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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL CARE

**The Development of Professional Social Work Values and
Ethics in the Workplace: A Critical Incident Analysis from the
Students' Perspective**

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Social Care

By
Eleni Papouli

January 2014

**WORK NOT SUBMITTED ELSEWHERE FOR
EXAMINATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Eleni Papouli

January 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL CARE

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
ELENI PAPOULI

TITLE OF THESIS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND ETHICS IN
THE WORKPLACE: A CRITICAL INCIDENT ANALYSIS FROM THE STUDENTS'
PERSPECTIVE

SUMMARY

This thesis explores Greek social work students' perceptions of the development of their professional values and ethics in the workplace during their professional practice placement. To accomplish its goals, the thesis includes a literature review and employs a qualitative exploratory research design with descriptive elements positioned within the constructivist paradigm. This research design allows the researcher to explore and describe a topic - social work values and ethics - that is generally under-researched in the existing literature, as well as being complex in nature and difficult to study.

Data were collected using the critical incident technique (CIT). This method took the form of a written questionnaire (the CIT questionnaire) completed by 32 students between 11th and 25th October, 2010. The data were inductively analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. SPSS and SPAD software packages were also used to analyse the numerical and textual data respectively.

The study findings underline the vital role of the workplace as a social space for students to learn and develop their professional social work values and ethics. They also highlight the complexity of implementing social work values and ethics in the different workplace environments that students, as trainees, are placed for their professional practice due to their situation-specific nature.

Further, the study reveals a number of factors that, from the students' point of view, are important in applying and upholding professional ethical standards in social work practice. These factors are associated with: a) the need to practice social work values and ethics in the workplace on a daily basis in order to keep them alive and active; b) the students' own contribution to upholding ethical standards; c) the role practice instructors/supervisors play in the transmission of social work values to students during their placements; d) the importance of

ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace to achieve the best practices for clients; e) the client's behaviour as a determinant of the ethical practice of social workers in the workplace; and f) the importance of the ethics of management (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisations) in creating and sustaining an ethical work/learning environment.

The study suggests that all the factors mentioned above-to a greater or lesser degree- should be considered important elements to take into account in the planning and development of values-based social work education programmes. Special attention should be paid to workplace conditions that can hinder or support the development of values-based social work practice. As the study clearly shows, daily ethical practice in social work, students as individuals, the role of practice instructors, ethical workplace collaboration, client behaviour, and the ethics of management are crucial components for building upon the ethical skills taught in the classroom and developing ethically informed professional identities in real-life workplace situations.

The thesis concludes that the critical incidents experienced by students are a valuable source of knowledge and understanding of the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice. In this study, indeed, students gained valuable insights into their ethics development process in practice contexts, from both positive and negative critical incidents alike.

Key words: *social work, values, ethics, students, practice placement, workplace, learning, ethical development, social work education, social service organisations, ethical theories, codes of ethics, practice instructor, supervisor, critical incident, textual analysis, Greece.*

*To the two special boys in my life, Yannis and
Manos, either side of my smile...*

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Supervisor, Professor Imogen Taylor, for her encouragement, support and guidance throughout the PhD process. Her long experience, constructive advice and constant support were essential for accomplishing this thesis. I would also like to thank my Joint Supervisor, Senior Lecturer Cath Holmstrom for her very helpful comments and suggestions through all of these years.

I am also very thankful to Vassilios Gialamas, Associate Professor, University of Athens, Department of Preschool Education, for assisting me with the statistical analysis of the data and its accurate interpretation. He inspired me to look at statistics differently and taught me a lot about being a critical and open-minded social work researcher.

I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewer of critical incidents for his very useful advice and comments. Special thanks also go to all the students who gave their time to participate in the research and to provide the insights and other revelations on which this thesis is based.

A big thanks also to my husband, Yannis, for his ongoing support, constant encouragement, wisdom, advice and the meaningful conversations we had. I am more than sure that without him, this thesis could never have been written. Last but obviously not least, a huge thank you to my little son, Manos, because his wonderful smile always encouraged me to do my best and to never give up.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	2
Summary	3
Dedication	5
Acknowledgements	6
Table of Contents	7
List of Figures and Tables	13
List of Abbreviations	15

PART ONE: Orientation and Overview

1. Introduction.....	17
1.1 Motivation and Background	17
1.2 Key Concepts	19
1.3 Research Question and Structure of the Thesis	26
1.3.1 The Research Question	26
1.3.2 Structure of the Thesis	27

PART TWO: Literature Review

2. The Landscape of Professional Values and Ethics in the Social Work Profession.....	31
2.1 Introduction	31
2.1.1 Literature Review Method: Inclusion and exclusion criteria	31
2.2 Professional Social Work Values and Ethics: An Overview	32
2.3 Professional Social Work Values: Yesterday and Today	36
2.3.1 Professional Social Work Values and Personal Values Systems	42
2.4 Professional Social Work Ethics: Codes of Ethics for Social Workers	45
2.4.1 The Hellenic Code of Deontology for Social Workers	47
2.4.2 Professional Social Work Ethics and Interprofessional Work	52
2.5 Review of Related Research	55
2.6 Approaches to Professional Values and Ethics in Social Work	57
2.6.1 Deontology and Utilitarianism	59
2.6.2 Virtue Ethics and Care Ethics	64
2.6.2.1 Virtue Ethics	66
a. Aristotle's Virtue Ethics	66
b. Virtue Ethics and Social Work	68
2.6.2.2 Care Ethics	70
2.6.3 Ethical Pluralism and Principlism	74
2.7 Teaching Professional Social Work Values and Ethics	76
2.7.1 Values and Ethics in the Curriculum of the Social Work Department of TEI of Athens/Greece	79
2.8 Conclusion	81

CONTENTS – Continued

3.	Professional Values, Ethics and the Workplace: Learning to be Ethical in Practice Placement Settings.....	83
3.1	Introduction	83
3.1.1	Literature Review Method: Inclusion and exclusion criteria	83
3.2	Overview of Learning in Social Work Education	84
3.3	The Value of Student Placements for Learning in Workplace Settings	87
3.4	Professional Values, Ethics and the Workplace as a Site for Learning	89
3.4.1	Workplace/Practice Learning Environments: Enabling and Constraining	90
3.5	Students as Learners: Approaches to Learning in Practice Settings	91
3.5.1	Individual Approaches-Adult Learning Theory	93
3.5.2	Socio-cultural/Situated Approaches	94
3.6	Students and Ethical Development in Practice Settings	98
3.7	Ethically and Critically Reflective Practice	100
3.8	Supervision and/or Ethical Practice	102
3.8.1	Practice Instructor/Supervisor as Role Model	103
3.8.2	Practice Instructor/Supervisor as Assessor	105
3.9	Ethics and Organisations	106
3.9.1	Organisational Ethics	107
3.10	Power and Ethical Practice in Social Service Organisations	110
3.11	Conclusion	112

PART THREE: The Research Process

4.	Research Design, Methodology and Methods.....	115
4.1	Introduction	115
4.2	Research Design	115
4.3	Research Aims, Objectives and Outcomes	116
4.4	Research Question and Sub-Questions	117
4.5	Research Methodology	119
4.5.1	Research Paradigm	119
4.5.1.1	Constructivist Paradigm	120
4.5.2	Qualitative Research	124
4.5.2.1	Rigour and Trustworthiness	126
4.5.2.2	The Role of the Researcher	130
4.6	Ethical Considerations	130
4.6.1	Informed Consent	131
4.6.2	Anonymity and Confidentiality	132
4.6.3	The Researcher-Participant Relationship	133
4.6.4	The Protection of Research Subjects from Harm or Risk	134
4.6.5	Ethical Approval	134
4.7	Research Population and Sampling	134
4.7.1	Population	134
4.7.2	Sampling	136
4.7.3	Recruitment of Participants	138

CONTENTS – Continued

4.7.4 Research Pack	139
4.7.5 The Site	140
4.8 Data Collection Method	141
4.8.1 The Critical Incident Technique (CIT)	141
4.8.1.1 Disadvantages of Critical Incident Technique	144
4.8.2 The CIT Questionnaire as Research Tool	145
4.8.3 Pilot Study	149
4.9 Approaches to Data Analysis	150
4.9.1 Content Analysis	152
4.9.1.1 Content Analysis Steps	153
4.9.2 Descriptive Statistics	158
4.9.3 Analysis of Textual Data	158
4.9.3.1 Data Preprocessing	159
4.9.3.2 Variables Determined	161
4.9.3.3 Statistical Techniques	161
a. Correspondence Analysis	162
b. Technique of Characteristic Words	163
c. Technique of Characteristic Responses	164
4.10 Conclusion	164

PART FOUR: Research Results and Findings

5. Results and Findings from the Analysis of Critical

Incidents.....	167
5.1 Introduction	167
5.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents	167
5.2.1 Gender of Respondents	167
5.2.2 Age of Respondents	168
5.2.3 Role of Respondents	169
5.2.4 Respondents by Type of Placement Sector	169
5.3 Characteristics of Critical Incidents	170
5.4 The Nature of Critical Incidents: Types and Categories	173
5.4.1 Positive Critical Incidents and Related Categories	175
5.4.1.1 Category: <i>Client</i> [3]	175
5.4.1.2 Category: <i>Interprofessional Teamwork</i> [4]	177
5.4.1.3 Category: <i>Practice Instructor</i> [3]	178
5.4.1.4 Category: <i>Student</i> [8]	180
5.4.2 Negative Critical Incidents and Related Categories	182
5.4.2.1 Category: <i>Client</i> [2]	182
5.4.2.2 Category: <i>Interagency Work</i> [1]	183
5.4.2.3 Category: <i>Interprofessional Teamwork</i> [3]	184
5.4.2.4 Category: <i>Management</i> [1]	186
5.4.2.5 Category: <i>Practice Instructor</i> [3]	187
5.4.2.6 Category: <i>Staff</i> [3]	188

CONTENTS – *Continued*

5.4.2.7 Category: *Student* [2] **190**

5.5 Conclusion **192**

6. Results and Findings from the Analysis of Written Responses to Open-ended Questions.....194

6.1 Introduction **194**

6.2 Professional Values highlighted by Critical Incidents **194**

6.2.1 Correspondence Analysis **195**

6.2.2 Characteristic Words **196**

6.2.3 Characteristic Responses **198**

6.3 Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others **200**

6.3.1 Correspondence Analysis **200**

6.3.2 Characteristic Words **202**

6.3.3 Characteristic Responses **203**

6.4 Critical Incidents and Future Practice **206**

6.4.1 Correspondence Analysis **206**

6.4.2 Characteristic Words **208**

6.4.3 Characteristic Responses **209**

6.5 Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection **211**

6.5.1 Correspondence Analysis **211**

6.5.2 Characteristic Words **213**

6.5.3 Characteristic Responses **214**

6.6 Changes in Thinking & Acting **216**

6.6.1 Correspondence Analysis **216**

6.6.2 Characteristic Words **218**

6.6.3 Characteristic Responses **219**

6.7 Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents **222**

6.7.1 Correspondence Analysis **222**

6.7.2 Characteristic Words **224**

6.7.3 Characteristic Responses **225**

6.8 Key Points from Findings **227**

6.9 Conclusion **230**

PART FIVE: Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

7. Discussion.....233

7.1 Introduction **233**

7.2 Discussion of Findings: The many aspects of the development of professional social work values and ethics **234**

7.2.1 Development through daily practice **234**

7.2.2 Development through active participation: The contribution of students to upholding their ethical standards **236**

7.2.3 Development through role modelling: Practice instructors as ethical role models for students **238**

CONTENTS – *Continued*

7.2.4 Development through collaboration with others, inside and outside the workplace	240
7.2.5 Development through interaction with ‘ <i>difficult</i> ’ clients	243
7.2.6 Development through and beyond the ‘ <i>Tone at the Top</i> ’	244
7.3 Limitations of the Study	246
8. Conclusions and Implications.....	248
8.1 Introduction	248
8.2 Conclusions	248
8.3 Implications	250
8.3.1 Classroom based Education	250
8.3.2 Practice Education	252
8.3.3 Future Research	253
8.4 Instead of an Epilogue	255
 PART SIX: “Addendum”	
9. The Development of Professional Social Work Values and Ethics in the Workplace: A Focus Group Study.....	257
9.1 Background and Aims	257
9.2 Ethical Considerations	258
9.3 Methodology	259
9.4 Recruitment	259
9.5 Sampling and Sample Size	260
9.6 Participants	261
9.7 The Procedures followed in the Focus Groups	262
9.7.1 Role of the Moderator	264
9.8 Data Analysis	264
9.9 Presentation of Findings	265
9.10 Synthesis and Conclusions	280
9.11 Epilogue	283
 10. Reflections on My Research Journey.....	 285
10.1 Introduction	285
10.2 Me, myself and I (my story)	285
10.3 Reading, talking and questioning	287
10.4 My insider issues and challenges	289
10.5 Reflecting on the data analysis	291
10.6 My role as translator	292

CONTENTS – *Continued*

- 10.7 My role as writer **292**
- 10.8 Concluding thoughts **293**

Bibliography **295**

Websites **319**

Appendices **320**

- A. Informed Consent Form 322**
- B. The CIT Questionnaire 325**
- C. Ethics Clearance and Approval Form, University of Sussex, School of Education and Social Work, Research Governance and Ethics 329**
- D. Ethical Approval from the Department of Social Work, TEI of Athens, Greece 332**
- E. Mapping of Critical Incidents 334**
- F. Glossary of Terms 344**
- G. Informed Consent Form (Focus Group) 347**
- H. Information Sheet (Focus Group) 350**

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

5.1	Types of Critical Incident and Related Categories	174
6.1	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Professional Values highlighted by Critical Incidents"	195
6.2	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others"	201
6.3	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Critical Incidents and Future Practice"	207
6.4	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection"	212
6.5	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Changes in Thinking & Acting"	217
6.6	Factorial Plane 1x2: "Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents"	223

Tables

2.1	Milestones in the evolution of social work values and ethics	37
2.2	Commonly cited values in social work literature	39
2.3	Social work fundamental values and principles of human rights, human dignity and social justice according to IFSW/IASSW (2004)	40
4.1	Characteristics of a Critical Incident	148
4.2	Data Analysis Methods	151
4.3	Categories and subcategories emerging from reports of positive critical incidents	157
4.4	Categories and subcategories emerging from reports of negative critical incidents	157
5.1	Gender of Respondents	168
5.2	Age of Respondents	168
5.3	Role of Respondents	169
5.4	Respondents by Type of Placement Sector	170
5.5	Critical Incidents by Type of Placement Sector	170
5.6	Location	170
5.7	Period of Practice	171
5.8	Type of Critical Incident (From the students' perspective)	171
5.9	Type of Critical Incident by Period of Practice	172
5.10	Client-IP Teamwork/Overlapping Categories/Positive Critical Incidents	176
5.11	Client-Student/Overlapping Categories/Positive Critical Incidents	176
5.12	IP Teamwork/ Positive Critical Incidents	178
5.13	Practice Instructor/Positive Critical Incidents	179
5.14	Student/ Positive Critical Incidents	181
5.15	Student-Practice Instructor/Overlapping Categories/ Positive Critical Incidents	181
5.16	Client/ Negative Critical Incidents	182

Tables (*Continued*)

5.17	Interagency Work/Negative Critical Incidents	183
5.18	IP Teamwork/Negative Critical Incidents	185
5.19	IP Teamwork-Student/Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents	185
5.20	Management-Client/ Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents	186
5.21	Practice Instructor/ Negative Critical Incidents	188
5.22	Staff/Negative Critical Incidents	190
5.23	Student/Negative Critical Incidents	191
5.24	Student-Practice Instructor/Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents	192
6.1	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	196
6.2	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Professional Values highlighted by Critical Incidents”	199
6.3	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	202
6.4	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others”	204
6.5	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	208
6.6	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Critical Incidents and Future Practice”	210
6.7	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	213
6.8	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection”	214
6.9	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	218
6.10	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Changes in Thinking & Acting”	220
6.11	List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents	224
6.12	Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents”	226
9.1	Composition of the two focus groups	262
9.2	Focus group discussion guide	263

List of Abbreviations

ASSIA	: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts
CA	: Correspondence Analysis
CIT	: Critical Incident Technique
CINAHL	: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature
IASSW	: International Association of Schools of Social Work
IFSW	: International Federation of Social Workers
IHEU	: International Humanist and Ethical Union
JSWEC	: Joint Social Work Education Conference
NASW	: National Association of Social Workers
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organisations
REC	: Research Ethics Committee
SEYP	: Faculty of Health and Caring Professions
SCIE	: Social Care Institute for Excellence
SPAD	: Système Portable pour l' Analyse de Données (in French)
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SW	: Social Work
TEI	: Technological Educational Institute
UK	: United Kingdom
USA	: Unites States of America
US	: Unites States

PART ONE

Orientation and Overview

1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation and Background

The concepts of values and ethics are central to the health and social care professions. Social work in particular is strongly associated with values and ethics. As Reamer (1998), a leading figure in the study of professional ethics in social work, pointed out, 'ethics has always been a central feature of social work', and 'social workers' core values and ethical beliefs are the profession's linchpins' (p.488). In fact, values and ethics are so interwoven within the profession of social work that it is universally regarded as an ethical values-based profession (Healy, 2001; Reamer, 2006; Congress and McAuliffe, 2006).

Broadly speaking, values and ethics are seen as indicators of underlying cultural assumptions and of what defines our world today. Values and ethics reflect the way people treat each other, and consequently mark the quality of our lives as human beings. Values and ethics not only relate to and guide our personal, but also our professional lives.

In the health and social care professions like social work, values and ethics guide the practice at the heart of the profession. The successful implementation and on-going development of the values and ethical standards of the social work profession in the workplace are essential for providing a high quality service to clients.

Values and ethics have always been very important to this researcher, both personally and professionally. Values and ethics are central to her daily professional life. She faced ethical issues and/or dilemmas in various forms during her career in social work and had to address them appropriately.

Now, as a lecturer and student supervisor, values and ethics remain 'hot topics' for the researcher. As a students' supervisor, the meaning of ethical practice as perceived by students during their placement practice is of particular interest. As all social work educators know, the placement period in a real work environment provides opportunities for students to experience at first-hand, activities which directly relate to the application and development of the knowledge and skills concerning the values and ethics of the profession. Direct contact with the profession allows students to develop and learn how to apply professional values and ethics in real-life situations. In particular, in the final practice placement (i.e. professional practice placement), Greek students are usually actively engaged in social work and its ethical complexities by participating in the handling of various cases.

Through these workplace activities, as practice learners, students are likely to experience certain events that can play a crucial role in their development as skilful and ethically informed social workers. These events might be a negative or positive learning experience for them, but are likely to be critical turning points in the formation of the students' professional ethical identities.

Using the critical incident technique (CIT), this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the processes which students undergo in the development of their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics in their professional practice placement. The CIT method was administered in written form (i.e. the CIT Questionnaire), and is the basic qualitative research tool of the study (details of which are given in Chapter 4). As far as the researcher can see, this is the first time - in both the domestic and international social work literature - that the CIT method has been used solely to explore professional values and ethics matters.

1.2 Key Concepts

This section defines the terminology used throughout this thesis. First, the key concepts relevant to this study, *values*, and *ethics*¹, along with the associated term *development*, as in the thesis title are discussed. Second, the meanings of the terms *social work students*, *professional practice placement* and *workplace* are defined as they play a crucial role in the current study.

The relationship between the basic concepts *values* and *ethics* and between the terms *values* and *principles* is also considered as these latter terms have a very close conceptual and functional relationship and are widely used in the social work literature.

Before in depth consideration, it is important to mention that different authors or societies use some of the above terms differently, hence the literature does not provide any single formal definitions for these notions. Consequently, there is no standard terminology for describing them in the literature. This makes terminological clarification particularly complex, a real 'labyrinth' requiring the right path to the exit. Therefore, in order to escape from the maze of terminological ambiguity and avoid any misinterpretation, the researcher has tried to remain faithful to the spirit of the English speaking literature on these topics with as much clarity as possible.

Values, Ethics and Development

In much of the current literature, values and ethics are perceived as difficult and complex topics and investigating values and ethics in social work is perceived as a real 'minefield' (McAuliffe and Ferman, 2002; Shardlow, 2002). Shardlow (2002) notes that in the available literature, there is so much ambiguity around the topic

¹ The word *ethics* comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning *character* or *custom*.

that the lexicon of professional values and ethics is often ill-defined and misinterpreted. The most prevalent explanation is that the Anglophone literature, upon which most textbooks and journal articles on values and ethics rely, includes different concepts. Some texts use *values* and *ethics* interchangeably, others do not define the terms at all, and others offer terms either used in different ways, with different emphases and different assumptions or they are used synonymously and so can be interchanged (Shardlow, 2002; Reamer, 2006; Banks, 2004, 2006).

While values and ethics may be used similarly, they are not synonymous. Within wider social and cultural issues particularly, *values* as a concept refers to the knowledge gained by each society over time and which guides both individual and group cognitive and emotional processes, preferences and behaviours. Reamer (2006) writes that values:

...are generalized, emotionally charged conceptions of what is desirable; historically created and derived from experience; shared by a population or group within it; and provide the means for organising and structuring patterns of behaviour (p.12).

Basically, values are based on the following grounds: a) knowledge; b) aesthetics; and c) morals (Kenyon, 1999) and operate as social rules or norms which people use to make decisions about good and bad, right and wrong, should and shouldn't in their daily interactions with other people. Hence, *values* presuppose interaction with other people or social groups and include aspects of socially acceptable behaviour.

In general, values can take many different forms such as personal or intellectual values, professional values, cultural, religious or spiritual values or political values, etc. Banks (2006), one of the world's leading experts on social work ethics and values, with reference to Timms's findings (1983) says that there are about 180 different definitions of *values*, consequently, the concept is difficult to define precisely. In this thesis, *professional values* are most commonly referred to, that is, the beliefs that shape and guide the identity of the profession of social work and which are the drivers of social workers' behaviour in the practice arena (Congress,

1999; Banks, 2006). Bisman (2004) argues that these values are so intertwined with the nature of social work that, without them, there would be no profession.

In the social work literature, the term *values* is often linked to *principles* as both concepts are inextricably tied into the mission of the social work profession. The connection between the two concepts in the literature can take a number of forms: i) the terms *values* and *principles* appear together; this version is often present in the Greek literature and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) values global statement, ii) the two terms are treated synonymously and used interchangeably; this is evident in the English-speaking literature, perhaps, because there are some principles such as ethical principles, that are closely linked to certain social work values. Some literature separates *values* from *principles*, while *principles* is the preferred term in other texts and used to describe the same event or phenomenon as *values*. In addition, some countries, for example Greece, prefer the term *principles* throughout their ethical code for social workers to *values* as will be discussed later in Chapter 2.4.1.

A review of the literature, therefore suggests there is no clear distinction between *values* and *principles*, though values are different from principles. Usually, the key distinction made between them is that principles are a kind of normative guideline devolved from values (Tavlaridou-Kaloutsi, 2006). In this reading, the meaning of values is broader than that of principles. Basically, principles can take a written form and can be amended easily, as, for example, the various principles contained in declarations and treaties on social and human rights (Tavlaridou-Kaloutsi, 2006).

The different concepts in the literature outlined result in the problem of defining and distinguishing between *values* and *principles* in social work or precisely what concepts are referred to as values and what as principles of social work. A specific example is the concept of *social justice*, presented as either a value, or a principle of social work in the literature depending on the writer's point of view. As the problem of definition and differentiation blurs the distinction between values and

principles, the term *professional values* is used here in its broadest sense to include any core value or ethical principle found in the literature that concerns social work as a profession.

As regards *ethics*, scholars also use this term in a number of different ways. For instance, *ethics* can be used to refer to moral philosophy or moral norms and standards, or it may also refer to 'the character or ethos' (Clark, 2000; Banks, 2004, 2006). Sometimes, the term *morality* gets thrown into the same text; however, *morality* involves the judgment or evaluation of an action based on the norms of a larger cultural or religious context (Corey *et al.*, 1998; Gladding, 2000).

In general, ethics is traditionally subdivided into descriptive or empirical ethics (describing people's ethical values, beliefs and actions), metaethics (the conceptual analysis of ethical concepts like rights, responsibilities, professional integrity), and normative ethics (prescribing what people should do in terms of ethical principles, rules and specific actions) (Banks, 2006; Banks, 2008:1242). All these types of ethics are strongly associated with professional ethics (Banks, 2006), the present topic of interest; it seems that professional ethics is much closer to normative ethics, both as a concept and in content (Joseph, 1991; Banks, 2006).

In the literature, the term *professional ethics* usually refers to the written rules or standards that govern the conduct of members of a profession, for instance, social work (Clark, 2000; Banks 2004, 2006; Beckett and Maynard, 2005). Levy (1976:233) defines ethics as 'values in action'. In this thesis, the term *professional social work ethics* is used to describe the practical side of values and principles expressed through a code of ethics.

Just as with values and principles, in the English speaking literature, *ethics* is often used interchangeably with *values*, though they are distinct concepts. This can be explained by the fact that some values concern ethics when they pertain to beliefs as to what is worthy and valuable; right and wrong, etc. In some ways, values and ethics are similar in that they complement each other. But, ethics is normally based

upon wider social work values (Clark, 2000), which, in turn, directly influence ethics (Boland, 2006; Csikai, 1999). Taking into account the views in the literature as a whole, the researcher aims to keep the terms values and ethics together while recognizing that the two terms are not synonymous. When appropriate, necessary clarification will be provided in the thesis.

The remaining term to clarify is *development*, which is also used differently by different authors or in different disciplinary contexts, thus it can have various meanings and implications. Nevertheless, common to all the definitions, whether Greek or English, is the idea that *development* is used in a positive/optimistic sense to describe a dynamic process, a process of change through time. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004) and Benner (2004) point out that development as a positive process implies a path of progress that enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve professional competence (see also Chapter 3.6). Development in their view not only describes the process of progressing, but also the product or result of developing, a specific situation or state.

Taking into account the above, the term *development* in this thesis includes both the concepts of process and the state aspired to, and as such, provides a holistic approach to understanding the development of professional values and ethics in the workplace during the student's practice education.

Social Work Students, Professional Practice Placement² and Workplace

The word *students* in the thesis title refers to the final-year students of the Social Work Department of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI)³ of Athens

² The international social work literature uses a variety of terms to describe the activity concerning the practical part of social work education such as '*practice placement*', '*practice learning*', '*field education*', '*fieldwork instruction*', '*practicum*', '*work-based learning*', '*practice placement learning*', '*practice education*', etc. However, the North American literature usually prefers the terms which have the prefix 'field'. By contrast, the UK literature is more familiar with the term '*practice learning*' and those accompanying it.

³ TEI of Athens is the largest Technological Educational Institute in Greece and includes a wide range of Faculties. The Department of Social Work belongs to the Faculty of Health and Caring Professions (SEYP), which consists of a total of 15 Departments of Health and Caring Disciplines

(hereafter the *Department*), particularly to *trainee* students on their professional practice placements. *Professional practice placement* or professional practicum is a term commonly used to describe the work-based learning experience that students acquire during their studies in the Department.

According to the regulations of the Technological Educational Institute (TEI), a professional practice placement is undertaken in the final semester of social work studies (8th semester); it lasts six months and takes place twice a year, from 1 October to 31 March (winter semester) for students⁴ that completed their studies during the spring semester, and from 1 April to 30 September (spring semester) for those that completed their studies during the winter semester. Professional practice placement, the final placement of students, comes after the two first blocks of practice placement (I & II) in the 5th & 6th semesters of study. The first two blocks of practice placement require students to spend three days per week at the field agency and have one hour of group supervision weekly with a member of the academic staff of the Department or an external member.

During the professional practicum, students are required to perform professional social work duties as they work full time for five days per week, following the schedule of the agency, and are actively involved in all social work activities in the workplace. For their services, students receive a token payment from either their employer or the TEI of Athens. During this period, students are also insured in case of work accidents.

Usually, students are placed in the social services of their choice or in their preferred area of social work practice such as mental health, disability, care of the elderly, etc, unless they have already been placed in the same agency or area of

(e.g. Midwifery, Nursing, Early Childhood Education, Health Visiting, etc.). In Greece, social work falls within Public Higher Education and is offered at TEI and University level (University of Thrace/Komotini). Today, there are three Departments of Social Work at TEI level (Athens/Attica, Patra/Peloponnese, and Heraklion/Crete). In all Departments, the course lasts four years. The final semester (8th semester) includes professional practice placement (six months daily placement) and dissertation. Each Social Work Department is independent of the others, has its own educational programs and internal rules of function. However, all Social Work Departments at TEI level function under government regulations and laws.

⁴ Until recently, there was a staggered student intake in the Department (winter semester/spring semester).

practice during their two earlier blocks of practice placement. Students who live outside Attica⁵ or Cypriot students may choose to do their professional practice in the area of their permanent residence. Also, a small number of students, selected on the basis of specific criteria, can spend three out of the six months of their professional practicum in another European country under the European Erasmus Exchange programme.

During their professional practice, students are trained, supervised and assessed only by the agency practice instructor, and not by academic staff members or external members. However, the Department has overall responsibility for the student's educational experience in the agency. Professional practice does not include any performance rating i.e. students either pass or fail. Although rare, a student who fails professional practice must repeat it. In Greece, trainee students are in great demand by social services due to the adequate number of social workers employed in these work settings.

The Department does not provide a specific professional practice programme prior to placement other than the general practice placement policy and guidelines, because students are placed in different social work services across the country, each of which sets out its own rules and goals. However, the Department's Committee of Practice Placement's role is to monitor and assess social agency functions, to collaborate with practice instructors and help students overcome any difficulties they might face during their professional practice so that they can perform well in their role as future social workers.

In order to meet the needs of students in practice placement, the Department closely collaborates with a large number of accredited public and private (profit and not- for- profit) social services and organisations located in the city of Athens and its surrounding area (the Attica region), and throughout the country. Some

⁵ Attica (prefecture of Attica) is an administrative region in Greece. The Attica region includes four regional units (East Attica, West Attica, North Attica, and South Attica). Athens dominates the Attica region and is the capital of Greece.

examples of social agencies include: general and mental health hospitals; Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), social services for the elderly, community services, social welfare services, social services for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers; children's, families' and youth services; prevention and addiction services; the probation service; school social work services for children with special needs, social services for people with disabilities, etc.

Generally, these agencies operate as placement centres for students and are the main places of work for social workers in Greece. With this in mind, the term *workplace* in this thesis is used to describe places used as practice placement settings for students by the Department. Ideally, the workplace (or practice setting) is the best place for transferring classroom knowledge to practice, for learning by doing and also for developing a strong social work value and ethics culture; it is the place where social work values and ethics can fully develop- or even fail to develop.

1.3 Research Question and Structure of the Thesis

1.3.1 The Research Question

Bordage and Dawson (2003) stress that, 'the single most important component of a study is the research question' (p. 378). Indeed, the research question in this thesis was the foundation upon which the study was built. As mentioned earlier, the idea behind the central research question originated from the researcher's professional practice area and personal interests. Specifically, the research question emerged from the researcher's critical reflection on experiences in social work education and social work practice regarding the values and ethics of the profession.

Discussions with students, colleagues, practice instructors and practitioners also helped the researcher to narrow down the area of research interest and clarify key issues related to the research topic. The literature review was also important for the researcher to better understand her research topic and develop and refine the

research question. Finally, the research question emerged as follows: “What can critical incident analysis tell us about how social work students perceive the development of their professional values and ethics whilst in the workplace?”

1.3.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six parts as follows:

Part One, Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides the motivation for choosing the specific research topic, the background and the research question, and the structure of the study. **Chapter 1** also clarifies the key concepts which emerged from the exploration of the research topic, developed in the literature review.

Part Two consists of **Chapters 2 & 3**, which present a review of the literature and the theoretical basis of the study. Specifically, **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the landscape of professional values and ethics in the social work profession from its birth till today and looks at issues related to the topic. The major ethical theories underlying social work are outlined together with the importance of teaching professional values and ethics in social work studies/to social work students.

Chapter 3 discusses various aspects of students learning and development in practice settings related to their professional values and ethics. The chapter also presents the two basic approaches to students as adult learners in practice settings i.e. individual approaches - adult learning theory - and socio-cultural/situated approaches. Drawing on the social work literature and organisational and business/management literature, it summarises the key topics related to the development of ethical practice in social service organisations.

According to Aveyard (2007), the literature review as research methodology aims to develop new insight into a particular subject area. In this context, the literature review presented in **Chapters 2 & 3** helped the researcher to: obtain a

comprehensive understanding of the topic under study; identify possible gaps in the theoretical and empirical literature; and provide the background for the development of the research problem and questions.

Part Three consists of **Chapter 4** which outlines the research process - the research design, methodology and methods of the study - as well as the research aims, objectives and outcomes including the central research question and its sub-questions. It then focuses on topics related to the ethical considerations associated with the research process, and describes the research population and sample. Finally, the chapter presents the details of the research methods used to collect and analyse the data.

Part Four consists of **Chapters 5 & 6**, which present the results and findings from the analysis of the data. **Chapter 5** presents and discusses the results and findings from the analysis of the critical incidents according to qualitative content analysis. **Chapter 6** provides the results obtained from the analysis of the written responses to the open-ended questions according to the statistical techniques used for this process.

Part Five consists of **Chapter 7 & 8**, which critically evaluate the findings of the study and discuss its limitations and implications for social work education and practice. **Chapter 7** discusses the study's findings and the limitations of the study, while **Chapter 8** draws conclusions about the topic under study, and ends with a series of social work education, practice and research implications.

Part Six is an Addendum to the thesis. Following my PhD viva on Tuesday 9th July 2013, the examiners proposed that I undertake 'some additional discrete work'. This Addendum to the thesis presents two further chapters (**Chapter 9 & 10**) as required by the examiners. **Chapter 9** presents the results of a study of two focus groups of social work students from the social work course at my Department in 2013. I presented the earlier findings from my original study (2010) to these two focus groups and explored with them their significance for these two further

groups of students. **Chapter 10** further explores my own role as a researcher in relation to my methodological position and the research, and my own stance in relation to the students with whom I was working.

PART TWO

Literature Review

2. The Landscape of Professional Values and Ethics in the Social Work Profession

2.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the evolution of social work values and ethics in western countries to identify the social work values prevalent in the current international literature. Then it examines the relationship between social workers' professional values and their personal values and beliefs and looks at the role of ethical codes in social work practice. This exploration provides the basis for the analysis of the Greek code of ethics for social workers discussed later in the chapter.

The chapter also presents the relationship between professional social work ethics and other professions in work settings, and discusses the previous research into social work values and ethics, specifically, into their development in professional practice. It examines the core ethical theories in social work and the importance of social work education in teaching and learning values and ethics. Lastly, the chapter presents and discusses the undergraduate values and ethics course in the Department of Social Work in Athens/Greece.

2.1.1 Literature Review Method: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The literature review is based mainly on primary sources. Although there is a considerable body of theoretical literature on social work values and ethics, the empirical literature on this topic was scarce. As a result, the literature review was expanded to include data from disciplines outside social work such as education, nursing, medicine and business. Medicine and nursing, in particular, have a rich research tradition on values and ethics issues and were major drivers of the literature search related to the topic.

The literature search was confined to the English and Greek-speaking literatures, and most of the material drawn on has been published in the last ten years, when most of the empirical studies were undertaken. However, earlier studies are included if the searches for the past ten years referred to them and they seemed of particular relevance.

The literature search used print resources (e.g. textbooks, policy documents such as the Hellenic code of ethics, and articles) and electronic resources (accessible via the University of Sussex and TEI of Athens) plus Google and Google Scholar. Also included are personal verbal communication with the teacher responsible for teaching the ethics course in the Department. Textbooks and articles were selected for review based on their titles, tables of contents and abstracts.

The literature search used the following electronic databases:

- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
- EBSCO
- Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)
- Social Care Online (SCIE)
- PubMed
- Social Services Abstracts
- Informaworld
- Zetoc

The electronic resources, including online databases, searches used keywords that included 'social work' in conjunction with 'values', 'ethics', 'education', 'codes of ethics', 'ethics teaching and learning', 'students', 'ethical theories'.

2.2 Professional Social Work Values and Ethics: An Overview

In the current epoch, values and ethics are generally seen as the cornerstone of professionalism and necessary to any legitimate profession (Banks, 2004; 2006).

As such, many health and human service professions through their bodies or associations have set up their own values and ethical standards in order to delineate their professional mission and distinguish it from others. Among these, the profession of social work occupies a particular position as its history is strongly linked to the development of a values and ethics system.

According to several writers, social work has, since its origins, placed strong emphasis on values and ethics and is today considered an ethical value- laden profession (Healy, 2001; Reamer, 2006; Congress and McAuliffe, 2006). In his historical review of social work values and ethics, Reamer (2006) identified four key factors connected with the necessity for overt values and ethics in the social work profession. These are: a) the nature of the social work mission; b) the relationships that social workers have with clients, colleagues, and members of the broader society; c) the methods of intervention that social workers use in their work; and d) the resolution of ethical dilemmas in practice' (p.13). Reamer claims all the above factors have played and continue to play a crucial role in building and re- building specific values, principles and standards for the profession.

In social work, ethics and values are deeply rooted in humanist⁶ philosophy and democratic ideals (Clark and Asquith, 1985:119; Powell, 2001; IFSW, 2004). But, social work values and ethics are highly contextual concepts because their interpretation and application in actual practice is heavily dependent on the context in which they develop. As Banks (2008a:32) notes, professional values and ethics '... do not exist in isolation from the societies and cultures in which they are practised, nor from the employing organisations, practitioners and service users involved'. Because of their context dependent nature, values and ethics are

⁶ According to the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), "Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality". Retrieved May 7, 2008, from: <http://www.iheu.org/bylaws>.

therefore seen as complex topics in the existing literature. Hence, there are innate difficulties in approaching and exploring their meaning in social work today.

Over the years, social work values and ethics as dynamic concepts have undergone various changes. According to Reamer (2006), central to these changes is the shift of social work values from the morality of clients to the morality of social workers. Reamer (2006) notes that in western societies, the evolution of social work values and ethics includes four distinct stages, sometimes overlapping. These are: the morality period; the values period; the ethical theory and decision-making period; and the ethical standards and risk management period (ibid: 5).

The '*morality period*' is associated with the birth of the profession of social work and mainly concerned clients' morals and values. On the other hand, the values period was associated with the exploration of the personal values of social workers and professional core values. As Reamer (1998) remarked:

social workers' concern with values and ethics matured considerably during the 20th century, from a moralistic preoccupation with clients' values to concern about the complex ethical dilemmas faced by practitioners and strategies for dealing with them (p. 488).

This shift in values is particularly apparent in the following two periods of ethical theory and decision-making and then ethical standards and risk management.

The '*ethical theory and decision-making*' period related to issues of professionals' malpractice, applied ethics, discussions around ethics education and training, as well as 'the relevance of moral philosophy and ethical theory to the ethical dilemmas faced by social workers'(Reamer, 2006:9). Much of the discussion around these issues began in the 1960s in the medical field known today as bioethics⁷. During this period ethical decision-making based on the values of the

⁷ Bioethics is a branch of applied ethics that studies the the philosophical, social, and legal issues arising in medicine and the life sciences. Bioethics. (n.d.). © *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from: Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bioethics>

profession and certain ethical theories attracted the attention of social work scholars and researchers since 'social workers intervene in people's lives and have an impact on their well-being' (Osimo and Landau, 2001:483). At the same time, decision making was recognised as a complex process because it has to take into account the various ethical dilemmas and problems arising from the conflicting values and interests of the people involved in the process (client, social worker, and agency).

The most recent stage is the '*ethical standards and risk management*' period of social work values and ethics. Reamer (2006) defines our age as a risk management period in which social workers have everyday contact with difficult populations facing multiple psychosocial problems coupled with increasing demands from the organisations for which they work. For Reamer (2006:9), this current stage 'is mainly characterized by the significant expansion of ethical standards to guide practitioners' conduct and by increased knowledge concerning professional negligence and liability'. Social work is so concerned with the ethical standards and regulation of professionals' behaviour in practice that it is criticized by some as giving more emphasis to 'regulations than the promotion of core values' (Scottish Government, 2005).

According to Barnard (2008), the '*risk management*' period has been accompanied by some changes and development in values as well. In the United Kingdom, for example, Barnard argues that the introduction of the meaning of interprofessional working in social care - as will be discussed later in this chapter (2.4.2)- 'demands a focus on the values of each profession and the possibility of conflicting values between each profession' (p.16). Moreover, Barnard (drawing on Banks's work, 2004) notes that recent changes in the British social welfare system, moving towards greater productivity and accountability, may lead social work back to its traditional role where emphasis was on 'the technical management of personal problems and the maintenance of order' (ibid:16).

In summary, social work values and ethics are synonymous with the history of the profession. Social work values and ethics are set up not only to lend prestige to the profession and distinguish it from others, but also to safeguard clients from possible abusive practices. Furthermore, social work values and ethics are generally reflected by and in the society or organisation within which they are applied and develop. The literature review suggests that values and ethics in social work are complex by nature and therefore, there are difficulties innate in attempting to approach, define and conceptualise them.

The next two sections attempt to explore and identify the notions of values and ethics in social work by looking firstly at the type of values underlying the profession and then by examining the nature of social work codes of ethics in general and the Greek social work context in particular.

2.3 Professional Social Work Values: Yesterday and Today

Values are regarded as essential aspects of the professional socialization of social workers...they are viewed as important to the continued development of the profession.

Pike, 1996

Social work is a value-laden profession, so the question that naturally comes to mind is what are professional social work values? This question has been central to social work literature throughout the history of the profession and several scholars have attempted to identify core values and create a values list approach to describe preferred social worker behaviours in practice. The values list approach remains influential but has been criticized by various sources for different reasons (Clark, 2000; Shardlow, 2002; Banks, 2008).

Historically, Biestek (1957/1974), a Catholic priest, is the best known early American theorist who first defined and clarified core values thus laying the foundation of the values list approach to social work. Biestek defined seven core values (Table 2.1) necessary for a good relationship between practitioner and

client. A review of the older social work literature indicates that, after Biestek, other writers, too, (e.g. Pumphrey 1959; Gordon 1965; Butrym 1976; Timms 1983) struggled with the same questions and contributed to the knowledge and understanding of core social work values and principles (Shardlow, 2002; Reamer, 1998, 2006; Kreitzer, 2006; Banks, 2006).

Table 2.1 presents the milestones in the evolution of social work values and ethics according to Kreitzer (2006) and Parrott (2010).

Table 2.1_ Milestones in the evolution of social work values and ethics	
Biestek (1957)	1. Acceptance, 2. Non- judgemental attitude, 3. Individualisation, 4. Purposeful expression of feelings, 5. Controlled emotional involvement, 6. Confidentiality, 7. Self-determination
Gordon (1965)	1. The role of the individual in contemporary society, 2. Interdependence of individuals, 3. Individuals' social responsibility for one another, 4. Individuals' common human needs and uniqueness, 5. The importance of social action and social responsibility, 6. Society's obligation to eliminate obstacles to individual self-realisation
Butrym (1976)	1. Respect for persons, 2. Uniqueness of persons, 3. Persons as social beings, 4. Belief in personal change
Timms (1983)	1. Respect for clients, 2. Acceptance of clients, 3. Not blaming clients, 4. Self-determination, 5. Respecting confidence

Source: Adapted from Kreitzer (2006) and Parrott (2010)

Table 2.1 suggests early social work authors, except for Gordon, focused their attention almost exclusively on individual approaches to clients' needs and rights, perhaps because they were strongly influenced by Christianity and the Liberal ideas of the Enlightenment which were dominant in social work during that period according to Clark (2000) and Reamer (2006).

In current terms, early approaches to social work values are described as individualistic and traditional because recent changes in the social and political landscape in the western world, in particular, have led to several scholars shifting their focus from an individual to a more collective orientation. As a result, over the last two or three decades, the lexicon of social work values has gradually been enriched with the new values of *partnership, empowerment, advocacy, user involvement, anti-discrimination, social justice, and anti-oppressive practice* (Braye and Preston-Shoot, 1995; Payne, 1999; Shardlow, 2002). All these notions have been defined as radical values by Braye and Preston-Shoot (1995) as opposed to the older /traditional values mentioned earlier. Smith (1997:36) points out that the new values appearing in the vocabulary of social work 'seek to challenge structurally embedded inequalities which reflect the differential distribution of power and resources'.

According to Shardlow (2002), the growing interest in radical or modern approaches to social work values over recent years clearly shows the ability of the profession to listen closely to new tendencies in client needs and rights in modern societies. In Greece, as much of the social work literature is greatly influenced by the English speaking literature, more and more texts and books refer to the new approaches to social work values.

The majority of the current literature, as Reamer (2006) found in his review, contains both traditional and modern values including radical values, thus combining different approaches to the subject. Table 2.2 below shows the traditional and modern values commonly cited in the literature.

Table 2.2_Commonly cited values in social work literature	
Traditional	Modern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual worth and dignity ▪ Respect of persons ▪ Valuing individual's capacity for change ▪ Client self-determination ▪ Providing individuals with the opportunity to realize their potential ▪ Seeking to meet individual's common human needs ▪ Seeking to provide individuals with adequate resources and services to meet their basic needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Client empowerment ▪ Equal opportunity ▪ Non-discrimination ▪ Respect for diversity ▪ Commitment to social change and social justice ▪ Confidentiality and privacy ▪ Willingness to transmit professional knowledge and skills to others

Source: Adapted from Reamer (2006:22)

Nowadays, traditional and modern approaches are expressed through the new document jointly set up by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) on 'Ethics in Social Work: Statement of Principles' (2004). This document has universal validity and is a good example of the aspiration for the coexistence and harmony of individual and collective values and ethics approaches to social work education and practice. The document contains core ethical standards (Table 2.3) and defines the status of the profession of social work worldwide. Following the global trend, social work educators in Greece have acknowledged the value of this document in delivering professional and educational ethical services and include it as taught material in their curricula.

Table 2.3 summarises the social work fundamental values and principles contained in the global standards document.

Table 2.3_ *Social work fundamental values and principles of human rights, human dignity and social justice according to IFSW/IASSW(2004)*

- Respecting the right to self-determination
- Promoting the right to participation
- Treating each person as a whole
- Identifying and developing strengths
- Challenging negative discrimination
- Recognising diversity
- Distributing resources equitably
- Challenging unjust policies and practices
- Working in solidarity

Source: Adapted from Kreitzer (2006)

Universal standards are the values and ethics to which all social workers in the world must adhere. However, the general idea of a global ethical code has caused much debate and controversy within the international social work community in recent years (Yip, 2005; Hutchings and Taylor, 2007; Leung, 2007; Sewpaul, 2007; Healy, 2007). According to critics, the current global standards document was developed from western individualist values (particularly Anglo-American), excluding core values rooted in non-western societies. In brief, proponents of the cultural relativity in respect of values consider there are significant cultural differences between western and non-western countries, so it is questionable whether ethical standards⁸ can be universally applied to all social workers throughout the world.

On the other hand, universalists argue that, since the document is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) signed by most countries (Banks, 2006), it is therefore feasible to promote a common ethical code for all social workers. As

⁸ The International Journal of Social Welfare (2007, vol. 16, issue 4) contains some debates on the applicability of the international definition of social work and the global values statement in non-western countries such as China. Hutchings and Taylor (2007) and Sewpaul (2007) offer two interesting and different approaches to this topic.

Banks (2008) reports, the current debates on 'universalism, relativism, and particularism ...are often linked to contemporary social and political concerns around conflicts relating to ethnicity, religion and culture' (pp. 1243-1244). However, it is not the researcher's intention to go into more detail about the different perspectives here.

To conclude the discussion of the universality of social work values at this point, it can be argued that some values are universal as 'self-evident 'truths' (Biehal and Sainsbury, 1991:251) namely, the basic human rights proclaimed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other widely accepted and officially endorsed documents, and can be transferred across countries (Abbott, 2003), while others are specific in time, place and culture (Biehal and Sainsbury, 1991; Healy, 2007). But, as with all value standards posited by international societies, the concern is about how values are interpreted and applied to a local society, rather than about the universal acceptance of core human and social values (Banks, 2006).

Finally, it is important to recognise that, although the values underlying the profession are very similar to those of other human service professions, social work is the only profession that identifies itself with the appearance of core humanitarian and democratic values (Clark, 2000). Furthermore, although changes in social work values have 'not signalled a revolution' as stated by Banks (2004:194), social work values are distinguished by their dynamic and adaptive character, as well as their core durability over time and space.

For all the above reasons, values are rightly the hallmark of the social work profession and therefore a vital part of the professional socialisation and development both of social work students and practitioners (Pike, 1996; Barretti, 2004).

2.3.1 Professional Social Work Values and Personal Values Systems

Having students identify their values is key to all other learning objectives.

Haynes, 1999

It is often argued by scholars and practitioners alike that values are an important factor in the ethical decision-making⁹ process. Osmo and Landau (2001:483) note that 'ethical decision making is recognized as an important component of social work practice because social workers intervene in people's lives and have an impact on their well-being'. Ethical decision making is a difficult and complex process that requires practitioners to take into account different values.

Values can influence ethical judgements in a number of ways. Jormsri *et al.*, (2005) with reference to Wright (1987) suggest values can affect ethical decisions in the following three ways:

- (1) Values frame a problem and people view a problem on the basis of the values they bring to the situation;
- (2) Values supply alternative possible problem solutions based on the values individuals apply to their potential actions; and
- (3) Values which direct judgment or reasoning are framed by what individuals wish to uphold or promote (p. 583).

In social work, personal values along with professional values are the basis of ethical judgements. As Greeno *et al.* (2007:483) point out, 'the interaction of personal and professional values affects the types of decisions that social workers make in practice'. Recently, the literature has increasingly focused attention on the influence of personal values on the responses of clients and ethical judgements as

⁹ In recent years, the social work literature has offered a range of ethical decision-making frameworks based on various ethical theories (see for example, Congress, 1999; Dolgoff, Loewenberg and Harrington, 2009; Mattison, 2000; Hartsell, 2006; Miller, 2007) in order to assist both professionals and students to understand ethical matters in the practice context, as well as to develop a critical and reflective orientation on the ways of handling them.

the research shows that social workers most often use personal values and experience as the main resource in their ethical decision making in preference to written ethics, laws, and agency policy (Saxon *et al.*, 2006).

Like other professionals, social workers as human beings have their own personal system of values which affects their way of thinking and acting. Horwath (2007:1299) notes that 'practitioners' feelings, experiences, values and beliefs routinely influence practice'. Personal values are formed by the complex interaction of diverse factors such as family, culture, religion, age, education, and so forth but, this is beyond the scope of this short discussion. Personal values are not static and change over time. Personal values are subjective while professional values are objective.

Studies have shown that various factors such as culture/ethnicity (Csikai, 1999) and religion/spirituality (Csikai, 1999; Landau, 1999; Hodge, 2003) may influence the personal values of social workers. From both the researcher's personal experience and what is reported in the literature, religion seems to be recognised as an important factor influencing personal life. Religion is usually identified with a particular ethnic/or national group or minority group and as such, is synonymous with its culture. This is particularly evident in national populations¹⁰ where an institutionalised religion has, historically, always been present and strong.

Today, many social workers around the world, including in Greece, work with populations for whom religious or spiritual values and beliefs play a vital role in their lives and direct their day-to-day behaviour. But religion and spirituality not only influence client behaviour, but also that of social workers. From their review of the empirical literature, Doyle and her colleagues (2009) observed that many social workers value religion and spirituality in their own lives and incorporate

¹⁰ In Greece, for example, there is a strong relationship between religion, ethnicity, and national identity which is understood as a part of culture. The majority of the population of Greece is Christian Orthodox. In more secular societies like the UK, the influence of religious beliefs may be less obvious.

both in their practice. Also, religion and/or spirituality are likely to be present in many complex and often controversial issues involving social work practice such as, homosexuality, abortion, HIV/AIDS, terminal illness, bereavement, aging, difficult family relations, foster parenting, domestic violence, natural disasters, mental illness, and poverty (Streets, 2009; Doyle *et al.*, 2009).

Streets (2009) notes that 'social workers, along with their clients, live with and negotiate many conflicting, competing, and contradictory values and beliefs in their effort to keep the dance of their lives flowing and meaningful'(pp. 197-198). In the same way, Spano and Koenig (2003:94) state that, 'the nature of social work practice is that we are nearly always dealing with conflicting or competing values'. In fact, the professional reality suggests that differing values are often a source of conflict, and social workers must be able to maintain the equilibrium between their personal and professional values. Failure to recognise and manage value differences can lead to social workers acting in an unethical or biased way to their clients or others. And, as mentioned in the previous section, the social work profession has now shifted from the morality of the client to the ethical behaviour of the practitioner (Reamer, 2006).

Given the influence of personal values on our professional lives, some social work writers like Banks (2004, 2006) and Hugman (2005) distinguish the content of values within the profession from those of personal preferences held by individuals. Although these authors accept that social workers are human beings with their own personal values and beliefs, they situate the professional role before any personal standpoint. For them, issues of personal and professional values should always be investigated within the framework of the professional role and its demands.

To sum up, the conclusion of the literature review suggests it is essential for social workers to be aware of their own personal values along with the core values of the profession of social work. Smith (1997) proposes that:

personal values and beliefs must be acknowledged, understood and frequently challenged in order for practitioners to convey social work values in practice. Additionally, belief fuels a commitment to translating values into action in order to accomplish change (p. 51).

2.4 Professional Social Work Ethics: Codes of Ethics for Social Workers

As discussed in the introductory chapter, professional ethics refers to the code of ethics for social workers. Codes of ethics are formal documents about professional decision making and behaviour in the workplace and the broader society. According to Banks (2003), the purpose of a code of ethics is to guide professional behaviour, protect clients from abusive practices and safeguard the public reputation of the profession. Typically, codes are produced and published by professional bodies or associations and take the form of a professional pledge (Banks, 2003). In some European and other countries, however, codes of ethics can take the form of a legal document being part of state law, as is the case in Greece, described below.

Codes state the core principles and values of a particular profession; they can include both explicit and implicit values and generally mirror the historical and cultural framework within which they are designed and applied (Banks, 2003; 2006). The nature of a code may be either aspirational or regulatory (Harris, 2001), but can also be rhetorical or/and educational (Banks, 2006). Through her study of the professional ethical codes of various disciplines in 20 countries around the world, Banks (2006) found that most countries share common cardinal principles and social values while differences among them are usually in the area of practical guidance. In the same way, Clark (2000) reports that the majority of ethical codes across the world share some common general behavioural rules or statements, as follows:

- Respect the individual client
- Perform in a way which is honest and truthful
- Carry out tasks with proper knowledge and skill

- Be careful and diligent, respecting the client's trust in the professional
- Methods are demonstrably effective and helpful
- Proper authority governs actions, thus they are legitimate and authorized
- Collaborate with associates and be accountable to them
- Respected in the community and of creditable status

(p. 273)

In recent years, codes of ethics in general and in social work in particular have been heavily criticised for failing to provide specific help and guidance to professionals because they are too general and platitudinous (Banks, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008; Shardlow, 2002). Codes have also been criticised for failing to establish or enforce sanctions in cases of malpractice (Harris, 2001; Shardlow, 2002). In the field of social work in particular, Clark (1999:263-264) raised a number of criticisms of social work codes of ethics, such as: a) social workers are often unclear about the meaning and interpretation of some principles and how these translate into practice; b) codes do not reconcile conflicting goals; c) codes are irrelevant to practice, which is guided more by law and organisational procedures; and lastly, d) codes are not being used in social work practice.

Recently, a number of empirical social work studies carried out in different countries appears to support these criticisms. For instance, Papadaki and Papadaki (2008), in their study of ethically difficult situations faced by social workers in public social service organisations in Crete/Greece, observed that professionals neither consult the Greek ethical code nor the IFSW code of ethics to resolve ethically difficult situations. Similarly, in their study of Canadian social workers' lived experience of ethics in three health service settings, Rossiter *et al.* (2000, cited in Banks, 2008) found that most professionals treat codes of ethics as irrelevant to the real world of practice, and do not use a specific ethical decision making model. Moreover, an Australian study undertaken by McAuliffe (cited in McAuliffe and Ferman, 2002) suggested few social workers employ ethical guidelines to resolve ethical dilemmas.

Because of the criticisms mentioned above, there is currently a strong debate in social work circles and other human disciplines about the importance and usefulness of codes of ethics to professional societies in general. Drawing from the research literature on business and public ethics, for example, Harris (2001:7) points out that having a code of ethics in and of itself is meaningless unless it is supported 'by proper training, by top management commitment and a willingness to enforce the code with sanctions'. In social work, Hugman (2003) suggests how ethical codes should be treated in general. Hugman sees ethical codes as 'discursive and living documents' which should be constantly under discussion and reconsideration by every member of the professional community. This includes not 'leaving matters of ethics to the experts' and attending to the capacity to engage in ethical reflexivity as crucially as to other aspects of praxis (the dynamic relationship between theory and practice)' (ibid: 12).

The Hellenic Code of Ethics for social workers is scrutinised next, paying particular attention to specific articles related to the core values and principles of social work as identified in the literature review and discussed in 2.3.

2.4.1 The Hellenic Code of Deontology¹¹ for Social Workers

In Greece, 1959 marks a milestone in the history of social work, since the social work profession was officially recognised and legally regulated for the first time. In the same year, Greek social workers acquired their first code of ethics produced by the then newly created 'Hellenic Association of Social Workers'. That code became state law in 1961 under Presidential Decree No 690 (Kallinikaki, 2011). Over the years, the Greek State has defined and refined statements about the social work profession.

¹¹ Greece belongs to southern European countries (e.g. France, Italy, and Spain) which, as Banks (2003, 2006) mentions, use the term 'deontological codes' rather than 'ethical codes', which is used mainly by Anglo-Saxon countries. Banks(2006) notes that, although there are no substantial differences between the two types of codes, given that both deal with issues related to social work as a profession, deontological codes mainly refer to duties, while ethical codes are 'designated to distinguish right from wrong action' (p.78).

The most recent deontological code is Presidential Decree No 23, 1992, published jointly by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Insurance¹² and the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. The code as a whole is based on universal human principles and social values and influenced by international declarations and treaties, as well as national legislation on human and social rights.

The Code is generally analogous to most codes for social workers in western societies with some adaptations to the local legislative and cultural context. Like other codes, the style is either motivational or imperative and prohibitive, with the use of terms like *ought to*, *should* or *forbidden* regarding practice.

The Code document is taught to students in the second semester of their studies at the SW Department of Athens as part of '*Professional Ethics and Deontology in Social Work*¹³'. Due to the absence of educational or empirical studies in the subject, it is not known to what extent students are influenced by the code at either a theoretical or practical level or whether professionals themselves use or consult it in their daily working lives. The following discussion provides a brief description of the code, which was used by students during the research process.

Brief description

The Code is divided into two major sections and consists of a total of 11 Articles; each is devoted to specific issues. According to the Code, the social work profession in Greece is committed to specific universal human principles (article 4). These include: freedom, social justice and faith in the value of human beings and their potential. These principles are at the heart of the Code, signaling the type of relationship social workers and their clients share as human entities. More specifically, Article 4 states that:

¹² Its current name is 'Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity'.

¹³ According to the Department's new curriculum, the course has renamed to '*Professional Ethics, Deontology and Entrepreneurship*'.

a) Social workers recognise the right of every human being:

- i. to decide to accept or not the type of social services needed and the way he/she resolves his/her social problems insofar he/she does not risk the safety and welfare of others and society in general.
- ii. to participate as far as possible in the planning process of the social measures that concerns him/her and contributes to meeting his/her needs where possible.

b) Social workers act in a way that contributes to creating or providing equal opportunities to individuals, groups and communities, without bias concerning sex, age, social status, religious or political beliefs, so that clients can satisfy their biological, emotional, social and cultural needs, and develop and build on their own strengths. Social workers help to cultivate and raise awareness of a spirit of social responsibility and solidarity between citizens and prepare them for social action.

Article 4 (above) sets out the criteria for social work in Greece and stresses that the relationship between professionals and clients is based on core ethical principles, clearly prohibiting any discrimination¹⁴ towards individuals, groups or communities. It is clear that social workers should always work for their clients' well-being and in collaboration with them as the latter have the right to choose the necessary services and participate in the planning of their needs. According to the Code, it appears that social work is a dialectical and interactive professional activity.

Study of the Code (by the researcher) indicates that *principles*, *duties* and *obligations* are predominantly used to describe the general framework of the social work profession. Surprisingly, the code document uses only *principles* rather than *values* as found in the relevant literature to describe certain professional behavioural precepts. This means that the text makes no reference to *values* of

¹⁴ However, it does not make any specific reference to gender discrimination.

different types, nor has a special section devoted to them. Basically, different types of values are embedded in the content of Articles and certain paragraphs in the Code and are scattered throughout the document.

Nevertheless, core social work values, as described in the previous section, do exist and can be found in Article 6 regarding social workers' duties to clients. More specifically, Article 6 contains the following core social work values:

- Respect for the personality and dignity of the person;
- Respect for clients' individual needs and the duty to safeguard their rights;
- Clients' rights to autonomy, self-determination, empowerment and self-action;
- Right to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality;
- Right to access records.

According to Article 6, social workers recognise the right of clients to self-determination and self-action by encouraging and helping them take responsibility for their actions, to realise their full potential and to find solutions to meet their needs or address their social problems in a socially acceptable manner. The Article emphasizes that the provision of services to clients is based on objective criteria and after fair judgment so that clients can trust professionals and access their skills. Further, it refers to clients' informed consent and professionals' duty to gather only the data necessary to help their clients and protect all confidential information. The Article makes it clear that social workers should be very careful regarding privacy and confidentiality issues. However, the disclosure of personal information, data or events is not a violation of privacy or confidentiality in situations aimed at safeguarding human life or protecting minors' physical and mental health, or adults who are unable for whatever reason to protect themselves. Finally, the Article says that social workers must always act in the clients' and their environment's best interests and should under no circumstances accept money for their services.

Given that the Code defines the appropriate professional behaviour, it would seem reasonable for it to describe, directly or indirectly, the desirable character traits of social workers as well. In terms of the Code, a social worker should not only be a competent professional, but also a good and ethical person in their professional conduct in terms of reliability, honesty, dignity, responsibility, fairness and objectivity. The Code highlights the positive and ethical characteristics of the ideal professional social worker, but does not go into detail or describe the desired moral characteristics of social workers. Also, as a purely legal document¹⁵, the Code does not make reference to desirable social worker characteristics such as *empathy*, *caring*, and *compassion* as stated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the virtue and care ethics literature respectively. Neither does the Code address issues of having emotional or sexual relationships with clients or issues of sexual harassment. Finally, the Code does not address issues regarding the appropriate relationships between the staff and students placed on practice or what ethical principles should guide research in the work environment.

However, despite these shortcomings of the Code, it is worth noting that the Code was written twelve years before the current IFSW code of ethics (2004), and does incorporate the key values and principles of social work, demonstrating the universality and durability of the core values of social work over time and place. In addition, the text combines traditional and modern values as contained in the international literature, such as user participation, anti-discrimination practices, the right to informed consent, social justice and so forth.

Overall, the Code describes the basic legal framework underlying the profession of social work and maps out the general goals of professional behaviour by providing specific standards and rules for good conduct. Compared to other national codes of ethics, for example, the American NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Ethical Code, the Hellenic Code does not provide a detailed set of rules that

¹⁵ This means that, for example, someone can take a social worker to court for failing to comply with the Code.

prescribe how social workers should act in all situations. This is partly explained by the fact that the Code is not the only official document dealing with issues related to social workers' behaviour in professional practice. Greece has other legal resources, for example, public or employment law, or organisations' internal regulations, or even ethics committees, which are responsible for regulating matters of professional ethical practice. Similarly, the Hellenic Association of Social Workers, as the official professional body is also responsible for ethical practice. Lastly, recently in Greece, an increasing number of institutionalised independent authorities for upholding vulnerable people's rights have come into existence, for example, the Hellenic Data Protection Authority and the Greek Ombudsman with its various specialised bodies.

To sum up, despite the plethora of different legal and other resources in Greece, the need has become clear in recent years for the Hellenic Code to be modernised and harmonised with global social work standards to offer more specific guidance to social workers and greater control over their actions and conduct. Globalisation and current changes in European social welfare systems regarding the marketisation of the public and non-profit-making social sectors have undoubtedly influenced the Greek system of social services, too. As a result, the profession of social work has become considerably more specialised, complex and demanding than ever.

2.4.2 Professional Social Work Ethics and Interprofessional Work

During recent years, radical changes in the provision of health and social care in many European countries, including Greece, have resulted in an increased need for collaboration between practitioners from different professions within the same organisation or even from different organisations. As a result, more and more social workers and students on placements today interact with other professionals as part of a team - nurses, doctors, psychologists and others - in order to provide appropriate care to clients (Doel *et al.*, 2011) . Hence, interprofessional team working is now central to promoting the client's well-being.

Interprofessional teamwork as defined by Reeves and colleagues (2010:xiv) 'is a type of work which involves different health and/or social professions who share a team identity and work closely together in an integrated and interdependent manner to solve problems and deliver services'. Leathard (2003) highlights the benefits of interprofessional practice for all parties involved, as follows:

- The recognition that what people have in common is more important than the difference, as professionals acknowledge the value of sharing knowledge and expertise;
- The response to the growth in the complexity of health and social care; provision, with the potential for comprehensive, integrated services;
- The recognition of a more satisfying work environment within an arena where professionals can share and support each other (p.9).

Although interprofessional practice across health and social care settings has widely been recognised, working together to achieve a common goal is not as simple as it sounds. As Clark (1993:218) pointed out 'putting people together in groups representing many disciplines does not necessarily guarantee the development of a shared understanding'. In fact, it is clear from the literature that effective interprofessional working is the result of multiple factors. As discussed below, communication among team members is one of the most important factors for successful interprofessional work because poor team building and communication has an impact on the ability to provide high quality services to clients.

The evidence clearly shows that poor collaboration between professionals is strongly associated with differences in professional cultures regarding ethical practice and values (Molyneux, 2001; Johnson *et al.*, 2003; Hall, 2005). Irvine and colleagues (2002:199) state that, 'interprofessional relationships . . . are frequently distorted by mutual suspicion, hostility and disparities between the way that a particular profession views itself and how it is viewed by other occupations'.

Given that professions have different histories and are rooted in different worldviews, it is rational for them to have different value systems. However, differences in professional values among practitioners often lead to value conflicts during inter-professional cooperation. In healthcare organisations, for example, cooperation problems are common between physicians and other disciplines such as nurses and social workers because it is suggested that doctors have a strong professional culture that encourages them to have a negative attitude or and stereotypical notions of other professionals (Hall,2005) .

In the work environment, as Hall (2005:191) indicates, values are often conveyed implicitly 'since values are internalized and largely unspoken, they can create important obstacles that may actually be invisible to different team members struggling with a problem'. In order to overcome obstacles and promote teamwork, Hall recommends that 'professional values must be made apparent to all professionals involved' (ibid, 2005). Similarly, Herod and Lymbery (2002) stress the need for outsourcing social work values in teamwork, saying:

The values and ethical stance of social workers are a vital element of an interprofessional team, as these are areas in which there are key differences between social workers and other professionals. Through the expression of these values the social worker should be able to provide both a critique and challenge within the multi-disciplinary team (p.23).

In 2.2 it was noted that each profession is based on strong values and ethical codes that prescribe its professional identity. But, as the literature shows, different professional cultures including values and beliefs are likely to be seen as barriers to effective interprofessional collaboration (Hall, 2005; Doel *et al.*, 2011). Because of these potential barriers, current discussions around interprofessional working in health and social care focus on the issue of interprofessional ethics.

Interprofessional ethics concerns both the existence of a common set of professional values for successful interprofessional working, as well as the study of ethical issues within it (Banks, 2010). In the United Kingdom, there has been an attempt to develop an interprofessional practice code of ethics. Although

interprofessional ethics is a growing area of interest internationally, it is still very limited in the literature and under-researched (Banks, 2010).

The next section provides a brief overview of the key research topics and empirical literature gaps regarding social work values and ethics around the world, with special emphasis on the field of social work education.

2.5 Review of Related Research

Internationally, values and ethics as research topics have been examined from different angles in the fields of social work education and practice. According to Spano and Koenig (2007), the most popular research areas are related to the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals (professionals or students) in actual practice, or value conflicts between social workers and their social agencies, or social workers and their clients. However, the researcher found that issues related to the process of ethical decision making, as well as the ethical codes and factors affecting their use in practice are also popular areas of research in the field of social work.

Congress and McAuliffe (2006) observe that the vast majority of the existing research is concerned with social work ethics rather than social work values. As the authors explain, current studies on social work values are limited in number, 'perhaps because of the difficulty of receiving accurate information about social work values' (p. 153). The few published studies devoted exclusively to social work values usually refer to the values seen as most important to the profession such as self-determination, confidentiality and privacy or respect for the person (Saxon *et al.*, 2006; Congress and McAuliffe, 2006). By inference, values as a separate topic are not the primary goal of most research into social work practice.

Within the field of social work education, most of the research into values and ethics is concentrated in two areas: the value differences between students across educational levels and how values change during educational processes (Pike,

1996), or compares social work students' values with those of students in other professions (Haynes, 1994). The second area focuses on how students' socialisation influences the acculturation or assimilation of their professional values in general (Barretti, 2004). The majority of the current empirical literature on these topics comes from western Anglo-Saxon countries such as the UK and USA, and more recently, from Australia, while in Greece, values and ethics are generally under-researched areas in social work education and practice. Indeed, Greece is among those European countries where research production in general is still very low, in both the social work and educational sectors.

During the literature review, it became apparent that, despite increased focus by scholars on social work values and ethics over several decades, relatively little research had been undertaken in this area. Little attention has been paid to the thesis research topic of students' perceptions of the development of their professional values and ethics in the workplace during the practicum. Internationally, the few published empirical studies come mostly from USA (e.g. Williams and Reeves, 2004; Lindsey, 2005; Richter-Hauk and Arias, 2008) and highlight the importance of values development during practicum learning, as well as the role practice learning plays. At the European level, there is only one published study looking at the barriers that hinder the application of professional values in social work practice from the perspective of students in three countries: Lithuania, Belarus and Sweden (Urbonienė and Leliūgienė, 2007).

However, all the above studies were small in scale (except for Urbonienė and Leliūgienė, 2007) and provided limited insights. In addition, they used different methodological approaches and were conducted within different cultural environments. It is consequently difficult to make any direct comparisons because of the different aims and methodological approaches of these studies, as well as the different cultural environments within which they were conducted. Similar conclusions have been drawn from Pike (1996), Clark (2000) and Barretti (2004) in their literature reviews with regard to research on values and ethics in social work.

Clark (2000:36) states 'the few published studies on social work values and ethics in practice are mostly small in scale and disparate in aims and methods'. Pike (1996) and Barretti (2004) draw a similar conclusion with regard to research on values and ethics in social work education through their detailed reviews of the existing empirical literature and observed that earlier research into values in social work education had resulted in contradictory and mixed findings interpreted by researchers in different ways.

Several scholars argue that, although the profession of social work is value laden, compared to other human service professions like medicine and nursing, far too little attention has been given to researching professional values and ethics in education and practice (Pike, 1996; Clark, 2000; Abbott, 2003; Congress and McAuliffe, 2006; Banks, 2008). Bearing this in mind, the lack of studies focusing solely on this thesis research topic, either in Greece or elsewhere, reveals a considerable gap in both the local and global empirical literature.

2.6 Approaches to Professional Values and Ethics in Social Work

Nowadays, there are many theoretical approaches to values and ethics worldwide. As Clark (2000) notes, the majority have their roots in western schools of thought, specifically, in moral philosophy and political science. Theoretical approaches to values and ethics are usually divided into two broad categories: the first includes the so-called principle-based approaches to action, while the second contains ethical theories that focus on the character of moral agents and their relationships (Banks, 2006).

Each of these approaches encompasses a range of ethical theories developed to give answers to some central philosophical questions such as what sort of actions individuals should perform or what sort of people they should be. In other words, ethical theories have been created to explain issues pertaining to human action and human conduct.

According to the social work literature, the most-frequently cited ethical theories are deontological¹⁶ and utilitarian theories and more recently, virtue ethics and the ethics of care (McBeath and Webb, 2002; Banks, 2004, 2006; Clark, 2000, 2006; Hugman, 2005; Reamer, 2006; Webb, 2006). Deontological and utilitarian theories belong to principle-based approaches to ethics and focus generally on the concepts of *duty*, and *utility* in relation to social context, originating from liberal individualism ideas (Banks, 2004, 2006; Clark, 2000). Banks (2004) states that these theories:

tend to be dominant, with the emphasis on the professional as an impartial moral agent, acting rationally by applying principles, weighing up the consequences of various courses of action and prioritising the various principles in particular cases (p.79).

On the other hand, virtue and care ethics theories are concerned with the characteristics of human beings as individuals making moral decisions and actions and the particular relationships that develop between professionals and their clients. Virtue ethics and care ethics are typical examples of agent-focused and relationship-based ethical theories.

In social work, ethical theories are used to describe and explain how professionals make decisions and act within the framework of their daily work. Indeed, as already mentioned, the process of decision making in social work practice is complex given the ethical dilemmas or problems arising from conflicting values and ethics or conflicts of interests among stakeholders such as the social worker, the organisation and the client (Reamer, 2006).

The following subsections are devoted to outlining the above mentioned ethical theories, the deontological, utilitarian and virtue and care ethics theories, by presenting the general framework within which each of these theories developed and exploring their relationship to the profession of social work. The aim is to summarise key aspects of the different approaches to enable links to be made in

¹⁶ From the Greek word *deontology* that is for duty (δέον: deon) and science (or study) of (logos).

later discussion of the empirical findings rather than present them in great detail. Finally, there is a short discussion on the notions of ethical pluralism and principlism, which appears to be current in the literature on ethics.

2.6.1 Deontology¹⁷ and Utilitarianism¹⁸

Deontological and utilitarian ethical theories are associated with principles concerning human intention and action (Hinman, 2003; Banks, 2004, 2006). In particular, deontological theory claims that actions should be based on what is right or wrong as determined by a moral rule rationally developed. Deontological ethics are usually attributed to the German philosopher, Kant, and his later followers. In Kantian philosophy, the notion of the categorical imperative is of paramount importance and means that a moral rule is 'a command that must be adhered to' (Banks, 2006:28). Further, for deontologists, *good* is defined independently of *right* and actions must fulfil the categorical imperative. Hence, Kantian ethics 'stresses the overriding importance of fixed moral rules' (Dolgoff *et al.*, 2009:53) and is based on the view that 'the only good action is that which is done from a sense of duty' (Banks, 2006:30).

In the deontological system, ethical rules have a universal character and 'the notions of law, universality and autonomy are inextricably connected' (Hugman, 2005: 22). The classical version of deontological ethics offers some typical examples of Kantian theory such as telling the truth or not producing harm to others independently of the view that the reasons or consequences are inherently right (Banks, 2004, 2006; Reamer, 2006). The application of these views to social work can mean that practitioners should never lie even if this was for a good reason- for example, to save a child's life from potential abuse - because obedience to the predefined rules is perceived as an inviolable canon. In other words, the

¹⁷ In the literature of ethics, the terms *deontological ethics*, *deontology*, or *Kantian ethics* have the same meaning and are used interchangeably.

¹⁸ The terms *utilitarianism* or *utilitarian ethics* have the same meaning.

Kantian principle of the *categorical imperative* requires complete obedience to rules or laws.

The classical form of Kantian ethics is criticised for its moral absolutism (Hinman, 2003; Banks, 2004) not only by critics of this orientation, as will be seen, but also by other deontologists. For instance, Ross (1930/2002), an exponent of the pluralist deontological approach, believed that people under some circumstances, have to act in a way that transgresses the prescribed rules. In addition, some contemporary deontologists have determined a number of principles such as the Principle of Permissible Harm which, according to Kamm (1996), means a minor harm in the name of a greater good is justifiable.

At its weakest characterisation, despite the various criticisms of the Kantian approach, deontological theory can claim to emphasise 'the individual person and their rights and duties, particularly the principles of liberty and justice' (Banks, 2006:40). It acknowledges the moral agent is a unique entity that has the right to make moral decisions and choices freely, but on the other hand, has a duty to treat others always as an end and never as a means. In relation to social work, Banks (2006) says that the notion of respect for the individual person as defined by Kant is the most influential principle in social work ethics. Indeed, as noted, respect of the individual combined with self-determination is a cardinal social work principle permeating all statements and declarations of social work professionals around the world. At the same time, these values are difficult to fully apply in practice for various reasons.

Broadly speaking, the spirit of the deontological approach has, to a large extent, pervaded the social work profession. This can be seen in the structure and content of various codes for social workers or ethics audits that are based on principles and rules about professionals' duties¹⁹. (Reamer, 2001, 2006; Banks, 2004, 2006).

¹⁹ The same conclusion concerns the international values and ethics statement as determined by International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) alike.

Parenthetically, the Hellenic Code for social workers described earlier is a similar example. It is essentially a legislative framework which maps out the general deontological principles for social workers in relation to their duties towards the profession itself, clients, colleagues, the organisation and society at large.

By contrast, the utilitarian orientation deems the right action is that which creates the most good. In his chapter on '*the ethics of consequences: utilitarianism*', Hinman (2003), examines the notion of utilitarianism, its roots, and the different types that exist within it. According to him, utilitarian theory originates from the work of the British philosophers Bentham (1748-1832) and Mill (1806-1873). In classical utilitarianism as defined by Bentham and later by Mill, the concept of utility is defined in terms of pleasure (Bentham's approach) and happiness (Mill's approach) respectively.

According to Hinman, there are three versions of utilitarianism: *act utilitarianism* states that the right action is the one that produces the greatest ratio of good to evil for all concerned; *rule utilitarianism* accepts the existence of general rules or laws because they help individuals to take the right action; *practice utilitarianism* is based on those practices which produce the greatest amount of utility. As Hinman notes, the above types of utilitarianism are not 'necessarily mutually exclusive' since they are all concerned with the production of the greatest amount of utility (ibid: 143-156).

Reamer (2006) argues that it is important that social workers are able to distinguish between the two basic forms of utilitarianism (act and rule) by giving the example of a common situation in social work practice where social workers must decide how to identify those most eligible to receive scarce resources. If a practitioner makes a decision on the basis of 'the greatest good for the greatest number of people', then he/she must distribute small amounts of money to all clients, an approach associated with act utilitarianism. In rule utilitarianism, professionals should distribute a greater amount of money to fewer eligible people. Similarly, Savulescu (2005:118) although referring to the health sector,

points out that the utilitarian approach fits public health issues and the concept of health economics 'to use limited healthcare resources as efficiently as possible'.

In general, utilitarian approaches consider the concept of utility and the consequences of an action to others. For Banks (2006:40), utilitarian theory is interested in 'public good, looking to the consequences of actions with respect to the principles of utility and justice (as equal treatment)'. In contrast to Kantian ethics which 'place exclusive emphasis on the intentions behind the action' (Hinman, 2003:136), utilitarian theory focuses on the action itself and its outcomes.

In social work practice, Clark (1999:260) argues that utilitarianism may be applicable in cases of people 'whose conduct is morally problematic such as offenders or those who otherwise fail in their social obligations'. Further, Meacham (2007) argues that the utilitarian orientation is compatible with mezzo and macro social workers' decisions, while at the micro level, it tends to ignore individual or minorities' particular needs, in contrast to deontological ethics which focuses on individual rights and duties. According to Meacham, individuals and minorities constitute the majority of social workers' clients.

As already noted, deontological and utilitarian theories are considered the dominant approaches to ethics in social work (Reamer, 2006; Banks, 2004, 2006; Hugman, 2003, 2005; Clifford and Burke, 2005). Recently, Osmo and Landau (2006) carried out a study into the role ethical theories played in the decision making of 62 Israeli social workers. Although this study is small in scale, it offers some useful findings. For instance, the authors, using a content analysis of arguments given in four different contexts, found that the majority of social workers used deontological or utilitarian approaches in their decision making. They found that few social workers used concepts from other ethical theories such as virtue ethics, rights theory or care theory of ethics. They also observed that professionals used concepts from deontological theories such as the right intention, duty, and universalism when they did not have to justify actions in a specific practice situation. In contrast, when social workers had to make decisions

relating to a specific practice situation, then they used concepts from utilitarian theory such as the notion of consequences, their utility and so on. These findings fit with Dolgoff *et al.*'s (2009) views whereby social workers tend to use deontological views at a general level, but prefer to employ utilitarian concepts in practice.

Hugman (2003), Clark (2000) and Webb (2006) explore the reasons why deontology and utilitarianism are considered dominant ethical theories in social work and other social professions such as medicine and nursing. According to these authors, the Kantian and utilitarian approaches have developed under the umbrella of universalism and liberal individualism which strongly characterise modern societies. As a result, the professional ethics that guide the social professions follow the same reasoning. In particular, Hugman (2003) claims that both philosophical trends have basic principles in common:

- The moral value of individual persons as autonomous rational beings;
- The universality of values and principles;
- The possibility of deducing moral 'laws' through rational reflection;
- The goal of individual liberty (freedom, emancipation) in the just ordering of a society. (p.7)

Before concluding this brief discussion of the leading ethical theories, it is worth noting that Hugman (2005) with reference to Tannsjö (2002), draws attention to the difficulties professionals have in choosing an approach to help their clients as all theoretical approaches are not 'equally valid because they incorporate different assumptions' (Tannsjö, 2002 cited in Hugman, 2005). Hugman notes:

... in seeking to combine insights from a different approach there are inherent risks that professionals may find themselves in a double-bind, for example in trying to operationalize a deontological notion of respect for persons and a utilitarian idea of justice in rationing scarce resources (2005:142).

Key criticisms

It was noted earlier that social work has placed much stress on deontological and utilitarian theories over the last decades. In recent years, however, these traditional approaches to ethics are the target of criticism for various reasons. For example, these approaches tend to lay such strong emphasis on the notions of duty and rights that some social work authors talk about a 'cold', 'distant', 'depersonalising' and finally a 'mechanical application' of the related concepts in practice (McBeath and Webb, 2002:1018; Hugman, 2005:84). Further, deontological and utilitarian approaches perceive 'ethics as a matter of articulating and applying very abstract, universal principles' (Banks, 2004:86) and as a result, they have failed to 'articulate sets of principles for right action' (Banks, 2006:55).

However, the most common criticism in the related literature is that Kantian and utilitarian ethics lack, for the most part, any humane concept of an action since the 'real' protagonists are either the consequences of the actions or the notions of duty or rules. With regard to this, Banks (2006) claims that:

principle-based approaches ignore important features of the moral life and moral judgements, including the character, motives and emotions of the moral agent, the particular contexts in which judgements are made and the particular relationships and commitments people have to each other (p.54).

2.6.2 Virtue Ethics and Care Ethics

In recent years, virtue ethical theories have become increasingly influential in human service professions including social work. As a result, the notion of virtues has become more and more connected to the notion of good professional practice by adding the aretaic²⁰ dimension to the normative and technical aspects of good practice (Clark, 2006).

²⁰ *Aretaic* from the Greek word for excellence or virtue.

Virtue ethical theories, as opposed to deontological and utilitarian approaches which answer the question *how should we act* are concerned with *who we should be* and *how we should live*. In other words, these theories are concerned with the character or motives of moral agent and the people's relationships with each other.

According to Banks's taxonomy (2006), virtue ethical theories belong to partial and situated approaches to ethics and include, inter alia, virtue ethics and care ethics²¹. However, some authors like Tong (1998) and Halwani (2003) regard care as a virtue, and do not see care ethics as a separate theory, but as a sub area of virtue ethics. Similarly, Athanassoulis (2006) notes, that although care ethicists do not always directly refer to virtue ethics, their writings often entail special virtues which play an important role in the theory of virtue ethics.

In the field of social work, as Banks (2004, 2006) and Clark (2006) state, the study of virtue ethics and care ethics is still in an embryonic stage compared to other human disciplines such as medicine, psychology, nursing and teaching. For the moment, few social work writers, mostly in the Anglophone literature, have turned their attention to the moral characteristics of social workers and their relationships with their clients as alternative or complementary approaches to modern ethics²².

The following subsections present an overview of the main concepts related to virtue ethics and care ethics theories respectively.

²¹ This is often referred to as 'ethics of care' too.

²² Some UK example writings are Houston, 2003; Parton, 2003; Webb, 2006; Clark, 2006; Lovat and Gray, 2008.

2.6.2.1 Virtue Ethics

We are not studying in order to know what virtue is, but to become good, for otherwise there would be no profit in it.

Aristotle

According to Velasquez *et al.* (1988):

Virtues are attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop this potential. They enable us to pursue the ideals we have adopted. Honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, and prudence are all examples of virtues.

Virtue ethics in western societies derives from ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the Aristotelian understanding of a virtuous person. Aristotle²³ is the originator of virtue ethics and even today, his approach to ethics has a profound influence on modern virtue theorists. Below is a brief description of the basic tenets of Aristotelian thought.

a. Aristotle's Virtue Ethics

Aristotle followed Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to be central to a life well-lived, but was the first to put the notion of virtue ethics into the social framework from the viewpoint that human experience is a holistic process (Kraut, 2010). Aristotle claimed that virtues are socially situated, cultivated and constitutive of a human life well-lived (*eudaimonia*). Aristotle distinguished two kinds of virtue: *moral virtues* (virtues of character) and *intellectual virtues* (or *dianoetic virtues*)²⁴ (Crisp, 2000; Hughes, 2001). *Moral virtues* are courage, temperance, self-discipline, moderation, modesty, humility, generosity, friendliness, truthfulness, honesty, justice. *Intellectual virtues* include scientific knowledge (*episteme*), artistic or technical knowledge (*techne*), intuitive reason (*nous*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and philosophic wisdom (*sophia*).

²³ In his book "Nicomachean Ethics", Aristotle fully develops his virtue theory.

²⁴ From the Greek '*aretai dianoetikai*'.

Aristotle considered virtues as important parts of the good individual person and likened them to acquired skills. He further believed that virtues are not naturally possessed, but form part of the conscious choice of individuals based on practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which needs continuous affirmation to be acquired. In today's terms, the Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom is compatible with the term *good judgment*²⁵ according to Banks (2006).

Aristotle put great emphasis on the training of character in a *virtues modus vivendi*. More specifically, the philosopher believed that the training of character begins in the early years and continues until the end of a person's life. He claimed that for a person to be virtuous they must practise good character traits all the time, what he refers to a *habitual excellence*. The Aristotelian position could be seen as analogous with *lifelong learning* (Carr, 2007).

With regard to the training of character, Aristotle believed instructors should function as role models for their trainees. Parents may be good or bad role models for their children during their upbringing, as well as teachers and others engaged in the education process. This would suggest that practitioners, social work teachers or practice instructors/supervisors may also function as positive or negative role models for both their students and clients (see also Chapter 3.8).

Like Aristotle, modern virtue theorists argue that the concept of the goodness of an action is associated with the character of the person, so priority is placed on the qualities of the human character. Like Aristotle, contemporary virtue theorists emphasise the role a good upbringing plays in becoming a virtuous person. Following Aristotle's views on moral education and development, modern virtue ethicists also attach importance to these concepts, considering them the basis for human flourishing. In particular, MacIntyre (1987), one of the foremost

²⁵ According to Banks (2006), 'Good judgment could be regarded as a characteristic of the professional. It can be linked with the notion of the reflective and reflexive practitioner, requiring, among other things, the ability to learn from and reflect on experience, a sensitivity to people's feelings and situations, attentiveness to features of situations and an ability to reason'(pp. 67-68).

proponents of virtue ethics, claimed that virtue is obtained from daily interaction with other people, in communities of practice and through a trial and error process. He also believed that ethics are culturally and role situated.

b. Virtue Ethics and Social Work

Clark (2006:88) notes that, ‘... good professional practice is not sufficiently described either by technical competence or by grand ethical principle; it also subsists essentially in the moral character of the practitioner’. In fact, social work as a value-laden profession cannot be separated from virtue ethics because the effective application of professional values and ethics depends not only on duty-minded or even skilful social workers, but they must also be the carriers of good character traits.

Rejecting the value-neutrality of the social work profession in liberal individualistic societies, Clark (2006) turns his attention to the moral personality of the social worker and the features that constitutes a good professional. In his view, social workers must fulfil all the requirements described in various statements on human rights regarding personal relationships. In addition, social workers should meet context-sensitive moral standards where social work is in operation. For Clark, ‘social workers are necessarily practitioners of context-sensitive moral values and bearers of particular moral character’ (ibid: 86).

Other social work writers like Webb (2006: 221) see virtue ethics as a ‘process of reflection, deliberation and self-understanding’ for professionals. For Webb, what is important is that ‘virtue calls upon the inner sense of the essential rightness of one’s stance commensurate with the situation and the determination of a moral dialogue with the rest of society’ (ibid: 221). Houston (2003), Hugman (2005), and Lovat and Gray (2008), influenced by Habermasian discourse ethics for critical thinking, also argue that in a democratic society virtue ethics enters into a moral dialogue in everyday relationships, including in the work environment, rather than a set of pre-determined rules about morality.

From the above, it can be argued that contemporary writings on virtue ethics in social work emphasize, on the one hand, the notion of the critical self-reflection of the social worker about his or her individual ethical stance and on the other, the moral and ethical dialogue between social workers and other people engaged in social work practice as a dialectical process.

Key criticisms

Virtue ethics is a theoretical system that, like many others, has also limitations. The aim here is not to make an exhaustive list of the drawbacks of such an approach or dissenting voices, but to illustrate some difficulties²⁶, which are often exposed by both supporters and opponents of virtue ethics.

One difficulty is that virtue ethics is contextual and consequently its applicability is related to specific cases (van Staveren, 2007). Further, virtue ethics is 'culture-specific' (Campbell, 2005:46) and thus does not have universal acceptance (Campbell, 2005; van Staveren, 2007). In addition, according to opponents of these approaches in professional practice, virtue ethics 'ignores social and communal dimensions' because emphasis is given to the moral character of individuals, not the social context where social beings interrelate (Campbell, 2005:47). Nevertheless, recent findings in the domain of positive psychology have shown that, although societies vary in their ethical practices, they all recognise common virtues such as courage (e.g. bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality); wisdom and knowledge (e.g. creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective); humanity (e.g. love, kindness, social intelligence); justice (e.g. citizenship, fairness, leadership); temperance (e.g. forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, self-regulation) and transcendence (e.g. appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality) (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Dahlsgaard *et al.*, 2005).

²⁶ The word *difficulty* is borrowed from Campbell (2005).

Another limitation is that virtue ethics is based upon motive (Slote, 2001) and motives alone do not always lead to good judgement and action (Banks, 2004, 2006; van Staveren, 2007). For instance, a social worker might have the good intention to help his/her clients, but this is not always enough to make appropriate decisions and react effectively in the client's interest. As already seen, other factors play a significant role in ethical judgements. On the other hand, it is by no means certain that all social workers or students²⁷ studying to become social workers embody the qualities of good character or possess only positive motives towards the profession and the population they serve.

To conclude, Banks (2006:70) points out that 'people are not always virtuous' or able to 'make good judgements' and for this reason she believes social work must adopt specific principles and rules to underpin its *raison d'être* (ibid: 2006). However, she accepts virtue ethics as a process in moral education and development given that for her, like other social work writers mentioned earlier, social work is not a profession that relies only on acquired skills or prescribed rules and obligations, but it also needs virtues to be functional.

2.6.2.2 Care Ethics

Parton (2003:10) says '...the notion of care lies at the heart of social work'. Indeed, throughout its history, social work as a caring profession has always been involved with looking after vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups or people who need help in coping with their daily lives. In particular, the development of caring relationships between social workers and clients in certain environments, such as residential care, was and still is required as a precondition to achieve social

²⁷ Papadaki's (2001) research shows that 30% of students at the Department of Social Work in TEI of Crete decide to study social work as a compromise rather than vocational choice. For Papadaki, the student's socio-economic background and the Greek educational system are significant factors affecting students graduating in social work. From her research findings, Papadaki (ibid: 146) concludes that: 'there are often a number of students who, despite the fact that they do not identify with the social work profession, manage to graduate. They are then likely to work as social workers at some point in their lives, a prospect not in the least promising for the social work profession itself'.

work goals. The notion of *care* or *caring* has a leading role in the social work vocabulary.

However, the meaning of care as a moral sentiment or a form of virtue has changed over the years. Today, caring relationships have become a popular issue within social work owing to changes in social services systems at European level. Recent shifts in welfare systems in European states towards managerial and marketing approaches to social services (Williams, 2001; Meagher and Parton, 2004) along with the current division between morality and politics (Tronto, 1993) tend to alienate social work from one of its basic functions - fostering caring relationships between professionals and clients. In view of this danger, the current social work interest in the ethics of care or care ethics seeks to redefine the notion of *care giving* and *receiving* in the relationship between social workers and clients.

Care ethics is based on the idea that human hypostasis is mainly relational. In this view, care ethics emphasises 'social relationships as a primary value' (Hugman, 2005:84) in contrast to virtue ethics, which focuses on the character of moral agents, or the deontological and utilitarian views narrowly connected to universal duties and obligations. Although the notions of care or care ethics are not novel (Verkerk, 2005), current care ethics notions stem from feminist ideas about care as a gender issue. In particular, Gilligan's work (1982) on the morality of care as a matter of gender and power differences was a signal for later care ethicists to redefine the notion of care.

However, current developments in care ethics go beyond gender relations. Contemporary writing on care ethics focuses on the meaning of care as a human activity for both men and women. In addition, previous debates on the relationship between care and justice as separate issues seem to have been resolved as several modern care ethics writers agree that justice and care are both indispensable as part of the caring process (e.g. Friedman, 1993; Tronto, 1993; Hekman, 1995; Orme, 2002).

Verkerk (2005) says that despite the existence of a range of different versions of care ethics, all care theorists share two basic concepts²⁸. Firstly, human relationships are mutual and interdependent, and secondly, ethical reasoning consists of 'ethical sensitivity, attentiveness and connectedness' (Verkerk, 2005:134). In the vocabulary of care ethics, the notion of care is considered an interpersonal interaction and not a technical relationship, arguing that care is an integral part of moral reasoning.

In their article, *"Modernising Social Work and the Ethics of Care"*, Meagher and Parton (2004) explore the relationship between social work and the ethics of care in the context of the modernisation of social work services as a whole. Based on their findings and those of other researchers emphasising that clients contribute to caring relationships as part of effective practice, they see the ethics of care as an opportunity for practitioners, to 'recognise and affirm' their 'self-understanding and 'aspirations' (p.18). Likewise, integrating care ethics into modern social services is considered an opportunity for clients 'to evaluate the delivery of service quality' (ibid: 20). For Meagher and Parton, the care ethics approach to social work also offers the opportunity to 'identify, criticise and reform (masculinist) managerialist institutions and processes' (ibid: 20). Nevertheless, care ethics within social work may carry some risks, according to the authors.

Although Meagher and Parton accept some theoretical positions oppose the enactment of care ethics in managerial institutions because 'managerialism is a juggernaut crushing everything in its path'(ibid, 2004:23), they believe that there is room within social services to foster care ethics approaches in order to reduce the negative effects of managerialism. In a similar vein, Banks (2004) connects care

²⁸ For example, Tronto (1993), a modern care theorist, perceives care or the ethic of care, as she prefers to call it, as social practice in concrete environments. Tronto's position on care ethics is primarily political. For her, care is a political practice because 'the question 'who cares for whom'-marks relations of power and marks the intersection of gender, race, and class with care- giving' (p.169). Other care theorists, like Noddings (1984) see caring as a natural process. Noddings's contribution to care ethics is placing great emphasis on the role of education for cultivating caring in pupils to make them ethically sensitive citizens. For Noddings, education requires four key-elements to be ethically sensitive: modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation, while key the values are trust and continuity.

with the concept of humanity, which tends to be underestimated in today's professions. She notes:

As the professions became more organised and regulated, then so too developed the concern with professional distance, with 'controlled' emotional involvement, and with the kind of universal principles and impartialist language we now recognise in the codes of ethics. Yet the tradition of care and empathy still remains, not just as a remnant of a world we have lost, but as an inescapable part of what it means to be human (p.102).

From Bank's point of view, concern with care ethics seems to deepen the knowledge of how the notion of care is pertinent to concepts like empathy, compassion, listening, autonomy, responsibility and so on, and can increase ethical sensitivity in the handling of social work cases.

As pointed out earlier, social work is a caring profession, in particular, alongside other caring professions strongly characterised as having 'relational practice' (Hugman, 2003:10). Since the ethics of care focuses on the relational meaning of care, it could be said that both correspond to the concepts of ethical sensitivity and emotional responsiveness to particular situations. On the other hand, social work is also concerned with political practice embedded in social policies (Clark, 2000; Webb, 2006). Care ethics may also be seen as political practice (Tronto, 1993; Sevenhuijsen, 2000; Williams, 2001). From this standpoint, the study of care ethics in social work seems to further illuminate the ways in which power or unequal relations operate at the micro and macro practice.

Key criticisms

A common criticism of care ethics- especially from feminist critics-is that it encourages traditional ideas about gender roles; women are culturally associated with care and men with justice (Tronto, 1993). Orme (2002) notes that, 'association with the practice of caring has required women to honour their duties while denying them their rights: men's public human rights have depended on women bearing an unequal share of care responsibilities' (pp. 803-804).

Another criticism is that care is often linked to the concepts of paternalism/maternalism and parochialism (Tronto, 1993; Orme, 2002; Meagher and Parton, 2004). Given that care ethics is relational, Tronto (1993) draws attention to paternalistic views of care that might be inherent in relationships between the care provider and care receiver. For Tronto, paternalism (or maternalism) is a danger for care services because it makes care receivers feel like passive receivers.

Often care-givers have more competence and expertise in meeting the needs of those receiving care. The result is that care givers may well come to see themselves as more capable of assessing the needs of care-receivers than are the care-receivers themselves...Especially, when the caregivers' sense of importance, duty, career, etc., are tied to their caring role, we can well imagine the development of relationships of profound inequality (1993:170).

Tronto (1993) also draws attention to parochialism, which might restrict the extent of caring relationships. Parochialism comes from the care relations individuals know best and think of as being the most important in their lives, like the mother-child or other relationships, such as friendship, which arise from close contact (Meagher and Parton, 2004). Parochialism leads to favouritism towards one's family and friends. Paternalism/maternalism and parochialism are the *dark side* of care as defined by Tronto (1993) and are seen as the negative aspects of care ethics.

2.6.3 Ethical Pluralism and Principlism

As noted above, ethical theories are vital for understanding how decisions are made in social work practice. However, some writers like Hinman (2003) and Banks (2004) argue there is no dominant theory since they all can have a role in human decision making and actions, depending on the situation. In addition, Hugman (2005) claims the current dominant approaches to ethics such as the deontological and utilitarian views, do not help social workers to understand the complexity of these times.

Influenced by the work of Kekes (1993) on ethical pluralism and that of Beauchamp and Childress (2001) concerning principlism in bioethics, Hugman (2005) introduced the notions of 'ethical pluralism' and 'principlism' as alternative to the dominant ethical theories. Briefly, ethical pluralism, as described by Kekes and cited in Hugman (2005), asserts the coexistence of multiple values within society, as well as the idea of value conflicts as inevitable due to different voices in society. For Kekes, disagreements and value conflicts can be vital elements for human innovation, adaptation, and change (Wollenberg *et al.*, 2005).

Ethical pluralism rejects both absolutism and relativism, considering that values are conditional. Within this framework, some values are primary– relatively context independent - while others are secondary – relatively context dependent. Hugman (2005) considers that making a distinction between primary and secondary values is very helpful for ethical judgement. 'The former are understood at a high level of generality such as 'life', 'health' and so on, while the latter are more specific, concerning culturally specific goods'(ibid:20). In the quotation below, Hugman describes the strengths of ethical pluralism as follows:

...ethical pluralism provides a more appropriate way of re-evaluating professional ethics than the tendency towards collapsing ethics into 'standards' or rules of 'conduct'. Pluralism also provides a way of responding to changes in moral philosophy, as in notions such as compassion, care, ecology and postmodern ethics. Because it does not give an absolute position to any one of the more dominant traditions, the plural perspective leaves open the possibility that other ways of defining values may be considered. In this way, it points the caring professions towards the important task of conscious reflection and application that constitutes professional ethics (p.152).

Similar to ethical pluralism, 'principlism is a pluralist approach that, brings together ideas about duty, consequences, character, relationship, emotion and so on' (Hugman, 2005:10). Principlism asserts that ethics are in basic principles. According to Beauchamp and Childress (2001), the main exponents of principlism, there are four basic ethical principles upon which any ethical professional practice should be based. These are: *nonmaleficence* referring to the principle of not harming others; *beneficence* meaning practitioners should always act in the best

interests of others; *autonomy* or *self-determination* (in social work) referring to respect for the person; and, *justice* which involves considering what alternative best supports the fair treatment of people. Hugman (2005) suggests *principlism* can be seen as the interplay between the deontological and utilitarian orientations as principles play an important part in rational decision-making.

Although Beauchamp and Childress's (2001) focus is primarily on principlism in bioethics, they also acknowledge that virtues have an important part in a complete ethical theory. They identify some virtues as cardinal such as compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, integrity and conscientiousness. These virtues can be found under the auspices of the basic moral principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice that any ethical professional practice should operate within, according to the authors.

Currently, ethical pluralism presents an alternative view to the unitary views of morality such as the deontology or utilitarianism described earlier. As regards ethical principlism, this is considered one of the most influential approaches in various branches of applied ethics (e.g. bioethics) in the Anglophone literature.

2.7 Teaching Professional Social Work Values and Ethics

Teaching social work students about ethical practice didactically and by example continues to be crucial in the education of professional social workers

Congress, 2002

The literature across various human sciences clearly shows that ethics education and training are of great importance in preparing students for ethical practice. As Kohlberg (1981) stated, education is crucial to developing and promoting a person's ethical awareness. In human service professions like social work, the knowledge and integration of professional values and ethics is achieved through education and practice experience. That is, values and ethics are usually formally

taught in the classroom and then applied and developed in actual practice, as discussed in 2.7.1.

Generally speaking, through the teaching of values and ethics, students start to become familiar with their professional value system and prepared to become ethical social workers. Reamer (2001) claims social work values must be at the centre of social work education, while Hugman (2005:162) states that 'if ethics is not included in professional education then practitioners learn that it is not important'.

Social work as a value-laden profession acknowledged early-on the necessity for values and ethics teaching and learning. Historically, the literature on the teaching of values and ethics in social work dates back to the work of the American social work educator, Muriel Pumphrey in 1959 (Congress, 2002), followed by Reamer and Abramson's (1982) book on the teaching of social work ethics (McAuliffe and Ferman, 2002). Today, the value of teaching ethics in social work has been widely acknowledged by the international social work community (International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work), and the global values statement (discussed in 2.3) also includes ethical principles for the education and practical training of social work students.

Drawing upon the work of a range of social work scholars, Walmsley and Birkbeck (2006) identify the following core objectives related to teaching values and ethics within social work education:

- a. Provide an awareness of one's own values;
- b. Engender the ability to recognize value conflicts in oneself and between oneself and clients;
- c. Provide the ability to distinguish personal from professional values;
- d. Ensure a willingness to adopt the profession's values;
- e. Provide the inspiration needed for a meaningful career;

f. 6. Give concrete guidelines for actual practice (p.113).

In addition to the above, studies have shown that education and training in ethics has a significant influence on the ability to make ethical decisions, use ethics resources, and the moral actions of students (Grady *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, research has found that students' who are familiar with social work values and ethics may be more likely to understand 'the complexity of the situations and the dilemmas that social workers encounter, than those who have not yet started their professional training' (Landau, 1999:71).

Internationally, there are two dominant models for teaching values and ethics in social work: the discrete model and the pervasive model (Joseph, 1991). The discrete model refers to separate values and ethics courses, while the pervasive model integrates them throughout the curriculum. Some social work scholars, like Reamer (2001) and Congress (2002), contend that the most effective way to teach ethics in social work is to combine the discrete model with the pervasive model. However, the effectiveness of this approach has not yet been empirically evaluated (Berkman *et al.*, 2000).

As regards teaching methods, Reamer (2001) suggests a combination of traditional and modern teaching methods for ethics such as lectures, videos, debates, role-plays, student logs, etc. Reamer (2001) also suggests that ethics is better taught towards the end of the curriculum, because at this stage of studying, students are better prepared to understand and address ethical issues and conflicts. However, in addition to didactic approaches to ethics, Congress (2002) states that, students also learn to act ethically through role modelling (see also Chapter 3.8). As she puts it:

Ethical behaviour is also learnt by students through observing their teachers, either in the classroom or in their practice, as role models and they therefore have a responsibility to model appropriate ethical behaviour'(p.153).

In light of the above, there is no doubt that teaching professional values and ethics is considered as a primary task for social work education and as such, it must be an integral part of it. The following quote from Joseph (1991) best summarises the essential goal of teaching ethics and values in social work education:

Importantly, the goal of teaching ethics in professional education is not indoctrination -to teach a special set of behaviours for certain situations - but rather to promote respect for various moral perspectives and help students engage in the dialectic necessary to reach informed ethical choices (p. 98).

2.7.1 Values and Ethics in the Curriculum of the Social Work Department of TEI of Athens/Greece

As discussed earlier, teaching and learning values and ethics for students is important because it helps them to increase their ethical awareness and ethical sensitivity to issues within their profession. For this reason, teaching values and ethics today has become an essential and integral part of most social work curricula worldwide.

From a web search of the curricula of Social Work Departments in Greece, it became clear to the researcher that all Departments of Social Work in the country include aspects of values and ethics teaching in their educational programmes. Yet, because social work degree programmes throughout Greece are different in structure and content, ethics education is tailored to each individual Social Work Department. As a result, there is variation in the content of ethics courses, as well as the teaching methods used for them. Within this framework, the Social Work Department of Athens has its own characteristics.

Since its beginnings in 1984, the Social Work Department of Athens has shown a keen interest in ethics teaching to students. For many years, the Department offered a separate course on professional values and ethics. But, at the beginning of the current decade, it stopped providing this module and ethics became integrated

into social work courses throughout the curriculum. This change reflects the pervasive model of teaching ethics as discussed above. However, recent changes in the curriculum have resulted in the reintroduction of a discrete ethics module. The discrete module was designed to give students the opportunity to have direct knowledge about social work values and ethics. This new module is entitled 'Professional Ethics and Deontology in Social Work' and runs in the second year of the four year degree programme, before the first block placement (5th semester of studies). The module is compulsory for all students and is taught using a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, discussions, and small group work. It is taught three hours per week for one semester.

The module aims to provide students with basic knowledge of social work values and ethics, as well as to familiarise them with the skills necessary for identifying and addressing ethical issues related to social work practice. The module content includes: the history of values and ethics in social work; the relationship between personal and professional values; the nature of national and international ethical codes in the profession of social work and allied disciplines; ethical issues and obstacles to social work practice; interprofessional collaboration and ethics; the rights of clients to social services; ethics in the use of software programmes in social work services and so forth.

Topics such as ethical theories, as discussed in 2.6, are not included in the course material²⁹, though the prescribed literature highlights their importance to students in order to prepare them to better comprehend the ways that professionals make ethical decisions, as well as to understand their own ways of ethical thinking and acting during their practice placement (Osimo and Landau, 2001, 2006; McAuliffe and Ferman, 2002). As the module does not provide models of ethical decision making in social work practice, neither does it include all the key issues related to

²⁹ This information was given after personal contact with the teacher responsible for teaching the course (personal communication, September 20, 2010) for further clarification on the course content.

the teaching of values and ethics mentioned earlier and suggested by the international literature on ethics education.

Before concluding this section, it is worth mentioning that, apart from the existing ethics module, students also learn to become aware of their professional values and ethics through other social work courses during their studies. It can be argued that in general, the Department combines the discrete ethics model with the pervasive ethics model for ethics teaching in social work, as discussed in 2.7.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the nature of professional values and ethics in social work today. The review of the relevant literature revealed different levels of complexity in the topic, as well as lack of agreement among experts on what values and ethics should be prescribed for the profession worldwide. So, although the international social work community has suggested global professional values and rules, this does not ensure uniformity of judgement and understanding in different locations. Also, the literature review identified a gap in empirical research into professional values and ethics in both the domestic and international social work literature. As a result, there are few original research articles on the topic.

As has been shown, societies express the values and norms of the social work profession from within the perspective of their own cultural policies and instruments and, as a result, researchers and theorists from different countries approach the topic differently. Despite such particularities and differences, it seems that certain values are common in both the domestic and international literature. For example, there is a common assertion in the literature that, regardless of personal values and belief, public and professional interests should be the primary concern of social workers the world over.

Through the literature review, it also became evident that professional values and ethics are often a source of conflict among different professions within the

workplace or between the practitioner and the client or the working environment. The literature also shows that although ethical theories are core to the process of decision making in the workplace, no single ethical theory or approach has become widely used. Historically, deontology and utilitarianism are the dominant ethical theories in social work, but recently, the theories of virtue and care ethics have gradually gained ground in social work, while, more recently, ethical pluralism and principlism have attracted the interest of social work theorists and researchers alike.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the benefits of teaching professional values and ethics to social work students and describing and commenting on the ethics course offered by the Department of Social Work in Athens based on the findings from the literature.

3. Professional Values, Ethics and the Workplace: Learning to be Ethical in Practice Placement Settings

3.1 Introduction

The chapter begins by looking at the concept of learning in social work education in general, and highlights its importance so that students become competent professionals. Then it focuses on the value of the student placement for ethics learning in workplace settings and presents two major approaches to adult learning: individual learning approaches - adult learning theory - and socio-cultural/situated approaches.

The chapter also discusses the ethical development of students on placements as a crucial part of their learning process, underlines the importance of ethical and critical reflective practice for students in practice settings, and how practice instruction/supervision is central to ethical social work in field education.

Finally, the chapter explores the role of ethics in organisations where students are placed for practice, and ends by examining the concept of power and its relationship to ethical practice in social service organisations. The knowledge of power dynamics in organisations is important for understanding the delivery of ethically-based services to clients and ensuring safe professional environments for both practitioners and students.

3.1.1 Literature Review Method: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The review is mainly based on the social work literature and organisational and business/management literature to provide a better understanding of the topic. The literature search was confined to English language textbooks, articles, websites and databases. Textbooks and articles were selected for review based on their titles, tables of contents and abstracts. The literature search was not

chronologically restricted, in order to gather as much information as possible, while current issues and trends in the field of ethics learning and development in social work practice were highlighted.

The literature search was conducted through print resources (e.g. textbooks) and electronic resources (accessible via the University of Sussex and the TEI of Athens) plus Google and Google Scholar. The literature search was conducted using the following electronic databases:

- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)
- EBSCO
- Social Care Online (SCIE)
- Social Services Abstracts
- Informaworld
- Zetoc

The search of the electronic resources, including online databases, used keywords like 'social work', 'values', and 'ethics' in conjunction with 'education', 'placement', 'practice learning', 'workplace', 'management', 'adult learning theories', 'practice instructor', 'supervisor', 'ethical development', 'organisation'.

3.2 Overview of Learning in Social Work Education

Learning is a critical process for social work students to help them acquire, practice, and improve the values, skills and ethics knowledge needed for the profession. Learning enables students to become competent and ethical professional social workers. However, learning in social work education is a big topic and beyond the scope of this study to explore it in detail. The purpose here is to identify the key issues as they relate to learning during practice placement.

As a rule, learning, like instruction, precedes development because learning brings about development (Vygotsky, 1978). Several writers have argued that the

purpose of learning should be not only to inform, but also to change and transform (Dewey, 1938/1997; Mezirow, 2000; Hager, 2005). Mezirow (1998), one of the most noted proponents of transformative or transformational learning in adult education, stated that the concept of critical reflection should be the key to this transformation (Reflection is discussed in 3.7).

Learning has many different forms and types. However, formal and informal learning appear to be the dominant learning types referred to in the social work education literature. Formal learning processes are normally connected with institutionalised learning such as academic learning or classroom-based learning; they are highly structured and often take place off the job and outside the work environment (Eraut, 1994; Marsick and Watkins, 1990, 2001). Sometimes, formal learning can also be present in daily work, for example, on-the-job training courses. Formal learning is linked to explicit knowledge, i.e. the knowledge derived from lectures, courses, reading books, and so on (Eraut, 1994).

On the other hand, informal or non-formal learning takes place primarily in workplace settings, is linked with daily activities, is self-directed, and is also highly unstructured and experiential (Eraut, 1994, 2000; Marsick and Watkins, 1990, 2001). Informal and unplanned learning may also take place within the formal institutional context, for example between students, or students and staff. Informal learning is usually influenced by the cultural, social, political and historical context in which it takes place, as well as by the person providing this type of learning (Garrick, 1998).

Marsick and Watkins (1990, 2001) point out that informal learning is primarily linked to adult education because of its 'learner-centred focus' and its 'experiential' nature. Informal learning is mainly connected with implicit or tacit knowledge, which is viewed as a powerful process due to its association with doing rather than saying in professional practice (Eraut, 1994, 2000).

Polanyi (1976) was the first to distinguish between explicit and tacit (or implicit) knowledge and talk about the tacit dimension of human learning. He believed, human knowledge cannot be fully explicit because it has personal and tacit elements. Tacit knowledge is associated with the hidden curriculum of professional practice as opposed to the explicit knowledge of the overt curriculum concerning formal education or organisational statements (Coulehan and Williams, 2003; Hugman, 2005). The term *hidden curriculum* refers to values, attitudes and unwritten rules which are implicitly conveyed in an organisation and the social environment and which have been 'influential on the developing professional as they learn in the workplace' (Hafferty and Hafler, 2011:17). The hidden curriculum (or implicit curriculum) is seen as another way to teach values to students (Inlay, 2003).

For some scholars, the relationship between the hidden curriculum and the tacit learning of values and ethics is a crucial one. Based on their empirical studies and their own professional experiences in the field of medical education, for example, Coulehan and Williams (2003) conclude that the tacit learning of professional values in clinical practice may have negative effects on students' cognitive level as the clinical milieu tends to 'deconstruct and reduce individuals to a matrix of medical needs' as opposed to the explicit curriculum which valorises the whole person (ibid: 10).

In social work, Hugman (2005) argues that tacit learning and knowledge of social work values and ethics in professional practice is of particular importance because:

... tacit instruction is often more powerful than the explicit lesson because the tacit is embedded in the routines of 'real' practice, compared to the 'theory' of the overt curriculum. It is the lesson of following what is done and not what is said (p.164).

As mentioned earlier, the learning process can take different forms. In social work education in particular, learning is not only cognitive, but also experiential. Kolb (1984), the father of experiential learning theory, said learning is more meaningful

if it has been done through actual experience, because experience is the key to success in any endeavor. Kolb (1984) considered experiential learning as a process that links education, work and personal development. In practice education, experiential learning is interwoven with learning during practice placement.

Because learning always takes place in a social context, it is said to be a constructivist activity situated within the specific context of a learning environment and culture (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In recent years, there has been much discussion in social work education about situated learning in the practice placement, discussed in more detail in 3.5.2. Bandura (1978), a renowned social learning theoretician, developed the concept of reciprocal determinism to explain that learning as development stems from the interaction between a person and the environment; this means that the person, behaviour (activity) and environment interact in complex ways so that not only can the environment influence the person, but the person can also influence the environment.

From the above, it is clear that learning is essential to students' professional development. In particular, as mentioned, learning for/and development through the practice placement in a professional work environment is crucial for students to build a competent and ethical professional self under real-life conditions, as discussed in the section below.

3.3 The Value of Student Placements for Learning in Workplace Settings

Practice placement learning is an integral part of social work programmes around the world. Indeed, a glance at the history of social work education reveals that, since the foundation of the first schools of social work until today, practice placement learning has been at the heart of social work education (Doel and Shardlow, 2005; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011; Reamer, 2012). However, approaches to practice learning and the criteria used to evaluate students' learning and performance vary across schools and countries, as discussed in Chapter 1.2 regarding the SW Department of Athens.

Practice learning is a type of learning that students acquire during their placement in social service agencies. Shardlow and Doel (1996) describe practice learning as:

...the learning that occurs whilst a student is on placement in a social work agency. It should not be taken to imply that students do not learn about practice in class settings. It refers to the context of learning in the practice agency (p.5).

During practice education, students move from classroom learning to learning through practice, which marks their entrance into the social work profession and the demands of learning on the job. Practice learning provides a rich experience for students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the social work profession through active participation in it. Regehr *et al.* (2002:56) consider practice learning as a 'primary opportunity for students to integrate knowledge, values, and skills into their professional self concepts'. In a similar way, Parker (2007) with reference to Fortune *et al.* (2001) and Doel and Shardlow (2005), states that practice education (or practice learning) is the place where classroom learning 'confronts practice reality and is synthesised into professional social work' (p.764).

Throughout their practical experience, students are able to work with actual clients, interact with experienced social work staff and other professionals and learn to develop interpersonal skills through contact with clients, peers and role models (Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011). Noble (2001) points out that the process of 'knowing and doing' through practice learning helps students learn to make decisions in real situations. In other words, as students are increasingly involved in professional practice, they become initiated into the decision-making procedure in the workplace where - in most cases - the acquisition of this knowledge at a practical level is often more complicated than in theory.

The benefits of practice placement learning for students not only relate to their professional development, but also to their personal development. Practice learning in workplace settings can contribute to students' personal development in a number of ways; during the fieldwork experience, students come into direct contact or interact with different categories of individuals, groups and

professionals, as well as people with different personalities with whom they are likely to work later in their professional lives. Through this interplay, students have hands-on opportunities to discover new ideas or think about themselves and their own values, prejudices and attitudes towards others, while learning to manage emotions and feelings.

It can be argued that social work students can transform themselves from receivers to producers of knowledge, values and skills of the profession during their work placement to become effective in their professional roles.

3.4 Professional Values, Ethics and the Workplace as a Site for Learning

*Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember;
involve me and I'll understand.*

Chinese proverb

Traditionally, the practice placement has been the key to values and ethics learning in social work practice. Indeed, Reamer (2012:11) maintains that 'what students learn about ethics during their field placements is likely to be among the most important and compelling lessons gained during the course of their careers'.

In field practice, students have the opportunity to integrate social work values and ethics into their professional role, to use academic theory and research to inform practice, to learn how to manage ethical dilemmas and make ethical decisions, and to build ethical knowledge and skills (Noble, 2001; Regehr *et al.* 2002; Reamer, 2006, 2012; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011). Within this environment, students as novice social workers encounter a range of ethical issues and dilemmas which challenge their personal values, beliefs and attitudes, as well as their ethical reasoning skills.

Drawing on the business literature, Badaracco (1998) states that, the workplace as a practice setting is where professional values and ethics develop through defining

moments. Defining moments are situations where professional responsibilities conflict with personal values. For Badaracco, defining moments provide unique and valuable opportunities for learning and personal and professional development (ibid, 1998). In a similar vein, Eraut (1994) argues that learning in practice contributes to the acquisition of practical knowledge³⁰ or to what Ryle (1949/2008) has termed 'knowing how', and occurs in situations of 'hot action', where professionals must make decisions quickly and instinctively.

In the workplace, learning is inherent in everyday practice, and like any type of learning, has its own challenges depending on the context. Griffiths and Guile (1999), explored the practices of learning through work experience, and developed the term *dual agenda* to highlight the challenges faced by students during their learning in practice settings:

Learning in work-based contexts involves students having to come to terms with a dual agenda. They not only have to learn how to draw upon their formal learning and use it to interrogate workplace practices; they also have to learn how to participate within workplace activities and cultures (p.170).

3.4.1 Workplace/Practice Learning Environments: Enabling and Constraining

As noted earlier, workplaces as practice learning environments are highly valued. Yet not all workplace settings afford opportunities for appropriate learning experiences, nor can all practice experiences be seen as learning experiences (Jarvis, 1995). Some workplace settings, for example, can provide more fruitful hands-on experience than others and vice versa.

Fuller and Unwin (2004) examined learning in different professional settings and found that learning is best achieved in expansive rather than restrictive environments. Expansive learning environments provide opportunities for

³⁰ Eraut (1994:38) uses the term *practical knowledge* to describe the knowledge 'which is expressed only in the practice and can only be learned in the practice'.

learners to, for example, engage with multiple communities of practice; gain broad experience across the organisation; learn off and on-the-job and extend their work roles; and have recognised status as learners (Unwin and Fuller, 2003). In social work, Doel and Shardlow (2005) state that, 'learning flourishes in a creative and energetic climate' (ibid, xxi) and as such, expansive learning environments are seen as essential for students and professionals to be learners.

As mentioned, not all practice experiences are equally as important for students as learners. Some practice experiences can be regarded as more critical or significant than others for learning and development and can be either positive or negative. For instance, learning from mistakes, whether one's own or those of others (Eraut, 2007) and learning from emotions and feelings (Dirkx, 2001), though the latter learning requires a safe context where open exploration is encouraged rather than a more defensive culture. Learning from errors is particularly crucial for the development of negative knowledge³¹ and the improvement of expertise in workplace contexts (Oser and Spychiger, 2005 cited in Gartmeier *et al.*, 2008).

3.5 Students as Learners: Approaches to Learning in Practice Settings

During the last thirty years there have been heated debates among learning theorists about how individuals in general, and students as adult learners in particular, learn and develop through practice in the workplace. Central to these debates are issues concerning the processes of learning and knowledge transfer at the site.

In his historical review of workplace learning theories, Hager (2005) identified two broad categories of learning theories, each with its own epistemological assumptions about knowledge and knowing. The first includes approaches that see workplace learning as a product, while the second looks at learning as a participatory process in a community of practice. As Hager (2005) notes:

³¹ Negative knowledge is acquired through learning from mistakes and helps to avoid similar errors in similar situations in future (Oser and Spychiger, 2005).

Early accounts of workplace learning were strongly influenced by the learning as product view. Here the focus of learning was on learners acquiring novel attributes. More recent accounts are very much in line with the learning as process view (p.829).

Hager's description of the two paradigms of learning at work is very similar to Sfard's (1998) view of learning as a metaphorical concept - the learning as acquisition metaphor and the learning as participation metaphor - which has largely influenced the educational thought of western societies in recent years (cited in Hager, 2005).

According to Sfard's distinction, learning as acquisition is in line with individual approaches to workplace learning, while learning as participation is consistent with socio-cultural or social/situational approaches. This implies that some views focus on workplace learning from an individual perspective and others emphasize the social, organisational and cultural dimensions of such learning.

In the following quotation, Paavola *et al.* (2004) summarise the differences between the acquisition metaphor approaches and those of the participation metaphor.

Approaches belonging to the acquisition metaphor typically emphasize individuals, processes happening in individuals' minds, conceptual knowledge, and clear-cut logical rules. To these features can be added innovativeness, such as in models of inquiry where creative efforts of searching through conceptual spaces are emphasized... Approaches belonging to the participation metaphor typically emphasize communities, social practices, activities, and the situated nature of human cognition and knowledge. This emphasis can also include progressive development of activities (p. 569).

There follows a general description of the two most prevalent categories of adult learning theories in professional practice: individual and socio-cultural/situated.

3.5.1 Individual Approaches-Adult Learning Theory

Individual approaches to learning focus on how students as individual adults learn. As a rule, individual learning approaches vary from student to student depending on different characteristics. In her review of the empirical literature on practice education, Bogo (2006) notes that the few studies attempting to identify social work students' characteristics that influence their learning path have shown that demographic factors, degree of anxiety about the practicum, learning style, and psychiatric disability influence individual learning in practice settings.

Despite individual differences in learning, students, as adult learners, have some common characteristics. Knowles, the father of andragogy³² theory, identified six assumptions about adult learning (Knowles, 1990; Knowles *et al.*, 2005) which, according to Bogo (2010) and Gitterman (2004), are particularly relevant to social work students as adult learners in practice settings, and are therefore important for understanding how they approach their field practice.

First, the learner's 'need to know' requires them to be engaged in the learning process in order to satisfy it. Second, the learner's self-concept relates to the autonomy and self-directedness of the student as an adult learner. Social work students, as self-directed learners, need to be proactive in their learning and capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Third, the role of the learner's experiences: students as adult learners bring life experiences and knowledge to their learning process. Interestingly, the practice education literature shows that social work students with previous life or work experience may be less anxious, learn faster and perform more competently in practice education than those without (Bogo, 2010). Fourth, readiness to learn: adults are ready to learn when they need to perform certain tasks and roles. Gitterman (2004:101) states that 'social work students are ready to learn because of their aspirations for professional careers as well as the immediate demands of field work'. Fifth,

³² The term 'andragogy', stems from the Greek word *aner* (with the stem *andr-*), which means "man, not boy" or adult. According to Knowles (1990), andragogy is 'the art and science to help adults learn' as opposed to pedagogy which is 'the art and science of teaching children' (pp. 42-43).

orientation to learning: adults are task-centred (or problem-centred) in their orientation to learning. In the practice education, for example, the literature suggests social work students as adult learners learn more when instruction is centered on relevant real-world tasks or problems (Shardlow and Doel, 1996; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011). Finally, motivation to learn: students as adults want to learn and are internally motivated to do so. Student motivation to learn can, however, be blocked or limited by educational programmes that do not take into account adult learning assumptions (Knowles *et al.*, 2005) or if they have been poorly prepared by previous educational experiences.

In practice education, the literature clearly shows that students, as individual adult learners, are generally motivated and ready to learn when they are given meaningful opportunities to practice their skills, values and ethics and participate and contribute to the process of learning, as described in the next section (Shardlow and Doel, 1996; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011).

Key criticisms

Adult learning theory developed by Knowles, has been criticised for focusing on the individual learning process without taking into account the social context and its role in learning. Learning is seen as an individual process which takes place independent of a person's social, cultural or organisational environment (Merriam, 2004; Hager, 2005). Limited research has also been conducted to evaluate its basic theoretical assumptions, resulting in a debate over whether adult learning theory as developed by Knowles is a theory of adult learning or just a set of principles that guide practice (Merriam, 2004). Despite the criticisms, Knowles's theory and the six assumptions of adult learning described, remain, after over three decades, a fundamental approach in the field of adult education (Merriam, 2004; Bogo, 2010).

3.5.2 Socio-cultural/Situated Approaches

Given that in practice education, student readiness to learn is closely associated with the learning context, socio-cultural/situated approaches to learning are

important for understanding how students learn and develop their professional values and ethics(with others) through practice settings.

As a counterpart to individual learning approaches, socio-cultural/situated (or social/situational) learning approaches go beyond the individual by emphasising the individual in the social context. Socio-cultural/situated approaches argue strongly for the importance of the social, relational and situational aspects of learning.

Historically, socio-cultural/situated approaches are strongly influenced by the American philosopher and educator, Dewey, and the Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, who contributed to the dualist dichotomy of the individual and society (Hager, 2005). Both learning theorists broke new ground in the understanding of the social aspects of learning since both argued that learning in an actual context is a form of social interaction and collaboration.

Today, the ideas of Dewey and Vygotsky have been extended further by more recent ideas about learning in practice, such as the notions of situated learning and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999). These ideas are popular in the Anglophone social work literature and constitute an overarching framework to better understand how the learning and development process occurs in the practice context.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991:31), whose research was based on observing very diverse workplace communities, learning involves the whole person (not just the mind) where through participation, 'agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other'. In this view, social work students learn from, through and with their interactions with others - their supervisors or practice instructors, other students, work groups, other professionals, and more advanced or experienced others. Jarvis (1999) calls this type of learning 'learning from secondary experience'. Further, students learn through their engagement in authentic activities within the workplace, which operates as a community of practice. For

Wenger (1999), meaningful situated experiences enable students to fully identify with their profession.

Lave and Wenger (1991:98) see a 'community of practice as a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice'. Wenger (1999:4) points out that participation in a community of practice 'shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do'. This learning is described as learning from primary experience (Jarvis, 1999) and according to Eraut and Hirsh (2007), workplaces tend to emphasise this type of learning. In addition, Lave and Wenger suggest that stable and well-bounded communities of practice enable newcomers to move from the novice stage to the expert stage through full participation within the community of professionals (3.6 gives more details of moving from novice to expert).

The key aspect of situated learning is the concept of the apprentice observing the community of practice. This means that students learn by observing from the boundary or *legitimate peripheral participation*, which enables students to increasingly put together the culture of the community and what it means to be a member: '...To be able to participate in a legitimately peripheral way entails that newcomers have broad access to arenas of mature practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991:110). From this perspective, students learn in the workplace through observing the conduct of their practice instructors, peers or other people significant to them. Students also learn by observing organisational practices and the cultural norms within the organisation.

For Lave and Wenger (1991), the observation of others' behaviours, values and attitudes within the workplace is very important because it is likely to influence the learners' values and actions for life. Therefore, good or poor work practices impact on students' ethical behaviour and practice accordingly. Within education, however, as social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) has shown and a number of empirical studies have confirmed, students, as novice adult learners, learn not only

by observation, but also by instruction. Vygotsky (1978) developed the concept of the *zone of proximal development* to explain how individuals learn through social interaction and through the assistance of more experienced others. In a similar way, Rogoff (1990) uses the term *guided participation* to show that individuals learn through more competent others and through guided participation with others in culturally valued activities.

Key criticisms

Lave and Wenger's overall view of learning has been criticised by a number of authors. Some scholars cast doubt on whether learning itself is the result of a participatory process in a community of experts (Hay, 1993; Hager, 2005). More specifically, Hay (1993) points out that newcomers' entrance into a workplace community is not an automatic process because there may be situations where the community of practice is feeble or exhibits power relationships that seriously obstruct access and participation. In a similar vein, Guile and Griffiths (2001), with reference to Gheredi and colleagues, argue that full access and engagement in a community of practice requires a host organisation able to provide learning opportunities for students to observe, discuss, practice, and exchange different approaches with members of the workplace community.

Not all organisations are stable and well defined environments; Engeström (1999, 2001) has demonstrated that learning is also likely to occur through the contradictions and tensions present within the workplace as an active system. Hager (2005) argues that the participation process does not necessarily lead to learning as change. For Hager, learning is the driving force for change and as such cannot only be considered in relation to participation as a process. Hager gives an example from ancient Sparta, where all the citizens were obliged to participate in joint events within a rigid unchanging system. Hager adds a third dimension to the classical dichotomy of learning as acquisition or participation - that of learning as construction or/and re-construction, which includes the 'construction of the

learning, of the self, and of the environment (world) which includes the self' (ibid: 842).

3.6 Students and Ethical Development in Practice Settings

So far, it has been argued that knowledge and skills acquisition is a developmental process that normally begins from the early stages of students' entrance into their educational programmes and continues throughout their placement with social services agencies. In this light, it has been said that novice students and senior/experienced students have different learning abilities and needs and therefore require different support. This holds true for the ethical development of students in practice settings as well.

During their placement, students, like professionals, deal with ethical issues and dilemmas and respond to ethical matters in qualitatively different ways, depending on their skill acquisition stage. Students typically pass through five distinct stages of ethical skill acquisition, as: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert skill users (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2004). Each stage has specific characteristics associated with the level of ethical skill acquisition, performance and development. Although these stages are described as separate, they are likely to overlap in practice.

The five stages of ethical skill acquisition are known as the Dreyfus model, which has been widely used in health and social care including social work. Similar to the work by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004), Benner (2004), who extensively applied the Dreyfus model to nursing education and practice, describes the five stages of skill acquisition as follows:

- *Novice:* Beginners have had no experience of the situations in which they are expected to perform. Novices are taught rules to help them perform. The rules are context-free and independent of specific cases; hence the rules tend to be applied universally. The rule-governed behaviour typical of the novice is extremely limited and inflexible.

- *Advanced Beginner:* Advanced beginners are those who can demonstrate marginally acceptable performance, those who have coped with enough real situations to note, or to have pointed out to them by a mentor, the recurring meaningful situational components. Principles to guide actions begin to be formulated. The principles are based on experience.
- *Competent:* Able to identify key concepts, now see actions at least partly in terms of longer-term goals; conscious deliberate planning, standardised and routinised procedures.
- *Proficient:* The proficient performer sees situations holistically rather than in terms of aspects, sees what is most important in a situation, perceives deviations from the normal pattern, decision-making is less laboured, s/he uses maxims for guidance whose meaning varies according to the situation.
- *Expert:* The expert performer no longer relies on an analytic principle (rule, guideline, or maxim) to connect her or his understanding of the situation to an appropriate action. The expert is able to take up theories and ends of practice in multiple ways, often creating new possibilities in a situation. (Source: adapted from Benner, 2004:191-197)

Using the Dreyfus model, Benner's (2004) research demonstrated that novice and expert nursing students have different learning and skill acquisition during clinical practice and therefore need different approaches to instruction. Like Dreyfus, Benner's work on skill acquisition is also relevant to the ethical development of students. So, it can be said that novice social work students who have basic theoretical ethics knowledge, but little or no practical experience must be given the rules and explicit details to guide their behaviour in a given ethics situation encountered during the practice placement. Given that novice students do not normally have practical experience of social work, they may rigidly adhere to their professional values and ethical standards. Bogo (2010:82) states that, because novice social work students on placements usually have 'beginner's anxiety', they become more focused on their performance than on their clients' needs and need support and guidance from the practice instructors to complete their tasks.

Consistent with Benner's approach (2004), once students have more experience in managing ethical problems or dilemmas due to longer practice, they should be better able to look at things from different angles, organise their work and make decisions that are ethically based. Therefore, expert social work students are able to understand and explain complex situations in daily practice and make ethical decisions using relevant theories and frameworks. Also, social work students as expert learners are able to actively engage with ethics matters in the workplace during their placement, to take responsibility for their own ethics learning and themselves contribute to upholding ethics in practice settings (as shown in Chapter 7.2, the discussion of findings of this study). Expert social work students usually need little guidance and direction to accomplish the goals of their practice education (Bogo, 2010).

In the light of the above discussion, student ethical development is an important part of the learning process during the placement. In essence, ethical development is seen as a positive procedure that contributes to the transition of students from ethical novices to ethical experts.

3.7 Ethically and Critically Reflective Practice

Reflection³³ is a core component of ethical development. In practice education, reflection is fundamental because it helps students to learn and understand thoroughly the causes and possible effects of their own or other's actions, and to make the connections between taught theory and practice experience. In particular, reflection on work practice is a meta-cognitive process that enables students to evaluate their thoughts, feelings and actions, as well as to look at

³³ Schön (1983, 1987) distinguishes between in-action reflection during the event and on-action reflection after the event. Reflection whether in and on-action can happen either individually or collectively and, according to Schön, is an on-going process of the framing and reframing of the thinking, feelings and actions during practice. The notions of reflection in and on-action as developed by Schön add a new dimension to learning in practice contexts from the learner's perspective.

whether or not their behaviour was based on ethical assumptions (Green, 2002; Hugman, 2005).

Green (2002:5) argued that students' ability to reflect on their own values and beliefs can serve as a 'vehicle through which values or beliefs can be challenged or changed, and consequently a change in practice may ensue'. As discussed in Chapter 4.8.1, critical incidents are valuable examples of retrospective reflection on the ethics learning process during work placement.

Fook (2002, 2004) illuminated another aspect of reflection known as *critical reflection*. According to Fook, the workplace as a social context has its own power and dynamic relations which often affect the professional's ability to act effectively (see 3.10). Therefore, like professionals, students must be able to critically analyse the power relations which have developed within the organisation as a learning system. Critical reflection is a valuable process 'in mitigating the myriad contexts in which values and ethics collide in our moment to moment practice' (Gharabaghi, 2008:208). Critical reflection as defined by Gardner (2009:188) 'is a process that enables workers to identify underlying assumptions and values and either affirm or change them to reflect what they see as core values in their practice'.

On the other hand, Hugman (2005) uses the term *ethical reflection* to indicate that all reflection must be guided by ethical reasoning. Such reflection emphasises the ethical dimension of human thinking and acting by arguing that people need not only to think ethically, but also to act ethically. For Hugman, ethical reflection requires an on-going dialogue between individuals and their surroundings around their values and the potential ethical dilemmas and conflicts that arise. Ethical reflection is essential for developing and maintaining students' ethical sensitivity and awareness. As students learn to recognise the processes of learning, especially those related to professional values and ethics, they are able to reflect critically and ethically upon their own or others experiences, build upon them and transfer them to other situations.

Reflection is a complex 'inner journey' which aims at discovering, understanding and thereby changing the personal and professional self for the better. However, effective reflection needs to be guided by a mind open to ethical and critical questioning at all stages of an activity. This idea is particularly important for social work students because they need not only to critically analyse the power relations developed in practice, but must also be able to place their critical thinking on an ethical basis, as the social work profession requires.

3.8 Supervision and/for Ethical Practice

Supervision has long been recognised as a key component of social work education and practice (Kadushin, 1992). Supervision provides supervisees with the opportunity to create and integrate an ethical and professional identity. Student learning under the direction of practice instructors as supervisor/s is essential for their professional identity formation as social workers.

The social work literature indicates that supervisors are resource persons for their students; they use their knowledge to assist students to internalise sets of principles, attitudes and values that will partly govern their future professional behaviour (Kadushin, 1992; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011; Reamer, 2012). Practice instructors in particular, as the direct supervisors of students, play a key role in helping them develop their ethics skills and knowledge and build ethical courage through guiding their practice in the workplace. Practice instructors are also responsible for the teaching of organisational ethics and belief systems to students (see 3.9), while their primary responsibility is to seek out ethics learning opportunities for students and help them to identify and address challenging ethical issues and dilemmas during their placement (Reamer, 2012).

Practice instructors as supervisors 'have administrative accountability and responsibility in the agency to ensure that administrative and practice standards are met' (Bogo, 2010:15). Typically, practice instructors who supervise students take primary responsibility for their performance in the practicum and therefore

have liability for their actions; indeed, the literature on practice education uses the legal term *respondeat superior* - let the master respond - to highlight the supervisor's liability for any student mistakes or omissions during their practicum (Reamer, 2006; Barsky, 2010).

From this, it is clear that practice instructors, as supervisors, have multiple and complex roles: they act as teachers, advisers, supporters, facilitators, mentors, assessors and role models for students (Shardlow and Doel, 1996; Barretti, 2007; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011). All the various roles that practice instructors/supervisors have are equally important to the ethics education of students in practice settings. Some are especially significant, like the instructor/supervisor as role model and assessor of students.

3.8.1 Practice Instructor/Supervisor as Role Model

We learn by practice and the best practice is to follow a model of the virtuous person

Aristotle

In practice placement settings, modelling (or observational) learning is a powerful means of transmitting attitudes, values, and behaviour, whether positive or negative in nature.

Practice instructors/supervisors are considered important role models for their students, who are eager for guidance and advice, and can direct or indirectly affect their learning and decisions (Barretti, 2007, 2009; Bogo, 2010). Specifically, having a role model is seen as essential for students to learn ethical behaviour grounded in the application of the values and ethical standards of the social work profession (Barretti, 2007). Despite the importance of practice instructors/supervisors as ethical role models, the social work literature on this topic is scarce. Much of the information provided here thus derives from the literature regarding the value of role models in social work education in general.

Barretti (2007) reviewed a range of studies on teachers and practice instructors as student role models and found that role modelling - leading by example - is crucial to students' socialisation within the social work profession and acquiring professional values and ethics. Barretti (2009) also reviewed the literature on the desirable qualities of a practice instructor role model and concluded that good role models combine personal, professional and supervisory characteristics. She observed that in most studies, social work students prefer practice instructors who are:

available, respectful, responsive, supportive, fair, objective, and who are knowledgeable and able to directly communicate their knowledge, encourage autonomy, observation and feedback, and facilitate professional development (Barretti, 2009:50-51).

But, some studies also indicate that practice instructors/supervisors role models are not always positive; practice instructors/supervisors can also be negative role models through displaying inappropriate behaviour. According to a US study concerning student-field instructor problems in the practicum, negative role model behaviours can be variously manifested, for instance, through an authoritarian supervisory style, or unprofessional behaviour with moderate ethical and boundary violations, and extreme violations including physical aggression, sexual harassment, and racial bias (Giddings *et al.*, 2003).

Barretti (2007) and Bogo (2010) draw attention to the destructive power of negative role modelling in practice education which may have an adverse impact on student learning and performance (see also 3.10). In particular, Barretti (2007) with reference to Jacobs (1991) points out that, negative role models can make students more likely to replicate the problematic supervisory behaviour in their own work with clients.

Based on the values of social work, Bogo (2010:104) describes the ideal type of instructor-student relationship as collaborative, non-hierarchical, allowing free expression of opinion and acceptance of difference. In summary, this literature

review stresses the importance of supervision for ethical social work practice as this sort of relationship:

...has a tremendous impact on the development of the supervisee and the effectiveness of supervision. In simple terms, a positive relationship is likely to result in a productive learning experience, and a poor relationship is likely to result in a negative and less productive experience (Caspi and Reid, 2002: 96).

3.8.2 Practice Instructor/Supervisor as Assessor

Because of their position, practice instructors/supervisors have the legitimate power to assess students' learning and progress. In some social work schools, for example, practice instructors/supervisors are both responsible for instructing and assessing the student learning associated with their placement. In the SW Department of Athens, as discussed in Chapter 1.2, practice instructors are both supervisors and assessors of students learning and performance during their final practice placement, whereas practice instructors and supervisors in the first two practice placements (5th and 6th semesters of studies) are usually different.

According to Bogo (2010), the dual role of the practice instructor as supervisor/assessor may sometimes lead to instructors abusing their power, with several effects on students. As a recent social work Canadian study showed, misuse of power by the practice instructor as assessor causes stress to students in practice learning (Litvack *et al.*, 2010). Given that practice instructors can not only assess student learning and performance but also provide references for future employment they must be careful about the use of their authority and power (Litvack *et al.*, 2010; Bogo, 2010; Doel *et al.*, 2011).

Lastly, the social work literature has recently focused on the challenges of assessing ethics learning in practice using competency approaches. As Bogo (2010) points out, competency models of learning and assessment have been criticised for not dealing properly with social work values and ethics. Given that competence focuses on performance where ethics may not be 'visible' or observable, Bogo

(2010) strongly emphasises the 'importance of building ethics into competency models, and the sets of values which enable professionals to make ethical decisions' (p.73).

3.9 Ethics and Organisations

As discussed in Chapter 2.4.2, social work, like other applied social disciplines, does not exist in a vacuum; students and social workers associate with other students or professionals through inter-professional work within organisations established for providing specific services to people in need. Social service organisations, within which students learn to become professionals and where social workers are already employed, are social entities each with their own set of implicit and explicit values and rules.

Until recently, however, the issue of ethics in organisations was mostly associated with the ethical behaviour of the individuals within it. This view echoes the individualist approach to ethical responsibility in organisations, according to which the individual is ultimately responsible for his/her behaviour (Brown, 1989). But, it is too simplistic to consider that ethical people act ethically in all situations. As Kohlberg (1981) noted, behaviour can be affected by the ethical climate people work in, and hence, 'employees with sound ethical intentions still need support or reinforcement in the workplace' (cited in Menzel, 2007:21).

Given the above, over recent years, a growing body of organisational literature has looked at the ethical behaviour of organisations as a prerequisite for providing good quality services to clients. This view relates to the collectivist approach to ethics in organisations as defined by Brown (1989), according to which, ethics are seen to reside within a community of individuals; although individuals may act inappropriately, they do so in the context of a larger social structure that influences and mediates their behaviour. Interestingly, a recent social work study in the UK reaches similar conclusions. Meleyal (2011) studied the application of the social work code of conduct in the workplace and found that

conduct in the workplace was strongly influenced by workplace culture in relation to the management of conduct.

The collectivist approach to ethics in organisations is congruent with the ideal of the workplace as a moral community within which ‘there is no gap between what participants know is the right thing to do and what they actually do’ (Ray, 2006:441).

3.9.1 Organisational Ethics

Organisational ethics or ethics in organisations is defined as ‘the intentional use of values to guide the decisions of a system’ (Potter, 1996 cited in Ray, 2006:442). Although the term *organisational ethics* initially referred to the health care sector, it is now applied to many fields, including social care (Suter, 2006). Organisational ethics mirrors the ethical climate in any given organisational setting, as well as showing the willingness of the organisation to encourage and support ethical practices. According to Ulrich *et al.* (2007:3), ‘an ethical climate represents those shared perceptions of organizational practices related to ethical decision-making and reflection and includes issues of power, trust and human interactions within an organization’.

Drawing mainly on the business and organisational literature (e.g. Brown, 1989; Brown *et al.*, 2005; Trevino and Brown, 2004, 2005; Trevino *et al.*, 2006; DuBrin, 2008) several factors describe the ethical climate of an organisation. According to DuBrin (2008) three types of factors affect the ethical behaviour of an organisation – individual, organisational and issue-related factors. The literature suggests there are at least six core organisational factors: formal mechanisms for monitoring ethics; written organisational codes of conduct; communicating about the topic; leadership by example and ethical role models; confrontation about ethical deviation; and training programmes (DuBrin, 2008:106). Some of the views relevant to codes of ethics, as well as ethics education and training in general have already been discussed in Chapters 2.4 and 2.7.

Of the above, appropriate leadership seems to be the major requirement for creating and developing an ethical climate within organisational settings (Bush, 1998; Brown *et al.*, 2005; Trevino and Brown, 2004, 2005; Trevino *et al.*, 2006; DuBrin, 2008). Leaders, particularly managers who interact directly with employees at all organisational levels, are responsible for promoting and maintaining a strong culture of ethics. Referring to the social care sector, Hardina *et al.* (2007) claim managers should act as ethical leaders because:

the social service manager serves as a role model for staff members and clients, illustrating how values should be reflected in practice and how good working partnerships can be established with all organizational constituents, including clients (p. 398).

Similarly, Bush (1998:43) argues that 'leaders have the main responsibility for generating and sustaining culture and communicating core values and beliefs both within the organization and to external stakeholders'. In both the for - profit and non-profit management literature, leadership, especially ethical leadership, is crucial to any organisational environment. Ethical leadership is defined as:

the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making (Brown *et al.*, 2005:120).

Ethical leadership behaviour has an important influence on employees' performance and therefore, is a prerequisite for effective social service organisations. DuBrin (2008) identifies the following seven behavioural characteristics that managers must have in order to be perceived as ethical leaders within their organisations:

- moral conduct and adherence to ethical standards;
- moral purpose (moral vision and commitment to achieving moral ends);
- Moral accomplishment (achieving desirable moral outcomes);
- Moral duty/responsibility and obligations;

- Moral knowing (knowing that/known how);
- Moral cooperation and the just exercise of power;
- Moral role modelling (leading by example).

As noted in Chapter 2.2, Reamer (2006) described the current social work era as the '*ethical standards and risk management period*'. In fact, as health and social care becomes increasingly complex, and 'work in human services is increasingly viewed as a risky business' (McAuliffe, 2005:357), organisations need to ensure high ethical standards of professional practice to meet their clients' needs. For this reason, ethics audits tools are now considered essential for creating and maintaining an ethical workplace environment.

According to Reamer (2000, 2006) and McAuliffe (2005), social work ethics audits can play a key role in preventing ethical misconduct and ensuring accountability and transparency in social service organisations. In particular, McAuliffe (2005) points out that the use of an ethics audit tool seems to 'be a positive contribution to both the social work profession and to organisations that are genuinely concerned with ensuring better than acceptable standards of accountability, equity and care' (ibid: 358).

The above suggests that when a social service organisation develops and promotes ethical sensitivity and awareness within its environment, from both top to bottom and bottom up, as well as horizontally between its members, unacceptable situations or unethical behaviour are reduced. Furthermore, regardless of how an organisation conveys its ethical climate and culture to its members, - for example, whether explicitly/written or implicitly/unwritten or both - all workers and students placed for practice expect behaviour to be appropriate to the workplace.

Doel and Shardlow (2005: xvi) state that 'the organizations in which social work is practised have a significant impact on the shape of that practice' and therefore, organisational ethics seems to be of paramount importance for good professional practice.

3.10 Power and Ethical Practice in Social Service Organisations

As discussed in Chapter 2 and reinforced in Chapter 3, ethical practice is situated in the relationship between people and people and their environment. But as noted, all human relationships, including professional relationships, typically involve a power differential.

Power differentials are inherent in any professional relationship (e.g. client-social worker, instructor/supervisor-student, between colleagues) including those between different organisations or within the same organisation. Power differentials have always been critical to social service organisations. Therefore, understanding power and power relations in such places is essential for understanding the ethical challenges to creating and maintaining professional environments for social workers and students and delivering good quality services to clients.

Smith (2008:13) states that 'power is a complex and challenging concept' and as such, has no fixed definition. However, power is often defined as 'the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do' (Pfeffer, 1992: 30). In its broader meaning, therefore, power is viewed as being the ability to influence and control.

Power in social service organisations can be either formal (positional/organisational power) or informal (personal power) and positive or negative (Kadushin and Harkness, 2002; Lawler and Bilson, 2010; Nelson *et al.*, 2011; Lunenburg, 2012). Formal power is derived from an individual's position in the organisation, while informal power emerges from relationships with others. Similarly, the positive aspect of power refers to the empowerment of self and others to achieve purposeful goals, while the negative aspect of power has to do with domination and control over others. For social work, as Smith (2008:56)

argues, 'the capacity to negotiate positive power relationships depends on a critical and reflective approach to pre-existing concepts of expertise and authority'.

Power in social service organisations can take different forms. Most frequently cited in social work management textbooks is the five-fold typology of power developed by French and Raven (1968). Lawler and Bilson (2010) discuss French and Raven's five forms of power as follows: *legitimate power* (stems from the person's position in the organisation and the authority granted to it), *coercive power* (stems from the authority to punish or to recommend punishment), *reward power* (the opposite of coercive power; results from the authority to reward others), *referent power* (it is the ability to attract others and build loyalty), and *expert power* (is derived from possessing knowledge or expertise in a particular area).

Legitimate, reward, and coercive are all forms of formal power dependent upon the position held within an organisation (Nelson *et al.*, 2011). By contrast, expert power and referent power depend on an individual's character and personal qualities (Nelson *et al.*, 2011). Typically, professionals exercise both legitimate, reward, and coercive power when they are in a position of authority (e.g. practice instructor/supervisor, or manager in an organisation), though coercive power is generally ineffectual in the workplace (Lunenburg, 2012).

In addition, professionals also exercise personal power (expert and referent) when interacting with other people. In social work supervision, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) argue that expert power and referent power 'give the supervisory relationship a leadership orientation' and as a result, 'the authority of the supervisor is freely accepted rather than felt to be imposed' (p. 91). Referent power in particular, is seen as the archetypal role model power because it has the ability to attract others; this form of power is particularly related to practice instructors/supervisors, who serve as role models to students, as noted in 3.8. Lunenburg (2012:1) states that in organisations, the personal sources of power

'are more strongly related to employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance than are the organizational power sources'.

As discussed above, different internal sources of power may influence an organisation. But, given that organisations, as social entities, are linked to external environments, they are also influenced by external sources of power such as political and economic forces. Public social service organisations are typical examples of institutions primary dependent on government policy and funding and as a result, they usually lack economic and political autonomy.

In Greece, public social service organisations (i.e. state and municipal social services) are government dependent, so policy is aligned to the political party in power. As a result, politicians have a leading role in the formation of the social welfare system, as well as the kind of relationships they have with the social service users (as their potential voters) at local and national level. Such involvement is likely to be a potential source of discrimination and unequal distribution of social services.

While power is neither good nor bad per se, and power structures are inevitable in social service organisations, it is even more important for professionals and students to build power relationships that create and promote ethical practices both within and between organisations to ensure good quality services to clients.

3.11 Conclusion

Chapter 3 showed how practice settings (or workplaces) are important for students as they provide fruitful opportunities for ethics learning and development. Practice settings are where the theory aims to meet practice for students during their placement, where the ethical standards of the profession should be seen and experienced in action. As discussed, however, learning to become a skilful, ethical social worker is a dynamic and complex process affected by various factors. Wilson *et al.* (2008) pointed out that learning in the workplace

during the social work placement is a multi-faceted process that 'involves a complex interaction between students, practice teachers, tutors, educational institutions and agencies, and quality is viewable from a number of different perspectives' (p. 36).

Typically, students as adult learners learn individually or collectively or from a combination of both approaches. In this regard, individual adult learning theories and socio-cultural/situated theoretical approaches provide a useful starting-point for understanding ethics learning and development in practice.

From the literature review, it also became apparent that, students in practice may deal with ethical issues and respond to ethical matters in qualitatively different ways, depending on their skill acquisition stage. The models of ethics skills acquisition (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2004; Benner, 2004) map the possible transitions of students from ethical novice to ethical expert, though stages are likely to overlap in practice. In addition, ethical critical reflection and supervision and support for students have also been identified as key elements for developing ethical practices in the workplace. In relation to supervision, practice instructors as supervisors are identified as key persons in the professional and ethical development of students.

Furthermore, the literature review highlighted the importance of organisational ethics as part of the learning environment for students along with the role of managers as ethical leaders in promoting good quality services to clients. Managers are key figures in upholding the ethical rules and principles and maintaining an ethical work and learning climate within an organisation.

Finally, the literature review illustrated how ethical practice is primarily determined by the balance of power between the parties to a relationship. Thus, the balance of power between and within social service organisations is fundamental to the application, development and ultimate maintenance of ethical practices in professional settings.

PART THREE

The Research Process

4. Research Design, Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design, methodology and methods used in the study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the type of research design and the reasons for choosing it, and then describes the aims and objectives in conducting the study. The central research question is also outlined along with the four sub-questions of the study. Further, the chapter describes the philosophical paradigm of constructivism that underpins this study and discusses the use of qualitative methodology along with the criteria used for achieving the rigour and trustworthiness of the study.

The chapter also covers the ethical considerations used to guide the research process, sample selection procedures, and data collection and analysis methods. Specifically, it discusses issues related to the selection and the type of population sampled, as well as the recruitment process. It then focuses on the critical incident technique (CIT) as the primary research tool and describes how it was used for data collection. Finally, it presents the various quantitative and qualitative techniques applied to analyse the data and describes in detail the analysis procedure.

A glossary of terms was developed in order to familiarize the reader with the terms used for the analysis of data. This glossary is found in Appendix F.

4.2 Research Design

The research design is the researcher's 'overall plan for obtaining answers to the questions being studied and for handling some of the difficulties encountered during the research process' (Polit and Beck, 2008: 66). Babbie (2011) identifies

three types of research design in social research: *exploratory*, *descriptive* and *explanatory*.

Exploratory research is usually conducted when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of study itself is relatively new (Babbie, 2011:95). *Exploratory research* involves qualitative studies. On the other hand, *descriptive research* aims to facilitate the description of situations and events (ibid, 2011:96). Usually, the exploratory and descriptive research approaches have much in common, and as a result, they often blur together in practice (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003:22). *Descriptive research* can be either quantitative or qualitative. Finally, *explanatory research* is interested in developing and evaluating causal theories (Babbie, 2011:97). *Explanatory research* is hypothesis testing and involves quantitative studies.

According to the above criteria, this study adopted an *exploratory qualitative research design* with descriptive elements. This research design was chosen because, as mentioned in Chapter 2.5, the researcher seeks to explore and describe a topic that is under-researched in the Greek social work literature, as well as being complex in nature and difficult to study.

4.3 Research Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The aim of this study was to build understanding of the processes through which students develop their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics in their professional practice placement. As a lecturer and supervisor, the researcher has always encouraged students to share and discuss ideas and questions about values and ethics in social work. These discussions have provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe that students often describe their experiences of ethics and values using critical incidents that occurred within the placement. As a result, critical incidents were chosen as the research tool through which students were asked to examine the development of values and ethics in placement.

The overarching objectives are as follows:

- To contribute to understanding the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice placement;
- To identify critical incidents related to the development of social work values and ethics during students' professional practice placement;
- To identify factors that, from the students' point of view, might influence the implementation and upholding of social work values and ethics in practice.

Finally, the desired outcomes from the study were:

- To contribute to knowledge about the development of social work values and ethics in placement;
- To create a series of critical incident case studies for use in ethics and values teaching and learning;
- To formulate recommendations for the academic teachers and supervisors of the Department of Social Work in Athens to improve the teaching and learning of practices concerning social work values and ethics based on the research findings.

4.4 Research Question and Sub-Questions

Given the type of study design and its objectives, the researcher wanted to ask questions that would give information for a better understanding of the subject. According to Creswell (2003), these questions can take two forms: a central question and associated sub-questions: 'the central question is a statement of the question being examined in the study in its most general form' while 'sub-questions follow the central question, narrow the focus of the study, but leave open the questioning' (pp.105-106). Creswell (2003) recommends one or two central questions and no more than five to seven sub-questions. Central questions that

start with the words 'what' or 'how' are appropriate for exploratory qualitative research design (ibid: 2003).

Given the above considerations, this study was guided by one central question and related sub-questions. The central research question and the sub-questions were formulated as follows:

What can critical incident analysis tell us about how social work students perceive the development of their professional values and ethics whilst in the workplace?

- *What are the characteristics and nature of the critical incidents experienced by the students?*

This sub-question aimed to explore the structure and content of critical incidents as reported by students in order to understand their importance and impact on the development of the students' social work values and ethics in professional practice.

- *What professional social work values are highlighted by these critical incidents?*

This sub-question explored the type of social work values evolving from the critical incidents. Given that values play a primary role in this study, it is important to find out what professional values are mostly violated/neglected or defended according to the Hellenic code of deontology for social workers.

- *What factors identified during the critical incidents enhance or inhibit the development of social work values and ethics in the workplace?*

This sub-question aimed to find out the factors affecting the development of professional values and ethics in the workplace. Identifying the factors that influence the development process helped to enhance the researcher's understanding of the research topic.

- *Do critical incidents reveal differences between what is taught in the classroom and what is learned in practice regarding social work values and ethics?*

This sub-question sought to identify what, if any, differences exist between the classroom and placement regarding teaching and learning of social work values and ethics to give a deeper understanding of how students learn about values and ethics and the implications for classroom learning.

Both the central and sub-questions guiding the process of this study are compatible with the general characteristics of qualitative research questions as suggested by Creswell (2003, 2007), and Agee (2009). That is, the research questions are open-ended, non directional, exploratory, descriptive, and evolving. In addition, all the above questions, as Agee (2009) helpfully puts it, have been used as 'navigational tools that can help a researcher map possible directions but also to inquire about the unexpected' (p.432).

4.5 Research Methodology

4.5.1 Research Paradigm

Mertens (2005:7) states that a 'paradigm is a way of looking at the world [and] is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action'. Researchers as individuals have different philosophical approaches, which influence the decisions they make about how to conduct their research and determine their role in the process of inquiry. As a result, there is no one way to approach social reality and understand social phenomena, and thus, there is no a single research paradigm (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Crotty, 2003).

Positivism and constructivism³⁴ are the two dominant paradigms in social research today. Positivism assumes that knowledge is objective and quantifiable, while constructivism asserts that there are multiple realities that are socially constructed by individuals, and thus, knowledge is subjective and qualitative (Creswell, 2003, 2007). Positivism is generally associated with quantitative research, while constructivism is often equated with qualitative research.

The research paradigm adopted here is broadly based on the constructivist philosophy of knowledge, which is congruent with the exploratory research design and qualitative methodology and methods used in the study. Although constructivism has many versions³⁵, this study does not use any particular one, but draws upon the concept of constructivism as a whole. Therefore, the study is based exclusively on the core ideas of the constructivist paradigm referred to in this thesis, drawing on the works of several writers on the subject.

Below is a core discussion of the ontological³⁶, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underlying the constructivist paradigm and the researcher's reasons for choosing this specific paradigm as most appropriate for the study.

4.5.1.1 Constructivist Paradigm

In its broader sense, *constructivism* is an umbrella term used in different ways by different disciplines and academics, as mentioned in 4.5.1. Ernest (1995:459) points out that 'there are as many varieties of constructivism as there are researchers'. However, despite its many forms and meanings, constructivism in general is about how people construct and make sense of their world. Fosnot (1996) describes constructivism as a theory about knowledge and learning, while

³⁴ Creswell (2007:20) says that constructivism (or social constructivism) is often combined with interpretivism.

³⁵ Because of its many varieties, Neimeyer and Raskin (2001) use the plural form 'constructivisms'.

³⁶ Ontology is about the nature of reality; Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and known, while methodology refers to the way in which knowledge about the world is collected (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 2003).

Schwandt (1997:19) defines constructivism as a 'philosophical perspective interested in the ways in which human beings individually and collectively interpret or construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts'.

According to Vrasidas (2000) and Williamson *et al.* (2003), constructivism as a philosophical position embodies both personal and social processes of meaning-making. Hence, constructivism is comprised of two main schools of thought: 'personal' (or cognitive) constructivism and 'social' or sociocultural constructivism (Vrasidas, 2000; Williamson *et al.*, 2003). The former is concerned with the personal processes of meaning-making based on the idea that people personally construct reality, which often differs from one person to another (Vrasidas, 2000; Williamson *et al.*, 2003). According to this, social phenomena have no single reality, but multiple truths and realities and consequently, there are multiple interpretations of reality (Vrasidas, 2000; Williamson *et al.*, 2003). The paradigm of personal constructivism has its origins in Piaget's work on learning as a personal, individual, mental process (Vrasidas, 2000; Williamson *et al.*, 2003).

On the other hand, social constructivism is concerned with the social processes of meaning-making highlighting the 'social aspect' of knowing (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003, 2007; Crotty, 2003). Social constructivism is embedded in sociocultural approaches to learning - with special reference to Vygotsky as a pioneer- and the current ideas of communities of practice and situated learning, as identified and discussed in Chapter 3. Contemporary social constructivism has also been influenced by the ideas of sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1967) about the social construction of reality (cited in Creswell, 2003, 2007; Crotty, 2003). According to Berger and Luckmann, knowledge, including the taken-for-granted knowledge of everyday reality, is socially constructed through people interacting with others (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Crotty, 2003).

As mentioned, the constructivist paradigm in this study is not a specific version, and therefore encompasses both personal and social processes in the construction of meaning, because, as Cobb (1994:13) states, the two processes are inseparable

and complementary. Personal and social constructivist approaches are incorporated into the broader notion of constructivism referred to in this thesis and despite any differences, they share common ontological and epistemological assumptions about reality and knowledge.

In conclusion, it is important to note that, because constructivist researchers do not generally begin with a theory, but 'generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning' (Creswell, 2007:21), the constructivist paradigm fits very well with qualitative methodology, as mentioned, and will be discussed in detail in 4.5.2.

Key criticisms

Regardless of its varieties, constructivism as an epistemological perspective has frequently been criticised on various grounds. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore all the issues here, the most common criticism is that it stresses subjectivism and relativism. As discussed, constructivism asserts that reality itself is subjective; there is no one reality, but multiple realities. Some proponents believe that while constructivism does not reject social reality, it denies objectivity (Crotty, 2003; Vrasidas, 2000).

Crotty (2003: 48) notes that, in the constructivist view, objectivity and subjectivity are not separate, but are 'indissolubly bound up with each other'. According to Gephart (1999), indeed, constructivists are particularly interested in the interplay of subjective, objective and intersubjective knowledge. Intersubjectivity as defined by Gephart is the process of knowing others' minds. For Gephart, intersubjectivity occurs through language, social interaction, and written texts. The following quote from Patton (2002) best describes the notion of 'subjectivity' and how it is used within constructivism as a philosophical research paradigm:

Constructivists embrace subjectivity as a pathway deeper into understanding the human dimensions of the world in general, as well as whatever specific phenomena they are examining. They're more interested in deeply understanding

specific cases within a particular context than in hypothesizing about generalizations and causes across time and space (p. 546).

Rationale for Choosing the Constructivist Paradigm

Having discussed the basic ideas of constructivism, the reasons for choosing the constructivist paradigm as the most suitable for this study are set out along with the general principles of constructivism, as identified and described in the previous section.

- i) Constructivism recognises the complex nature of reality or social phenomena. From this perspective, the phenomenon under study presents a topic that is complex in nature and difficult to pin down. Constructivism asserts that there are diverse and multiple interpretations of reality rather than single realities of social phenomena. Constructivism also believes that knowledge is constructed, not discovered, through social interaction. Given these assumptions, this study explores and describes the phenomenon under study from the student's perspective and through their interaction with others in the workplace during their practice placement.
- ii) Constructivist research gathers subjective accounts that reveal how reality is experienced and constructed by people. Likewise, the study looks at the phenomenon of the development of professional values and ethics as experienced, constructed and interpreted by the participants/students themselves and through critical incidents occurring in the workplace.
- iii) Constructivism considers natural contexts to be of particular importance. Social agencies, as professional educational settings are of particular importance for social work students because they can provide or withhold opportunities for learning and doing and, consequently, for personal and professional development. It is also believed that knowledge is shaped by a specific social and cultural context. In this study, the workplace is the

specific social and cultural context in which, for a period of six months, students have daily contact with the world of the profession and its demands.

- iv) Constructivism casts doubts on taken for granted meanings. Although the literature has shown that the social work profession is value laden, matters concerning values and ethics are often taken for granted and neglected or not carefully examined. With this in mind, this study attempts to shed light on the taken for granted meaning of the development of social work values and ethics in the Greek workplace through the students' eyes.
- v) The central tenet of constructivism is that people construct reality and knowledge from experience (Fosnot, 1996). This means that, in addition to classroom experience related to matters of values and ethics, practical experience is also invaluable for students' learning and for the development of their knowledge about the values and ethics of the social work profession in real settings.

4.5.2 Qualitative Research

Silverman (2005) points out that, there are no better or worse methodologies and in choosing a method, everything depends upon what the researcher is trying to find out. From this perspective and the above mentioned considerations concerning the research paradigm, this study is well suited to qualitative research methodology.

Typically, qualitative research methodology is derived from the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm and they therefore have features in common. As a result, qualitative methodology is concerned with the meaning and understanding of social reality by focusing on the voices of the participants, rather than those of the researchers. In qualitative research, as Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) state, it is the participants who are the experts, not the researchers.

Qualitative research is often seen as an inductive, emerging, flexible, creative, holistic and reflexive method for data collection and analysis (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 1990, 2002; Creswell, 2007; Neuman, 2007). More specifically, qualitative research is inductive because researchers 'begin with empirical data, follow with abstract ideas, relate ideas and data, and end with a mixture of ideas and data' (Neuman, 2007:111). In addition, 'qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on this emerging process, as well as the outcomes or products of the research' (Hoepfl, 1997:49).

Moreover, qualitative research is often flexible and creative in that it uses a variety of methods to gain rich and insightful information about the phenomenon under study. In contrast to other research approaches, qualitative research positioned within the constructivist paradigm uses mostly open-ended questions, allowing the participants to respond in their own words. In this way, as Creswell (2007:21) points out that, 'participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons'. Finally, qualitative research is holistic and reflexive because its aim is to explore and fully describe the phenomenon at hand, seeking in this way to discover not only what people say or do but also how and why they say or do it (Patton, 2002).

However, qualitative approaches have their own disadvantages. Denscombe (2007:312-314) identifies the following (potential) disadvantages of qualitative research: (i) the data might be less representative; (ii) interpretation is bound up with the 'self' of the researcher; (iii) there is a possibility of decontextualizing the meaning; (iv) there is the danger of oversimplifying the explanation; and (v) the analysis takes longer. Some of these disadvantages are highlighted in the research literature, for example, the fact that qualitative data is collected from a few cases or individuals, so that findings cannot be generalised to a larger population (see Chapter 7.3 about the limitations of the current study). The quality of the research is also heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher.

Because qualitative research relies heavily on the researcher's interpretation of the data collected, it has been criticised for its subjectivity by many scholars. To address subjective issues in data quality, qualitative researchers have developed various criteria to maintain the so-called 'rigour' and 'trustworthiness' of data. The criteria and associated techniques related to the rigour and trustworthiness of the present study are discussed below.

4.5.2.1 Rigour and Trustworthiness

As noted earlier, rigour and trustworthiness are essential elements of a qualitative research study. Macnee and McCabe (2008:170) describe rigour as a 'strict process of data collection and analysis, as well as a term that reflects the overall quality of that process in qualitative research'. Rigour in qualitative research is established through the trustworthiness of the findings. Streubert and Rinaldi Carpenter (2011:455) describe trustworthiness as 'establishing [the] validity and reliability of qualitative research'. As the authors point out, 'qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experience of the study participants' (ibid: 455).

In order to ensure trustworthiness, this study was based on Lincoln and Guba's model (1985) as described by Shenton (2004) and Lietz and Zayas (2010). This model was chosen because it is well developed conceptually and has been widely used by qualitative researchers for a number of years. According to Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness includes: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Shenton, 2004; Lietz and Zayas, 2010).

a. Credibility

'Credibility refers to the degree to which a study's findings represent the meanings of the research participants' (Lietz and Zayas, 2010:191). Shenton (2004) with reference to Lincoln and Guba (1985) argues that credibility is one of most

important criteria in establishing trustworthiness. To achieve credibility, the researcher employed the following techniques:

- i. ***Prolonged engagement*** between the researcher and the participants in order to establish a relationship of trust between the parties (Shenton, 2004:65-66). The length of prolonged engagement varies depending on the purposes of the research, and as a result, there are no standards for the amount of time that a researcher should spend with participants to build trust and rapport (Patton, 2002; Polit and Beck, 2008). In this study, the researcher contacted potential participants about one month before conducting the research. The researcher had email and personal contact with participants prior to conducting the study in order to build rapport with them, describe the purpose of the study, and ask them to sign the informed consent form. The researcher also had a meeting with participants in order to explain in detail the research process and response to any queries they may have had (see also 4.7.3). Finally, the researcher encouraged participants to communicate with her throughout the research process if they required any further clarification.
- ii. ***Triangulation*** ‘strengthens a study by combining methods’ (Patton, 2002: 247). In this study, the researcher used two types of triangulation, site (or space) triangulation, and data-analysis triangulation, as follows: a) Site triangulation involved the use of different types of practice placement settings in the public or private sector (for-profit or not-for-profit). The purpose of site triangulation was ‘to reduce the effect on the study of particular local factors peculiar to one institution’ (Shenton, 2004:66); b) Data-analysis triangulation included the use of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques in the study of the same phenomenon (see also 4.9).
- iii. ***Reflexivity*** refers to the ‘thoughtful consideration of how a researcher’s standpoint can influence the research’ (Lietz and Zayas, 2010: 198). One of

the ways that researchers can describe and interpret their own behavior and experiences within the research context is to make use of a field journal (Krefting, 1991:218). In this study, reflexivity was accomplished throughout the research process by keeping a research diary in which the researcher recorded information about her methodological decisions and possible alternatives and data analysis procedures. The researcher also used this diary to check potential biases and predispositions as these could affect the research process and conclusion.

- iv. ***Peer debriefing*** refers to ‘meeting with mentors or other researchers engaged in qualitative research to dialogue regarding research decisions’ (Lietz and Zayas, 2010: 198). The researcher enlisted the help of a competent peer debriefer, Vassilis Gialamas, Assist. Professor, Dept. of Early Childhood Education, University of Athens. The peer debriefer was familiar with qualitative methods and expert in quantitative data analysis. Also, the researcher consulted a colleague experienced in qualitative methods, about the analysis of critical incidents.

Apart from the above, credibility was also achieved by using SPAD and SPSS software tools for data analysis (see 4.9). As Richards and Richards (1994) and Patton (2002) state, the use of software in qualitative research can further ensure the credibility of the research findings and the status of the study as a whole. Finally, the credibility of the study was enhanced by using both the TEI of Athens and Sussex University logos and addresses in the informed consent form, as advised by Hott and Budin (1999).

b. Dependability

Dependability refers to ‘evidence that is believable, consistent and stable over time’ (Polit and Beck, 2008:216). Dependability is difficult to measure in qualitative research because ‘many qualitative methods are tailored to the research situation, [and therefore], there are no methodological shorthand

descriptions' (Krefting, 1991:221). However, one way that can enhance dependability is to describe in detail the research process, 'thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results' (Shenton, 2004:71). To achieve this end, the researcher used rich description of data to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny while 'transparent' research methods involved the researcher setting out to be fully clear to the reader what she was doing and why.

c. Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the 'ability of others to confirm or corroborate the findings' (Lietz and Zayas, 2010:197). To address the issue of confirmability, Shenton (2004:63) says 'researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions'. Towards this end, the researcher attempted to address the issue of confirmability by using the benefits of peer debriefing and triangulation techniques as advised by Shenton (2004) and Lietz and Zayas (2010) and described earlier.

d. Transferability

Transferability has to do with 'the degree to which the findings are applicable or useful to theory, practice and future research' (Lietz and Zayas, 2010:195). However, because qualitative researchers do not share the same level of concern for the generalisability of findings as quantitative researchers, the transferability of the study was achieved through the purposive selection of the sample (Lietz and Zayas, 2010) and dense descriptions of the research methodology and methods to allow 'readers to understand ways findings may be applicable to other settings' (Lietz and Zayas, 2010:195; Shenton, 2004).

4.5.2.2 The Role of the Researcher

Regardless of the type of qualitative methods used, the role of the researcher as an individual is particularly important for the credibility of the research. Patton (2002:513) states that 'because the researcher is the instrument of qualitative inquiry, the quality of the result depends heavily on the qualities of that human being'. Thus, the credibility of the researcher is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self (ibid: 552).

In this study, the researcher's academic background and professional experience as a former social work practitioner contributed to the trustworthiness of the research. These elements helped the researcher critically reflect on her actions and on her own subjectivity, integrate feedback and critique her study, as well as deal with her own knowledge gaps about the research methodology and methods.

When the researcher started her PhD journey, she attended a four weeks course on qualitative research methods at the University of Athens in order to increase her knowledge and gain experience in the field of qualitative methodology (29/1/2008-26/2/2008). Furthermore, through peer debriefing, the researcher had the chance to take lessons in descriptive statistics and teach herself use of SPAD and SPSS statistical software to learn the ways data are recorded and contributes to their analysis. In this way, the researcher acquired new knowledge about statistics and updated and integrated previous knowledge, and so was confident in her skills and abilities to proceed with the research process.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Given that this study deals with values and ethics, it is equally important to adhere to ethical norms in its research design and implementation. After a careful review of the existing literature in the field, the ethical issues within a qualitative inquiry of this kind were identified as: a) informed consent; b) anonymity of research participants and confidentiality of information shared; c) the researcher-

participant relationship; d) the protection of research subjects from harm or risk; and e) ethical approval (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003; Cohen *et al.*, 2006).

These ethical principles were used to guide the research and are congruent with the ethics research literature, as well as the Research Ethics Checklist of School of Education and Social Work ³⁷ (University of Sussex) in use at the time that the researcher was planning her study. 4.6.1 explains in detail how the researcher adhered these specific ethics in the study.

4.6.1 Informed Consent

The informed consent form (Appendix A) used here includes the basic information as presented by the research ethics literature and required by the Sussex Institute of Research Ethics Standards and Guidelines. The document contains the following:

- A brief description of the study and its procedures;
- The identification of the researcher, and of where to receive information about subjects' rights or have questions about the study answered;
- An assurance that participation is voluntary and that the respondent has the right to withdraw at any time without penalty;
- An assurance of anonymity and confidentiality;
- Benefits and risks associated with participation in the study;
- An offer to provide information on findings even to those who decide to not participate in the research study (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003:105; Cohen *et al.*, 2006).

As will be explained in 4.7.3, since the recruitment process was done via e-mail, the informed consent was in written form, with space for a signature for those who decided to participate in the research.

³⁷ The researcher was registered over a period when the Sussex Institute was restructured into the School of Education and Social Work.

4.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research ethics literature, two ways to protect participants' right to privacy are identified: anonymity and confidentiality (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003; Cohen *et. al.*, 2006). Although anonymity can be provided without confidentiality or vice versa, (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003:107), for this research, both are important to encourage students to participate in the study and respond openly and honestly to the questions posed. From this standpoint, therefore, to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, the research used the following procedures:

i. Anonymity of research participants

In order to preserve anonymity, the following measures were taken: The envelopes used in the study had no names on them; there was no place on the CIT questionnaire to provide a name or identification number and no other means to identify a respondent/participant. Anonymity was also assured by the fact that there was no face-to-face interview (Cohen *et. al.*, 2006) and the coding of data started once the questionnaires were returned to the researcher's office.

Since the issue of anonymity also refers to persons or organisations described by the respondents in their recording of critical incidents, the researcher asked participants to not divulge the identity of those involved in the written story (see Appendix A, Appendix B).

In the event that a student did reveal personal or other sensitive information in completing the CIT questionnaire, the researcher decided to not include them in her work and to destroy the questionnaires automatically. During the analysis of data, however, the researcher did not need to take any of the above measures since all the data collected respected issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

ii. Confidentiality of information shared

To assure confidentiality, all the data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Social Work at TEI of Athens. Once the study was completed and the data analysed, the material was destroyed. In addition, all responses remained anonymous and confidential and were coded so that the students' identities could not be revealed. Furthermore, any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study did not contain any identifiable information regarding the respondents or the location of persons and organisations.

4.6.3 The Researcher-Participant Relationship

In any type of qualitative research, the relationship between the researcher and participant involves power and trust (Neuman and Kreuger, 2003). In educational research, particularly, issues of power relations are often associated with the dual role of the researcher as researcher and as teacher (Cohen *et. al.*, 2006). In this study, however, the author had only the role of researcher (not teacher), as the sampling population consisted of final-year students who had completed their courses and were going to graduate soon. It should also be noted that, the researcher had never taught the sampling population, nor was she involved in their assessment, so there had been no conflict of interest due to any past teacher /student relationship. But, the researcher was known to the students as a teacher and therefore they might have agreed to participate for this reason.

As for trust, due to the nature of the study, honesty characterised the relationship between researcher and participants since the latter were fully aware of the research project and were completely free to choose whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

4.6.4 The Protection of Research Subjects from Harm or Risk

The researcher took all possible steps to avoid harm to the students as a consequence of participating in this research. As already explained, participation was completely voluntary; through the written informed consent letter, which made potential participants fully aware of the research aims and procedures. The students knew in advance what the research was about and how it would be conducted. In addition, the meetings the researcher had with those who decided to participate in the study enabled her to provide information about the Counselling Support Service of TEI of Athens in case anyone became distressed when considering the CIT questionnaire (This Service could be contacted without the need for prior or special approval).

4.6.5 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was given by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex (24/9/2010) (Appendix C). Prior to this, however, on her own initiative, the researcher asked and got written approval (9/3/2010) from the Board of the Department of Social Work³⁸ in Athens in order to carry out the study for educational purposes (Appendix D). The Greek document was officially translated into English by the Greek Foreign Ministry and was available to the Ethics Committee of the University of Sussex.

4.7. Research Population and Sampling

4.7.1 Population

There are two types of population in social research: the target population and the study population. According to Procter *et al.* (2010), the 'target population is the total population that forms the focus for the study', while the 'study population is a

³⁸ Unlike other Departments of Social Work around the world, the Social Work Department of Athens has no Research Ethics Committee. Neither is there an appropriate person to whom disclosures that involve danger to participant or others must be reported. In general, the Board of the Department with its members is responsible for addressing ethical and deontological matters regarding research issues.

subset of the target population from whom the sample is taken' (p. 143). The two types of population along with the inclusion/exclusion criteria set up for the study population are discussed below.

Target Population

The target population here was all the final year social work students who, during the period of the research, had completed their professional practice placement. This target population was selected for the following reasons:

1. The students had completed their compulsory courses (theory, practice placement I, II, and professional practice placement), so it could be assumed they had already acquired the basic theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed for the social work profession.
2. As trainees, students had to perform as professional social workers in the real working world. In Greece, although trainees are still students learning through and in practice, they are treated as professionals and carry full caseloads. Therefore, they are expected to behave and act in a professional and responsible manner. These students are one step away from entering the job market.

Study population: inclusion/exclusion criteria

As mentioned, the target population was all social work students who, during the conduct of the research, had completed their professional practice placement. However, the study population consisted only of those who had done their professional practice in a social service/organisation in the region of Attica. The researcher excluded from the study students who had done their professional practice outside Attica or had spent a period of time abroad through a European exchange programme. Further, the researcher excluded overseas students (e.g. Cypriot students) who had completed their professional practice in their own country. The exclusion of these populations from the study was unlikely to have an effect on the final research findings because:

- The excluded sample size was very small; the majority of students' practice takes place in the capital city and its surroundings (the region of Attica);
- Since this small scale study has a qualitative orientation, it was not overly concerned with generalisability.

Summarising the above discussion, the study population was selected because it met the inclusion criteria and was accessible locally. This population of students could, therefore, be expected to be in the best position to formulate and express their opinions of the phenomena under study. The study population consisted of 57 students.

4.7.2 Sampling

Sample Type

Sampling methods are broadly categorised into probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a random selection method representative of the target population (Babbie, 2011). Probability sampling is generally used in quantitative studies. Non-probability sampling does not use random selection methods, and thus is not representative of the target population (Babbie, 2011; Patton, 2002). Non-probability sampling is mainly used in qualitative studies.

This study uses non-probability sampling, the most appropriate method in qualitative research. In non-probability sampling, the sample is gathered on the basis of accessibility or the purposive judgment of the researcher (Babbie, 2011; Patton, 2002). In general, there are three types of non-probability sampling in qualitative research:

- *Purposive sampling (or judgmental sampling)* where the subjects to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative;

- *Snowball sampling* whereby each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing;
- *Quota sampling*, in which subjects are selected for sampling on the basis of pre-specified characteristics, so that the sample has the same overall distribution of the characteristics assumed to exist in the wider population under study (Babbie, 2011:207-208).

In this study, purposive sampling was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather data from knowledgeable informants able to provide useful information about the topic under study. As mentioned in 4.7.1, study participants were selected on the basis of their first-hand knowledge and experience of the subject and therefore, were able to answer the research questions in a way that allowed the researcher to select 'information-rich cases for study in depth' (Patton, 2002:230).

Purposive sampling was also used because it has low costs and the study was self-funded- and the convenience sampling approach (Ary *et al.*, 2009). Finally, purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling does not aim to make generalisations, but to provide good quality information on the given topic (Babbie, 2011). Hence, it fits the small scale and qualitative nature of the study well.

Sample Size

Qualitative researchers emphasise quality rather than quantity, and therefore, 'there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research' (Patton, 2002: 244). However, Sandelowski (1995) maintains that the qualitative sample size should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve saturation, nor so large that it is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis.

Initially, the researcher sent email invitations (see 4.7.3 for more details) containing the informed consent form, to all the students who had completed their professional practice placement during the Spring Semester (1st April to 30th

September, 2010/ Academic Year 2009-2010) in the capital city of Athens and its broader zone, known as Attica. As mentioned, this study population consisted of 57 students.

Of the 57 students contacted via email, 34 agreed to participate in the study and received the research pack to complete. As will be seen later, of the 34 returned packs, 2 were rejected because they were not correctly completed. Consequently, the final sample size constituted of 32 students.

4.7.3 Recruitment of Participants

The study was carried out between 11th and 25th October, 2010. The recruitment process had the following stages.

Once the Ethics Committee of the School of Education and Social Work at Sussex University had approved the research project, the researcher asked those of her colleagues who are members of the Committee of Practice Placement to give her a list of students placed in professional practice during the spring semester (1st April to 30th September 2010). The list is an official document containing all the information needed to get in touch with students - names, postal and email addresses, mobile and landline numbers, placement sector.

As mentioned, students were recruited through two email invitations. The first included the letter of informed consent as part of the invitation to participate in the study (Appendix A). The informed consent letter explains clearly and briefly the research purpose and procedures and asks students to sign an agreement to participate in the research. Participants were also asked to respond via e-mail within the following few days in order to pass to the second stage of the recruitment process. Before proceeding to the next stage, the researcher personally contacted the participants via telephone to confirm receipt of their emails. As Hott and Budin (1999:104) point out, personal touches 'make the participants feel committed, valued, and appreciated, helping them to develop a commitment to the study'.

The next stage was a follow-up email to respondents containing details about meeting the researcher. Within two weeks, (from October 11th to October 25th, 2010), three alternative days were set aside to meet the students so that all potential participants had the opportunity to come to the Department. Depending on the date students were available, they were divided into three different groups. Each group had their own meeting, and each meeting lasted approximately one and a half hours. The day before the meeting, the researcher called and reminded students of the appointment. The scheduled meetings took place in the Department hall, on work days and during evening hours.

In the meetings, the researcher outlined the philosophy of the study and its research methodology, and gave the students the research pack (see 4.7.4 below) and all the information necessary to successfully complete the CIT questionnaire. The researcher also informed students about research ethics and any potential risks in their participation (see 4.6).

4.7.4 Research Pack

The research pack contained the following:

- The CIT Questionnaire, (three pages).
- A working definition of the critical incident technique³⁹ based on the literature review (one page).
- A Computer Disk-Rewritable (CD-RW) which contains: i) copies of the above documents as Word files, and ii) a copy of the Hellenic code of ethics as a PDF file.
- Copies of the Approval Letters by the Ethics Committee of Sussex University and the Athenian Department of Social Work.
- An A4 size envelope.

³⁹ The researcher decided to include a sheet with a working definition of a critical incident because students were not familiar with this type of research method (see Chapter 4.8.2 for more details)

Since the research project was fully self-funded, it was important for the researcher to know the total number of students willing to participate in the study (not their names) as is explained below, in order to prepare the correct number of research packs. Students were asked to fill in their response to the critical incidents questionnaire by hand on paper and to word process the same documents to be saved on a CD-RW and returned to the researcher, to make the later data analysis easier. Also, because the research was anonymous, if a response hadn't been saved on computer disk, there was the backup of the printed form. Note that the CIT questionnaire, as well as all the documents provided to the students/participants, were in Greek, their first language, and translated by the researcher for the purpose of this thesis.

4.7.5 The Site

All the respondents in the study received the same research pack and completed it in a location outside the Department, chosen by them. In this way, the participants had more time to reflect on and write about the critical incident, as well as reply to the questions. The data were collected in the same manner, too. That is, participants put the completed documents i.e. the critical incident along with its answers; and the personal data form, along with the electronic forms in the CD-RW in an A4 envelope which they brought to the Department three days after receiving the pack, as specified. This time frame for responses was selected because: the researcher considered that it gave enough time for students to reflect on the CIT questionnaire and respond carefully to the questions, and there had to be a deadline for the return of responses.

At the Department, students put their envelopes in a locked deposit box placed at the reception desk of the Department for this purpose. This fully maintained the anonymity of participants, as well as ensured the safe and secure return of the participants' responses.

4.8 Data Collection Method

Values often remain hidden until they are challenged. Critical incidents are exactly those events that make values become visible.

Jaakson *et al.*, 2004

One of the biggest methodological challenges the researcher faced was to determine how to collect data that would be rich in information and practical for analysis. This is because, as mentioned several times here, the phenomenon of values and ethics is complex in nature and difficult to investigate using conventional research techniques. So, while the researcher was looking for a tool that could meet the objectives of this study, the above quote by Jaakson and her colleagues along with the students' critical placement experiences served as a source of inspiration for selecting the critical incident technique (CIT) as the primary data collection method.

In the following sections, a general introduction to the critical incident method is presented and the way in which this method was applied in the present study.

4.8.1 The Critical Incident Technique (CIT)

According to the literature, the critical incident technique (CIT) is a flexible, retrospective qualitative approach initially developed by the psychologist, Flanagan, (1954) a half-century ago in order to understand pilot error in flying aircraft and later applied to researching safety during anaesthesia (Flanagan, 1954; Jaakson *et. al.* 2004; Branch, 2005; Green Lister and Crisp, 2007:47). Today, the critical incident technique and its several variants is widely used in health professions such as medicine and nursing, as well as in psychology and educational research for a variety of purposes.

In the area of social work, the critical incident technique has been mostly used as a tool for teaching and learning rather than as a research method, though it is

recognised as a qualitative method of data collection. In addition, as far as the researcher knows, this method has never been applied before to investigate social work values and ethics per se, although Thomas's (2004) study in the UK used the critical incident technique to promote critical reflection among professionals and included ethical and values issues.

As stated in the literature, critical incidents are defined as 'brief written or spoken depictions of vividly remembered events' that hold special significance for the person who experienced them (Brookfield, 1990: 84). Hott and Budin (1999:107) state that 'critical incident reports are based on the subject's memory of incidents that involved human activities'. These activities can be associated with past or current experiences or observations that occur in everyday life or professional practice (Ghaye and Lillyman, 2006). Critical incidents can be positive or negative and unpleasant (Hott and Budin, 1999; Radford, 2006; Green Lister and Crisp, 2007). In addition, critical incidents are unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled (Woods, 1993).

Tripp (1993), whose work greatly influenced social work, according to Green Lister and Crisp (2007), argues that, critical incidents tend to 'mark significant turning points or changes in the life of a person or an institution or in some social phenomenon' (p.24). For Tripp, however, 'critical incidents are not necessarily dramatic or obvious; most critical incidents are straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice; but, are rendered critical through analysis' (ibid: 24-25). Therefore, 'the criticality of an incident is a matter of personal interpretation' (ibid: 8).

In nursing research, on the other hand, Schluter and colleagues (2008) replaced the term 'critical incident' with 'significant event' because in hospitals, the former term is usually synonymous with negative events or crisis events. Schluter *et al.*'s comment made the researcher realise that the word 'critical' has mostly negative connotations in the Greek language, too. So, to avoid confusion in the translation from English to Greek, the researcher chose to use both words i.e. critical and

significant (critical/significant) in the Greek version of the CIT questionnaire, and give further clarifications of its meaning verbally to students during their meetings.

Due to its retrospective nature, the critical incident technique is a valuable reflective tool for enabling students to recall learning experiences using their own words, thus helping them to learn from practice, and certainly, as Parker *et al.* (1995) and Green Lister and Crisp (2007) claim, they facilitate the integration of theory and practice. As discussed in Chapter 3.7., reflection, especially critical and ethical reflection, is an important process in learning from practice experience and transforming this to meaningful knowledge.

Some authors such as Jaakson *et al.* (2004) and Ghaye and Lillyman (2006) consider the CIT an excellent tool for revealing possible differences between what is said and what is actually done or, the differences between espoused theories and theories in use (Argyris and Schön, 1974). In other words, the CIT method is useful to clarify the nature of our professional values (Ghaye and Lillyman, 2006).

In the existing literature, the majority of reported critical incidents appear to be related to interpersonal interactions (Minghella and Benson, 1995; Fook, 2004; Branch, 2005). Drawing on her research findings, Fook (2004), who used the technique of critical incident in social work education and practice, contends that, 'often incidents are constructed in terms which emphasize the powerlessness of the individual person telling the story, and exaggerate the powerfulness of the other person targeted for change'(p.23). Fook also points out that 'people often present critical incidents which were significant simply because they were traumatic, emotionally and professionally (ibid: 23). In this study, however, the critical incidents reported by students were both positive and negative events, as discussed in detail in Chapter 5.4.

Finally, the literature refers to the value of discussing critical incidents with other people. Referring to medical education, Branch (2005) stresses the value of discussing critical incidents with others, because through discussion, people 'may

reframe experiences from “negative” to “positive” or “constructive” (p.1064). Similarly, in social work, Thomas (2004) maintains that the discussion of critical incidents with critical colleagues allows professionals to use their learning experiences effectively benefiting both themselves and those around them such as clients and the organisation.

To sum up, writers from different disciplines who have used the critical incident technique agree that this method is ideal for recreating practice experience in order to understand various phenomena from the respondent’s perspective as in the present study of the issue of professional values and ethics (Parker *et al.*, 1995; Jaakson *et al.*, 2004; Branch, 2005; Ghaye and Lillyman, 2006). Following the works of others on the topic, Gremler (2004) points out that this technique is especially useful: when the topic being researched has been sparingly documented; as an exploratory method to increase knowledge about a little-known phenomenon; or when a thorough understanding is needed to describe or explain a phenomenon (p.67).

From the above, it seems clear that the critical incident technique fits well with the objectives of the study and consequently, was viewed as the best qualitative research tool to ‘bring out into the open the values that make us the kind of health care professionals we are’(Ghaye and Lillyman, 2006:88).

4.8.1.1 Disadvantages of Critical Incident Technique

Although the critical incident technique (CIT) is applied in many forms to address a wide range of issues, as a research method, it has some disadvantages. One is that respondents may not be accustomed to or willing to take the time to write a complete or understandable (for the researcher) account when describing the critical incident (Edvardsson and Roos, 2001). Another disadvantage is that the CIT method relies on events being remembered by respondents and requires the accurate and truthful reporting of these events (Gremler, 2004). Furthermore, because critical incidents often rely on memory, incidents may be imprecise or

may even go unreported (Snodgrass *et al.*, 2009). Finally, like other qualitative methods, the CIT is highly dependent on the researcher as an instrument, and has therefore been criticised for being a subjective means of data collection (Gremier, 2004).

In order to overcome the disadvantages, in this study, the researcher decided to collect incidents that had been recently experienced by the respondents so that key elements could be fully remembered. Note that the researcher's focus was on the respondent perspective (their own accounts). Also, given that participation in the study was voluntary, respondents were more willing to take the time to write a complete and understandable story when describing the critical incident. Furthermore, the researcher used the CIT in the form of written questions i.e. the CIT questionnaire, rather than interview questions (see 4.8.2) to collect data from the respondent's perspective and in his or her own words. In this way, the researcher sought to reduce any subjectivity in the research process.

4.8.2 The CIT Questionnaire as Research Tool

In this study, the CIT questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed to gather as much information as possible on students' views about the development of their professional social work values and ethics in the workplace. The CIT questionnaire as a research tool was devised taking into account the general principles of the critical incident technique described earlier.

As mentioned in the previous section, this study uses the CIT as a written account rather than a verbal process. The written approach was chosen because, as the pilot study showed (see 4.8.3), written reports allow students more time to reflect on their practice experience and select the most representative critical incident. In addition, 'written accounts have been shown to be a time-efficient means of gathering good-quality, descriptively rich data' (Handy and Ross, 2005:40), although some authors argue that critical incidents collected by interviews provide more opportunity for clarification (Radford, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, the CIT questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section A: Personal Details (one page) -with demographic information (age, gender, practice placement sector: public or private: for profit/not- for- profit). The CIT questionnaire did not collect any personally sensitive information (such as ethnicity or race) because the researcher considered that it was not necessary for the research purpose. Under Greek law 2472/1997⁴⁰, ethnicity or racial origin, are classified as 'sensitive data' and can be collected only for specific and specified purposes.

Section B: General Instructions and Key Questions Related to the Critical Incident (one page)-giving general instructions to students on the writing of the critical incident, and asking a set of key questions related to the critical incident. The questions are grouped under the common heading: "Account of Critical Incident".

Section C: Additional Questions about the Critical Incident (one page)-contains a series of additional open-ended questions (and/or sub-questions) grouped under three thematic headings:

1. Professional Social Work Values Highlighted by the Critical Incident (Question 1: a, b);
2. Discussion of the Critical Incident with Others (Question 2: a, b);
3. Lessons from the Critical Incident (Question 3: a, b, c, d).

All the questions in the CIT questionnaire were designed to be clear and straightforward so that students were able to understand them and respond appropriately. The questions' final form was determined after the pilot study (4.8.3), and as mentioned, were organised into different thematic areas.

⁴⁰ Law 2472/1997 protects citizens' rights vis-a-vis those who keep and process their personal data (Data Controllers). Retrieved September 10, 2012, from: http://www.dpa.gr/portal/page?_pageid=33,43290&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

- The questions regarding the **“Account of Critical Incident”** were designed to provide data about the characteristics and nature of the critical incidents, as well as the factors associated with the development of professional values in social work practice. For this reason, a set of specific questions-what the incident was about, who were involved, and so on were included. Given that critical incidents should be short stories (Brookfield, 1990; Branch; 2005), there was a ~300-400 word limit for answering the total number of questions. This was considered to be enough for students to provide the necessary information about the critical incident in Greek, the language of the research tool.
- The questions regarding the **“Professional Social Work Values Highlighted by the Critical Incident”** aimed to explore the type of social work values evolving from the critical incidents, either as a positive or negative learning experience. Given that values and ethics play a primary role in this study, it was important to find out what social work values were mostly violated/ neglected or defended according to the Hellenic code of deontology for social workers.
- The questions regarding the **“Discussion of the 'Critical Incident with Others”** aimed to examine discussing critical incidents with others in order to find out the key-person(s) students are most likely to share their experience of the critical incident with. The literature review suggests that students benefit from the discussing incidents with other people, especially their practice instructors or supervisors.
- The **“Lessons from the Critical Incident”** questions aimed to deepen the understanding of what students learn about professional ethics from critical incidents, and to identify potential gaps between theory and practice related to the topic. This category of questions focused on student learning and development outcomes.

Because students were unfamiliar with the CIT technique, as indicated earlier, the researcher developed the following working definition of the critical incident to help them better understand the specific technique (Table 4.1). This definition provides the main characteristics of a critical incident as identified by the researcher from the relevant literature review.

Table 4.1 <i>Characteristics of a Critical Incident</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It has a significant effect upon your thinking and knowledge as an ethical social worker. ▪ The incident may be a positive or negative (or unpleasant) experience. ▪ You may have been actively involved in it or have observed it during your professional practice placement. ▪ It may not be dramatic or obvious; critical incidents are often embedded in work routines. ▪ It may mark a turning point or change in the way you think and/or act as an ethical social worker. ▪ It is crucial to your professional development.

Concluding this section, it is important to emphasize that students were allowed to choose freely both the type of critical incident (positive or negative), and the role they played (observer or active participant). This choice was given to students, because, as the literature review shows, firstly, both positive and negative learning experiences can be a source of knowledge about values and ethics in social work practice, and secondly, the description of an event as critical is not necessarily associated with the role that an individual plays in it, since 'it is not always essential that those for whom an incident is critical are active participants in the process. Nor need the interaction be lengthy' (Crisp *et al.*, 2005:6).

4.8.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study is 'a small-scale implementation of a larger study or of part of a larger study' (Schreiber, 2008:624). Pilot studies in qualitative research are used to help researchers improve the quality and appropriateness of the data collection process (Polit and Beck, 2008; Schreiber, 2008). Bearing this in mind, a pilot study was conducted to identify the potential strengths and weaknesses of the CIT questionnaire, as well as the whole research process.

The researcher had the opportunity to discuss the research topic with some recent graduates from the Department that she had met during a workshop held in the Department and invited them to participate in the pilot study. Six former students agreed to write about one incident and respond to the relevant questions according to the researcher's written and oral instructions. In order to look at the ways of distributing and collecting the CIT questionnaires, half the participants were asked to complete the CIT questionnaire on the spot, and the other half were asked to take the material away and return it. Participants from the pilot study were not included in the sample of the main study because was not the population that the researcher was interested in.

Feedback from interviews with the pilot-study participants after completion of the CIT questionnaire helped the researcher to: change the wording of some questions to express their meaning and intent better and use the term *values* together with the term *principles* (i.e. values/principles) as in the Greek social work literature, these concepts usually go hand-in hand (see also Chapter 1.2); select the written report for the critical incident as the main form of data collection (as explained earlier); and look at ways of distributing and collecting the CIT questionnaires, as well as the time and location needed to complete it. For practical reasons, participants also asked the researcher to group the questions under headings in Section C of the CIT questionnaire.

All the pilot-study participants agreed the CIT questionnaire as research tool explored values and ethics issues. But, as noted earlier, they were not familiar with the critical incident techniques and consequently, it was necessary to develop a working definition to guide the participants in the main study. The working definition of critical incident was included in the research pack, as mentioned, and discussed extensively during the meetings with the participants of the main study about the research packs.

4.9 Approaches to Data Analysis

No data is untouched by the researcher's human hands

Silverman, 2005

Creswell (2003:190) defines data analysis as the process involving 'making sense out of text and image data'. In this study, data were inductively⁴¹analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to the literature, the combined use of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques within the same study reflects data-analysis triangulation. Data-analysis triangulation is defined as 'the combining of two or more methods of analyzing data' (Thurmond, 2001: 254).

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the qualitative and quantitative methods used for analysing the collected data, the field of their application, and the software packages used for each technique.

⁴¹ Although there is no standard technique for analysing critical incidents, there is a common assertion in the relevant literature that CIT analysis is an inductive⁴¹ process (Flanagan, 1954; Radford, 2006).

Table 4.2_Data Analysis Methods			
APPROACHES	METHODS	APPLICATION	SOFTWARE PACKAGE USED
QUALITATIVE	Content Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Account of Critical Incidents ✓ Mapping of Critical Incidents 	-
QUANTITATIVE	Descriptive Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Characteristics of Respondents (i.e. the demographic profile of respondents) ✓ Characteristics of Critical Incidents 	SPSS 19.0
	Correspondence Analysis (CA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Textual Analysis of Responses to the Open-Ended Questions in the CIT Questionnaire (Section C) 	SPAD 5.0
	Technique of Characteristic Words		
	Technique of Characteristic Responses		

The following sections present more detailed information about the various data analysis techniques used to provide an explanation of how these methods work.

4.9.1 Content Analysis

As mentioned in Table 4.2, content analysis was used as a qualitative data analysis method to analyse the content of critical incidents as identified by the responses to the open-ended questions included in Section B of the CIT questionnaire (Appendix B). More specifically, this method was used to identify the characteristics and nature of critical incidents, as well as to extract general categories and subcategories from the data, as will be discussed in detail later.

Qualitative content analysis also enabled the critical incidents to be mapped (see Appendix E) and used for statistical processing and analysis. This study did not use computer software for qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate way of organising and analysing the content of written documents, such as interview transcripts, and responses to open-ended questions, as well as data originating from qualitative studies using small sample sizes, as in the present study (Elo and Kyngas, 2008; Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; White and Marsh, 2006).

Qualitative content analysis has its beginnings as a quantitative method in the study of mass communication in the 1950s (Julien, 2008; White and Marsh, 2006). Broadly speaking, content analysis is 'the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data' (Patton, 1990:381). According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), the goal of qualitative content analysis is to 'attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon and the outcome of the analysis is a concept or categories describing the phenomenon' (p.108).

In the literature, qualitative content analysis is also sometimes referred to as *latent* content analysis (Julien, 2008:120), because it has the potential to reveal the hidden messages in communication. It is an inductive⁴² and creative research technique that is extremely flexible (Patton, 1990; Elo and Kyngas, 2008); indeed, because there are no theoretically fixed rules for the analysis of data, Elo and Kyngas (2008:113) suggest that the researchers themselves 'must judge what

⁴² Inductive analysis is defined 'as a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions'. (Braun and Clarke, 2006:83)

variations are most appropriate for their particular problems, and this makes the analysis process most challenging and interesting’.

Despite its flexibility, qualitative content analysis in general, is a step by step process of categorisation (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004), and as such, there are general guidelines that the researcher should follow in order to perform the analysis, as presented in the next section. However, it is important to note that the steps below are not the only way of doing qualitative content analysis, but were chosen by the researcher as the most appropriate for the purposes of the current study.

4.9.1.1 Content Analysis Steps

The following paragraphs outline the four basic steps involved in the process of qualitative content analysis and how these were applied in the present study.

STEP 1 - The Unit of Analysis

It is first of all very important to identify the unit of analysis (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). The unit of analysis is defined as the smallest unit of text and varies with the nature of the data and the purpose of the research (Berg, 2001; Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Elo and Kyngas, 2008).

Generally speaking, types of units of analysis might include physical linguistic units (e.g. a single word, a paragraph, or a sentence) or an entire response or even an entire article or book (Berg, 2001; Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Elo and Kyngas, 2008).

Due to the nature of the data and the purpose of research, the unit of analysis for this study was the entire response. More specifically, each student’s response to each question under the heading “Account of Critical Incident” (in the CIT questionnaire) was the unit of analysis. This type of unit of analysis is called an

item because it represents the whole unit of the sender's message (Berg, 2001:247).

STEP 2 - Arranging the Raw Data

After identifying the unit of analysis, the second step was to arrange the raw data by unit of analysis. Given that each student's response provided information about a particular critical incident, the whole response was considered a separate critical incident and as such, was classified as follows:

Each critical incident which formed a unit of analysis was assigned a unique serial number, such as CI01, CI02, etc., so that no two incidents had the same number. This unique number was used to identify each specific incident. In addition, because the data were also recorded on CD-ROM disks, each CD was given the same number as the written critical incident. The researcher then created a computer folder into which she copied the content of all the CDs organised into files using Microsoft Word. The same procedure was used for the additional open-ended questions in Section C of the CIT questionnaire.

The critical incidents were read through carefully in order to be labelled and mapped according to their main characteristics as given by the respondents (e.g., where and when the incident happened, what the student's role was and so forth). The researcher constructed a Table (Appendix E) from this which the relevant information.

STEP 3 - Coding

According to Anastas (1999), coding lies at the heart of the process of content analysis. Coding is 'the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form' (Babbie, 2011:361). In the coding procedure, codes can be defined prior to the analysis or derived from the text itself (Berg, 2001).

In this study, codes were developed after careful reading of the data (i.e. critical incidents) by the researcher to identify the type of learning experience students reported they had experienced at work during their professional practice placement.

As a result of several readings, critical incidents were coded based on their nature, i.e., '*positive*' or '*negative*' as defined by the students (described in detail in Chapter 5.4, some experiences that may have seemed negative at the time were positive in terms of the outcomes for the students). Because of its importance, the positive-negative coding criterion was also used to guide the analysis of the textual data presented in Chapter 6.

STEP 4 - Category Extraction (and Subcategories)

After coding the entire data set, the final step in the process was to identify categories and subcategories from the data. In the literature, category is defined as 'a group of content that shares a commonality' (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004: 107), while 'the content of the categories is described through subcategories' (Elo and Kyngas, 2008:112) which have more specific sets of shared features.

In the present study, categories are based on who the 'actor' was in the account of the incident, not imposed by the researcher, but as they emerged from the data. For the purposes of this study, the 'actor' is defined as the *subject* (i.e. a *person*, a *team* or an *institution*) that either caused the critical event to occur, or engaged in it in various ways, or just performed the main action (see Chapter 5).

The actor category was chosen because, after several readings of the data, the researcher found that this had a central role in the emergence of issues related to the values and ethics of the social work profession. Incidents were then grouped into subcategories based on the general action, behaviour or attitude of the actor in the story of the incident (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). As described in Chapter 5.4, a subcategory can have one only member.

During the categorisation process, critical incidents were divided into positive and negative and the steps followed were the same for both types of critical incidents, which were then read and re-read by the researcher to find the main actor in each and the role s/he played in the incident. Each incident's characteristics were then compared with the others to identify common features across the critical incidents. Once common categories had been identified, the researcher summarised them within their category clusters.

However, the categorisation procedure was not without difficulty. The researcher had to solve two major problems. First, some incidents had more than one actor. Second, some incidents did not share common features with any others and could not be added to a pre-existing category.

In order to solve these problems, and given the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher decided:

- To create enough categories so that every critical incident could be included, because, according to content analysts Graneheim and Lundman (2004:107), 'no data related to the purpose should be excluded due to lack of a suitable category';
- To count incidents with more than one actor category and subcategories as the same incident in order to express its full meaning. This solution was developed firstly, because, critical incidents as human stories are very likely to have more than one actor. Secondly, according to some content analysts, such as Graneheim and Lundman (2004: 107), '... owing to the intertwined nature of human experiences, it is not always possible to create mutually exclusive categories when a text deals with experiences'.

The results of the categorisation are summarised in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 presenting the overall picture of the categories and subcategories that emerged from the content analysis of positive and negative critical incidents (see glossary of terms in

Appendix F). Further details about the categories and subcategories in relation to the nature of critical incidents are given in Chapter 5.

Table 4.3 <i>Categories and subcategories emerging from reports of positive critical incidents</i>	
Categories	Subcategories
Client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ destabilizing/ disruptive behaviour towards team members ▫ unethical behaviour regarding organisational ethics and rules ▫ unethical and manipulative behaviour towards student
Interprofessional Teamwork⁴³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ effective collaboration between team members ▫ team members' positive attitude to student ▫ acceptance of student as team member ▫ violation of organisational ethics in favour of client's interests
Practice Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ supervision and support for student ▫ ethical skills and personal and professional qualities ▫ ethical skills and professional qualities
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ ethical and professional behaviour and skills

Table 4.4 <i>Categories and subcategories emerging from reports of negative critical incidents</i>	
Categories	Subcategories
Client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ challenging/violent behaviour towards student ▫ violent behaviour towards city council social worker
Interprofessional Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ lack of effective collaboration between team members ▫ illegal and unethical team members' behaviour towards client ▫ violation of organisational ethics by agency head and team members

⁴³Hereafter the *IP TEAMWORK*

Interagency Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ conflict of interest between two different public sector organisations ▫ illegal and unethical practices by public organisations with greater authority and power
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ lack of management support for social worker ▫ undermining of social worker's role as professional
Practice Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ lack of supervision and support for student ▫ lack of ethical skills and professional qualities
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ flagrant violation of the organisation's code of ethics by all staff members ▫ illegal and unethical behaviour by staff member towards social worker's client ▫ lack of ethical and professional behaviour and skills
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ failure to implement ethical and professional behaviour and skills

4.9.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to organise and describe the respondents' demographic characteristics, as well as the characteristics of critical incidents (e.g. frequency tables and graphs). SPSS 19.0 was used to produce descriptive statistics.

4.9.3 Analysis of Textual Data

This section describes the data preprocessing and statistical techniques used to analyse the responses (i.e. textual data) to the open-ended questions included in the Section C of the CIT questionnaire (see Appendix B). The statistical techniques used here are derived from the methodology proposed by the French School of Textual Data Analysis, known as "*Analyse Statistique des Données Textuelles*" (Lebart, 1998; Lebart *et al.*, 1998; Behrakis, 1999).

4.9.3.1 Data Preprocessing

The textual analysis procedure involves preprocessing the data. Data preprocessing is a very important, but difficult stage that must always be taken prior to performing any statistical textual analysis. Preprocessing, is the 'cleaning' of a text, that is, removing typing mistakes, dealing with digits, punctuation marks, hyphens, and the case of letters (Manning and Schatze, 1999).

In this study, data preprocessing aimed to transform the raw (unstructured) data into structured data-into lexical tables- suitable for computer processing and analysis. All the pre-processing steps, as well as the sequence of data analysis techniques described later were performed using the SPAD 5.0 software program. The SPAD software is appropriate for textual analysis as it has the vast majority of methods by default⁴⁴. Textual analysis using SPAD was carried out in Greek. For the sake of comprehension, however, the words and responses included in the Tables and Figures presented in Chapter 6 have been translated into English.

In order to produce better textual analysis, the data (responses) were finally grouped according to the question type and classified under the following headings:

- Professional values highlighted by critical incidents (Question 1: a and b)
- Discussion of critical incidents with others (Question 2: a and b)
- Critical incidents and future practice (Question 3:a)
- Critical incidents and knowledge gap detection(Question 3:b)
- Changes in thinking & acting (Question 3:c)
- Knowledge acquired from critical incidents (Question 3:d)

⁴⁴ SPAD: Système Portable pour l' Analyse de Données (in French). The SPAD software, Version 5.0 (Cisia-Ceresta, Montreuil, France), which was used in this study, is only available in French, but its latest version is also available in English (Coheris SPAD Version 7.3, Website: www.coheris.fr).

The following subsections set out the four processing steps involved in the transformation of unstructured textual data into structured, based on the work of Lebart (1998), Lebart *et al.* (1998) and Behrakis (1999).

STEP 1- Word Selection and Filtering

The first step defines the words of the text and filters out the punctuation and symbols such as, brackets, quotation marks, etc. In the text preprocessing by computer, according to Behrakis (1999), the basic statistical unit of analysis is the lexical unit, defined as a set of characters that interrupt each other with a space or a punctuation mark (ibid, 1999: 215).

In this study, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and participles were chosen as lexical units for further processing and analysis. These types of words were chosen because they reveal the content of texts; such lexical items carry the main semantic and relational meanings in text (Behrakis, 1999).

STEP 2 – Cleaning

The task of cleaning is to remove *noise* from the textual data in order to improve its quality (Lebart *et al.*, 1998; Behrakis, 1999). Cleaning means to:

- Eliminate non-significant words, such as ‘articles’, ‘prepositions’, ‘pronouns’ and ‘conjunctions’(e.g. the, and, for, on);
- Correct spelling errors;
- Change capital letters to lower case letters.

STEP 3 – Grouping of Words

Synonyms and morphologically related words or verbs were grouped. This was not an easy task because the researcher had simultaneously to take into account how the Greek words selected after grouping would correspond to English words.

In order to maintain the meaning of the words and texts as far as possible unchanged and reduce potential translation problems, verbs retained only two tense forms (simple past and simple present), the first-person singular (I) and first-person plural (we).

STEP 4 - Coding of Textual Data into a Lexical Table (words x categories)

The final step involved calculating the frequency of occurrence of each word in the data and transforming them into a lexical table ready for correspondence analysis (Behrakis, 1999).

4.9.3.2 Variables Determined

The study included six categorical⁴⁵ variables/categories used for the processing and analysis of textual data: (a) student's role; (b) period of practice placement; (c) type of critical incident (positive-negative); (d) gender; (e) practice placement sector; and (f) location (see glossary of terms in Appendix F). These variables concerned the demographic characteristics of respondents (e.g. gender), and characterisations that emerged either from the study process (e.g. student's role, period of practice, location, sector) or from the results themselves, for example, the type of critical incident (positive or negative).

4.9.3.3 Statistical Techniques

The following subsections provide an overview of the statistical techniques used to analyse the textual data. As mentioned, these were automatically performed using SPAD software.

⁴⁵ **Categorical variable:** Any variable that is not quantitative is categorical. Categorical variables take a value that is one of several possible categories. As naturally measured, categorical variables have no numerical meaning. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from: http://www.oswego.edu/~srp/stats/variable_types.htm

a. Correspondence Analysis (of the lexical table words x categories)

Correspondence analysis⁴⁶ (CA) belongs to the family of factorial multidimensional descriptive statistics which are applied across the whole spectrum of the social sciences and humanities (Behrakis, 1999). Correspondence analysis was invented and developed by the French mathematician, Jean Paul Benzécri and his collaborators in a linguistic context in the early 1960's and 1970's (Behrakis, 1999; Morin, 2006). The first studies using the method were performed on the tragedies of Racine (Morin, 2006:1).

Correspondence analysis is a useful technique for exploring and describing tables of categorical data for which no specific hypotheses have been formed *a priori* (Benzécri, 1992; Behrakis, 1999). The technique of correspondence analysis (CA) is ideal for analysing the content of textual data, as well as the responses to open-ended questions in surveys or studies (Benzécri, 1992; Lebart *et al.*, 1998; Behrakis, 1999) as in this study. According to Guérin-Pace (1998:73), 'the use of statistical methods of textual analysis offers an extremely rich exploratory approach, both for the comparative study of texts and for the understanding of their content'.

A distinct advantage of correspondence analysis (CA) over other statistical techniques is that it can be successfully used without prior restrictive technical prerequisites (Behrakis, 1999). Another advantage is the double representation of documents and words on the same factorial plane (*ibid*, 1999). In addition, thanks to CA, it is possible to visualize associations between elements (forms or segments) and between groups of respondents or categories (*ibid*, 1999). Therefore, the visualization of the proximities between words and categories can help the understanding of the responses in each of these categories (*ibid*, 1999).

⁴⁶ For a history of, and a good introduction to the technique of correspondence analysis in English, see: Benzécri, J.P. (1992). *Correspondence Analysis Handbook*. New York: Marcel Dekker.

Despite its advantages, however, the CA method is not without its critics. According to Harcourt (2002), the most important disadvantage seems to be that the method is model-free, or theory-free, because it does not test hypotheses. But, at the same time, this disadvantage seems to be its main advantage, as Harcourt puts it: 'It is a method that lets the data speak without imposing any preconceptions on the data. The guiding principle is that 'the model must follow the data and not the reverse' (ibid: 1001). And this method was applied here.

i. Factorial Plane

As mentioned, the results of CA analysis can be visualized in a factorial plane, defined by two factorial axes. The interpretation of an axis in CA is defined as the opposition between the most extreme points (which are very often the points with the highest contributions to inertia⁴⁷ of the axis (Morin, 2006:2). But, as Ivy (2001: 279) notes, 'the closer the proximity of the points the more similar the underlying structure'.

In the present study, for a better reading of the factorial plane and to avoid overcrowding the words, all the factorial planes presented in Chapter 6 include words that strongly contributed to the axes. The factorial planes use the first and the second axis extracted by CA. The first axis shows the type of critical incident (positive-negative), while the second axis shows the student's role in it (observer or active participant).

b. Technique of Characteristic Words

Characteristic words are unusually frequent (or unusually rare) in the responses of a group of individuals (Lebart, 1998). The characteristic words were determined using a probability (p) value associated with the test-values (valeur test). A test-value measures the deviation between the relative frequency of a word within a

⁴⁷ Inertia is defined as a measure of the total variability in the original data set. (Núñez *et al.*, 2009)

group and its global frequency calculated on the entire set of responses or individuals (ibid: 144). In this study, the smaller the p-value, the more useful the word is for topic identification (e.g. $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.1$).

Given that all characteristic words are not equal in nature and are not all 'meaningful' in themselves since it is the context in which the words are used that is significant, the technique of characteristic words is typically followed by the technique of characteristic responses as described below.

c. Technique of Characteristic Responses

As Lebart *et al.* (1998) note, the concept of characteristic (or modal) responses is extremely useful in the case of open-ended questions. This technique allows the situating of characteristic words identified in the previous procedure (b) in their context. The criterion for selecting characteristic responses was based on 'similarities in the lexical profile of responses, with the lexical profile of the text or category respectively' (Behrakis, 1999:225). 'These characteristic responses are not artificial or average responses, but real individual responses' (Núñez *et al.*, 2009: 1160) which, in this study, most closely represent a specific type of critical incident (i.e. positive or negative).

Given that all characteristic responses were not important to the analysis, Chapter 6 presents and discusses only those of particular importance for the research, hence the term *most characteristic responses*, because: a) these are the most typical in a certain type of critical incident (positive-negative); and b) their content is important/significant for further analysis and discussion in relation to the question posed.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research design, methodology and methods employed in this study. It described the aims and objectives of the study, along with its

central question and associated sub-questions. Given that values and ethics is still an under-researched area in the Greek social work literature, the researcher adopted an exploratory research design (with descriptive elements) as the most appropriate to approach the topic of the research. Within this context, a qualitative methodology positioned within the constructivist research paradigm was chosen to shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of the topic.

The ethical considerations, sample processing, and data collection and analysis procedures of the study have also been described in this chapter. The study used the critical incident technique (CIT) as the only method for collecting data from 32 social work students who voluntarily and anonymously participated in the study. Subsequently, the data collected were inductively analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Lastly, SPSS 19.0 and SPAD 5.0 software packages were also used to analyse the numerical and textual data respectively.

PART FOUR

Research Results and Findings

5. Results and Findings from the Analysis of Critical Incidents

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings that emerged from the qualitative content analysis of 32 written critical incidents. It also gives the general characteristics of the respondents. Initially, the chapter describes the basic demographic characteristics of the study participants such as gender, age, role of respondent, and respondents by type of placement sector. It then presents the various characteristics of critical incidents which emerged from using the statistical analysis such as where the incident took place (e.g. public or private social sector), the location (inside or outside the workplace), period of practice placement and the type of critical incident (positive-negative).

The chapter proceeds to describe the nature of critical incidents-types and categories- and discusses critical incidents (positive and negative) within the different categories and associated subcategories that emerged from the qualitative content analysis. Findings are summarised in tables to help the reader to understand the data and find specific information.

5.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The following subsections describe the demographic characteristics of the study sample.

5.2.1 Gender of Respondents

As stated in Chapter 4, the study sample consisted of 32 students. 30 of the 32 respondents were female, and 2 were male (Table 5.1). As expected, the ratio of women to men in the study reflects the general gender composition of the profession of social work in Greece and elsewhere (Dedoussi *et al.*, 2004).

Table 5. 1_Gender of Respondents			
		Frequency	Percent
	Male	2	6.3
	Female	30	93.8
	Total	32	100.0

5.2.2 Age of Respondents

Table (5.2) below shows the age profile of the respondents. The respondents ranged in age from 22 to 38 years. As can be seen, the largest proportion of respondents (16) was in the 23-year-old age group, while 2 respondents were over the age of 30. From the Table, It is evident that, most of the respondents were young given the preponderance of younger students within Greek Higher Education⁴⁸.

Table 5.2_ Age of Respondents			
		Frequency	Percent
	22	4	12.5
	23	16	50.0
	24	5	15.6
	25	3	9.4
	26	1	3.1
	27	1	3.1
	30	1	3.1
	38	1	3.1
	Total	32	100.0

But, the mean age is increased by the inclusion of some older students who, either as professionals of allied disciplines or graduates of other subjects, have chosen to

⁴⁸ In Greece, the typical age of entry into higher education (universities or technological educational institutes) is 18 years old and above.

study social work in order to change profession or to enrich and improve their professional knowledge and skills in general.

5.2.3 Role of Respondents

Table 5.3 illustrates the role of the student in the identified critical incident itself. Most respondents (22) had the role of active participant in the critical incident, while the remaining 10 respondents were observers. The large number of students who were active participants in the incident is easily explained as the students were asked to describe a critical incident which, preferably, was experienced first-hand by themselves.

Table 5.3_ Role of Respondents			
		Frequency	Percent
	Active Participant	22	68.8
	Observer	10	31.3
	Total	32	100.0

5.2.4 Respondents by Type of Placement Sector

Table 5.4 gives the number of respondents from each type of practice placement (public or private not-for-profit). 28 respondents indicated that they completed their professional practice in the public health and social care services, while 4 respondents stated that they completed their professional practice in the private not-for-profit sector. These findings reflect the fact that the public system dominates health and social care provision in Greece and as a result, the majority of Greek social workers are employed in the public health and social care sector (Dedoussi *et al.*, 2004).

Table 5.4_Respondents by Type of Placement Sector			
		Frequency	Percent
	Public	28	87.5
	Private Not-for- Profit	4	12.5
	Total	32	100.0

5.3 Characteristics of Critical Incidents

Of the 32 critical incidents reported by students, 28 took place in the social care services of the public sector, and 4 took place in social care services of the private not- for-profit sector (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5_Critical Incidents by Type of Placement Sector			
		Frequency	Percent
	Public	28	87.5
	Private Not-for-Profit	4	12.5
	Total	32	100.0

Most critical incidents (30) occurred inside the workplace while handling the case and only 2 critical incidents occurred outside the workplace during a home visit (Table 5.6). According to the respondents, 9 incidents happened at the beginning of their professional practice, 11 occurred in the middle of the practice placement, and 12 at the end of their professional practice (Table 5.7).

Table 5.6_ Location		
	Frequency	Percent
Outside	2	6.3
Inside	30	93.8
Total	32	100.0

Table 5.7_Period of Practice		
	Frequency	Percent
Beginning	9	28.1
Middle	11	34.3
End	12	37.5
Total	32	100.0

Of the 32 critical incidents, 18 were classified as positive experiences and 14 were classified at the time of writing about them as negative experiences, according to the respondents (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8_Type of Critical Incident (From the students' perspective)		
	Frequency	Percent
Positive	18	56.3
Negative	14	43.8
Total	32	100.0

Table 5.9 shows the relationship between the type of critical incidents and the period of practice. As can be seen, there is a negative relationship between these two variables. For instance, at the beginning of practice, positive critical incidents (7) outweigh the negative ones (2). But, from the middle of the professional practice to the end, there is a steady increase in the number of negative critical incidents experienced by students as opposed to positive ones. It is noteworthy that at the end of professional practicum, the number of negative critical incidents (8) is twice the number of positive critical incidents (4).

Table 5.9_Type of Critical Incident by Period of Practice					
		Period of Practice			Total
		Beginning	Middle	End	
Type of Critical Incident	Positive	7	7	4	18
	Negative	2	4	8	14
Total		9	11	12	32

5.4 The Nature of Critical Incidents: Types and Categories

As mentioned in Chapter 4.9.1.1, the positive and negative critical incidents were analysed separately. As a result, a number of different categories have emerged from this analysis of the data. Each of the categories detailed below is divided into subcategories, thus providing a more detailed view of the major category.

The main categories that emerged from the analysis of positive critical incidents were: 1) the **Client**, 2) **Interprofessional Teamwork**, 3) the **Practice Instructor**, and 4) the **Student**. However, the main categories that emerged from the analysis of negative critical incidents were: 1) the **Client**, 2) **Interagency Work**, 3) **Interprofessional Teamwork**, 4) **Management**, 5) the **Practice Instructor**, 6) **Staff**, and 7) the **Student**.

Positive and negative critical incidents have some features in common, the categories of '**Client**', '**Interprofessional Teamwork**', '**Practice Instructor**', and '**Student**'. Though these categories have some similarities, as will be seen later, they differ in their content.

The following figure summarises the types of critical incident and their main categories. The number in parenthesis below or next to each category indicates the number of critical incidents belonging to that category.

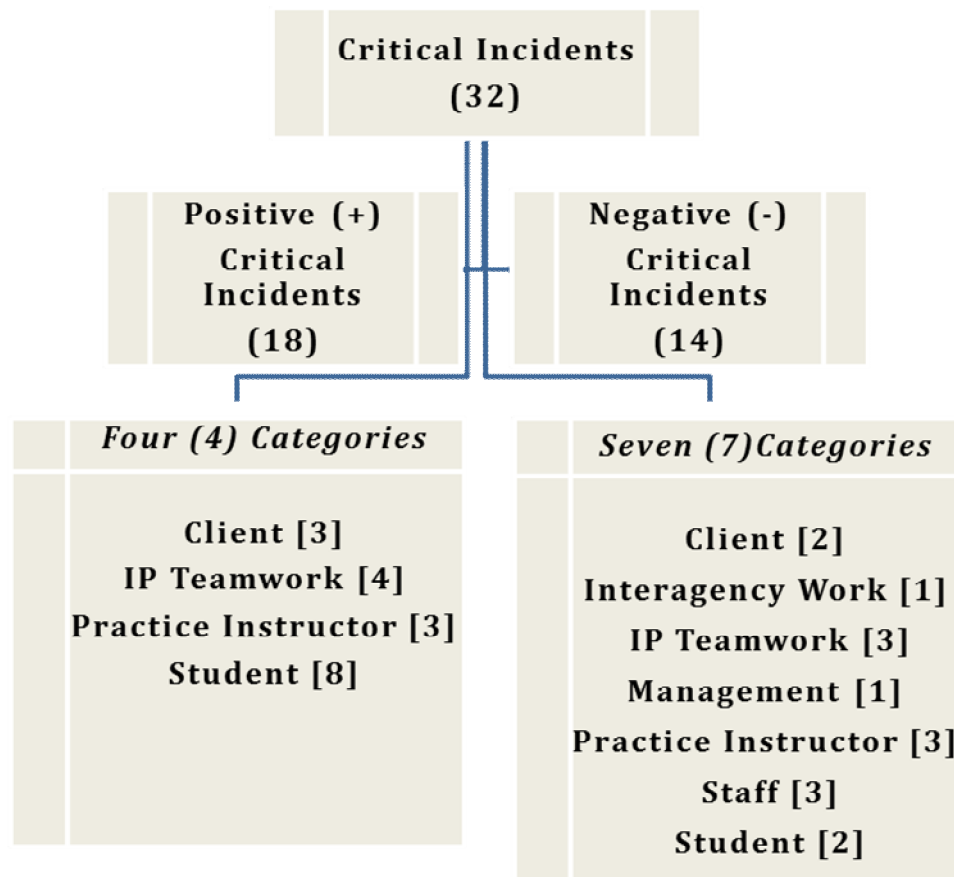


Figure 5.1 Types of Critical Incident and Related Categories

The following sections describe the categories and subcategories (see also Tables 4.3 and 4.4 in Chapter 4.9.1.1) that emerged from the analysis of positive and negative critical incidents. Note that the presentation of the categories of critical incidents below is in alphabetical order, not the frequency in terms of the number of either positive or negative critical incidents.

5.4.1 Positive Critical Incidents and Related Categories

5.4.1.1 Category: *Client* [3]

The Client category is central to three critical incidents categorised as ‘positive’. This category refers to the client’s behaviour during his/her interaction with the professional(s), including students. The Client category overlaps with two other categories, IP Teamwork (CI01) and the Student (CI17, CI28).

The subcategories that emerged from the client category are related to client’s *“destabilizing/disruptive behaviour towards team members”*, client’s *“unethical behaviour regarding organisational ethics and rules”*, and client’s *“unethical and manipulative behaviour towards student”* (Table 5.10 and Table 5.11).

Subcategories also exist within the same incident. The subcategories that emerged from the intersection of the Client category and the categories of IP Teamwork and the Student respectively are *“effective collaboration between team members”*, and the student’s ability to practice *“ethical and professional behaviour skills”* effectively.

Client’s⁴⁹ improper behaviour is what lies at the heart of the three positive incidents. Despite the fact that the client’s behaviour was viewed negatively by students, it is interesting that all the incidents were reported as positive due to good teamwork and the student’s ability to cope with the incident.

⁴⁹ The term ‘**improper behaviour**’ involves a broad range of client behaviours (e.g. challenging, disruptive, aggressive, violent, manipulative, etc.) and refers to interactional and behavioural processes without reference to underlying causes.

Table 5.10_Client-IP Teamwork/ Overlapping Categories/Positive Critical Incidents		
Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/ Description
Client	IP Teamwork	
Subcategories		
Destabilizing/ disruptive behaviour towards team members	Effective collaboration between team members	
		Client's tried to disrupt existing good relations between team members to curry favour with the social worker and take advantage of this. (CI01)

Table 5.11_Client-Student/ Overlapping Categories/Positive Critical Incidents		
Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/ Description
Client	Student	
Subcategories	Common Subcategory	
Unethical behaviour regarding organisational ethics and rules	Ethical and professional behaviour and skills	A client tried to put her personal interests above the public interest by asking the student to breach the rules of the organisation. Student tried to maintain client boundaries and refused to provide any service that did not comply with the rules established by the agency. (CI17)
Unethical and manipulative behaviour towards student		Manipulative client with learning disabilities sought to gain the attention of student in a deceptive and unethical manner, asking her to investigate false allegations of abuse by another staff member. (CI28)

5.4.1.2 Category: *Interprofessional Teamwork* [4]

The category of Interprofessional Teamwork is central to four positive critical incidents. This category refers to the overall behaviour and attitudes of team members from different disciplines towards third parties such as the student (CI09), the client (CI21, CI26) or the organisation (CI32).

The subcategories that emerged are related to the “*team members’ positive attitude to student*”, the “*acceptance of student as team member*”, “*effective collaboration between team members*”, and “*violation of organisational ethics in favour of the client’s interests*” as perceived by the respondent (Table 5.12).

As can be seen from Table 5.12, two subcategories exist within the same incidents (CI09, CI21) since both concepts are equally important for the students. With exception of effective interprofessional collaboration, which was also found in the previous section, all the other subcategories related to the main category of this section are new findings.

The subcategories dealing with the “*acceptance of student as team member*”, as well as the “*team members’ positive attitude to student*” who made mistakes during their performance seem to be key components of an open, ethical and cooperative learning environment.

On the other hand, the subcategory related to the violation of the organisational ethics brings to surface the topic of professionals who go against organisational norms and rules in order to benefit their clients, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Table 5.12_ IP Teamwork/ Positive Critical Incidents

Category	Subcategories	Common Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
IP Teamwork	Team members' positive attitude to student	Acceptance of student as team member	Student claimed ignorance of the organisational code of ethics and did not inform team members about formal counselling offered to a client. Team members understood the student's position and advised her appropriately. (CI09)
	Effective collaboration between team members		Professionals from different disciplines (doctor, nurse, social worker) in a hospital setting worked together to help an indigent and uninsured young immigrant suffering from serious health problems. (CI21)
	Effective collaboration between team members		Team members' successful crisis management of individual with learning disabilities due to separation from his beloved teacher who resigned from the agency. (CI26)
	Violation of organisational ethics in favour of client's interests		Team members violated the ethics of the organisation by changing the results of a diagnostic assessment of a poor child (with single-mother) in order to help her get the treatment she needed at a private centre free of charge. (CI32)

5.4.1.3 Category: *Practice Instructor* [3]

The category of Practice Instructor is central to three positive critical incidents. In the positive incidents the practice instructors were perceived as ethical, skilled social workers. The subcategories emerging from this category are related to the practice instructor's "*ethical skills and professional qualities*", and "*ethical skills and*

personal and professional qualities” (Table 5.13). All the critical incidents summarised in the Table below were observed by students.

Table 5.13_ Practice Instructor/ Positive Critical Incidents		
Category	Subcategories	Critical Incident/ Description
Practice Instructor	Ethical skills and professional qualities	Social worker initiated, facilitated, and coordinated the return of a cancer patient (end-stage) with serious respiratory problems to her island village. (CI02)
	Ethical skills and personal and professional qualities	Separate meetings held with divorced parents with mental health problems to get permission for their child to be assessed for possible dyslexia. Parental counselling. (CI20)
		Counselling support to adult young man with problematic family relations due to his sexual orientation. (CI30)

As shown in Table 5.13, subcategories regarding the last two critical incidents (CI20, CI30) are also related to the personal qualities of social workers. This means that students admired not only the way that the social workers as professionals treated clients and helped them to solve their problems, but they also appreciated their personal character traits, though they did not refer to specific traits; students generally considered their practice instructors as good, both personally and professionally.

5.4.1.4 Category: *Student* [8]

The category of Student is the most common to emerge from the analysis of positive critical incidents. This category, which was described in 5.4.1.1, refers to the student's ability to understand and uphold the values and ethics of professional practice and behaviour. As will be described later, the Student category was found to exist within the category of Practice Instructor in 5 out of the 8 critical incidents described in this section. (Tables 5.14 and 5.15)

The Student category produced one main subcategory related to the student's ability to effectively practice "*ethical and professional behaviour skills*", and appears in all the critical incidents listed in this section, and also exists within the subcategory concerning the "*supervision and support for student*" provided by the practice instructor.

In all the critical incidents reported here, students play the most active role in applying and developing their professional values and ethics in practice; students chose to describe incidents that were part of their handling of a case they were involved in as trainee students⁵⁰. In general, students handled these incidents either under the direct supervision and guidance of their practice instructors, who praised their good work (CI07, CI08, CI10, CI15, CI18) or they handled it themselves because of their practice instructor absence owing to illness or for other reasons (CI11, CI12, CI24).

⁵⁰It helps to recall that according to the instructions that were given to students for recording the critical incident, it was not mandatory for them to report an incident handled by them, though it was desirable.

Table 5.14 *Student/ Positive Critical Incidents*

Category	Common Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Student	Ethical and professional behaviour and skills	Student who replaced her practice instructor in group meetings with young people with learning disabilities handled the challenging behaviour of a group member, avoiding the dissolution of the group. (CI11)
		Student placed in the municipal department of social services agreed to a mother's request to persuade the social welfare agency to reassess her daughter's allowance entitlement due to her learning disabilities. (CI12)
		Counselling parents with difficult/aggressive behaviour after their request for a diagnostic assessment of their children for immature behaviour was rejected. (CI24)

Table 5.15 *Student-Practice Instructor/Overlapping Categories/Positive Critical Incidents*

Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/ Description
Student	Practice Instructor	
Common Subcategories		Counselling support and guidance to family members to provide proper care to a very old family member with serious psychosocial problems. (CI07)
Ethical and professional behaviour and skills	Supervision and support for student	Counselling support and guidance to mother with immature behaviour and her partner while investigating whether conditions were suitable for the upbringing of their newborn baby. (CI08)
		Intake interview with a mother who wanted her child assessed for learning difficulties. Counselling and support to the mother who confided to the social worker she experienced domestic violence from her husband. (CI10)
		Counselling support and guidance to a single mother facing serious financial problems in order to help her terminate her pregnancy. (CI15)

		Intake interview and counselling support and guidance to a Moldovan immigrant woman in final stages of breast cancer. (CI18)
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5.4.2 Negative Critical Incidents and Related Categories

5.4.2.1 Category: *Client* [2]

The category of Client is central to two negative critical incidents, one of which will be discussed later in 5.4.2.4⁵¹. Like the critical incident (CI19) in 5.4.2.4, this incident (CI05) also focuses on the client's challenging behaviour during his/her interaction with the social worker including the student.

Table 5.16_Client/ Negative Critical Incidents		
Category	Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Client	Challenging/Violent behaviour towards student	Client with challenging behaviour blamed the social agency for poor service and asked student to return her personal data file in a violent manner. (CI05)

The Client category generated one main subcategory: "*challenging/violent behaviour towards student*". The incident reported in this section describes an event when the client refused to comply with the rules of the agency and asked the trainee student who had undertaken her/his case, to give back his/her personal data file in a violent manner.

⁵¹ Note that, the Client category has been numbered twice due to its existence with the Management category as well (CI19), as will be discussed in Chapter 5.4.2.4.

5.4.2.2 Category: *Interagency Work* [1]

Like the Management category (see 5.4.2.4), the category of Interagency Work is related to only one reported critical incident (CI29). This category generally refers to the relationships between organisations (public or private) that have different and sometimes incompatible goals.

Table 5.17 <i>Interagency Work /Negative Critical Incidents</i>		
Category	Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Interagency Work	Illegal and unethical practices by public organisations with greater authority and power	The Migrant Services Department ⁵² declined to provide the care planned by the hospital social service department to a mother immigrant patient and her minor child, permanent residents of Greece, which risked their being deported. (CI29)
	Conflict of interest between two different public sector organisations	

The subcategories that emerged from the Interagency Work category are related to the “*illegal and unethical practices by public organisations with greater authority and power*”, and “*conflict of interest between two different public sector organisations*” (Table 5.17).

Through analysis, it appears that the student, who handled the situation herself, experienced strong disappointment and frustration because of the misuse of regulatory power by another public sector organisation involved in the same case.

⁵² In the UK, this service is called ‘Border Agency’.

5.4.2.3 Category: *Interprofessional Teamwork* [3]

There are 3 interprofessional teamwork negative critical incidents concerning various negative aspects of the team members' behaviour and performance. This category also overlapped with the Student category within critical incidents, CI13.

The subcategories that emerged from the IP Teamwork category relate to "*lack of effective collaboration between team members*", and '*illegal⁵³ and unethical team behaviour towards client*' (Tables 5.18).

The overlapping subcategories emerged from the IP Teamwork with the Student category concern the student's "*ethical and professional behaviour skills*" and "*violation of organisational ethics by agency head and team members*" (Table 5.19).

Sometimes as team members (CI13, CI23) and others as observers (CI04), students described negative critical incidents that have their own particularities. In one incident, the student herself tried to rally the team (CI13).

All critical incidents in this section disclose various types of unethical, illegal and unprofessional acts at work, which could have had a serious effect, either on the client's welfare or on the proper functioning of the social agency or organisation.

⁵³The terms 'illegal' and 'unethical' are related, but are not identical: Illegal acts break the law, while unethical acts may not be illegal. In this chapter, the words 'illegal' and 'unethical' put together to portray different aspects of critical incidents.

These acts were the responsibility of the whole team (CI04, CI23) with the connivance of the head of the social service agency (CI13).

Table 5.18_IP Teamwork/Negative Critical Incidents		
Category	Subcategory	Critical Incident/Description
IP Teamwork	Illegal and unethical team members' behaviour towards client	Team members remained indifferent to the plight of two abused and neglected children from a multi problem family who came to the social agency to get tested for dyslexia. (CI04)
	Lack of effective collaboration between team members	Team members' inability to work together and make appropriate decisions lead a drug addicted client to stop attending therapy sessions and leave the addiction treatment centre. (CI23)

Table 5.19_IP Teamwork-Student/Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents		
Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/Description
IP Teamwork	Student	
Subcategories		
Violation of organisational ethics by agency head and team members	Ethical and professional behaviour and skills	
		Team members with the connivance of the head of social services department violated team operating rules. Student took the initiative and intervened during a meeting to restore team co-operation. (CI13)

5.4.2.4 Category: *Management* [1]

Management is not a dominant category emerging from the data in the present study; it exists in parallel with the category of Client, as discussed in 5.4.2.1, and appeared only once in all described critical incidents. Nevertheless, this category is discussed separately because it is seen as of particular importance to the student. As student observes practice instructor's work in a practice situation, s/he begins to understand the ethical nature of the problems professionals face in the workplace.

The Management category has produced two subcategories: *"lack of management support for social worker"*, and *"undermining of the social worker's role as professional"* by management' (Table 5.20). Both indicate the negative attitude that some social services managers in Greece may have toward the profession of social work; especially when managers or administrators come from other specializations (e.g. economists, doctors, etc.).

Table 5.20 <i>Management-Client/ Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents</i>		
Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/ Description
Management	Client	
Subcategories		
Lack of management support for social worker	Violent behaviour towards city council social worker	Violent behaviour of client towards city council social worker was strongly supported by people with political power working within the community. Management undermined the social worker's role. (CI19)
Undermining of social worker's role as professional		

On the other hand, the Client category revealed the relationships that may exist between the clients of social services and local politicians (CI19); the client who

behaved violently towards a city council social worker in order to gain an advantage did not act alone, but was strongly supported by people with political power within the specific workplace context.

5.4.2.5 Category: *Practice Instructor* [3]

The Practice Instructor is central to three negative critical incidents. This (negative) Practice Instructor category refer to her/his inability to apply professional social work values and ethics when working with difficult and challenging clients (CI03, CI22) or when guiding and supervising social work students in the practice context (CI16).

The subcategories that emerged from the Practice Instructor category are related to the *“lack of ethical skills and professional qualities”*, and *“lack of supervision and support for student”* (Table 5.21).

In 2 of the 3 critical incidents (CI03, CI22), students observed their practice instructors making errors or mistakes (e.g. loss of self-control, use of verbal abuse, verbal quarrel) in managing difficult clients, while in the third critical incident (CI16), the student had a bad supervisory experience because of the practice instructor’s indifferent behaviour towards her learning needs.

According to the students, all of the above types of practice instructor errors or attitudes were forms of unprofessional conduct, which is synonymous with unethical conduct in professional practice.

Table 5.21_Practice Instructor/ Negative Critical Incidents			
Category	Common Subcategory	Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Practice Instructor	Lack of ethical skills and professional qualities		Loss of self-control by social worker and use of verbal abuse to a mother/client of social services who neglected her minor child. (CI03)
		Lack of supervision and support for student	Student refused to work on a specific case because her practice instructor did not provide her with the necessary information and guidance for handling the case. (CI16)
			Verbal quarrel between drug addicted woman with wayward behaviour and the social worker in charge of the aid programme for people in need of material assistance. (CI22)

5.4.2.6 Category: *Staff* [3]

The category of Staff is central to three negative critical incidents and no positive ones. This category refers to a number of individual or collective unethical professional actions or behaviour that happened in the working environment.

In 2 of the 3 critical incidents, students were actively involved in the learning process (CI14, CI31), while in the third incident (CI06), the student was an observer of the teacher-students classroom interactions in the context of gaining practice learning experience.

Subcategories that emerged from the Staff category are related to “*lack of ethical and professional behaviour and skills*”, “*flagrant violation of the organisation's code of ethics*”, and “*illegal and unethical behaviour by staff member towards social worker's client*” (Table 5.22).

As can be seen from Table 5.22, each incident has its own features; the first incident (CI06) describes how the lack of the teacher's professional and ethical competence can cause communication problems between adolescents with learning disabilities. On the other hand, the second incident (CI14) describes extreme actions in the workplace and illustrates the lack of ethical accountability and professionalism at all staff levels within the organisation (management and technical staff).

Finally, the third incident (CI31) describes the refusal of a particular staff member to provide care services to the social worker's client. This incident clearly shows how the lack of work ethic can impact on the client's access to the full service.

Table 5.22_Staff/Negative Critical Incidents		
Category	Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Staff	Lack of ethical and professional behaviour and skills	Teacher's inability to collaborate with the teaching assistant to manage and resolve a conflict situation in a special education classroom caused serious communication problems between adolescent students and disrupted the smooth functioning of the class. (CI06)
	Flagrant violation of the organisation's code of ethics by all staff members	Staff (both management and technical) abandoned the social services department to celebrate a national anniversary. Staff instructed students from different disciplines (led by social work students) to manage the social services department by themselves. (CI14)
	Illegal and unethical behaviour by staff member towards social worker's client	Colleague of another specialty (psychologist) within the same social agency refused to provide care services to the social worker's client. (CI31)

5.4.2.7 Category: *Student* [2]

The category of Student is central to two negative critical incidents. These refer to the student's inability to apply ethical standards and professional values when working with clients. In 1 of the 2 critical incidents, the Student category overlapped with the category of Practice Instructor (CI27).

The main subcategory emerging is the student's *"failure to implement ethical and professional behaviour and skills"* (Table 5.23 and 5.24). On the other hand, the emerging from the overlap with the category of Practice Instructor refers to the practice instructor's *"lack of supervision and support for student"* (Table 5.24).

In both types of incident, students failed to adhere to the expected ethical standards and skills for professional social workers. The students attributed this failure to different causes. In the first incident (CI25), the student attributed her/his failure to help the client to her own lack of ability to practice proper professional ethics and skills. Here the student was unable to maintain the professional boundaries between the client and herself as she was emotionally involved with him.

In contrast, in the second incident (CI27), the student criticised the practice instructor for not helping him/her to handle the situation properly; the practice instructor was not a social worker, but a psychologist within this specific organisation as any professional can function as a practice instructor for social work students.

Table 5.23_Student/Negative Critical Incidents		
Category	Subcategory	Critical Incident/ Description
Student	Failure to implement ethical and professional behaviour and skills	Student, who had been involved emotionally with a client, was unable to think objectively so failed to provide appropriate services to the client. (CI25)

Table 5.24_Student-Practice Instructor/Overlapping Categories/Negative Critical Incidents		
Overlapping Categories		Critical Incident/ Description
Student	Practice Instructor	
Subcategories		
Failure to implement ethical and professional behaviour skills	Lack of supervision and support for student	Student failed to deal with clients efficiently because her practice instructor was a psychologist not a social worker and unable to provide her with adequate training and guidance based on social work ethical standards. (CI27)

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the presentation and analysis of the data obtained from 32 written critical incidents. The chapter also outlined and discussed the respondents' characteristics.

The majority of the sample were female students (30 of 32) with a mean age of 24.13 years. Most respondents had done their professional practice in public social agencies/organisations and were active participants in the critical incident. The critical incidents were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that: a) most critical incidents were reported as positive experiences by students (18 of 32), and occurred inside the public sector workplace; b) the public social care sector is associated with both positive and negative critical incidents, while the private not-for-profit sector is only associated with positive critical incidents; c) more positive critical incidents are associated with the start of the practice period, while the number of negative critical incidents is inversely proportional to the number of positive critical

incidents towards the end of practice period, and d) the statistical analysis showed no significant association between positive/negative critical incidents and the respondents' age.

The results of the qualitative content analysis showed variations in the type (i.e. positive or negative) and content of critical incidents and highlighted a number of factors that, in different ways and to different degrees, seem to play a key role in the development of social work values and ethics in the workplace. These factors appeared under various headings (e.g. Client, Practice Instructor, Student, IP Teamwork, etc.) under which either positive or negative critical incidents were classified. These factors will be discussed more broadly in Chapter 7. Lastly, the results showed that a negative critical incident may also result in a positive learning experience for students under certain circumstances.

6. Results and Findings from the Analysis of Written Responses to Open- Ended Questions

Language is a tool that we use to communicate. But, our choice of words also reveals the ideologies that underpin our views of the world and the power relations inherent within these.

Dominelli, 2002

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results that emerged from the analysis of the written responses to the open-ended questions in Section C of the CIT questionnaire (Appendix B). The chapter is divided into six thematic sections based on the responses to the questions from the students. Each section has subsections that present and comment on the data obtained from the analysis of the written responses according to the statistical techniques used and presented in Chapter 4.9.3.3. The results of the statistical techniques are presented in the following order: 1) Correspondence Analysis, 2) Characteristic Words, and 3) Characteristic Responses.

6.2 Professional Values Highlighted by Critical Incidents

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question1: What professional values were: a. upheld (a positive experience) or b. violated/neglected (a negative experience) by this incident, according to the code of ethics? (PD 23.2/1992)

6.2. 1 Correspondence Analysis

Figure 6.1 shows the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results produced by the application of the Correspondence Analysis method to the lexical table of words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) Figure 6.1 illustrates the relationships between the categories and the two factorial axes (Axis 1, Axis 2) in the figure. **“POSITIVE”** (inferior part, right quadrant) is opposed to **“NEGATIVE”** (superior part, left quadrant) on the first axis. On the second axis, the categories **“OBSERVER”** and **“END”** (superior part, right quadrant) are opposed to categories **“ACTIVE PARTICIPANT”**, **“MIDDLE”** (inferior part, left quadrant) and **“BEGINNING”** (inferior part, right quadrant).

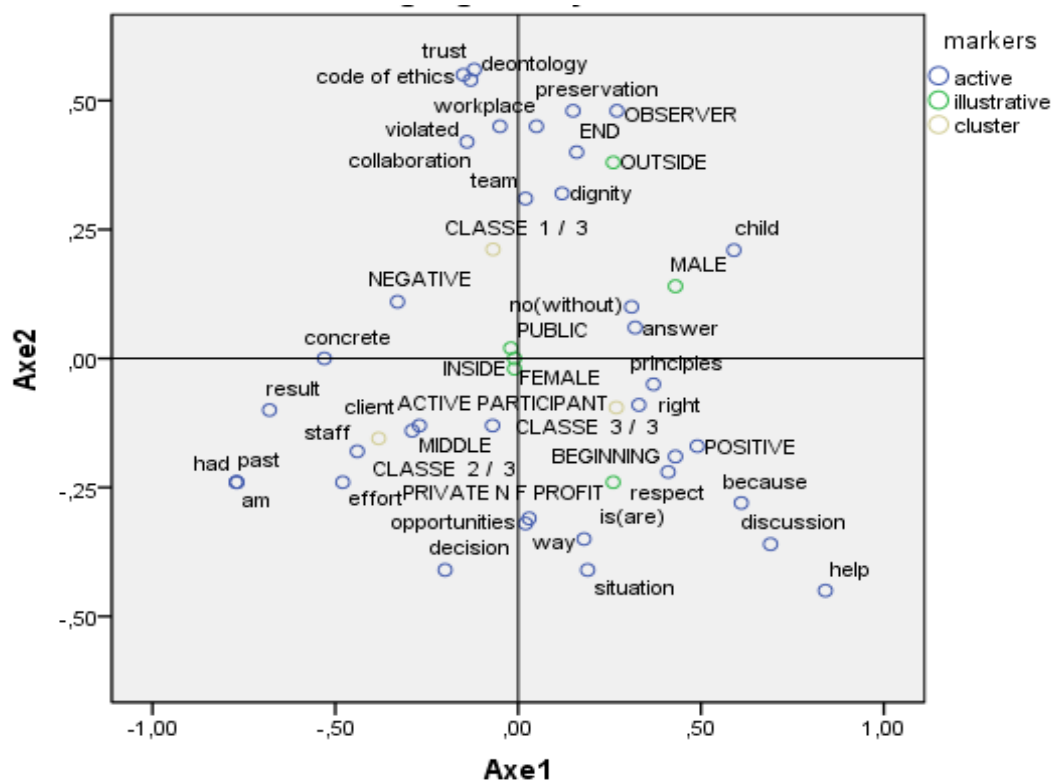


Figure 6.1 Factorial Plane 1x2: “ Professional Values highlighted by Critical Incidents”

ii) Figure 6.1 also shows the position of words with regard to the categories on the factorial plane. Words like “*code of ethics*”, “*deontology*”, “*dignity*”, “*preservation*”, and “*violated*” are located in the space between the categories “**OBSERVER**”, “**END**” and “**NEGATIVE**”. This group of words characterises respondents who observed negative critical incidents occurring at the end of their practice placement. In addition, words like “*staff*”, “*client*”, “*result*” and “*effort*” are located mid-way between the categories “**MIDDLE**”, “**NEGATIVE**” and “**ACTIVE PARTICIPANT**”. These words belong to active participant respondents who experienced negative critical incidents during the middle of their practice placement. Finally, words like “*right*”, “*respect*”, “*principles*” and “*discussion*” are located near the categories “**POSITIVE**” and “**BEGINNING**” and belong to respondents who experienced positive critical incidents at the beginning of their practice placement.

6.2. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.1 gives a list of the characteristic words regarding positive and negative critical incidents. As can be seen, words like “*right*”, “*respect*”, “*principles*”, and “*values*” are the most frequently used in the category of positive critical incidents. Similarly, words like “*client*”, “*concrete*”, “*neglected*”, “*violated*”, “*team*”, and “*staff*” are the most frequently used in the category of negative critical incidents.

Table 6.1 <i>List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents</i>				
Critical Incident	Characteristic Words	Internal frequency⁵⁴	Global frequency⁵⁵	p value*
POSITIVE	right	12	17	0.009*
	respect	12	18	0.018*
	principles	16	26	0.018*

⁵⁴ Internal frequency: Number of occurrences in each type of critical incident

⁵⁵ Global frequency: number of occurrences in the total study population

	values	9	14	0.025*
	child	4	4	0.054
	help	3	3	0.063
	problem	4	5	0.085
	because	4	5	0.085
	opportunities	5	7	0.093
	discussion	5	7	0.093
	process	6	9	0.095
NEGATIVE	client	36	48	0.020*
	concrete	7	7	0.028*
	neglected	7	7	0.028*
	violated	7	7	0.028*
	team	9	10	0.046*
	staff	6	6	0.047*
	result	11	13	0.058
	fact	10	12	0.084

Note: *p<0.05

A closer examination of the characteristic words included in the above Table, shows that in this study:

- When abstract⁵⁶ words (e.g. “right”, “respect”, “principles”, “values”) take precedence over concrete words (e.g. “client”, “staff”, “team”), then there is an application of social work values associated with students’ positive critical experiences in the workplace.
- When concrete words (e.g. “client”, “staff”, “team”) dominate, there is a violation or neglect of social work values; this is associated with students’ negative critical experiences in the workplace.

⁵⁶ Words can be classified into two categories: abstract and concrete. Abstract words are used to discuss general ideas. On the other hand, concrete words are specific words that refer to definite persons, places, or things. Retrieved September 30, 2011, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?Concrete-vs-Abstract&id=630796>

6.2. 3 Characteristic Responses

Table 6.2 shows the most characteristic responses regarding the kind (s) of social work values highlighted in the positive and negative critical incidents. Examining the characteristic responses (Table 6.2) about the kind(s) of professional social work values that emerged from positive and negative critical incidents shows that:

- The same type of social work values can be found in both positive and negative critical incidents, for instance, “*dignity*”, “*respect*”, “*confidentiality*” and “*privacy*”. These social work values are either violated or defended depending on the type of critical incident.
- Some social work values have a broader meaning and can take various forms. For example, “*respect*” can refer to the concepts of “*confidentiality*” and “*privacy*”, or the “*personality of the client*”. It can also be associated with the clients’ right to make their own decisions. In the same way, “*right(s)*” can refer to the “*rights of the individual....*”, “*right to decide...*” or can also be related to the clients’ right for self-determination, such as, “*...right to accept or refuse the type of services offered and the method for dealing with problems*⁵⁷...”.
- The concepts of “*respect*” along with that of “*dignity*” seem to be the dominant social work values as they are included in most responses.
- The values of “*confidentiality*”, “*privacy*”, “*equal opportunities*” (which is referred to as ‘social justice’), and “*non- discrimination*” of any kind are significantly present in the text responses.
- The principles of “*responsibility*” and “*collaboration*” seem to be important in order to avoid any ambiguity or conflict in the workplace which may result in bad practices.

⁵⁷ The quotes are from the responses included in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 *Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding
“Professional Values highlighted by Critical Incidents”*

CI	CC ⁵⁸	CI No ⁵⁹	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	1.776	2	<i>The main core values/principles of social work referred to are the preservation of human dignity and the rights of the individual as a mentally ill patient.</i>
	1.677	17	<i>Respect for rights of confidentiality and privacy.</i>
	1.245	7	<i>The following values came to the surface through the specific(concrete) incident: 1) acknowledgement of each person's right to accept or refuse the type of services offered and the method for dealing with problems, provided this does not endanger the safety and prosperity of fellow humans and society. 2) Contribution to the provision of equal opportunities without age-based discrimination.</i>
	1.186	11	<i>Faith in human nature and its capabilities. Provision of equal opportunities to individuals and communities.</i>
	1.100	15	<i>There was respect for the personality of the client and respect for her final decision. Confidentiality was also kept and there was no discrimination based on origin.</i>
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.500	23	<i>With regard to the specific incident, I believe that the values of respect for the client's personality, and right to improve his quality of life were violated; the social worker, who was prejudiced against the client's past behaviour, conveyed her prejudice to other team members leading them to focus only on the client's negative behaviour in the past. As a result, team members ignored the client's desire and right to change his current life for the better.</i>
	0.422	13	<i>I believe that several values of social work were violated which are mostly implicitly stated in the code of ethics as for example the responsibility of staff team to respect the operating team rules. In addition, the fact that both the Practice Instructor and the Head of the Agency ignored my presence, as well as that of my colleague meant they violated another principle, that of</i>

⁵⁸ CC= Classification Criteria

⁵⁹ No= the number of critical incident

			<i>collaboration between professionals. Finally, the fact that the team meeting took place in a common area of the agency endangered client/social worker confidentiality.</i>
	0.299	22	<i>There are some indications that, article 6 of the code, concerning the obligation of the social worker to preserve the dignity of the client, and the privacy regarding confidential data, was neglected.</i>
	0.146	3	<i>In accordance with the code of ethics for social workers (Presidential Decree 23(2)/1992) and the outcome of this negative experience during my professional practicum, I consider that the following principles – values of social work were violated: The social worker did not show respect for the person of the client and failed to protect her dignity by not acknowledging her right to decide issues in her own case.</i>

6.3 Discussion of Critical Incident with Others

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question2: Did you discuss the critical incident with a supervisor, university tutor, workplace colleagues or others? If so, who was it, and why that particular person? If there was no discussion, why not?

6.3. 1 Correspondence Analysis

Figure 6.2 shows the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results produced by the application of the CA method to the lexical table words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) Figure 6.2 visualizes the relationships between the different categories and the two factorial axes (Axis 1, Axis 2). As can be seen, “**POSITIVE**” (right quadrant) and “**BEGINNING**” (inferior part, right quadrant) are opposed to “**NEGATIVE**”⁶⁰ (left quadrant) on the first axis. On the second axis, “**OBSERVER**” (superior part, right quadrant) and “**END**” (superior part, left quadrant) are opposed to “**MIDDLE**” (inferior part, left quadrant).

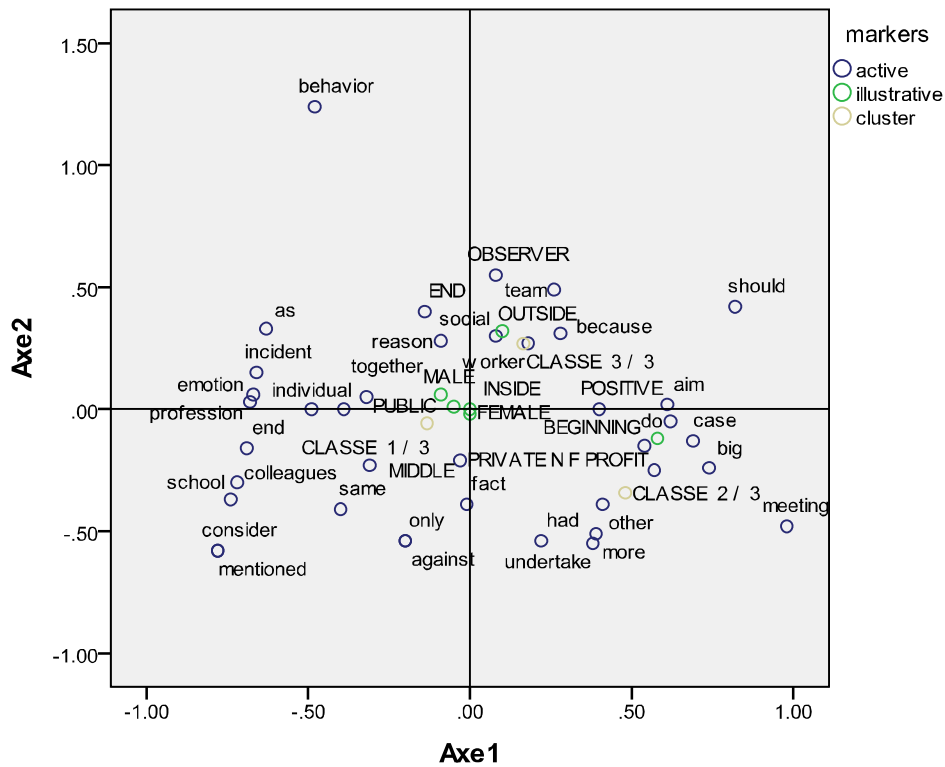


Figure 6.2 Factorial Plane 1x2: “Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others”

- ii) Figure 6.2 also shows how the words are located on the factorial plane. Words like “*colleagues*”, “*individual*”, and “*emotion*” are positioned in the space near “**NEGATIVE**” or/and “**MIDDLE**”. These words relate to respondents who experienced negative incidents in the middle of their practice placement. Similarly, words like “*aim*”, “*case*”, “*undertake*”, and “*meeting*” are positioned in mid-way between the “**POSITIVE**”, and

⁶⁰ ‘NEGATIVE’ is not shown on the graph due to the overcrowding of words, but is located diametrically opposite to ‘POSITIVE’ on the first axis.

“BEGINNING”. This group of words belongs to respondents who experienced positive incidents at the beginning of their practice placement. Finally, words like *“social”*, *“worker”*, and *“team”* are positioned in the space near **“POSITIVE”** and **“OBSERVER”**. These words characterise respondents who were observers and experienced positive incidents.

6.3. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.3 shows a list of the characteristic words related to positive and negative critical incidents. Words like *“worker”*⁶¹ and *“incident”* are the more frequently used in positive critical incidents. Similarly, words like *“individual”*, *“profession”*, *“colleagues”*, *“incident”*, *“friend”*, *“school”*, and *“together”* are more frequently used in negative critical incidents. As will be seen in the next paragraph, the word *“individual”* that dominates negative critical incidents refers mainly to colleagues, fellow students and friends.

Table 6.3 <i>List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents</i>				
Critical Incident	Characteristic words	Internal frequency	Global frequency	p value*
POSITIVE	worker	17	26	0.068*
	incident	25	41	0.080*
	other	5	6	0.101
	responsible	5	6	0.101
	because	12	18	0.102
	undertake	3	3	0.118
	psychologist	3	3	0.118
	should	3	3	0.118
	meeting	3	3	0.118
	big	3	3	0.118
	instructor	15	24	0.130
	workplace	8	12	0.176
	Interprofessional	4	5	0.176
	case	4	5	0.176

⁶¹ Note that the word “worker” refers to the agency social worker⁶¹ who has the role of practice instructor for social work students.

NEGATIVE	individual	12	14	0.007*
	profession	7	7	0.008*
	colleagues	6	6	0.017*
	incident	5	5	0.033*
	friend	4	4	0.050*
	school	4	4	0.066*
	together	9	12	0.079*
	end	5	6	0.116

Note: * $p < 0.1$

The above results obtained using the technique of characteristic words will now be used in conjunction with the technique of characteristic responses in order to better understand and interpret the data.

6.3. 3 Characteristic Responses

Table 6.4 shows the most characteristic responses concerning the discussion of critical incidents with others. A careful look at the responses for each type of critical incident presented in the Table below illustrates that:

- The practice instructor is the first person to whom students turn for advice, help or report to in relation to the management of critical incidents.
- The practice instructor is a key person for imparting the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice.
- Positive workplace relationships (e.g. collaboration, support,) encourage and inspire students to discuss difficult issues openly and honestly, and develop and apply their ethical reasoning skills.

- Fellow students and friends are an important source of support for students. The most frequent types of support seem to be affirmative support, advice, information and emotional support.
- Students' responsibility to discuss critical incidents with their practice instructors and other responsible professionals in the social agency is part of ethical behaviour in the workplace.

Table 6.4 *Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding "Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others"*

CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	0.985	24	<i>I discussed this incident with my practice instructor and supervisor, who were constantly close to me in order to instruct me on how I should handle this incident, while also trying to relieve me from the stress I was feeling.</i>
	0.783	26	<i>I discussed this incident with the social worker assigned as my practice instructor, in order to understand the actions I should perform as a professional social worker in a similar incident in the future.</i>
	0.537	20	<i>I discussed this incident with the interprofessional team of the organisation, my supervisor, the interviewing social worker and my fellow students, as well. In respect to the interprofessional team, this incident was bound to be discussed, since it was a very difficult critical incident and the team had to be briefed so that the remaining mental health professionals had access to the pertinent information. I discussed this with my practice instructor/supervisor since I had to report to her any incident I attended. I also discussed it with the social worker who handled the incident since I got very confused about what happened and because I trust and appreciate her opinion. Finally, I and my fellow students were seriously affected and I felt the need to share this with them.</i>
	0.521	21	<i>I discussed the incident with the practice instructor, in order to keep him updated on my actions and also in order to</i>

			<i>receive advice on them, along with the remaining interprofessional team to improve collaboration and have a clear view of the incident.</i>
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.589	22	<i>I discussed the incident with a friend the same age to me and from a completely different educational background as I wished to understand how someone unrelated to social work perceived the specific (concrete) incident, and whether they considered that the dignity and privacy of the client had been violated, while also commenting on the general behaviour of a professional towards a client who is difficult to handle.</i>
	0.542	29	<i>I discussed this incident with my instructor/supervisor and my colleagues in Social Service. I felt the need to share it with someone and the specific (concrete) individuals were capable of understanding my frustration and advising me.</i>
	0.443	13	<i>I initially discussed this incident with my colleague (volunteer Psychologist), who was also upset about this incident. I also discussed it with two of my closest friends (and fellow students) because they are individuals whose opinion and advice is very important to me. These individuals share the same enthusiasm for social work and I trust them completely. Finally, I had a pertinent discussion with the management staff on the following day when they came to the social service agency, after they requested to be briefed on the events of the previous day and the matters concerning the trainees were discussed.</i>
	0.399	23	<i>I discussed the specific (concrete) incident both with my instructor and with other colleagues in front of the interprofessional team or privately. During discussions, I refrained from commenting on the role and mode of work used by colleagues. However, I did state my disagreement with certain aspects of the manner chosen to deal with the specific (concrete) incident. Finally, I discussed this incident with a fellow student, whose opinion and views I trust, in order to allow a third person, not directly related to the incident to have a fresh eye and a more objective view of the subject.</i>

6.4 Critical Incidents and Future Practice

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question 3a: If faced with a similar event again, would you handle it differently? If so, what would you change? How would you achieve this?

6.4.1 Correspondence Analysis

The following Figure 6.3 shows the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results produced by the application of the CA method to the lexical table words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) Figure 6.3 shows a clear distinction between **“POSITIVE”** (inferior part, right quadrant) and **“NEGATIVE”** (superior part, left quadrant) on the first factorial axis, as well as between **“OBSERVER”** (superior part, left quadrant) and **“ACTIVE PARTICIPANT”** (inferior part, right quadrant) on the second axis.

ii) Figure 6.3 also depicts words and their position on the factorial plane. As can be seen, words like *“instructor”*, *“worker”*, *“profession”*, and *“principles”* are located mid-way between the categories **“OBSERVER”** and **“END”**. These words characterize respondents who were observers of the incident that happened at the end of their practice placement. On the other hand, words like *“incident”*, *“situation”*, and *“handled”* are located near the categories **“POSITIVE”** and **“BEGINNING”**. Such words came from respondents who experienced positive incidents at the beginning of their practice placement. Finally, words like *“collaboration”*, *“staff”*, and *“against”* are located near **“MIDDLE”** and used by respondents who experienced negative incidents during the middle period of their practice placement.

6.4. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.5 presents a list of the characteristic words used to describe positive and negative critical incidents. As can be seen, the most frequently used words for positive incidents are “way”, “situation”, “handled”, and “same”. Similarly, the most frequently used words refer to negative incidents are “instructor”, “professional”, and “role”.

Considering all the words in the Table (6.5), it appears that: positive critical incidents are described using words that highlight the positive handling of the event. By contrast, negative critical incidents are associated with words that focus on persons and ways to better handle a similar experience in the future.

Table 6.5 <i>List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents</i>				
Critical Incident	Characteristic words	Internal frequency	Global frequency	p value*
POSITIVE	way	12	16	0.002*
	situation	5	5	0.006*
	handled	10	15	0.016*
	same	7	15	0.049*
	could	3	4	0.143
	better	3	5	0.262
	more	3	5	0.262
	consider	5	10	0.286
	thing	2	3	0.306
	moment	2	3	0.306
	incident	7	16	0.365
	did	3	6	0.388
	tried	3	6	0.388
NEGATIVE	instructor	5	5	0.038*
	professional	5	5	0.038*
	role	5	5	0.038*
	case	7	8	0.141
	position	4	4	0.158
	intervene	4	4	0.158

	staff	4	4	0.158
	is(are)	4	4	0.158
	against	4	4	0.158
	service	4	4	0.158
	collaboration	8	10	0.221
	big	3	3	0.252
	during	3	3	0.252
	clients	12	17	0.357

Note: *p<0.05

6.4. 3 Characteristic Responses

The next Table (6.6) shows the most characteristic responses with regard to positive and negative critical incidents. A closer look at those relating to positive incidents shows that, although the respondents reported that they would use the same methods to handle similar incidents in the future, they focus on some elements that appear to further contribute to positive incident handling in the future, for instance:

- The appropriate methods chosen for handling the incident
- The professional experience of those involved in the incident
- The existence of collaboration between employees in the workplace

On the other hand, characteristic responses relating to negative incidents gave specific information and examples in order to avoid similar poor handling of incidents in the future. As evidenced by the responses, students focused on issues related to:

- People with power in the workplace;
- Boundary issues in the social worker/client relationship;
- Client empowerment;
- Collaboration between the employees and students;
- The student's role as a trainee in the workplace.

Table 6.6 *Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Critical Incidents and Future Practice”*

CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	1.691	20	<i>No, I think that I would act again in the same way.</i>
	1.465	2	<i>I would handle it in the same way, since the method chosen turned out to be successful.</i>
	1.245	26	<i>Considering the incident, and having seen it being handled by experienced professional specialists, I believe that I would handle it in the way I saw them act.</i>
	1.143	1	<i>I consider that I would deal with the situation in the same way, while prioritizing collaboration with my fellow colleagues.</i>
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.508	19	<i>Being a trainee student, I don't believe there was anything I could have done. However, if I had been the instructor, I would have never allowed such abuse. I would control the “people with power” and not have allowed their presence in the office during my session. I would not have recommended the extraordinary financial support to the client; instead, I would have suggested other solutions and provisions, more permanent and significant, in which she would have participated actively, so as not to become “incapable” and “dependent” on social services.</i>
	0.346	5	<i>I would have clarified the boundaries in my collaboration with the clients in a more precise manner. In any case, I would have booked a session a few days later, in order to train the client's social skills, with the purpose of having them understand that additional cases are waiting to be served by social services and that clients cannot not decide when they should be served, except in cases of emergency.</i>
	0.319	13	<i>I consider that I would have been less discrete and that I would have tried to remind them (i.e. colleagues) that we had met as an interprofessional team in order to deal with the trainees and with service issues, and not with their personal issues and concerns(student refers to team members).</i>

	0.286	4	<i>If I were to have such an experience, I wouldn't opt to remain a remote observer; instead, I would have intervened in order to speak my mind to the interprofessional team. I would have done this if there had been a climate of collaboration between the agency employees and trainee students.</i>
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6.5 Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question3b: Did the theoretical values and skills knowledge gained during your studies help you understand how to implement and uphold social work values and ethics in the workplace at the time of the incident? If not, what kind of information would have helped?

6.5. 1 Correspondence Analysis

Figure 6.4 provides the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results produced by the application of the CA method to the lexical table words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) Figure 6.4 shows how the factorial axes markedly separate the categories. As can be seen, “**POSITIVE**” (superior part, right quadrant) and “**BEGINNING**” (inferior part, right quadrant) are in opposition to “**NEGATIVE**” (inferior part, left quadrant) and “**END**” (inferior part, left quadrant) on the first axis. On the second axis, “**OBSERVER**” and “**MIDDLE**” (superior part, left quadrant) are in opposition to “**ACTIVE PARTICIPANT**”, (inferior part, right quadrant) and “**END**” (inferior part, left quadrant).

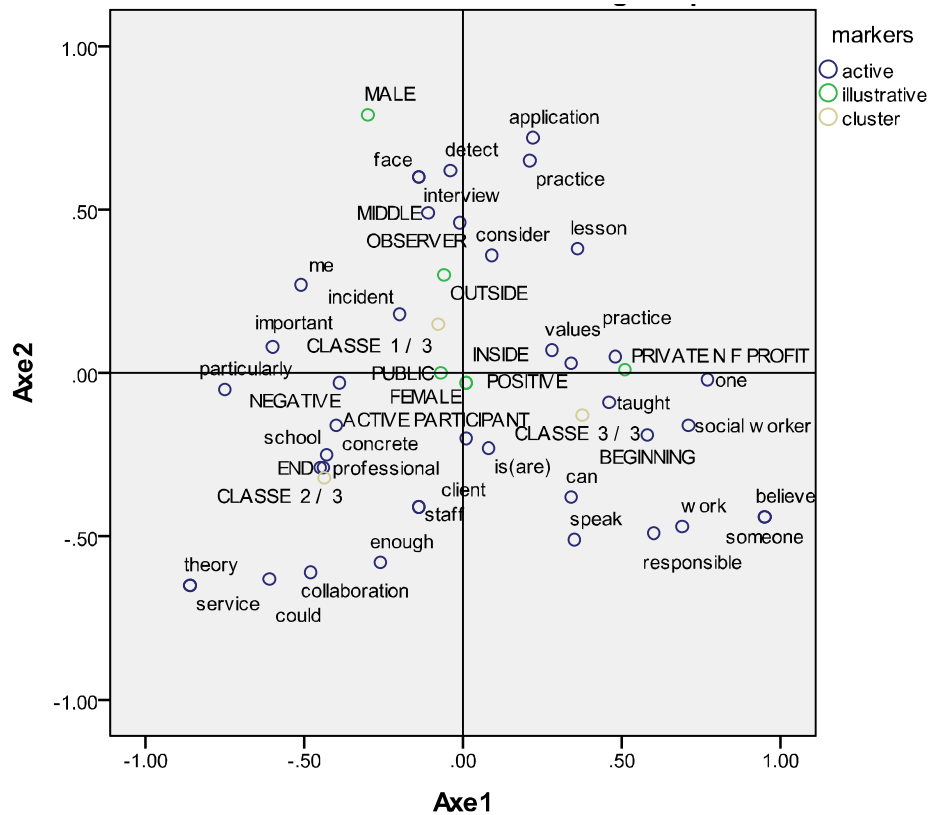


Figure 6.4 Factorial Plane 1x2: “Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection”

- ii) Figure 6.4 also illustrates how the words are located on the factorial plane in relation to the categories. As can be seen, words like “incident”, “face”, and “detect” are located in the space between “OBSERVER” and “MIDDLE”. These words come from respondents who were observers’ role of the incident which happened during the middle of their practice placement. Similarly, words like “school”, “professional”, and “concrete” are located mid-way between “END” and “NEGATIVE”. This group of words comes from respondents who experienced negative incidents at the end of their practice placement. Finally, words like “values”, “social”, “worker” and “taught” are located near “POSITIVE” and “BEGINNING” and relate to the experience of positive incidents at the beginning of their practice placement.

6.5. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.7 presents a list of the characteristic words related to positive and negative critical incidents. As can be seen, the most frequently used words for the category of positive critical incidents are “*practice*”, “*values*”, “*lesson*”, “*application*”, “*workplace*”, and “*work*”. Similarly, the most frequently used words for negative critical incidents are “*service*”, “*important*”, “*professional*”, “*school*”, “*knowledge*”, and “*theory*”.

Table 6.7 *List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents*

Critical Incident	Characteristic Words	Internal frequency	Global frequency	p value*
POSITIVE	practice	9	11	0.052*
	values	8	12	0.079*
	lesson	4	5	0.085*
	application	4	5	0.085*
	workplace	4	5	0.085*
	work	6	7	0.087*
	responsible	3	3	0.153
	social	3	3	0.153
	worker	3	3	0.153
	believe	3	3	0.153
	had	3	3	0.153
	social	7	10	0.233
NEGATIVE	service	5	5	0.021*
	important	4	4	0.046*
	professional	5	6	0.078*
	school	4	5	0.085*
	knowledge	10	15	0.091*
	theory	2	2	0.099*
	against	7	11	0.197
	role	2	2	0.215
	handling	4	6	0.278
	regarding	4	6	0.278
	me	3	4	0.260

Note: *p<0.1

As can be seen, words relating to negative critical incidents focus on abstract knowledge gained on the course and its application in relation to social work service. By contrast, words commonly included in positive critical incidents focus on the application of values taught in classroom in the practice context.

6.5. 3 Characteristic Responses

Table 6.8 depicts the most characteristic responses reported by students in relation to the potential knowledge gaps between theory and practice. Taking the results of the positive and negative responses together, it can be said that:

- The acquired theoretical knowledge seems (with a few exceptions) generally to be sufficient for understanding social work values and ethical matters in the workplace. While there is no lack of basic theoretical knowledge, there appears to be a lack of specialised knowledge for instance, about burnout syndrome in clinical practice, or the values and principles of group work, or even knowledge to meet the needs and particularities of the Greek social services.

Table 6.8_ Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection”			
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	0.275	18	<i>I can't say I noticed any knowledge gaps; I can only say that each workplace follows the same policy, but in a different way. In addition, a social worker may use a specific ethical skill in order to achieve a result, while someone else may not use it, believing it will not be useful. Consequently, I believe that the manner in which each of us applies (and whether) the principles/values of the profession of social work is subjective.</i>
	0.205	15	<i>In our Department of Social Work, everything taught about values and ethics is in theory, so one must discern and apply theory in practice. I believe that dealing with certain matters during the practicum, and later on as a professional, is related to emotions and values of a general nature, which cannot be taught or examined. In regards to the core principles applied in general</i>

			<i>in the profession, I did not observe any gaps.</i>
	0.191	26	<i>I can't claim that I observed any gaps; however, when one is inexperienced and new to the profession, several moments may come when you don't know how to react, even if you have been taught about such moments in class. Daily contact with clients is required to acquire experience. In other words, I believe that fieldwork practice, much more the six-month practicum in the profession can offer a variety of incidents that have to be treated separately. Consequently, practicums are very useful, since they combine theory and actual work, while trying to cope with incidents under real conditions.</i>
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.402	13	<i>The knowledge gap I found was not directly related to the values of the profession; it was indirectly related to them since it was linked to the manifestation and consequences of Burnout Syndrome in clinical practice. Personally speaking, I was particularly interested in what a social worker is permitted to do in order to deal with this phenomenon, both on a personal and professional level. Specifically, in the Mental Health Agency where I conducted my practicum most of the instructors who were going to retire soon were mostly indifferent towards students and clients. The only thing they seemed to be interested in was leaving as soon as possible to go home. I pondered on whether something could be done about this, but I failed to come up with an answer.</i>
	0.381	23	<i>The specific incident was not capable of making me feeling insecure about my theoretical knowledge and skills I acquired during my studies in the Department, neither did I locate any gaps in regards to the values / principles and the ethics of the profession. However, it is a fact that theoretical knowledge is not always enough or suitable for dealing with an actual incident. For this reason, I believe that the capacity to evolve as a professional is very important, including constant efforts to learn and move forward to become capable of successfully coping with the tasks at hand.</i>

	0.280	6	<i>The knowledge gaps I detected referred to theoretical knowledge concerning the values and principles that should govern the operation of a group and the methods for the creative release of intense emotions. In addition, I realized that ignorance of suitable operations resulted in erroneous messages, with the possible risk of rupturing the team.</i>
	0.223	16	<i>Through this learning experience, I realized that theory is not that closely related to actual practice. This is due to the fact that during the specific incident, I behaved as taught in class, which resulted in conflict with the practice instructor. I cannot describe specific knowledge gaps; there are definitely enough due either to myself or the personnel of the course. Or... it just seems that the theory taught is not tailored to the specific welfare system applied in Greece.</i>

6.6 Changes in Thinking & Acting

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question3c: Did the critical incident experience change the way you think and/or act as an ethical social worker?
If so, in what way?

6.6. 1. Correspondence Analysis

Figure 6.5 provides the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results from applying the CA method to the lexical table words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) Figure 6.5 shows the projection of the categories on the factorial axes. As can be seen, “**POSITIVE**” (inferior part, right quadrant) is opposed to

“**NEGATIVE**” (superior part, left quadrant) on the first axis. On the second axis, “**OBSERVER**” and “**MIDDLE**” (inferior part, left quadrant) are in opposition to “**END**” and “**ACTIVE PARTICIPANT**”, (superior part, right quadrant).

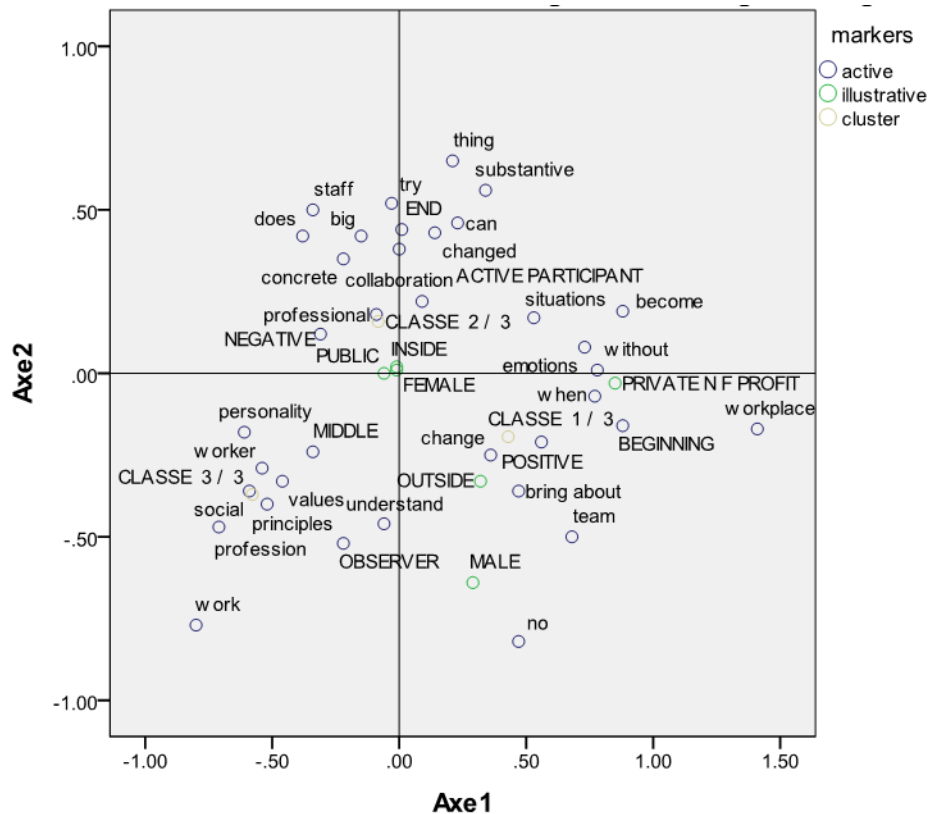


Figure 6.5 Factorial Plane 1x2: “Changes in Thinking & Acting”

- ii) Figure 6.5 also presents the position of words in the factorial plane in relation to the categories. Words like “*change*”, “*bring about*”, and “*emotions*” are located in the space between “**POSITIVE**” and “**BEGINNING**”. These words come from respondents who experienced positive incidents at the beginning of their practice placement. Similarly, words like “*professional*”, “*collaboration*”, and “*concrete*” are located in mid-way between “**END**”, “**NEGATIVE**” and “**ACTIVE PARTICIPANT**”. This group of words characterizes active participant respondents who experienced negative incidents at the end of their practice placement. Finally, words like

“social”, “worker”, “values”, and “principles” are located near **“OBSERVER”** and **“MIDDLE”**. These words belong to respondents who were observers of the incidents during the middle of their practice placement.

6.6. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.9 shows a list of the characteristic words for positive and negative critical incidents. As can be seen, the most frequently used words in the category of positive incidents are: *“bring about”, “change”, “no”, “without”, and “workplace”*. Similarly, the most frequently used words for the category of negative incidents are: *“professional”, “social”, and “worker”*.

Table 6.9 <i>List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents</i>				
Critical Incident	Characteristic Words	Internal frequency	Global frequency	p value*
POSITIVE	bring about	11	14	0.001*
	change	11	16	0.006*
	no	3	3	0.045*
	without	3	3	0.045*
	workplace	3	3	0.045*
	diversity	2	2	0.128
	emotions	3	4	0.133
	activity	3	5	0.247
	right	2	3	0.293
	anger	2	3	0.293
	become	2	3	0.293
	help	2	3	0.293
NEGATIVE	professional	22	28	0.001*
	social	11	12	0.035*
	worker	9	10	0.075*
	does	5	5	0.107
	staff	4	4	0.168
	adherence	4	4	0.168
	effort	4	4	0.168

	result	3	3	0.263
	well	3	3	0.263
	work	3	3	0.263
	personality	3	3	0.263
	profession	3	3	0.263

Note: *p<0.1

6.6.3 Characteristic Responses

Table 6.10 illustrates the most characteristic responses regarding potential changes in the students' thinking and acting in relation to their professional values and ethics. Considering the content of these responses for both types of critical incidents, it can be said that:

- In general, both positive and negative critical incidents challenged students to think about potential changes to the way they look at their professional values and ethics in the workplace, and helped them to reflect upon themselves as future ethical social workers.
- Students reported different changes in their thinking/acting, which are associated with either their personal or professional behaviour and growth, or both. For example,
 - Regarding changes at a personal level, students spoke of personal maturity and confidence, avoiding intolerance towards others, being less sentimental, accepting human diversity, and keeping personal and professional lives separate.
 - Regarding changes at a professional level, students talked about the social worker's ethical responsibility in practice settings, and the necessity for being aware of organisational values and ethics. Students also spoke of observing the professional boundaries between different disciplines, as well

as the elimination of all forms of exploitation of the students as trainees by their practice instructors.

Table 6.10 *Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Changes in Thinking & Acting”*

CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	1.692	18	<i>The changes affected the manner I perceive things; I felt more mature and confident, and sceptical about certain matters.</i>
	1.385	9	<i>No significant change was effected, but, I will make sure that in future, I will be familiar with the rules and methods applied in each social work agency I work or cooperate with.</i>
	1.205	2	<i>No significant changes occurred to my mode of thinking and doing things; however, it did improve me professionally.</i>
	1.108	20	<i>The main change was learning to listen without thinking about myself with regards to each incident. In other words, I avoid thinking what I would have done in their place (i.e. the clients), getting upset or over-involved with them about everything, since this nullifies my opinion and stops me helping them. Being over-involved with clients, loses the professional capacity to help solve their problem. I must accept their different natures, try to understand it and refrain from judging them or getting shocked by them.</i>
	0,616	7	<i>A significant change brought about by the specific incident in my way of thinking and acting was that it taught me to keep a good balance between empathy and professional detachment.</i>

CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.541	4	<i>This helped me understand even better the significance of the responsibility borne by the social worker with regards to how the various incidents evolve.</i>
	0.229	19	<i>Obviously, this incident had a significant impact on my mode of thinking and acting as a future professional. I believe questioning the role of the social worker in the workplace can also result in questioning and rejecting the principles and values of the profession itself. Such actions must be reported and the social worker must protect both her/his/ profession and clients. S/He must act as a shield, shielding anything that could affect the principles of the profession. S/He must refrain from rendering the clients incapable of acting and finding solutions, while discovering whether behind the request for "financial support" there are other messages that cannot be expressed by the client. Finally, s/he may set strict limits to any external factors that could affect her/his work, e.g. authority persons.</i>
	0.217	3	<i>The specific incident did not change my mode of thinking as a certified social worker; instead, it reminded me once more that we should never forget the principles and values governing our profession, and that we must always follow the code of ethics and avoid getting carried away by personal emotions and thoughts.</i>
	0.097	13	<i>Lots have changed after this event; I believe that in the future I will be in a constant battle with regards to boundaries and my professional relations with the remaining staff. In addition, I will try to defend my views and role, regardless of how difficult this may become. Finally, as a professional I will never allow myself to carry to the agency my personal problems and issues, which could distract me from the issues which concern my clients.</i>

6.7 Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents

This section describes and discusses the results obtained from the analysis of responses to the following question:

Question3d: What did you learn, whether negative or positive, about the importance of upholding social work values and ethics in the workplace?

6.7.1 Correspondence Analysis

Figure 6.6 shows the graphical representation (Factorial Plane 1x2) of the results produced by applying the CA method to the lexical table words x categories resulting from the statistical processing of the responses to the above question. More specifically,

- i) As shown in Figure 6.6, **“POSITIVE”** (inferior part, right quadrant) is in opposition to **“NEGATIVE”** (superior part, left quadrant) and **“END”** (inferior part, left quadrant) on the first axis. On the second axis, the **“MIDDLE”** (superior part, right quadrant) is in opposition to **“END”** (inferior part, left quadrant) and **“BEGINNING”** (inferior part, right quadrant).

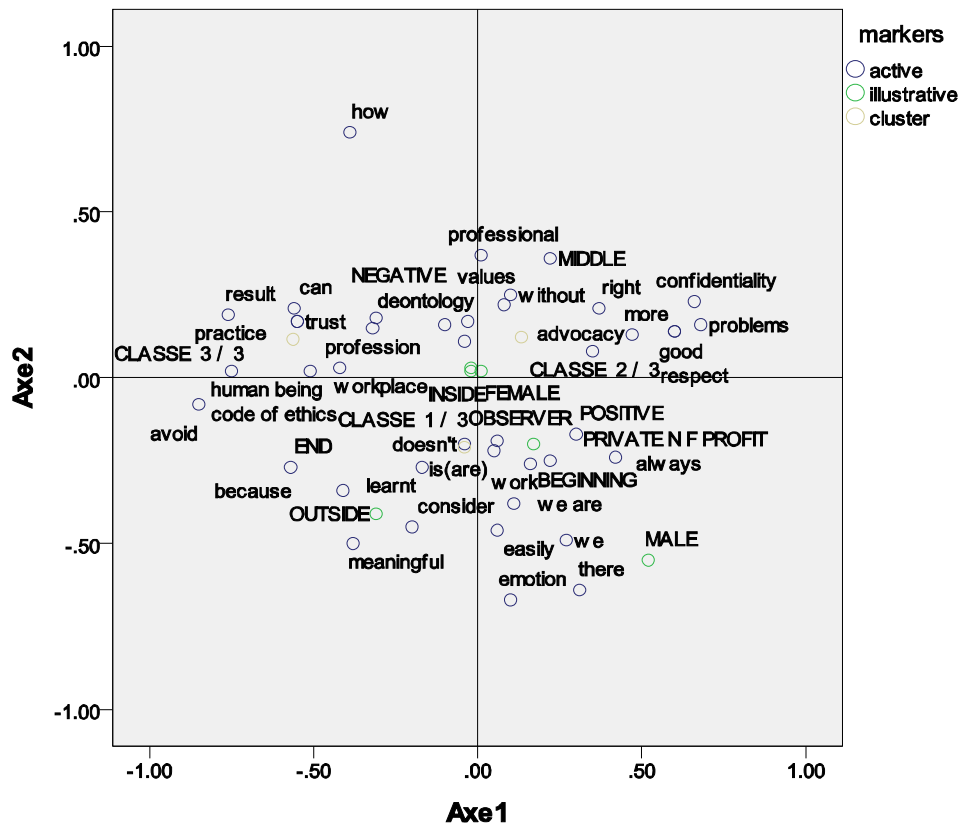


Figure 6.6 Factorial Plane 1x2: “Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents”

ii) Figure 6.6 also shows how the words are positioned on the factorial plane in relation to the capitalized categories. As can be seen, words like “*code of ethics*”, “*learnt*”, and “*workplace*” are located mid-way between the “**END**” and “**OBSERVER**”. These words are characteristic of respondents who were observers role of the incident, which occurred at the end of their practice placement. Similarly, words like “*values*”, “*confidentiality*”, “*respect*”, and “*right*” are located near “**MIDDLE**” and are characteristic of respondents who experienced their critical incidents in the middle of their practice placement. Finally, words like “*practice*”, “*deontology*”, and “*trust*” are located mid-way between the “**NEGATIVE**” and “**END**”. These words come from respondents who experienced their negative incident at the end of their practice placement.

6.7. 2 Characteristic Words

Table 6.11 provides a list of the characteristic used words regarding both positive and negative critical incidents. As can be seen, words like “always”, “respect”, “work”, “good”, and “learnt” are the most frequently used to refer to positive critical incidents. However,, words like “profession”, “avoid”, “workplace”, “result”, and “principles” are the most frequently used in the category of negative critical incidents.

Table 6.11 <i>List of words with significant differences in use between positive and negative critical incidents</i>				
Critical Incident	Characteristic Words	Internal Frequency	Global Frequency	p value
POSITIVE				
	always	4	4	0.065*
	respect	5	6	0.115*
	work	5	7	0.130*
	good	3	3	0.130*
	learnt	3	3	0.130*
	problems	8	12	0.130
	we are	4	5	0.175
	right	5	7	0.196
	relation	4	5	0.196
NEGATIVE				
	profession	8	9	0.016*
	avoid	4	4	0.058*
	workplace	4	4	0.058*
	result	3	3	0.118*
	principles	12	19	0.156*
	code of ethics	4	5	0.176
	social	4	5	0.176
	worker	6	9	0.236
	deontology	10	17	0.288
	individuals	3	4	0.300

6.7.3 Characteristic Responses

Table 6.12 includes the most characteristic responses regarding the acquisition of professional ethical knowledge by students. An initial consideration of these responses shows that critical incidents (positive or negative) were undoubtedly vehicles for students to learn further or realise better some aspects of their ethics in practice. But, due to different critical experiences and work environments responses vary from student to student⁶².

Students placed great emphasis on applying and maintaining certain social work values such as “respect”, “professional secrecy” and “anonymity”, or “solidarity” and “effective collaboration” including “constructive criticism” among professionals, as well as “trust” between social workers and clients. Some students focused on the responsibility social workers have to communicate the values of their profession even if this meant being at odds with other professionals at work. Some students also talked about the importance of setting clear value boundaries and these being explicit from the start of their relationships with clients. Finally, some students focused on issues relating to informal rules of conduct that exist in the workplace, or the need for adequate supervision to prevent improper professional behaviour, and the need to manage emotions at work.

So, it is clear from the above that, despite the variety of answers given to the question, students tended to emphasize the importance of upholding ethical standards in the workplace as an essential prerequisite for providing good quality social services to clients.

⁶² And no doubt for personal reasons or because of previous experiences too.

Table 6.12_Selection of the most characteristic responses regarding “Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents”			
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
POSITIVE	0.499	30	<i>Appropriate respect and attention should always be given to each client’s needs/problems and professional secrecy and anonymity should be kept in order to protect him/her from potentially biased behaviour.</i>
	0.440	11	<i>...in order to defend the core values of our profession, one may have to oppose other professionals. Upholding social work values taught me that may be the most difficult part, especially when the workplace is filled with non-qualified people who lack the basic rules of ethics.</i>
	0.388	28	<i>In all kinds of social work agencies where the science of social work is applied, the upholding of values / principles and ethics of the profession improves the quality of services offered to clients, as well as increases the reliability of the social agency. For this reason, the social worker must always remain vigilant and be ethically responsible, even if s/he comes into conflict with other professionals in the work environment in order to preserve her/his professional ethical standards.</i>
	0.377	7	<i>A very positive element that I learned through my six months placement is the importance of solidarity and effective collaboration between professionals, as well as the need to receive and give effective criticism.</i>
	0.293	26	<i>What I learned from this incident is that it is very easy to get carried away by the emotions and to ultimately fail to help the client, something that is negative for the profession, as this is not the aim. For this reason, we need to have a balance between personal feelings and professional responsibility.</i>
CI	CC	CI No	Characteristic Responses
NEGATIVE	0.459	25	<i>Following the code of ethics closely helps one avoid numerous mistakes and cope with the requirements of the work. One may also avoid several traps, even when a certain incident requires special handling. This is what I learnt.</i>

	0.440	4	<i>This incident was the most suitable to «shake» me up to understand how important it is to comply with ethics, so that the social worker does not act against clients. For this reason, there should be staff supervision in various social work agencies.</i>
	0.374	19	<i>Through my negative experience, I realized that if the social worker fails to set limits from the beginning and defend the values and ethics of the profession, such failure is immediately detected by every person involved, (both clients and those in authority), leading to manipulative clientelistic relationships that can reproduce themselves. The profession, without its principles and values would turn into a simple administrative, secretarial service that could be performed by anyone, without requiring any specialised knowledge. This would be even worse, where the client came to an agency whose name was completely different to the services provided. This entire situation would be destructive for both the clients and the profession.</i>
	0.355	27	<i>Through everyday work, I observed that most professionals have developed highly “diplomatic” behaviour in regards to their colleagues; I initially found this strange, since I believed it was unnecessary and pretentious. In the end, my belief that workplaces involve informal rules of conduct (apart from those noted in the code of ethics of each agency), was upheld. I believe this is because people are different; the purpose of informal rules is to avoid conflict between colleagues and is not a matter of courtesy or specific personality traits.</i>
	0.342	29	<i>...Not only is it important to earn the trust of the client, but also it is equally important to preserve it, so that you can help him/her effectively and you also feel at peace with your conscience.</i>

6.8 Key Points from Findings

The following are the key learning points that emerged above in the discussion of the findings for each of the six questions:

Q1 Professional Values Highlighted by Critical Incidents

- The same type of social work values can be found in both positive and negative critical incidents and are either violated or defended depending on the type of critical incident.
- Some social work values have a broader meaning and can take various forms (e.g. *respect, rights to...*). The values of *respect and dignity* seem to be the dominant social work values, while the values of *confidentiality, privacy, equal opportunities* (which is referred to as 'social justice'), and *non-discrimination* of any kind are also important.
- The principles of *responsibility* and *collaboration* seem to be important in order to avoid any ambiguity or conflict in the workplace which may result in bad practices.

Q2 Discussion of Critical Incidents with Others

- The practice instructor is the first person to whom students turn for advice, help or report to in relation to the management of critical incidents.
- The practice instructor is a key person for imparting the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice.
- Positive workplace relationships (e.g. collaboration, support,) encourage and inspire students to discuss difficult issues openly and honestly, and develop and apply their ethical reasoning skills.
- Fellow students and friends are an important source of support for students. The most frequent types of support seem to be affirmative support, advice, information and emotional support.
- Students' responsibility to discuss critical incidents with their practice instructors and other responsible professionals in the social agency is part of ethical behaviour in the workplace.

Q3 Critical Incidents and Future Practice

- Positive critical incidents were generally associated with the appropriate methods chosen for handling the incident, the professional experience of those involved in the incident, the existence of collaboration between employees in the workplace.
- Negative critical incidents gave specific information and examples in order to avoid similar poor handling of incidents in the future. Such issues are related to people with power in the workplace, boundary issues in the social worker/client relationship, client empowerment, collaboration between the employees and students, the student's role as a trainee in the workplace.

Q4 Critical Incidents and Knowledge Gap Detection

- The acquired theoretical knowledge seems (with a few exceptions) generally to be sufficient for understanding social work values and ethical matters in the workplace. While there is no lack of basic theoretical knowledge, there appears to be a lack of specialised knowledge for instance, about burnout syndrome in clinical practice, or the values and principles of group work, or even knowledge to meet the needs and particularities of the Greek social services.

Q5 Changes in Thinking & Acting

- Both positive and negative critical incidents challenged students to think about potential changes to the way they look at their professional values and ethics in the workplace, and helped them to reflect upon themselves as future ethical social workers.
- Changes in thinking/acting are associated with either the student's personal or professional behaviour and growth, or both. Regarding changes at a personal level, for example, students spoke of personal maturity and confidence, avoiding intolerance towards others, being

less sentimental, accepting human diversity, and keeping personal and professional lives separate. Regarding changes at a professional level, students talked about the social worker's ethical responsibility in practice settings, and the necessity for being aware of organisational values and ethics. Students also spoke of observing the professional boundaries between different disciplines, as well as the elimination of all forms of exploitation of the students as trainees by their practice instructors.

Q6 Knowledge Acquired from Critical Incidents

- Students placed great emphasis on applying and maintaining certain social work values such as *respect*, *professional secrecy* and *anonymity*, or *solidarity* and *effective collaboration* including *constructive criticism* among professionals, as well as *trust* between social workers and clients.
- Some students focused on the responsibility social workers have to communicate the values of their profession even if this meant being at odds with other professionals at work. Some students also talked about the importance of setting clear value boundaries and these being explicit from the start of their relationships with clients. Finally, some students focused on issues relating to informal rules of conduct that exist in the workplace, or the need for adequate supervision to prevent improper professional behaviour, and the need to manage emotions at work.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the results of the analysis of responses to the open-ended questions included in Section C of the CIT questionnaire. As demonstrated, the combination of the three statistical techniques (correspondence analysis, characteristic words, and characteristic responses) was particularly

useful for identifying the structure and content of the responses gathered from 32 students.

The results from the correspondence analysis (CA) method revealed the categories *positive – negative* to be the most important for the creation of the factorial planes. The other two categories identified were: period of practice placement, and student's role). *Positive – negative* were the principal axes of discrimination between the words used in the participants' responses. Note that the positive-negative criterion also played a significant role in the coding of critical incidents presented in Chapter 5, and consequently, is viewed as key to the analysis and interpretation of findings.

On the other hand, the results of the analysis of characteristic words and responses brought to light a number of important issues relating to the development of social work values and ethics in the workplace. In particular, the analysis of characteristic responses, which typically follows the analysis of characteristic words, provided a rich picture of how students viewed their critical incident experiences during their placement, as gaining or expanding their knowledge and understanding of the topic.

The study of the most characteristic responses (positive and negative) as a whole revealed a need for the continuous and uninterrupted safeguarding of social work values and ethics in professional practice.

The significance of the results included in this chapter along with other important topics that emerged from the analysis of critical incidents in the previous chapter will be discussed within a broader context in the next chapter.

PART FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

7. Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together and discusses the key findings from Chapters 5 and 6 and relates these to the theoretical and empirical literature discussed in Part One. The chapter is divided into six main sections all focusing on the major factors found to affect, either alone or in combination, the development⁶³ of professional social work values and ethics in the workplace. The chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of practicing and developing social work values and ethics as part of daily professional practice and then discusses the contribution of students to developing and upholding their professional ethical standards.

The chapter underlines the important role of practice instructors as role models for the transmission of professional values to students during their practice placement, while points out the need for collaboration between staff members, groups and agencies in order to achieve ethical best practice. It also shows how difficult clients' behaviour can affect the social worker's ethical reasoning and decision making. Moreover, it illustrates the importance of the ethics of management within an organisation, drawing attention to some particularities in the delivery of social service organisations at local level. The chapter ends with a discussion on the methodological and data analysis limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias.

⁶³ The words *values* and *ethics* have been omitted in each sub- section heading for reasons of brevity.

7.2 Discussion of Findings: The many aspects of the development of professional social work values and ethics

7.2.1 Development through daily practice

In Chapters 2 and 3, the literature review clearly showed that professional values and ethics are at the heart of ethical practice and thus are crucial for ethical decision making. The review also showed how some core professional values inform social work practice and guide social workers' professional conduct worldwide; the same core values are also reflected in the Hellenic Code of Ethics, and were identified by respondents in answer to the relevant question in the study, discussed in Chapter 6.2 (e.g., respect, dignity, confidentiality, privacy, etc.). These core professional values were either promoted or neglected/violated and reflected individualist and traditional social work values rather than modern (or radical) social work values, based on the literature review (Chapter 2.3).

Moreover, the literature review demonstrated that professional values and ethics do not exist in a vacuum, but are developed through learning in practice and through real life situations in practice settings. This assumption is particularly important for students and their studies because it lies behind the findings of this study; the significance of learning values and ethics in practice is one of the key lessons learned from the textual data.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2.7, social work education commonly sets out to provide a starting point for students to acquire knowledge and become familiar with the values and ethics issues relating to their profession. In this respect, the findings show that students had a basic understanding of the subject, but in some cases, they lacked the specialised knowledge and skills needed to confront and resolve ethical tensions and problems (see, for example, Chapters 6.4 to 6.7).

Furthermore, the study appeared to confirm the somewhat obvious, but nevertheless important, finding that theory must be followed by action so students can fully understand and conceptualise a given phenomenon. Such a view was particularly evident in the students' descriptions of their critical incident experiences and related textual responses. In their views, it is through practice, especially daily reflective practice, that core social work values and ethics standards can be and must be kept alive. Of course, as the study also showed, how the critical incidents were used by the students for learning depended on various factors such as whether the experience was captured in supervision for discussion, or linked to assignments which required students to write about ethical issues and dilemmas.

Given these considerations, it seems reasonable to infer that social work values and ethics are actually developed and maintained through daily practice and reflection. This conclusion echoes back to Aristotle's discussion of the pedagogical role of habituation, which is produced through practice and leads professionals to practice with wisdom (see Chapter 2.6.2.1). It also reflects Bourdieu's notion of habitus according to which, external structures such as professional values and ethics are internalised into habitus through practices (Ritzer, 2003). Drawing on their research on professional conduct and boundaries, Doel *et al.* (2009) have developed the notion of ethical engagement as critical to helping social workers develop ethical competence through regular discussion of ethical issues within the daily practices of the organisations.

The discussion above leads to the idea that cultivating ethical habits through social work in practice is key to developing values-based professional skills; in other words, just as virtue for Aristotle can be developed by repeated practice (habituation), the same is true for our capacity as social workers to act ethically and competently. Therefore, the more opportunities students have to be involved in daily work practice and encouraged to incorporate their professional values and ethics into it, the more likely they will learn to act ethically and competently

throughout their professional lives. In this way, students will be also able to reflect and embed ethics learning and to bring it from being tacit to being explicit.

7.2.2 Development through active participation: The contribution of students to upholding their ethical standards

The idea of the active student participant proved to be particularly useful for understanding the multifaceted topic under study. As the analysis of the data revealed, most students handled the incidents themselves, with positive outcomes, while they reported more negative critical incidents when they were closer to the end of their professional practice. The exceptions were critical incidents CI25 and CI27 where students failed to adhere to the expected ethical standards and skills, but for different reasons. In CI25, for example, the student attributed her/his failure to help the client to her own lack of ability to practise proper professional ethics and skills. In contrast, in CI27, the student criticised the practice instructor for not helping him/her to handle the situation properly.

The idea of the active student participant was particularly revealing regarding the role students as trainees can play in upholding their ethical standards. The findings emphasised the individual student's preparedness and ability to use the knowledge gained from classroom in the practice environment, as well as to make ethical decisions and to act accordingly (e.g. CI11, CI12, and CI24). These findings corroborate the individual approaches to learning discussed in Chapter 3.5.1, whereby students as adult learners are able to contribute to their own learning in practice. The findings are also consistent with recent social work research pointing to the adequacy of students' preparation along with their ability to implement knowledge and skills -including values and ethics- in practice education (Bogo, 2010; Kanno and Koeske, 2010). According to Bogo (2010), the ability of students to conceptualize their practice and identify the values, principles, and ideas that underlie their judgments and actions is an essential meta-competency for effective learning and development.

But, the findings also emphasise the importance of reinforcing students' preparedness and ability to apply their ethical standards by offering engaging learning opportunities associated with competent practice instruction. The results of the present study correspond to the findings of other social work studies indicating the importance of engaging in field learning activities (e.g. Fortune *et al.*, 2001; Fortune and Kaye, 2002; Barron, 2004; Wilson *et al.*, 2008). Based upon their study findings, Fortune and Kaye (2002) draw the following conclusion regarding the need to give students learning opportunities to do things themselves in order to experience social work related issues including values and ethics first hand:

...students who reported engaging in skills more and doing more independent work evaluated their performance as better. Presumably, more practice contributes to greater mastery. However, it is important for students to do things themselves, rather than simply observing or helping others in their work (p.23).

Furthermore, the findings of the thesis study revealed that when students are actively engaged in the learning environment on a daily basis and for a long period of time, they have more opportunities to deepen their knowledge of the structure of the organisation and detect potential hidden values. The increase in negative critical incidents towards the end of practice education is an example. Such critical incidents seem to indicate that the longer placement probably determines not only the opportunities students have to acquire and develop analytical and practice skills (Woodward and Mackay, 2012), but possibly also the opportunities they have to identify the potential negative effects of the hidden curriculum of the organisation under certain circumstances. This is only a reasonable speculation about the reason for this finding because the researcher has no data to confirm this.

Summarising the above discussion, it could be suggested that students who actively participate in placement work (because they are supported and encouraged by competent practice instructors) for a longer period of time and are better prepared and more able to make decisions about their professional values and ethics, and themselves contribute to the development of the ethical standards

of the profession in practice. They may also contribute to the maintenance of an ethical work climate within social work settings.

7.2.3 Development through role modelling: Practice instructors as ethical role models for students

Through the analysis of critical incidents related to the category of practice instructor (Chapters 5.4.1.3 and 5.4.2.5), as well as the responses to the relevant question, 'the discussion of critical incidents with others' (Chapter 6.3), it became apparent that students place great emphasis on the practice instructor as a role model and transmitter of ethics knowledge and skills.

Students who reported positive incidents focused on the professional and supervisory abilities and skills as well as the personal qualities of the practice instructor. As already noted, students with positive experiences referred to practice instructors who treated their clients and themselves ethically and professionally. At the same time, students also referred to practice instructors' personal character traits in general, not to any one specific trait; students generally considered their practice instructors as positive ethical role models when they were able to combine good personal and professional/ supervisory characteristics. These views reflect and reinforce Aristotelian and contemporary approaches to virtue ethics in social work (McBeath and Webb, 2002; Webb, 2006), and appear to confirm Banks's (2006) view that a good social worker must combine technical knowledge and skills with character/personal qualities.

On the other hand, students who reported negative incidents focused upon a lack of personal qualities and professional/supervisory characteristics in the practice instructor, that is, the practice instructor's inability to either avoid specific errors or mistakes (e.g. loss of self-control, use of verbal abuse, verbal quarrelling) when managing difficult clients (CI03, CI22), or to provide appropriate support and supervision to the student (CI16). In this category of critical incidents, practice

instructors behaved so badly that they served as good examples for students of what not to do in their future professional careers.

This finding supports the literature regarding negative experience as a source of learning and development (Chapter 3), but raises the question of the reliability and consistency of the practice instructor as a positive role model. Indeed, recent research outside social work has presented a different view of role models. For example, a study exploring the importance of role models for medical students showed that, although role models are important for students ethical and professional development, they may not be a dependable way to impart professional values, attitudes, and behaviours (Paice *et al.*, 2002: 707). The study revealed that role models as negative behaviour examples can have a detrimental effect on students (produce confusion, distress and anger). Therefore, Paice *et al.*'s study argues that professional behaviour and ethics should be explicitly taught to students through transparent methods of teaching and learning, like peer group discussion, exposure to the views of people outside medicine, and having access to trained mentors.

All the findings discussed in this section are generally consistent with several studies (e.g. Bogo, 2010) and the review of the literature in Chapter 3.8 indicating the key role of practice instructors as role models in providing good quality services to students and promoting student ethical learning. The findings also reflect Bandura's (1977), Vygotsky's (1978) and Aristotle's ideas of modelling, as well as Lave and Wenger's (1991) apprenticeship learning through the idea of legitimate peripheral participation within a community of practice in the workplace. The apprenticeship model for learning in social work is also recognised by Bogo (2010) as the most appropriate way to develop knowledge and skills in professional practice, including values and ethics. This is learning through watching, doing and integrating instruction.

Apart from the above, the findings of the current study go a step further by showing that when practice instructors are both supervisors and practitioners, they have a dual responsibility: to safeguard and promote the highest professional

standards; to provide a positive role model for the transmission of ethics knowledge and skills to students. Hence, practice instructors need to align their espoused professional values to their actual behaviour in practice, crucially important for students' professional ethical development during their placement. In other words, they must practice what they preach and be seen to do so.

7.2.4 Development through collaboration with others, inside and outside the workplace

Another important finding of this study draws attention to the need for collaboration in organisations as a critical factor in either promoting or hindering ethical social work practice. This significant finding emerged from the analysis of positive and negative critical incidents associated with different categories (see Chapter 5.4.1.2 and Chapters 5.4.2.2, 5.4.2.3, and 5.4.2.6).

The findings shed light on the important role of ethical collaboration, whether inside or outside the workplace: collaboration between staff members regardless of whether they are social workers, teamwork members or inter-agency collaboration workers.

Collaboration between staff members - The critical incidents associated with the *staff* category were particularly revealing. The incidents reported as negative learning experiences by students show that unethical staff behaviour and collaboration in the workplace can take different forms and have different effects upon the quality of service provided to clients. They also showed that not only can unethical staff behaviour lead to poor service delivery to clients, but can also have negative repercussions on the organisation's reputation. Furthermore, the findings revealed that an ethical culture and climate within an organisation requires not only individual ethical behaviour, but also relational (or collective) ethical practices between staff members at all levels of the organisation (see, for example, the negative critical incident CI14). Extensive literature reviews of behavioural

ethics in organisations (Trevino *et al.*, 2006) and team collaboration in healthcare (O' Daniel and Rosenstein, 2008) have also identified that individual ethical behaviour, and relational factors such as staff relationships are significant in building and maintaining ethical practice in the workplace.

Teamwork collaboration- Collaboration between team members from different disciplines was another influential factor in applying and sustaining social work values and ethics. Positive critical incidents in the 'teamwork' category revealed effective collaboration and communication between team members (e.g. CI26), as well as acceptance of students as team members (CI09, CI21) are indicative of high quality service and ethical learning practice. In addition, positive critical incidents showed that professionals sometimes break the rules of the agency if the client's situation requires it (e.g. the positive critical incident CI32). Therefore, although violations of organisational rules are certainly reprehensible, these should be evaluated under the *rule of reason*. This recognises violations applied in a particular case may be reasonable when there are important benefits to clients. Interestingly, this view echoes strongly pluralistic and contemporary approaches to Kantian ethics, which consider the circumstances surrounding rule breaches discussed in Chapter 2.6.1. Taken together, the findings presented here support the importance of ethical teamwork collaboration by including students as team members for delivering quality services to clients. Particularly, treating students as equals when they are involved in teamwork seems to reinforce the ethical standards of practice while at the same time reducing the power differentials between professionals and students in practice settings, as identified in the literature (Chapters 3.8 and 3.10).

By contrast, the negative critical incidents indicate that teamwork in the workplace has not only advantages, but also disadvantages relating to lack of professionalism in terms of ethical conduct at work, both between team members and the team members and the leader of the organisation (e.g. CI04, CI23, and CI13). Unfortunately, the negative effects of teamwork in delivering good services to clients, as well as group ethical decision-making are also under researched areas of social work; research comes mainly from management and organisational studies.

For example, a recent research study by Pearsall and Ellis (2011) in US explored factors influencing the unethical behaviour of team members. These researchers explored the behaviour of management school students divided into 126 three-member teams and engaged in a class project where the opportunity to cheat was easily available. The results indicated that utilitarian-orientated teams and psychological safety are determinants of unethical behaviour. Psychological safety was the extent to which group members believed that they would not be punished for making suggestions that seem out of the box or risky. Interestingly, it seems that groupthink can result in negative outcomes under certain circumstances.

Interagency collaboration-Collaboration between agencies from different organisations is also seen as crucial for practising and developing social work values and ethics. This sort of collaboration was associated with just one critical incident (CI29), but it was particularly revealing; it showed the challenges and difficulties that social workers can face when they have to cooperate with organisations with different cultures and therefore conflicting professional value systems. It also indicated how some public sector organisations in Greece (e.g., the Migrant Services Department) can commit illegal or illegitimate acts, possibly because of the increased authority and power (formal or informal) they now have. On this topic, a recent Swedish study on barriers to collaboration between health care, social services and schools (Widmark *et al.*, 2011), found that responsibility for collaboration fell largely on the professionals, and that when managers from different organisations share responsibility, this is a crucial factor affecting successful collaboration. In the context of interagency collaboration, the study findings indicate that a shared understanding of common objectives, as well as responsibility between professionals and agencies from different public or private organisations is important in delivering care to clients.

From the literature review, as well as the study findings, it appears that collaboration as an 'ethical perspective for social workers' (Abramson, 1984) requires open, supportive and ethical workplace relationships which reflect a positive work atmosphere within which students feel comfortably able to express their ideas and opinions, as well as learn to develop ethically and professionally. In

her study, Meleyal (2011) also identified the need for a workplace culture of support, and a blame free culture of staff as essential for learning in practice. Finally, supportive, collaborative and ethical relationships between staff members at all levels in the workplace (colleagues, team members, etc.) provide role modelling functions that are particularly important for students learning to perform their tasks better based on the ethical standards of their profession.

7.2.5 Development through interaction with ‘difficult’ clients

During the review of the existing literature (Chapter 2), it became apparent that ethical practice is central to the social worker-client relationship. In this context, an interesting finding from this study was the role that clients themselves as individuals with certain behaviours can play in the development and maintenance of ethical practice. This finding emerged from the analysis of critical incidents related to the category of client (Chapter 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.2 .1). Students who reported these incidents focused mostly on the client’s improper behaviour toward service providers, regardless of the reasons why the clients behaved as they did.

As shown in Chapter 5, improper behaviour by clients took various forms- challenging, unethical, violent, manipulative etc. In one critical incident in particular, (CI19), the client’s improper behaviour was reinforced by the political power of an employee, (discussed further in 7.2.6). According to some social work writers (e.g. Littlechild, 2005; Koritsas *et al.*, 2010; Savaya *et al.*, 2011), it is not uncommon for social workers to encounter such behaviour, especially those in contact with difficult client populations (those with mental disorders, people with learning difficulties or poorly motivated clients and so on). However, improper client behaviour can be a powerful source of a conflict of interest or a breach of ethical standards.

So far in this thesis, much of what has been written about the social worker-client relationship has focused on conflicts between workers’ personal and professional values and clients’ values or issues of power over clients (see, for example, Chapter

2.3.1). Surprisingly, the literature pays very little attention to client behaviour as a factor that may affect the worker's ability to adhere to ethical standards.

Despite the apparent lack of relevant research, there is some evidence that improper or negative client behaviour can cause ethically stressful situations for social workers. For example, a recent Israeli study of stressful encounters with social work clients showed that negative client behaviour (e.g. hostile, aggressive, unethical, etc. behaviour) including violation of the unwritten rules of the profession or the workers' expectations, is an important source of ethical distress for social workers (Savaya *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, negative client behaviour may cause stress to students and lead to poor ethics learning outcomes. Interestingly, however, in this study negative client behaviour was found to be a powerful trigger forcing students to actively engage with their professional ethics, as well as the ethics of the social agency.

Negative client behaviour was useful for students learning of ethical practice when the right conditions were in place. But, as the study findings revealed, negative client behaviour can adversely affect social workers' ability to act ethically and professionally if they themselves are not able to manage difficult clients, and/or the work environment is not appropriately supportive (e.g. CI01, CI17, and CI28).

7.2.6 Development through and beyond the 'Tone at the Top'

The previous sections of this chapter discussed a number of factors that affected - either positively or negatively- the development of professional values and ethics in the social workplace. This final section summarises the previous ones to shed light on two very important findings that emerged from the analysis of the critical incident within the category of management (CI19).

The findings presented in this section provide some support for the theory that managers are key players in developing and sustaining ethical and accountable work environments. As discussed in Chapter 3.9, and demonstrated in various

business studies (e.g. Brown *et al.*, 2005; Trevino and Brown, 2004; Trevino and Brown, 2005), managers at all levels, but especially those at the top of organisations, are responsible for setting the ethical tone⁶⁴ and shaping the formal and informal ethical culture of the organisation. The findings of this study suggest that managers as top leaders and role models are expected to behave ethically and treat their employees equally and fairly regardless of their professional backgrounds and specialisms/specialisations.

Furthermore, the findings reveal the relational and context specific nature of the ethics of management, as discussed in Chapter 3.9.1. Specifically, the findings bring to the surface certain particularities regarding the delivery of social services in Greece, especially at the state and local level. These particularities have to do with clientelistic practices, which are some of the more common drawbacks and weak points of the Greek health and social care system (Sotiropoulos, 2004; Economou, 2010). Clientelism as a phenomenon refers to a specific form of social structure, 'in which formal rules are less important relative to personal connections or, in later forms of clientelism, connections mediated through political parties, the Church and other organizations' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:58). As regards social services in Greece, 'clientelism' can occur when clients (e.g. individuals, families or groups) circumvent the formal processes to get welfare benefits for themselves and to the detriment of third parties. In such cases, clients exert pressure on persons who have institutional power (e.g. the manager/head of an organisation) and/or hold political positions (e.g. a municipal counsellor, major, member of parliament) within or outside the social organization. Clientelism normally implies favours in return for votes or political support of some kind, so it's a kind of bargaining system. In social service organisations, clientelistic relationships tend to affect adversely the quality of service delivery and, consequently, the ethicality of the organisation itself.

Overall, the findings emphasise the important role of management professionals (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisation) as ethical leaders

⁶⁴Hence, the expression *the tone at the top* that is included in the section heading.

within a social service agency or a social service organisation. At the same time, the findings also point to the complex relationships between management ethics and clientelistic practices that, to some degree, exist in the provision of public social care services in Greece.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

As with all research, this study has limitations. Some of these have been discussed throughout the thesis as issues arose, while others are presented for the first time below. The main limitations are summarised as follows:

The first limitation of the study is the small number of participants and the restriction of the data to only one Social Work Department; however, due to the qualitative nature of this study and its unfunded doctoral basis, it was not possible to include a larger sample size with students from other SW Departments in Greece. In the future, a larger study that includes students from other areas of Social Work would help stakeholders (e.g. researchers, educators, employers, professionals associations) to have a wider and deeper understanding of the topic under investigation.

The second limitation is related to the sample composition. The study included only the students and not their practice instructors. Research also including the practice instructors in the sample population might have given a different balance to the data, shed more light on the subject, and enabled the practice instructors' perspectives to be addressed as part of a more holistic investigation into what influences the practice experience.

The third limitation has to do with the CIT questionnaire as the source of data gathering. The CIT questionnaire has proved to be very useful for exploring the topic of professional values and ethics. However, the use of the CIT questionnaire as the only research tool in this study may have limited the understanding and discussion of the outcomes. The findings might have been more comprehensive if

additional tools, such as focus groups interviews, had been carried out as well. In particular, the use of focus groups interviews with students to compare different practice placement environments can help researchers develop a more complete understanding of the research topic. With hindsight, it also might have been useful for this researcher had used observation methods to gain more insight into the way that professional values are transmitted in the practice environment; - the study is limited by its reliance on student reporting.

The fourth limitation concerns the categorisation of critical incidents done by the author, and hence some degree of subjectivity was inevitable. Although the initial reading of the textual data was made with an experienced social worker in order to reduce author subjectivity and classification bias at this stage of the research process, because of the nature of a doctoral thesis, the data were coded and categories identified by a single person, i.e. the researcher. Bearing in mind that the subjectivity of the researcher is involved in any qualitative methodology, the researcher has recognised its importance by making her research processes as transparent and clear as possible (see Chapter 4.5.2.1).

The fifth limitation is related to particular problems in the translation process. This is because the study was conducted in Greek, but the findings have been translated and presented in English. Of course, this approach was very helpful for analysing and interpreting the meaning of textual data in their original language, but, there may be some nuanced differences in the translation into English. Being aware of such possible translations difficulties and problems, the researcher made every attempt to remain faithful to the meaning expressed in the texts.

8. Conclusions and Implications

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 focused on the key factors and lessons learned that emerged from the analysis of critical incidents and their associated written responses. This chapter provides a synthesis of the key findings from the study and draws conclusions about the research objectives and research question (and its sub questions). The chapter also presents implications of the study and recommendations for social work education, practice and further research.

8.2 Conclusions

This study focused on a phenomenon that forms the bedrock of the social work profession, i.e. values and ethics. In particular, the study sought to explore the development of professional social work values and ethics in the practice placement from the student social workers' perspective. To do this, the study used the critical incident technique (CIT) to gather data from students who, during the conduct of the research, had completed their professional practice placement.

Given that values and ethics is still an under-researched area in the social work literature in Greece, the researcher adopted a qualitative exploratory research design (with descriptive elements) positioned within the constructivist paradigm as the most appropriate approach to the topic. Within this context, the study was guided by a central research question and related sub-questions (Chapter 4.4). The overarching research question this study aimed to answer was:

What can critical incident analysis tell us about how social work students perceive the development of their professional values and ethics whilst in the workplace?

In order to answer the central research question (and related sub questions), the study looked at critical incidents during their professional placement practice,

which were retrospectively reported by students. The study's findings indicate the primary purpose of the thesis has been achieved. In this light, the critical incident technique (CIT) applied in the study has proved to be very useful for exploring the topic of professional values and ethics. More specifically:

Using the CIT method, the study revealed 18 positive and 14 negative critical incidents that, depending on their nature (positive or negative), are associated with the promotion or neglect/violation of certain core social work values (e.g. respect, dignity, confidentiality, privacy). All the critical incidents were reported by the students as a valuable source of knowledge and understanding in the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice. That is, both positive and negative critical incidents helped students gain valuable insights into their ethics development process in the practice context. However, negative critical incidents served as good examples for students of what not to do in their future professional careers.

Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate that, professional values are not simply theoretical and abstract ideas, but are core concepts which take on concrete meanings and are activated by/in the world of social work practice. As a result, their applicability and development seems to depend upon various individual and situational factors, as revealed by the CIT analysis. Factors of particular interest were identified as:

- the need to practice social work values and ethics in the workplace on a daily basis in order to keep them alive and active;
- the students' own contribution to upholding their ethical standards;
- the role practice instructors/supervisors play in the transmission of social work values to students during their placements;
- the importance of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace in order to achieve best practices for clients;
- the client's behaviour as a determinant of the ethical practice of social workers in the workplace; and

- the importance of the ethics of management (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisations) in creating and sustaining an ethical work/learning environment.

The study suggests that all the factors mentioned above-to a greater or lesser degree- should be considered important elements to take into account in the planning and development of values-based social work education programmes. This variety of factors also confirm the depth and complexity of the topic under study as identified in the discussion of values and ethics in Chapter 2 and of social work education in Chapter 3. In particular, the data reveals the situation-specific nature of the learning of social work values and ethics in the practice placement.

Lastly, the study has indicated that positive workplace experiences during placement are strong motivational factors for students to use and expand their theoretical knowledge in ethics, build their ethics skills and develop their identities as ethical professionals.

8.3 Implications

8.3.1 Classroom based Education

As stated in Chapter 2.7, social work education plays a pivotal role in providing students with the fundamental values and ethics knowledge and skills required to become ethically competent professionals. Therefore, the findings and interpretations of the study are helpful in redesigning the values and ethics course taught within the Social Work Department and improving the quality of practice education by offering placements to students that promote social work values-based practices. To do this, the course content could be enriched to take account of the key factors found to be associated with the development of social work values and ethics in professional practice. Outlined below are four key implications for teaching and assessing ethics learning and development.

- *Making the link between theory and practice*

Educators could plan their teaching strategies to overcome the gap between classroom learning and practice learning by offering specialised high-level courses in ethics, by collaborating closely with practice instructors and offering supervision, support and consultation to both students and practice instructors on ethics matters. They could also take into account teaching and learning trends in social work values and ethics at the international level, as discussed in the literature review. In relation to the latter, educators could include ethical theories and ethical decision making frameworks in the course material.

- *Learning from real life critical incidents and role-play*

Educators could use role-playing scenarios derived from stories of critical incidents as part of their ethics teaching strategies to students. The 32 critical incidents-real life events- collected in this study could be excellent teaching and learning material for students to understand and develop values and ethics knowledge and skills taking into account the ethical complexities arising in everyday social work practice. By understanding and learning the meaning behind values and ethics in action, students can become more active and complete social workers in their professional lives.

- *Formalising ethical standards requirements*

Educators must reinforce the value of ethical behaviour in practice placement settings by providing written ethical standards for practice education (i.e. a code of practice education) given that the Hellenic Code of Ethics is not concerned with such matters, as discussed in Chapter 2.4.1. In the Department, the establishment of written ethical standards could be used as a guide for evaluating practice placement environments in order to avoid ethically problematic placement agencies. The CIT method used in this study could be part of a variety of evaluation methods included in the written ethical standards.

- *CIT as a tool to evaluate how far social work values match the ethics of the placement environment*

As the study shows, the CIT as a reflective method was found to be an effective tool to explore aspects of the process of the students' ethics learning and development in the course of their practice placement. Given that competency models of learning and assessment have been criticised for not dealing well with ethics, as discussed in Chapter 3.8.2, the CIT method could be part of the evaluation process of ethics learning in practice. In this way, the CIT approach used by students can identify whether the philosophy of the practice environment is congruent with social work values and ethics.

8.3.2 Practice Education

Practice instructors were not included in the study. Nevertheless, as the study findings showed, practice instructors played a major role in transmitting professional values and ethics to students. It is therefore necessary to encourage them to integrate the classroom taught values into the realities of the social work practice environment.

Practice instructors could be given copies of the values and ethics content students have been taught so they are familiar with the curriculum and how it has been presented. In addition, they could be given the findings of the study so they are aware of some factors affecting the development of professional values and ethics in the course of the practice placement, such as the important role they themselves play as ethical role models for their students. In an ideal world, practice instructors would be invited to a workshop on this topic where the findings could be presented to them. But for now, this is not possible due to financial constraints.

As ethical role models, practice instructors could combine professional ethics skills and knowledge with personal qualities. Also, they could share their personal ways of implementing ethics skills and knowledge with their students to help them to become ethical professional performers on the social work stage. Furthermore,

practice instructors need to understand how valuable the learning opportunities are for students to be involved and to take the initiative to practice their professional values and ethics through their everyday contact with clients during their placement. As indicated in section 7.2.3, practice instructors as role models are extremely important for students' professional ethical development.

Finally, given that workplaces operate as practice environments for students, special attention should be given to conditions that could hinder, as well as those that support, the development of social work values and ethics, such as how collaboration with the people in and outside the workplace is organised and the kind of management ethics that exist. In case of inadequate ethical practice, students should have access to an ethics committee/board within the Department for ethical consultation, support and assistance in order to address any ethical issues that may arise in field practice. This committee could also promote the participation of students in decision making processes to help them develop a strong social work value and ethics culture. Practice instructors, university based educators and students could come together to discuss what an ethics committee could offer and how it might work.

8.3.3 Future Research

As noted in Chapter 4.2, the researcher adopted an exploratory qualitative approach because of the complex nature of values and ethics, as well as the lack of research on this issue in social work education and practice in Greece. Although the study was exploratory in nature, the findings suggest four possible avenues for future research to provide further insights into the development of social work values and ethics in practice settings:

1. To explore further the individual factors found associated with the development of social work values and ethics in the workplace during the student placement (see Chapter 7). Using the CIT method, for example, future research might explore the personal qualities and skills of students

that promote the virtuous ethics of their practice; as the study showed, students as active participants were able to make decisions about their professional values and ethics, thus contributing themselves to the development of their ethical standards in practice. Similarly, research might explore the personal and professional qualities of practice instructors necessary to fit with professional ethics; although the study findings highlighted the personal and professional qualities of practice instructor in general, they did not refer to specific characteristics.

2. To examine the learning opportunities offered by social agencies to students to promote their professional ethical standards. As demonstrated, the workplace is the place where values along with skills are transformed and shaped from being abstract theoretical ideas to becoming situated practice knowledge; values and ethical skills are developed and actively maintained through interactions with others in daily professional practice.
3. To look at the differences between public and private not-for-profit sectors in developing social work values-based practices and determine if different kinds of sectors have an impact on their students' professional ethics development experience. As the study showed, although the public social care sector was associated with both positive and negative critical incidents, the private not-for-profit sector was only associated with positive critical incidents.
4. Last but not least, future research needs to identify how the breach of organisational ethics and rules by social workers and students to favour their clients' interests may influence the development of social work values and ethics in professional settings. In respect to this, the type of breach and the consequences for the social worker and student as trainee social worker also need to be explored in future research. It can be argued that breaches of organisational ethics and rules by staff in favour of their clients'

might be signs of poor management and poor ethical practice in social service organisations.

8.4 Instead of an Epilogue

This study provides clear evidence that, students gain valuable insights into their ethics development process in practice settings, from both positive and negative critical incidents alike. Nevertheless, the study does highlight that students need positive practice environments that support ethical social work practice; it is within these professional environments that students are triggered, motivated and inspired to develop fully their social work values and ethics knowledge and the skills taught and developed in the classroom environment. This view is indeed reinforced by the IFSW (May 2012) latest policy statement, whereby, social workers need a working environment that upholds ethical practice and is committed to standards and good quality services in order to practice effectively and ethically.

PART SIX

“Addendum”

9. The Development of Professional Social Work Values and Ethics in the Workplace: A Focus Group Study

9.1 Background and Aims

In my original study, I explored the processes through which students develop their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics in their professional practice placement⁶⁵. To do this, I used the critical incident technique (CIT) as a qualitative research method of gathering data from students. The CIT method took the form of a written questionnaire (the CIT questionnaire) completed by 32 final year social work students in October, 2010.

In order to build upon and further develop my previous empirical study, I undertook an additional study using focus groups as a further method of collecting qualitative data. The purpose of this additional study was to seek students' views about the findings of the original study and to explore whether these were similar or different to their own experiences. The main aim was to further inform my thinking about the findings of my original study.

This additional study involved two focus groups with final year social work students completing their professional practice placement- just prior to qualifying- in the Social Work Department in Athens, Greece where I am a Lecturer. The students who participated in the focus group study were unknown to me and had not taken part in my original study (that group had since graduated). I was not involved in their teaching, nor was I involved in their assessment. Although there was no obvious conflict of interest due to the absence of any past teacher /student relationship, the students will have viewed me as a member of faculty in their university and this may have affected how they responded.

⁶⁵ The professional practice placement is of six months' duration.

9.2 Ethical Considerations

In order to obtain ethical approval to carry out my additional study⁶⁶, I needed to submit an amendment to my original application to the University of Sussex Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (REC). After consultation with the Chair of REC in July 2013, I was asked to submit the following documents: a) Information Sheet; b) Topic Guide for the Focus Groups; and c) Consent Form for the Focus Groups (see Appendix G and Appendix H). These documents were accompanied by a covering letter explaining the reason for further ethical approval. Ethical approval for the additional study was also obtained from the Head of the Department of Social Work in Athens using oral consent procedures.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were asked to sign a consent form and return it to the researcher via email prior to their participation in the research. The consent form was used to inform potential participants about the aims and research ethics of the study including their rights to confidentiality and anonymity.

In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all the information students provided was kept confidential and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department. The focus groups were tape-recorded and at the end of the study, the tapes used for recording the data were destroyed. Moreover, all comments made were/will be anonymised by the use of pseudonyms in any further discussions or publications relating to the research, and any further possible identifying information was/will be changed so that no individual or institution could be identified by their remarks.

Given that the students' decision to participate in the focus group was entirely voluntary, they could withdraw at any stage, even after their participation in the research had commenced. In order to fully protect the confidentiality of all participants, those taking part were asked not to share any personal data volunteered by other focus group members outside the group. Finally, students were informed that they were welcome to request feedback in respect of the

⁶⁶ My original ethics application was approved in September 2010.

study's findings. Those students who requested feedback were informed of the results via email.

9.3 Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach, and used focus group discussions as a data collection method. Focus groups are typically defined as a 'carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment' (Krueger and Casey, 2009:2). Focus groups are a particularly flexible qualitative data collection method as they can be used at various stages of the research process, alone or in combination with other qualitative or quantitative research methods, and for a variety of purposes (Linhorst, 2002; Robson, 2002; Krueger and Casey, 2009).

In this study, the focus group method was found to be a useful approach in exploring students' views of the findings from my earlier study and to facilitate discussions about whether these were similar or different to their own experiences regarding the processes through which they develop their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics during their professional practice placement.

9.4 Recruitment

Once ethical approval had been obtained, I asked the Practice Placement Coordinator of the Department to give me information (i.e. list of names, placements and email addresses) about the students who were placed in professional practice⁶⁷ during the spring semester so I could contact them.

⁶⁷ Due to temporary changes in the practice placement schedule, the focus group discussions were carried out with students, who had completed their professional practice placement earlier (i.e. 1th March to 31th August 2013) than the periods when this typically takes place (1th October to 31th March/winter semester and 1th April to 30th September/spring semester).

Students were recruited through direct email invitations. Those who did not have an email address were excluded from the recruitment process as this recruitment was through email alone. Using email for the recruitment process was because it was economical and user-friendly for the students and the researcher, as well as an efficient use of time. Of the 35 students contacted via email, 14 agreed to participate in the study. The recruitment process had two stages.

The first included sending out the letter of informed consent along with the information sheet as part of the invitation to participate in the focus group. At this stage, participants were asked to respond via e-mail within the following few days in order to pass to the second stage of the recruitment process. Before the next stage, I personally contacted the participants by telephone to confirm receipt of their emails.

After that there was a follow-up email to the respondents with details about meeting me, the researcher. Within the first week of September, a choice of two days (2/9/2013 and 3/9/2013) was offered to the students to meet so that all the potential participants had the opportunity to come to the Department. In the event that the number of potential participants was greater than expected, I had decided that to select participants on a first-come, first-served basis, though this strategy was not needed in the end. Depending on the date students were available, they were divided into two focus groups. The day before the meeting, I called and reminded students of the appointment.

9.5 Sampling and Sample Size

The students who volunteered to participate were from a group I had purposively selected on the basis of their first-hand knowledge and experience of the subject. The purposive sampling method allowed me to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 2002).

Given that focus groups generally use homogeneous⁶⁸ participants, the sample of students in both the focus groups was homogeneous in that all students had completed their final placement during the period the focus group research was undertaken. Also, the students had all done their professional practice in a social service/organisation within the Attica region. I excluded from the study overseas students or students who had done their professional practice outside Attica or had spent a period of time abroad through a European exchange programme. The reasons I excluded them were because: a) the excluded sample size was too small to have an effect on the final research findings; b) the majority of students' practice takes place in the capital city and its surroundings; and c) this small scale study has a qualitative orientation so any findings could only be treated cautiously in terms of their generalisability.

Regarding sample size, the focus group literature clearly suggests that small groups show greater potential, are easier to recruit, more comfortable for people to participate in and also usually offer greater insights into groups with specialised experiences (Linhorst, 2002; Robson, 2002; Krueger and Casey, 2009). Bearing these suggestions in mind, I chose to have small groups (i.e. between 6 to 10 participants) to make it easier for students to talk and express their opinions (Linhorst, 2002).

9.6 Participants

As mentioned earlier, the focus groups were made up of 14 students altogether, and each focus group had the following characteristics.

Focus group 1 (FG1) consisted of eight students, 3 male and 5 female. The students ranged in age from 22 to 25 years old. Three students were 22 years old, four were 23 years old and one was 25 years old. Of the eight focus group participants, six had completed their professional practice in the public health and

⁶⁸ This may include homogeneity in social class, occupation, educational level, age or family characteristics (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

social care services, and two had completed their professional practice in the private non-profit sector.

Focus group 2 (FG2) consisted of six students, all female. The students ranged in age from 22 to 24 years old, as follows: two students were 22 years old, two were 23 years old and two were 24 years old. All focus group participants had completed their professional practice in the public health and social care services. Table 9.1 presents the composition of each focus group (FG1, FG2).

Table 9.1_ Composition of the two focus groups

Focus Groups	Gender		Age				Practice Placement Sector	
	Male	Female	22	23	24	25	Public	Private Non-Profit
Focus Group1 (FG1)	3	5	3	4	-	1	6	2
Focus Group2 (FG2)	-	6	2	2	2	-	6	-

9.7 The Procedures followed in the Focus Groups

The focus group discussions with students took place in the meeting room of the Department (this is a quiet place for discussion and reflection) on work days during the afternoon at the beginning of September 2013. Each focus group had their own meeting, and each meeting lasted from 75 minutes (FG2) to 90 minutes (FG1). They were carried out in Greek and were audio-recorded.

At the beginning of each focus group discussion, I explained in detail the purpose of the study and reminded the students of the voluntary nature of their participation. Also, I informed them again about research ethics and any potential risks from their participation.

Before the discussions started, the students were asked to fill out a short form giving their basic demographic information such as age, gender, and practice placement sector (public or private: profit/non-profit). The demographic

questionnaire was anonymous and did not collect any personally sensitive information because I considered that this was unnecessary for the research purposes. Basic demographic data was collected to develop the demographic profiles of each student focus group.

The findings of the original study were presented to the students in both focus groups for discussion and exploration. The students were asked to discuss and explore each finding separately. The list of key findings from the original study (see Table 9.2: Focus group discussion guide) were presented to give students the opportunity to freely express their own views and experiences of the subject thus helping to provide insights into their viewpoints and the different ways they negotiated the topics.

Table 9.2 _Focus group discussion guide

- I.** Keeping social work values and ethics alive and active in the workplace.
- II.** The students' contribution to developing and maintaining their own ethical standards.
- III.** The role practice instructors/supervisors play in the student's development of social work values and ethics.
- IV.** The importance of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace to achieve the best practice for clients.
- V.** The client's behaviour as a contributory factor to the development of ethical practice of social workers in the workplace.
- VI.** The importance of the ethics of management (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisations) in creating and sustaining an ethical work/learning environment.

The focus group discussion guide was also given to students in written form at the beginning of the discussion along with some guidelines I prepared to help establish the group rules. I presented them for discussion and then sought group agreement to using them. Group rules (e.g. speak clearly/one person at a time, in conversation/all can participate, there are no right/wrong answers) were helpful for the successful facilitation of procedures in the groups; they underpinned the benefits of dialogue and were designed to help students feel free to talk openly and share their experiences with the other members of the group.

9.7.1 Role of the moderator

During the discussions, my role as moderator was to help stimulate the dialogue while keeping it focused on the subject at hand (some students tended to generate off-topic discussions), to facilitate dialogue between all the members of each focus group to help them all participate fully. Initially, some students were more talkative and had a tendency to dominate the discussion, mainly in the FG1, while others were shy and tended not to speak at first (FG2).

Furthermore, at the beginning of the focus groups discussions, some students said they felt a little uncomfortable about being recorded, given that they were not familiar with the use of an audio recorder for the tape recording of interviews (students of FG2 in particular). So, in order to help them feel comfortable and trust the process of recording them, I reminded them of my own strong commitment to ethical research practice and their right to confidentiality and anonymity.

Finally, I tried to observe and listen in a non-directed way so that all the students could feel comfortable about speaking out and sharing their views with their classmates and me, as the researcher and focus group moderator. Given that my role as moderator was to guide the discussion and not engage as a participant, I aimed to remain as neutral and impartial as possible and therefore, I did not share my own views or feelings with students.

9.8 Data Analysis

The focus group discussions with students were transcribed verbatim in Greek and the data that emerged from each focus group were analysed using the thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a widely-used method for analysing most types of qualitative data including focus group discussions. In this study, I used an inductive approach to thematic analysis that allowed themes to emerge from the data, rather than searching for pre-defined themes (Robson, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Initially, I read and re-read the discussion transcripts many times in order to familiarise myself with their content, highlighting words, phrases or sentences in the responses that appeared to be important for thematic analysis. At the same time, I noted down initial ideas about identifying themes within the data. My aim was to identify opinions and ideas from the two focus groups that were similar or different to the original study's findings.

Running two focus groups meant I could also explore the similarities and difference between them. To do this, the focus groups were analysed separately before being compared to find any similarities or differences between them. To do this, the responses were grouped under common themes, while I integrated exact quotes from the students' discussion transcripts into the text to enhance the rigour and credibility of the analysis and give additional detail to help communicate the meaning of each theme to the reader.

9.9 Presentation of Findings

This section presents the combined findings from the comparison of the two focus groups. I do not present individual analysis here given there were no significant differences in the two groups. The findings are organised into six subsections, each including the main themes that emerged from the analysis of all the data. Each theme is identified under the guideline discussion headings presented to each focus group.

I. Keeping social work values and ethics alive and active in the workplace

The ethical basis of social work practice

All the students in both groups recognised the central role that ethics and values play in the practice of social workers and placed great emphasis on keeping them alive and active in their everyday professional relationships. In their view, this is

considered as central to ethical social work practice given that it is intertwined with the nature of social work as a humanistic profession:

Keeping values and ethics fresh and alive in the workplace is a sine qua non for the ethical practice of social work. (FG1)

Values and ethics are intertwined with the nature of social work as a humanistic profession and as such, it is of paramount importance for social workers to do the best they can to protect them. (FG1)

Keeping values and ethics alive and active in the workplace is the key for having good professional relationships with your colleagues from your own and allied disciplines. (FG2)

Benefits of keeping values and ethics alive and active

For students, it is very important to safeguard and promote the values and ethical principles on which the social work profession is based on a daily basis during the practicum in order to protect:

- clients and other people involved in the relationship from risk or ethical violation:

The protection of our professional values and ethics on a daily basis is of paramount importance; taking daily values-based actions, we endeavour to protect our relationship with the client, and other people involved in the affair. (FG1)

- the professional status and recognition of social work in relation to other professions:

By practicing our ethics and values daily in the workplace, we empower our professional identity and enhance our professional status in the eyes of the public and of the fellow professionals in other fields. (FG1)

- social workers themselves from:

...potential conflict between our personal and professional values by being aware of and able to resolve any potential conflict of interest by giving priority to the ethical principles and standards of the profession. (FG1)

Keeping professional values and ethics alive helps you to be good as an individual person. I think that the more you practice the values and ethics the better person you can become. (FG1)

Difficulties experienced in keeping values and ethics alive and active

In focus group 2, most students discussed the embeddedness of ethics in the practice settings and drew attention to the difficulties in keeping values and ethics alive and active in everyday social work practice as this requires and presupposes that:

- professionals including students, really love what they have chosen to do:

In order to protect and promote the values and ethics of the profession, first and for most, we must love our job, act upon our personal values, and enjoy working with people and enabling them to take action to improve their quality of life. (FG2)

- working environments promote the implementation and upholding of values-based practices:

Sometimes, it is very hard to apply and develop social work values and ethics in the workplace; it is beyond my personal commitment to the profession... the lack of mutual understanding and cooperation between professionals, the lack of appropriate structures for preservation of confidentiality (e.g. no interview room) or even no recognition of the work we do as trainee students are significant obstacles that hinder the promotion of values-based practices in the working environment. (FG2)

Be ethically vigilant at all times and in all situations

In focus group 2, students talked in particular about the need to be vigilant and alert at all times to preserve and keep alive the values and ethics of the profession. As one student commented:

...Too often, we become complacent in our daily work routines and that can have a negative impact on our professional performance as ethical social workers. Therefore, we need to constantly be at a high level of values-based alert in order to ethically protect our clients, other professionals and ourselves as well. (FG2)

In focus group 2, the students added the need to be ethically vigilant at all times regardless of the situation. For them, it is useless trying to apply values and ethics only when an ethically difficult situation arises because:

...values and ethics should guide and motivate our everyday actions even the most routine activities in the practice settings without ethically difficult situations necessarily existing which need to be addressed. (FG2)

It is not necessary for me to work through ethical situations in social work practice in order to apply our professional values and ethics. I am trying to keep

them alive and active through my everyday behaviour in the agency, such as, on how to talk over the phone respecting client's or other people's privacy and protecting their personal information, on how to treat others with kindness and respect...these simple things also make us feel ethical 'professionals' all the time. (FG2)

II. The students' contribution to developing and maintaining their own ethical standards

Students as ethical contributors in practice environments

Students in both focus groups emphasised their own contribution to the development of their professional values and ethics in the workplace:

As a trainee student, I had the opportunity to participate actively in work-related activities, to reflect on my role as ethical social worker and demonstrate application of classroom ethics learning and skills to real world through daily practice. In this way, I think, therefore, I did make a strong contribution to the development of our professional ethical standards. (FG2)

Students see themselves as agents of change who are able to bring new perspectives and ideas on ethics issues in the workplace. Students also see themselves as active partners in shaping their ethics learning experience since they often work directly with clients and participate actively in the case management process:

During the practicum, I often felt like an agent of change given that through my student role, I had the opportunity to transmit the new ideas learned in the classroom to the social service, and 'teach', to some degree, the professionals new things about the profession of social work. (FG1)

Some students used the words *new blood* to indicate the refreshing and innovative aspects of their role as trainee students and how this might be associated with the upholding of social work values and ethics in the workplace settings:

As trainee students, we often bring 'new blood' into the social agency including values and ethics matters; this is particularly obvious when some professionals who are especially vulnerable to burnout given the job demands and day-to day tasks, do not hesitate to ask us for ideas about alternative ways of acting and doing without breaching the ethical requirements of the profession. (FG1)

Other students reflected on their responsibilities and duties to safeguard the professional ethical guidelines by building a critical thinking lens:

Although we are still students, we all have a responsibility and duty to protect and promote our ethical standards during the placement. From this perspective, I think we are ethically responsible for cultivating our critical thinking skills and for fighting against social injustice and policies especially now that the financial/social crisis in Greece has led to various human rights violations. (FG1)

Two students described themselves as transmitters and guardians of information and knowledge regarding ethics and values matters as follows:

We enter into professional practice bringing along new ideas and concepts on how we can better apply and promote our social work values and ethics knowledge and skills in the workplace... Many times our ideas were so appreciated by the practice instructors (and other professionals), that we found ourselves to be not only receivers of ethics knowledge, but also transmitters of it. (FG2)

Provided that the practice environment is student-friendly, students reported that:

-sometimes, they can serve as reminders of keeping ethics and values alive in the workplace:

Although ethics is at the heart of everyday practice, sometimes, over the years, professionals are negatively influenced by work routines and forget their ethical role as social workers; it is then that we remind them of their responsibilities to uphold the ethical standards of our profession and to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. (FG2)

Once, the head of the social agency asked me to undertake a case that was not as urgent, as the case that I was handling that period. Although I had to do it, I reminded him of my ethical duties as a trainee student and after I insisted a lot, I finally managed to address both cases without neglecting that one was more urgent...(FG2)

-while some other times, they can act as 'ethical levers of pressure and sensitisation' towards their practice instructors and other professionals in the social agency saying that:

...although professionals want to help, they often feel fatigued and frustrated from the everyday tasks and agency bureaucracy so that they need someone else to sensitize them ethically and motivate them to take action and go ahead. (FG2)

...we do not only bring new ideas in the workplace, but we also ask professionals - inside and outside the agency- by 'pressing' them, to overcome the bureaucracy's policies in order to provide immediate services to clients who really need them. (FG2)

Factors influencing the ethical contribution of students

In order to fully contribute to the development of ethical standards, students highlighted the need for collaboration between employees, including students, in the workplace. Students also highlighted the need to be treated fairly and equally by staff members as they are often asked by their practice instructors to act like professionals:

When they treat you in a fair and equal way, they listen to you, and trust you to handle even the smallest task, you feel more and more responsible for your professional conduct and actions regarding the importance of upholding ethical standards. (FG1)

III. The role practice instructors/supervisors play in the student's development of social work values and ethics

Practice instructor/ supervisor as ethical role models

All students highlighted the important role the practice instructor/supervisor plays in the development of their professional values and ethics in practice settings. Students perceive their practice instructors as powerful role models who function as transmitters of ethical and professional behaviour in the workplace:

During the professional practicum, it is very important for us to have ethical role models, because when we enter the professional arena as social workers, we will recall our experiences as trainee students and possibly, we will want to behave accordingly; so, the more your practice instructor guides you to behave in an ethical manner and helps you to learn and apply values and ethics in practice, the more you want to help other people and make them feel better in their life. (FG1)

For students, the practice instructor is generally recognised as the key person/role model for ethics learning and development in social work practice settings:

Given that practice instructors are in daily contact and interaction with us, they function as role models for us; they show us professional ethics skills through their behaviour in actual practice and teach us how we should act and behave ethically and professionally in the workplace. (FG2)

One student referred to the importance of role modelling by practice instructors as a pedagogical tool for transmitting the ethical standards of the profession:

For me, modelling has a powerful pedagogical role as through it, students like children, who learn by observing their teachers, learn to achieve the values and ethics knowledge and skills required by social workers to work within a legal and ethical professional framework. (FG1)

Other students considered that practice instructors as role models contribute to the formation of their ethical identity as professional social workers:

Practice instructors are the most important role models for the formation of our ethical professional identity in social work practice. (FG2)

...they are always beside you and are ready to teach you or show you through their behaviours, what you should and should not do when handling a case under real-life working conditions. (FG2)

One student described the positive experience she had from her relationship with the practice instructor as follows:

...Undoubtedly, I was blessed in having a great practice instructor in the social agency as I think that he/she as a role model has, almost always has a strong impact on the development of your ethical professional identity. (FG2)

In general, students agreed that practice instructors can be positive or negative role models for their on-the-job ethics learning, while they strongly preferred to see them as positive ethical role models. However, one student stated that, although she prefers good instructors to bad ones as a source of her ethics learning and development, she indicated that practice instructor's negative behaviour could also be a useful source of ethics knowledge saying that:

...although I strongly believe that we as students need practice instructors acting as ethical role models, bad ethical role models can also educate us in what we don't want to be in our professional life later on. (FG1)

Students also stated that practice instructors who set a good example, are able to teach and communicate values and ethics through their own behaviour and actions in the practice environment. Indeed, the majority of students emphasised the instructor's ability to apply and maintain the values and ethics of the profession rather than just talking about them.

...Practice instructors must be able to teach values and ethics to students through their own actions and behaviours in the professional environment rather than talking about them. (FG1)

The profile of the ethical role model

For students, practice instructors as ethical role models should have personal, professional and supervisory characteristics, as well as transmission skills. In relation to this, some students from FG1 described the desirable qualities of an ethical practice instructor saying that they prefer practice instructors who:

...encourage students to express their opinions, and show respect for their opinions by taking their responses into account when making decisions. (FG1)

... are willing to transmit their professional values and ethics knowledge and skills to students and share their ethics perspectives with them...Practice instructors must be able to establish a trusting and caring relationship with their students and be humane, righteous, and responsible for upholding and maintaining ethical social work standards in their working environment. (FG1)

Interestingly, the students in focus group 1 talked about both bad and good role models. By contrast, the students in focus group 2 - who had all had good practice experiences - only focused on the practice instructors who were good role models and were able to function as a positive source of values and ethics knowledge and learning for them. Indeed, they placed particular emphasis on the human side of the practice instructor's role and those personal characteristics that might influence their ethics learning outcomes:

...practice instructors should be active in their professional role, available to help us learn how to learn in actual practice; also, they should be able to guide and encourage us to demonstrate our ethics abilities and skills, as well as be able to reward us therefore motivating us to perform better the next time. (FG2)

...we do not like practice instructors who look only at the mistakes we are probably making during the professional practicum; instead, we need instructors who help us to keep our wings of knowledge open and fly... (FG2)

Finally, one of the students compared the practice instructor as a professional to the individual person as a human being:

As all people are unique human beings, the same applies for all practice instructors; each has a unique way to apply, uphold and adhere to the values and ethics standards of the social work profession. (FG2)

IV. The importance of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace to achieve the best practice for clients

The value of ethical workplace collaboration

All the students in both focus groups agreed that ethical collaboration in social work practice is an important part of delivering good quality services to clients.

Professionals and trainee students have daily contacts with colleagues of the same or allied disciplines within and between different social agencies and organisations in order to help their clients to achieve their goals. Thus, ethical collaboration is central to deliver quality services to our clients. (FG2)

Students also noted that collaboration can be a powerful influence in applying and developing social work values and ethics. In the opinion of one student:

...being able to collaborate with your colleagues within your own agency and within other agencies, means that you are able to keep your values and ethical standards. (FG2)

Difficulties of ethical workplace collaboration

While students emphasized the need for ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace, some pointed to the difficulties of collaboration and noted experiences that hindered collaborative practice. For example, one student talked about a lack of trust and respect between public agencies and between public and nonprofit agencies in the following way:

Some public sector services are not willing to provide services to social workers in order to help their clients meet their needs; many employees in these services impede the collaborative behaviour...During my practicum experience, I noticed that there was a lack of trust and respect among public agencies and between public and nonprofit agencies which made ethical collaboration a very difficult exercise. (FG1)

Other students criticised certain state agencies (e.g. the police, the tax office, the office for foreigners) for what they thought was unjustified refusal to provide services to social workers advocating on behalf of their clients. In their opinion, such behaviour often led to values conflicts between professionals and organisations:

Whenever I had to contact certain state agencies, I always hoped to meet an employee who was really responsible and eager to give guidance and provide the

right information. Otherwise, I would have to berate them and argue with them in order to safeguard my clients' rights. (FG2)

One student commented:

When agencies or organisations refuse to recognise the role of social workers or they refuse to respect and implement the clients' rights, it means that society is not yet ready to accept social workers' services. That's why social workers must have strong voices as advocate of their clients. (FG1)

Issues related to ethical workplace collaboration

All the students in both groups reported a continued need for maintaining and safeguarding an ethical climate in the work environment in addition to pointing out the need to disclose unethical behaviour or actions to prevent the adoption of unethical practices. One student mentioned specifically:

I consider that, given that ethical climate is at the heart of professional relationships inside and outside the workplace, practice placement settings have a paramount duty to encourage professionals and students alike to report unethical behaviours or actions and cultivate ethically collaborative relationships. (FG1)

Other students mentioned the need for common organisational values within the working environment in order to prevent unethical collaborative practice or conflicts of interest between professionals. One student commented that:

Through my practice experience, I first realised the need for existing common values between professionals within the working environment; these values were important for establishing good professional relationships and avoiding any unethical behaviour. (FG2)

Most students noted experiences that promote the meaning of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace. One student in particular spoke about his practicum experience considering it as a good example for ethical collaborative practice. As she noted:

I realised and understood the meaning of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace only when I was doing my professional practicum in the non-profit agency for immigrants. Working conditions were based on solidarity and mutual respect and professionals from various disciplines including students were encouraged and empowered to work together to achieve common goals...Under these humane and harmonic working conditions, unethical professional practice including unethical collaborative relationships is something which rarely occurs. (FG2)

Although students acknowledged working conditions were important for ethical collaborative practice, they placed particular emphasis on the quality of the professional as an individual, as well as the role that the School of Social Work should play in cultivating ethical collaborative relationships. In their opinion,

It doesn't matter where you are working, for example, in the public or the nonprofit sector, but (it matters) what type of people you are going to work with. (FG2)

Given that there is a lack of collaborative culture in the Greek working environments in general, social work students need to be better prepared by their schools to learn to work towards professional collaborative relationships that promote ethical practices. (FG2)

IV. The client's behaviour as a contributory factor to the development of ethical practice of social workers in the workplace

The influence of client's behaviour on professionals' ethical behaviour

Students commonly argued that client behaviour is a very significant factor influencing social workers' ethical behaviour in the workplace. From their perspective, client attitudes and behaviour impact on the way professional social workers or students think and act ethically in practice:

...I wanted to respect him, but he behaved in such an awful way that I didn't want to respect him and tried politely to avoid him by telling him to ask another agency for help. (FG1)

Some clients are too demanding of the service they expect...they insist and often treat us like we are their servants. These behaviours bother me and make me feel out of control and nervous. (FG2)

One student noted that:

...negative client behaviour of whatever type (e.g. aggressive or manipulative) is an important factor which affects the behaviour of professionals or students regardless of their personalities. (FG2)

Some students pointed out that ethical social work practice can not only be influenced by the client's behaviour itself, but it can also be influenced by other people's attitudes and behaviour, like that of relatives or caregivers, who act on behalf of the client in certain professional settings. In relation to this, one student described his experience as a trainee social worker in a psychiatric hospital:

When I was doing my practice in the psychiatric hospital, I often had to deal with negative behaviours of relatives or caregivers, who in their efforts to help their people they became aggressive, manipulative or demanding towards professionals...And this behaviour made me very reluctant to provide appropriate services and show them respect. (FG1)

Another student spoke about clients who asked for help and behaved aggressively towards professionals. She described her own experience as follows:

But his behaviour was so bad that I was scared. Professionals fear aggressive behaviour... and I believe that the feeling of fear is above any professional deontology in social work practice. (FG2)

Finally, it is interesting to note that in the opinion of one student, the ethical practice of social workers in the workplace is also likely to be affected by the positive behaviour of clients. As the student commented:

Apart from the 'bad' client's behaviour, there is also the 'good' client's behaviour that often acts as an incentive for professionals and trainees to offer as many as possible further services to the clients. In my opinion, this is also a type of anti-deontological (unethical) behaviour because it can lead to discriminatory practice on behalf of professionals. (FG2)

Professionals' reactions to clients' behaviour

Although students noted client negative behaviour as an important factor in the ethical behaviour of social workers, they strongly agreed that professionals should not be influenced by their client's behaviour or history and suggested ways in which professional ethics can develop, such as:

In order to cope with difficult and negative behaviours, and not to be swayed ethically, social workers will need to have self-knowledge, be able to self-criticize every moment in their career, and always set limits on their relationship with the clients. (FG1)

...social workers should have boundaries, and not cross them...this is the key for ethical social work practice. (FG1)

Given that most students raised concerns about working with difficult clients, they suggested that professionals need to acquire 'ethical resilience' through the process of self-knowledge and self-development in order to be able to deal with these clients' behaviours and provide the appropriate services.

If social workers want to behave according to their professional values and ethics, they need to develop ethical resilience towards clients' negative behaviour through the process of self-knowledge and self-development. (FG2)

Finally, several students remarked that a client's negative behaviour can be a positive motive for social workers to apply and uphold their professional values and ethics in practice. As one student said:

We as professionals need to understand our client; clients are not expected to understand our behaviours. That's why every difficult case should be a good opportunity or even a challenge for us to become better professionals and gain self-awareness and self-improvement. (FG1)

VI. The importance of the ethics of management (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisations) in creating and sustaining an ethical work/learning environment

Managers as ethical leaders and role models

In general, students pointed out the ethical role managers have regardless of the level they have in the organisation's hierarchy. Also, students recognised that managers/ heads are very important to ensure social agencies or organisations maintain an ethical work/learning environment. Comments like the following were indicative of this sense:

The manager/head is the 'mirror' of an agency, and as such, he is required to transmit and foster human values and principles in the working space. (FG1)

He/she is the key person for the performance of an organisation and therefore, he/she is mainly responsible for its improvement or its closure. (FG2)

...they are the mainstay of the social agency, the basis upon which staff members are grounded to work together in an effective and ethical way. (FG1)

Some students described the managers/heads as role models for ethical behaviour in the workplace. Others associated his/her role with qualities of character and gave certain examples of ethical management. One student who had had very positive experiences from his practice placement reported in particular:

Judging from my own experience, I would say that the manager was a strong role model for me. Through his behaviour, I learned a lot about how I should defend our professional values, as well as how important it is to seek solutions working together with my colleagues for the benefit of our clients and of course, do not

discriminate against others whether clients or employees... He was a model of kindness, compassionate understanding and professionalism. (FG1)

Poor ethical management

As noted earlier, the importance of the ethical role of managers was emphasized. However, some students indicated they had experienced poor ethical management during the practice learning experience. These students criticised the senior manager's behaviour towards social workers, and expressed their disappointment over the management of unethical activities. One student, who did her practicum in a general hospital, described her experience as follows:

Sometimes, the senior manager asked social workers to provide services to patients who, although they were not scheduled for receiving help from the social work department, they suddenly appeared at the department and asked for help using the name of the director...Other times, again, he forced social workers to provide outpatient care to homeless or uninsured patients in order to give the hospital bed to someone else who was insured or had money to pay for their hospital treatment. (FG1)

This student also described the reactions of social workers to the pressures of senior management:

I have noticed many of my social work colleagues recoiling at the idea of fighting against illegal or unethical acts; they were so frustrated that they felt like giving up at times. Indeed, I often heard them repeat words like ...unfortunately, nothing can change that. (FG1)

Other students, who had also experienced some poor ethical management, lamented the fact that senior managers in public social organisations are political appointees and, in most cases, are not social workers:

...The senior manager, who was a political appointee, lacked the big picture of the organisation's goals and mission and appeared to have been driven by personal and political interests rather than professional interests...Although she lacked appropriate experience for her position, she did not listen to the social workers who were experts at their jobs, and often provoked conflicts. (FG2)

The same students:

-raised concerns about placing political appointees in the public social welfare organisations saying that:

...the political person in the position of manager always has different interests than social workers.(FG2)

... Social workers often feel trapped when the manager puts private/political interests above the public interest. They feel powerless to rising challenges as they occur. (FG1)

- talked about management lack of appropriate experience and subject knowledge at all levels:

Social workers always need to explain their role and defend their values and ethics to managers who are of different specialty. Different professional backgrounds may cause conflicts of interest and reduce the quality of services to clients. (FG2)

Components of ethical management

Students discussed ethical management and agreed that in order to lead ethically, managers in social organisations need to have been trained in social work and have certain professional and personal qualities. As two students said:

Managers at all levels with social worker background tend to better understand their employees' role and the efforts they make to help their clients. They are also better prepared (from their studies) to behave ethically in the organisation. (FG2)

Good managers must have character qualities, good communication abilities and be human relations experts. And like us [i.e. the trainee social workers], they must have received appropriate training on the organisation's structure and goals before starting to work. (FG2)

9.10 Synthesis and Conclusions

This study built upon the earlier (2010) research and the 2013 focus groups were set up to discuss and explore the findings from the original study. Interestingly, the 2013 focus groups findings take the original findings one step further by providing more detailed and in- depth information or reactions to the topic under study. The new findings support the previous ones, although they could have done otherwise, of course. They help to extend knowledge of the the subject matter by shedding more light on it and revealing novel aspects evolving from each original finding discussed.

The students' responses revealed their awareness of a wide range of issues related to their professional values and ethics, while various interrelated issues that emerged as a result of the focus groups discussions verify the complexity of interactions in developing the values and ethics of the profession in practice settings.

Both focus group students recognised that the findings from the original study deepened their understanding of the development of social work values and ethics during the practice placement. In both focus groups, the students appeared to openly express their opinions and share their experiences regardless of whether their practice learning experiences were positive or negative.

Below are the summarized and synthesized findings that emerged from the analysis of the focus groups discussions, as well as various suggestions/ recommendations made by students during the discussions.

- ✚ The students from both focus groups highlighted the importance of keeping social work values and ethics alive and active in their everyday practice, despite any difficulties encountered in doing so. Ethical practice is intertwined with the nature of social work as a humanistic profession and therefore professionals, including students, need to demonstrate ethical behaviour on all occasions rather than only in ethically difficult situations. Furthermore, students claimed that it is important to safeguard and

promote the values and ethical principles of the profession because it protects: a) clients and other people involved in the professional relationship from risks or ethical violations; b) the professional status and recognition of social work in relation to other professions; and c) social workers themselves from conflicts arising between their personal and professional values. In order to demonstrate values and ethical behaviour every day, however, students concluded that professionals and students alike must be passionate about the work they do, as well as be able to work in professional environments that promote the application and upholding of values-based social work practices.

✚ In both focus groups, students emphasized their own contribution to the development of their professional values and ethics in the workplace. Indeed, students used a variety of words to describe their roles and responsibilities with regard to the promotion of ethical practices during their placements, such as being: *agents of change, new blood, a transmitter* and *guardians, reminders, ethical levers of pressure* and *sensitisation*. The choice of these words clearly indicates students' perceptions about their involvement as active partners in developing and maintaining the ethics and values of the profession. While the students consider themselves ethical contributors to practice environments, they identify factors that can impede their involvement in ethical practices, such as: a) a lack of a student-friendly practice environment; b) lack of collaboration between professionals; and c) lack of staff members' fair and equal treatment of students. Students said that, although they often carry case-loads that need professional skills and are asked to act like professionals, they are not treated fairly or equally nor are their needs as trainee students supported.

✚ In both focus groups, practice instructors were viewed as powerful ethical role models for students, who as trainees are taking their first steps in the professional world of social work. Students stated that practice instructors can be positive or negative role models for their ethics and values learning

in social work practice. But, they strongly preferred to see them as positive ethical role models. In addition, students mainly preferred instructors who were able to teach and demonstrate ethics and values by modelling them through example. While all the students described practice instructors as good ethical role models who combine personal, professional and supervisory characteristics, some students put the personal qualities of the instructor above everything else.

✚ The importance of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace was highlighted as a priority for delivering good quality services to clients by students from both focus groups. Students discussed a number of experiences that enhanced or impeded ethically collaborative practices inside and outside the workplace. Students also discussed difficulties in ethical collaboration and offered a range of recommendations that cluster around three different areas: a) the need to sustain continuously an ethical climate in working environments; b) the need to encourage professionals, including students, to report unethical behaviour to prevent the acceptance of unethical practices; and c) the need to maintain common organisational values in order to prevent unethical collaborative practice or conflicts of interest between professionals. The qualities of the professional as an individual were also discussed by some students. Finally, some students highlighted the important role that the School of Social Work can play in cultivating ethical collaborative relationships between students during the educational process so that they are better prepared for ethical collaborative practice.

✚ In both focus groups, the client's behaviour was cited as a factor influencing the way social workers, including students, think and act ethically in professional practice. Most students highlighted the negative behaviour of clients (including behaviours coming from those who act on behalf of clients, such as caregivers or relatives) as an influential factor, though the positive behaviour of the client was also cited as an important factor for ethical

behaviour of practitioners. Interestingly, most students considered a client's negative behaviour as a trigger that activates the application of social work values and ethics in practice. Lastly, most students suggested that professionals need to buffer themselves against a client's negative behaviour by developing *ethical resilience* through the processes of self-knowledge and self-development. For students, *ethical resilience* is essential to ensure the provision of appropriate services to clients.

- ✚ The importance of managers at all levels in the hierarchy of organisations as ethical leaders and role models was greatly emphasised by all the students in both focus groups. Students discussed a range of experiences through which they experienced ethical or unethical management practices and raised the issue of political influence on the management of the public social welfare organisations in particular. Moreover, students said they had raised concerns about social workers who perceived themselves as powerless to react to a manager's poor ethical behaviour in certain professional settings (e.g. general hospitals or welfare organisations). They made the following specific recommendations for ethical management: a) the need for managers to have appropriate experience and subject knowledge at all levels in the organisation; b) managers must be trained in social work so that they are able to better understand the role and duties of the profession; and finally, c) managers must have personal qualities, good communication skills and knowledge of human relations.

9.11 Epilogue

The aim of the focus group study was to explore the views of students about the original study's findings, whether these are different to their own experiences or similar, in order to further inform my thinking about the findings of my previous research. As shown through the discussion above, the focus group method used here was particularly helpful for me as a researcher to achieve my goals, broaden

my knowledge and expand and focus my thinking about the findings of my original study.

The following highlight the main messages that emerged from the focus groups discussions: a) the need to practise ethical social work on every occasion as a matter of habit rather than only in ethically difficult situations; b) the vital role that students as ethical contributors can play in practice environments; c) the importance of the practice instructors as positive ethical role models for students; d) the need for ethical collaboration inside and outside the practice environment to deliver good quality services to clients; e) the client's behaviour (either negative or positive) as a key factor in ethical social work practice; and f) the importance of managers at all levels in the hierarchy of organisations as ethical leaders and role models for professionals and students alike.

The focus groups findings not only support the original study's findings, but take them one step further by adding greater clarity and deeper insights into the complex processes through which students develop their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics in their professional practice placement. From this perspective, the key messages emerging from both the original study (Table 9.2) and the focus group study are critically important for delivering quality social work field education, and therefore, academic teachers and practice instructors need to take them into account when preparing and educating future generations of social workers.

10. Reflections on My Research Journey

When you set out on your journey to Ithaca, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge.

“Ithaca” by Constantine P. Cavafy (1911)

10.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my personal reflections on my role as a researcher while working on this thesis. Reflecting on the research journey was important and constructive as it helped me to situate my own methodological position in relation to the research itself and considers my stance in relation to that of the students with whom I worked. Drake and Heath (2011:107) point out that the researchers’ role in the research process and ‘how they create their research story is connected to who they are, their previous experience, professional knowledge and desire to bring this into the academy via doctoral study’. Bearing this in mind, I needed to reflect deeply on the relationship between my research and my life and on what inspired and motivated me to embark on my doctoral research⁶⁹. Through the process of reflection, I also attempted to explain and understand the synergies and tensions between my educator, researcher and practice roles, as well as my roles as PhD student, translator and writer of the thesis, which I present below.

10.2 Me, myself and I (my story)

As I look back on my life, I recognise that much of my current research interest in social work values and ethics has evolved from a lifetime’s interest in ethical behaviour in humans. Through my personal life and professional and academic career I have seen various key points that have shaped and influenced my ethical perspective. I am passionate about values and ethics learning and sharing my

⁶⁹ In Chapter 1.1, I stated briefly the reasons for choosing the topic of my research study. Here I reflect more deeply on the motivational factors that influenced my choice of research project and my increased awareness of the connection between my past and my future as a ‘good’ researcher.

knowledge with students, colleagues and others. I also like observing and reflecting on other people's behaviour, especially their ethical behaviour; it's something I've done ever since I was a child. For me, values and ethics reflect the way people treat each other, and consequently mark the quality of our lives as human beings.

I began my professional career as a qualified social worker at a residential care home for children and adolescents in the early 1990s, in Athens. Over the period of my work experience, I had the opportunity to learn and use many valuable social work skills to interact with other people (e.g. children, adolescents, families, colleagues), to consider relationships and issues within my professional context, as well as to observe and reflect on the realities of work life. My professional career as a children's social worker has cultivated my interest in professional and ethical behaviour in the workplace. It was then that I started to be interested in social work values and ethics and, for the first time, I began to question my beliefs and ethics about workplace realities and how they affected my professional life and vice versa.

During my work experience, I developed a passion for helping others to reach their own goals and achieve their own dreams by teaching them new skills and empowering them to find their own voices. I feel that my passion for teaching and social work during these years led me to want to inspire that same passion in others and I decided to pursue a university teaching career. After I had been selected for the position of Lecturer at the Department of Social Work in Athens in 2002, I therefore decided to start a career in academia. Since then, I have been involved in teaching on a number of social work courses in my Department, including recently, courses on social work values and ethics. I have also been supervising students in practice placements (see also Chapter 1.1) and I have been involved in many administrative duties.

As a lecturer and student supervisor, my interest in the values and ethics of the social work profession seemed a natural continuation of what I liked to study and learn more about. Indeed, through the experience of supervising students, I

developed a particular interest in the processes through which students develop their knowledge and understanding of social work values and ethics in their practice placement. My interest and passion in this field, motivated me to pursue a research PhD.

To research the topic of great interest to me meant I had to apply for a PhD in a country other than own because, in Greece, there are relatively few PhD opportunities in the area of social work, and even fewer for funded research projects. Driven by a desire to follow my own research ideas, after a successful 5-year academic teaching career, I enrolled as a PhD student in Social Work and Social Care at the University of Sussex in late June of 2007.

Registering for a PhD was a landmark decision for my academic career and my personal and family life after my MA in Social Work studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA/UK) in 2000, which had influenced my interest in qualitative research, a topic I return to below. I knew before starting my PhD journey that it would be longer and much more difficult than my MA studies, but, I had not fully realised the variety of difficulties I would experience as a PhD researcher; I outline some of these challenges and what I learned from them in this chapter.

10.3 Reading, talking and questioning

When I started my PhD, I was an experienced academic teacher, but a novice qualitative researcher since I had no previous experience of using qualitative research methodology. Up to that point, I had considered myself a quantitatively-oriented researcher, but with no strong commitment to the philosophy of quantitative research. Traditionally, most social science researchers, including social work researchers in Greece, have had a background in quantitative rather than qualitative methods. In recent years, however, there has been growing interest in qualitative research, as well as in mixed research approaches, in both academia and in practice. These relatively recent trends and methods for social work research in Greece along with the complex nature of the research topic rekindled my interest in the qualitative research interest developed during my

master's degree. As a result, I decided to turn my attention back to qualitative methodology to find out whether this was the best tool for my research. I remind the reader that my chosen research topic concerned students' perceptions of how their professional values and ethics in the workplace developed during their professional practice placement. My research topic refers to professional values and ethics, which as a topic is generally under-researched in the existing social work literature, as well as being complex in nature and difficult to study. Given the complex nature of values and ethics, as well as the lack of research on this issue in social work education and practice in Greece, I considered that qualitative rather than quantitative research was the most appropriate method for the topic in which I was interested in (Chapter 4.5.2).

Generally speaking, I had knowledge of research and my previous experience had shown my ability to undertake research. As a quantitative-oriented researcher, for example, I developed and carried out small scale projects in my previous and current workplace and in the classroom. In researching for my PhD, however, I decided to leave my old quantitative researcher self behind and turn to my new self as a qualitative researcher because of the choices I made in relation to the research paradigm, methodology and methods. Trying to become a proficient qualitative researcher was the most challenging and transformative learning experience for me.

In order to gain insight into qualitative research, after I had registered to do my PhD at Sussex, I had to establish a self-study plan to familiarise myself with qualitative methodology and its research methods, as well as identify the challenges and ethical issues that emerge most often in this type of research. As a quantitative-oriented researcher, I was familiar with the language of numbers and the power that numbers have not only to inform, but also to regulate people's lives. As a qualitative researcher, by contrast, I had to familiarise myself with the language of words and recognise the power words can have in qualitative research when they are the sole means of communication and the responsibility the researcher has in choosing the appropriate ones. Qualitative research is concerned

with the meaning and understanding of social reality by focusing on people's experiences expressed in words (Robson, 2002; Flick, 2009).

As a novice qualitative researcher, I began reading a range of published qualitative research articles and textbooks in English and Greek to increase my knowledge of research methods, and learn more about the possible models available to use to carry out my research project. At the same time, I started to search for workshops on qualitative research methods in Athens, (I was registered at Sussex, but continued my work in Athens throughout this period) and looked for colleagues or other professionals who had expertise in qualitative research and could introduce me to qualitative approaches (see Chapter 4.5.2.2). Robson (2002) suggests that talking to other researchers and experts in research methods is a great way to learn about it first-hand. Reading and talking about my research interest with other people was very helpful in improving my learning and knowledge of the subject. At the beginning of my research journey, I had the opportunity to meet people who gave me some good tips, advice and a starting point. I was fortunate to have a good mentor who was familiar with qualitative methods with a strong background in quantitative research (Vassilios Gialamas, Associate Professor, University of Athens/ Department of Preschool Education). I was also fortunate to have two supervisors who were very open minded about new research approaches and who provided a sounding board for my thoughts, ideas and concerns about my research choices and suggestions. However, I soon realised that, like a journey through pregnancy, learning to do research at doctoral level is quite a lonely journey, particularly when you are a 'distance student'.

10.4 My insider issues and challenges

In my research study, I explored the experiences and views of final-year social work students in my own Department. In qualitative research terms, this means that I conducted 'insider research' since I had direct involvement with the research setting (Robson, 2002); the research setting was my work area and students in my Department were the co-producers of knowledge and learning in my projects.

Due to my position in the Department, I have had the privilege of meeting and speaking with lots of students during teaching courses or other school activities. For me, already being a member of the academic staff was very helpful in avoiding any of the 'culture shock' or 'disorientation' that outsider researchers frequently experience (Hockey, 1993). So, familiarity with the people and place allowed me to have easy and rapid access to students and information. In addition, familiarity increased my ability to have an honest discussion with students and get what appeared to be more honest responses (Drake and Heath, 2011). Of course, I recognise that being an insider researcher may give me privileged access over an outsider (e.g. Hockey, 1993), but I am aware that it might also cause me to think I know things rather than asking questions about them (Drake and Heath, 2011).

Although my insider position offered a variety of advantages, I was also mindful of potential challenges. Drake and Heath (2011) note that practitioner researchers take on multiple roles with respect to work, research, and practice and they therefore need to be aware of the ethical issues that may arise during research when enacting their multiple roles. I have described my dual role as researcher and teacher and conceptualising the relationships and power between researcher and participants (Chapter 4.6.3 and Chapter 9.1). It is worth adding here that the students, who were not given incentives to participate, but and voluntarily took part in the study, were not known to me and I had not been involved in teaching or assessing them. The only role I had in my research was that of researcher (not teacher), as the sample population consisted of final-year students who had completed their courses and were going to graduate soon. However, the students were aware of my role as a social work lecturer and so power was still potentially a relevant factor. For this reason, I continually reminded myself that I was a member of the faculty and they were students, that I had the power, invested in me by the institution, to assess students as part of my job. Based on the above, I assume that my not being involved in teaching or assessing the volunteers along with my good reputation in the workplace and the importance of the research topic may have helped attract students to participate in the projects, as there were no difficulties in recruiting volunteers.

As an insider conducting qualitative research, I also recognised and accepted the fact that bias and subjectivity within the research process are inevitable. Qualitative research is inherently biased and subjective and, as Flick (2009:16) points out, 'the subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied becomes part of the research process'. Both need to be addressed, so I kept a reflective diary and used a variety of techniques to address the challenges of bias and subjectivity (see Chapter 4.5.2.1), as well as to maintain neutrality and impartiality with regard to my role as moderator in focus groups discussions. In relation to the latter, for example, my role as moderator was to guide the discussion and therefore, I did not participate in the discussions nor did I share my own views or feelings with students (Chapter 9.7.1). I feel my social work training in listening skills, being empathic etc. have been very useful to me in focus group research interviews. As an ex social worker with long-time work experience, I have developed the art of listening to the voice of individuals, and the ability to reflect in and on the workplace.

10.5 Reflecting on the data analysis

During my research journey, I realised that certain parts of myself as a quantitative-oriented researcher remained as I undertook a quantitative analysis with critical incident technique (CIT) and used numerical data to draw some conclusions (Chapter 4.9.3.3). Here, I remind the reader that I used statistical techniques for analysing textual data (i.e. responses to the open-ended questions in the CIT questionnaire) and I used qualitative content analysis for analysing the content of critical incidents and mapping them. Reflecting on my attempt to merge the different approaches to data analysis, I became aware that quantitative analysis approaches to qualitative data can also provide meaningful information to the researcher in helping to understand study results. Given that I ended up with a mixed methods study, I would argue that quantitative and qualitative approaches can be seen as complementary rather than competitive, though it is clear to me they have distinct characteristics. In my future research, I look forward to reflecting further on how a mixed methods approach can be used to provide a

comprehensive and holistic analysis of complex social phenomena, such as the values and ethics in social work.

10.6 My role as translator

In my research with students, I also had the role of translator in addition to researcher. Reflecting on my subjectivity, therefore, I realised that I had to examine my role in translating the findings from Greek into English because both the original study and the focus group study were conducted in Greek, but the findings were translated and presented in English. In Chapter 7.3, I acknowledged that issues of translation were one of the research limitations of the original study. In order to best manage my translation, I attempted to preserve the full meaning and tone of the text in my translation. In addition, from feedback from my supervisors and my proof reader, who were the first readers of my English texts, I was able to discover whether the translated texts preserved their full meaning or not. For example, when my supervisors' feedback comments referred to unclear sentences or phrases, I was able to understand that the translation was not appropriate and I had to retranslate the text. However, if I look back on these subjectivity issues, I would argue that, being both translator and researcher had some advantages. For example, I was able to better understand the meaning of the findings, as I was able to take into account cultural diversity issues in the translation process and the context in which comments were made. In Chapter 4.8.1, for example, I mentioned that in the Greek version of the CIT questionnaire, I chose to use both critical and significant (critical/significant) to avoid confusion in the translation process since the word 'critical' has mostly negative connotations in the Greek language. Another example has to do with the term 'clientelism', which as a phenomenon, has cultural connotations and is therefore a difficult concept to translate giving its full meaning.

10.7 My role as writer

When I began my PhD journey, I used to write about myself as researcher in the third person (e.g. the researcher did or the researcher did not...etc.) and I continued to do so until my viva, which was a turning point in my role as

researcher. The original study was written in the third person, because up to then, I was strongly influenced by my home country culture regarding writing a research paper; third person is standard and regularly used in academic and formal writing in Greece. In addition, I was strongly influenced by the positivist view of writing about research in detached, third-person voices.

On the other hand, the additional study was written in the first person; the first person is used to describe the personal experience of the author and is not regularly used in formal writing in academic settings in Greece. From my own experience in writing about the research project, however, using the first person was a critically self-reflective process for my own understanding and development as a researcher. In other words, it showed me a new way of viewing my role as a researcher; I learned to recognise my personal strengths and limitations and I felt more comfortable within myself as a researcher since I learned to acknowledge my research mistakes, to deal with them and share the lessons I learned with others so they do not repeat my mistakes (Eraut, 2007).

10.8 Concluding thoughts

When I started writing this chapter, I reminded myself of one of my favorite poems from Constantine P. Cavafy: "*Ithaca*". In this poem, Cavafy tells us about the experiences and knowledge gained while travelling towards a destination, which are of greater importance than the destination itself; the latter simply facilitates the journey. Bearing "*Ithaca*" in mind, during my journey doing research, I have enjoyed watching myself develop my capability as a qualitative researcher, and learned the importance of giving a voice to students and enabling them to become the co-producers of knowledge in the research process. Indeed, I now realise that I have learnt even more through my students' reflections on their own ethics learning experience during their practice placements.

Through the research process, I came to understand the vital importance of ethics in doing qualitative research and recognised the potential power imbalance

between the students and myself as researcher/teacher and the potential for exploiting relationships when recruiting with an insider's perspective.

During my research journey, I also had the opportunity to present my early findings from the original study at the Joint Social Work Education Conference (JSWEC) in July 2013. My presentation at the JSWEC Conference was actually one of the most exciting experiences in my research journey as it showed me the value of learning from presenting your work to others and I look forward to more opportunities to do that.

At the time I started this research journey, I did not expect reflection and self-reflection in particular to be a decisive factor in my development as a qualitative researcher. Now, I realise its significance because I strongly believe that embarking on an inner journey is also important to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the interactions between our inner and outer worlds as qualitative researchers. In conclusion, the following quote best describes my opinion about the benefits of undertaking a journey to do qualitative research: 'we as researchers learn our strengths and weakness, our points of connection, and the boundaries of connecting with our participants' (Merriam, 2002: 421).

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Hellenic Data Protection Authority [<http://www.dpa.gr>]

International humanist and Ethical Union [<http://www.iheu.org>]

State University of New York [<http://www.oswego.edu>]

APPENDICES

A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form



**TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF ATHENS
Faculty of Health and Caring Professions
Department of Social Work
274 Thivon Street,
122 41 Egaleo
Greece**

**US University
of Sussex
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
& SOCIAL CARE
Essex House
Falmer
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 9QQ**

Date

Title of Research Project: “The Development of Professional Social Work Values and Ethics in the Workplace: A Critical Incident Analysis from the Students’ Perspective.”

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Student,

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate at the University of Sussex (see above), Department of Social Work and Social Care, under the Supervision of Professor Imogen Taylor, and Lecturer Cath Holmstrom. For my doctoral research I plan to investigate final year social work students' perceptions of the learning and development of professional values and ethics in the workplace. In order to do this, I plan to use a critical incident technique and I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study.

I am seeking your help in the form of completing a questionnaire. This asks you to briefly write about an event from your current practice placement that had a significant effect upon your thinking and knowledge about social work values and ethics in practice. It should take you about 90 minutes to complete. Along with this questionnaire you are asked to give personal data (age, gender, practice placement sector: public or private). Please look over the questionnaire and I hope you will choose to complete it. When complete, please bring the questionnaire and the personal data form in the enclosed envelope and to the Department and put it in the locked deposit box placed at the reception desk of the Department for this purpose.

All data will be kept confidential and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Social Work at TEI of Athens. Once the study is complete and the data

analysed, the material will be destroyed. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential and coded so that your identity is concealed. Any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study will not contain any identifiable information regarding the location of persons or organizations. Exceptions are only where incidents involving danger to the participant or others must be reported to the appropriate departmental bodies. If you decide to disclose personal or delicate information, it is very important to maintain the anonymity of all involved in the incident in order to respect their confidentiality as well.

There are no risks or costs to you for participating in the study. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but what is learned from this study should benefit the Department regarding values and ethics education and training. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the study. Even if you decide not to respond I will share my results with you by making my thesis available if you are interested.

This study has received approval from the Ethics Committee of Sussex University and the Social Work Department of Athens. If you have any questions about the study, or about being in this study, you may contact me via email epapouli@teiath.gr or by telephone +30 210 5385683. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject in this study you may contact my thesis supervisor, Prof. Imogen Taylor, at i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk

If you understand the contents described above and agree to participate in this research, please sign below. Your help is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Eleni Papouli

Lecturer in Social Work
DPhil Candidate

Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

The CIT Questionnaire

The CIT Questionnaire**SECTION: A****PERSONAL DETAILS**

Please complete the following information by placing a \surd in the appropriate box.

Age:

Gender: **Male** ☐ **Female** ☐

Practice Placement Sector: **Public** ☐

Private: **Profit** ☐ **Not-For- Profit** ☐

The CIT Questionnaire

SECTION: B

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AND KEY QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

Choose an incident that happened in the social service/organization where you did your professional practice placement and which you think had a significant effect upon your thinking and knowledge about upholding social work values⁷⁰ and ethics in the workplace. The incident may have been a positive or negative (unpleasant) experience for you and should have been part of your handling of a case you worked on as trainee student or one you observed during your practice. A situation you handled by yourself is ideal.

It is very important that you do not reveal the identities of persons to whom you refer and to make sure that they are not recognisable from any description you give. This applies to both clients and other people involved in the incident, such as practitioners or managers. Strive to be exact and specific in the information you give to respond to the following questions.

ACCOUNT OF CRITICAL INCIDENT*

Use only role or job titles, not specific names, in all cases.

- a. What happened?
- b. Where and when did this happen? (inside or outside the workplace, period of practice placement)
- c. Were the individuals involved social workers, clients or both?
- d. What was your own role/involvement in the incident? (e.g. active participant, observer)
- e. What were the outcomes of this incident for: 1) the client, 2) others: e.g. practitioners, managers, 3) yourself

* Preferred word-count: ~ 300 to 400 words

⁷⁰ For reasons explained in Chapter 1.2 of the thesis, along with the term *values* the Greek version of the CIT questionnaire uses the term *principles*, as follows: **values/principles**.

The CIT Questionnaire

SECTION: C

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

1. PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK VALUES HIGHLIGHTED BY THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

What professional values were:

- a. upheld (a positive experience) or
 - b. violated/neglected (a negative experience)
- by this incident, according to the code of ethics? (PD 23.2/1992)

2. DISCUSSION OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT WITH OTHERS

- a. Did you discuss the critical incident with a supervisor, university tutor, workplace colleagues or others?
- b. If so, who was it, and why that particular person? If there was no discussion, why not?

3. LESSONS FROM THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

As you look back:

- a. If faced with a similar event again, would you handle it differently? If so, what would you change? How would you achieve this?
- b. Did the theoretical values and skills knowledge gained during your studies help you understand how to implement and uphold social work values and ethics in the workplace at the time of the incident? If not, what kind of information would have helped?
- c. Did the critical incident experience change the way you think and/or act as an ethical social worker? If so, in what way?
- d. What did you learn, whether positive or negative, about the importance of upholding social work values and ethics in the workplace?

APPENDIX C

Ethics Clearance and Approval Form, University of Sussex,
School of Education and Social Work, Research
Governance and Ethics

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK
RESEARCH GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS

ETHICS CLEARANCE AND APPROVAL FORM

Please attach this to the completed research proposal/research plan and the ESW Ethics Checklist, when requesting clearance for a research project.

The researcher should keep a completed copy of this form. If the process progresses to Stage 2 approval, copy of the completed form should also be lodged with the Secretary of the ESW Research Governance Committee

STAGE 1 Ethical Clearance

Name of researcher/student: Eleni Papouli
Name(s) of other UoS staff working on project: -
Name of supervisor (for students): Imogen Taylor, Cath Holmstrom
Name of any external staff working on project: -
Title of research project: The Development of Professional Values and Ethics in the Workplace from the Social Work Students' Perspective: A Critical Incident Analysis
Start and end dates of project: 1-31 October 2010
Overall aim of project: The project aims to explore senior social work students' perceptions of the development of their professional values and ethics by examining experiences they perceive to be critical incidents occurring in the workplace during their placement.
Who are the participants? The participants are final social work students of the department of social work in Athens/Greece
What main material collection/literature reviewing methods will be used? Data will be collected using the method of critical incident technique. The technique of written critical incident will be accompanied by a number of open-ended questions.

Researcher /student supervisor to complete:	
I attach a completed Ethics Checklist and	
<i>Please tick as appropriate</i>	
I confirm that the ESW Standards for Research Ethics have been met. I will monitor the progress of the project and let the ethics committee know if any difficulties arise.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The ESW Standards for Research Ethics have not yet been met and the proposal should go to Stage 2 for ethical approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed <u>Imogen Taylor</u> Date <u>22/09/10</u>	

Clearance	
In my capacity as a designated person approving research proposals I have read this proposal, completed Checklist and Clearance Form (above).	
<i>Please tick as appropriate</i>	
I confirm that the project has ethical clearance from the ESW.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that the proposal does not have ethical clearance from the ESW and should proceed to Stage 2 for ethical approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signed <u>Julie Silva</u> Date <u>24/09/10</u>	

APPENDIX D

Ethical Approval from the Department of Social Work,
TEI of Athens, Greece

ΕΠΙΣΗΜΗ ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ TRADUCTION OFFICIELLE OFFICIAL TRANSLATION

No 66475

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTE (TEI) OF ATHENS
 SCHOOL OF HEALTH & WELFARE VOCATIONS
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Mail address: 274 Thivon st. 122 41 EGALEO

Telephone: 5385671

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Information: D. Papapostolou

Date 9-3-10

Reference number: Φ1/391

TOPIC " Approval of research license
 in our Department"

TO: Mrs Papouli Eleni professor of
 applications of our department

According to the decision 5/25-2-2010 of the Board of our Department, it is approved the research license by Mrs Papouli Eleni, professor of applications of our Department, to the graduate students of the Department, who make their six-month practice in several social services of Attica. The research will take place in the fields of the diplomatic thesis which is elaborated in Sussex University of G. Britain, as referred in her application.

THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT
 SIGNATURE
 EKATERINI TZORTZI
 ASS. PROFESSOR
 FOLLOWS OFFICIAL SEAL

Athens, 21/06/2010

Official translation from Greek certified document into English

The translator Paraskevopoulou Stavroula

Ελληνική Δημοκρατία, Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών, Μεταφραστική Υπηρεσία
 République Hellénique, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Service des Traductions.
 Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Translations Service.

APPENDIX E

Mapping of Critical Incidents

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

CI No.	Critical Incident/ Description	Type of Critical Incident <i>positive/negative</i>	Practice Placement Sector <i>(public, private/for profit or not-for-profit)</i>	Location <i>(inside the workplace/ outside the workplace)</i>	Period of Practice Placement <i>(beginning/middle/end)</i>	Student's Role <i>(active participant/ observer)</i>	Gender <i>Male/female</i>	Age
01	Client's tried to disrupt existing good relations between team members to curry favour with the social worker and take advantage of this.	Positive	Public	Outside	Middle	Observer	F	22
02	Social worker initiated, facilitated, and coordinated the return of a cancer patient (end-stage) with serious respiratory problems to her island village.	Positive	Public	Inside	Middle	Observer	M	24
03	Loss of self-control by social worker and use of verbal abuse to a mother/client of social services who neglected her minor child.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Observer	F	23
04	Team members remained indifferent to the plight of two abused and neglected children from a multi problem family who came to the	Negative	Public	Inside	Middle	Observer	F	23

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

	social agency to get tested for dyslexia.								
05	Client with challenging behaviour blamed the social agency for poor service and asked student to return her personal data file in a violent manner.	Negative	Public	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	25	
06	Teacher's inability to collaborate with the teaching assistant to manage and resolve a conflict situation in a special education classroom caused serious communication problems between adolescent students and disrupted the smooth functioning of the class.	Negative	Public	Inside	Beginning	Observer	F	38	
07	Counselling support and guidance to family members to provide proper care to a very old family member with serious psychosocial problems.	Positive	Public	Outside	End	Active Participant	F	23	
08	Counselling support and guidance to mother with immature behaviour and her partner while investigating whether conditions	Positive	Public	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	24	

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

	were suitable for the upbringing of their newborn baby.								
09	Student claimed ignorance of the organisational code of ethics and did not inform team members about informal counselling offered to a client. Team members understood the student's position and advised her appropriately.	Positive	Private/Not-For- Profit	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	26	
10	Intake interview with a mother who wanted her child assessed for learning difficulties. Counseling and support to the mother who confided to the social worker she experienced domestic violence from her husband.	Positive	Public	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	23	
11	Student who replaced her practice instructor in group meetings with young people with learning disabilities handled the challenging behaviour of a group member, avoiding the dissolution of the group.	Positive	Private/Not-For- Profit	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	25	

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

12	Student placed in the municipal department of social services agreed to a mother's request to persuade the social welfare agency to reassess her daughter's allowance entitlement due to her learning disabilities.	Positive	Public	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	24
13	Team members with the connivance of the head of social services department violated team operating rules. Student took the initiative and intervened during a meeting to restore team co-operation.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	27
14	Staff (both management and technical) abandoned the social services department to celebrate a national anniversary. Staff instructed students from different disciplines (led by social work students) to manage the social services department by themselves.	Negative	Public	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	23

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

15	Counselling support and guidance to a single mother facing serious financial problems in order to help her terminate her pregnancy.	Positive	Private/ Not-For- Profit	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	23
16	Student refused to work on a specific case because her practice instructor did not provide her with the necessary information and guidance for handling the case.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	23
17	A client tried to put her personal interests above the public interest by asking the student to breach the rules of the organisation. Student tried to maintain client boundaries and refused to provide any service that did not comply with the rules established by the agency.	Positive	Public	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	23
18	Intake interview and counselling support and guidance to a Moldovan immigrant woman in the final stages of breast cancer.	Positive	Public	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	23

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

19	Violent behaviour of client towards city council social worker was strongly supported by people with political power working within the community. Management undermined the social worker's role.	Negative	Public	Inside	Middle	Observer	F	23
20	Separate meetings held with divorced parents with mental health problems to get permission for their child to be assessed for possible dyslexia. Parental counselling.	Positive	Public	Inside	End	Observer	F	22
21	Professionals from different disciplines (doctor, nurse, social worker) in a hospital setting worked together to help an indigent and uninsured young immigrant suffering from serious health problems.	Positive	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	23
22	Verbal quarrel between drug addicted woman with wayward behaviour and the social worker in charge of the aid programme for	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Observer	F	23

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

	people in need of material assistance.								
23	Team members' inability to work together and make appropriate decisions lead a drug addicted client to stop attending therapy sessions and leave the addiction treatment centre.	Negative	Public	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	22	
24	Counselling parents with difficult/aggressive behaviour after their request for a diagnostic assessment of their children for immature behaviour was rejected.	Positive	Public	Inside	Middle	Active Participant	F	25	
25	Student, who had been involved emotionally with a client, was unable to think objectively so failed to provide appropriate services to the client.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	23	
26	Team members' successful crisis management of individual with learning disabilities due to separation from his beloved teacher who resigned from the agency.	Positive	Private/Not-For- Profit	Inside	Beginning	Observer	F	23	

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

27	Student failed to deal with clients efficiently because her practice instructor was a psychologist not a social worker and unable to provide her with adequate training and guidance based on social work ethical standards.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	24
28	Manipulative client with learning disabilities sought to gain the attention of student in a deceptive and unethical manner, asking her to investigate false allegations of abuse by another staff member.	Positive	Public	Inside	Beginning	Active Participant	F	23
29	The Migrant Services Department declined to provide the care planned by the hospital social service department to a mother immigrant patient and her minor child, permanent residents of Greece, which risked their being deported.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	24
30	Counselling support to adult young man with problematic family relations due to his different sexual	Positive	Public	Inside	Middle	Observer	F	30

APPENDIX E: MAPPING OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

orientation.									
31	Colleague of another specialty (psychologist) within the same social agency refused to provide care services to the social worker's client.	Negative	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	F	23	
32	Team members violated the ethics of the organisation by changing the results of a diagnostic assessment of a poor child (with a single-mother) to help her get the treatment she needed at a private centre free of charge.	Positive	Public	Inside	End	Active Participant	M	22	

CI-Critical Incident, No. -Number, ☐ Positive ☐ Negative

APPENDIX F

Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms	
Client	The person, couple, family, or group that seeks or receives social welfare services.
Interagency Work	More than one agency is working with a client, but not necessarily jointly (Lloyd <i>et al.</i> , 2001).
Interprofessional Teamwork	A type of work which involves different health and/or social professionals who share a team identity and work closely together in an integrated and interdependent manner to solve problems and deliver services(Reeves <i>et al.</i> , 2010).
Location (<i>inside the workplace/ outside the workplace</i>)	It is the place where the critical incident occurred, i.e. inside the workplace (i.e. office based) or outside the workplace (e.g. at a client's home).
Management	Management is employed to describe the particular person or persons in the organisation's hierarchy whose policies and decision constitute a leadership role (Patti, 2000:5).
Period of Practice Placement (<i>beginning/middle/end</i>)	When the incident happened, i.e. at the beginning, in the middle or in the end of field placement period. Note that field professional placements in Greece last six months (on an everyday basis).
Practice Instructor	The individual social worker within the practice placement organisation who instructs and supervises the overall experience of the trainee student. Practice Instructors serve as liaisons between the Social Work Department and the practice placement organisation.
Practice Placement Sector (<i>public, private/ for profit or not- for-profit</i>)	Refers to the social agency or organisation where students were placed for field practice. This was either a public (i.e. state, local, municipal) or private agency/organisation (for profit or not- for- profit). The not-for-profit sector in Greece, particularly, includes a variety of different organisations such as NGOs, charities, church organisations, social welfare services, philanthropic foundations, etc.

Glossary of Terms	
Staff	The employees of a social agency or organisation who work in the field.
Student's Role (<i>active participant/observer</i>)	Refers to the role of student in the critical incident. The student may be an active participant or an observer of the incident. Active participant means that the student was directly involved in handling the incident. Observer means that the student was not actively engaged in the incident, but observed someone else's handling of it such as the field instructor, either alone or as a team member or another professional in the workplace closely collaborating with the field instructor.
Type of Critical Incident (<i>positive/negative</i>)	Critical incidents can be a positive or negative experience for student's ethical learning development.
Note: Glossary entry descriptions and definitions were taken from several sources, which are listed at the end of the glossary; where no source is given, the researcher has specified the relevant meaning.	

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form (Focus Group)



TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTE (TEI) OF ATHENS
Faculty of Health and Caring Professions
Department of Social Work
274 Thivon Street,
122 41 Egaleo
Greece

US University
of Sussex
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
& SOCIAL CARE
Essex House
Falmer
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 9QQ

Date

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear student,

I am a Doctoral student at the University of Sussex and Lecturer in the Department of Social Work in Athens. In my initial PhD project, I examined the development of professional social work values and ethics in the workplace using a critical incident approach to explore the students' perspectives and experiences.

In order to build upon and further develop my previous research, I am now going to undertake 2 focus groups with final year social work students in our own Social Work Department in Athens – each lasting one hour. The purpose is to present my key findings from my earlier study to the focus groups and seek student views of the findings and explore any differences in experiences. Your decision to participate in this focus group is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any stage even once your participation in the research has commenced.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please read the attached information sheet carefully. If you decide to participate, please sign the consent form below and return it to myself via email (epapouli@teiath.gr). Your help is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Eleni Papouli
Lecturer in Social Work
PhD candidate

I agree to take part in the focus groups described above.

I confirm that I have received and read the associated Information Sheet regarding this project.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX H

Information Sheet (Focus Group)

The development of professional social work values and ethics in the workplace

Information sheet for those social work students considering participation in a focus group

About the study

In my initial PhD project, I examined the development of professional social work values and ethics in the workplace using a critical incident approach. As a follow up to my previous research, I am now planning to undertake 2 focus groups with final year social work students in our own Social Work Department in Athens – each lasting one hour. The purpose is to present my key findings and to build on my earlier work through the focus groups by seeking students' views of the original findings.

The focus groups

The size of each focus group will be between five and ten participants depending on the number of students willing to participate in the study. In the event that the number of potential participants is greater than expected, the participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. The focus group will be tape-recorded and transcribed and at the end of the study the tapes will be destroyed. Participants are welcome to request feedback in respect of the study's findings. Such feedback will be provided at the end of the project via email.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information you provide will be kept confidential and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Social Work at TEI of Athens. All comments made will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms in any further discussions or publications relating to the research, and if necessary any further possible identifying information will be changed so that no individual or institution can be identified by their remarks. In order to fully protect the confidentiality of all participants, those taking part will be asked not to share any personal data volunteered by other focus group members.

Participants' right to withdraw

Your decision to participate in this focus group is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any stage even once your participation in the research has commenced.

Complaints and concerns

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sussex and the Social Work Department of Athens. However, if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact my supervisors: Prof. Imogen Taylor, at i.j.taylor@sussex.ac.uk or Cath Holmstrom, Senior Lecturer, at c.j.holmstrom@sussex.ac.uk

Topic areas the focus groups will discuss:

- Keeping social work values and ethics alive and active in the workplace.
- The students' contribution to developing and maintaining their own ethical standards.
- The role practice instructors/supervisors play in the student's development of social work values and ethics.
- The importance of ethical collaboration inside and outside the workplace to achieve the best practices for clients.
- The client's behaviour as a contributory factor to the development of ethical practice of social workers in the workplace.
- The importance of the ethics of management (including the political affiliation of the heads of organisations) in creating and sustaining an ethical work/learning environment.

Eleni Papouli
PhD candidate
Department of Social Work and Social Care
University of Sussex

14/8/2013