subsequent recruitment campaign and research processes for collecting and analysing data. Researchers encounter problems in the practical application of design and I report on how these were resolved in this section.

Qualitative research attempts to extract in-depth knowledge and develop empathic understanding from those who have first-hand knowledge and experience, understood as lived experience (kvale, 2008). By attempting to step into the shoes of those at the coal face

of social work, the project was investigating the world of practitioners to understand more about the enactment of use of self. Research design requires the development of questions that will open up the topic for exploration, but also join with accumulated knowledge and theory to develop the evidence base. It also requires evolution of learning about the research design itself to find flaws and to think about the improvement of any future investigations. For example, what was missing, what could have been done better and what further work is needed to understand the topic more fully?

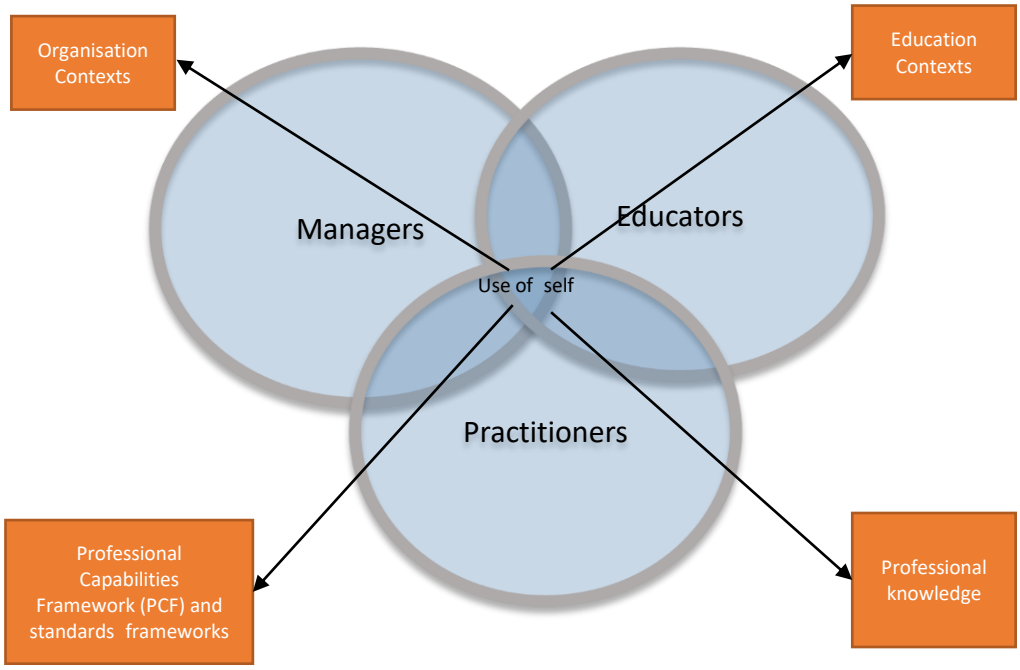
My study focussed on the qualified to strategic level social worker in the PCF framework (see figure 2, p.146 of this thesis), who were experienced in their field. I decided to discuss use of self with professionals from levels after the Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE) because this was the point from which they were 'on their own' as autonomous professionals, who were also expected to advance their professional development. These were social workers in qualified, experienced, advanced and strategic levels of practice in the PCF level frameworks (see figure 2).

Qualified social workers who gain experience outside of their Assessed and Supported years are nominally understood to develop career levels at qualified, senior and strategic roles. Often, social workers gain experience, or wear more than one hat in their work. For example, many social workers become practice educators, or switch into management careers whilst retaining some case responsibility. The modes of advancement for social work in England were characterised in the PCF by three distinct career paths, those who become social work educators, those who become managers and those who advance into strategic practice with an emphasis on leadership in all three roles. It seemed to me at the design stage of the project that these three groups of qualified social workers may have different

perspectives on how use of self was understood and possibly different positions on styles of practice. I identified the different positions in a model that helped me to frame the research (see figure 1). The model shows the areas of practice that overlap, but also distinct areas where there may be divergencies of views between the different roles.

I wanted to ensure social workers from all three groups would come forward, without feeling the project was 'not for them' because, for example, they were not practicing traditional casework, or were managers. The research design included a recruitment campaign that welcomed qualified social work participants from all areas of practice in the three vocational areas of management, education and practice (Appendices 2, 3 & 4). Interview schedules were drawn up using the model in figure 1 as a guide for examining the different features of the roles in the PCF levels. Initially, different questions were developed for different focusses in practice, but in view of the overlap and the potential for varied participant experiences, the same interview schedule was used for focus groups and for interviews (Appendix 1). The decision to use one schedule was made prior to any interviews or focus groups taking place.

Figure 1: Model for research design



Focus groups

I believed that focus groups would afford opportunities to bring busy and highly experienced professionals together to engage in conversations.

In the initial design I intended to have a focus group from each of the occupations to gain three perspectives of management, education and practice. However, I found in the planning and recruitment stages it was not possible to organise three distinct professional groups who could come together as strangers in a room. Logistically this would have involved sourcing and renting conference rooms and asking professionals to travel from different areas. Professionals who came forward were prepared to have individual interviews but could not spare the time to wait for a group of people to coordinate diaries. Further, I may have lost the opportunity to interview professionals if they were waiting on a date where I could pull people together.

One participant I spoke to at a conference very kindly suggested that she put together a group of managers from her own management group so I could travel and talk to them in their conference room. This then became the model for recruitment for groups through my contacts. A lecturer brought together educators within a university, a strategic practitioner brought together a group from a youth offending team and another independent consultant/manager brought together practitioners she worked with.

The mode of bringing people together for focus groups became convenient, where professionals were prepared to organise people and venues. Advantages of speaking to colleagues known to each other included their discussions about engagement of use of self within their organisation as well as general conversations about their individual experiences as professionals with each other. The disadvantage was a lack of comparative analysis from ranges of experiences with each other as strangers from different organisations. The individual interviews helped me to gain perspectives from each of the different levels and styles in practice, but I believed there would have been some benefits in having participants from disparate experiences to speak to each other.

I discovered that nearly all participants had worked in management or education at some point in their career with many in dual roles at the point of their participation with the project. The focus groups were similarly made up of professionals who wore more than one hat in their work. This was useful for gathering information from a range of perspectives and sources, where participants were able to speak about use of self in different settings and multi-agency contexts. I agree with Barbour (2008) that Focus Groups have potential to gather, “extremely rich data with enormous potential for comparison and, hence, can afford analytic purchase with regard to a wide range of research questions” (Barbour, 2008, p. 132).

Interviews

Interviews are the most common way of collecting data in qualitative research. Three types of semi-structured interviews are discussed in the methods literature: 'minimally structured', where questions are the same but used flexibly in the interview and may generate further, different questions or discussions; 'continuum', where the questions are open ended asked in the same order to each participant. These are 'inquiry', that allow free flowing narratives of experiences and life stories (Padgett, 2016, p115). I used a combination of minimal and continuum approaches. Conversations developed as part of the process and similarly to the focus groups I supported participants to speak at length about the subject within a minimal framework.

The interviewees were from the same professional groups as focus group individuals. However, one key advantage of the interviews was the space to share stories and experiences in a private conversation between the participant and myself. The schedules for the interviews and focus groups covered the same ground, but I was aware of the more significant personal impacts for social workers, such as supervision experiences, management issues or burn-out, where individual space in interviews might afford opportunities for deeper discussion. I decided to conduct individual interviews to get a more in-depth insight.

Designing Interview and focus group question schedules

The interview and focus group questions were developed in liaison with the supervisors and designed to dovetail with the research questions. There were several phases of interview schedule questions. Initially they were discipline specific, with some different questions addressed in each to education, management and advanced practice. Changes were then made to address different questions in focus groups and interviews and levels of practice in

the PCF. Given the overlap of subjects in each discipline and in all levels a single interview schedule was eventually developed and settled on to use with all respondents (Appendix 1)

As the process of interviewing and focus groups continued the discussions expanded far beyond the original questions. This was an important process for noting points that I had not previously thought of, or that were not covered in the questions, with some noting what they would be interested in asking if they had been conducting the research. The schedule then does not do justice to the conversations that became expansive and rich in material.

Conducting research with peers

It is suggested that proximity to peers can be mitigated by adopting the role of an outside stranger. In this study there was a mutual recognition that my contexts were similar to participants and this allowed a transparency for conducting professional conversations, and where I was clearly not in a position to adopt a stranger role. My honesty as a researcher who was also part of the profession seemed necessary for the project and helped to forge an openness between myself and participants. I do not believe participants would have spoken so openly to a researcher with no knowledge of the subject or of the profession. As a personal reflection I think it would be difficult for a researcher to take on the subject without some insider knowledge. I had to take account of the advantages and disadvantages of my position as a peer to peer researcher.

Research undertaken by Coar and Sim (2006) indicated peer interviews are social constructions in which "informants are concerned as much with achieving certain purposes (e.g. of self-presentation) within that situation, as with providing a description of their beliefs and attitudes." (Coar & Sim, 2006, p255). They indicated three issues that should be addressed when undertaking peer research:

1. Professionals' concern about the strength of their knowledge in relation to the researcher's knowledge (for example, is the researcher 'testing' them or do they have sufficient knowledge that is useful?);

2. Whether opportunities exist for education in the research arena (as professional learners and educators);

3. Whether a sense of 'solidarity' or 'camaraderie' serves as a conduit for collusion. For example, in criticisms of the profession.

Condensed from Coar & Sim (2006, p255-256).

The above points were useful indicators for thinking about how participants might experience a professional colleague undertaking an interview. They made me mindful of creating open opportunities for discussion where agendas did not interfere, but where professional knowledge was recognised between us, and where participants were able to speak affably and equitably. I thought, given the well recorded political tensions between social work and successive governments, this would be difficult.

It turned out to be the case that participants sometimes shared anger and hurt about professional frustrations that were potentially a conduit for collusion, as expressed in Coar and Sims issues for peer research. These did become a source of empathy between us and sources of camaraderie. All respondents were confident, experienced and highly knowledgeable social work professionals and there was no difficulty bringing conversations back to the matter in hand. I was also on an equal professional footing with participants and in many cases we expressed mutual respect for each other. A certain amount of off-loading seemed appropriate and significant to the subject. In respect of Coar and Sims second point,

professional development was evident in conversations, with many of the participants and myself expressing their value as a source of learning for ourselves.

Participants in focus groups and interviews received schedules in advance so they could consider the questions. I observed in interviews and in focus groups that participants looked through the schedule often asking if they had addressed everything. The ambiance was very professional, and participants were prepared to travel on conversational journeys, but come back to the schedule. They used devices such as, “I think we’ve covered that a lot!”; “have we covered all your questions?”; “but that’s a later question, I’ll wait.” I noted that participants showed a willingness to be helpful in ensuring I had all the information I needed. They also asked if I wanted them to cover any other aspects of a question before moving on and contributed information outside of the question schedule if they thought it was helpful. The process was fluid and enjoyable, sometimes with lots of laughter, kept on track by the loose framework of the questions.

Padgett (2016) suggested that social workers have transferable skills as qualitative researchers because of their training in listening, communicating and acknowledging others, as well as reflexivity in approaches to people. As an experienced professional I was able to acknowledge my own skills to adopt an egalitarian tone during interviews and focus groups. It would be difficult for me to recognise the accomplishment of these skills without feedback from participants, who were respectful, engaging and showed genuine interest in the project and its potential outcomes.

My own observation from listening to recordings and typing transcripts, was the discovery of some limitations in my interviewing skills. This surprised me after many years’ experience as a social worker and some experience as a researcher. For example, I recognised

‘going native’ and colluding around a topic, rather than opening the discussion for further debate. I acknowledge that we are all our own worst critic, but listening to recordings served as a learning experience for myself, where opportunities are not often available to hear one’s own performance. Unfortunately this did close down some avenues of conversation that would have been useful to explore and were missed opportunities to ask further pertinent questions. Most areas of the interviews though were balanced and demonstrated good inter-communication skills of participants and myself. I was also able to verify transcripts with participants and welcomed any other feedback from them.

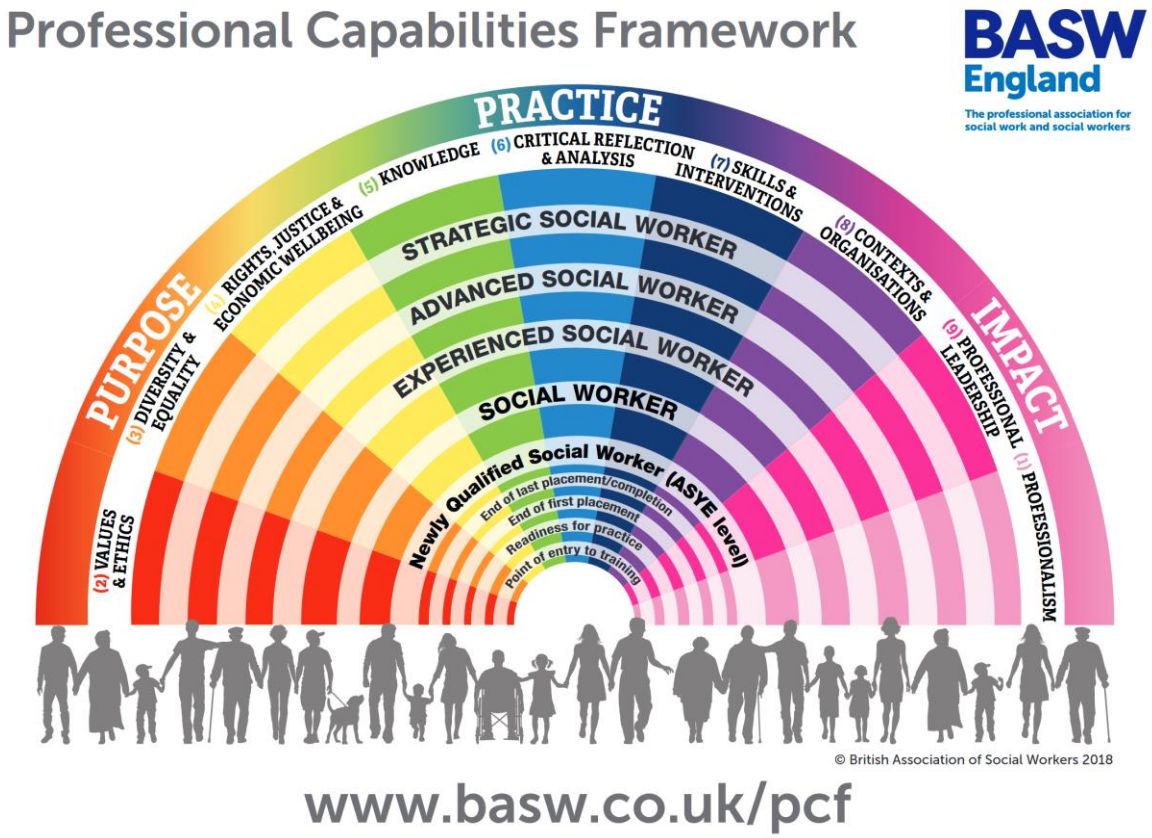
Sampling and recruitment procedures

The study was undertaken in England where Social Work is occupationally divided between children and adult services. The Department for Education is responsible for children’s social care. Skills for Care (www.skillsforcare.org.uk), is a charitable organisation, that takes lead responsibility for adult services within the broad remit of the Local Government Association and the Department of Work and Pensions (DoWP). This is a complex workforce located in diverse settings throughout local government, health and social care and voluntary sectors (House of Commons Education Committee, Social Work Reform, 2016-17). Social Work education in England is managed through Higher Education Institutions and includes three-year under-graduate courses and master’s programmes, which may be stand-alone courses or directed through new government sponsored schemes for fast-tracked graduates known as Frontline and Step-up (House of Commons Education Committee, Social Work Reform, 2016-17).

Students undertaking the bachelor’s degree or master’s in social work do not become fully qualified until they have completed an Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE). However,

masters level students in programmes such as Front Line and Step Up enter the profession as qualified workers following end of last placement. I identified participants from practitioners who were qualified professionals with at least one year of practice experience. The levels indicated these were professionals operating as qualified and experienced practitioners, managers and educators in the qualified, experienced, advanced and strategic practice levels in the top 3 tiers of the PCF.

Figure 2: PCF Fan Diagram



The study recruited from professionals engaged in the following:

1. Social workers who were lecturers or field educators on any Social Work courses in universities; including undergraduate, master's, Step-up and Frontline courses.
2. Qualified social workers from any practice field, who were also managers responsible for the day to day running of any social care or social work services across the sector.
3. Experienced qualified social workers from any practice field.

The recruitment campaign targeted a large population of experienced social workers, managers and educators. I drew on a non-probability approach to recruit participants. Saumure & Given (2008) outline 3 techniques of non-probability sampling:

1. Purposeful sampling - using knowledge of the population to purposively select participants who are representative of that population
2. Convenience sampling – selected because of their proximity to the researcher – e.g. part of the researcher's network
3. Snowball sampling – drawn by recommendation or participants' networks

From Saumure & Given (2008, p.2)

Colleagues from professional networks in organisations were approached in a recruitment campaign (Appendix 2). Some were known to me and able to assist with disseminating information. Convenience sampling was also used to recruit participants by connecting with my professional networks. I had a great deal of support from the following professional organisations to promote the recruitment campaign:

- The Centre for Social Work Practice (CfSWP) operates from the Tavistock Clinic in London and promotes the use of clinical and relational work in social work. The Director of CfSWP invited me to speak briefly about the research at a conference and distributed flyers on the website and in other specialised forums. Six people expressed interest and left contact details. Three responded to follow up emails and were subsequently interviewed. A further contact at the conference organised a focus group of seven managers in childcare practice teams in a central England region.
- Colleagues from three University social work departments were contacted, one where I was previously employed and two others where I had colleagues who agreed to support the expressions of interest campaign. One of these universities organised a focus group of 3 educators in a university in Southern England. The other invited me to a Practice Educators' Conference where three interview participants were recruited. Another professional who attended the conference arranged a focus group of four managers and senior practitioners in a Youth Offending team in Eastern England. Contacts at these universities also put me in touch with an ex-colleague who worked in a 4th university resulting in the recruitment of two further interview participants.

I have a profile on LinkedIn and sent out recruitment flyers through this network. four participants were recruited for interview and another arranged a focus group of three professionals in a London region. Three other interviewees who contacted me through linkedin were known to me as colleagues, two were educators and one a senior social work practitioner.

Initially I gave those who contacted me the choice of attending an interview or a focus group, putting those interested in focus groups on a list. I tried to source conference

rooms for hire in London and in the eastern and northern regions of England. I provisionally booked a room, but it became logistically very difficult to coordinate times for different groups to come together. Initially I had tried to have one management, one education and one practitioner group which made coordination of the sample, who were from across the country, difficult to get together.

At one conference I spoke to a manager who said it would be too difficult for her to coordinate her diary but would be delighted to gather other managers in her location for a focus group. She organised the group. As a result of this idea I spoke to those who had originally wanted to be part of a focus group and asked if they were able to make similar arrangements. A contact from LinkedIn arranged a focus group with colleagues and the other two decided to attend an individual interview instead. I met other colleagues at the university settings and mooted the idea of convening a focus group with two lecturers and a past social work colleague. The colleague and one of the lecturers arranged focus group meetings at their place of work.

All those that expressed an interest during the recruitment campaign were enthusiastic about the project and keen to discuss the topic. The participants self-selected and chose to come forward to give their views.

Sample size

Participants were recruited in numbers according to criteria pertinent to the inquiry; where the characteristics of the participant align them with subject being investigated. The end result is said to represent 'saturation,' which is seen as, "the gold standard by which purposive sample sizes are determined in health science and in health science research" (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006 p. 61). There are no standardised yard sticks by which to measure saturation. Further, the decision about numbers of people in a sample is often decided, because of ethics

protocols, before research takes place, making it difficult to determine whether a representative sample for saturation is reached.

Formulas are suggested for meeting saturation (Patton, 2002; Morse, 2009). These identify numbers between 15 and 50 participants for grounded theoretical approaches. However, there are variants described within each formula, making it difficult to judge the correct number for each individual circumstance of investigation. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) carried out a meta-analysis of qualitative studies to measure saturation in their own research and suggest that twelve interviews achieves saturation, although they were able to arrive at basic elemental themes after six interviews. I was not able to do an extensive analysis of saturation in such a small-scale project and relied on literature and professional knowledge of other researchers to determine a sample size that would lead to saturation.

In the supervision process it was decided initially that three focus groups and fifteen interviews should provide enough material on which to formulate themes. The original design indicated three focus groups targeted at managers, educators and practitioners. In the implementation phase there were four focus groups and, more by luck than judgement, they broadly covered the three advanced levels and roles in distinct groups of educators, managers and practitioners. Everyone who came forward and expressed an interest in the project either attended an interview or a focus group. As previously mentioned, colleagues who convened groups brought together their own colleagues, which increased the sample size. Focus group participants were also asked if they would like to be interviewed individually but they all declined. One person who was ill at the time of a focus group she was hoping to attend requested an individual interview which I carried out. Participants who came forward through LinkedIn completed the sample of fifteen interviewees. Nobody else came forward and the

recruitment flyer was removed after all of the interviews had taken place. Had others come forward they would have been interviewed.

Data collection and analysis

The sample comprised a total of seventeen individuals in focus groups, and fifteen individual interviews. The focus groups were conducted face to face in offices arranged by each of the initial contacts. Eleven of the interviews were conducted face to face, two were conducted by telephone and two via Skype. Transcripts of recorded interviews were sent to participants for verification.

All participants were invited to reflect on meanings and interpretations they had given and add any information they would like. Participants were also invited to complete a profile questionnaire noting their career experiences, number of years qualified and other information regarding their gender, age and ethnic identity to be used for providing case classifications in the data analysis phase. The focus groups comprised a mixture of professionals from management, practitioner and educator roles. One group comprised all educators and one group all managers with the other two groups consisting of a mixture of roles. Participants in all the groups had held a variety of roles as managers, educators and practitioners, with many in combined roles at the time of the group. Everyone interviewed had also worked in the three roles at some point in their career, with many in combined roles at the time of participation.

Table 3: Focus Groups

Data Collection	No.	Group Profile	Fields of Practice
Focus Group 1	7	6 Managers 1 Senior Consultant practitioner & Chair of local authority child safeguarding	Childcare Fostering and adoption Child safeguarding
Focus Group 2	3	2 Senior Lecturers in dual roles as practice educators 1 Casual Lecturer who was also a local authority manager	Social work education Practice placement education across all sectors of child and adult services in voluntary, statutory agencies
Focus Group 3	3	2 Senior Consultant practitioners in dual roles as practice educators 1 practitioner	Local authority child safeguarding
Focus Group 4	4	4 managers in multiple senior case worker and practice education roles	Local authority youth offending and young people's services

Table 4: Interviewees

Practice Areas	Practitioner	Educator	Manager
Child and family: Child safeguarding/protection; looked after children; children in need; child mental health; child disability; adoption & fostering	3	1	1
Adult: Mental health; adult safeguarding/protection; adult disability; probation; domestic abuse; substance misuse	1	4	1
Young People: Youth offending; leaving care; young people & mental health	2	1	
Quality assurance; practice development; consultancy			1

Frameworks for analysing data

The recorded transcripts of interviews and focus groups were used to examine meanings. Analytical abduction is a tool to examine how participants descriptions fit into already broadly existing patterns of explanation. I entered the transcripts into a computer assisted tool called Nvivo. I read through every transcript manually creating a first level open coding analysis. This generated a long table of data categorisations in a node structure (Appendix 6) discussed later. In this level I was looking for patterns in the data, similar topics being discussed by participants and their views. Nvivo was useful for putting information together in 'nodes' and generating automated lists. It also showed stand-out comments and views that might easily have been missed in manual coding.

Ezzy (2000) noted that, "simultaneous data collection and data analysis builds on the strengths of qualitative methods as an inductive method for building theory and interpretations from the perspectives of the people being studied" (p.61). During the processes of data collection and analysis I had built up collections of notes, thoughts and reflections. I was able to type these into Nvivo which became a useful container of all the research material used to connect to coding for reflection.

I was cautious initially about using Nvivo, as in earlier qualitative research in my career I had been used to coding manually from word-processed or printed documents and highlighter pens. However, I realised that I had generated a large amount of data from participants and that manual coding would be difficult. I self-taught Nvivo for a number of months before it began to make sense as a tool. When the data was collected and was held in Microsoft Word documents I attended a three day introductory and five day advanced training. Although this still didn't lead to a sophisticated level of use, I found it invaluable for

sorting through the long transcripts and notes to make connections in the data. The tool could also be used to generate word searches and connect ideas. I was able to identify words used consistently by participants and transfer these to word trees.

Silver and Lewins (2014) identify four investigative stances that frame analytic practice; organisation of material, exploration of content, interrogation through reflection on decisions and integration of material with sources. These are not linear activities but continuous iterative processes that revisit ideas throughout by tracking, noting, comparing, testing and questioning results before crystallising themes. Silver and Lewins (2014) note that these seemingly straight forward activities are fraught with ontological and epistemological traps where it is important for the researcher to consider the lineage of the research and their position in relation to the material. I became very aware of this as my examinations progressed, particularly in view of shared values and knowledge with participants, discussed in the earlier epistemology in this chapter. I read and re-read transcripts to try and gain holistic understanding. Notes and memos were revisited and enhanced as the data analysis progressed.

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) in Nvivo

Some research has suggested that QADAS is useful for reconceptualising data in surprising ways that are not found in manual searches (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Here, searches accord with exploring the world in new ways that might not have been intuitive in manual reading and coding, with opportunities for other verifiers to enter the picture, for example, through inter-coder reliability checks and providing an audit trail for decision making in data analysis (Silver & Lewin, 2014).

In summary CAQDAS was useful for:

1. Assisting the development of coding strategies using mind maps and concept maps
2. Making comparisons in data through query tabs to explore codes generated in manual coding practice
3. Producing succinct reports, code books and tables of data
4. Providing a repository for all data elements including transcripts, field notes, memos and practice standards, to apply axial coding
5. Annotation and memo facilities to keep records of thoughts as patterns in data emerge

I found that CAQDAS in Nvivo provided a container for the research materials and tracked reasoning processes. It was flexible enough to carry out holistic reading of transcripts as well as fine coding analysis for each participant in the different occupational groups. The professionals in focus groups and interviews told stories about the subject which were easier to read holistically as full transcripts, and this was also possible in Nvivo which is flexible enough to create several coding frameworks. I was able to map sources and contexts in materials and reflect on them. I worked through the material in searches to find:

- Causal conditions – make discoveries in the data and assess what causes them
- Examine core ideas and events discussed by participants
- Examine contexts in relation to the participants education, management and practice viewpoints utilising the PCF to support axial processes
- Develop strategies for presenting useful professional knowledge

Woods (1999) noted the early requirements of attending to data as trial and error. It is an abductive process of attending to data, “central to the process of discovery” (Ezzy, 2002,

p. 15), paying regard to the role of knowledge to guide the investigation, allowing freedom for the messiness, ambiguity and inconsistency that corresponds to simultaneous exploration of theory and empirical data.

Data analysis process

The way in which the research project unfolded included attempts at scrutinising data in numerous ways. I wrote reflections in a notebook after each interview and focus group and this became my field manual. I used a social work method of process recording, a method of training my early years in social work where we were asked to produced detailed records of visits to families, noting every thought and observation that came to mind as soon as possible following the visit. These served as a useful tool for supervision. I used the notes the process notes personally in the research and they were useful for sharing my observations and thoughts personally with my supervisors.

I typed transcripts as soon as possible after conducting interviews and focus groups. I am a competent touch typist which supported my ability to do this and all interviewees and focus group members received their transcripts for review within two weeks by email. I typed transcripts with headphones and kept the field notebook beside me. I stopped and made notes at points I found interesting. I was typing transcripts at the same time as conducting the interviews and focus groups which allowed to be immersed in an iterative process. Once the transcripts were completed, I entered the them into the Nvivo project. A case file for each participant was made which allowed me to analyse all the data together and find commonalities and stand-out comments (Silver and Lewins, 2014). The advantage was being able to examine and contrast viewpoints across the whole sample allowing me to try to understand the huge amount of data that unfolded in a process of refining it through coding.

Each participant was identified by a number and role code assigned to them which indicated whether they were a focus group member or an interviewee and their main role at the time they participated. This allowed me to identify each individual as I carried out a manual interrogation of the data in Nvivo. Each identifier was associated with a case node so that I could trace who had made comments in the chosen code nodes and their unique profile. Each participant had an identity tag which was used in the report of findings to indicate who was speaking.

Identity tags were issued according to interview or focus group attendance. G indicates that the participant attended a focus group and N an interview. The tag G1, G2, G3, G4 indicates which focus group was attended by each participant. Each member was then assigned a main role tag according to their own description and given a participant number. Categories were Managers (M), Educators (E), Practitioners (P) with under five years experience and Senior Practitioners with over five years experience (SP). The numbers were assigned in a straight forward way in order of interviews and focus groups. For example, N1P2 is the first interviewee and the second practitioner in the whole sample and G1M1 was in the first focus group and was the first manager in the whole sample. The quotes in the findings are traceable to the individual profiles of each participant. Table 5 sets out the profiles with the identity tag removed to maintain confidentiality. However, the tags in the Nvivo project allowed me to trace back quotes to the individuals who made them and are used in the findings to demonstrate a broad spread of quotes across the sample.

Table 5: Participant profiles

Participant ID	Age group	Ethnic origin	Practice area	Gender	Main role at interview	Yrs in practice
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Male	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	> 50	White British	Lecturer	Male	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	41-50	Black British	Lecturer	Male	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	>50	White British	Generic	Female	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	> 50	White British	Child and Family	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	25-40	British Asian	Child and Family	Female	Snr Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	41-50	White British	Youth	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	41-50	White British	Youth	Male	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	>50	White British	Youth	Male	Snr Practitioner	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Youth	Male	Snr Practitioner	> 5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Male	Practitioner	<5 Yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	>50	White British	Generic	Male	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	< 25	Black British	Child and Family	Female	Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Mental Health	Female	Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	25-40	Spanish/British citizen	Adult	Female	Snr Practitioner	> 5 yrs
Removed	> 50	White British	Lecturer	Female	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	41-50	White British	Generic	Female	Snr Practitioner	>5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Youth	Female	Practitioner	< 5 Yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Child and Family	Female	Snr Practitioner	> 5 yrs
Removed	>50	White British	Lecturer	Female	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	> 50	White British	Child and Family	Female	Snr Practitioner	>5 yrs
Removed	25-40	White British	Adult	Female	Manager	> 5 yrs
Removed	41-50	White South African	Lecturer	Male	Educator	> 5 yrs
Removed	41-50	Black British	Lecturer	Female	Educator	> 5 yrs

In a first level analysis I produced word searches in Nvivo to deal with the large amount of raw data. I analysed word trees and their associated transcripts in html documents generated by the program (Appendix 7). I checked for stronger links to concepts in a cluster analysis of the nodes and read those quotes to further break down findings into themes. The cluster analysis showed four strong associations with concepts created from the material, 'who you are', 'developing others', 'multi-collegiate working' and 'self-disclosure'. Closer reading of the data in the clustered material in the transcripts demonstrated three broad themes of 'who you are' (integration of the personal/professional, self/self-awareness, personal/professional boundaries), 'Procedural self' (or tick-box cultures, multi-agency working, targets and trackers, political) and 'Requirements for use of self'(including the assessment of use of self and the PCF.

I was attending a second level Nvivo course whilst analysing the Nvivo data. I had the advantage of tutorial help to examine categories and make searches. The summarised material was shared with my supervisors for examination and discussion before writing the findings. These helped me to distance myself from the material during a process of critical feedback and appraisal to support the finalising of themes.

The narratives of focus groups were contained in the project as individual case nodes, which means their narratives were examined in the main data interrogation of Nvivo above as individual cases. This had the advantage of allowing an interrogation of all the data together for comparison. But they were also contained as complete focus group cases for individual analysis in another part of Nvivo. I examined the characteristics of each focus group in a manual coding process of the whole body of transcripts. I was interested in the different

character of each group and their views in the different management and education categories (Appendix 8).

The process meant that all interviews and focus groups were considered in the analysis with no exclusion criteria applied. There was a surprising consistency across the role perspectives in interviews and in focus groups. This may have been because nearly all participants had been in more than one role throughout their career, or they were in dual, or even in all three roles, at the time of interviews and focus groups.

Thematic Analysis

Miles and Huberman (2013) established a model for distilling coding as: descriptive (or broad coding), creating a sense of the data; interpretive (or axial coding), identifying key relationships; and pattern codes (early category coding), which lay the foundations of thematic findings. Thematic analysis has become a useful tool in the application of social, health and psychological research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, McQueen & Namey, 2011).

Guest, McQueen & Namey (2012) point out qualitative research relies on exhaustive analytical approaches that are usually impractical for small-scale research, or for data that the researcher wishes to use for practical application, such as in professional contexts. The authors analogise the process of identifying themes with that of mapping territories to define borders, requiring segmentation of moderate to large data sets. Applied thematic analysis identifies the way in which fine coded data coalesces to create a theme, or an exploratory model.

> Good segmentation practices facilitate the analysts ability to identify, map and succinctly display the context and multi-dimensionality of the data used to answer a

particular research question and, importantly to easily return to the full context of any feature described on the "map" (p.4).

The identification of themes, or "data territories", required holistic reading, defining boundaries of data segments and implementing coding procedures. Data analysis was performed within grounded processes that abstracted meaning from data chunks, but where, as Guest, McQueen and Namey (2011) point out, semantics of text are maintained. In simple terms thematic analysis was a flexible approach; taking in words, sentences, paragraphs or conversations as units of coding. In the mapping analogy this might indicate ways of undertaking ordinance surveying; defining features and points of interest.

Thematic analysis was proposed at the planning stage of the research as it had potential to use a pragmatic approach to the data set and can act as a two-way verifier in the more detailed open and axial coding stages. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the activities of data collection and early analysis as identification of, "underlying ideas, and conceptualisations – and ideologies - that are theorised as shaping, or informing the semantic content" (p.84). They define a theme as, "something important about the data in relation to the research question which represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p.82). Woods (1999) pointed out to the importance of identifying stand-out comments, or conversation, which can be identified as a theme when connected with theoretical frameworks about the topic. The following six stage schema of systemised thematic analysis formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006) to show the phases of identifying themes:

1. Becoming familiar with the data.

2. Generating initial codes.

3. Searching for themes.

4. Reviewing themes.

5. Defining and naming themes.

6. Producing the report.

Essentially, thematic analysis is an interpretive tool. Silver and Lewins (2014) note that empirical data requires rigorous strategies appointed throughout by continually examining the relationships between different aspects which may involve counting and the production of statistical tables. However, content remains the core evidential amenity.

As discussed above, Nvivo was suited to thematic analysis as it was able to break down any permutation of paragraph, sentence or words identified by the researcher in manual or automated coding to see if it supports or contradicts identified themes (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Guest, McQueen & Namey (2011), acknowledge complimentary components of using coding software in thematic analysis. The nature of the research provided a learning opportunity for me as a researcher, as well as 'fit' for exploratory approaches that examined narratives. The tool does not replace the researcher's analytic capacity. Rather, as previously discussed, it provides a systematic way to organise data in one place. The segmenting of material is managed in the coding framework where the researcher sets up individualised coding structures and can make manual or automatic searches to categorise selected data. I found the process of searching the data with exploratory operations in the program extremely helpful for problematising material and creating themes.

Open coding first level analysis

I used two frameworks to code the data in a first level analysis. The first was a manual coding framework. Each line of data in the recordings was numbered and broad themes were highlighted. Table 6 shows themes identified in the initial stages. Important in this open coding was a clarity that for participants there was an identifiable social work use of self that be contrasted with other uses of self, not seen by participants as a social work use of self.

Table 6: First Analysis of Themes

Practice level	*Who you are – personality, background* *Self-awareness* *Relationship-based* *Empathy* *Emotional intelligence* *Examinations of Power* *Self-care* *Personal/professional boundaries* *Culture/ gender/ difference* *It helps service users*
Knowledge and learning level	Social work values Self-reflection Critical reflection Supervision Personal professional Boundaries Human rights and social justice
Barriers	Management supervision Technocratic and tick-box cultures Politics and policy Fear and anxiety Professional status Public image of profession
Overcoming barriers	Professional networks for peer and collective support Safe spaces for exploring emotional vulnerabilities and errors or mistakes Self-care Confidence in use of self in professional and multidisciplinary settings Pride in soft skills
PCF and requirements of use of self practice	Only vague awareness of what the PCF says in relation to use of self Requirements are dense and complex Use of self was meaningful to participants and embedded in practice Use of self is a responsibility of professional development regardless of requirements Use of self is a perception – taught from the perspective of the educator (problematic for recognising the social work use of self)

Checking for validity

Data is verified across a range of methodological distinctions through triangulation (Mathison, 2005). Creswell & Miller (2000) noted that, "the choice of validity procedures is governed by two perspectives: the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers' paradigm assumptions" (p.124). Goodman (2001) noted that, "threats to internal validity, as commonly described in social research literature are threaded throughout nearly all phases of studies." (p.2). Creswell & Miller (2000) examined three frameworks for validating data: saturation of data into exhaustive themes, checking the meaning with research participants, and examination of material and themes with external reviewers or knowledgeable practitioners, such as academics or supervisors. The validity of the research should be tested in these multiple sources of information before forming themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Morse (2009) suggested there are now too many terms; trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, applicability and confirmability, which essentially avoid the central notion of validity in formulating research findings. They argued that findings should remain true to the acceptance of "reliability variance" (p.15). It is not possible to know whether the information is true, only that it is as accurate as possible using the best available resources to examine the data. I remained as true to the material as I could using outside sources and critical reflection to examine the extensive material produced by the research.

The three processes for validation above were embedded in the research phase of the project to ensure reliability of findings. I was able to have tutorials and conversations with knowledgeable practitioners, other PhD students and academics both informally and at conferences. Formal supervision was held regularly to examine material. I attended

workshops and training in qualitative methods, data analysis and Nvivo throughout the duration of the project. Transcripts were verified with participants and any other feedback or input was welcomed. There were different viewpoints about use of self that are contained in the findings. These generally related to professionals' beliefs about different perspectives in different areas of practice, for example, the idea that there are many different selves derived from styles and areas of practice.

Ethical considerations

There were ethical considerations that took account of the particular variation of research being carried out within ethical procedures. In particular, for this research, I was a member of the profession conducting interviews and research groups with professional colleagues. Complications can arise in all qualitative research due to its nature as a practice that has its basis in 'finding out' using human interaction. These involve psychological, cultural and social perspectives where power relationships and unpredictable circumstances are central in the 'goings on' between people. Insider research is doubly fraught with misunderstandings, infringement of personal/professional boundary issues, confidentiality traps and ethical dilemmas. Planning can support the processes, as well as learning through the wisdom of past research errors of judgement. But it seems unlikely that the possibilities of entrapments can ever be fully erased.

I was made aware of advantages and pitfalls derived from unconscious insider intersubjective biases throughout the planning stage of the research. Partly because of my own professional recognition and partly through detailed workshops in qualitative methods and discussions with tutors and supervisors. Although I had been a social worker for many years my occupation over the past ten years had been as an academic. But like many

academics my role was interchangeable and very much rooted in social work practice. For example, I continued to be a field practice educator and to be employed as a consultant in the profession.

Toy-Cronic (2018) noted that the boundaries between insider and outsider research are not fixed. They can become fluid exchanges of insider and outsider stances between researchers that help to form rich multi-dimensional relationships that pave the way for rich sources of understanding. I experienced the sense of being an insider and outsider at different points and were aware of the potential for working together in professional conversations to try to understand the topic. There appeared to be a sense of mutual benefit from the participants as well as myself in trying to make a complex topic more accessible to the profession.

In nearly all cases I was invited into the practitioners' offices and conference rooms to conduct interviews and focus groups. No doubt assumptions were made about our positions with each other and what might be shared. Participants were very honest and critically reflective. They appeared to trust that information in reports of findings would not identify them and they appeared to me by their welcoming behaviours to show a genuine interest, giving a great deal of information that I believed came from our 'insider' positions of mutual respect. As participants and researcher we were working within our own ethical guidance from the British Association of Social Workers which is shares a similar language of human dignity, self-worth and confidentiality, as ethical research committees.

BASW codes of ethics include honesty and ethically sharing confidential information where a danger to self and others is identified, all considered to be in common with research ethical codes (Bell and Nut, 2002). In the participant/ researcher relationship I had a

responsibility in professional codes and within the ethical research procedures to ensure participants were emotionally and physically safe. I drew up a list of organisations to support any participants who may have needed further advice outside the boundaries of the interviews and our relationship. I was as prepared as possible for any arising dilemma utilising my skills as a social worker (Appendix 5).

The recruitment included those who went and negotiated with others to ask if they would like to participate in focus groups. Informed consent became an issue because participants had not initially contacted me directly. I relied on the contact to organise the focus participants and the place of meeting. However, I asked for the email of each participant before the meeting and sent them the recruitment letter, information, questions and consent documentation to each of them least a week before the group. I attended the group with hard copies of all the documentation. In a preamble I asked all group members if they were comfortable to be in the meeting giving them an opportunity to leave if they wished. All participants stayed and signed the documentation before the group. I am only able to say that no power issues were detected. Focus group participants were generally on an equal footing with each other as managers, educators, senior social workers and colleagues and expressed a motivation to explore the subject explicitly.

All those outside of the data have a responsibility to scrutinise our own values and biases when identifying findings. At every level in all qualitative research inter-subjective bias exists, and it's unconscious nature means we can do nothing more than attempt to search for it.

> Whatever the terminology that we employ, it would seem clear that the researcher's subjectivity must be open to intensive scrutiny. Values, beliefs and personal interests should not only be declared but challenged on an ongoing basis. If the researcher's

> self is to function as a well-calibrated instrument, passion must be valued and harnessed. (Van Heugten, 2008, p.208)

The research was conducted within these ethical considerations that were both contained in the 'practitioner researcher' as well as the 'researcher practitioner'

Ethics Approval

Following a long history of harmful research that was of no benefit to communities or persons (Resea and Ryan, 1978) it has become essential to consider the ethical issues and implications of research projects before they are undertaken. That is, there is a duty of care and respect to persons by ensuring any research carried out is justified in a way that benefits the research subjects and does not cause harm. Established ethical practices require researchers to rigorously test the principles of the research, ensuring the informed consent of participants and by being open about the risks and benefits of carrying it out.

The research proposal was submitted to the University of Newcastle's Human Research Ethics Committee for approval. Approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee February 2017 (Approval no: H-2016-0442). The Centre for Social Work Practice was satisfied with the ethical approval given and was able to support recruitment of participants. LinkedIn messages contained attachments of the recruitment campaign on letter-headed paper which included supervisor details (Appendix 2)

Participant and researcher safety

The aim was to provide an opportunity for professional participants to discuss the topic 'use of self' in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. This included agreeing to mutual times and a good private location, as well as the provision of refreshments. The organisers of focus groups booked suitable rooms where I was able to set up recording equipment.

Individual interviews by phone or Skype were held in a private space in my home study. Face to face interviews variously took place at mutually agreed venues in private interview rooms organised by the participants or in my home study which offers a private space for discussions.

Following risk analysis procedures at the University of Newcastle it was decided that participants may be impacted by discussing personal/professional aspects regarding use of self. The possibility of raising personal emotional issues for which they may need further support was thought to need further clarification. The nature of the research was explained at the beginning of the interviews. A list of counselling organisations and voluntary community support agencies was made available to participants (Appendix 5). Procedures included ensuring the participants understood the processes of participation and my undertaking to ensure they were respected and looked after while they were taking part. Attention was also drawn to freedom to withdraw at any time, and freedom to contact my supervisors if there were any comments or complaints about the conduct of the research.

The recruitment flyer explained the nature of the project and the three different participant groups; educators, managers and qualified practitioners (Appendices 1, 2 & 3). Participants who were interested in being part of a focus group or being interviewed made contact via the university email address which was on the flyer. Participants were asked to sign a letter giving their consent to use information from the focus group and/or interviews as part of a PhD research and in any subsequent publications related to the topic. I explained consent and withdrawal of consent as laid out in paragraph 2.2.2 of National Standards for Ethics. Participants were given information and were able to discuss any aspect regarding its "purpose, methods, demands, risks and potential benefits" (Australian Vice Chancellor Committee, Ethical Statement on Human Research Conduct, 2015, p.16).

Confidentiality was explained verbally at the beginning of the interviews and focus groups so that participants could make an informed choice about their involvement. Confidentiality was set out in an agreement to ensure the boundary between researcher and participant was respected by all parties. The agreement included information about the purpose of the research, how data would be collected, stored and used, along with a statement of informed consent for all participants. Goodman (2001) notes that the relational aspects of interviews require researchers to ensure they "separate therapeutic objectives from the research objectives" (p.9). I also considered the peer proximity of the research and how this might impact on dynamics.

I made every effort to ensure that participants were not identified in the reporting of findings. In focus groups, transcripts were shared between participants who attended that group. All transcripts were anonymised and given a case code for identification.

Participants in research need to be certain that data collected in research is kept confidential and stored safely for the duration of and after completion of the research. All documents completed by participants were scanned and placed in my password protected Microsoft OneDrive folder. Anonymised transcripts were entered onto Nvivo for analysis. Anonymised transcripts were shared with supervisors following open coding processes.

Potential significance of the study

The research addresses current policy frameworks and a newly created capabilities framework in England (The Professional Capabilities Framework) which has included use of self as a requirement of practice. This is the first time the terminology of self and use of self has been prominent in standards of practice. It requires students to progress from a skilled use of self to an advanced stage of modelling the sophisticated use of self. Use of self is a

recognised feature of practice embedded in literature but is also considered to be opaque and contested. The research addresses how qualified experienced social work practitioners viewed it in their everyday practice and its alignment in policy frameworks, literature and participants understanding. The study contributes to knowledge and has policy implications.

Although the research was conducted in England to examine its requirements, it also has international relevance. Use of self has a history of integration both implicitly and explicitly in social work theory, knowledge and policy. The research should therefore be of interest in the further development of education and practice in wider contexts. Specifically the focus of a social understanding of self and the global impact of Giddens's thesis of the self permeates social, economic and political practices of social work internationally and this is central to developing a deeper understanding of how concepts of self influence the practice of use of self.

Limitations of the study

The research is qualitative from a small sample of participants in an under researched area of practice. The student voice is missing from the research which would have been beneficial for examining the impact of the newly developed frameworks on their education, particularly in the new PCF framework that was found not to be embedded. However, there were a small number of newly qualified social workers who had recently completed a newly created Assessed and Supported Year in Practice, as part of the PCF.

Although the framework has been in development since 2010, it has also been embroiled, as set out earlier in the thesis, in changes of government, the closing of social work organisations that created it and new reviews which questioned what social work is and what social workers should be able to do (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Narey, 2014). By 2018 when

the research was carried out there was some confusion about the governance of social work and the introduction of new Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS,2016). The PCF was undergoing revisions and its future was uncertain. The research is therefore extremely limited in its exploration of use of self as it is set out in the PCF. Since the time of the research the PCF has been refreshed once again and embedded as a training model and career structure in social work within the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and a new agency for registration, Social Work England.

At the time of both designing and carrying out the research with participants the PCF was still being reviewed and refreshed. As a fairly new instrument I found it was not fully embedded as a tool for education and practice, something that was also confirmed in conversations with the participants and reported in the findings. Future research would be needed to replicate the study with improved design for examination of the use of self as the PCF matures in education and practice. For example, subtle changes in wording were detected in frequent refreshments and updating of the PCF between 2016 and 2018 when this research project began.

Collecting data face to face from professional peers contained possible entrapments as well as advantages. There is little examination in the literature about the impact of researcher and participants who are also peers in professional groups or in one to one interviews (Coar & Sim, 2006). The shared culture of practice served as a useful short cut to recognition in data collection but was potentially disadvantaged by congruency. Hockey (1993) discusses the “mixed bag” of “benefits and pitfalls” in carrying out research in familiar settings and the issue of “going native” (Hockey, 1993, p.199); that is, colluding as a colleague

rather than maintaining professional researcher practice. This was a concern for me as I shared a common social work heritage with most participants in my sample in UK contexts.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter outlined the qualitative methodological frameworks that underpinned a qualitative research design. The research was carried out with social work professionals who were acquainted with regulation, standards and knowledge in use of self practice. Literature and research indicated a lack of problematized knowledge about use of self in social work contexts, where it is nonetheless said to be an accepted feature of practice that can be charted in professional knowledge. The research sought to expand understanding of how use of self becomes shaped in formal practice, understood in the PCF as progressively using self to more sophisticated levels. The research was undertaken in England where social work education is in flux. However, the PCF remained as the teaching and development tool for social workers throughout the project and provided a scaffold for examining the topic with professionals and in the data analysis. The Ethics committee at the University of Newcastle approved the setting up of a qualitative research that could examine regulation, perceptions and experiences of professionals in data collected from focus groups and individual interviews.

The analysis was set up within grounded and reflexive epistemological frameworks in a qualitative study which sought a deeper understanding of use of self in social workers professional lives. A literature and UK policy review were undertaken to examine current knowledge. Activities prior to gathering data established a method and design for setting up the research. Data analysis utilised open coding and CAQDAS to examine the data in Nvivo, a software package that acted as a container and analytic tool to support a coding framework.

The data was coalesced into professional themes using a thematic approach. Limitations and potential benefits of the research were discussed.

The benefits to participants and the researcher in terms of professional development were evident in the research process. Limitations are associated with qualitative research using small numbers of self-selecting samples was acknowledged. However, the research design attempted to develop analysis which supported professional development of knowledge and contribute to debates in policy and regulatory practice. There was combined knowledge, experience and wisdom that grew for the professional conversations about use of self as models of intervention that will be of benefit to its knowledge and evidence base.

A note on terms for people who use services

Few participants discussed the people they worked with as "clients", preferring instead to call them "service users", a term widely adopted in the UK across services sectors in health and social care, and noted to be a global trend (Gunasekara, Pentland, Rodgers & Patterson, 2014). The term service user denoted a shift in attitude to "people who use services" and has been widely applied in government policy in the UK following consultations, particularly with those who used disability and mental health services in the 1990s (Beresford, 2001). Recent documentation has challenged service user terminology and suggested that "people with lived experiences", or "experts by experience" were terms that could respect service users' views and contributions to their own care. These interchangeable terms are part of an evolution of critical discourses that increasingly involve the debate of everyone in health and social care services. An interesting observation from these findings is that commonalities of experiences between service users and practitioners was noted with a diminishing sense of expertise and a movement towards a mutual recognition of experiences as a basis for

interpretation and action. As we shall see, the shared experiences of participants and service users was central to participants' discussions for developing their use of self.

CHAPTER 6:

Findings and Discussion – Theme One

A social work use of self

Analysis of data gathered across focus groups and interviews with practitioners identified findings coalescing around three key themes. The following chapter sets out the findings in the first theme. This theme relates to the findings where the majority of participants discussed the importance of "who you are" and becoming self-aware, for supporting them to work with the complexities of their practice.

Who you are

There was general agreement amongst participants' that use of self involved a number of features that defined 'who you are' for practice that was more than learning a subject:

> *I think what I've come down to is the person who you are. Not just the knowledge that you hold. (N14E7)*

One participant suggested that use of self was a difficult or complex construct to discuss:

> *That's not a straight forward question…what if you were to ask the question, "what would it look like if you didn't use yourself?" It would be a really odd thing, wouldn't it? So, it seems to me that you're always using yourself, but it's just that as a professional you need to be aware of it. The use of self, the key bit is 'use'. But you can't not use yourself (G4SP2)*

Being a social work self was suggested to require a combination of the whole of who you are within an examination of social work values that found something vital and unique for them about their work:

Because the whole job of social work is about you as the resource and I think it makes us as social workers…it marks us out from being civil servants or from being someone who just follows processes really. So, it's about the whole thing about how we deliver news, how we interact with people. (N8SP5)

This was a personality for practice and encapsulated skills that helped them support others:

I think it is a good skill because it's your skill…So, if you can build better relationships and get better outcomes by using yourself then that's a good way of utilising your skills. (N2P3)

Self was also articulated by participants as a complex understanding of situations that involved them at a deeper level than cognitive reasoning such as finding ways to be authentic:

[I]t's very, almost difficult to pin down and articulate, because for me I think it's about a sense of authenticity. You know, you can go in and do what you have to do on a cognitive level, but then in the sense of using yourself it's about, I don't know, about feelings and who you are and your values… your values, your principles, your culture, your identity and those aspects of the whole of who you are. (N15E8)

Examination of participants discussion of use of self, identified that they generally privileged knowledge drawn from their own personal history and experience over that found in formal theory or technical approaches:

It's beyond the grand theories of how to intervene. It's down more to the individual practitioner and how they use their experience. Their personality. Often that may involve personal experiences. Yeah, that's got to be important in use of self. (N1P2)

Participants also discussed use of self as an integrated skill of everyday practice:

I think if you're somebody who is aware of your use of self, I think that it happens. I don't think you switch that on and off. I think that is a, it almost feels like it's a position that you take and that position is going to be evident in all sorts of settings. (N15E8)

In the participants' views examined practice; their history, culture, personality, values etc., indicated that the position one takes in different settings that became unique to themselves. It was also adaptable requiring the recognition of feelings as well as cognitive actions. The positionality between the situation of practice, with a service user, colleague, manager or co-professional appeared to come from an integrated professionalism. Using self indicated as bringing their own unique brand of their 'selves' to their role:

I'm aware that you've got to show people that they've got to develop their own use of self and they can't just adopt somebody's off the shelf…You have actually got to work it out for yourself, that we're all different.(N11E6)

There was an interest in working out who they were for practice through various activities including shadowing, modelling and seeing different styles

And you see differences when you talk to other professionals and finding ideas about how they work with young people and what resources they use and then you look at how you do things. But that's use of self, isn't it? (N6P6)

Diversity of styles in use of self within teams was useful. One practitioner, a manager, discussed the importance of diversities:

I've thought is really helpful is to have a diversity of people in a team. So, you have people who are very in touch with themselves, very creative, able to develop those relationships with challenging people, engage with them. Then you have the people

who can go in with crisis manage, maybe deal with all that heavy ended stuff and scary people. Because they're not holding that emotional…. they're attachment is slightly different, so they can do that. Then you have that whole range between…. where you can play to people's strengths and the client groups and you get a balance in the team (G3M7)

The comment identifies the skills in connecting practice to people, a complex task which also sets use of self as a wicked competence and soft skill, an art in knowing each other and playing to each other's strengths.

Use of self helped participants identify themselves for practice and it examined their styles and diversities which were of value for contributing to work. It acknowledged power differentials between themselves and service users important for their critical analysis.

The following sections examine the qualities that participants believed were essential for developing use of self. These were self-awareness, empathy, ethics and values, reflection and soft skills.

Self-awareness

Over half of the participants interviewed saw self-awareness as a driver of for understanding values, which they saw as critical in shaping their social work identity,

[T]he major area I would consider for using the self is firstly; self-awareness and understanding yourself, and particularly understanding your responses and biases and beliefs. (N13M11)

Self-awareness involved acknowledging the impacts of personal feelings, emotions and behaviours that supported understanding. Self-knowledge, understanding who you were

informed practice and included a number of critical analyses of structures, power and belief systems drawn from experience:

> *So, it's your emotional and intellectual growth. It's a learning, a knowledge, an analysing of our experiences. Personal and professional experiences. For me it's about bringing that into our work. You know, to be self-analytical and critical as well, which is really important. Considering all the learning opportunities, whatever form they take, and how we use that. And being aware of the power that as professionals we have. (G1M3)*

The rich statement above acknowledges the diversity of knowledge, techniques and skills that are incorporated into an interpretation of who you are. It recognised potential for oppressions, so that being self-analytical was essential for ensuring power was not misused.

Resilience and self-care

Being self-aware also supported participants to be aware of the need to self-care and build resilience for practice:

> *Resilience. So, the more you are aware of how you work and how things are impacting on you, the more you can manage yourself in that way, the more you can sustain yourself in the work. (N13M11)*

Resilience was suggested by participants to be connected to recognising the impact of work that consistently questioned actions:

> *In social work, we suffer a little bit from that because we're looking at your logs and reflective practice, but actually we're always looking for mistakes, almost. And I think that's a very dangerous part of our practice where there is a level where you need to*

say, "I've done my best, to my best ability, I've given it my best." And that sometimes is good enough. That is a real gift to learn to view that. (N6SP4)

The above participant was aware of the toll of looking for mistakes in order to improve practice which is an aspect of reflection. Dwelling on mistakes was draining and needed be contained. It also supports some evidence in the literature review that the expectation to reflect as part of an analysis of practice is complex. In the case above the participant has noted that dwelling on negatives in reflective practice could drain the energy of practice, indicating dangers of burn-out or even anxious practice. This is examined later on in the findings when participants discussed supports for their work.

There was a complex interaction between resilience and self-care, and new corporate languages of resilience:

Is resilience going on and on and on and not cracking? Or is resilience saying, "I'm not doing very well, I need some help," and then looking for the help? (N11E6)

True resilience involved humility and recognition of their own as well as others' needs. How to look after a person well by looking after themselves well which was a strength of practice:

I remember a very wise university tutor saying to me that, "in my vulnerability lies my strength." (G1M3)

Becoming resilient appeared to require discomfort or a recognition of vulnerabilities:

So your humanity, your vulnerability and your self-care (N14E7)

So if you're not looking after yourself, if you're not well, how are you going to…it is emotionally important to have the wellbeing and the frame of mind to go and work effectively with somebody else? (N15E8)

I suppose use of self is all tied in with resilience, self-care. Because some of the things we've been talking about I've been thinking, "is that use of self?" But, it is in a way. Self-care, where do I stop, where do service users start. (N8SP5)

Participants, reflecting on the vulnerability and relational aspects of use of self also drew attention to the emotional impacts of this on them personally and the fact that it required time and distance from work to support their own wellbeing:

Working through relationships and using yourself really does take its toll. It takes the toll in terms of your kind of emotional and intellectual capacity. Because, if you're doing it well you're constantly containing your emotions and waiting to respond, not reacting to things immediately, constantly thinking about, "why am I feeling this and why am I understanding in this way?" Then doing all that analysis work and that's really really tiring… So, the most important thing for me was the opportunity to step away from the work. There being definite breaks. (N13M11)

So you know what you need to do to for yourself and you know that you need to do this because if not it's not sustainable, burn-out is possible. Well, very likely, we know how often people burn-out in social work. So, I understand the importance of it, but it's difficult getting that balance. (N15E8)

And with self-care, that's something I'm trying to be better at. Because if you're having a wobbly day, based on health issues… If all you can think about is your health issues and the trauma that's happened before, then you can't focus on what you're trying to do, which is trying to help other people. (N9P6)

Being resilient contained acceptance of errors and the emotionally draining practice that required self-care. It was a recognition of vulnerabilities and the need to develop robust practice. This was not a robust resilience, but one that saw strengths in vulnerability. The literature review examines these traits as emotional intelligence that requires thoughtful recognition of self in order to be fit to support others. This is also a practice requirement and ethical responsibility of practice discussed later in the chapter.

Empathy

It was apparent that participants viewed their own histories and experiences as an effective way to build empathy, described as assisting in understanding the complexities of emotions experienced by those they were working with:

> *I think it's really really important in a profession where power is so central in what we do and how people view us, to let people know that we are no different in lots of ways, that we share a common ground as human beings, and that helps getting alongside people, rather than 'doing to' people. (N10M10)*

Just over a quarter of the respondents discussed intersecting narratives which impacted on their use of self, the following were clear statements from the data,

> *Okay, so, I'm a care leaver. I was in foster care for all of my life, basically. (N10M10)*
>
> *I've been a victim of abuse, but what does that mean to a person? (G2E1)*
>
> *But also knowing from personal experience that being a single mum is not easy (N12P6)*
>
> *I could go into the fact that I've had mental health problems in the past. (N1P2)*
>
> *And I have experienced domestic violence myself (N5P5)*

I was under supervision of probation (G4SP3)

One participant estimated that up to 45% of his student cohort had experienced discrimination and/or life experiences that brought them into contact with social workers themselves,

You aren't just teaching students, you're teaching students who come from a personal history. (N14E7)

Participants described how they saw their own histories and experiences as an effective way in which to build empathy,

And all of the families that I've dealt with I can usually identify with something about them and just put myself in their position and think, "That could be me. That so easily could be me sitting in that situation." And how would I respond in that situation? (G1M6)

Participants pointed out that similarities in the shared experiences between themselves and service users lives prompted empathy between the selves they brought to each other in their inter-actions; shared feelings and viewpoints that were seen as central for formulating change. This appeared to be a holistic analysis that taught them how relate to the service user system purposefully,

Well I always think of use of self in the sense of how I use the person I am to respond to where the service user is at. (N11E6)

In this view use of self held possibilities for finding a commonality between themselves and service users that was potentially liberating, but which also required a balanced response,

How much of myself am I giving, so that the service user feels a level of empathy and understanding from me from my own experiences of the past, (N8SP5)

The shared experiences of practitioners and service users was a process of understanding the service user perspective and was central for examining how it defined their personal/professional relationships.

Yes, that's really interesting, because again, I think a lot of it is knowing yourself really well and knowing not to overstep that professional boundary. You can disclose some things to clients. You can. But what you don't want to do, what you've got to be mindful of, is giving them worries, additional worries to what they've already got. You don't want them being your crutch for your problems. But what you want to try and do is let them know that they're not unique. They're not the only person in the world that's had that particular problem... we do think of them as the same as us. We're all humans… social workers are not these super-duper people who've got the knowledge to everything. We've also had our problems. But again, it's getting that fine balance. (N12P6)

Shared experiences evoked a sense of equality, a shared understanding of human experience that could affect anyone at any time. The ways in which participants used their own stories to help people is discussed later in these findings and underpins the importance of shared narratives in the helping experience.

Ethics and values

Two aspects of values and ethics were apparent. The first was the importance of being signed up to a social work ethos:

Because for me it goes back to values and social work values (G2E2).

The second was to ensure that personal values and social work values were balanced to combine social work and personal morality:

I think just to add to that self thing, it would be around those ethics and values as well and understanding what yours are and how you put them into your practice. (G3P1)

I think it comes across in your morals and your values a lot. And I think that sometimes they can be quite conflicting. (N4P4)

So that's really difficult without being, as you say, overpowering or too influential and bringing your own values and judgements to the situation. I think that's really complex. (G1M6)

Checking your own value base and how that's impacting your response and reactions. I think its part of everyday work in social work.(G1M1)

Self and values were mutually inclusive, supporting fairness and careful social justice, where knowing your own values and belief systems supported using self. One view suggested that personal and professional values become woven into professionalism:

It's a use of self with a professional aim. So, it's much more regulated perhaps. You know, that it still has to sit within the HCPC or BASW code of ethics of what's alright and what's not alright. (N11P6)

Another participant explored though the social analysis in social work ethics which examined structures:

I do think the subtle difference is that we are using a particular set of ethics around being anti-oppressive combatting previous relationship history that has happened…But we're actually trying to overcome oppression in people's previous relationships and so the way that we use ourselves is anti-oppressively. But also, we are trying to be more overt than in other fields. (N13M11)

Both these discussions demonstrate diverse practice in professional and anti-oppressive spheres and the ways in which social workers assert values. Analysis of power required an understanding of their own unconscious prejudices:

So, you want social workers to have really really good judgement about what makes a difference and what makes good outcomes. Because we're all highly biased and prejudiced in lots of different ways, and all these unconscious things are going on… if you don't understand yourself, you don't understand how you work internally, those judgements will probably be compromised. (N13M11)

Ethics and values weaved throughout the perspectives presented in these findings covering power, social work ethos, personal/professional relationships, social justice and anti-discriminatory practice. Participants were aware of their involved role in power so counteracting it involved understanding ethical contexts of their work, but also their position as a person within it.

For example, challenging inner personal belief systems against powerful constructions was important for developing an authentic social work self, including examinations of constructions of self,

I am very conscious that I am a male. I'm a white British male and erm that you know, I think again as I progress down my career that becomes more overt in my thinking. (N3E4)

The participant above had earlier discussed power in relation to his social class, economic status, family circumstances and culture, recognising the role of privilege in decision making. Importantly, this was an ongoing examination, that continued throughout his career.

Participants viewed themselves within structural examinations that they thought advantaged their examinations of power,

It's that understanding of discrimination and how that all works. (G4SP2)

Descriptions demonstrated that self was unique to the person, where values and ethics guided use of self and gave practitioners common ground on which to stand when practicing. The importance of the social work ethos is also returned to in chapters seven and eight where participants discussed barriers to use of self and the impacts of policy frameworks.

Reflection and self-reflection

Reflection was embedded in conversations regarding activities in over half of the interviews. It was difficult to untangle reflection from other conversations, but reflection was a key skill identified by over half of the participants:

I think reflection is really key. That self-reflection and questioning your own reaction to things at the same time. Checking your own value base and how that's impacting your response and reactions. (G1M1)

So, it's sort of the product of self-reflection and the insights that might give you, and how you might apply those to the therapeutic relationships of working. (G4P3)

One participant referred to critical analysis and discussed how they embedded critical reflection in their work to identify their beliefs:

> *Understanding your responses and biases and beliefs, and that's very strongly linked to critical reflection and analysis. (N13M11)*

On participant discussed concepts of use of self as intuition and saw its development as being conceived in critical reflection:

> *Everyone's got intuition. Maybe some more than others…. But regardless of what your intuition is, you have to consciously understand and use it as a source of information where you have to critically reflect on your analysis. (n13M11)*

The above reflects literature reported earlier in the thesis that critical reflection engages complexity and depth in analysis and where intuitive responses become an art of practice supported from a critical theorist approach.

Reflection could also utilise spaces that might be just as important for contemplation. A participant discussed the importance of her car:

> *When I was out and about on the road as a social worker, I'd have favourite lay-bys for pulling over and having a little think. You know, what had just happened and what I'd just done. So, it definitely was reflection time. (N11E6)*

The comment demonstrated the importance of an uninterrupted private space for the self, without external competing pressures. The participant below discussed the qualities needed for reflection for safe exploration because of its association with emotions of practice:

> *It's absolutely essential to talk about emotion and vulnerability, but providing a safe space for that to happen. And I think that social work would be so draconian and so*

judgemental without it because we're being required to make judgements on people's lives and it has to be uncomfortable, or we'll get it wrong (G1M3)

The comments above demonstrate the importance of finding high quality support for examining practice, and the earlier discussions about self-care, particularly the participant who careful thought about focussing on negative qualities in reflection practice. The policy reviews in earlier chapters address the problems of managerial supervision and some of the problems associated with the requirement to reflect on practice. These are examined in the themes identified in the following chapters.

Soft skills

It is suggested that use of self was seen as a soft, intuitive skill that necessarily exposed the fragile nature of self and the support needed to be confident with social work values:

it's an area where you are working with inter-personal relationships and all the kind of soft skills that you can't measure that intuition and that gut feeling. Then you look for well, "why do you have that gut feeling or bias or those reactions?", because those are human reactions (G2E3)

One participant commented the difficulties of maintaining a discursive that informs social work agendas which make the profession appear "woolly":

I always found social work theory really woolly. I don't know what makes us a social worker then. If you're a doctor, nurse, health professional, police, it's much clearer what you do. I think even now students struggle with theory all the time. They [students] find it difficult. You know, "Well, I just did the thing. I talked to the person and I did this and I did that." But what marks you out differently is that you have that

theory and you understand that, and you have that behind you as a qualified social worker… Yes, change agent, social justice, those kinds of concepts. (N8SP5)

The following educator believed more space was needed to examine social work's artistic elements:

I think social work is artistic. I'm not convinced we have been given enough space, or appropriate space, especially in academia and in education to keep it as an artistic expression of self. (N14E7)

There was some relationship in the above findings that suggested participants identified intuition as an aspect of practice. Softer skills were recognised as a place of strength in the negotiation of social work perspectives in multiagency environments:

So, for example, in our world when we do joint child protection investigations it's a social worker and a police officer, so for me that's an equal standing. They're obviously looking for the criminal side, we're looking at safeguarding, but there's that common goal and common purpose. Frequently I've heard social workers saying, "The police decided this." Okay, "So why didn't you challenge it? What was your part and your contribution to that investigation, where was your sense of self as a social worker advocating for the family?" And I think, agreeing with that caring side, and okay… Making those decisions can be quite a complex situation to deal with. (G1M5)

It also helped them to utilise interpersonal skills when in positions of power. The participant below discussed her role as a Chair:

Well, it's quite easy when you've had a number of years of practicing to bring your own agenda and experience into that meeting, rather than to facilitate the conference and

get the best out of people, to get a sense of them, as well and what they can do to resolve some of the difficulties. So I'm very aware of that within my role and in chairing children looked after reviews, and other meetings. (G1M3)

Although the soft skills of social work were also described as tricky to negotiate:

[I]f you're outnumbered, almost kind of criticised for being touchy, feely and all of these other things, then that might be harder to maintain. (N15E8)

Navigating personal/professional relationships

Personal histories were useful for understanding contexts, systems and narratives through which participants could reflect and analyse their practice. They were adaptable in their relationships, involving intuition, trying to gain access to perspectives that ensured appropriate responses:

I think it does show that the person is human. I suppose there's several audiences, there's worker to self, and I think that's a really important one. Like, "how do I work with my value sets?" There are professional ones, but what about, "personally me?" You know, "what do I feel?" and "what do I bring that's useful for that client that's sat in front of me?" And again, some of the conversations are about not compartmentalising our emotions too much, or our feelings. (N3E4)

Personal recognition of background and upbringing needed careful consideration and consciousness in interactions with service users. A number discussed the impacts of who you are:

I'm very aware that my upbringing was Catholic, so in terms of sometimes of the way that I think, those values are still in there and I have to be quite careful. Sometimes,

even now, when I'm looking, or assessing a situation, I have to think about and try and not bring that in there. So I'm quite self-aware with that. (G1M4)

Who I am as a black British woman and what kind of values I might hold because of that and the lens I would see that through. (N15E8)

Participants recognised service user/practitioner relationships needed careful negotiation of boundaries, especially where these were shared:

Particularly relating to women, where you've had shared experiences. How much of that do you allow into the relationship? You know, protecting yourself, as well as giving a bit of yourself, isn't there? (N5P5)

Issues around sexual orientation will often come up and have done throughout my career. But I don't think I've ever shared that I'm gay myself. So, am I using myself there? I made a decision that that moment is not about me and my life, and that I also want to protect myself as well. (N8SP5)

A participant who was a non-English white European noted how in England people didn't touch each other, which was something she had to learn, as in her own country social work could be quite tactile:

Over the years I've had to be very careful, if I'm being tactile with someone, how they might feel about that and is what they need or not? And in this country professionals don't touch each other. Where actually, in an engagement where somebody is terribly upset, perhaps just holding their hand might be quite appropriate, it might be just what that person needs. But in university they wouldn't tell you to do that, they'll probably

tell you never to do that. But the reality is that in human interaction, when somebody is at breaking point, it might be a gesture, and something that says it's okay. (N6SP4)

There was general agreement between most participants about the pitfalls of sharing their personal backgrounds with service users. It was important to understand what they were sharing and why they were sharing it,

[I]f a young person is talking about being abused and you say, "Oh yes, I know because I was abused too," for example. You run into all sorts of inappropriate difficulties there. One, you've got to be very careful, because they will not have experienced it as you experienced it, therefore the response will be different. You mustn't therefore…you've got to hear their story, not your story. (N11E6)

Focussing on the service user need and not their own was clearly important. The following comment reflects the negotiation of personal/professional boundaries that prioritised the service user:

But it is about finding that balance of not letting what you've gone through means that you understand what that other person's going through. Not let it dictate. Not let that power. Not let it dictate what you think that service user is going through. (N9P6)

This required them to be adaptable to service user situations:

….[T]he skill for me is adjusting the use of self to that person…do you keep different selves in your tool kit bring out according to where you are? I mean, you probably don't change your knowledge and experience, but you certainly change your approach. (N11E6)

Use of self here encompassed intersecting personal and professional identities and narratives that encapsulated determined helpful and professional approaches in their relationships with service users:

> *I guess it's investment of your personal history and your experience of dealing with issues. So, referring to how you might have developed yourself, and how that might be relevant to the work that you're doing with the person in front of you. So, it's sort of the product of self-reflection and the insights that might give you, and how you might apply those to the therapeutic relationships of working. (G4SP3)*

Participants gave a number of examples of ways that their own experience had the potential to help others, but where they appointed approaches for examining how this might impact on personal/professional relationships when they had shared experiences.

Shared experiences and personal/professional relationships

Nearly all participants described early relationship building as critical for setting the tone of their encounters, which may or may not involve sharing information from their personal histories:

> *I think it's a skill we all have as individual social workers, you know, when to share information and how much to share and how that might work with different people. (G3P1)*

Making decisions to disclose information about their own lives needed to be planned, and it was important to know when to stand back from sharing.

> *You're in a dialogue with the service user and they say something, you just don't want to flippantly or quickly respond to them about how you're aware of some part of their*

life experience because you share a similar life experience, or you can equate a past experience that you've had. You need to have time to go back and reflect on what they've said, and then if you feel it would be beneficial for them, well, then you can go back and explore that a bit more with them. (G1M2)

The above response had reflective qualities requiring considered responses. These are similar to Schön's 'in action' and 'on action' reflection theory. This approach might be suggested as intuitive, a reflection 'in action' regardless of whether a decision is made to share or not to share, it is made in the moment. The literature on use of self discussed 'intuitive' responses as an aspect of use of self. The participants were identifying this hidden ability in these comments.

More surface sharing might come from what participants viewed as less important information about themselves for building rapport. The following participant saw the importance of sharing themselves to show a service user they were human:

Actually, that's what makes you human. It's that human to human interaction, or that…. Can you imagine? It perplexes me really; how bad would your life have to be before you called a social worker?...and this person arrives, and they don't look human, and you've got no idea really what they do…why would you start opening up to this stranger, without forming that relationship? It isn't an equal relationship. We have a lot of power as social workers, and if we're not able to bring that down to some level, you can't do it. (N6SP4)

But even here it was noted care was needed because of potential power imbalances, asking themselves what purpose the shared information served,

[T]here will be times when offering something from your personal life helps build a relationship or helps to you to work better with that person, to help them make a valid decision, for that person. It might be helpful for example, to….well, when I was a practitioner I worked with older people primarily. I would talk about my relationship with my grandmother, if I thought it was useful, when talking to a carer, for example. But I just think you have to be really really careful with it because it's not about you. If you're using yourself to build a relationship, to understand someone else's situation and what happens to them, there's a power differential. (N13M11)

Use of self here was a vital inter-personal skill for adapting themselves to service user situations and using personal histories sensitively as a helping tool. The important comment here being to remember that the encounter was not the participant but the other person. In the following example a participant discussed how she decided the ways in which she shared knowledge from practice to support families:

If I'm talking about strategies for managing behaviour, they'll ask me does it really work? And I do talk about that. I don't necessarily answer about whether I've got kids or not. But I will say, "I tried this and it worked with this child." I think when you speak about your own experiences with a family, you're telling them that there's not just one way, there's not a right and a wrong way, and helping them to understand it's okay to make mistakes and try different things. You're giving them different options and different strategies, different ways of trying things, and it becomes more human, doesn't it? (G3M7)

In another example the participant reframed her own experience to support a service user:

I could really relate to it because a similar thing happened to me. I was very conscious of not saying that to her, but wanting to use my experiences of how I recovered from that situation…I think you have to be confident with that and trust that you're able to apply the knowledge that you have and the experience that you have and turn it into a way of helping people. I think it's a fine line, like I said at the beginning, making sure that that doesn't take over. The person that you're working with, where your experiences aren't at the top of your mind…it should always be the service users at the top of your mind. (N9P6)

The above examples demonstrated the search for an authentic manner, in each case making discerning judgments about whether and how personal information supported the service user. How they could carefully incorporate experiences into their practice. These again seemed to be intuitive and creative reactions, ways to find empathy and discover whether any of their experiences were useful to support the helping relationship,

People don't react the way you expect them to. And if people don't react the way you expect them to you kind of go back and think, "How would I have reacted if I'd been faced with that scenario?" Or, if people are really struggling, "Have I got any experiences that would help to move it on?" …Can I use anything that I've been through to figure out a way of supporting them, or helping them to explore it and figure it out themselves? (G1M1)

There were three essential elements; whether the sharing would support a healthy relationship with the service user, whether the sharing would appear to denigrate the service user's experience, and an analysis of power. The personality of the participants was brought

together with experience and skills and confidence in accessing resources from within themselves; building empathy, emotional intelligence and authenticity in responses.

Individual responsibility and collective support

The above quotes respond to earlier comments about the way in which knowledge connects with self and the possibilities for it to be adjusted, recognised differently through the actions of others. Taking responsibility for themselves in practice meant they were accountable to themselves through the support of others:

> *I think it's absolutely essential that you're prepared, or I'm prepared to talk about what in my personal life and in my personal experiences is impacting on my practice, absolutely. And, that's something that's really a necessity to do good work. Whether that's actually reflected on and discussed and processed… it ought to be. (N11M11)*

Supervision

Supervision was expressed as being key to developing use of self:

> *You need to have that supervision and feel comfortable disclosing stuff, discussing what's appropriate to share and how to manage that. What feelings of my past are bringing up for me that may interfere in my role or could be used positively. (N1P2)*

> *If you don't address your needs as an individual, as a professional…and you don't know that a case is having an impact on you emotionally for whatever reason, how can you address it, deal with it, never mind seek support? Or ask for help from your supervisor? So, effective supervision, regular supervision is absolutely key in self-care, but not just with the support of a professional. If you don't know yourself, how can you go to your*

manager…and perhaps peer support is particularly important, as in mentoring, which we don't have enough of in social work. (N6SP4)

In order to be effective it needed to provide safe and protected space:

Its absolutely essential to talk about emotion and vulnerability but providing a safe space for that to happen. (G1M3)

Interestingly, use of self was described by many as being developed through mutual peer support or consultation, with some reservations expressed about regular supervision with a manager on its own being useful for developing use of self:

I'm really fortunate in my supervision because I have a trusted colleague who supervises me and I don't work for her and she doesn't work for me and we're not part of the same organisation. And now that I've got that much more strongly than I ever have with other supervisors I just think it's so valuable. But I think it's very hard to do that when your supervisor is also your boss. (N13M11)

Participants developed a preferred use of self in their practice through mutual learning and supportive collegial groups or supervision shaped through their professional relationships. It was in these more informal arenas that participants discussed feeling safe to explore experiences, mistakes and to self-reflect which involved challenge for themselves:

Yes, so if you're in a team of people who just keep telling you, "yes, yes, you're wonderful," you're never going to develop, and the team won't either. So, you do need to be able to develop that, to say, "no," or, "have you thought about that in a different way?" (G3M7)

It was expressly important for participants in their conversations to have opportunities to learn about others as well as themselves, and how this impacted on different diversities, styles and personalities that contributed to their professionalism. Further, they wanted opportunities to discuss mistakes or feelings about being wrong, through others, for example, a participant described the importance of a car journey to work with a colleague:

> *So, in the mornings and the afternoon when we drove to work we'd both be going, "Oh this happened," and "have I done this right?" and, "I feel like I'm completely failing at this that and the other." (G3SP1)*

The responses demonstrated that peer networks, mentoring and consultation had a 'private' quality that was not counselling, but that was connected to a fluid analysis,

> *Where you can share your experiences and where it's okay to talk about things that you've done wrong or mistakes, or something you didn't know about. That approach is a core social work skill. (G3M7)*

A group of managers discussed setting up peer supervision to give practitioners space to examine their work away from their regular management supervision:

> *[T]hey're all professionals…And it's that way of getting them to that place of self-awareness. That's when they'll perform, that's when they'll do best, regardless of whether that's about performance and quality of work, or commitment, or going through difficult times… So, we've introduced peer group supervision to try and get them talking to each other and figuring it out for themselves. (G1M1)*

Barriers to good supervision

Participants raised concerned about the quality of supervision they had experienced in organisations as they became more complex in modern structures:

> *And it's very difficult to sustain a relationship with your supervisor. Managers are changing. I think that burn-out rate of people moving in and out very quickly is because there are no other options. (G7M7)*

Some described how structures had become increasingly pressurised in environments where they were unable to sustain support for themselves:

> *So, interestingly you find that when social workers go into supervision… they don't necessarily get good quality supervision, or colleagues can really struggle with working with each other because of the amount of work and the stress around and competition for desks and some of the behaviours that you see in practice and in management and leadership, and I would include myself in this, is not good social work. It's almost as if we can't sustain it. And, because maybe we don't have enough containment, or places to go and say, "well, actually, I'm at the end of my tether."…You have to very deliberately create strategies to sustain people because what happens in the field kind of uses up the capacity for this. (N13M11)*

Changed structures were also physical, making it difficult to find peer support networks that they found important and perhaps more necessary:

> *I think a lot of the problems for me is that they're making offices now so that you're hot desking and you're not around other people that you're working with, so you can't really use yourself because you're not sitting there talking things over, and they're not*

helping. I think recently when I had supervision, I had an issue with an [assessment] and I was told that it was because I have a gap in my practice. But it wasn't that, it was because I haven't got the chance to reflect on things. (G3P1)

The quality of relationships with managers in their supervisory role was mentioned as being essential for honest exploration of practice. Management style can make the difference between supervision as an opportunity to learn and improve and as a means of managerial control and practitioner disempowerment:

There are some managers I've had who I wouldn't say a word to, no matter what I was going through, because I know it would be held against me. Then there's been other managers who are brilliant. Someone who would be really helpful. But I know there are other managers where if I said, "I'm struggling with so and so, I'm not quite sure." They would look down on me. (N12SP6)

A manager in a group also discussed the difficulties of balancing the competing demands of supporting social work autonomy, whilst meeting organisational requirements:

I'm a great believer that people don't need to be managed if you give them the tools to do the job, they should be able to do that. But here there is very much that culture and a very big investment from managers to support the workers, but you know, to get that balance and also to ultimately deliver a service to our children and families. So you know, I'm very mindful of that and about their responsibility as well; to themselves, to their profession and to the families that we serve. (G1M3)

Responses indicated it was becoming too difficult to maintain the kind of support necessary for maintaining good quality supervision and why, as reported in this section, many participants had taken individual and collective responsibility for exploring their practice.

Illustration of supervision

A participant explained how she overcame anxiety when supported to do so by a change in her supervision. This, in turn, was experienced as supportive of her work with a family. These changes were related to new unitary authorities that were implemented in the UK under the Hackney Model (Munro, 2010, 2011) discussed in chapter 3. The participant discussed her prior experience of management supervision before the restructuring:

> *You would think that supervision is that space for you, but then it becomes a case management. So, then you're kind of left feeling, or I was left feeling, like, "Oh crap, you haven't done that and that." But yes, I'm still left with those feelings of anxiety, and still those feelings of stress. And then I have to bottle that in for the next 4 weeks – until supervision comes round again. (N4P4)*

When the participant moved to the newly structured unit teams based on the Munro recommendations, her supervision was restructured as peer groups led by a social work consultant. At the time she was working with a family who reminded her of her own family which she felt uncomfortable. Although she realised that it was common for practice to mirror experiences of practitioners, her prior experience of supervision made her wary of discussing it:

> *I was sceptical about telling anyone. Really sceptical. Because I thought, "how is that going to be perceived? How will that be viewed? Will I be viewed as being*

unprofessional? Am I going to be viewed as somebody who can't manage different situations or experiences, or whatever?" (N4P4)

She went on to discuss how the anxieties were causing her to feel stuck:

I don't have the opportunity to be crippled by fear when I'm working with a family, if that makes sense, I've got a job to do. (N4P4).

In the peer group supervision with a social work consultant provided by the unitary model she felt safe enough to share her anxieties about working with the family:

And I felt like the team was really kind and understanding. And they kind of explored it with me a little bit more, which allowed me to kind of face some of my demons and face some of my truth. It allowed me to effectively work with the family really well. . I could empathise…That forced me to re-evaluate myself and re-evaluate my emotions So that was, I think, a good lesson for me. Really good lesson. (N4P4)

The participant explained that she believed sharing her experience validated practice with the family and improved her work with them. Her prior experience of supervision had taught her to be wary of sharing and indicated it was not space to discuss personal histories. The experience of the unitary model supported her to be open to reflecting on herself. She saw this was beneficial for the family and for herself.

There is a commonality in this story with the literature. These may be in small ways, as one person noted earlier on that she could see something of herself in every family she worked with, or whether there were emotional identifications in the immediacy of interventions that made workers unsure. The way in which these were resolved were through a supporting 'holding space' for practice. Emotional containment is discussed

extensively in the literature review. It also reflects the importance of ensuring worker emotional safety and the benefits of doing so for service users and for practice.

Discussion

Use of self was pragmatic, achieved by recognising how shared experiences between social workers and service users contributed to an analysis of values. It was seen as something unique and meaningful, embedded into their practice, and understood through a large number of concepts, empathy, self-care, emotional resilience etc.

Nurturing use of self required safe space in which to be open and honest about mistakes and emotional vulnerabilities. Participants described some barriers for feeling safe in professional case driven supervision for getting the emotional support they needed. A significant number overcame the difficulties they faced by creating professional or friendship networks, peer supervision, or group supervision. Their own arrangements allowed them to take responsibility for their professionalism and social work values through collective support. Ferguson (2008) noted the significance of liquid practice and neutral spaces of social work practice. Participants in this finding were also finding neutral spaces for practice contemplation, casual conversations in the car, pulling over to the roadside to contemplate, utilising colleague networks outside of work.

The finding demonstrated that participants were willing to search for an authentic self, and fully accepted that there were diversities of self. This was important because it indicates that an authentic self must be located in social work values consistent with a commitment to examine practice. Doing so included allowing oneself to be emotionally vulnerable and recognising this as a strength. Participants used pragmatic approaches; the use of prior experiences as a guide and using each other as sounding boards to locate good practice.

Authenticity was underpinned by a professional ethos; being prepared to be wrong, openly and honestly sharing practice with each other, being self-aware that involved promoting self-care and building healthy resilience for using self wisely in their relationships with service users. The above contrasted Kausick (2017) who suggested that the examination of personality, values and belief systems may indicate superiority of one type of self over another, making it difficult to locate an authentic self for social work. The finding in this theme suggested it was possible to find a social work use of self.

There were shared experiences between participants and service users that accessed the practitioners' own feelings and emotions. Their empathy supported practice as a tool for finding any useful approaches. Further, participants thought social work should take account of the way in which personal values and beliefs influenced their understanding of the service users' situation. This was the self they decided to share with clients, and decisions about different aspects of themselves might be helpful, including their previous practice experiences. Participants adjusted their approaches to support service user need. Disclosure was only used if it was considered appropriate and helpful and might be understood as an "ethic of mutuality" (Cooper & Lesser, 2002, p.131). This indicated high-order ethical interpretations, as well as wider examinations of social structures.

Importantly participants attached a great weight to trust, time and space for exploring use of self. The illustrative story of one participant's supervision demonstrated how bringing together a number of analyses, including her personal therapy, improved her practice with a family during a consultation process in a unit meeting. These spaces were recommended by the Munro reviews of child care social work (Munro, 2010, 2011) and structured by the Hackney model of unitary approaches (Cross, Hubbard & Munro, 2010). Howe suggested that

emotionally intelligent organisations were the best way to support high quality practice (Howe, 2008, p.190).

Where management and case-oriented supervision created barriers for participants, they took responsibility for carving out time and space for themselves outside of their organisations. This gave them space for exploring practice that might otherwise make them feel vulnerable, such as making mistakes and the impact of emotions on practice. Private supportive spaces became important nourishments for holding on to their sense of social work identity as well as allowing them to find strength in their vulnerabilities for resilient practice. Taking these kinds of responsibilities contained their practice and it is suggested, supported the development of an 'internal supervisor'.

A good example was in this research itself. One group met together at the house of one of the participants and cooked lunch for us to share, other groups brought cakes and other groups and interviews were located in comfortable spaces or offices where they made time in their very busy days to engage in the research.

It is suggested in summary that use of self was vital for insightful practice where practitioners could use their unique identities to support others. Analysis of social work values and ethical interpretations contributed to examinations of power and checks on self; boundaries, adaptations of self, cultivating supportive relationships and finding an authentic professional self that participants could use for practice. These required time, space and trust in which to explore vulnerabilities. Barriers were identified to using this 'preferred self', examined in the next theme.

Research questions

The finding supports answers to question one and partially supports answers to the final parts of research question two:

How do social workers understand use of self as an aspect of their professional practice in social work?

How do social work professionals interpret, sustain and manage use of self?

This theme partly addresses research questions of one two and three. Participants concurred with each other that they understood 'who you are' alongside knowledge, values, skills that helped them to become self-aware for use of self.

Use of self was unique to participants, in that each provided different styles that must be driven by social work values in open, honest examinations of themselves. Participants were involved humanists who used therapeutic approaches but were also influenced by structural examinations. Social analysis gave them access to "co-construction", a wider variance of psychodynamic interpretation (Adamowich et al,2014 p.132), also suggested by Kondrat (1999) as "critical reflectivity". Structural examinations of power acted as a lens for recognising marginalisation, and differences in experiences, to find authentic approaches. Addressing the first part of research question two, their interpretation of use of self was critically examined and therapeutically oriented, connected to human values. In the final chapter the definitions of use of self are examined in detail, to see whether a definitive straightforward description is possible.

CHAPTER 7:

Findings and Discussion – Theme Two

Barriers to use of self

This theme reports on tensions that participants thought were devaluing social work and eroding professional confidence for using the preferred self they identified in the previous chapter. Most participants described their recent practice experience as working in a new age of social work that closed down a sense of self. These were seen in targets and performance driven services, values conflicts and emotional safety.

Targets and performance driven services

Importantly, nearly all participants believed rigorous technocratic processes were becoming increasingly difficult to resist, placing considerable barriers in the way of use of self. Opportunities to develop their professionalism were minimised in management supervision and technocratic processes discussed as 'tick-box', 'procedural' or 'performance driven' processes. One participant sums this up clearly:

> *So, different agencies will use, at different times, different assessment tools, which are very quantitative. Our [referring to the participants in the focus group] planning around work tends to be much more qualitative. Like, much more a* ***feel*** *[participants emphasis] of what the assessment means, rather than an attempt to put people down the right route in automatic, "If you answer this question, this is what we do." It's something that actually is brought in the new IT system data base which is exactly looking for us to take the need for the individual out…Once you've put the information in, it will tell you what you've got to do next. (G4SP3)*

The above participant realised in the conversation with the group that the new IT system he was discussing was coming to his own job, where his "feel" for practice may soon be limited. Another group member joked,

> *That's not far away from being able to be automated, is it? You could run it like that. (G4M9)*

It was a glib comment with serious intent that suggested the practitioner would be able to work in a much more mechanistic fashion, without needing to examining other aspects of the work they were discussing. A comment reflecting the concerns of automation was discussed by another participant in relation to students he was teaching:

> *When I look at students now, the last thing is for them to be this line of robots…. You know, coming out of university and are able to tick all the right boxes, whatever, whatever. Then go home, not think about it (G2E2)*

Another manager discussed her meetings with colleagues where the focus no longer identified the nature of the work they were doing,

> *And looking at the performance board one day and just thinking to myself, "Well, all those numbers up there, they could be about the number of shoes I've sold this week." Because it didn't feel as if it was anything to do with children whatsoever. (G1M6)*

Reducing service users to numbers was reported as dehumanising. In essence, automated responses for practice were seen as endangering the qualities of evidence and removal of social work values. For all participants, these developments were experienced as hostile to the use of self in social work. These were translated into other professional management arenas as a lack of understanding about social work skills:

For example, I sat with the Chief Executives' Management Team for a while, and go in there with lots of those sort of, accountants, heads of completely different department with the potential to look at the social worky ones, and, "they don't really know what they're doing." (G4SP3)

Tick box and performance driven cultures

Participants referred to overwhelming procedural and tick box systems. The following quotes provide a n array of examples where technocratic cultures were seen to be impinging on practice:

[You] have a check list and tick all the boxes. (N15E8)

As long as you tick this box it's fine. (N9P6)

Tick tick tick. (N11E6)

Here's the question, tick. (N7E5)

Who can do the right tick boxes to prove what they're doing. (G3M7)

As long as it's on the system we can tick it off. (G4M8)

[Y]ou have to do a sexual exploitation tick box assessment. No, you don't. Well, you do, because your manager says you have to. (N5P5).

It's become very processed really. And that's systems and trackers. (G3M7)

It's much more process driven. You must follow this, you must follow that. (N8SP5)

They were replicating what we are always saying not to do with families, where it was very very performance led and it was, "you must do this and you must do that and you must do it now." (G1M6)

When I look at students now, the last thing is for them to be this line of robots…. You know, coming out of university and are able to tick all the right boxes, whatever, whatever. (G2E2)

These experiences were reported as relentless and as having a corrosive impact on social work practice. Providing tick box assessments was described as inadequate for engaging with the complexities experienced by families in the system:

> *I read stuff where people have talked to parents about their family history because it's part of the boxes they've got to do, but they…You either get this full account of, "he said, they said, she said"… and no reflection on it, or they have overly analysed it without a psychological element, just summarised it. And then, they don't actually know how that informs why that parent becomes……..we don't have that use of self, we don't have that psychological outlet. (G3M7).*

The dominance of risk reduction policies were also experienced by participants as reducing the role of self and agency in social work. Participants discussed how policy designed to minimise risk continued to overwhelm services:

> *Potentially I think they try to minimise risk. So as close to zero as they can possibly do. That's what they're after. There not being a risk of something going wrong, and for that you have to curtail all sorts of things. It doesn't work anyway, things still go wrong. (G4SP3)*

The participant below made a sarcastic comment about the response to new processes described in Every Child Matters:

> *Because of Every Child Matters. You know, so all the case reviews coming out at that time and all the child deaths and the press response to that was brilliant, "we'll eliminate all risk, altogether and then everyone will be entirely safe" (N10M10)*

Heightened anxieties lessened the motivation for participants to take risk themselves. Disciplinary regimes in organisations were described as very effective in reducing innovation and creative approaches in social work:

> *So, the more serious case reviews there are, the more things that go wrong, the more that things become tighter and people are scared to be creative, or go outside the kind of set rules and processes. (N8SP5)*

Participants were aware of problems associated with over strategized 'what works' agendas but saw frequently the confusion generated by conflicting policies about what was the 'best' solution:

> *And then suddenly being responsible for those decisions really, the sense of self can get very lost in that because, I'm not sure what I think is right anymore. And suddenly the political influences make me second guess myself, and what is the right way? Trying to keep away from permanence with birth family, now we're* ***doing*** *permanence with birth family, and I'm sure we'll go round again. (G1M1)*

> *So, I think that's one of the ways they deal with it and that's a way of managing the anxieties about the decisions we make. It's not really my decision, it's really…here's the boxes and here's the answer. (N7E5)*

A participant noted how curriculums changed the nature of social work to ones that taught skills approaches and 'surface' learning changing the nature of social work itself:

> *I think social workers now seem pretty business like. I think you can be a social worker now and say, "I'm doing these things," and not be very reflective. (N7E5).*

Concepts that participants valued, such as empathy and emotional intelligence were reported as being minimised in the workplace, and assessment criteria on which to make judgements were maximised:

> *Again, I'm conscious that I've had several conversations in the last few years with social workers, because I do run group sessions as well, about whether we become too unemotional as social workers, are we boundaried too much. Again we don't show feelings, we don't show empathy. (N3E4)*

> *Something's happened, and we want to make sure we reduce the risk and protect there. You have to mirror it in the way you manage your workers, so that they can then explore that environment and they have the capacity to go out and do that with the families. You don't! I am strong believer that with that system you produce a different type of social worker now. You can be a practitioner who doesn't use self. I think you can. You've got that extreme. (G3M7)*

Participants expressed concern that current workplace imperatives encouraged social workers to practice without needing to understand the deeper significance of the use of self in examinations of power, structure or relationships:

> *If you're not prepared to be reflective about that…I think those people use policy and procedure(N7E5)*

The use of procedures was also discussed as anxiety about the 'atmospheres' social work practiced in, which were described as restricting the emotional aspects of their work that implicated their emotional safety.

Emotional safety

Feelings of discomfort were expressed by most participants from macro political, to micro levels of practice. These included a sense of disenfranchisement from their own role in managerialist cultures:

> *Well I'm going to blame New Labour for everything. This managerialist culture…That kind of micromanagement suppressed us to a point where we lost all of our discretionary space and we were told that we were idiots, and we weren't allowed to have independent thoughts. It was almost like induced helplessness, "you are helpless, because we're telling you that you're helpless. You must do it the way this micromanagement manual tells you to do." (G2E1)*

A number of participants reflected on their concern about public perceptions of social work which they saw, were fed by media portrayals that made it difficult to maintain credibility as a social worker. The following participant referred to a newspaper media campaign to have a Social Work Director and social worker removed from their posts following the death of a child (Harringay Council, 2009). The newspaper began a public petition which led to the public dismissal Director on a TV programme (Shoesmith, 2016):

> *And I think, how do we expect families to work with social workers when the media portrays us like, the Sun [newspaper], obviously, is the worst one...How can that be right in this day and age that this corporation can do that to people without?…But I think it's just really disgusting the way the media treat us. (G3P1)*

These were decsribed by participants as typical portrayals that had eroded professional status over a number of years. The quote below illustrates this:

For decades it's not highest the status compared with other professions. You know, we all know that in the media that social workers get the criticism before doctors and others in serious case reviews. (N8SP5)

Participants expressed anxieties workplace blame cultures which they felt created an unsafe environment for self expression and practice which engaged little more than procedures. A fairly newly qualified social worker just outside of her qualified year of practice referred to her concerns about management supervision:

I would say that what's frightening about this massive statutory sector who are all struggling to be able to do that. I think that worries me. It worries me about how I will protect myself in that environment. (N5P5)

One participant suggested it was becoming more and more difficult to resist procedural approaches, believing these were wearing practitioners down:

Your humanity, your vulnerability and your self-care and your self-disclosure, giving of oneself…All the things that fall under professional use of self were not only ***not*** *valued, but were devalued. And you were taught very carefully that to survive that system you did not bring those skills sets to the shop floor. So, you either play by the rules, or you don't…so you chose in the end to play by those rules, you go by that system. (N14E7)*

The following quote provides a clear account of the negative impacts of procedure heavy social work on the capacity of workers enact professional thought and assessment:

So, I think it's anxiety and preoccupation and so that sense of not doing your work well…The first thing is you think that it must be your fault, because you're supposed to be able to do that, rather than thinking, "what's going on?" Then, I also think, "well,

maybe I'm not very good at social work then." And you start to doubt yourself and then that actually does make you think that you are less good. Because you've lost some of your authenticity, you're over thinking, and so yes, there's that sense of failure that starts to creep in as well. And I think also the threat of potentially losing your job does stop people from offering themselves in those thoughtful or reflective ways. (N13M11)

In this workplace environment, some participants advocated for attention to be paid to create and maintain spaces and support for the development of the professional self in social work. One participant agreed it was far more important to provide safe and contained spaces for self-development in practice. This included exposing the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of yourself as the manager or supervisor, as a learning tool:

If you can be passionate and vulnerable as managers then you've got a much better chance of workers following suit. And if you're willing to reflect openly, and sometimes even uncomfortably, about what you're thinking about yourself, you've got much more chance of making it safe for them to be able to do so. (G1M1)

On a micro level emotional safety was essential because of ethical dilemmas they would face in practice. Life experiences were seen as a central tool for examining use of self for learning and practice, where sharing with each other, discussed in the previous theme, supported use of self. The quality of supervision was believed to be patchy and dependant on the supervisors' attitudes:

Knowing some of the personal issues I have had to deal with over the last couple of years and supervisors that I've had at the time, the amount and level of disclosure has been reflected in the relationship that I've had with that supervisor and whether I've felt safe. Which is if I'm going to get support and I've felt that what I'm disclosing is

going to be taken as, "Okay, this is something that we need to discuss, or have some support around, or have something in place." Or is it going to be taken as, "Oh well, she's not managing. This is a problem…" the relationship and the trust and the response I think I'm going to get from that supervisor (N14E7)

Student social worker education

Providing emotional safety for students was reported as a critical part of safeguarding future social work practice. In practice doing so was described as complex because of competing curriculum and assessment demands. Anxieties were believed to be embedded in education, training and management, thus reinforcing the attenuation of use of self:

I suppose it is also what the agenda was for social work then in terms of risk and risk management and…You know, all these things that are very prescriptive and bureaucratic. So then social work training follows that, and different universities follow that, and that probably doesn't help that either. (N10M10)

Focus group discussions indicated a new proceduralism and a corporate professionalism that suggested there was a change in expectations of social work education:

It's the whole changing nature of social work education and training… especially around professional use of self, this is devalued because the outcome is simply about graduate status, "I'll arrive on a three year programme. I'll be taught what I need to do. I'll do my 2 placements, complete all my modules and pass all my modules then I'll get graduate social work status. But do I really need to go beyond consumption of enough knowledge to graduate?" (N14E7)

Following graduation, the practice of self and the containment of self in relationship with the service user, was no longer seen as being available as an internal skill for curtailing risk. Instead, as discussed earlier, risk avoidance was decanted into a set of procedures. Without foundational principles they believed students found it difficult to understand what use of self was:

> *If they don't do it we go back to them and say, "there's not much of you in here. Have you considered how this might affect the service user in this situation?" Or, "How does it impact on you when you go home, having had such a difficult day? How do you off load? Do you reflect? Do you use a reflective cycle, etc etc…"? We're pushing them in some ways to do it. But, maybe they don't understand the importance of why it's helpful.(G2E2)*

> *You know, the whole thing of integration of self and professional behaviours is really to role model that to our students. I'm not convinced I see a lot of this in professional practice. When our students go out into professional practice we try to really say, "are you seeing much of this? Can you reference this in your PCF domain? Are you presenting skills around integration of self and professional behaviours?" Our students are coming back and saying, "Not really." (N14E7)*

The above indicated the pressure on students to reflect and to find the "you" in their practice, and the squeezing of use of self within other competing demands whereas the previous theme indicated the importance of space, time and trust needed for use of self.

Educators reported they were working with larger cohorts of students attracted by strong advertising and vocational aspirations not necessarily reconcilable with social work values in new corporate Higher Education Institutions:

I still feel it's a disconnect between academic provision and practice reality. (N14E7)

As a result, the expression of personal histories that were commonplace in classrooms of the past were becoming onerous to manage in the degree program:

> [Students] *make themselves vulnerable by using disclosure, especially in a large group. Because not everybody in that teaching group is a nice person who wants to help everybody. You get people, who are getting off on the controlling aspect of it. (G2E1).*

One participant thought Issues were magnified in 'celebrity' culture, trial by media and social media 'back stories', that make compelling drama for the consumption of others (G2E1). The treatment of personal histories had shifted in modern social media, making it more difficult to build trust according to this participant:

> *And we live in a different age now. You know, disclosure in 1986, that would have been one thing. It can go word of mouth and maybe disappear. Now we've got social media, so straight away, for the student… and that stays there forever, you can't just delete it off your wall and think it's gone. It exists. And people, or employers, they can search for it. It can be negative. (G2E2)*

Participants raised discrepancies between the theoretical discussion they were having and the realities of exposure of self in current education settings. For example, it was commonplace to use their own experiences as a learning tool. However, discussions arose about the wariness of doing so in current education contexts:

> *[Y]ou need to make a judgement yourself about what you're happy to disclose to these students and just how that will be received by that group or that student. So, definitely*

there's got to be a balance with professionalism and appropriateness about what's being disclosed. (N15E8)

They reported wide gaps between the theoretical discussion they were having about use of self and the practicalities of learning cultures in current university settings which made everyone vulnerable:

But we do live and work in a different time and space where students are more litigious, students are more consumerist, and students can use things against you. There are examples, here as elsewhere, so I think to just be very mindful. (N14E7).

In the previous theme mistakes were seen as important for learning, but these were dependant on practice educators' views:

Are students allowed to make a mistake and then reflect on it and then move on? I think it depends on who's assessing them in my experience. I might say to a student about how something went wrong in a direct observation. And I think this is a good thing because this is how you learn. But I have seen practice educators who would say, "No, you've got that wrong," and not seeing that positive way, and the student saying, "well, I think I'm going to fail." I've got that situation now where the student is saying, "fair point, I'm going to learn from that." But the practice educator is saying, "I can't see that person passing." (N8SP5)

It was also difficult for educators to recognise use of self practice, how individual personal values might influence views and accuracy of its assessment as a capability. Student observation, a requirement of practice education, was seen as one opportunity for giving feedback:

When we're doing practice education and we're doing direct observations we are assessing use of self because we're seeing how people respond to them and what tools they've got. (N11E6)

As a soft skill though, assessment of use of self, remained problematic because of the different ways practitioners might interpret behaviours, or how interactions and different internal views or values about what was acceptable might be expressed. Such matters of professional judgement presented problems for educators and lecturers:

Does she have resilience? Does she work well in the team? How well does she get on with the manager? But these things disguise or hide a lot of those other dynamics. (N3E4)

In this quote, the participant was aware of the PCF criteria, but thought it lacked guidance on what use of self actually was for assessment of the sophisticated use of self:

It's all very subjective…You can almost feel it, but actually there's no assessment criteria through which to measure and assess it… Because, you're thought to be making a value judgement about that person…It's definitely the missing criteria…we can't fail a person on that [use of self] because the criteria isn't there. (G2E1)

Though another was wary of developing tools to measure use of self:

The minute you put it as an assessment tool it becomes… people become closed to it, or they become frightened of it. Part of being self-aware is being able to admit you've made mistakes and making yourself vulnerable to people and asking them, "what do you see?" (G2M7)

Here a criteriia for use of self would required students to do things that needed secure emotional spaces, seen to be unavailable in modern contexts.

Ethical dilemmas

Participants demonstrated somewhat independent stances and found the difficulties of maintaining a social work ethos one of the most frustrating things about their work. A strong sense of an ethical base was needed to overcome the bureaucracy of practice. There were indications that participants were dealing with corporate rather than human approaches:

> *We had someone that came in to talk to our team about our professional ethics. I took offence at the suggestion that if you knew a young person was going to be sleeping rough… Like, had nowhere to go, you should only give them the appropriate numbers. Like, you shouldn't pick them up, you shouldn't take them somewhere and you definitely shouldn't be doing anything like physically paying for them, but that you should leave this person homeless on the street. The point I was making was that I wouldn't do that to someone I didn't know, let alone somebody I knew and I was supporting professionally. So, those issues are very difficult and the more you try to be black and white for it, the more you set up people to fail at it. (G4SP3)*

He suggested that training that adopted a uniform approach was becoming more common, tending to identify with behaviours rather than compassion. In a similar scenario another participant thought was important to provide human assessment:

> *You have that moral obligation to support that person. You can't just say, "That's your problem. Go to the police, or whatever. I'm not interested." (G2E2).*

These were barriers for negotiating relationships as social workers with what seemed to be changing values in corporate identities of organisations.

Evidence

Participants were at variance with views that evidence could provide answers in procedural processes. Instead they saw analysis of evidence as a combination the skills needed for use of self:

> *So yes, I do think there has to be a mix of the evidence base and the theory. You're working with somebody and families, where you're responding to their selves, and it's how, if you're using yourself as well, they come together. (N15E8)*

Shifts were noted in the way evidence was being used to provide straightforward answers to complex questions, said to be informed by political rather than social work knowledge sources:

> *We've had a lot of changes that have really significantly impacted on our practice. We must remove children quicker, but we must get them back to birth parents… Hang on a minute!… And you suddenly realise how political social work is. And your sense of self is irrelevant. Because ultimately there is no right answer when parents are not able to care for their children. That's a problem that we can't solve. (G1M1)*

Rules based responses were dressed up in 'best practice' form, that was not, in the view of most participants, the same as evaluating evidence and then using best practice ,

> *I've just been having a lot of cases where you've got 13, 14 and 15 year olds. The Local Authority doesn't want to intervene… Because the view is, "well, there isn't much you can do. Well, if we put them into foster care, they'll run." But actually, on an individual*

basis that's a huge sweeping statement. On an individual basis for some of those children it is important, and something that should be done and can be done in an effective way. (G3M7)

Evidence was removed from ethics into straightforward procedural assessments, purportedly to reduce risk, whereas use of self required absorbing risks:

You can eliminate risk. ***But****, you have to live with it and be comfortable with it and make balanced choices about how we do it. So, for me use of self does have a strong evidence base and relational practice has got a strong evidence base, from many many years that tells us that this is what makes a difference. (n10M10)*

The above comment indicates participants were able to take professional responsibility which required complex analysis of evidence:

[S]omeone has got to provide, what is the evidence? You can provide that evidence, but does that mean it's actually going to improve things necessarily, or…. Who decides… Someone's got to decide what is good evidence? Or what is an evidence? So, whoever is making that decision… You know, is it evidence based practice or is it politically based practice? So surely the idea about using self is about using the intellectual. Being an intellectual. Which means, being able to make your own decisions. Being able to read stuff and react appropriately because every situation is different. (N5P5)

Knowledge and intellectual rigour were therefore seen to be part of use of self, an ability to utilise evidence critically. Instead, thought they saw evidence as reduced to algorithmic structures in contemporary organisations. Participants welcomed evidence-based practice as

a way to support critical evaluation of their work and use themselves more qualitatively as practitioners. However, regulated assessment, or computer-based assessments, were becoming more commonplace creating, they thought, a different kind of social worker:

> *Particularly, in social care, we see a lot of the social workers are deskilled. Because it is all about doing a procedure, doing a form, "I've done the CSE form, I've sent the referral off." But, "What are you doing with that young person?"… So there really seems to be, yeah, limited in terms of using their social work skills. (G4M8)*

The above participant went on to say that the introduction of evidence-based procedures designed to reduce risk, ignored critical human elements that could do the same:

> *So, lots of the people we work with won't engage with anyone. So, having someone that they'll engage with actually, reduces risk, because they're working with them… so, it's a big part of it. (G4M8)*

The following story illustrates how a worker used evidence and personal experience whilst containing risk:

An illustrative story

The participant was working with a vulnerable young single mother who had been removed from her own mother and had poor parenting experiences throughout her life. The participant described how she herself had experienced poor parenting in her own upbringing and had been a young single mother herself. The young mother triggered memories of her own experience of discrimination and being judged by others about her ability to parent her own children, who she had successfully brought up to adulthood.

Recognising room for doubt regarding her empathy because of protection issues, she nonetheless thought there was potential for the mother to change. Her team manager had strongly advised in supervision that the child should be removed because of historical high risk factors in the family, but the participant successfully argued that there should be an assessment. She described how she used her "intuition", believing she "saw something" in the mother that made her believe she could parent the child and continue her abilities throughout the childhood. Her manager supported a trial assessment, the Cycle of Change Model (Prochaska & DiClemente,1986) which emphasised the importance of returning to adjust learning in parenting:

> *Eventually, I knew, because of the poor parenting she'd had, she had to learn ways of doing it. She really kept asking me, "Is this what I should do? Is this how I should do it?" And I could see something different in her. And like I say, I think it was down to thinking about the cycle of change and different theories around parenting. But also knowing from personal experience that being a single mum is not easy. (N12SP6)*

The worker noted the importance of the relationship, the recognition of power and being willing to remove the child if she saw indications of risk. She described an open and honest relationship and argued for the case to be open long term.

These are very tricky decisions for individual social workers attempting to walk the tight rope between child safety and parental rights required of them in statute. It also demonstrated intricate relations of self that required bringing together psychological, ethical and intuitive practices.

Discussion

Public, media and political criticisms of social work were considered by participants to have generated uncontained anxieties making it difficult to maintain their professional role. Leigh (2014) suggested that media vilification of social work had created a defensive discourse within child protection work, citing newspapers that depicted social workers as 'naive, unintelligent and inexperienced' (Leigh, 2014, p.629). It was noted that participants saw their vilification, not just in child protection, but across the spectrum, where they demonstrated a recognition of how external views of social work impacted on their relationships with clients and other professionals.

Participants viewed an examination of evidence as a component of rounded assessment that included use of self. Concern was expressed about the introduction of evidence based procedural systems that removed self from practice, these were the tick box and generated assessment forms discussed in the theme. Structured Decision-making Models (SDMs) that collect meta-data for generating evidence collected in data entry forms completed by professionals have been shown to be relatively successful for indicating outcomes (Shlonsky & Wagner, 2005; Schwalb, 2008). These are widely adopted in health, welfare and social care services across the world, with many utilising IT systems for data entry. The most prevalent example in the UK was the Integrated Children's System (ICS) introduced by the New Labour government at the beginning of the century. However, evidence suggested that stand-alone use of such models remains largely untested and is generally focused on risk without a social needs interpretation. Schwalbe (2008) notes,

> [T]he theoretical differences between risk and needs have not been fully conceptualized. Indeed, while the concept of risk has been refined over the years of

> theoretical development, the concept of need has suffered from relative conceptual neglect. (Schalwb, 2007, p.1459)

Schwalbe noted that algorithm based actuarial tools used to predict risk are more successful when they are combined with contextual information gathered by practitioners (Schwalbe, 2008). Shlonsky and Wagner (2005) point out that SDMs are not a replacement for "sound professional judgement by the investigating worker who completes it." (p. 420). Evidence in this theme indicated that practitioners saw themselves being replaced, rather than integrated with systems models and this blocked contextual information they were able to bring; not seen as aids to support their work but as uncritical assumptions about evidence to be followed by practitioners.

Furman (2009), noted that without care, evidence bases can appear value free but are possibly contaminated with impersonal epistemological values that are followed as rules (Furman, 2009, p.82). Participants reported overwhelmingly on the complex issues that were not only privileging evidence over values but were seen as instigating 'uncritical values' that favoured institutional protocols. In order to overcome obstacles practitioners had to interpret their practice qualitatively, using holistic experience and use self.

The struggle to utilise respectful understanding of the service users experience was demonstrated in the illustrative story of the practitioner. Rossitta (2007) argued that social workers can become involved in the problems of clients, not just because of the presenting behaviours and how practitioners experience these, but also because of inter-subjective dynamics of those encounters. That is, the shared social histories of the worker and the client which includes their socialisation, values, culture and social position, as well as the presenting problem. It may also bring up the social worker's own past unresolved trauma. These are

counteracted in the recognised relations of the subjugated positions of the practitioner and the service user to claim use of social work values. In the illustrative example the participant used the rounded interpretations of use of self set out in the findings in her plan for working with a mother.

Organisational structures were not seen as viable for containing the complex emotional capacities for use of self. A number of participants saw the requirements of social work as overwhelming and preferred personal development to find their own way. Participants thought the corporate qualities of education in modern contexts made learning the foundations of use of self untenable, where nevertheless they struggled to contain it in the curriculum. One educator wondered about the wisdom of pushing students who may not be ready to locate themselves in their practice, just because it was a requirement. The problem of how to assess it was complex with little criteria available on which to examine students abilities.

Given the emotional qualities associated with exposures of self in modern contexts; social media, celebrity culture etc, it was suggested there were untenable anxieties and tensions with little or no 'time' or in modern curriculums, or 'space' to create a safe holding spaces to build 'trust' in which to examine it. As noted in chapter 4, Ferguson (2018) found that dealing with emotional impact and competing anxieties of practice was untenable without contained safe spaces, believing this created a "defended nature of the self" (p.416). Negative views on structures and the uncontrolled environments where students learned and practitioners worked indicated that anxiety was present before they reach practice environments.

Any criteria for judging use of self, then, might include better and safer arenas to share life stories and their connection with interventions in safe and contained spaces that offer opportunities to explore unconscious values. These spaces would need to be integrated thoughtfully into future assessment requirements.

Research questions

The discussion in this theme supports answers to research questions three and four:

How is professional knowledge about use of self understood?

How does social work policy impact on standards and requirements for use of self?

In research question three the theme provided evidence that use of self is an integration of social work knowledge, ethical reasoning and soft skills located in empathy, intuition and artistry. Presenting a 'whole picture' of intervention required intellectual and rigorous examinations of evidence. Further the new corporate identities of social care, alongside procedural assessments were erasing discretional powers and the potential of social workers to work with risk in innovative and creative ways. These were all associated with shrinking use of self practice, where social workers could be 'business-like'.

CHAPTER 8:

Findings and Discussion - Theme Three

Use of self in policy and practice standards

The theme reports on how participants understood contexts in which use of self was shaped. First findings are outlined regarding how use of self was understood in the PCF and then those regarding policy and political frames that inform social work that were said to impact on use of self are reported and discussed. Participants reported a major concern about the erosion of their identity in political re-constructions of their role and the constant struggle to maintain social work values.

The Professional Capabilities Framework

Very few participants knew that self and use of self were requirements of practice in the PCF, however a small number actively linked their practice to the Framework. One focus group participant reflected on the progress from a skilled to sophisticated use of self in this context:

> *I was thinking about the two standards… I'm not sure what they mean. I wonder if, it seems as if they are saying as well as just being aware of self, it's about being able to reflect through the difficulties, being able to model that reflection to others and almost a move towards reflexivity, rather than just reflection and supporting others to do that? …I guess that's where my career has progressed. To begin with all I could do was barely cope with social work and the emotions it evoked and the frustrations. And then you kind of realise that you're coping better with that and the reflection has become part of everyday thought processes, then you start to do that with other people, and then suddenly you become aware that you're supporting other people to do it. (G1M1)*

The PCF was seen by those participants as a useful tool for developing professionalism in social justice:

> *I happen to be working with a woman who was experiencing some sort of bullying at home. Whatever it was it was causing her distress. And it was marginalising her… because she couldn't work. Yet I think, talking about the PCF, it does talk about social justice, it does talk about realising people's social and economic status. (N5P5)*

In addition, for those with good knowledge of the PCF, utilising this to build evidence for use of self in practice was described as useful by one focus group of managers:

> *I think that we are getting a lot better in social work practice of evidencing our self through our work. So, thinking about some of the challenges, some of the barriers, some of the positive ways of working with families and really unpicking what that is. Is it down to the services we have, or is it down to that sense of self with that individual worker? (G1M5)*

However, another group of mainly educator partipants also reported that capabilities were considered difficult to measure, particularly as use of self:

> *But when we're asking ourselves and our students, or the people we're supporting, to make those judgements and assessments about the capacity of that person, and the capacity includes the use of their self and their own experiences. So how they were parented, around ideas around attachment behaviour. So, we are expecting that from the people that we work with. So, in a way we're trying to measure things that are very difficult to measure. (G2E3)*

Use of self was seen by some participants as hidden, not emphasised in what was an seen as a dense and inaccessible Framework:

> *The PCF is a very extensive framework. I know that. And it can get very tedious coming out of university and having to go through it all again, especially when you have another framework; knowledge and skills statements, you know?...To be honest I'm not sure I'm aware of that [*use of self*] being in the PCF. I know you've got professional leadership, contexts in organisations, skills, values and ethics… But it's not something that would jump out at me and it's not something that's overly emphasised from my experience in terms of something that's a key component. (N2P2)*

For the majority of participants, using self wasn't necessarily seen as a component of using a framework, it was largely reported as an individual and collective responsibility as outlined in theme one:

> *I didn't know that about the PCF, that detail of it. But it doesn't really surprise me. I think once you get into the job, then you're supposed to be good at using yourself. It's really down to yourself, your supervisor and your colleagues and mentors around you as to how much reflective work you do and how much reflexivity there is in the environment and how much you talk about these things. (N13M11)*

One participant questioned whether use of self was best described as a capability at all:

> *I do like that lead through with the PCF… you know – the first year in practice. You know, I think we carry on having those conversations. I don't think it's a capability as such – I think it's something that people feel comfortable to develop. (N3E4)*

In agreement with the above another participant saw self as an artistic endeavour difficult to examine as a domain of practice that was diminished in skills-based competencies:

> *When I was younger, I always thought social work was an avenue to something, a pathway to something. It wasn't the end game, it wasn't, "you achieve the skills sets, like the PCF framework. You prove your capability, you demonstrate to the audience, and then you go out and practice." It was very much how to navigate spaces. (N14E7)*

For some, the impact of individual style and approach was a key factor shaping the learning processes around use of self:

> *[I]t depends entirely on the Practice Educator's style, or possibly the Practice Educator's use of self.(N11E6)*

The above comment was interesting because a number of participants discussed displacement of use of self with more business-like, procedural and corporate models of practice that encouraged a non-use of self, suggesting some disparity between the self that might be taught and the one they were describing in theme one.

Illustrative example

The above problem of locating use of self is in the following example. A participant discussed a training course she attended where she was asked to share her reflective log on a case with another course delegate. She was shocked by the differences between her log and the other social worker's, believing her own contained a great deal of 'self', whilst the one she was reading contained mostly evidence:

> *I felt like her log was very evidence-based practice and felt a bit cold. And from reading it I didn't really get any sense of how the child was feeling… I followed her rationale*

and I understood it very well… Whereas, when she read mine, she felt that it was the complete opposite. So, it had a lot of self in there, a lot of self, lots of self-reflection, lots about the different families I was working with, lots about the different experiences of the children. But she felt like it didn't have enough evidence. Which I agreed. But she, when I gave her my feedback, her attitude was, "well, that bit's not really important. As long as I've got the evidence that states that this child, or this family can't do this or that, then that's fine." Whereas I thought to myself, "well, I think a bit of both is helpful." If you get the balance right, I think it's important to have both. Because if not, I think you lose the voice of the child or the voice of the parent, or whoever you're working with… I get why people say evidence only because there's no emotion attached to it. It just is what it is. Whereas I guess if you've got more reflection in there then I guess there's more to challenge. (N4P4)

Rounded analysis was seen as important in previous themes where evidence, among a number of factors, played a role for informing practice including use of self in relational practice. For the participant, using self would require particular qualities of emotional and personal examination not present in the other practitioner's log. A learning point for the participant was to combine evidence more roundly in her own practice. The other practitioner though didn't see the merit in locating herself within the case. There is clearly no right or wrong answer, but engagement of self in practice was understood by this participant to change the quality of practice in some way that problematises use of self. This is different from using evidence mechanistically as 'best practice' or a procedural, business or non-self. It shows instead the different styles of practitioner may adopt as use of self. It doesn't mean the other practitioner was not using self, or even not using an 'appropriate self'. The difficulty is in determining the kind of self each was demonstrating.

The importance for each of the practitioners was promoting learning opportunities to explore diversities of practice.

Policy contexts and social work Identity

Participants expressed a disconnect between themselves and their values in contemporary roles associated with neoliberalist policy and practice:

> *And this whole thing, this individualistic thing… We no longer think about community, we no longer think of ourselves as connected in any way. It's when social workers stopped thinking… And this is where I personally believe we stopped applying sociological perspectives to our assessments and interventions. (G2E2)*

What is a social worker?

Discussions suggested local policies and practice were misidentifying social work and its expertise. In two conversations a disjunct between the status of practice in England and their experiences in other countries were of note. One participant had experience in South Africa:

> *I was working in adolescent mental health primarily and working in townships, very much community based social work which sadly doesn't exist in this country* [England] *anymore. It's been completely abolished. (N14E7)*

The other participant had experiences of working in the Netherlands where she believed social work was invested in professional expertise, compared with work in England which wa seen as de-valued:

> *They had social workers in schools, who were very experienced in clinical supervisions, and in child protection issues, and worked really well in schools with lots of groups and one to ones and stuff… In contrast, we were putting in assistants in schools and family*

liaison. So actually, they were putting in their most experienced people in the most general settings, but to offer a very specific role, which included working with all the professionals to help them develop that change promotion work… if something risky was going on then the social worker dealt with that, they were seen as the expert. And yet in contrast we would just send along an unqualified worker to go and do whatever the school told them to do. It wasn't negotiation as it would have been with a professional. (G3M7)

Participants valued unqualified or voluntary workers but were wary of expectations in the service organisation that they should undertake work requiring qualified professional input:

When you're delivering those difficult messages sometimes, you know, if you're not qualified and you're not signed up to the set of values… I never did reconcile that. (G1M4)

In this view unqualified workers and volunteers were a complex resource which removed qualified social workers expertise and experience and magnified government misunderstanding about what social work is:

I suppose that's where the political bit comes in. Because it does depend on the ideology that is coming from… You see, maybe if you're working in a charity then maybe you're working in a different situation to working in the statutory sector. You are constrained by the ideology that's being filtered down or forced down. (N5P5)

These comments reflect the broad range of social work and expectations and the expertise needed. The unitary models implemented following the Munro reviews caused considerable confusion in one focus group about who was doing 'real' social work (Munro, 2010, 2011):

> *So we've had it recently where we've had to fight for qualified social workers to do their AYSE* [supported practice year] *with us. Because they're saying, "you have to be in a unit now," and we've had struggles within youth offending because they're saying, "well actually, you're not doing social work." (G4M8)*

The qualified worker above was an experienced social worker in a youth-offending team who had worked for the authority for many years. Another participant reported the unit model, or at least the unit meeting, on which the ethos of the model was founded, was being phased out:

> *[T]here's conversations about those meetings being scrapped. So again, that takes another opportunity away where you can actually think, another opportunity that actually gives you the space. (N4SP4)*

Removing the meeting was a resource decision and underlined a complete misunderstanding by resource allocators of the importance of the meeting. Another participant wondered:

> *You know, did anyone ever listen to Munro? You know, Munro wrote all about that… and that was quite a while ago actually and you just think, well, this is what she was talking about. We all sit in this funny little office somewhere and all the children are out there somewhere, and how often do we get out to see them? When you do see them, how do you possibly fit all of it in? (N5P5)*

There was also a suggestion that social work might be seen as no longer necessary, or cost effective:

So, in my experience, when I've worked in multi-disciplinary teams I would be extremely confident next to an OT [Ocupational Therapist]*, and a psychiatrist or a psychologist. I see myself as no different, because I have clarity of purpose. And often, it is suggested by government that it isn't necessary, others can do it, or it would be cheaper if others can do it. (N6SP4)*

In addition , for some participants, social work was becoming minimised into a model of individualised interventions:

And we've gone purely into when somebody needs an intervention, we blame them for the behaviour and apply a medical model. Simple as… But we don't actually look at that impact of that injury, that trauma, has had on the wider society. (G2E2)

A shift in the language of social work was noted from care to one of protection and monitoring. A participant discussed the nature of the probation service where she worked for many years. The original ethos of the service was *'befriending, advising and assisting to support offenders in the community'* and was changed to '*rehabilitation and public protection' (N8SP5)*. When she began her probation career, she had spent time with offenders supporting them in the community and running groups. She decided to leave the profession when even more constricted language was applied to the role; *'monitoring behaviour, offender management and tagging offenders' (N8SP5):*

[Y]ou just needed to quickly go through some sheets with them, check whether or not they understood, you know? The consequences of offending and had they done anything, and then out of the door, then put in on the computer and make sure you said you'd seen them. Appointments [now] are about 10 minutes with someone who's unqualified to check that the person's checking in with them. (N8SP5)

The above participant further noted the difficulty in finding a post for herself in more privatised social services that erased the title of social worker:

> *You're no longer called a probation officer or a social worker, you're a case manager. So, you're fielding it out to other agencies that may or may not meet the needs and may or may not charge quite a lot of money that people may or may not be able to afford. (N8SP5)*

One focus group examined some of the complexities around the engagement of a psychologist consultant from health services to provide group supervision to the social work team. A group member believed this was as a subtle manipulation to shift their social focus to one of individual deficit problem solving:

> *But the fact that we have an understanding of how things work at a community level and our sociological perspective means that we can step back from looking at things as a psychologist would… I often think we have a much more useful perspective on things than other professionals… But there, you've taken the whole thing out of your profession into somebody else's defined terms from another profession. (G4SP2).*

The above complex remark is in contrast to literature that examines co-constructions in social-psycho analysis, but the comment was given in a spirit of a return to medical models, supported by others' comments. This is also a political comment about the profession and suggested the emphasis of individualist models of practice predominated in a new health oriented policy.

A group consisting of managers pointed out the difficulties in communicating the needs of social workers with Human Resources who they believed were measuring performance and resources, rather than examining the qualities of work:

> *It seems we have a lot of conflicts of cultures as managers in working with our HR department. You've got a different set of expectations and understandings and levels of how much they think people should be looked after… I find that quite challenging really because they're not social workers either, they don't really understand what the job is, they don't understand what the demands are. (G1M6)*

There were strong indications that political contexts changed the nature of the role and demonstrated a different relevance of social work, which was governed by politics rather than the profession:

> *'you become their tool rather than an agent for society' (FG3 M7).*

Social work in a number of views had been reconstituted as a resource and participants found themselves removed from their peers. Growing scarcity of resources caused competition and alienation from a social work ethos:

> *I think that context of scarcity creates competition, which causes people to act in different ways, and affects behaviour. Some of that's competition for parking spaces and desk space, or scarce resources. Or actually there's so much work load that actually you don't want to be the one that gets allocated. Or managers who are all working on projects and are… don't have time to collaborate, all that activity. And I think also the threat of potentially losing your job does stop people from offering*

themselves in those thoughtful or reflective ways. And those triggers, or instincts, that are defensive, or even slightly aggressive behaviours… they could come out. (N13M11)

This was seen as contributing to a growing feeling of isolation and disconnect amongst participants in practice. One participant expressed how her dislocation in regulation and misperceptions about the profession made her social work lonely,

It's very difficult for you as a social worker and as someone who's quite experienced, seeing everything that happens. Sometimes, it's quite lonely. It's a lonely place to be. You know, when it's you and everybody else. (G1M4)

Another thought that resources for social work were so cost constrained they might only be targeted at risk intervention:

a lot of what happens is because of political decisions that have been made. If they're going to change, then local authority social work might need to change, it might need to be focussed on high risk, just high-end intervention because that's all we've got the financial resources for. (G3M7)

Discussion

The findings discussed here focus on two aspects of policy; views about use of self domains in the PCF and how these fit into current policy contexts. The answers indicated that the PCF was not bedded into practice and this may be because it is a new framework. Most participants were unaware that the framework referred to use of self. The policy frameworks in their everyday practice largely focussed on its disenfranchisement from its expertise in preventative and community function. In their view they were dislocated from values and professionalism to such an extent that it confused their status in new languages

of care, health, state and privatised services.

Those who used the PCF, or knew of it, were only vaguely aware that use of self was a capability in the descriptors. One participant who had recently completed the assessed year using the PCF did not see use of self as a feature of his later training. An educator discussed with a colleague that recognition of use of self was dependant on the prominence placed on it by the educator.

As discussed in the literature review, the various disciplines have widely varying language to describe similar concepts. Participants examined the density of this language across disciplines. Participants thought this led to some confusions and homogenisation of terms leading to a lack of clarity regarding meanings. Higgins (2015) noted how various requirements frameworks in the UK are products informed by incoherent definitions of social work itself (Higgins, 2015). The ambition to create a unified professional structure of social work education and practice, as discussed in the literature review, were complicated by political agendas and discrepancies over the terminologies of capabilities, competencies and skills (Taylor & Bogo, 2013).

Interestingly, there were two comments suggesting that regardless of the PCF, use of self was something that social workers understood and developed on their own as an aspect of professionalism and practice. Agreed descriptions of their understanding of use of self indicated it was embedded. Participants questioned the role of performance indicators for use of self, believing its subjective soft skills were problematic to identify. In contrast though, one participant thought social workers were getting better at evidencing use of self in their practice and proving its value as a soft skill in multi-professional safeguarding teams. This comment indicated abilities in “modelling the sophisticated use of self” required for the

strategic social work domain for professionalism (BASW, 2018, Domain One, p.60).

Two questions arise here; the first is the ethos of the PCF as a holistic assessment framework and the extent to which measurement is an aspect of it, discussed in chapter three. The second is participants' varied understandings about how the tool would be used to assess them when use of self is open to varied subjective interpretations as a soft practice skill. This is particularly relevant in thinking about the different selves which participants identified with as complex interpretations about what is acceptable practice and how far they subscribe to social work values as opposed to implementing procedures. As one participant commented, this is influenced by the way social work is taught and depends on the educator's perspective, or the way the educator uses themself.

Having set the discussion about policy frameworks in place participants variously discussed their disenfranchisement from their social work values and the impact of constructions of social work in new political orders. Participants generally saw an erosion of social work identity, particularly changes in their role from addressing community issues to becoming state agents. When asked about policy they explored how new contexts of social work assumed individualist intervention and removed them from their community experience and expertise in preventative practice.

There were examples from other countries that demonstrated the value of social work in communities, whereas in England the function was suggested to either no longer exist or responsibility passed to unqualified workers or volunteers. Their role in hierarchies distanced participants from negotiating functions in the community. Instead, it was suggested workers with little or no experience could carry out roles that one participant believed were qualified functions. Further, in qualified practice a social worker who was

confident in her abilities to offer a professional role thought that governments believed it was an unrequired function, or that someone else could do it.

Participants attributed the changed nature of social work to the reshaping the profession into new languages of social care, such as protection, case management and security which included changing their titles, isolating them from peers, and subtly remodelling it as a government resource. These were macro influences that drained social work professional identities and marginalised expertise through excessive management functions. Negotiating their soft skills in complex authoritative resource constrained settings became a demanding task.

In one case a social worker who had been carrying out a social work role for a number of years was being told that the team could not recruit newly qualified social workers as they were not 'doing' social work unless they worked in one of the new social work units (Munro, 2010, 2011). It was interesting that the units were seen by the authority as the only legitimate location of social work, despite the evidence of qualified and skilled experiences outside of it. Further, the phasing out of unit meetings evidenced as the central component for success in safeguarding showed a lack of regard for professional practice in social work (Munro, 2011).

In her reviews Munro (2011) strongly advocated for a reawakening of social work agency that she believed had been undermined by a "managerialist account" (Munro, 2011, p.86). Her concern was that social work was now organised to emphasise cognitive tasks, rather than focusing on the emotional elements and complexities of the social work safeguarding role. The model played a central role in supporting social workers to examine risk in unit meetings designed as consultancies to contain social work models, support

practitioners' development and provide qualitative reflective space (Cross, Hubard & Munro, 2010).

The policy review in this thesis examined the impacts of neoliberal contexts and the gradual loss of traditional community based and liberational roles (Beresford & Croft, 2001). Ferguson (2004) noted that successive governments assumed, on very little evidence, that traditional community oriented social work was the cause of its ineffective safeguarding (Ferguson, 2004, p.6). The continual reshaping of traditional services from the beginning of the 1980s emphasised a more authoritative position for the profession in technocratic organisations that continued to minimise community engagement. Participants indicated they were in a position to negotiate the complexities of reconciling authority and community practice. However, the language of social work was shifted in political economies and changed the nature of their role in many cases, making it increasingly difficult to subscribe to social work values, central for assisting a social work use of self.

Lynberry (2005) argued that New Labour's call for partnership and collaboration were difficult to achieve because of vast differences between cultures, status and powers of professionals. The language of collaboration continues in current services, but participants appeared to find it difficult to find a viable social work agenda for themselves, with diminishing resources and competitive hierarchies. Some managers were able to negotiate their social work function, but on the whole participants discussed constraints including acute competition, scarce resources, role manipulation in changed titles and isolation from peers. Critically participants felt their removal from community expertise transferred into the hands of unqualified workers and volunteers, created gaps in preventative practice where they believed they could be effective.

The finding in this theme further indicated that social work was being denied its obligation of social intervention by a deliberate politicised decanting of its disciplines into individualised corporate and privatised industries of social care, leading to an impression that community focussed social work might not be necessary. Moreover, technocratic monitoring, isolation of practitioners from each other and alienation from social language represented major threats to participants' social work identity. In their view these led to role confusions that needed strong identification with social work values in order to maintain credibility.

Research questions

The theme addressed research question four:

How does social work policy impact on standards and requirements for use of self?

The finding was that the current standards frameworks were not easily identified by participants. Their views reflected confusions in the framework about the role and identity of social work and how an overwhelming array of skills can be identified. Essentially, a few participants developed their own use of self as an aspect of practice, which is exactly what the capabilities framework requires of them. Hence the use of self in the PCF appeared to be, as set out in theme one, already embedded in their practice regardless of the requirement.

Complexities arise when looking at the political frameworks of social work that, in the views of participants themselves, created varying selves in different contexts. In themes one and two participants believed they were aware of the differences between their preferred use of self which was embedded in social work values and a constrained and even non-use of a social work self caught up in competing ideologies of social work from outside of the profession. In participants' views these 'other selves' threatened social work identity which in this theme they believed was located in community and preventative practice and social

analysis. Such impacts indicate that use of self as a tool for social work is minimised in policy contexts. This may have been the reason for its invisibility in the framework. However, more research would be needed to examine whether this was the case.

The finding was that the framework was not as yet embedded in practice, but, as established in the policy review, it was also politically side-lined. Although it has mapped the capabilities against other frameworks its status as a unified model is in question.

CHAPTER 9:

Conclusion to Findings

The following chapter draws out conclusions from the findings and discussions generated in the themes. The previous chapters have demonstrated that use of self was meaningful to participants. Use of self was identified as requiring time, safe spaces and trusting atmospheres for them to contemplate their practice because they felt it was necessary to expose and understand vulnerable parts of themselves, their feelings, emotions and experiences in their own lives, or feelings they had made mistakes in practice, in order to continually enhance their capabilities. The findings showed that use of self engendered the development of emotional intelligence and intellectual rigour in professionalism, critical for finding the best way to support service users.

All participants saw self as something that was embedded in their practice. It was significant because it shaped them in their relationships with service users and in their professional negotiations. Self-awareness, social work values and reflection were the key drivers of use of self. It combined who they were with a social ethos for professional practice. They were committed to anti-oppressive practice and change agent roles. It was seen as important for starting with the service user, adjusting themselves thoughtfully to service users' needs and working to develop well informed helping relationships.

Participants expressed that in the contemporary education and managerial cultures social workers may be using a different kind of self, one that isn't signed up to social work values and that this had an impact on the way they carried out practice in procedural processes. In this sense, services were interpreted as risk reduction through monitoring of both service users and practitioners. They saw little acknowledgement in structures that

govern social work that risk and protection roles could be reduced through engaging in open and honest relationships with service users. Distancing social workers from their relational work from its own professional values was seen in some examples to erase important qualities of practice in favour of prescriptive formulae.

The way in which social workers understood, interpreted and then sustained and managed their use of self indicated a social work self could be identified that had distinct qualities for practice. These are explored in this chapter before addressing implications for interpretations of use of self in requirements and how these might be demonstrated in teaching and practice.

Participants' use of self

Commonalities of interpretation regarding use of self were evident amongst research participants. For most, use of self was seen as important for practice and integrated the personal and professional. Crucially, their practice started with who they were. They believed being a social worker who used themselves required the integration of the profession's unique set of values, but was created from their own styles and personalities. The diversity of styles was underpinned by examinations of power and anti-oppressive ethics which acted as an internal monitor of practice.

Who you are

Participants noted that everyone uses their sense of self in different ways, pointing out we are able to be different selves at different times and that various occupations, including social work, ascribed use of self to their particular status. The development and use of a professional social work self was reported as central to practice for all participants. Their own experiences and utilisation of these in practice were what they described as marking them out as social

workers. It enabled an exploration of values and of the impact of power and privilege in their roles that they took great care to examine. In doing this, they described a process of first understanding their own biases and belief systems and essentially, 'who they are' which gave them a foundation for ongoing reflection and thoughtful practice.

The finding concurs with Heyd and Sherman (2005), who saw the conscious use of self akin to being an instrument that requires consistent care and tuning. It was suggested by participants that use of self was an invisible tool, difficult for other professions to understand. Heydt and Sherman argued the social work self was like other physical instruments of practice, for example health professionals have stethoscopes, thermometers, monitors etc. Health professionals also work with physiology and biology, the human form, the skeleton and the brain as a study for locating problems:

> The importance of the concept of conscious use of self to the field of social work warrants an emphasis on self-awareness as a foundation to understanding the role of conscious use of self in the development of effective helping relationships at micro- and macrolevels of intervention. In other words, tuning one's self as the instrument of change is not just about playing better duets. (Heydt & Sherman, 2005, p.26)

For participants, use of self was not simply a tool of one to one practice with a service user to achieve a goal, but development of a conscious awareness of the impact of structures on service users. The relationship was central but extended to recognition of wider systems.

Wider systems included self-examination of the impact of their own lenses of self, how inner belief systems might interfere with sound judgement or a misuse of power. The lens included thinking about shared experiences with service users, the impact of their own and others belief systems. Importantly, it was a tool invisible to the naked eye and was a soft

violable instrument, that required strengthening through a strong foundation of social work values.

A good example of strength was in participants descriptions of working multi-collegiately. They described, how they struggled with the complexity of theories they applied through their interpersonal skills believing their status was sometimes questioned as being "woolly", not needed or could be invested in voluntary or unqualified status. They described practicing in atmospheres of misunderstanding and mistrust of the social worker role which further compounded difficulties in raising the status of their work. Acknowledging their soft skills as a strength helped them understand the value of social work professionalism. For example, they defined themselves as credible negotiators who asserted the importance of human rights, made sure they listened to all perspectives.

Use of soft skills in this way, being clear about their safeguarding role and being creative in working with service users demonstrated qualities of open-minded approaches; displaying empathy, making connections between micro and mezzo aspects of practice, examining power whilst emphasising the importance of caring roles. Literature defines use of self as a maturation process, the absorption of difficult and demanding material and the ability to develop emotional intelligence, high quality critical analysis (England, 1986; Howe, 2008; Schubert & Gray, 2015).

Participants views matched Regehr, Bogo, Donovan, Lim and Anstices (2012) findings in their examinations of exemplary students in macro field practice, which included use of self as a component of their study. High level ability was an important component of working within governing rules whilst being able to challenge them:

> High levels of competency also involve strong conceptual and analytic ability as seen in critical thinking and the use of diverse theoretical perspectives, being openminded, and thinking broadly and from a social justice and empowerment perspective. Strong performance also includes the capacity to form and maintain respectful professional relationships with colleagues in the workplace, in productive work in teams, and with a wide range of community stakeholders. As well, strong quaUties include cultural competence, the ability to work with marginalized client groups, and the ability to hear and consider divergent opinions. (Regehr, et al, 2012, p315)

There are examples in the literature exploring the conveyance of social work through the self, suggesting it becomes the mediator of practice (Adamowich et al, 2014; Cournoyer, 2016; Dewane, 2006; Edwards & Bess, 1998; Heyd & Sherman, 2005; Mandell, 2007; Walters, 2008; Yan & Wong, 2005). Descriptions, alongside definitions by these authors incorporate functional qualities that support change in macro and micro-environments, as well as relationship skills that incorporate examinations power and privilege, human qualities of empathy and relationship-based working, self-care, self-awareness, critical reflection and social work values. All of these involve working with one's own personality, locating how behaviours, belief systems and personal values impact on practice.

The above qualities were extensively reported by participants and indicate that use of self becomes a rich web that is specific to social work. Participants indicated their continued persistence for and practice of use of self even when this was not well understood by others because they saw it as a critical window for complex problem solving. This emphasised the importance not just of 'who you are' but how you apply yourself as a professional social worker.

Understanding use of self for social work practice

Participants linked use of self to self-awareness and honest open mutual exchanges of personal and practice experiences for examination by colleagues. It emphasised a self in continual development, requiring them to come to understand unconscious influences. There was no choice in the participants' view but to examine self. It was a concept that defined their professionalism and their understanding of power, privilege and structures on human conditions. An authentic use of self was one that adapted to the needs of service users and was underpinned by an understanding of human rights, anti-oppressive practice, empathy and compassion (Clifford and Burke?).

Developing self was, for participants a 'work in progress'. Concepts of self were a starting point, but key analytical indicators of an authentic self were learned through trial, error and reflection, with a consistent eye to social work values. The 'work' required time, space and trust to explore mistakes and emotional vulnerabilities and using these for finding strengths of practice without misusing power. These were not perfect selves, but goals or aspirations for development of their practice. Further, participant's believed practice made the flaws in themselves and others visible, and these needed to be addressed openly and honestly in safe settings. (Howe?)

As discussed, using self involved risk for participants. They reported that practice could be uncomfortable, exposing emotional vulnerabilities and mistakes. In their discussions they consistently drew attention to the need for examination of the relationship between personal and professional and the construction of power. Participants spoke about their use of self in building empathy and being useful to service users, which engaged them perhaps in closer emotional proximity to service users than other professionals. Some participants had similar

past experiences to service users,or had learned from others and colleagues about their personal experiences.

(this is about intuition – not about above) – also bring in England?)The above reflects emotional content and the anxieties associated with practice. In her final review of child protection services, Munro (2011) recognised the importance of examining intuitive reactions in safeguarding work:

> Gut feelings are neither stupid nor perfect….They are not infallible, as research shows, because intuitive judgments are vulnerable to predictable types of error. Critical challenge by others is needed to help social workers catch such biases and correct them – hence the importance of supervision (Munro, 2011, p.90, 6.26)

Participants were aware of the need to explore their unconscious biases and belief systems as margins for error in their thinking. The use of intuition and practice wisdom were viewed with caution ensuring that they were not responses that made assumptions about service users' lives. Intuition was applied through finding a unique understanding and building professional knowledge to build practice wisdom.

Management supervision was not seen as adequate for examining the complexity of practice where participants described being caught up in high demand services and managerial processes. The way in which services were organised in multipurpose arrangements, such as hot-desks and competition for space in offices, also made it difficult to find other professionals for informal debriefs, a preferred method of reflecting on self. Further, they were aware of the monitoring and tracking of their roles with some mistrusting supervision processes, how they might be viewed if they made a mistake. They pointed to a

general lack of depth and nuance in tick box or procedural processes that that took them away from a qualitative expression of their work.

Participants were cognizant of processes that required social workers to examine their own potentially biased responses. As a result, a number took responsibility for setting up their own reflective spaces outside of organisations, with many others believing there was a need for supervision outside of formal management supervision. As discussed in theme one these involved a variety of formal and informal arrangements, peer supervision, colleague networks, conversations with colleagues or spaces for self-contemplation. These spaces were needed for self-care, freedom to explore mistakes and feeling comfortable with unconscious emotional material raised in themselves and by others.

Time, space and emotional safety

Participants reported that they were only able to provide what their service users needed if they attended to themselves. Their comments provided important messages that social workers required time, space and emotional safety for exploring practice. They frequently discussed the need to recognise their vulnerabilities as strengths, not as the weaknesses they were often implied to be by those outside and inside their profession. This was a way of valuing soft skills that they brought to their work that they first needed to value for themselves in order to trust using a social work self. The multi-agency processes they were involved in required resilient negotiation and confident abilities.

For research participants, important aspects of use of self included those which drew on human values, warmth, empathy, kindness and building appropriate supportive relationships, that concurred with the literature (Cooper, 2012; Daley,2013; Howe, 2008; Ruch, 2000). Developing a self for practice required an examination of one's own feelings,

especially as they related to others. Participants were confronted with their own emotional vulnerabilities that were often mirrored in shared experiences with service users. There were possibilities for discomfort, feeling wrong or unsure. They recognised practice was likely to evoke powerful feelings that they needed to understand. Research findings here concur with Howe (2008) that using self required self-recognition:

> Before the worker can be in touch with the feelings of clients, she must first be able to acknowledge and understand her own emotional states and the power they have to affect her, particularly as she relates with others in need, distress, anger and despair (Howe, 2008, p185).

Participants discussions identified a shortfall in opportunities for finding the spaces they needed. A significant number believed a consultative style of supervision outside of management-oriented supervision was needed alongside more informal opportunities to engage in professional discussions with each other. One focus group discussed how they had set up peer group supervision for social workers in their team to have opportunities to discuss cases outside of their management supervision. Participants who had set up their own supportive networks thought that these enriched their work. Such networks were not only described as arenas that developed social work practice, but also as ones that alleviated substantial anxieties about practice and the emotional impact of practice on themselves. The informal arenas affirmed that they were 'okay' when they were doing their job, serving both self-care and practice development.

The problem of supporting social workers in the UK was extensively reported in both the reviews of childcare practice by Munro (2010, 2011) and by the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) who consulted on and designed the Professional Capabilities Framework discussed in

chapter three. The reports drew attention to the emotional stress produced by workloads that impact on decision making abilities. They reported on the complexities in multidisciplinary teams that further confounded role confusion and conflicts between professions trying to work together with an overt focus on risk. Further, the high density of work and timeframes were considered to be dangerous without recognising the need for good supportive supervision. A participant reflected these views and it appeared that recommended new structures had not had the desired impact of supporting social workers to develop their role.

Research by Cross, Hubbard and Munro (2010) found that it was important to have "good professional and emotional support from colleagues" (p.13) It was believed practitioners needed time to reflect outside of case management. These consistent messages to the UK government appear to be ignored in the development of the profession and are instead overlaid by government views, rather than professional reviews, about the role of social workers. Some participants in the current study noted that the consultation style supervisions central to the unitary model were likely to be phased out in the authority they worked in.

A good example of the differences in case management supervision and the consultative supervision offered by the unit model discussed above was demonstrated in theme one. A participant discussed how her family experiences were similar to those of a family she was working with. Her transition from management supervision to a consultative style in a unit model liberated her practice and was now in safe and protected consultancy provision. She also discussed the 'kindness' and 'understanding' of the group that supported her. These supported her emotionally and also supported her work with families.

Ferguson (2018) noted that social workers can split emotionally difficult parts of themselves from their practice when facing the realities and emotional pain of their work. In the case above the participant recognised something about the need to explore her experiences, but felt she had to 'split off' her personal self from the 'case work' in management supervision. The unit consultation encouraged her use her experiences safely as part of her work. Other participants in the research also reported a need to find a space to find integrate emotional barriers in safe places. Ferguson (2018) saw a number of dangerous consequences of ignoring difficult emotional encounters:

> Staff support after practice encounters needs to be rigorously reflective, analytical, and critical, taking fully into account the feelings and sensory experiences that may have been split off in action and not thought about. (Ferguson, 2018, p.425)

However, it appeared from interviews that the views of participants about their own professional needs for practice were generally disregarded and such support was reported as often unavailable.

For Howe (2008), encouraging emotionally supportive atmospheres for social workers creates conditions for developing complexity, critical for affecting the change agent role; utilising positive regard and supporting service users to be able to recognise demanding aspects of their own lives and environments, to ease their discomfort and give them tools for managing their own emotional self-experiences.

> Emotionally intelligent managers and team leaders induce more cooperation, harmony and creativity in their front line practitioners. People think more laterally. Teams behave in a more inclusive, flexible and innovative and less hide-bound way.

> And even though their practices may appear less efficient in terms of time spent on problems and cases, service user satisfaction tends to be higher. (Howe, 2008, p.190)

It is suggested that providing spaces for themselves in the way participants described, or through the provisioning of spaces in the workplace, supported the development of an "internal supervisor" (Casement 1985). Casement defined the internal supervisor as being able to recognise inner emotional responses as professional responses for learning in the supervision relationship and then utilised in practice (Casement, 1985):

> The internal supervisor functions to facilitate hindsight, foresight and insight into the process of therapy, and acts to provide a mental space or supervisory view-point (Bell, Dixon & Kolts, 2016, p.233)

Ferguson (2017) referred to the internal supervisor in his examination of social workers reflection in action. The term, from Schön (1988), was discussed in chapter four and signals the way in which practitioners gradually improve their professional reactions "in" action from learning "on" past actions. In his research Ferguson found that workers anxieties were raised in uncontained atmospheres of contemporary social work structures that overwhelmed them:

> Good experiences of supervision in turn supports the further development of the internal supervisor and the worker's capacity to contain themselves in the difficult circumstances that threaten to stop them from thinking and feeling what as far as is humanly possible they need to be able to (Ferguson, 2018, p.425)

Ferguson believed the expectation that social workers should limitlessly reflect on emotionally draining practice within demanding structures to be untenable. He identified a

“defended nature of the self” where the capacity to think about the high demands of practice were closed down in uncontained institutional atmospheres (Ferguson, 2017, p.416). As discussed in the literature review Ferguson recommended contained spaces for practice examination and drew on Bion’s concept of “containment” used to understand the importance of parental guidance, warmth, love and boundaries in bringing up a child (Ferguson, 2018). In the contained spaces supervisors support the expressions of feelings and help them to face unbearable, or difficult emotional qualities of practice that they have split away from their thinking.

The spaces in which participants reflected drew on conceptual frameworks that are discussed next.

Conceptual frameworks for use of self

The literature reviews reported on a number of concepts that were reported to guide understanding of self as a subject of study for social workers and how these impact on practice (Kondrat, 1999; Ruch, 2000; Trevithick, 2017). These suggested that frameworks affirmed an eclecticism of social work and its preference for structural analysis. The literature also discussed how rifts permeated social work regarding how it should inform its role and the difficulties in defining reflection for social work which was also considered relevant to use of self (Askeland & Fook, 2009). Further political frameworks impacted on the role of social workers centralised in a new conceptualisation of self itself in postmodern global contexts and incorporated by New Labour into third way politics. The following examines these conceptual lenses as they were understood by participants, whether and how they recognised them as supports for use of self practice.

Reflection

Participants generally agreed that reflection was central for examining internal to external experiences of practice. Importance was placed on hearing the voices and stories of those they were working with, exploring feelings and connecting them to social work knowledge. Reflection appeared to be their way of working things out; estimations of what was going on in their practice. Participants said they used critical reflection, with reference also to reflexivity, for examining oppressive practice and the impact of organisational contexts which required them to understand their own belief systems. Such examinations concurred with Fook (2002) who believed self was constructed in the relationship to co-create knowledge upwards in order build theory about practice.

Fook (2002) believed critical reflection requires practitioners to be in states of uncertainty and to suspend answers whilst connecting self to knowledge frameworks, allowing the worker to co-locate meaning and create theoretical ideas for action. Critical reflection, unlike Schön's concepts of "on action" and "in action" appoints an association with critical theory. Askeland and Fook (2009) found that critical reflection supports thinking at deeper levels of assumption to analyse social structures and entrapments of self within them. These include cultures, beliefs and values systems that permeate our experiences and are difficult to recognise without the challenge of inner examination. They saw commonalities between the deeper critical analyses of self and the concept of reflexivity, believing them to have become the currency of self-awareness:

> Reflexivity is a term widely used in social science circles, and has taken on some currency in recent times as a broad call for an awareness of self particularly one's social location in experience and actions. Of course, such a concept shares

> commonalities with understandings of critical reflection. Presumably both a reflexive awareness, and a process of critical reflection would hopefully result in a better understanding of how individuals may both be influenced by and contribute to social conditions. (Askeland & Fook, 2009, p.290)

Dempsey, Halton and Murphy (2001) added a deeper layer of critical reflection, discussed as a synthesis between use of self and critical theory that engages something akin to a "constructivist, approach to learning" (p. 632). That is, one that involved the shared recognition from personal perspectives in critical examination and interpretation within the relationship. Kondrat (1999) called this kind of constructivist approach critical reflectivity, believing it drew together a critical and psychological examinations of practice.

Participants made connections between structural interpretation and relational dynamics in their professional discussions that supported the sorts of deeper approaches discussed above. Some of these were political analyses, noting structural constraints of practice that oppressed others, such as not being able to influence decisions in new laws for asylum seekers, or being required to follow policies that were based on little evidence in the realities of practice; whether a teenager could be placed in foster care, when a child should be removed from home. At the same time, they were working with clients' reasoning and negotiating their 'on the ground' experience to work out what the best options were for the service user.

Ixer (1999, 2011, 2016) suggested that reflection was flawed; firstly because of the well recorded interchangeability of terms that confused its theoretical underpinning, and secondly because of an assumption that it was the best way to measure practice. In this regard Ixer and others have criticised reflection believing it to be a tool of acculturation, overused

for evidence gathering and even as surveillance in the assessment of performance in education and management cultures (Gilbert, 2001; Ixer, 2016; Yip, 2006). Participants discussed some issues about trust and safety in supervisory processes, but associated problems with the nature of management and organisational cultures, tending to favour reflection providing it could be carried out safely.

Participants considered the speed of their work, the possibility of making mistakes and management expectations as significant constraints. As previously discussed, they attempted to overcome these by finding their own supportive networks for reflection, which they saw as a responsibility of their role. Their view concurred with Adamowich et al (2014) who recognised the imperfections of reflection when merging its own contested theories with the contested terms of use of self, but who came to the view that regardless of any difficulties the ultimate responsibility for problematising practice rested with the practitioner.

> [W]e need to critically reflect on our use of self, however we define that self. We cannot blame the Unconscious for our not knowing; nor can we blame external social structures of inequity for our oppressive practices. As reflective practitioners, we are called upon to be self-aware and take responsibility for our thoughts and actions. Indeed, studies assert that a dire need for critical reflection on our use of self permeates social work, not only in the traditional areas of clinical practice but also in research, policy, education and community practice (p.132)

Participants expressed a pragmatic view of reflection, not necessarily cognizant of the academic debates about its complexity and convolution. They were wary of organisational cultures which may be punitive but found places for themselves to reflect in conditions of emotional safety.

Values and ethics

Social work values acted as a guide when participants examined real and metaphorical scenarios for learning to examine power. In their answers, participants were conscious of social work values that underpinned their work.

In contrast to the many authors who saw critical reflection as a deeper analysis of practice Ixer (2016) suggested it remained skilled based unless it was merged with an examination of values. The examination of problems in this view requires a meta-level cognition; how to judge whether an action is morally right or not. This is a duty to act from a principle of doing the right thing for the service user but that may collide with organisational utility. There were examples of ethical dilemmas translated to moral actions or thoughts, similar to that indicated above that help to unpack the moral function in social work organisational contexts.

Examples were described by participant that demonstrated the kinds of ethical dilemmas raised. In the first example a participant raised differences in ethical values in political and corporate frameworks regarding assisting a homeless person on their case load. In the second a participant made a decision to support a young mother whose child may otherwise have been immediately removed, giving her optimum opportunities to change her parenting. In another example a participant working with young people, some of whom she thought should be accommodated, was denied resources because of a blanket policy that assumed best practice models for all young people for them to remain at home. Participants' own ethical principles as social workers in these cases ran counter to risk averse atmospheres and assumptions about boundary management.

Social workers are asked to balance rights and responsibilities in their decision making, but participants brought out evidence of restrictive protection functions in organisational interpretations of practice that made it increasingly difficult to use social work values, even when these were contained in statute. For example, The Children Act makes it clear that realistic opportunities should be given for children to live at home with their parents. In the second case there is evidence that teenage young people do not do so well in care, but this does not mean every teenage young person would not do well. Participants often pointed to best practices that were local policy interpretations, or resource allocation constraints for driving decisions, rather than qualitative practice.

Participants were examining self and personal belief systems, particularly in shared life experiences. Adams (2009) noted that practice required social workers to translate their own character as morals for action, an important distinguishing factor for the definition of a social work use of self.

> The concept of virtues, understood as positive and stable character traits, gets at what matters to professional practice-not our opinions, but how well we act, as a matter of habit and will in the professional use of self, in ways required for and developed by practice within the profession of social work. (Adams, 2009,p.88)

Constructivist and constructionism

Participants' identification with ethics helped them to define boundaries, but also supported them to challenge discrimination and marginalisation. These included critical analysis of cultural and structural relations of self that pulled in "higher order" skills to integrate an understanding of privilege and marginalisation (Yan & Wong, 2005, p.181). They drew

attention to cultural and structural privilege and unconscious assumptions that potentially misused power.

Participants shared experiences of marginalisation, the extent and understanding of these provided a focus on unconscious material within service user relationships. Their shared knowledge demonstrated a significant recognition of their role in challenging structural oppressions. The adjustment of self to ensure they adapted themselves to hear the service users was essential in defining a self of practice within epistemologies that created meaning through interpretation (constructionism).

The findings in this research diverged somewhat from Reupert (2007) whose participants saw use of self contained within the relationship between practitioner and client, suggesting a lack of focus on cultural competence and making assumptions about self-fulfilment. There were some similarities in that respondents in Ruepert's research, as in this research, centralised who they were and the unique self they brought to their practice. However, whereas Reupert thought her respondents minimised the examination of oppression, participants in this research maximised it with high level clarity about their positions of power and privilege, that prioritised analysis of structural oppression and racism. Findings in this research concurred with Powell (2011):

> Participants collectively viewed the self as contextual rather than possessing fixed or essential qualities. Their responses affirmed the social constructed nature of self and therefore the concept of "use of self." Overall, participants' views of how to preferably use self had more to do with the esteemed values and concepts they had developed over years of practical experience in the field rather than because of specific academic theoretical orientations or theories that they had been exposed to (Powell, 2011, p.61)

Psychology

A number of participants discussed the ways in which psychological theory impacted on social work practice and use of self. Consistent with the literature, two strands of psychology were seen to inform practice. The first as a conceptual framework for understanding human development and the second for use as a tool for informing practice.

There was clear evidence that participants drew on psychological resources. Their discussions accorded with Gordon and Dunworth (2017) who noted that psychologies provided a shorthand for discussion and tended to connect interpretations of use of self:

> Although there are important differences in language and interpretation between different conceptions of use of self in social work, all place, to a greater or lesser extent, an emphasis on the worker drawing on their emotional and psychological resources, both to try to understand the service user's experience, and to enable them to intervene empathically in people's lives (Gordon and Dunworth, 2017, p.593)

Participants discussed how they drew on emotional, therapeutic and empathic aspects of themselves to support others. It was not detected that their actions were purely psychological, such as by reference to countertransference, or purely sociological, such as by references to radical community action. The self they presented had adaptive qualities supporting them to unpack social marginalisation and ensuring the self they used was helpful to service users in its humanist interpretation. This might involve therapeutic elements in their broader aspects, and even the use of some techniques of therapeutic practice, alongside a social critical perspective.

By incorporating psychological and critical conceptual frameworks participants were able to understand disruptions in their own and others' lives. According to Kondrat (1999)

becoming self-aware involves structural, personal, relational and psychodynamic examinations of practice culminating in "critical reflectivity" described as a recognition of the ongoing constructed realities of self:

> [In]practitioner self-awareness, the self is a construct that is continuously emerging within specific social contexts— that is, the self as co-constructor of his or her immediate worlds of meaning. The self in each of these traditions is the self of individual or interpersonal psychology—the location for thoughts, feelings, perceptions, sensations, meanings, intentions, experiences, behaviors, biases (Kondrat, 1999, p.460)

The discussion implies that self is fluid, able to move between different aspects of personal identity to reflect on memories, values, beliefs and norms in an iterative way to examine links between micro, mezzo and macro aspects of practice. For Kondrat, critical reflectivity aims at blending otherwise scattered theories of self between psychological and sociological interpretations.

Participants demonstrated links between sociological and psychological examination. They were concerned that their sociological analysis was being removed from practice and their expertise in community and social intelligence were diminished as an aspect of practice. How expertise was used in other countries was given as one example, where expertise was appointed in preventative and community roles. Ferguson (2004) as seen elsewhere in this thesis discusses the phasing out of social work community functions with very little evidence that they are inefficient and ineffective. In this view government energy has focused on health and social care and privatised provision in individualised models. Some participants discussed how health care models homogenised their roles and changed their identities in social work

contexts. This changed the nature of the role of social work itself to one that could be 'business-like'. It indicated to them a different kind of self that could practice without social content and the loss of critical theory.

Emotional and social intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the combining of elements to create resilient practice (Howe, 2008). As discussed in the themes, resilience for participants, included a recognition of the strengths contained in their vulnerabilities and confidence in soft skills of practice, such as empathy. Social intelligence is carried out through the negotiations of practice and relies on the language and discourse between people (Howe, 2017). Participants showed they were skilled negotiators liaising between people across professions where they advocated for service users.

Howe (2017) suggested that emotional and social intelligence form in our relationships through childhood and are maintained in the world throughout our lives in the interactions with others. He suggested people develop "mind reading" honed through develop personal and professional lives (Howe, 2017, p.1). As social workers develop relationships with service using adults and children, they work things out about each other; what their expectations are and how they experience encounters. These are areas of negotiation, developed through the language of the intervention. Professional emotional and social intelligence is grown through debate with each other and openness to change which requires sufficient safety for to explore practice (Howe, 2012).

These were the conundrums of self, closely identified as having empathic qualities, that required the development of practice that emerges as an integrated understanding of the emotional self and how practitioners learn to transfer it into practice. Freedberg (2007)

saw interactions between social workers and service users; one that weaved inter-subjective narratives aiming for mutuality and equality (Freedberg, 2007, p.254). When participants were able to use their preferred self, they expressed a fluidity of action that was rooted in experience derived from the recognition of themselves in others, especially oppression. Participants acknowledged emotional intelligence as a way of using vulnerability, and deriving strength from the woollier, vague aspects of practice that they thought were not well understood in their day to day contexts.

Relationship-based practice

Relationship-based practice has become a popular term in social work practice associated with use of self (Ward, 2010). Participants were cognizant of relationships with service users being central. The use of the skills and concepts discussed so far were brought together in the relationship. Use of self was key in order to make the relationship as successful as possible to achieve a good outcome.

Participants were working with strong feelings in relationships. The themes identify how they needed to work through personal/professional boundaries, how to appropriately use personal information about themselves, whether to share aspects of themselves or use them in some way that was helpful. One participant noted that feelings could extend to not necessarily liking a person you work with but needing to build a relationship with them. In other interpretations the relationship may continue even though participants were giving people 'bad news'. This appeared to be the art of the professional relationship.

Ruch (2010) pointed out the common experiences of social workers maintaining their relationships in complicated circumstances, for example with a mother whose child was being removed. In their relationships social workers are containing strong emotions held in tension

between themselves and the other. Ruch (2000) constructed an integrated understanding of relational frameworks for using self that takes account of the inner world of the practitioner and the outer world of the client system. Ruch thought that practitioners should utilise interaction reflexivity to, "hold these two worlds (outer and inner client systems) in a healthy and informative tension" (p.108). One participant discussed moving through critical reflection to reflexivity, and a number of others, although not using the language of reflection, showed examples of using complex skills and abilities.

Disclosure

Growing literature about use of self comes from the stories, narratives and ethnographies of practice that builds a comprehensive understanding of what practice is like (Brydon, 2006; De Montigny, 1995; Dewane, 2006; Fook, 2002; Riemann, 2005). The association between social research and relational practice was discussed by Ruch (2000) as the justification of "autobiographical narrative as a source of knowledge" (Ruch, 2000, p.103).

Riemann (2005) argued for an interpretation of practice where social workers 'become self-reflective ethnographers in their own affairs, of their own emergent social work practice' (p.89). Like Ruch (2000) Riemann also saw groundwork had been laid in the qualitative sciences for analysing practice as autobiographical analyses that he believed made practice "strange", that is, a way of working which, "consists of developing different competencies in observing, analysing and writing, and requires a setting in which students' written observations and reflections can be shared and discussed by their peers in a critical, egalitarian and supportive manner" (Riemann, 2005, p.87). However, he noted how ethnomethodological researchers spend time immersing themselves to examine phenomena in ways that social workers cannot.

Riemann (2005) saw social workers' privileged access to particular realms of practice problematic because they were engaged in practical interactions constrained by time, and based on regulated requirements to make decisions. He suggested that the education and development of social workers needed much more space to facilitate autobiographical material into a "textual analysis" for examination. Participants concurred that autobiographical material was a useful learning tool and expressed this as self-disclosure in the classroom. However, participants' views about the education of social workers suggested there were difficulties in courses where autobiographical information for thinking about contexts and belief systems had become problematic. Educators in interviews thought the nature of courses had become consumer oriented. They also saw technologies and social media as problematic in large cohorts where it no longer felt safe to share personal material and where students may be at risk if they share their own information. Fitness to practice and assessment issues were also noted as being complex for educators to manage.

Policy and practice

Participants were concerned that use of self was misunderstood as a concept of practice in policy contexts, erasing what they considered to be an essential part of their role. Procedural and techno-rational frameworks were of concern and suggested to them that there may be a different use of self, or non-use of self. In addressing the final research question, it is suggested better descriptors of use of self are needed in the UK. The suggestion is raised amidst a confusion about what use of self is in the academic literature, which also raises questions about how it can be defined in a way that is recognisable for social workers. The PCF has clearly made a start by recognising it as an aspect of practice, but it wasn't prominent for participants, although it was embedded in their practice.

Politics and role confusion

It was noted participants combined conceptions and critical frameworks that supported their use of self, indicating that it drew on constructions of self in broad psychological, social and political frameworks. They thought there was a difference between the embedded recognition of use of self they discussed and its use as an 'automatic' function of reflection and evidence-based practice. This made use of self 'business-like', or 'procedural' rendering unconscious powerful forms of control unacknowledged.

Howe (2008) noted that differences between people could impact on what kind of self they brought to practice:

> Significant numbers of people possess both types of skill in equal measure, but others are predominantly either, 'systemisers' or emotionally intelligent 'empathisers' (Howe, 2008, p.191).

Interestingly, participants thought current policy, standards and education 'train out' soft skills of use of self by emphasising skills-based learning. Further, without self-confidence, participants appeared to believe use of self could be drowned out or seen being unnecessary.

Participants described overwhelmingly procedurally driven tick-box cultures they were working in. Techno rational decision-making tools and evidence based 'best' practice were seen to mandate forms of practice response, rather than acting as a tool to guide it. The participants questioned whether students and practitioners were encouraged to use themselves as critical analysts in modern contexts. A question raised in much of the literature has been how to balance social work's human centred approaches with its safeguarding functions which appear to be at the centre of these issues. A stark divide was noted throughout the policy literature between government and social work responses.

There was evidence that participants were in strong surveillance cultures and ever-growing economies of privatisation. Further, participants reported time and attention being consumed by tick box procedural processes that subsumed the qualities they valued. Their views affirmed major concerns in the literature about the future of social work in the UK (Ferguson, 2004; Jones, 2014). In the extreme participants reported how they could either knowingly comply with constraints on their preferred self, or leave their position.

Participants understood that the past of a social worker and their accumulated experience may never be an accurate predictor for the outcome of a social work intervention. But they held that the opportunity to reflect on and deal safely with the emotions of practice make for more considered actions and decisions than algorithmic guidance from the binary data that is collected in the field.

It is contended that in the UK political constructions in neoliberalism in privatised economies, and New Labour's continual restructuring of social welfare in third way politics, negatively impacted on social work structures (Ferguson, 2004; Jones, 2014). These were underpinned by the ways that social work as a profession was viewed politically and by the media following serious case reviews (Jones,2015; Parton, 2014; Warner, 2015). Further, self has been theorised in structuration theory (Giddens, 1991), that was said to lead to a paradox of the self in modern structures, the possibilities for an emancipation in new life politics or a reawakening of deserving and undeserving frameworks of assessments in privatised models of care.

There is a great deal of documented evidence suggesting that changes in the reputation, status and organization of health and social welfare has impacted on social workers, but there is very little which indicates the impact on the self of social work and what

this means for social workers' use of self. Participants demonstrated a dislocation from its meaningful community and preventative practice with a lack of understanding of the skills these bring.

One detected in participants' conversations something of their tenacious character and determination to work out ethical solutions against a tide of proceduralism and controlled professionalism. They were consumed by their own powerlessness on occasions; whether the matter in hand was one of political expediency or what policy was flavour of the month, rather than what might be right for a particular family, child or individual. It is suggested they were examining unconscious blind spots of skills based interventions and surface reflection that were identified by a number of participants; the organisation not seeing that working directly with someone may be the very thing that decreases risk and protects, that simply monitoring offenders was not as effective as advising, befriending and assisting, that completing forms with people and allocating resources does not necessarily meet need, or that leaving a person with no home to go to, although argued to be ethically 'sensible' might actually be cruel. Ruch associated this with a move away from relationship-based cultures:

> The contemporary fragmented identity of social work is, in part, the result of a shift away from relationship based practice, which acknowledges the individuality of the professional and the client, towards depersonalised practice colonised by market forces, bureaucracy and procedure…Within educational settings the ascendancy of technically-orientated, competency-based learning and assessment has paralleled the trends towards the 'surface not depth' issues identified in practice (Ruch, 2000, p.100)

Use of self then was political. It was impossible to find a case in the interviews or focus groups where participants would not choose to use personal information about themselves as part of their analytic tool; in some cases that might mean taking risks in what might be suggested was an 'unauthorised self', on behalf of people who used services. It was their use of self that recognised oppression as a point of frustration or sadness on behalf of the systems people had to use. Practice was challenging, for example, when they asserted social work ethics in line with their profession and their agency as a social worker, rather than within the bureaucratic controls they believed was effacing it.

The PCF

The new PCF in the UK was a driver for framing the research because it incorporated use of self as practice capability. Use of self is contained in domains of the PCF, but does not have a descriptor of its own, associated instead with a number of concepts of practice that matched concepts discussed by participants and in the literature.

The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) designed the PCF as a way to conceptualise a unified approach to professional education and practice. The language in the 2018 refreshment of the PCF suggests social worker's identity using 'belonging words' such as beginning descriptors with the word "I…" to define what social workers should be able to demonstrate (BASW, 2018). A key message from the profession during the development and in the refreshments of the framework have been "Keep it simple!" (BASW, 2018, p.5).

The newly created Knowledge and Skills Frameworks (KSS) and the BASW code of ethics are now integrated with the PCF descriptors. As discussed earlier in the thesis the PCF was presented as a unified framework for the profession, designed to take social workers from application onto social work courses and through their career. A key message in all

reforms of education have been to define what social work is and what social workers should be able to do, which are now set out in the KSS (BASW, 2018,p.2).

Participants were only vaguely aware of use of self being in the framework. It is a new framework only recently bedding into courses and practice and this might be the reason. But one question for the research was whether the “keep it simple!” mantra of BASW had worked. A participant who recently completed the supported year of practice, developed in the PCF as a steppingstone to full practice, was not aware of it containing use of self and thought it wasn’t emphasised in his training. He suggested that the framework and the KSS, alongside requirements in the Standards of Proficiency made learning intense especially straight out of social work as a newly qualified worker who had already undertaken a great deal of similar education. Others who were not aware of use of self in the framework and discussed use of self as something that they took for granted in their development.

Throughout the discussions it appeared participants were demonstrating the PCF descriptors for a “skilled use of self” in their early development and to “model the sophisticated use of self” in advanced and strategic levels (BASW, 2018, Domain 1). Many were experienced practitioners who had long ago embedded use of self but some were newer practitioners, still attuning to the role and its demands. Use of self was hence meaningful and embedded into their practice regardless of the descriptor and appeared to be essential to them for growing a thoughtful and professional self for practice. The descriptor seems to hide use of self in the PCF and was not emphasised as an aspect of practice, indicating the need for a clearer identification of it and its prominence in education, training practice.

Policy Implications for use of self

The research in this thesis concurs that self contains diverse rich qualities requiring contained and safe spaces in which to explore it. The question remains how it is possible to demonstrate to policy makers the importance of contained spaces for workers that are committed to the development of emotionally intelligent practice. Consistent messages in the literature, alongside the Munro reviews (2010, 2011) demonstrate an urgent need for social workers in demanding UK contexts to have trusting qualitative space and time for developing their practice. The benefits of doing so were clearly demonstrated in the findings.

By using self in the ways they described, participants expressed hope for their practice to be authentic, coherent and emotionally intelligent. They associated political and media mistrust with vilification of their social analysis, believing there had been a re-engineering of its identity. Within neoliberal and New Labour contexts they suggested individuals were to blame for their condition and the purpose of social work was either coercive or incorporative. They emphasised that their change agent role had itself shifted from one that engaged in activities of equality and social cohesion to one that improved the abilities of individuals to compete and integrate. The tide of political and media mistrust and re-engineering of their role led participants to believe it was more difficult for them to work alongside people authentically.

The considerable barriers, tensions and misconstrued understandings of social work were thought by participants to endanger social work status and identity. These appeared to create schisms of self in social work, empowering those who would claim to be delivering social work without necessarily being signed up to widely held social work values.

The findings indicated that participants both hoped and despaired for the future of the profession. Hope was characterised by the care and consideration participants gave to their work to find creative and thoughtful spaces for deep reflection and for taking responsibility for finding trusting and safe relationships for exploring practice. Participants despaired at the continual tide of encroaching techno-procedural processes that progressively removed the profession from demonstrating its own expertise.

The non-use of self, or not using self, appeared to be an aphorism for being a self that was not the preferred one they were describing. It would seem strange for any professional to assert they were unable to use themselves as it is laid out in the identity of that profession. For example, that it would seem wrong to assert that accountants do not really know how to count or that nurses do not know how to nurse. Yet there was real sense that participants found it difficult to be able to do social work as they understood it as a profession, and a real emergency was detected about a future without a use of self, which appeared to be how participants were describing its trajectory.

Participants believed they were identifying a legitimate social work non-self, who could practice without being self-aware. It was this self that was of most concern to participants and prompted them to wonder what their future selves would look like; how they could look after themselves, how they could manage power and ethics and how they could sit with others' trauma, chaos and pain in sensitive and emotionally intelligent ways without examination of the self of practice.

Not using self was ascribed to political interference that confined practice knowledge to behavioural sciences within automatic processes, and with no internal moderator, or internal supervisor in pursuit of the authentic social work self as part of the process of

examination. Participants were suggesting that rational bureaucracies and scientific management run the risk of destroying the social work engine of change and emotionally intelligent social work (Howe, 2008 p.192)

Whilst working multi-professionally was generally welcomed, the way in which the profession was viewed externally by governments and media were thought to generally misdirect use of self into roles and identities that did not fit with its purpose, or where participants had to work extremely hard to have their agenda heard. Participants generally saw the value of social analysis in their work. Their experience and skills demonstrated a confidence in their contributions in multi-collegiate work with other professionals, where they reported respectful relationships. But sometimes they saw that others thought social work was not needed, or could be provided by someone else. In this analysis they also saw examples of multidisciplinary working in which a social work discourses were diluted into other health and social care models.

This was demonstrated in one the example of supervision provided to social workers by a psychologist. The participant believed language from health settings privileged models of human deficit that was being decanted into social work as a subtle manipulation of their social role. He and other participants were vociferous in their views that anti-oppressive practice was a driver involving sociological analysis and community engagement, from which many believed they were becoming disconnected. This was not to disregard psychology but a recognition that social work contributed other values that were important for analysis. The emphasis of their critiques was to define social work ethics, human rights, social justice and change agent roles.

Muzio, Brock and Suddaby (2013) argues that the status of all established professions has been eroded through changing regulation, but also by improved consumer choice in neoliberal economies. Scott (2008) argued that specialist expertise is strategically managed within symbiotic and crescive relations enacted within three pillars of regulative, normative and cultural constructs, the maintenance of which requires a sense of habitus, a feeling of 'belonging' to a certain group with shared values that are interpreted through professional bodies. Social workers do not have the assured authority of very old established professions such as the law, accountancy and medicine, and is a profession associated with social challenge which has arguably weakened its position more so than older established professions within neoliberal political contexts. Further, their links with their professional status appeared throughout the findings to be eroded in the contexts described.

As a result, participants also believed social work was becoming constrained by its structures, which made it difficult to use a preferred social work self. This was discussed as a gradual isolation of their social work identities, and their integration within organisational models that didn't fit with the values of their profession. Mandell (2007) believes, "use of self per se has been eliminated from courses or focus of study, particularly in those programmes that have adopted an anti-oppressive or critical approach" (p.*x*).

Literature in use of self demonstrated that it often becomes lost and found in the vastness of social work literature, always there but moving in and out in prominence (Adamowich et al, 2014; Gordon & Dunworth, 2017). Participants in this research demonstrated an integrated use of self that they used regardless of its official descriptions, and debates in the literature about what it means. Although their preferred use of self was unique and personal to them the participants in this research stressed the way in which use

of self is attached to social work values. Without such attachment to the more broadly drawn self they described, social work is endangered, creating a different type of self without a lens with which to examine practice.

Tensions between the government and the profession about what social work is and what it should be able to do take it away from its required global and localised standards and ethical principles. The PCF has included use of self and it was embedded for participants. Since social work identity and use of self are inter-dependant the importance of addressing it as a descriptor of practice are urgent. For example, the PCF was subject to a number of reviews and revisions during this research. The requirements for use of self changed between the 2016 and 2018 using different descriptors for use of self in each. The questions to participants was carried out prior to the refreshed document and contained different descriptors from the 2018 and 2019 versions.

It is suggested here that the preferred self was interpreted and sustained through the lens of who you are and how you use yourself to mediate an application of social work values and knowledge to your practice. Participants consistently reported that a preferred self acknowledged diversities of self; that is the differences and similarities between people who practice, as long as the person that practiced examined who they are. Hence the preferred use of self was self-aware, self-knowing and knowledgeable about critical and ethical context, able to acknowledge the positions of power in interactions to make judgements. Participants' self was developed and examined in 'spaces' that contained them and where they could feel free about the contribution of the more sensitive, emotional and empathic nature of their role. Mostly these spaces were unavailable to them in their organisations, but many found other sources of support in their professional peer network.

The preferred use of self, as participants described it, was corseted by models that were linear, behavioural and deontological, taking little account of social connection that they identified as a strength of practice. The deconstruction of self from social to privatised limited what they could bring in terms of social agendas, such as social justice and anti-oppressive practice. Further, in their final analysis they identified a non-use of self within creeping privatised and techno-rational systemised approaches to social care formalised in neoliberal, political and managerial structures. The non-use of self was embodied in a new kind of social worker who, in participants' views, could be business-like and follow procedures, and in one analysis may no longer need to be qualified as a social worker, leading to risks of unsafe practice.

Participants often discussed how they could see things differently to their managers or organisations, or that by doing things in creative ways, they were able to broker solutions rather than comply with taken for granted rules or regulations in ways that that were of benefit to clients. This appeared to be the art of use of self that engendered creative and imaginative qualities as they were discussed in the PCF.

The future of use of self

This conclusion raises fundamental questions about what might be required of UK social workers in their use of self in future. Social work is faced with conflicting views in contemporary policy about the nature of self, presented by fractured notions of what it is; for example, privatised, consumerist, postmodern. Is the preferred self good enough for contemporary practice and if so, how might it be supported? It was suggested that more research is needed to understand the role of moral character and virtue ethics for use of self. Whilst this continues to be a question for more studies, the self described by these

participants was connected to the traditions of challenging injustice and reifying the social which suggested investment in bringing together frameworks to create a coherent model of use of self that supports education, training and practice. The creation of time, space and emotional safety would seem to be central to such a goal.

Use of self required good quality space not only to reflect but to engage in critical reflection, meta-cognition, mutual ethics and empathy with service users and each other in relational practice. These are complex notions of the self for study as social workers that require safe space for exploration. In this respect the study provided a foundation for grounding some important principles for social work understanding of use of self in contemporary UK practice.

However, as noted by a number of authors, social work language was beginning to be strategized into ideologies of business, corporatism, industry and private enterprise which Ferguson (2004) believed left it bereft of social values and where new services became:

> dominated not by notions of social justice and equality but rather of 'value for money', led by managers whose primary remit is often to manage budgets rather than to meet the needs of clients, and too often staffed by demoralised practitioners who feel increasingly alienated from their organisations and from what now passes as social work (Ferguson, 2004, p.1)

Importantly, this research suggests that participants are well aware of the issues and continue to strive towards social work values in the interpretation of their work, although this is becoming increasingly difficult. Without urgent attention use of self, having become a prominent feature of standards in the PCF, may become lost once again.

Contribution to knowledge

Mandel (2007) believed social work had tended to distance itself from the focus of use of self because of it fails to examine critical and structural analysis in favour of individual psychologies that lean towards integration of the self without reference to marginalisation. Along with other authors a gap was identified in knowledge regarding the ways in which more personable aspects of encounters with service users are enacted in social work practice (Reupert, 2007, Jacobson, 2001, Mandel, 2007 Adamowich et al, 2014, Trevithic, 2017). However, whilst these authors believe a reification of social psychology is needed, there was evidence in these findings that it was happening, but perhaps isn't well recorded or integrated into knowledge. Giving experienced participants space to reflect on self created an understanding of a self sensitive to competing demands and powerful constructions of their work.

The study here has somewhat addressed this gap and demonstrates that use of self can be a co-constructed activity related to fairly unformed disciplines such as reflexivity that examine self, relationships and the way in which power is constituted.

What marked this research out differently from other research on self was the opportunity for participants not only to discuss who they were themselves as a social worker, but to analyse the 'concept' use of self and what it means to be a social work self in modern UK practice. Participants examined structures of 'self' as they experienced them in their day to day lives as practitioners. Their observations were merged with the literature to explore how use of self might be conceptualised for social work.

Research participants consistently claimed that the way in which they used self can restrict or liberate lives, and that examining 'self' as both a concept and how it impacts on

‘self’ of the practitioner can promote healthy analysis and change. Participants also discussed meta-frameworks that transmit the idea of what a ‘self’ for social work is; how it is learned, understood and sustained to form an aspect of their practice.

Such meta-frameworks comprise the influences; political, theoretical, governance and professional arrangements of social work that impact on the profession and the ways in which practitioners could use themselves. They can be a means of professional emancipation, or external control.

The above finding was supported by participants views that those governing the profession continuously misunderstood what social work was. The implementation of unit models, for example appeared to be phasing out the most important aspect of contained spaces for social workers to discuss cases in unit meetings, although overwhelming evidence was presented by Munro for its need (Munro, 2010, 2011). Despite numerous evidence-gathering consultations to develop the PCF there were still two reviews of social work education at variance with one another that followed it, leading to complex definitions of skills structures (Narey, 2014; Croisdale-Appleby, 2014). The House of Commons Education Select Committee have opened yet another review of the social care workforce in the UK in 2019 to ask similar consistently asked questions regarding their needs and resources. The testimony of participants in this thesis suggests that there are important deficiencies that must be rectified.

Chapter 10:

Thesis Conclusion

The thesis began with an interest in the way contemporary social workers view use of self. The curiosity sprang from years of professional interest in the subject as a social worker. I was interested in how the many different disciplines that define self, impact on social work identity. I was aware that a new Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) in England embedded self-awareness and use of self as a requirement of practice development, which prompted me to examine the subject in depth for a PhD. The PCF requires social workers to progress use of self as they advance their careers in professional social work practice. I was interested in shedding more light on the realities of its development within the self of the social worker. I conducted a research project which engaged practitioners at different levels of seniority and in varying roles, in a series of professional discussions.

Use of self is a liberally used term in social work literature, but how it is constructed in the everyday lives of practitioners through their education and acculturation is less clear. Before beginning, I conducted a policy and literature review which informed the research questions:

1. How do social workers understand use of self as an aspect of their professional practice in modern social work?
2. How do social worker professionals interpret, use and sustain use of self?
3. How is professional knowledge about use of self understood?
4. How does social work policy impact on requirements and standards for use of self?

Interviews and focus groups afforded opportunities to examine convergent and divergent views between three groups of educators, managers and senior practitioners. As discussed in

the methodology, participants often had experiences in all three roles or were engaged in more than one role. This gave purchase on a diverse range of opinions that identified a broad definition of use of self, although a great deal more work would be needed to test their views. It is suggested that descriptors of use of self in the PCF need to be improved in order to have a clearer criterion on which to judge practice.

Five areas seen as relevant to use of self were discussed that helped identify themes; practice, knowledge and learning, barriers, overcoming barriers and the PCF. Table 6 details areas of discussion and early patterns found when coding the data. This included extensive searches of transcripts in an Nvivo project (appendices 6 and 7). Three main themes were identified, translated as 'who you are' as a social work self, the importance of diversities of self for practice and the dangers of uniformity as 'non' use of social work self. Multiple selves of practice were positive provided they adhered to a social work ethos.

Participants thought it was critical to identify with the experiences of others either through their own personal histories, or through understanding the lived experience of others by recognising the impact of values. Participants had to adjust themselves in their professional lives, but saw who they were, for example, from diverse, marginalised or even privileged groups, to be part of their practice. The results demonstrated a complicated web of identifications in which the social work self is asked to define itself in professional and political realms, as well as within the individual persona of the practitioner.

There was strong evidence across the sample indicating that a 'non' use of self could be legitimately practiced by being 'professionalised' without reference to the significance of the personal. Legitimate use of self had something to do with bringing together who you are with a social work values professional persona. Using self involved high-level lifelong learning,

ultimately supported collectively, and with a willingness to submit to an examination of mistakes, being wrong, feeling bad and embracing fuzzy social work theory.

This chapter examines each research question in turn before concluding on the future of use of self in contemporary social work, particularly whether it can continue to imbibe social work ethos and values within politicised identities of health and social care.

How do social workers understand use of self as an aspect of their professional practice in modern social work?

The findings demonstrated that participants understood use of self to be a central component of social work ensuring an examination of power, prejudice and discrimination that adhered to social justice. Participants views aligned to Kondrat (1999) where the social work self utilises critical reflectivity that surpasses simplistic notions of self in conventional psychological or psycho-social thinking (Kondrat, 1999). In this view critical reflectivity removes the social worker into a political, and socially conscious realm of self that engages human agency and critical theory.

This finding contrasts with literature that examines use of self in clinical psychological and social psychological settings (Arnd-Caddigan, & Pozzuto, 2008; Dewane, 2006; Powell, 2001; Walter, 2008). These found use of self to be contextualised within relationships through self-disclosure, countertransference and psychodynamic examination. Participants in this research were acutely aware of wider social contexts and contextual impacts of their role on people. The natures of self were important, but unlike in Reuperts' findings on use of self these were understood in reflexive, cultural, political and social relational dynamics, rather than individualistic ones (Reupert, 2007).

Expression of social work values was complex when merged with anything understood to be managerialism and poorly thought through target driven tick-box performance management. This was not the same as sound management, but as a result of any expediency over appropriateness, putting quantity before quality or following a politicised or target driven policy trend. Parton (2014) noted that evidence-based assumptions have sometimes been shown, for example, to be fixed based on political will or local custom and practice. Regardless of whether they were in management, practice or education participants affirmed that survival of social work values in contemporary practice involved sound analysis in ethical judgement developed as a social work self.

Some discussed fear and dread created in often uncorroborated evidence presented to them as their own failure as a profession. Warner (2015) examined the binary discourse that brings emotive rhetoric about social work into political arenas, making not only the public but social workers themselves believe they are culpable. Warner argued a renewed role of social work should reinstate the relationship between state and society, lost in the political rhetoric of neoliberalism, by re-establishing societies sensitisation to suffering and injustice. There was some evidence participants understood concepts of communities of practice to address political injustice, but many struggled because of the way in which they were segregated both in and from their profession.

Managers in one focus group suggested social workers were getting better at evidencing how they use themselves. Other conversations with practitioners and educators demonstrated that their professionalism contributed balanced opinion of equal value to others. Both managers and senior practitioners expressed the view that they were more likely to experience resistance to their professionalism in negotiations with higher management

business strategists or in communications with HR, than in multidisciplinary meetings with health, teaching, police or other care professionals. However, others had varied views about their status in multidisciplinary groups, believing recognition of their social professionalism was reduced in contemporary systems. Some thought they were respected, but others believed there was a public and even professional perception that social work could be replaced, or that social analysis was unnecessary.

Conversations throughout the study pondered on the ownership of social work, the development of its language and the subtle influence of professional personas outside of social work. Many identified a legitimised non-use of self that was 'business-like', following processes and procedures, using protocols and uncritical enactments of evidence bases. A belief was expressed that emphasis in the social work profession on strong social critical self-analysis was weakened by individualised models that diminished contextual stances, such as addressing racism or social justice.

A number of culprits were identified; changes in systems that altered judgement through the introduction of algorithmic systems, the mashing together of professional groups, and assumptions about the status of professional language which emphasised individual blame rather than social analysis. Participants often expressed the potential for use of self to maintain the richness of divergence between themselves and other professionals in healthy debate to improve outcomes. Many saw instead politicised synthetic systems, dominated by corporate style management that assuaged diversity of opinion, not only in social work, but across the social care professions.

Use of self and education

Educators tended to suggest that the PCF descriptors of challenge, curiosity and critical thinking were difficult to teach in cognitive and skills focussed curriculums. They were keen to examine a wider critical understanding of self that was central to their own values as social workers with their students. However, the belief that employers were in powerful positions to influence modern curricula, left less scope for use of self-learning. Their views echoed Adamowich et al (2014) who found there was an insidious acculturation of students into organisations that prioritised compliance over the realising potential of the holistic self:

> [O]ur findings show that formal training in social work is also a colonizing project not only for Indigenous peoples but also for many marginalized groups, as some aspects of their wholistic self are excluded and people are reduced to mere professionals. (Adamowich et al, p.13)

The findings from participants in this research concurred, indicating that use of self can be either homogenised in a corporate project or heterogeneous in a critical one.

Educators generally shared that the deeper elements of self-awareness learning such as, self-disclosure or use of personality, were risky in social work education settings. They believed students, and even educators and lecturers who taught them, avoided self because of possible repercussions of emotional trauma or anxiety in curriculums not designed to manage these. They cited a number of reasons; lack of time for deeper analysis, whether others thought it was necessary, ramifications for students emotional wellbeing, their own emotional wellbeing and what kinds of experience they needed in order to teach it, all of which were compounded by a lack of criteria on which to judge it.

Many participants thought that social work education and practice could side-step use of self altogether, seeing it as a special interest rather than a core ingredient, and where 'non-learning' about self was possible. The next question establishes what participants saw as a 'legitimate' use of self for social work.

How do social worker professionals interpret, use and sustain use of self?

Initially participants said they struggled with the question what is use of self? But nearly all had a remarkably simple answer – It involved a deep recognition of who you are merged with social work values and knowledge, which in time developed a social work professional persona. This interpretation spanned across all professional groups and roles and provided a strong base line definition of use of self. These two cornerstones, who you are and social work values, demonstrated an identity that complimented other professional identities, different to their own, and central for marking out a social work perspective.

Because who they were was an important part of the role, participants thought it was inevitable that every person would bring a unique perspective. If the self they brought complemented social work ethos then this represented a legitimate diversity of practice. Individuality, inclusivity and representation were critical for preserving social analysis, described as something akin to an inner/outer character that recognised how westernised and Eurocentric models might constrain contextual thinking.

Trevithic (2017) attempted to break down the "core, multiple, authentic, private, public and true and false features of self" for social work (p.1836). Participants presented key ideas about all these different inner/outer features and saw them organically flowing one into another as legitimate multiple selves. This made use of self definable in the individual

personality and style of the practitioner that bound their own diversities into a social work ethos.

Sustaining use of self

Sustaining use of self as a social work ethos required a recognition of its professional power base and how to keep check on their practice. There were many methods across a range of supervisory and training techniques that were validated as practice development. Use of self specifically required collective support, often described as peer/colleague supervision. Expertise relied on having the freedom to examine actions and to critically self-reflect safely, involving feeling okay about making mistakes. It required being open to the possibility of feeling vulnerable and having uncomfortable feelings in order to challenge assumptions and unconscious values.

Finding strength in vulnerability was a key message of one participant manager in a focus group which summarised the thoughts of many in their examinations of resilience, empathy and the development of emotional intelligence. Without seeing the hidden or unknown 'inside' of their practice, self may impact negatively on service users, colleagues and others. Many described the importance of having discussions where they would feel okay to examine behaviours or concerns about their own responses to certain situations that made them angry or hurt. In peer support management was minimised and self-development maximised allowing the 'who you are' of practice and personal/professional boundaries to be safely exposed.

Networks included colleagues, families, friends, hobbies and other outside activities away from social work, essential to maintain self-care and avoid burnout. There were also possibilities to remove self from practice to reflect during the working day, such as sitting

alone in their car in a layby after a visit, or by having conversations with colleagues. There were more formal arrangements described as peer support groups and networks. Many participants believed their survival in the profession was related to their ability to self-care and to examine darker and more painful aspects of emotional/personal/professional areas of their work. Importantly, many discussed research they'd heard about which found social workers leave the profession within eight years of qualifying. The research, conducted in 2010, found that the working lives of social workers are far shorter than in other health and care related professions (Curtis, Moriarty & Netten, 2010). Participants suggested their informal networks helped to maintain them in their profession for longer.

Participants thought collective support might be considered as an extended aspect of practice development. Taking responsibility for maintaining the social work self was seen as essential for authentic examination. Alongside education, training and supervisory processes, peer and collective support allowed participants to be open to self-disclosure and possible feelings of discomfort that needed trusting atmospheres. A small scale study by Mills and Swift (2015) indicated there were benefits in peer supervision that encouraged safe exploration of emotions:

> [P]eer supervision groups need to feel like a safe context in which to share anxieties and self-doubts. As such, it is of central importance that peer supervision groups encourage sharing and attend to the emotional well-being of the individuals in the group (Mills and Swift, 2015, p.112).

Another study focussed on use of self as a peer network in professional education for social work students as a teaching method (Chapman, Oppenheim, Shibusawa, Jackson, 2003). The method asked social workers to think about what they bring of themselves to practice and

modelled peer supervision for them to take into their career. Follow up of students in later years suggested some success in helping them create support for their working lives and the demands of practice. Further research on collective networks would be useful to understand more about how to sustain not only use of self, but the possibilities for extending the professional life of social workers.

How is professional knowledge about use of self understood?

Participants tended to agree they theorised use of self through reflection, critical reflection and critical analysis, indicating that contextual cultural and social understanding of self was as important, if not more important, than psychosocial and psychodynamic interpretation. Interestingly, participants embodied an embryonic nature of self that embraced woolly theory drawing on any knowledge that they saw as having potential in messy practice logic.

Critical evaluation of the evidence base was important for participants, but priority rested on how to theorise practice from the place of the service user. Views accorded with Howe (2017) who believed putting the evidence base first was like putting the cart before the horse:

> High empathy and socially intelligent social workers are likely to establish good working relationships with their clients. A good working relationship, or therapeutic alliance, needs to be in place before the social worker can effectively deliver her service, provide support, advocate, give advice, administer treatment, or deliver an evidence-based practice. (Howe, 2017, p.1)

Participants across the sample demonstrated that confidence in themselves was a key component for promoting empathy, relational needs, expressing the voice of the service user, and for countering rigid systems of care and control. Without robust confidence in the

‘woollier’ aspects of social work theory it was more likely practitioners would burn out or leave the profession. Main resources for developing a social work use of self included building an inner resilience rather than a suit of armour, and continually returning to critical thinking and self-reflection, central for locating a care ethic identified in the quality of relationships with service users, even when there was little alternative to restricting their liberty.

A self that could act without reflective theory was seen as dangerous professionalism, business like or compliant. Whereas engaging in deeply critically reflective and self-reflective selves in ways similar to those theorised by Fook and her many colleagues illuminated meaning (Askeland & Fook, 2009; Fook, White & Gardner, 2006; Peas & Fook, 1999; Ryan, Hawkins & Fook, 2000). Examination of who you are allowed participants to question themselves and each other about diversities in religion, spirituality, culture, race, class, gender and sexual identity; the impact of these on personal experience within themselves, and how they might influence both their own and institutional power over others. Such interpretations were akin to Yan and Wong (2005) in their thesis of a dialogic contextual self. Howe (2017) called this social intelligence that engendered social as well as psychological empathy:

> The more unlike the client is to us in terms of gender or race, age or religion, the more the social worker has to try and see the world from the client’s point of view. The social worker has to imagine what it must be like to be the client, to be in their shoes. Knowledge of the client’s background, history, relationships and current circumstances should help the social worker to think about what it might be like to be the other person (Howe, 2017, p.10)

Participants made strenuous efforts to critically evaluate social work values. Virtue ethics were implied in discussions where subtle differences between what was ethically right and what was morally right for a person were central in critical reflective analysis. Their views concurred with Ixer who suggested reflection should be underpinned by values in order for it to be effective (Ixer, 2012, 2019). Further, there were hints that in order to use themselves authentically participants needed to resist powerful exertions of corporate and governmental control of their work. Clifford and Burke (2005), saw an examination of ethics as a counterweight to creeping rationalism in modern social work contexts that required self-critical stances.

> Our contention is that there is a need for a critical (and self-critical) anti-oppressive social work ethical framework which can bring together traditional ethical issues and anti-oppressive social work values drawing on long-standing concepts of social justice, anti-racism, and classical feminism, as well as more contemporary perspectives based on critical and feminist interpretations of 'affirmative' postmodernism. (Clifford & Burke, 2005, p.683)

Participants demanded of themselves that they recognised what their social work brought to the table, and how to promote change in the ethical realm. This included supporting service user change, but also resisting systems that discriminated against them or that were risk averse, often by taking risks themselves in the helping process.

Knowledge of use of self was grounded in social contextual meaning alongside critical theory. It was not an individualistic pursuit, but a relational one where the qualities between people and how these were managed was central for interpretation. Reflection was underpinned by ethics, which included weighing up virtuous and deontological moral

examinations of human rights and social justice. Critical reflectivity, reflexivity and emotional intelligence underpinned who they were and embraced the fuzzy theory that came from theorising practice.

How does social work policy impact on requirements and standards for use of self?

The policy review in chapter three discussed the impact of neo-liberal and new labour policy agendas on social work in England, and the more global impact of Giddens's theories of the insecure self. Participants tended to mirror feelings of disturbance and forbearance in overwhelming micromanagement and performance driven atmospheres they saw as politically oriented. Angst about political interference in the profession found in social work literature echoed their frustrations (Ferguson, 2004; Parton & O'Byrne, 2004; Warner, 2015). Managers often saw the benefits of performance management to ensure quality of services, similar to Munros' suggestion that targets should provide a sound foundation for child centred systems (Munro, 2010, 2011), but they questioned trackers that appeared to blame social workers in overworked organisations.

Few participants had extensive knowledge of what the PCF requirements contained in relation to use of self. The PCF itself was developed in turbulent political and regulatory development of social work policy. As discussed in the policy chapter it was initially superseded in a complex mapping exercise with the HCPC and the production of Knowledge and Skills Statements for adults and children. Initially the closure of the College of Social Work and the General Social Care Council jeopardised its trajectory into social work education and organisations.

Participants expressed that the PCF was dense. Focus on teaching and learning it were believed to be influenced by organisational features and council policies at national and local

levels. The PCF was indicative also of personal preferences in personal/professional development important for developing diversities of practice. Many social work selves were important, but requirements that developed selves that can legitimately sit comfortably outside of a social work ethic whilst operating inside its regulation and policy threatened social professionalism. The implication was that it was possible to emphasise different elements in the requirements for use of self, such as skills and behaviours, as well as curiosity, challenge and critical self-reflection, all of which guided the use of self that was 'used' in practice. Issues impacted directly on what was taught about self from the PCF and how these subtly influenced individuals as they became social workers and progressed in their careers.

Whether use of self was primarily skills based or interpretation based was not clear to participants. The PCF, requires examination of self as creative, curious and challenging, appearing to emphasise reflexivity that contextualises interpretation as poststructuralism. However, the BASW code of ethics requires social workers to strive for objectivity in their professional self-awareness suggesting positivist approaches, backed up by early career development in the PCF levels seen as skills interpretation. The new Knowledge and Skills Statements for working with adults and children does not consider self to be a central attribute of practice emphasising skills and evidence-based approaches. Other than in the PCF, regulation, standards and requirements appear to all but ignore use of self, regardless of its centrality in social work knowledge. Educators and those in educator roles indicated they were unclear about how they should examine use of self as a capability at different stages of social work education and careers. The findings indicate further work is needed to clarify exactly what criteria use of self should be judged against.

The views about a divide between self and non-self were found in competing scientific didactics contained in the requirements. Here it becomes difficult to determine between a 'right' use of self and a 'non' use of self. In the requirements there are certain defining features such as honesty, trustworthiness and recognising right actions using evidence and knowledge etc. But there are others more difficult to recognise. Certainly, many voices concurred with the literature that use of self thrives on challenging the rationalisation of practice and centralising values and ethics (Adams, 2009; Clifford & Burke, 2008; Heron, 2005). The promotion of social change remains a central social work value and participants were clear about their commitment to challenging individual blame cultures. However, social work values are themselves problematic, for example, the self on which participants were pinning their distinctions are not clear cut, since there are myriads of morality shifts over time and in different social and political eras.

It was clear from the research in this thesis that in evaluating social work self, something of more depth was needed than the expectations of policy makers in the requirements. Many participants did not believe use of self had a working criteria on which to judge it but were nonetheless using a self they believed to be 'alternative' to some 'non' social work selves ascribed through policy, regulation, procedures and protocols. When participants were reflexive, using social empathy and emotional intelligence in the multidimensions of practice, the view was they were more likely to be displaying a social work use of self.

Examining powerful forms of control and making mistakes was a priority for examination of practice for most participants. The concern was that corporate style surface,

individualistic and psychological explanations of self endangered the social work self by shifting the balance of power in favour of controlling or individualistic systems.

Benefits of the study

The study shed some light on a definition of a social work self. It exposed the limitations of current regulation and social work policy to incorporate a social work use of self ethos and demonstrated the need for fuller descriptors. Regardless of their knowledge of the PCF participants views demonstrated they recognised the need to have deeper defining features that were assigned to it, such as critical analysis, being curious, challenging and creative. The study contributes to the growing evidence base, that despite all the potential pitfalls of reflection as a colonisation tool, use of self is a reflexive, critical tool immersed in social work ethos. The importance of critical theory at the hearth of a healthy use of self to retain empathy, resilience, emotional and social intelligence was central in participants analysis and supported in social work literature.

Tensions between skills and capabilities indicated that diversities of self legitimated a non-use of self that was skills and behaviours oriented, able to reflect without utilising contextual critical material or deeper understanding of their own personality. The study demonstrated didactic fractures of practice discussed in the political and theoretical development of social work set out in the literature and policy review. What self is and what the self is for practice remains largely a matter of interpretation by those inside and outside of social work. The finding that an authentic social work use of self combined personal attributes (who you are) with social work anti-oppressive values and virtue ethics in a critical contextual analysis, provides a platform for testing in future studies

Limitations of the study

Although the research reached a wide range of qualified participants it was a small-scale study restricted by PhD parameters. The PCF was not well embedded as the single-entry framework for social work career development intended by the time the research was undertaken. Since then it has been more closely aligned within BASWs policy and underpinned by a new regulatory body for social work registration, Social Work England, that will take over from the HCPC in 2020.

The PCF was still being reviewed and refreshed as the research with participants was being carried out. As a fairly new instrument it was not fully embedded as a tool for education and practice, something that was also confirmed in conversations with the participants and reported in the findings. Future research would be needed to replicate the study with improved design for examination of the use of self as the PCF matures in education and practice. For example, subtle changes in wording were detected in frequent refreshments and updating of the PCF between 2016 and 2018 when this research project began. These were factors that limited participants understanding of the PCF.

Final Remarks

The literature review examined three impacts of social work use of self; the knowledge and evidence base that surrounds it, the policy, politics and regulation that support it and its interpretation in requirements. These informed some critical interpretations, and participants had strong views regarding outside influences, including political, media and public perceptions on how social work is viewed and understood. Participants saw this has having major implications for social work priority and the kinds of self that practice social work.

The research project explored what conundrums use of self might pose for social workers following a recognition in the literature and in policy that it was little understood and not well defined. The nature of discussions with participants in a research project leaned towards a recognition of use of self that operated either inside or outside of a social work ethos. Their critical reviews lead to a conclusion that there is professional disarray in interpretation and enactment of practice policy, tempered by a genuine attempt at authenticity within the person in practice. Further, that non-use of self was possible within the current practice regulation for social workers and was authenticated through professional acculturation.

Diversities of practice were seen as positive providing they were 'inside' social work ethos. The literature demonstrated that identifying 'insider' social work values was difficult because they were moveable over time impacted by cultural, political and social eras, contained also within the person who may then become a social worker. Participants intelligently teased apart the dilemma of how their profession was constructed and how they were also constructed within it. Using self was a struggle that they could bring to who they were uniquely for social work. Reflection was key, provided it was underpinned by a critical analysis and kept in mind social work values and ethos that contained virtues, social empathy and emotional intelligence.

Issues go to the heart of conflicting views within and outside of the profession about what social work and what social workers should be able to do. The way that the self of the social worker operates in organisations appears to be key to recognising the alternate perspective they bring multi-professional practice and whether resisting hegemonies of practice is part of that challenge. The contribution of a social analysis and the contextual self

became clearer in its importance for maintaining a questioning attitude to what appeared to be right, and what is hinted at for use of self as practitioners progress through levels of the PCF. The different levels of use of self need more explanation to support expectations in its teaching, learning, assessment and development.

New questions have arisen as a result of this research, such as; what really is a non-use of self in relation to use of self, what is the social work ethos when looked at in the context of definitions of self over times and eras, and is there, as participants suggest, a unique socially critical positionality of theorising practice which bring the profession closer to defining the uniqueness suggested by this research of a social work use of self.

Whilst there are a number of limitations to the study which would require addressing in future work, its significance is in pointing out the diametrically opposed self that was identified by participants and that appears to be played out in policy interpretation. I sum this up as a politically defined schizophrenic construct of the social work self that individual selves are required not only sit within, but to struggle with, in order to hold themselves to account ethically.

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Appendix 1: Focus Group and Interview Schedule

Focus Group and interview Schedule

Questions:

Questions not exhaustive and welcomes discussion open to exploring any aspect practitioners would like to share.

1. What ways would you describe use of self in social work practice?

2. The PCF Professionalism Domain describes use of self at Advanced Practitioner, Professional Educator and Social Work Manager following way:
   - "Confident integration of self and professional behaviours"
   - "Model and articulate use of self both within own agency and in multi-agency settings"

   How would you discuss this as a group regarding your own experiences at these levels in your role ?

In the PCF social workers are asked to be self-aware and to self-care, which includes being aware of how their health and behaviours impact on those they work with. What are views about this for social workers practice?

3. How are the qualities discussed above assessed and performance managed in the different areas of practice represented?

4. Are there exemplars of professional development or practice relating to use of self that you found positive that can be shared?

5. What do you think about one view expressed in the literature which says working with emotions and feelings can play a role in practice?

6. What are the views about sharing personal information and self-disclosure

7. Some literature regards use of self as a facilitative skill where intuition and quick thinking are valued, whereas others see evidence based practice and skills as more relevant for practice. Do you have any views on this or any experiences you can tell me about?

8. What is your view about the relevance of Use of Self in social work in current social work contexts?

Please feel free to make any other contributions that you believe are relevant for this study.

Thank you for your help in this project

Appendix 2: Recruitment Flyer

Dr Amanda Howard
School: Humanities and Social Science
Faculty: Education and Arts
University Drive,
Callaghan,
NSW 2308
Email address: amanda.howard@uon.edu.au

Student Researcher: Deborah Amas
Email address: deborah.amas@uon.edu.au

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

16/03/17

Perceptions of 'use of self' in social work

RESEARCH STUDY

www.newcastle.edu.au

You are invited to participate in a research project about the use of self in Social Work. The invitation is open to qualified Social Workers who are Managers, Social Work Educators or qualified Social Workers with more than one year of experience, post their supported year of practice.

Use of self is widely discussed in education and professional contexts as a component of social work that supports work with clients and practitioner self-care. The project aims to investigate the meaning, use and relevance of the use of self in diverse social work contexts. The research engages professionals to explore their understanding from education, practice and organizational management viewpoints.

Interested professionals would be asked to participate in either a focus group, or individual interview with the Student Researcher. These are audio recorded and transcribed. Participants will be able to review the transcript of their contribution. All contributions will be de-identified and participants remain anonymous in the research output. Participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. Arrangements can be made for Skype or telephone interviews where face to face appointments are not practical. Teleconferencing is possible for contributors unable to attend focus groups in person.

If you would be interested in taking part in this project please contact Ms Deborah Amas by email: deborah.amas@uon.edu.au for further details

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. **H-2016-0442**. .

Appendix 3: Information for Participants

Perceptions of use of self in Social Work

Information for Participation/ Preamble for interviews and Focus Groups

Welcome participants and collect consent forms and any profile forms. Provide refreshments.

Thank participants for agreeing to participate in this focus group/interview.

Impart information to ensure group/ interview comfort. (provide information about refreshments, fire escape details, toilet facilities, rest breaks)

Check that information about the research received. Ensure Hand-outs are also available on the day. Verify that all of the consents have been signed and that interviewees/ group participants are comfortable with the information they received – answer any questions about participation and consent

The group is expected to last between 1 and 2 hours/ Interview expected to last for between 45 minutes and 1 hour. It will be recorded –(explain device and microphone details to ensure optimum capture of voices).

Ensure Mobile phones are switched off or on silent.

Outline confidentiality and details as below:

Focus Group:

Encourages the expression of personal and professional opinions and free discussion, where all viewpoints are valued.

Individual identifying information, or personal information shared by participants during the group not to be shared outside of the group.

No organisations or names will be used during transcription – try to avoid naming organisations or individuals.

Personal and professional opinions/ expressions and all viewpoints are valued. The focus group encourages free discussion.

Individuals are also free to withdraw at any time. They do not have to give any reason for withdrawing unless they would like further discussion and advice.

The researcher has also provided a list of supportive groups and contact numbers should any information come up where they would like to seek further advice.

Transcripts of the full focus group (whole group discussion) sent for review to each participant. Participants are invited to contribute any reflections or other thoughts that occur should they wish to add any other information – this can be done in writing to the researcher. This information will also be de-identified.

Interviews:

Encourages the expression of personal and professional opinions and free discussion, where all viewpoints are valued.

Express if you are uncomfortable at any stage, for any reason, or would like a break.

You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time if you wish.

The interview is confidential and information will be deidentified in the written transcript. The transcript will be sent to participant to review. Participant is invited to give any further detail or reflection to contribute to the study.

The researcher has also provided a list of supportive groups and contact numbers should any information come up where they would like to seek further advice.

The researcher has given a list of support services to each participant for any further advice they might be seeking.

Appendix 4: Information Statement

Information Statement

Dr Amanda Howard
University of Newcastle,
Callaghan
NSW 2308

Chief Investigator: Dr Amanda Howard
Project Supervisors: Dr Amanda Howard and Dr Tamara Blakemore
School of Humanity and Social Science
Faculty of Education and Arts

Student Researcher
Deborah Amas
Email: deborah.amas@uon.edu.au

Information Statement for the Research Project:
Perceptions of 'use of self' in Social Work

19th March 2017

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Deborah Amas as part of the requirements for her PhD research in the school of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle.

The research is supervised by Dr Amanda Howard and Dr Tamara Blakemore in the school of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Newcastle.

Why is the research being done?
'Use of self' is widely discussed in education and in professional contexts as a component that supports relational work with clients and self-care for the Social Worker. The project contributes a qualitative research study to explore the meaning, use and relevance of 'use of self' in Social Work. Professionals from education, practice and organisational management are invited to contribute.

Who can participate in the research?

Participation is invited from qualified Social Workers who are Managers, Social Work Educators and one year post qualified Social Workers outside of the Supported Year of Practice. The Student Researcher would like to speak with professionals from a range of institutions, organisations and agencies to explore perceptions of use of self.

What would you be asked to do?
After having read and fully understood this participant information statement, professionals are invited to contribute to either a Social Work Manager or Social Work Educator focus group suitable to their role or a one to one interview as a practitioner. Interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed

Participants will not be asked to discuss anything related to their place of work and neither they, nor their place of work will be identified in the research project. It is also important to note that at no time during the interview will details regarding specific case work be elicited.

What choice do you have?
Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent

will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you.

If you do decide to participate you may withdraw from the project at any time up to the point of submission without giving a reason and have the option of withdrawing any data you contributed.

How much time will it take?
Focus groups are expected to last for between 1 and 2 hours. They will be conducted in a rooms arranged by the Student Researcher in office premises in suitable central locations for transport networks. Skype or video conference contributions can be arranged in liaison with the participant if they are unable to attend in person. The focus groups will be audio recorded.

One to one interviews are expected to last for up to an hour. Interviews can be conducted face to face or by telephone or Skype. Arrangements can be made to meet by either the Student Researcher or the interviewee in mutually convenient locations where suitable rooms can be booked. Skype and telephone conversations will take place in a confidential setting and will be audio recorded.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?
There is a possibility that participants may feel uncomfortable speaking about use of self and insights, perceptions and understandings gained in the context of their work. The researcher is able to direct participants to supportive networks if required.

It is important for potential participants to know that participating in this study is entirely voluntary and they do not have to provide any information they do not want to and will not be asked about anything related to their workplace or practice therein. The purpose of the project is to provide a point-in time overview of cross discipline perceptions and understandings of the use of self and to identify key themes that may inform future Social Work knowledge and policy contexts. Participants can choose to talk in as much or as little detail as they like. Participants can opt-out of participating in the study at any time and can withdraw data (up until the submission thesis date expected to be 31/09/2018) without providing any reason and with no negative consequences to them. The benefits to participating in this study include having the opportunity to contribute to the development of research knowledge.

How will your privacy be protected?
Any information collected by the researchers which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the Student Researcher unless you consent otherwise, except as required by law. There are limits on assurances of confidentiality as research data/records may be subpoenaed by law.

Data will be retained for at least 5 years on the University of Newcastle's ownCloud secure server and audio recordings will be stored on an electronic device that will be transferred to the University of Newcastle's ownCloud secure server. Data will be transcribed by the researcher and de-intified for coding which permanently replaces names with numerical codes during transcription. Data will be securely destroyed in line with UON policy provisions for research conducted by University staff and students.

Information which might identify participants will not be disclosed without their prior consent. This is particularly important for interviews and focus groups where individuals might be quoted and which may directly or indirectly identify them. Explicit consent is required in this case and participants must be able to sight the intended use of their material before granting a Release or Consent.

Participants in the focus groups will be requested to respect confidentiality of the group discussion.

How will the information collected be used?
The collected data will help provide an overview of perceptions about use of self in social work that contributes to a Social Work PhD thesis submitted by Ms Deborah Amas. The results may also be reported in academic books and journals and for presentation at conferences and workshops. No individuals or work places will be identified in reports arising from the project.

You will be able to review the recording and transcript of your recording and be able to edit or erase your contribution. You are also welcome to provide any further reflection or insights after reviewing this material.

Non-identifiable data may be also be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, and to contribute to further research and public knowledge, or as required by law.

If you would like a copy of the summary of results, please email Ms Deborah Amas (deborah.amas@uon.edu.au) after September 2018 when it is expected to be available

***What do you need to do to participate*?**
Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher.

If you would like to participate, please complete the consent form and initially email it to the Student Researcher (deborah.amas@uon.edu.au) Please provide contact details in order to begin arrangements for convenient ways that you would like to participate.

The Student Researcher is only able to select 10-12 Social Work Managers and 10-12 Social Work Educators for the focus groups, and 15 social work practitioners for interview. Expressions of interest are welcome from those who would like to participate in either a group or individual interview, or those who have an interest in being both interviewed individually in their practitioner capacity and to participate in a focus group appropriate to their role. All those who return the Consent Form will be contacted and thanked for the interest they have shown in the project and advised whether or not they have been selected as a participant.

Further information
If you would like further information please contact Ms Deborah Amas

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Ms Deborah Amas
RhD Candidate

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. **H-2016-0442**.

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Services, NIER Precinct, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au.

Appendix 5: Organisation list

Perceptions of 'use of self' in Social Work

Organisation list

The following are a list of organisations that provide support and counselling services in England. You may already know of support services available to you where you live or work. These are just a short list of main organisations and you may also want to seek information or advice from a trusted person, doctor or other professional.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Counselling Directory – Directory of independent registered professional counsellors

Web Address: http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/

Relate – Relationship Counselling:

Web Address: https://www.relate.org.uk/

Telephone: +443001001234

Samaritans – Suicide Counselling Service (support for individuals and those worried about others)

Web Address http://www.samaritans.org/

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES

Alcoholics Anonymous – support groups for Alcoholics

Web Address - http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/

Telephone: 0800 9177 650

ADFAM – Family drug and alcohol advice service:

Web Address: http://www.adfam.org.uk/

FRANK – Confidential drug advisory service:

http://www.talktofrank.com/support-near-you

MENTAL HEALTH:

Time to Change – Directory of services in the UK covering all aspects of mental health, therapeutic and counselling.

Web Address: http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/what-are-mental-health-problems/mental-health-help-you/other-useful-organisations

Anxiety UK – Living with stress, anxiety and depression

Web Address: https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/

SUPPORT SERVICES

Age Concern – Support line for all issues relating to older people

Telephone: **0800 009966**

Carers UK – Advice and support for all Carers

Web site: http://www.carersuk.org/Home

Childline – Free National Help Line for children and young people in trouble or danger

Telephone: 0800 1111

Citizens Advice Bureau – Free legal, consumer and welfare advice service

Web Address: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard – Advice and referral service

Telephone: 020 7837 7324

Appendix 6: Nvivo node structure

5/03/2018 11:32 AM

Node Structure

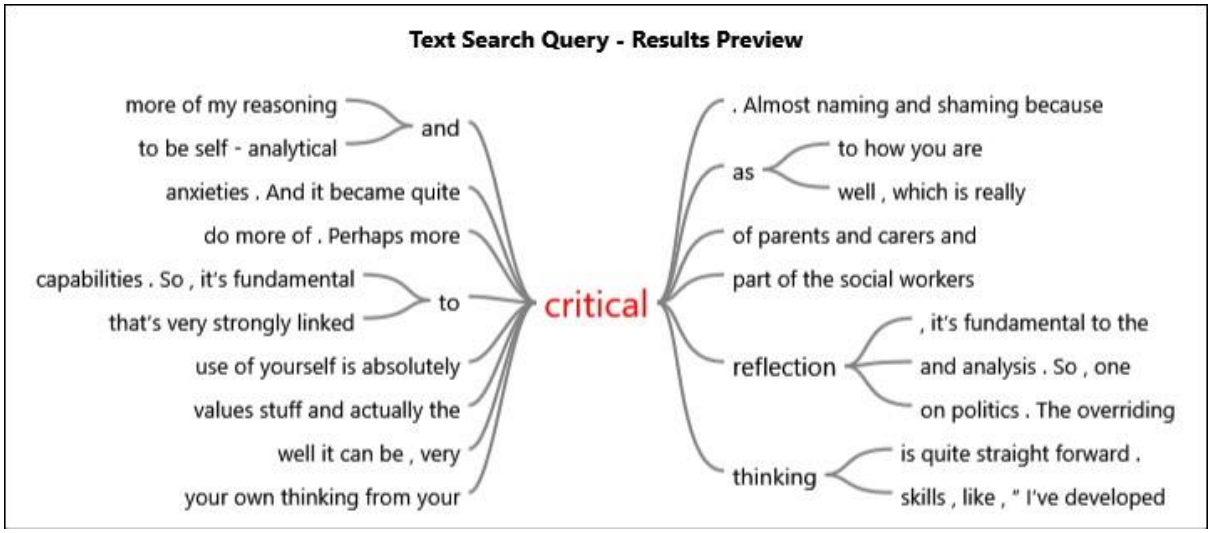
Perceptions of Use of Self

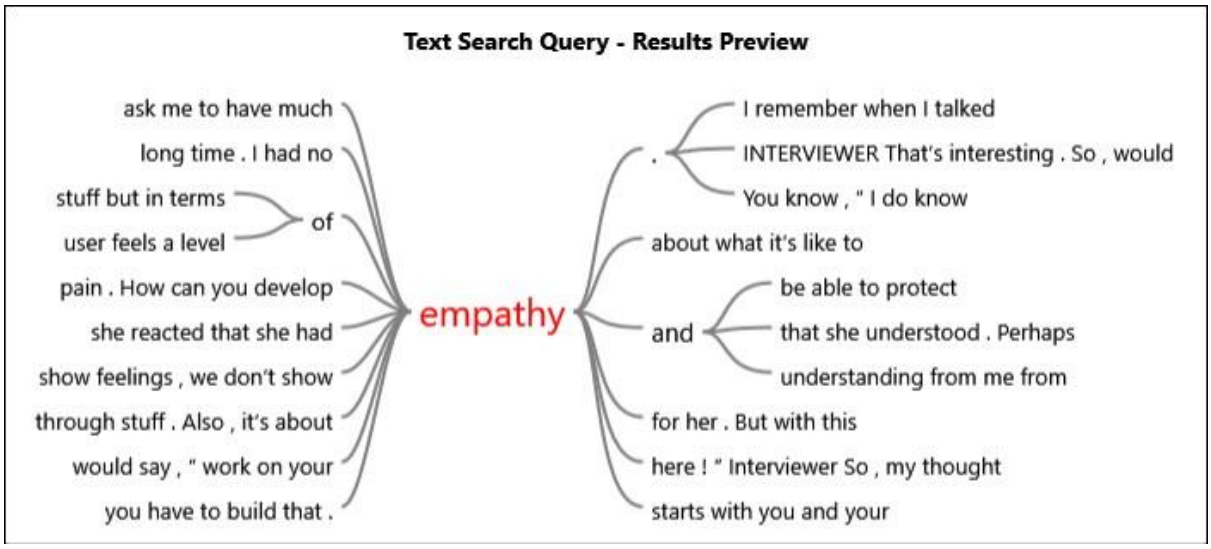
5/03/2018 11:32 AM

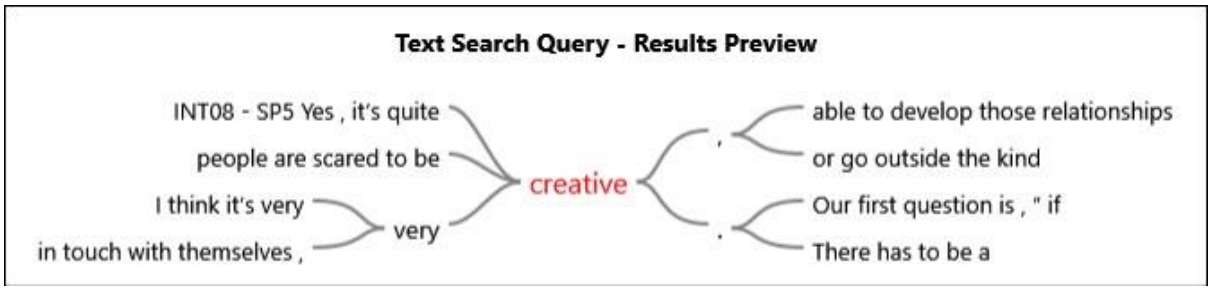
Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Node			
Nodes\\All interviews			
Nodes\\All interviews\\Assessing use of self	Is it the missing criteria	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Behaviours	Communication skills	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Creative use of self	Intution- practice wisdom	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Diversity	Cultural Competence	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Modelling	Do as I do	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Personal Professional Boundaries	self-disclosure - clients	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Personal Professional Boundaries\Relational working	Relationships with others	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Personal Professional Boundaries\Self-disclosure	Management and	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Political	Influences on social work	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Procedural Self	Not using self	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional Knowledge	use of self knowledge	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional Knowledge\Reflective practice	Reflection	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional Knowledge\Therapeutic self	people work	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional use of self	Feeling ok about my professional values and	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional use of self\Developing others	Managing and educating	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional use of self\Multi-collegiate working	working with other	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional use of self\Performance Management	Conflicts and dilemmas	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Professional use of self\Working with unqualified workers	Foster carers and volunteers	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Quoteable data	Findings data	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Self and use of peers	Peer support	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Self-Care	Burn-out	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Self-Care\Resilience	Strength and vulnerability	No	None

Nodes\\All interviews\\When and where you trained	history context of use of self learning and how it's	No	None
Nodes\\All interviews\\Who you are	Self-awareness	No	None

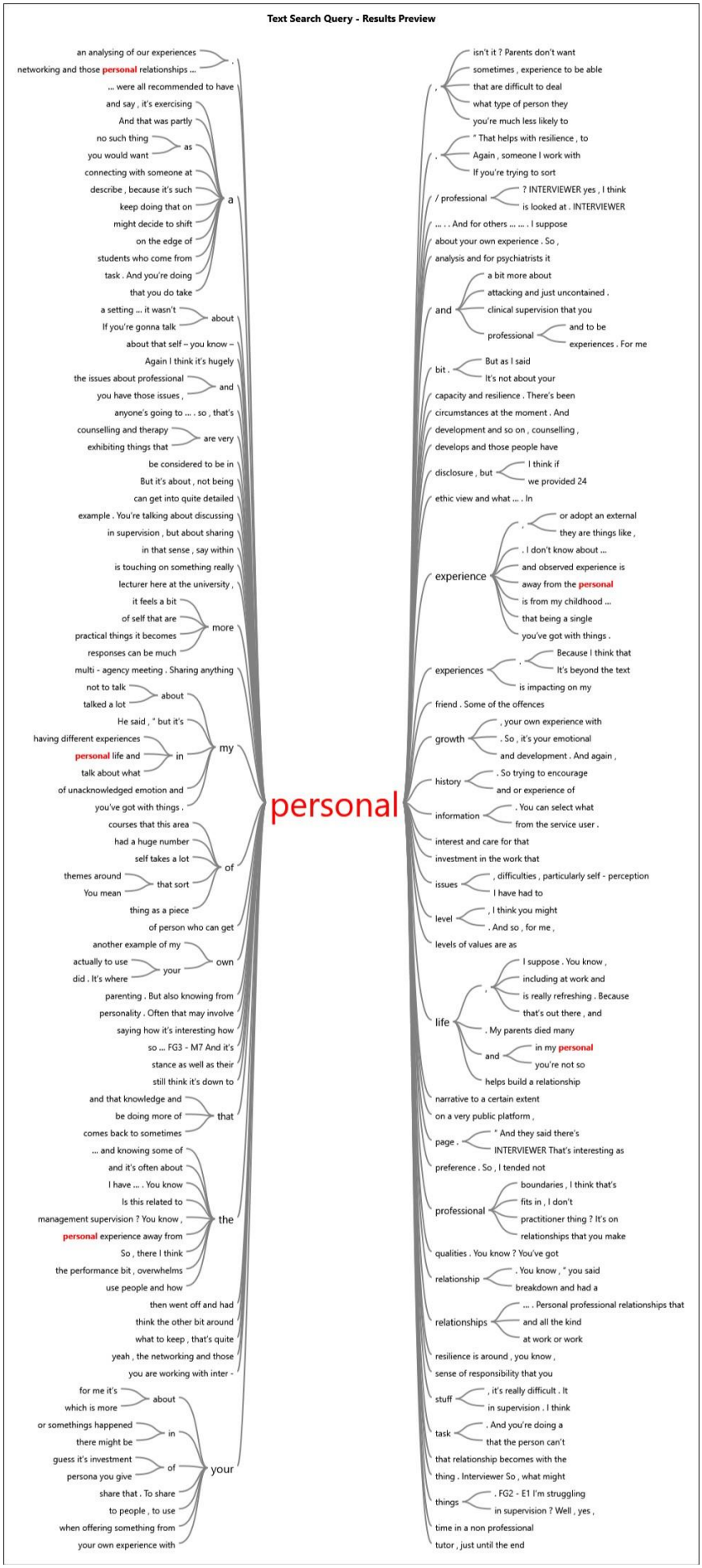
Appendix 7: Word Trees

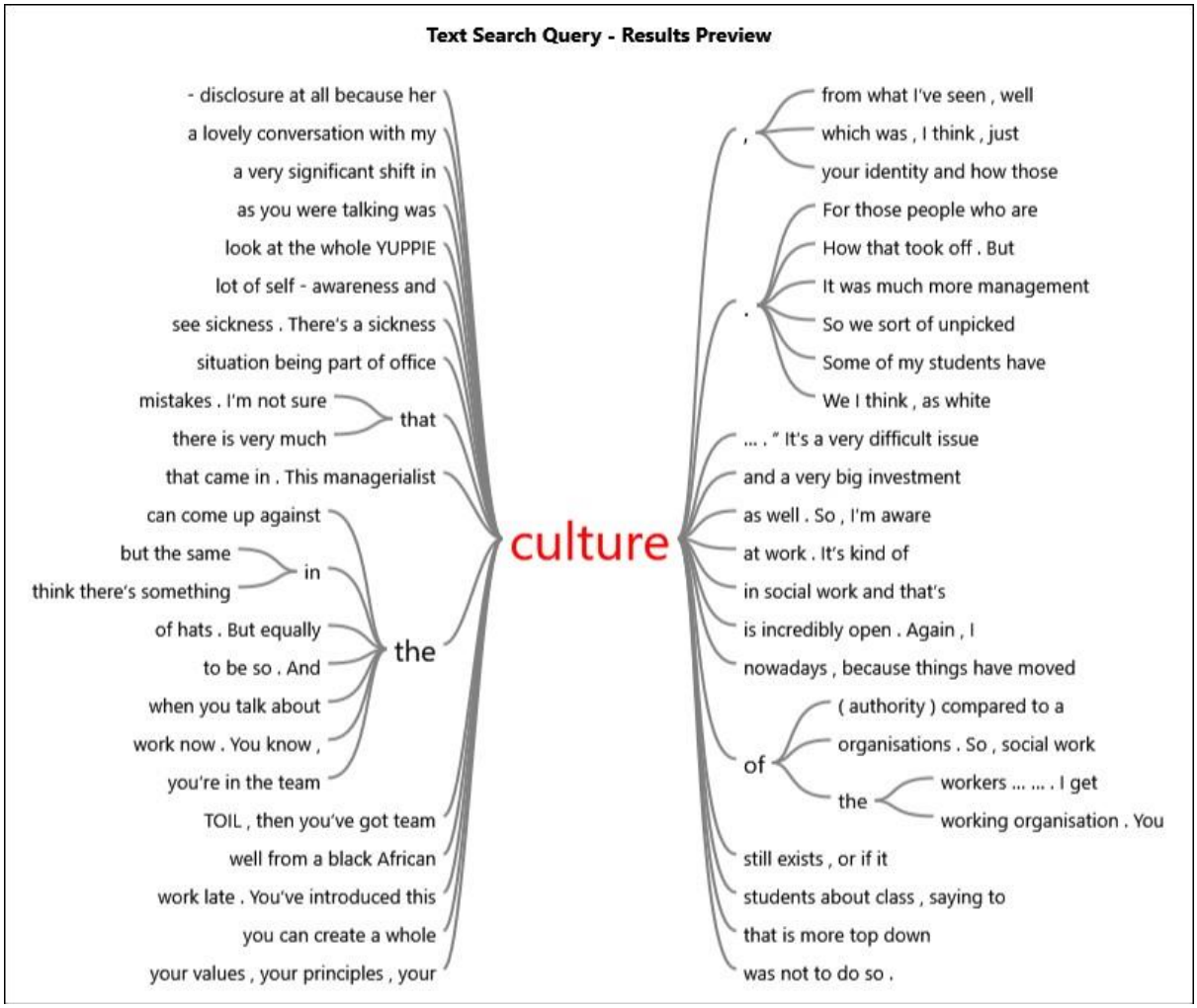




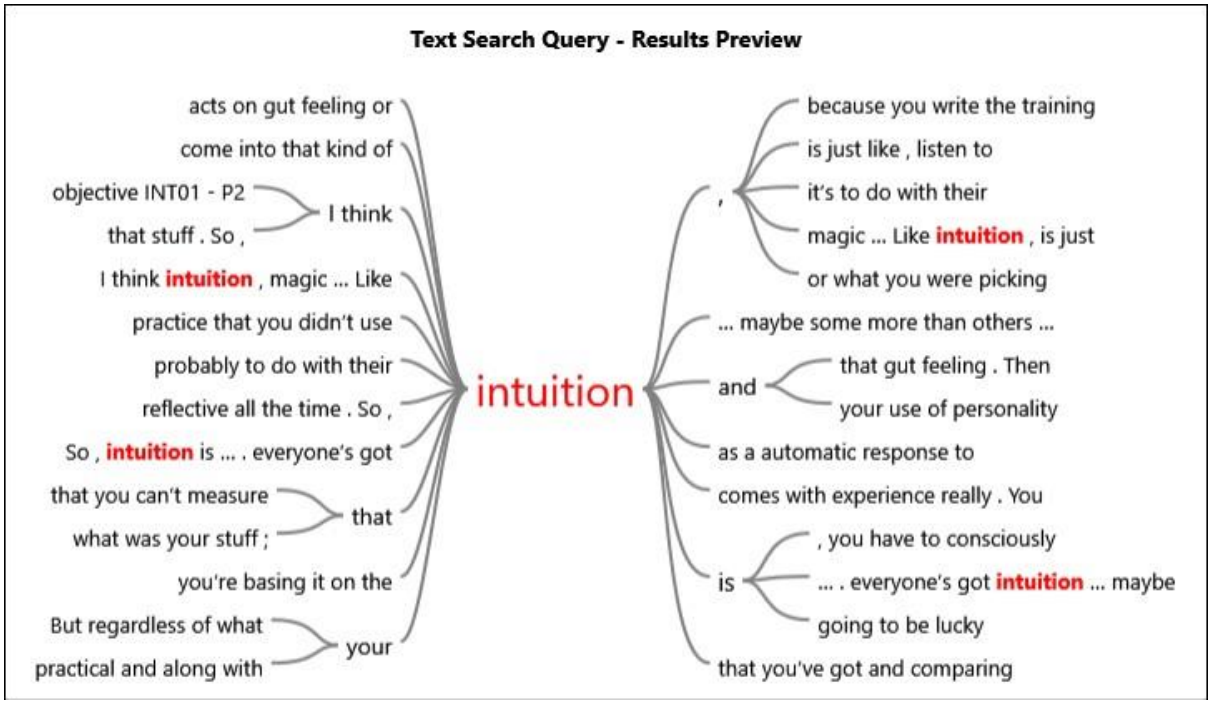


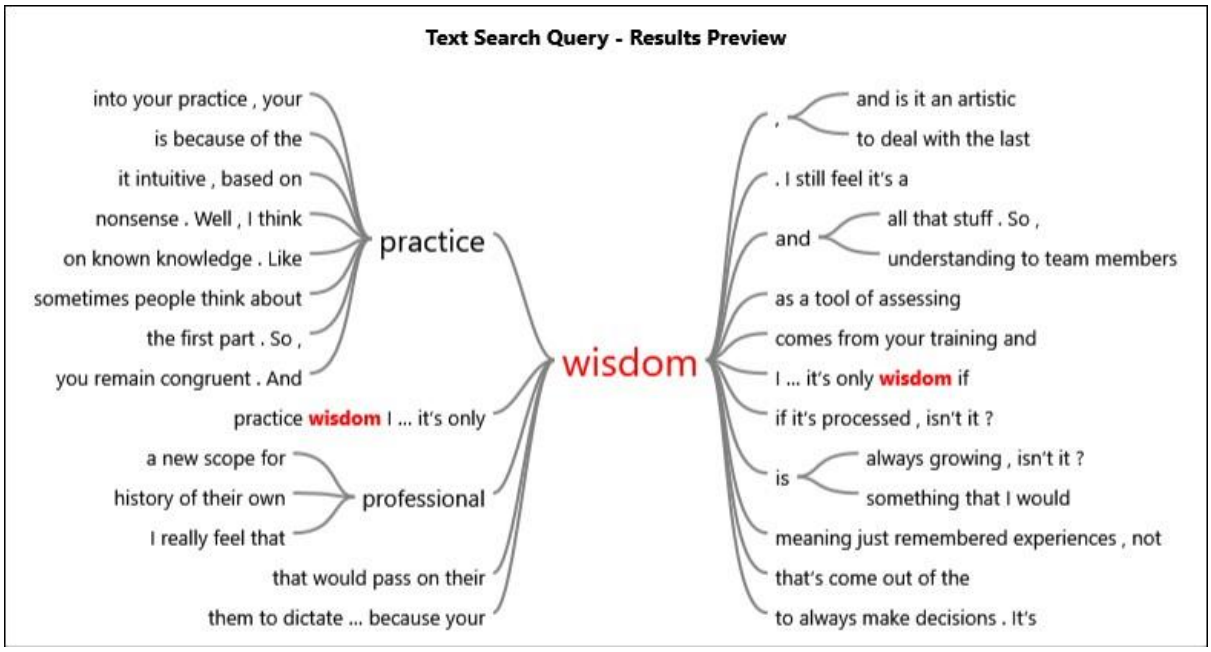

Text Search Query - Results Preview
professional
a sense of . I think
to be that more academic
very big believer in this
we have a PE , SU
what I believe in , humanity
" a confident integration of self . "
... well , we're all on
a question . I've got
- PS Yeah , yeah
as a partner
as an individual
almost been slated
it's just that
person , rather than
sense of self
have to revisit , in
I have to put
in a suit you're
just thought , " I have
we have to be
felt very comfortable
use of self
would have been
with the support of
year award . Is that
across the stage . Talk
organisational focus which isn't
Some of the issues
there's also the thing
" Confident
around
of
of our experiences .
self – you know –
integration of self
Personal
because I had a previous
But we should never use
confident integration of social work
are relating to a
you've got so many
disempowered by the way another
felt the tone had changed .
haven't got ... who don't have
their own decision . A
you're a doctor , nurse ,
heart breaking realities , especially around
a lot of this
counter with social workers
that a professional marker
You know , I believe
same thing applies to
We try to do
of that role that
training at this university
know everything . To seek other
as needing to be
the office have
as though
time that
we've
become
and very safe
I dealt with
students again , and that's
the last years of
my value sets ? " There are
never quite felt comfortable with
not been long qualified about "
Not just individual self but
now you are the super
a kind of continuum
at the same kind
candidate , not really mindful
enter into some sort
from my own position
have a real sense
strongly was the lack
was an over indulgence
you assess the impact
aware as part of
our regulator and to
to our team about
we haven't valued enough
our students go out into
I did push
to see in
extraordinary history of
on it . That's
PCF . I know you've got
and those personal relationships ... .
mean that sort of
people and how the
you're gonna talk about
that this area of
this related to the
personal time in a non
sure you are keeping tight
- disclosure . But it's also
is . So I think
my students , what makes
of that , you know
So I really feel
so many different places
this is because of
that ... You know , we're all
a little bit
whilst also thinking
and sometimes you see
now . We weren't on
yeah , because there is
the outside ... . what isn't strictly
the question of why those
the things that fall under
then , you see , you're crossing
there a new scope for
There wasn't a single reference
think about what is there
I don't know who
there's times when I'm
thought , that's my social worker
real racial , cultural tone
theme , Five days dedicated
to graduate ? " As opposed
very very different . I think
was a real emphasis on
weren't talking in a particularly
a secure base within
across , but actually it's
I'm trying to
like that would
is to really support
that would be putting
. police , it's much clearer what
If you don't know yourself ,
INTERVIEWER Hello ... Oh , I'm sorry
It brings some sort of
It's about a sense of
Sort of , relationships in the
That's what worries me , it's
Those people who are doing
To spot whether or not
/ service user relationship there's going
? INTERVIEWER yes , I think so ...
... .
. I have been quite unique
and you don't know that
aim ? So , it's much more
and
a tutor . And , you've
actually you are awake
personal ethic view and
respected as professionals . So
to be more aware
as well , Thinking back to
behaviours
" INTERVIEWER Yes INT14 - E?
Confident . That's an important
Model and articulate use
You know yourself and
? " Our students are coming
and I kind of
is really to role
boundaries
. I think that's a
I believe they keep
You know , I believe
and I felt I
as well , that I
really , and now the
boundary bit . I mean , some
Capabilities
Framework as well , because
we were on the
career in this country , that
confidence not as a student
contest , where you are , where
development . Certainly , the themes around
disciplines , why wouldn't they dream
ethics
. I took offence at
so we do talk
experience before social work , when
experiences . For me it's about
fits in , I don't know .
for being too caring and
friend . Crossing those boundaries – you
gossip " . Because I was stuck
hat on
. You know , when
and I've got
identity .
In my first two
It's interesting actually , because ,
Like , I'm comfortable in
So teachers would do
is
" And I said , " well ,
looked at . INTERVIEWER So ,
speaking to them and
judgement
by understanding how your
of where the boundary
leadership , contexts in organisations , skills ,
learning here . It's a waste
level , but who has the
levels and different areas of
life , as opposed to what
marker in professional use of
might be talking about sexual
network , that you should be
ones but what about , " personally
persona
of social worker working
that they're going to
personality , not your personality that
perspectives as well , because what
position . So quite often when
practice
" , to engage with . So ,
. When our students go
we try to really
practitioner thing ? It's on a
relationship
" into one where you
with this person , " and
relationships that you make with
role to understand that when
self
. Maybe I'd invest less
and
I think that's
therefore personally as
reacting to that , and
that may not fit
sense of self ... . . containing it
side , maintaining some containment ... . If
skills . Interviewer So , where's use
social work educators and we
space and ... , they did go .
stance as well as their
standing or we're still not
tend to get more involved
there
. And I don't know
who's bringing everyone together
training , don't have the right
use of self
! The level
appropriate self -
especially in
is this
I
know
look
It just
It's not
My life
Obviously , I
So it
This person
We've just
?
I personally
We're into
also has
and
modelling
the
because it's
has always
in
a
social
wasn't that
were not
works best
way . It was very negative
which then gives you the
wisdom
. I still feel it's
as a tool of
is something that I
work
, but also in my
. You start by having
you need to be aware

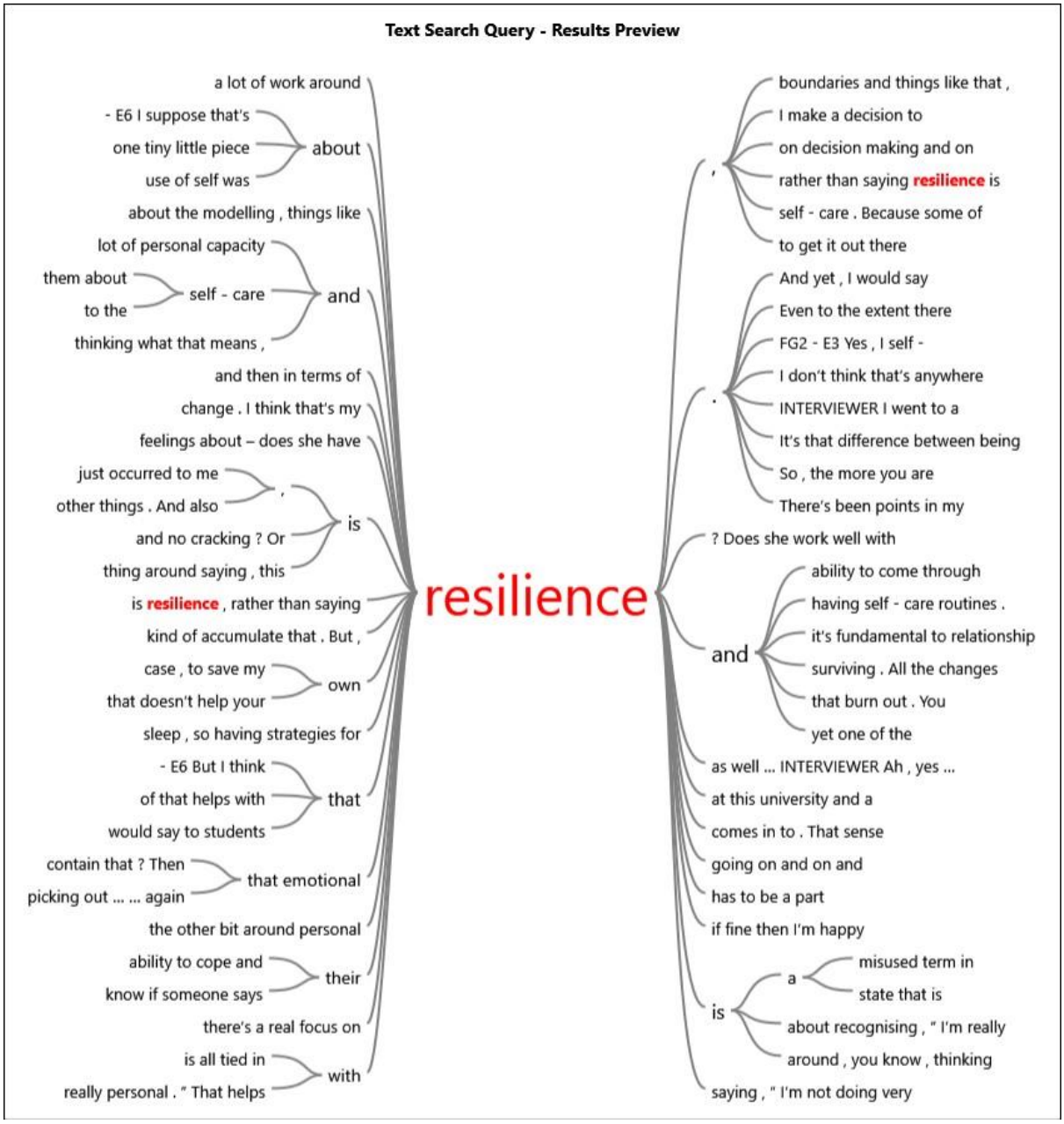

Text Search Query - Results Preview
personal
.
an analysing of our experiences
networking and those personal relationships ...
... were all recommended to have
a
and say , it's exercising
And that was partly
as
no such thing
you would want
connecting with someone at
describe , because it's such
keep doing that on
might decide to shift
on the edge of
students who come from
task . And you're doing
that you do take
about
a setting ... it wasn't
If you're gonna talk
about that self – you know –
Again I think it's hugely
and
the issues about professional
you have those issues ,
anyone's going to ... . so , that's
are very
counselling and therapy
exhibiting things that
be considered to be in
But it's about , not being
can get into quite detailed
example . You're talking about discussing
in supervision , but about sharing
in that sense , say within
is touching on something really
lecturer here at the university ,
more
it feels a bit
of self that are
practical things it becomes
responses can be much
multi - agency meeting . Sharing anything
my
about
not to talk
talked a lot
He said , " but it's
in
having different experiences
personal life and
talk about what
of unacknowledged emotion and
you've got with things .
of
courses that this area
had a huge number
self takes a lot
that sort
themes around
You mean
thing as a piece
of person who can get
own
another example of my
your
actually to use
did . It's where
parenting . But also knowing from
personality . Often that may involve
saying how it's interesting how
so ... FG3 - M7 And it's
stance as well as their
still think it's down to
that
and that knowledge and
be doing more of
comes back to sometimes
the
... and knowing some of
and it's often about
I have ... . You know
Is this related to
management supervision ? You know ,
personal experience away from
So , there I think
the performance bit , overwhelms
use people and how
then went off and had
think the other bit around
what to keep , that's quite
yeah , the networking and those
you are working with inter -
your
about
for me it's
which is more
in
or somethings happened
there might be
of
guess it's investment
persona you give
share that . To share
to people , to use
when offering something from
your own experience with
,
isn't it ? Parents don't want
sometimes , experience to be able
that are difficult to deal
what type of person they
you're much less likely to
.
" That helps with resilience , to
Again , someone I work with
If you're trying to sort
/ professional
? INTERVIEWER yes , I think
is looked at . INTERVIEWER
... . . And for others ... . I suppose
about your own experience . So ,
analysis and for psychiatrists it
and
a bit more about
attacking and just uncontained .
clinical supervision that you
professional
and to be
experiences . For me
bit .
But as I said
It's not about your
capacity and resilience . There's been
circumstances at the moment . And
development and so on , counselling ,
develops and those people have
disclosure , but
I think if
we provided 24
ethic view and what ... . In
experience
,
or adopt an external
they are things like ,
. I don't know about ...
and observed experience is
away from the personal
is from my childhood ...
that being a single
you've got with things .
experiences
,
Because I think that
It's beyond the text
is impacting on my
friend . Some of the offences
growth
, your own experience with
. So , it's your emotional
and development . And again ,
history
. So trying to encourage
and or experience of
information
. You can select what
from the service user .
interest and care for that
investment in the work that
issues
, difficulties , particularly self - perception
I have had to
level
, I think you might
. And so , for me ,
levels of values are as
life
,
I suppose . You know ,
including at work and
is really refreshing . Because
that's out there , and
. My parents died many
and
in my personal
you're not so
helps build a relationship
narrative to a certain extent
on a very public platform ,
page .
" And they said there's
INTERVIEWER That's interesting as
preference . So , I tended not
professional
boundaries , I think that's
fits in , I don't
practitioner thing ? It's on
relationships that you make
qualities . You know ? You've got
relationship
. You know , " you said
breakdown and had a
relationships
... . Personal professional relationships that
and all the kind
at work or work
resilience is around , you know ,
sense of responsibility that you
stuff
, it's really difficult . It
in supervision . I think
task
. And you're doing a
that the person can't
that relationship becomes with the
thing . Interviewer So , what might
things
. FG2 - E1 I'm struggling
in supervision ? Well , yes ,
time in a non professional
tutor , just until the end


Text Search Query - Results Preview
- disclosure at all because her
a lovely conversation with my
a very significant shift in
as you were talking was
look at the whole YUPPIE
lot of self - awareness and
see sickness . There's a sickness
situation being part of office
mistakes . I'm not sure
there is very much
that
that came in . This managerialist
can come up against
but the same
think there's something
in
of hats . But equally
to be so . And
when you talk about
work now . You know ,
you're in the team
the
TOIL , then you've got team
well from a black African
work late . You've introduced this
you can create a whole
your values , your principles , your
culture
,
from what I've seen , well
which was , I think , just
your identity and how those
.
For those people who are
How that took off . But
It was much more management
So we sort of unpicked
Some of my students have
We I think , as white
... . " It's a very difficult issue
and a very big investment
as well . So , I'm aware
at work . It's kind of
in social work and that's
is incredibly open . Again , I
nowadays , because things have moved
of
(authority) compared to a
organisations . So , social work
the
workers ... . I get
working organisation . You
still exists , or if it
students about class , saying to
that is more top down
was not to do so .

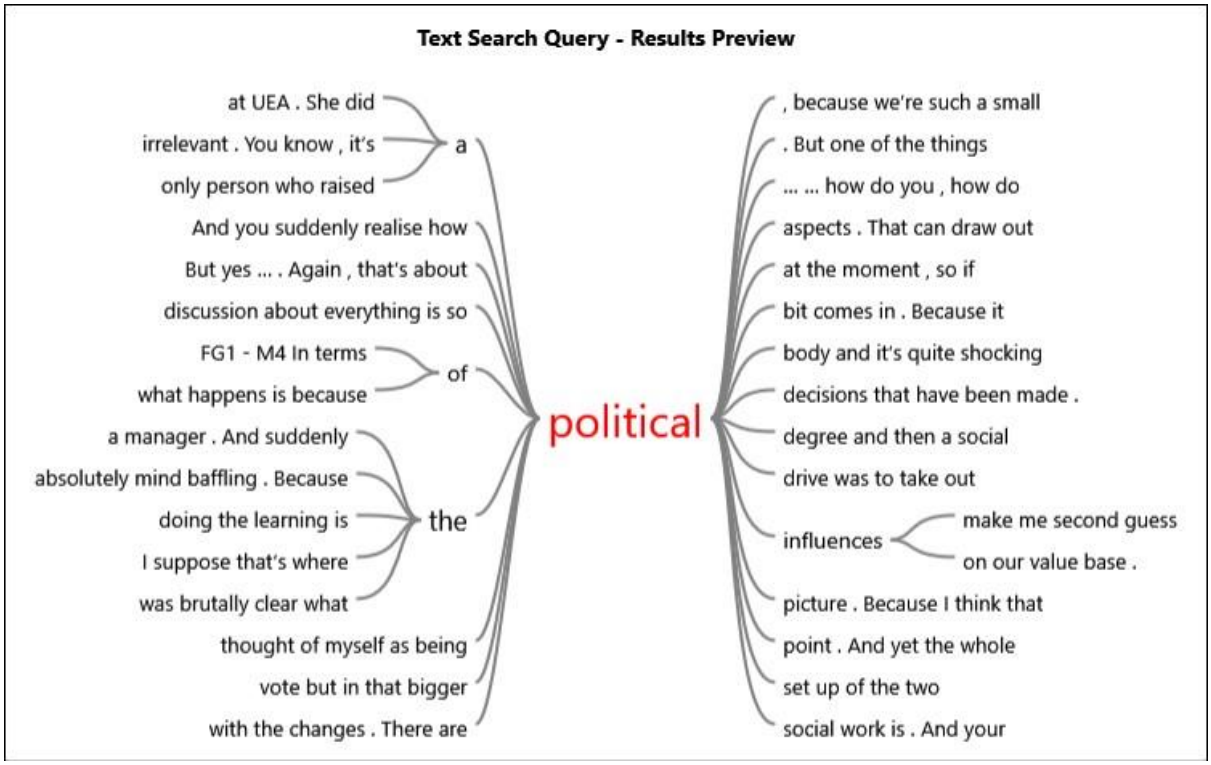

Text Search Query - Results Preview
knowledge
- E5 It's understanding and it's
a pathway of learning and
and sound in your own
be practice knowledge or evidential
could then say , apply theory ,
go beyond consumption of enough
growth . It's a learning , a
industries people have very efficient
it giving you an extra
of
" give us a bit
I've got a level
more of ... . a use
of knowledge ... could be practice
part of it is my
that
does come back to
having that experience and
It's how to use
was damaging me . So ,
that we have a greater
the
Is there anything in
just went with all
removed . And it's having
value they put on
yes , how that informs
you are . Not just
you're able to apply
to reflect on , so their
when you have another framework ;
would often rely on known
you actually have a true
your
asked pre - brother , " what's
It's definitely contributing to
to bring yourself . How
way that you apply
you probably don't change
,
an analysing of our experiences .
but
I haven't got that
not only that , you've
.
It's how to use that
Like practice wisdom to always
The students didn't respond well .
You know , I've taught I
...
. you can then pack it
could be practice knowledge or
about what those things are
and
experience
. Part of it
but you certainly
Skills statements
, you know ?
? INTERVIEWER Erm
that personal , sometimes , experience
as a practitioner . To be
but they don't speak to
I have and how I
if you like . You know ?
in their heads it wasn't
of
exchange with someone else .
self
.
All this stuff
And I use
in terms of
may not be
than we actually
was saying , walk
what's happening ? INTERVIEWER Do
yourself ? Are you just
or evidential knowledge if you
that
her childhood was really
you
have and the
hold . And it's
to
graduate ? " As opposed to
practice , your areas of

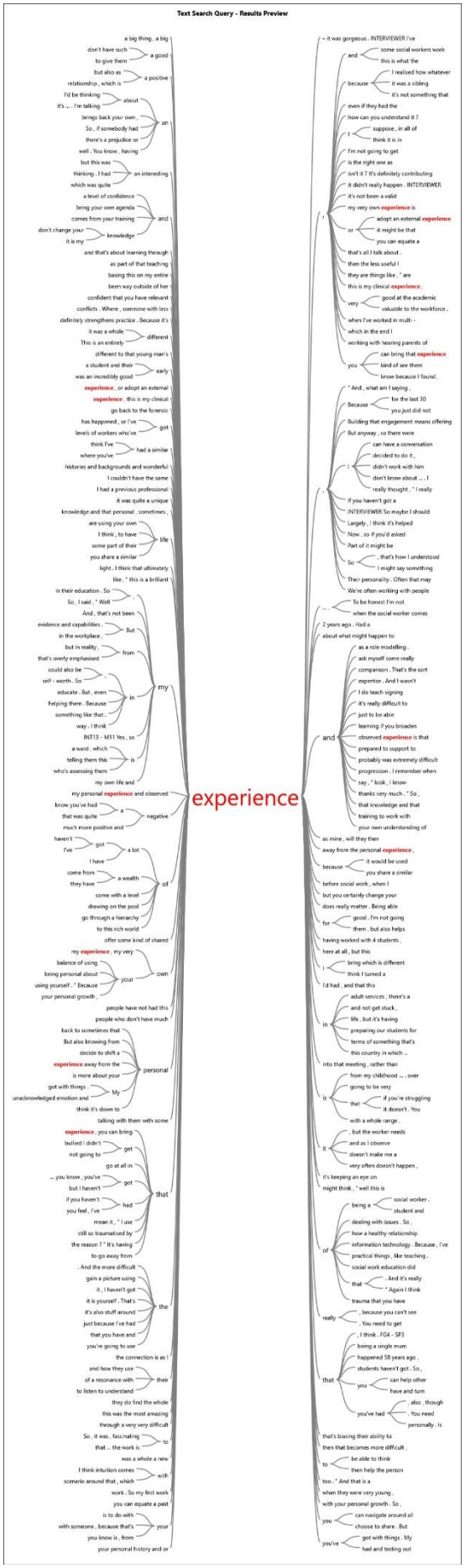

Text Search Query - Results Preview
intuition
acts on gut feeling or
come into that kind of
I think
objective INT01 - P2
that stuff . So ,
I think intuition , magic ... Like
practice that you didn't use
probably to do with their
reflective all the time . So ,
So , intuition is ... . everyone's got
that
that you can't measure
what was your stuff ;
you're basing it on the
your
But regardless of what
practical and along with
,
because you write the training
is just like , listen to
it's to do with their
magic ... Like intuition , is just
or what you were picking
... maybe some more than others ...
and
that gut feeling . Then
your use of personality
as a automatic response to
comes with experience really . You
is
, you have to consciously
... . everyone's got intuition ... maybe
going to be lucky
that you've got and comparing

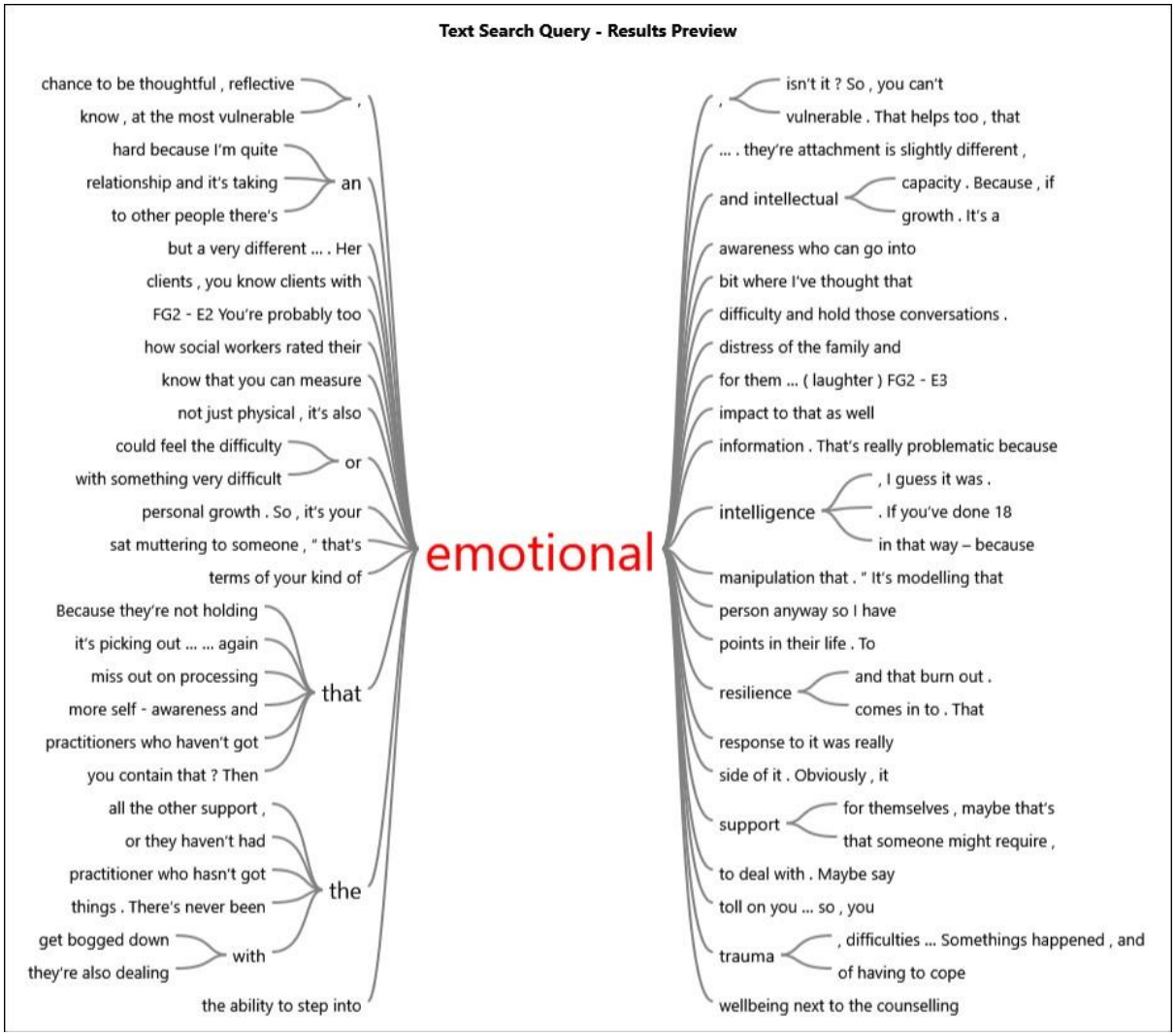

Text Search Query - Results Preview
wisdom
practice
into your practice , your
is because of the
it intuitive , based on
nonsense . Well , I think
on known knowledge . Like
sometimes people think about
the first part . So ,
you remain congruent . And
practice wisdom I ... it's only
professional
a new scope for
history of their own
I really feel that
that would pass on their
them to dictate ... because your
,
and is it an artistic
to deal with the last
. I still feel it's a
and
all that stuff . So ,
understanding to team members
as a tool of assessing
comes from your training and
I ... it's only wisdom if
if it's processed , isn't it ?
is
always growing , isn't it ?
something that I would
meaning just remembered experiences , not
that's come out of the
to always make decisions . It's


Text Search Query - Results Preview
resilience
a lot of work around
about
- E6 I suppose that's
one tiny little piece
use of self was
about the modelling , things like
and
lot of personal capacity
self - care
them about
to the
thinking what that means ,
and then in terms of
change . I think that's my
feelings about – does she have
is
,
just occurred to me
other things . And also
and no cracking ? Or
thing around saying , this
is resilience , rather than saying
kind of accumulate that . But ,
own
case , to save my
that doesn't help your
sleep , so having strategies for
that
- E6 But I think
of that helps with
would say to students
that emotional
contain that ? Then
picking out ... ... again
the other bit around personal
their
ability to cope and
know if someone says
there's a real focus on
with
is all tied in
really personal . " That helps
,
boundaries and things like that ,
I make a decision to
on decision making and on
rather than saying resilience is
self - care . Because some of
to get it out there
.
And yet , I would say
Even to the extent there
FG2 - E3 Yes , I self -
I don't think that's anywhere
INTERVIEWER I went to a
It's that difference between being
So , the more you are
There's been points in my
? Does she work well with
and
ability to come through
having self - care routines .
it's fundamental to relationship
surviving . All the changes
that burn out . You
yet one of the
as well ... INTERVIEWER Ah , yes ...
at this university and a
comes in to . That sense
going on and on and
has to be a part
if fine then I'm happy
is
a
misused term in
state that is
about recognising , " I'm really
around , you know , thinking
saying , " I'm not doing very


Text Search Query - Results Preview
evidence
practice has got
self does have
a strong
differently . Whereas when you've got
everything . You know , you can't
say that would be
to decide , what is
good
hard to measure on these
hour teaching session is exploring
I get why people say
evidence ? Or what
to if there
is an
justice qualitative versus the quantitative
like her log was very
like it didn't have enough
much down the route
of that in terms
of
of course we need to
or anything that you can
poverty . You know , is it
sure what you mean about
evidence . You can provide
your targets and gathering
that
be a mix of
Being able to integrate
long as I've got
to provide , what is
work properly . You know ,
the
the portfolio and it's not
there was an emphasis on
to management . " Even though there's
evidence based practice . " We
that was helping people
use
would that make a different
,
almost . I think that's why
but does that mean it's
.
Which I agreed . But she ,
You can provide that evidence ,
?
Or what is an evidence ?
You know , like our discussion
against you to take to
and
capabilities . But my experience ...
what is valuable , what's
base
... You know , did you
and
neutral skills . So ,
relational practice has
the theory . You're
from many many years
relevant to if Jeremy
to if there is
based
practice
.
" We use evidence
You can have
and felt a
or is it ,
social work practice . The
tools
. " I remember seeing
that led to
directly . So , you can say
everything , as much as we
from peers , she's senior , have
in practice . It involved training
it's just that , isn't it ?
of
risk is ... you know ,
those skills . But it
only because there's no emotion
that states that this child ,
what we're doing , understand where


Text Search Query - Results Preview
at UEA . She did
irrelevant . You know , it's
only person who raised
a
And you suddenly realise how
But yes ... . Again , that's about
discussion about everything is so
FG1 - M4 In terms
what happens is because
of
a manager . And suddenly
absolutely mind baffling . Because
doing the learning is
I suppose that's where
was brutally clear what
the
thought of myself as being
vote but in that bigger
with the changes . There are
political
, because we're such a small
. But one of the things
... ... how do you , how do
aspects . That can draw out
at the moment , so if
bit comes in . Because it
body and it's quite shocking
decisions that have been made .
degree and then a social
drive was to take out
influences
make me second guess
on our value base .
picture . Because I think that
point . And yet the whole
set up of the two
social work is . And your


Text Search Query - Results Preview
experience
a big thing , a big
don't have such
a good
to give them
but also as
a positive
relationship , which is
I'd be thinking
about
it's ... . I'm talking
an
brings back your own ,
So , if somebody had
there's a prejudice or
well , You know , having
but this was
thinking , I had
an interesting
which was quite
a level of confidence
bring your own agenda
and
comes from your training
don't change your
knowledge
it is my
and that's about learning through
as part of that teaching
basing this on my entire
been way outside of her
confident that you have relevant
conflicts . Where , someone with less
definitely strengthens practice . Because it's
it was a whole
different
This is an entirely
different to that young man's
a student and their
early
was an incredibly good
experience , or adopt an external
experience , this is my clinical
go back to the forensic
has happened , or I've
got
levels of workers who've
think I've
had a similar
where you've
histories and backgrounds and wonderful
I couldn't have the same
I had a previous professional
it was quite a unique
knowledge and that personal , sometimes ,
are using your own
life
I think , to have
some part of their
you share a similar
light , I think that ultimately
like , " this is a brilliant
in their education . So
So , I said , " Well
And , that's not been
evidence and capabilities ,
But
in the workplace ,
but in reality ,
from
that's overly emphasised
could also be
my
self - worth . So
in
educate . But , even
helping them . Because
something like that ,
way , I think
INT13 - M11 Yes , so
a ward , which
is
telling them this
who's assessing them
my own life and
my personal experience and observed
know you've had
a
negative
that was quite
much more positive and
haven't
got
a lot
I've
I have
come from
a wealth
of
they have
come with a level
drawing on the pool
go through a hierarchy
to this rich world
offer some kind of shared
my experience , my very
own
balance of using
being personal about
your
using yourself . " Because
your personal growth ,
people have not had this
people who don't have much
back to sometimes that
But also knowing from
decide to shift a
experience away from the
personal
is more about your
got with things ,
My
unacknowledged emotion and
think it's down to
talking with them with some
experience , you can bring
bullied I didn't
get
not going to
go at all in
... you know , you've
got
but I haven't
that
if you haven't
had
you feel , I've
mean it , " I use
still so traumatised by
the reason ? " It's having
to go away from
. And the more difficult
gain a picture using
it , I haven't got
it is yourself . That's
the
it's also stuff around
just because I've had
that you have and
you're going to use
the connection is as I
and how they use
their
of a resonance with
to listen to understand
they do find the whole
this was the most amazing
through a very very difficult
So , it was , fascinating
to
that ... the work is
was a whole a new
I think intuition comes
with
scenario around that , which
work . So my first work
you can equate a past
is to do with
your
with someone , because that's
you know is , from
your personal history and or
– it was gorgeous . INTERVIEWER I've
and
some social workers work
this is what the
I realised how whatever
because
it was a sibling
it's not something that
even if they had the
how can you understand it ?
I
suppose , in all of
think it is in
I'm not going to get
is the right one as
isn't it ? It's definitely contributing
it didn't really happen . INTERVIEWER
it's not been a valid
my very own experience is
adopt an external experience
or
it might be that
you can equate a
that's all I talk about .
then the less useful I
they are things like , " are
this is my clinical experience ,
very
good at the academic
valuable to the workforce ,
when I've worked in multi - ,
which in the end I
working with hearing parents of
you
can bring that experience
kind of see them
know because I found ,
" And , what am I saying ,
Because
for the last 30
you just did not
Building that engagement means offering
But anyway , so there were
can have a conversation
I
decided to do it ,
didn't work with him
don't know about ... I
really thought , " I really
if you haven't got a
INTERVIEWER So maybe I should
Largely , I think it's helped
Now , so if you'd asked
Part of it might be
So
" , that's how I understood
I might say something
Their personality . Often that may
We're often working with people
. .
To be honest I'm not
when the social worker comes
2 years ago . Had a
about what might happen to
as a role modelling ,
ask myself some really
comparison . That's the sort
expertise . And I wasn't
I do teach signing
it's really difficult to
and
just to be able
learning if you broaden
observed experience is that
prepared to support to
probably was extremely difficult
progression . I remember when
say , " look , I know
thanks very much . " So ,
that knowledge and that
training to work with
your own understanding of
as mine , will they then
away from the personal experience ,
because
it would be used
you share a similar
before social work , when I
but you certainly change your
does really matter . Being able
for
good . I'm not going
them , but also helps
having worked with 4 students ,
here at all , but this
bring which is different
think I turned a
I'd had , and that this
adult services , there's a
in
and not get stuck ,
life , but it's having
preparing our students for
terms of something that's
this country in which ...
into that meeting , rather than
from my childhood ... , over
is
going to be very
that
if you're struggling
it doesn't . You
with a whole range ,
, but the worker needs
it
and as I observe
doesn't make me a
very often doesn't happen ,
it's keeping an eye on
might think , " well this is
being a
social worker ,
student and
dealing with issues . So ,
how a healthy relationship
information technology . Because , I've
of
practical things , like teaching ,
social work education did
that
. And it's really
" Again I think
trauma that you have
really
, because you can't see
. You need to get
, I think . FG4 - SF3
being a single mum
happened 58 years ago ,
students haven't got . So ,
that
you
can help other
have and turn
you've had
also , though
. You need
personally . Is
that's biasing their ability to
then that becomes more difficult ,
to
be able to think
then help the person
too . " And that is a
when they were very young ,
with your personal growth . So ,
you
can navigate around all
choose to share . But
you've
got with things . My
had and testing out


Text Search Query - Results Preview
emotional
,
chance to be thoughtful , reflective
know , at the most vulnerable
an
hard because I'm quite
relationship and it's taking
to other people there's
but a very different ... . Her
clients , you know clients with
FG2 - E2 You're probably too
how social workers rated their
know that you can measure
not just physical , it's also
or
could feel the difficulty
with something very difficult
personal growth . So , it's your
sat muttering to someone , " that's
terms of your kind of
that
Because they're not holding
it's picking out ... ... again
miss out on processing
more self - awareness and
practitioners who haven't got
you contain that ? Then
the
all the other support ,
or they haven't had
practitioner who hasn't got
things . There's never been
with
get bogged down
they're also dealing
the ability to step into
,
isn't it ? So , you can't
vulnerable . That helps too , that
... . they're attachment is slightly different ,
and intellectual
capacity . Because , if
growth . It's a
awareness who can go into
bit where I've thought that
difficulty and hold those conversations .
distress of the family and
for them ... (laughter) FG2 - E3
impact to that as well
information . That's really problematic because
intelligence
, I guess it was .
. If you've done 18
in that way – because
manipulation that . " It's modelling that
person anyway so I have
points in their life . To
resilience
and that burn out .
comes in to . That
response to it was really
side of it . Obviously , it
support
for themselves , maybe that's
that someone might require ,
to deal with . Maybe say
toll on you ... so , you
trauma
, difficulties ... Somethings happened , and
of having to cope
wellbeing next to the counselling

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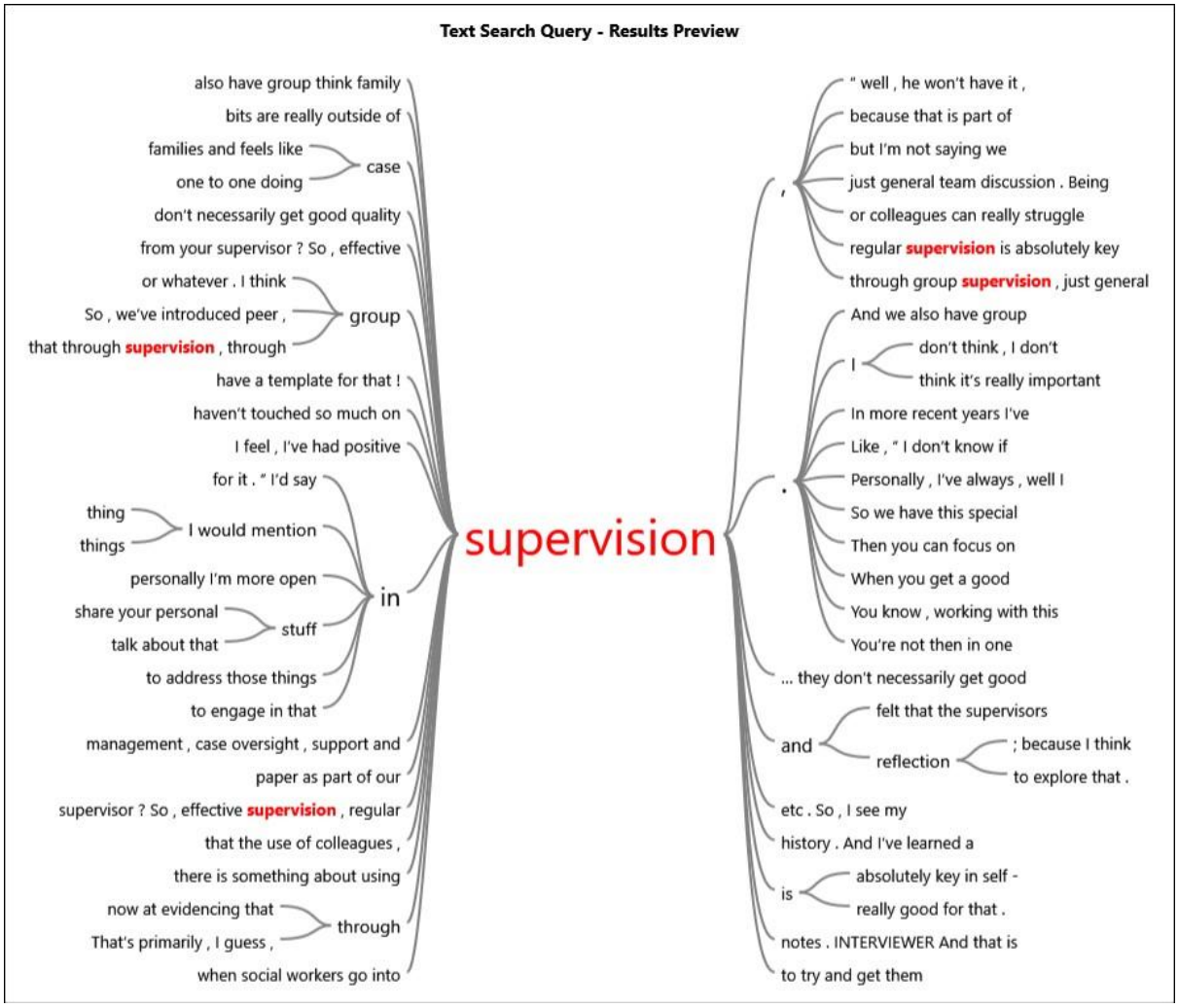
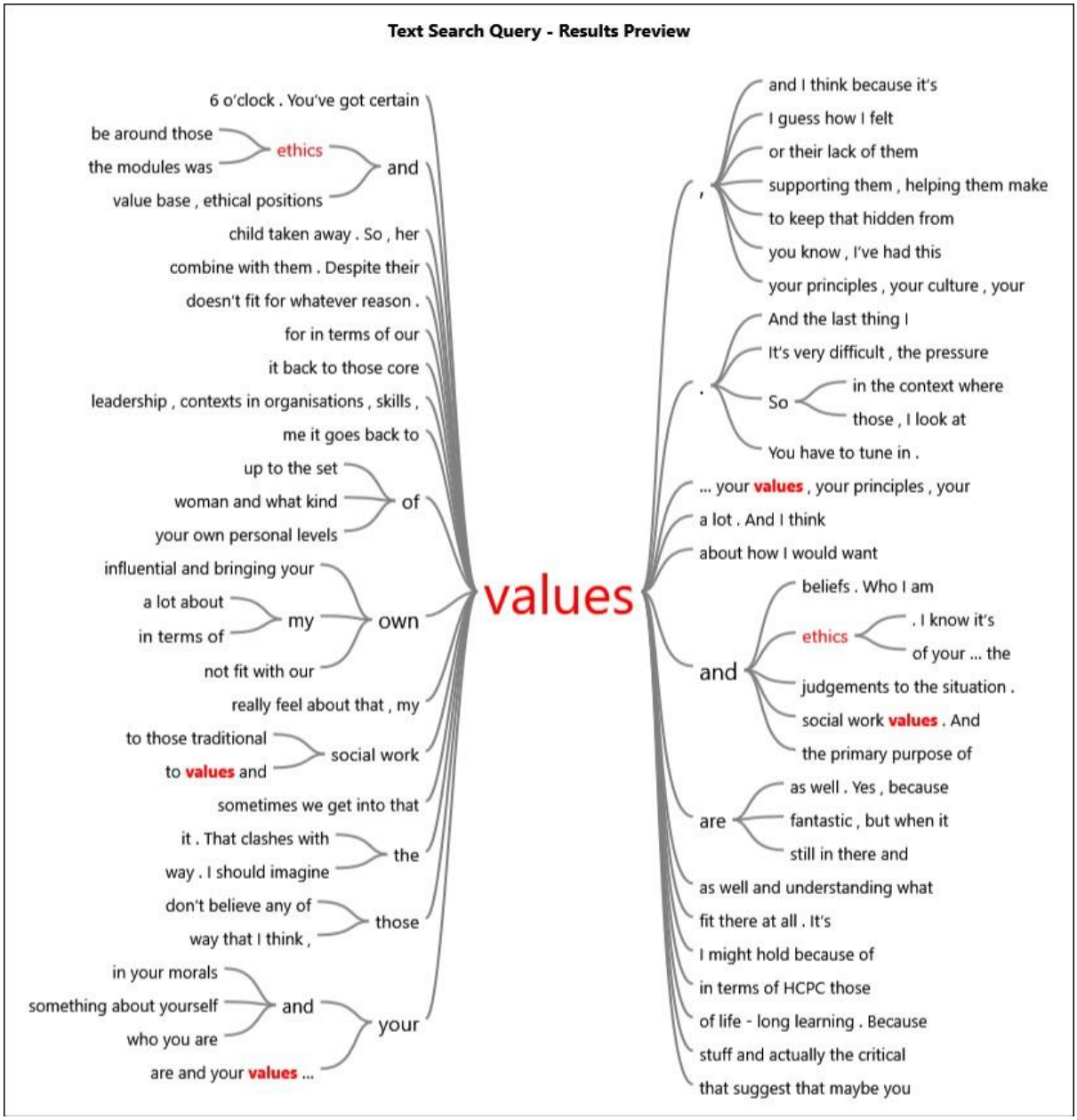
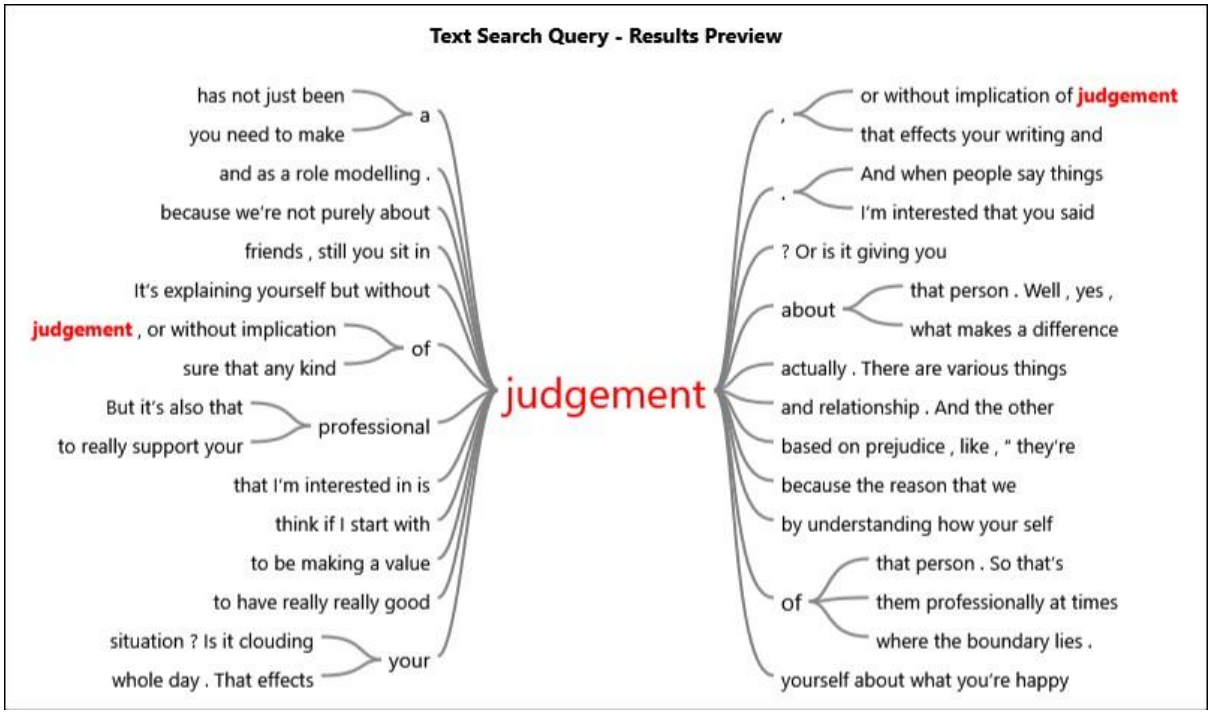
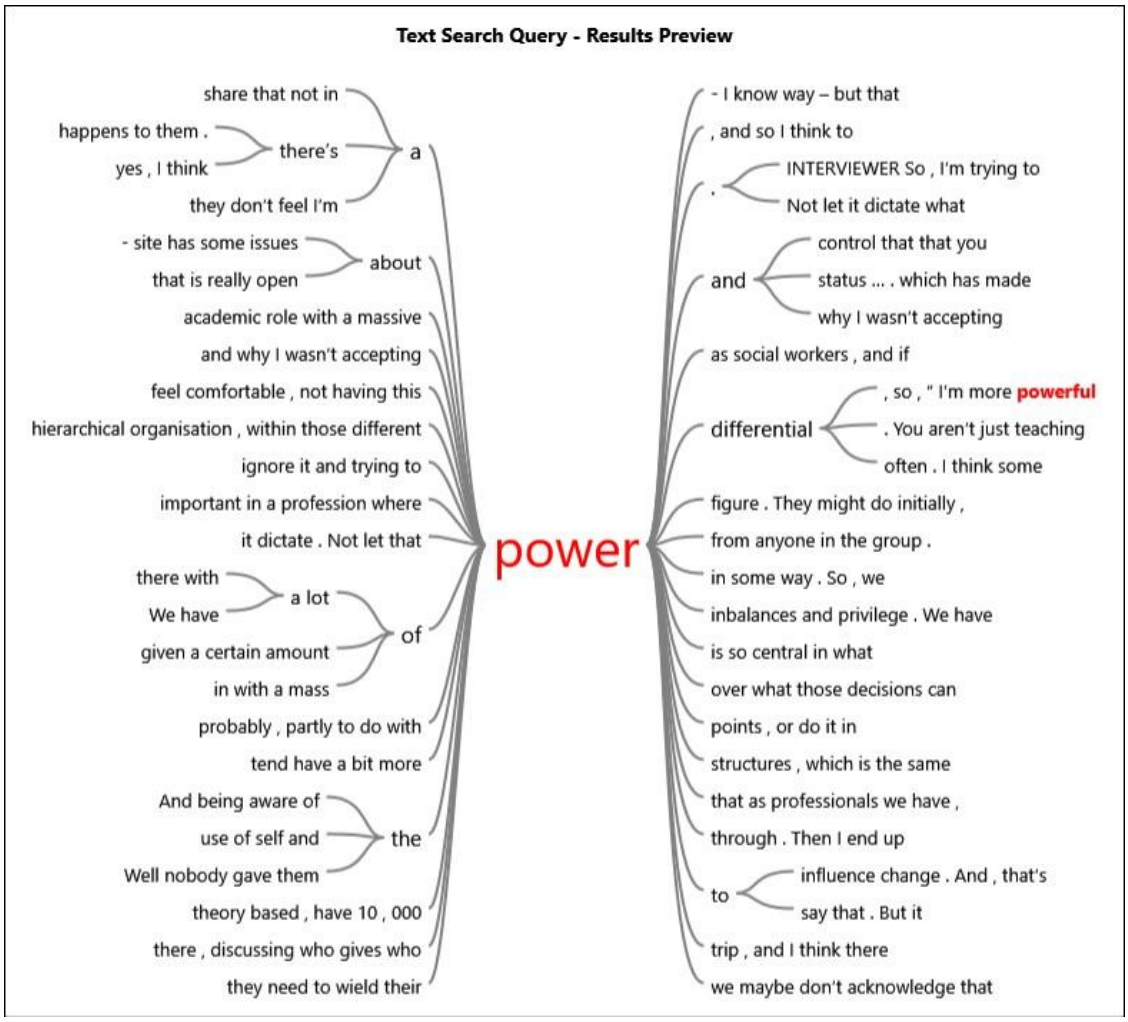
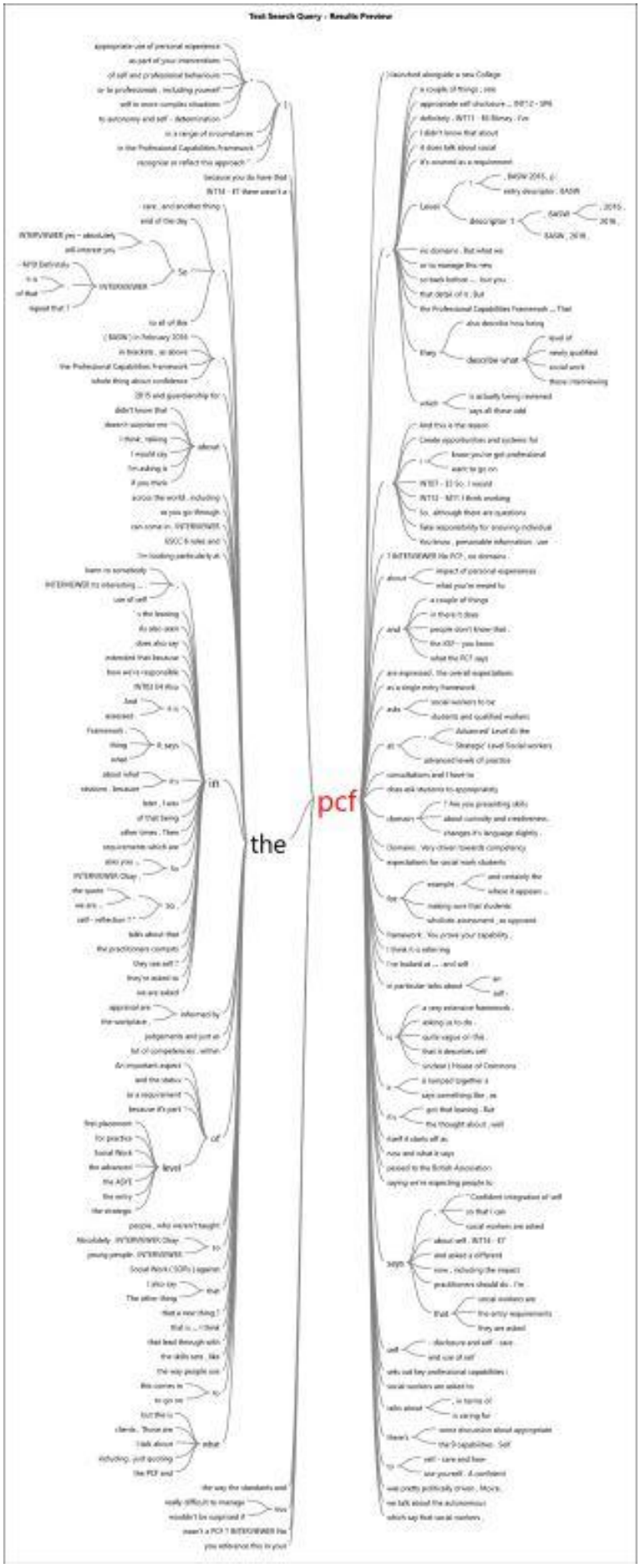

Text Search Query - Results Preview
supervision
also have group think family
bits are really outside of
families and feels like
one to one doing
case
don't necessarily get good quality
from your supervisor ? So , effective
or whatever . I think
So , we've introduced peer ,
that through supervision , through
group
have a template for that !
haven't touched so much on
I feel , I've had positive
for it . " I'd say
thing
things
I would mention
personally I'm more open
share your personal
talk about that
stuff
to address those things
to engage in that
in
management , case oversight , support and
paper as part of our
supervisor ? So , effective supervision , regular
that the use of colleagues ,
there is something about using
now at evidencing that
That's primarily , I guess ,
through
when social workers go into
,
" well , he won't have it ,
because that is part of
but I'm not saying we
just general team discussion . Being
or colleagues can really struggle
regular supervision is absolutely key
through group supervision , just general
.
And we also have group
I
don't think , I don't
think it's really important
In more recent years I've
Like , " I don't know if
Personally , I've always , well I
So we have this special
Then you can focus on
When you get a good
You know , working with this
You're not then in one
... they don't necessarily get good
and
felt that the supervisors
reflection
; because I think
to explore that .
etc . So , I see my
history . And I've learned a
is
absolutely key in self -
really good for that .
notes . INTERVIEWER And that is
to try and get them


Text Search Query - Results Preview
values
6 o'clock . You've got certain
be around those
ethics
the modules was
and
value base , ethical positions
child taken away . So , her
combine with them . Despite their
doesn't fit for whatever reason .
for in terms of our
it back to those core
leadership , contexts in organisations , skills ,
me it goes back to
up to the set
woman and what kind
of
your own personal levels
influential and bringing your
a lot about
my
own
in terms of
not fit with our
really feel about that , my
to those traditional
social work
to values and
sometimes we get into that
it . That clashes with
the
way . I should imagine
don't believe any of
those
way that I think ,
in your morals
and
something about yourself
your
who you are
are and your values ...
and I think because it's
I guess how I felt
or their lack of them
,
supporting them , helping them make
to keep that hidden from
you know , I've had this
your principles , your culture , your
And the last thing I
It's very difficult , the pressure
.
So
in the context where
those , I look at
You have to tune in .
... your values , your principles , your
a lot . And I think
about how I would want
beliefs . Who I am
ethics
. I know it's
and
of your ... the
judgements to the situation .
social work values . And
the primary purpose of
as well . Yes , because
are
fantastic , but when it
still in there and
as well and understanding what
fit there at all . It's
I might hold because of
in terms of HCPC those
of life - long learning . Because
stuff and actually the critical
that suggest that maybe you


Text Search Query - Results Preview
judgement
has not just been
you need to make
a
and as a role modelling .
because we're not purely about
friends , still you sit in
It's explaining yourself but without
judgement , or without implication
sure that any kind
of
But it's also that
to really support your
professional
that I'm interested in is
think if I start with
to be making a value
to have really really good
situation ? Is it clouding
whole day . That effects
your
, or without implication of judgement
that effects your writing and
And when people say things
I'm interested that you said
? Or is it giving you
that person . Well , yes ,
what makes a difference
actually . There are various things
and relationship . And the other
based on prejudice , like , " they're
because the reason that we
by understanding how your self
that person . So that's
them professionally at times
where the boundary lies .
yourself about what you're happy


Text Search Query - Results Preview
power
share that not in
happens to them .
yes , I think
there's
they don't feel I'm
a
- site has some issues
that is really open
about
academic role with a massive
and why I wasn't accepting
feel comfortable , not having this
hierarchical organisation , within those different
ignore it and trying to
important in a profession where
it dictate . Not let that
there with
We have
a lot
given a certain amount
in with a mass
of
probably , partly to do with
tend have a bit more
And being aware of
use of self and
Well nobody gave them
the
theory based , have 10 , 000
there , discussing who gives who
they need to wield their
- I know way – but that
, and so I think to
INTERVIEWER So , I'm trying to
Not let it dictate what
control that that you
status ... . which has made
and
why I wasn't accepting
as social workers , and if
, so , " I'm more powerful
differential
. You aren't just teaching
often . I think some
figure . They might do initially ,
from anyone in the group .
in some way . So , we
inbalances and privilege . We have
is so central in what
over what those decisions can
points , or do it in
structures , which is the same
that as professionals we have ,
through . Then I end up
influence change . And , that's
to
say that . But it
trip , and I think there
we maybe don't acknowledge that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the
pcf

Appendix 8: Focus Groups Analysis

A core discussion in each of the groups that seemed to represent something important for them in their discussion with each other is recorded in the tables below.

Focus Group 1: How to manage sound ethical management of use of self

Geographical location and group characteristics	Summary of discussion	Condensed segments
Rural (region removed) Small towns characterised by high levels of deprivation/ marginalisation in rural communities Child Protection Management Team	Commitment to improve management systems that support workers and maintain good practice with families by using self. PCF – what it means to them at their management and strategic level - The double-edged sword of performance management with most seeing that it could serve a purpose for ensuring families get the services they need. They saw their role working out the difference	*I think that we are getting a lot better in social work practice of evidencing our 'self' through our work. So, thinking about some of the challenges, some of the barriers, some of the positive ways of working with families and really unpicking what that is. Is it down to the services we have, or is it down to that sense of self with that individual worker? What do they bring? And what maybe is less helpful in how they approach it. But I think we're a lot better now at evidencing that through supervision, through group supervision, just general team discussion. Being more aware of our use of language about circumstances towards families, about families. I think that's been quite an improvement.* *I was thinking about the 2 standards and thinking, I'm not sure what they mean. I wonder if, it seems as if they are saying as well as just being aware of self it's about, being able to reflect through the difficulties, being able to model that reflection to others and almost a move towards reflexivity, rather than just reflection and supporting others to do that? You know, moving away from just what you know and helping others to figure out what they know and then working out how to use that to make the changes that need to be made, or just because we change, and figuring out how that looks, how that feels.*

	between being managers and leaders -trying to be leaders and modelling good practice to their staff. Peer supervision and facilitating social workers to use themselves was a priority for professional development	*I was just thinking about self-awareness again. I think that's the key. You know, they're all professionals, they're all grown-ups whether they're newly qualified or whether they've been doing their job for 20 or 30 years. And it's that way of getting them to that place of self-awareness. That's when they'll perform, that's when they'll do best, regardless of whether that's about performance and quality of work, or commitment, or going through difficult times and thinking that's what we've been pondering here that's been particularly important.* *I think that's particularly important, what you just said, around newly qualified social workers, helping them. Because in my experience, you kind of see them going along and really enjoying what they're doing and then they hit a brick wall. And then it's like, "what am I doing this for? It's not making any difference." And you're job is obviously to help them get over that wall. And at those times it's quite difficult not to share how you sometimes become cynical about social work. You know around courts, around thresholds. So it's difficult I think, not to disclose that to a newly qualified when you're trying to help them get over that hurdle and put things into perspective. I think that's what this means, "a confident integration of self." Professional behaviours. You know yourself and that you're managing self and still making decisions that other people can understand and accept.* *So, we've introduced peer, group supervision to try and get them talking to each other and figuring it out for themselves. ……And whilst performance is a necessary evil, actually that belief in giving them a chance to be thoughtful, reflective, emotional, vulnerable. That helps too, that helps them to kind of figure out what they need and where they need to be. Then they look after themselves better because they can see it coming* *I've been pondering all the way through this discussion about the difference between management and leadership. And thinking that leadership is management with emotion, passion, and vulnerability.*

		And looking at the performance board one day and just thinking to myself, "Well, all those numbers up there, they could be about the number of shoes I've sold this week." Because it didn't feel as if it was anything to do with children whatsoever. *But it's something that I don't believe in, that I'm not signed up to. And I've got to present this, "You must do this and you must do it now." Although that didn't fit very comfortably with me and I find that really difficult to not get that across to the team.* *So even our performance targets that drive us round the bend sometimes. If you think about this being about a child. This is why they're there, this is why they are important. Suddenly, everyone goes, "Oh yes." And if you talk about the reasons why you can't meet those quality indicators. Not in terms of the indicators are stupid and irritating, but in terms of, "I really want the best for this family, but I just can't achieve it." And you show that kind of vulnerability, then managers buy into it and they buy into their workers because they see that workers are trying and care but just can't achieve what they want to.* *And if you're willing to reflect openly, and sometimes even uncomfortably, about what you're thinking about yourself, you've got much more chance of making it safe for them (social workers who are managed) to be able to do so. I think honesty as well. I think many managers I've worked with have sometimes struggled with honesty. Again, you learn quite quickly in your practice with a family, that if you're not honest with them you generally come a cropper. There's complaints, they don't hear what you're saying. Once you start being open and transparent about things, it gets better because people buy into it.* *If you can be passionate and vulnerable as managers then you've got a much better chance of workers following suit.*

		I feel in terms of self, at times I've been quite confused about my profession, how it's changed. I know my value base, ethical positions and values, and I think because it's changed, before it wasn't what we came in to social work for in terms of our values, supporting them, helping them make the change that's needed. And it did become quite bureaucratic, and I think that for me, I've struggled over the years. And it's interesting now, being in the position I'm in how I feel I'm able, or to do the best that I can to influence that, to try and bring it back to those core values. It's very difficult, the pressure that's on social workers, you know the timescales, and achieving the changes that are needed to work with families and the resources that are available, so you're very mindful of that. But for me it's hanging on to the fact that in terms of self, it's our self that can make the difference as well. We are the resource, aren't we? We do have those skills. So that for me is quite a big one. I've struggled with the profession and what it should look like and what it actually does look like and what it feels like for service users and for the practitioners really.

Focus Group 2: PCF self is the missing critieria

Geographical location and group characteristics	Summary of discussion	Condensed segments
Eastern Region University town. Historic heritage town. Multi-cultural community. Pockets of rural deprivation and signs of urban	PCF - how to assess self-awareness and use of self for practice. They saw it as a subjective criteria that was difficult to measure.	*It's definitely the missing criteria, because it comes down to…. when you judge a person unable to cope, potentially, with the career they've chosen to do and yet that inability rolls on through year 1, year 2, year 3. You can almost feel it, but actually there's no assessment criteria through which to measure and assess it.*

gentrification surrounding the university. One educator and two lecturers	Disclosure – what is appropriate sharing of personal life experiences for examining self-awareness	*But when we're asking ourselves and our students, or the people we're supporting, to make those judgements and assessments about the capacity of that person, and the capacity includes the use of their self and their own experiences. So how they were parented, around ideas around attachment behaviour. So, we are expecting that from the people that we work with. So, in a way we're trying to measure things that are very difficult to measure.* *For me, I guess, it's dependant, and again it's very difficult to measure, but it's dependant on the impact its having on them. It's connected to what you say, how recent? And how relevant? So, if somebody had an experience when they were very young, they're not a victim of it anymore, they've survived it. To me that's choice whether they want to disclose that with their practice tutor, with their practice educator, when they get to their placement etc, etc* *If I'm honest, I think it's the hardest thing to assess. Because there isn't a pass/fail process, is there? It's embroiled in every other assessment process through from year 1 to year 3. But for example, if a student isn't demonstrating that behaviour in say, year 1, they might just get some feedback in terms of, "you need to develop this as you go into year 2" And in year 2, the PE might say, "you're not really demonstrating it, but you need to do so in year 3." So, what does happen is that it keeps rolling on, and if they haven't done it by the time they come to graduate…. well, there's AYSE. Do you know what I mean? It isn't, "you haven't done it therefore, you can't progress." Almost impossible, plus its very subjective.* *Whereas the Practice Educator or On-Site Supervisor might say, "I observed it in their interaction, or when they did x, y and z." But they might not have written it in their report. And this is kind of what happens in the end of placement reports. You get PE's saying very strongly that the student can demonstrate, this and this and this. But what we see is what is written in the portfolio and it's not evidence directly* *Because for me it goes back to values and social work values. And the last thing I want if I go back to practice, or when I was in practice, I would…. When I look at students now, the last thing is for them to be this line of robots…. You know, coming out of university and are able to*

		tick all the right boxes, whatever, whatever. Then go home, not think about it, not reflect, as long as we're doing it in that mechanical way then I won't need to get anxious because I've ticked all the right boxes. If there's no me in it, what is the point of it? It goes back to those traditional social work values. You have to tune in. You have to build relationships with service users…We have to respect them. We have to not judge them. We have to empower them, etc, etc. But it's difficult to do it if there's no 'you' in that process.

Focus Group 3: Use of self as a muscle: The gym has gone

Geographical location and group characteristics	Summary of discussion	Condensed segments
Region of Greater London Council. Large urban sprawl area, multi-ethic communities and refugee populations Child Care Practitioner, manager and consultant	Discussion focussed on the loss of arenas to practice use of self such as hot desking, peer support, and good supervision. Isolating social work environments governed by performance targets. This has removed potential to adhere to social work values such as human rights and social justice. Loss of social work values in systems and trackers.	*That's the problem with self really, it's a muscle, you've got to keep using it, you've got to bounce it off somebody else. It's a habit. So, for you to strengthen it and be able to develop it you've got to be able to have a relationship with somebody that can do that.* *I think a lot of the problems for me is that they're making offices now so that you're hot desking and you're not around other people that you're working with, so you can't really use yourself because you're not sitting there talking things over, and they're not helping. I think recently when I had supervision, I had an issue with a (assessment) and I was told that it was because I have a gap in my practice. But it wasn't that, it was because I haven't got the chance to reflect on things. Again, I just think it's that supervision style, really. It's not about talking through how you're finding things.* *A lot of people go in as a social worker – you want to make a different to family life – but the systems we've got don't allow you to see change through anymore, so you can't have that.*

	Like group1 concerned about systems and performance management that measured quantity over quality.	*It's become very processed really. And that's systems and trackers. The problem is you raise people's anxieties. On the one hand, it was useful that we were trying to go to a system and offer some consistency and kept on track with time frames. And I went from being a practitioner to a manager at that same sort of time. But, it just heightened people's anxieties. And it became quite critical. Almost naming and shaming because you'd be talking about trackers in team meetings, who was behind and who wasn't. Actually, if you talked about stress that was seen as something that was a negative quality rather than in my training where actually that's a useful tool, we need to think about. Because, everything just suddenly seemed to increase, didn't it? You can't reflect, you can't have that self-awareness when your anxiety levels are so high, or when you're busy running around* *Part of being self-aware is being able to admit you've made mistakes and making yourself vulnerable to people and asking them, "what do you see." Like K was saying from the hot desking, you're in not your same team room, so you haven't got your colleague saying, "what are you doing? That was a really awful phone call. Why are you now suddenly doing this?" You know, "Are you having a bad day H? Let's talk about it." There's nobody…. you haven't got that critically supportive person around, so you become more isolated. It just becomes about you and your manager, rather than part of a team, there's no space for that growth and if you admit that you're having…. the negative sides of things, there's that fear of that competency level.* *I just feel like social work…. it's disappearing. The work bit isn't there anymore. I don't even feel like we're fighting for justice anymore, do you?*

Focus Group 4: Who's profession is it anyway? Retaining the social worker self

Geographical location and group characteristics	Summary of discussion	Condensed segments
Southern England University City. Pockets of urban and rural deprivation. Large refugee and homeless population. Surrounded by rural towns of contrasts between wealthy and marginalised communities Youth Offending Senior Practitioners and Managers	Strong identification with critical knowledge and practice. Wide range of multi-agency work, including police, other social work teams, solicitors and clinicians Politicised group very cynical about performance management. Highly developed sense of self as a team. Main conversation revolved around the profession being invaded by other professions and how to work together with other professions at the same time as maintaining the distinct character of social workers – without becoming chameleons. One conversation centred on the benefits and pitfalls of clinical supervision and	*The following is part of the conversation that illustrates core theme of the group:* *Yeah, we have clinicians in all the time to help us with families where we absolutely don't know where to go and they help us unpick our thinking and…. They don't tell us what to do, but they help us hypothesise. So, I find them really helpful. Like, the team have found them really helpful. And what they have done in terms of use of self…They've given us names for the things that we do.* *It seems good, accept…. Well, one way of seeing that would be that we are so lacking in competence, that we have to draft in somebody else who's got a health side to them, to tell us how to understand what we do. Of course, when you think of the emphasis that's given to students in reflective practice, it does seem odd to me, that in order to help us do reflective practice we've got to call in somebody from health.* *It just strikes me as we were talking about how we see ourselves as a profession, and it does strike me as odd. And it's not a coincidence that they're called clinicians. If you want an illustration of how lacking social workers are…That you need a clinician to tell you what to do!* *yeah, but it's more about having a time to reflect, rather than telling you what you need to be doing…Isn't it just about having a space and having an opportunity to have that time set aside to talk about our…* *Well, it's putting a scientific label on it, isn't it? The whole language of that.* *Does that validate what you're doing?*

	whether it negated the wider social examination and reflexivity of social work.	*It does…Because when I'm going to see a family, I would call it chit chat. I'd make reference to the picture on the wall and, actually there's a name for that, something like, "warming the tone" or something.* *So, you're not going to get a pay rise if you can't tell us what it's called?* *(good-humoured laughter)* *No, but I'm not just making small talk, there's a reason for that small talk, and I know there is.* *But there you've taken the whole thing out of your profession into somebody else's defined terms from another profession that's 'better than yours' because in your terms, "I was just like 'doing common sense'."* *It's just another…It's a viewpoint isn't it? So, although I think I am going to warm the tone, I will still do what I always do.* Interviewer: So, would this service with their clinicians and their psychiatrists etc, invite a social worker to come and talk about their social models? To be part of a…. I don't know, to facilitate a clinician view of social models and what social models bring to the table? *The way I see it is that the strength of social work is that we should be able to see things on different levels at the same time. But not necessarily with that fine tuning, that specialism, so we're not psychologists, but we spend a lot of our time in individual interactions and we have an understanding of how psychology works. But the fact that we have an understanding of how things work at a community level and our sociological perspective means that we can step back from looking at things as a psychologist would because…. then what's the point of psychology. So, it's looking at these different levels at the same time. But I often think we have a much more useful perspective on things that…. other professionals, that are more specialist but more narrow. That's what I see…*

		And another thing, it's that understanding of discrimination and how that all works. Interviewer: Yes, exactly, social justice, all of that… *That they don't get, and that's one of the strengths of social work. But could you imagine us being invited into some sort of clinical team to talk about that? I can't. Not on a regular basis, where we just sit in a corner and say hang on a minute, "actually your diagnosis – look at the pattern there – they're all black." Or something like that. They don't like those sorts of questions.*

Appendix 9: Cluster Analysis