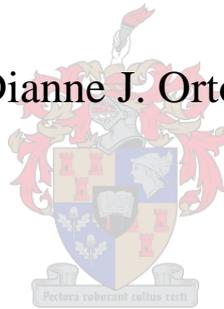


THE USE OF VISUAL IMAGERY AND REFLECTIVE
WRITING
AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL
WORK STUDENTS' CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously, in its entirety or in part, been submitted at any University for a degree.

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Date

SUMMARY

Traditional means for social work students to share their capstone field work experiences in the academic setting have primarily focused on articulating this experience using verbal skills, reports and other forms of written documentation. The ability of students to explain the nuances of agency environments, clientele, the acquisition and demonstration of transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, organizing and planning skills and critical thinking abilities in a descriptively rich fashion is quite limited.

The aim of the study is to determine the perceived meaning, and significance of students' photographed artifacts. This qualitative study incorporated an exploratory design using visual imagery, reflective writing techniques and photo-elicitation interviews. This process provided students the opportunity to illustrate the depth and breath of their capstone field work experiences.

The study resulted in 110 participant-produced photographs taken in three domains: *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*. Six overarching themes developed from the analyzed data: (1) safety, (2) environment and atmosphere, (3) transportation, (4) frustration and stress, (5) inspiration, coping and hope and (6) transferable skills. The findings reflect the unique perspective of students' capstone field work experience that can be shared with social work students, educators, and practitioners.

OPSOMMING

Studente in Maatskaplike Werk se tradisionele maniere om hulle sluitsteen ervarings in die opleidingsituasie oor te dra, het primêr daaruit bestaan dat hierdie ervarings verbaal weergegee word, asook oorgedra word deur middel van verslae en ander vorme van geskrewe dokumentasie. Studente se vermoë om die nuanses van die organisasie omgewing, kliënte, die verkryging en demonstrasie van oordraagbare vaardighede soos kommunikasie, bestuur sowel as spanwerk en kritiese denkvermoëns op 'n betekenisvolle beskrywende wyse te verduidelik, is taamlik beperk.

Die doel van die studie is om die betekenis en belang wat studente heg aan artefakte wat hulle waargeneem en gefotografeer het, vas te stel. 'n Verkennende ontwerp is vir hierdie kwalitatiewe studie benut. Dit het die gebruik van sigbare verbeelding, reflektiewe skryfegnieke en fotografiese ontlokkingsonderhoude ingesluit. Hierdie proses het aan studente die geleentheid gebied om die diepte en breedte van hul wesenlike veldwerk-ervarings te illustreer.

Die empiriese studie het 110 foto's tot gevolg gehad wat deelnemend geproduseer is en wat in drie gebiede geneem is: *By die organisasie*, *Buite die organisasie* en *Persoonlik*. Ses oorkoepelende temas is uit die data wat ontleed is, ontwikkel: (1) veiligheid, (2) omgewing en atmosfeer, (3) vervoer, (4) frustrasie en spanning, (5) inspirasie, hantering en hoop, asook (6) oordraagbare vaardighede. Hierdie bevindinge reflekteer die unieke perspektiewe van studente se wesenlike veldwerk-ervaring wat gedeel kan word met studente, dosente en praktisyns in Maatskaplike Werk.

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Writing a dissertation has personally been both a lonely yet fulfilling journey. The experience and fortitude to finish provided an opportunity for self-evaluation that was tested time and time again. Self-doubt was probably the biggest hurdle I faced despite the cheers, motivation and enduring spirit of my family, friends and colleagues who were so important to me in this adventure. The process often made me think of a favorite inspirational American children's book titled "The Little Engine That Could" by Watty Piper originally published in 1930.

The book provides an endearing message of perseverance and self-confidence. The basic idea of the story is that large trains refused to help pull another long train over a high mountain. As a result, a smaller train was asked to help and as a result was mocked by the larger engines for trying. But by chugging on with its motto "*I think I can*" the little engine succeeds in pulling the long train over the mountain. This book provided a descriptive metaphor of the self-confidence I developed during the dissertation process. The little engine's mantra "*I think I can*" resonated in my ability to overcome odds, deadlines, scrutiny and self-doubt that the end product would not be "good enough."

In addition, taking on the challenge of writing a dissertation at my age often made me think I was more like a "caboose" bringing up the rear rather than an "engine" leading the way. After it is all said and done, I believe I have shed some light and direction in providing social work education with new "visual" ways of thinking and reflecting about the meaning and significance field work has on students.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for the role they have played in assisting me in completing my research study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Capstone experiences in higher education are designed to provide senior undergraduate students with a sense of coherence and closure to their educational experience (Kerka, 2001; Murphy, 2000). These experiences should integrate general knowledge with specialized knowledge that students develop in their major area of study. This linkage strives to connect classroom instruction and practice through inquiry-based learning that broadens, deepens and integrates the total capstone experience (University of Missouri Undergraduate Catalog, 2005-2006:11; Murphy, 1998-2000). However; demonstrating and evaluating this integration of knowledge and connecting theory and practice has been built on the foundations of the written word using teacher-focused styles of instruction in academia. The lack of visual imagery as a teaching tool as one technique to help students integrate their accumulated knowledge is evident in the deficiency of literature on this topic (Prosser, 1998).

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Internationally, social work education programs have two components, theory and practice. Practice education is considered to be an essential component of the curriculum (Rambally, 1999:487). For the purposes of the study, the terms practice education and field work is used interchangeably. Practice education is required of students during their education experience in social work and provides the opportunity for students to work with clients in a variety of social service settings (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Sweitzer & King, 1999).

The capstone field work experience typically occurs during students' last semester. The knowledge, values/attitudes and skills students acquire during their field work experiences are considered to be the hallmark of professional education in social work (Kissman & Van Tran, 2000). The students' ability to demonstrate this acquisition of knowledge, values/attitudes and skills has typically relied on traditional academic methods of written documentation and verbal reports.

Social work practice education courses is one method that can provide the opportunity for educators and students to work together in creating relevant and meaningful learning experiences. By “thinking outside the box” new perspectives, knowledge, values, attitudes and skills can be advanced that not only benefit educators and students but also the community by addressing and meeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

Instructional strategies and activities in social work practice education typically require that demonstrated “ways of knowing” include, but are not limited to: journaling, report writing, community projects, portfolios, evaluations, surveys and other forms of written documentation (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Sweitzer & King, 1999).

These written assignments of students are shared with the agency supervisor and faculty liaison to ensure students are meeting the expectations of the school’s curriculum. Far too often these instructional strategies become “recipes” for assessment of performance and do not engage students to broaden their perspective of the field experience. Therefore, the student’s ability to share and explain their understanding of agency settings, the needs and problems of clientele they serve, and practice skills used field work in a descriptively rich fashion is quite variable.

Preparing competent professionals is a major goal of social work education (O’Hagan, 1996). Historically, practice education is an important component of this process. Designing learning activities that meet students’ learning needs and curriculum expectations is a challenge for classroom educators and field instructors alike. There is “no one size fits all” instructional strategy that can guarantee that the transfer of learning has occurred from the educational setting into the work place. The “learning by doing” in field work provides the avenue and venue for students to integrate classroom learning with direct practice (Shardlow & Doel, 1996). However, the variables of adequate supervision, learning styles, learning activities, organizational environment and fiscal constraints all impact a student’s experience (Jarman-Rhode, McFall, Kolar & Strom, 1997).

Maidment’s research (2003) indicates that teaching students how to survive, negotiate and manage themselves in the workplace is also important in the education process. The balance of providing quality educational opportunities while navigating in work environments that are financially stressed and with supervisors who struggle managing large caseloads can place students in difficult and complex field situations. An example

would be sending students into unsafe areas without teaching them safety precautions. All of these factors can influence and impact students' perception of the learning experience.

Field work experiences are challenging for students who are working with complex social problems. In addition, agencies are coping with limited funding from outside sources that result in fewer resources to offer clients. Diminished resources and lack of services also negatively impacts the reputation and attitude the general public has of the profession.

These challenges, coupled with the lack of awareness for the social workers role, contribute to the weak public image and perception of social work. By strengthening social work's viability and raising its profile the profession's credibility and visibility can be enhanced (Jarman-Rohde *et al.*, 1997). To do so will require creative and strategic initiatives educators can assist with, especially in practice education. By incorporating visual imagery teaching strategies in the classroom and providing opportunities in field for students to practice visual imagery techniques, stories about the practice of social work can begin.

Three possible ways other than written and verbal learning that can contribute to increased awareness of students work engaged in during field work include: perceptions, visual thinking and photography. These three techniques will now be discussed.

1.2.1 Perceptions

One way to increase awareness is through our perceptions. The researcher believes student perceptions of their field work experience and their ability to adequately describe the richness and uniqueness of their experiences is marginalized because of the inherent limitations of the traditional forms of written and verbal learning strategies in social work (Altman, 2000). According to Hartman (1990) there are many ways of knowing how to make contributions and how to increase understanding in social work (Fortune, McCarthy & Abramson, 2001).

Kolb (1984) recommends that learning materials should be presented in different formats allowing for both emotional and cognitive levels and styles of learning (Kolb, 1984:112). An example would be having students shadow and observe their field supervisors and

afterwards process their impressions and perceptions of their observations before working with clients alone.

According to Fortune *et al.* (2001) little attention has been paid to social work students' perceptions of their field work experiences or of teaching and learning about perceptions: One exception found is Lee, Wong and Cheungs' study (1994:3) on students' perceptions of teaching and learning in field. Their study assumes perceived learning outcomes are directly related to the teaching style of their teachers and student learning style. Student perceptions on how they learned and the style of teaching all impacted their field work experiences. Literature found pertaining to students' perception in field work (Kissman & Van Tran, 2000; Botha, 2000) include the following areas: quality of field instruction, student satisfaction with field placements, performance feedback, supervision, adequacy of assignments and learning goals.

In other words, there appears to be a gap in social work literatures that examines the benefits of using visual learning strategies to better understand and appreciate students' perceptions regarding their field work experiences.

1.2.2 Visual thinking

Another way of increasing awareness is through visual thinking. According to Goldberg and Middleman (1980:213) a majority of the information we obtain and process comes to us through our eyes and is learned from our interactions and experiences with our environment.

Research indicates that "learners who hear, see and interact with subject matter not only remember what they learn better, they also understand the underlying principles" (Considine & Hadley, 1999:42). Considine and Hadley also believe that the effective integration of imagery into social work field instruction can promote writing and improve students' recall and comprehension of their experiences. This multi-media, interactive approach to education encourages students to ask critical questions, assess and analyze information, construct new meanings and communicate effectively.

The following serves as an example of how visual thinking can be used in social work education. In preparation for a faculty exchange at the University of the Western Cape

(UWC) Social Work Department in South Africa in 2000 this researcher created an image-based learning experience for American field work students that would help explain their mid-Missouri social service agency experiences to UWC students and faculty. The intent was to introduce the same learning experience to South African social work students during their field work.

This researcher photographed participating students' chosen social artifacts in a collective photograph similar to a collage or montage. Each student participated in a photo-elicitation interview to provide the researcher with a better understanding of their selection of social artifacts and written reflections. Photographs of persons as a social artifact to include in the collage were prohibited.

Because social workers instinctively view persons as their primary concern and interest the prohibition forced attention to social work's true focus, person-in-environment. The students, deprived of the ability to show the person, had to "look" at their environment and try to capture and comprehend its essence in the situation.

The following example is a student's social artifact and written reflection of an American flag. The American flag at a Latino Center in North America represents a student's perception of the struggle immigrants have in coming to America. Many Latinos hope that working in America will help their families out of poverty, however; this is not always true and as a result their oppression and poverty continues. The flag becomes a symbol that represents the large and complex issues of Hispanic assimilation into the American culture. The combination of the flag and the student's written reflection reveals a larger story that words alone could not convey.

By encouraging students to "think outside the box" using visual imagery and reflection, the researcher believes students were able to raise social awareness of their student role and perception of the field work experience. In addition, students were able to elicit their appreciation of diverse practice settings, cultural differences and similar social issues.

A small sample of UWC social work students in their field experience agreed to participate in this newly created activity, using the same methodology during the researcher's visit to the campus in 2000. Based on the positive feedback from both American students and UWC students and respective faculty members, the researcher has

continued to refine the methodology and technique. Since 2000 the researcher has collected 25 samples of student work that represent a variety of practice settings in mid-Missouri, USA, where the researcher has been the Field Coordinator for the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Social Work since 1991.

Visual thinking is an effective way to understand students' perceptions and impressions that can lead to new ways of thinking not considered before.

1.2.3 Social work and photography

The use of photography to expose social and economic injustices is not new. In fact, there is a significant relationship between social work and photography dating back to the early decades of the 20th century in North America. "Social photographers" Paul Kellogg, Jacob Riis, Dorothea Lange, Lewis Hine and Roy Stryker, although better known among photographers than social workers, used photography to champion the causes of the working poor by looking at their working and living conditions in urban and rural America (Huff, 1998). Lewis Hine, "a social worker with a camera" portrayed his subjects with individuality and humanity. His ability to capture authenticity in his photographs was instrumental in raising social awareness and reform during the early 1900's. Hines's photographs were considered to be most convincing when he combined captions and narratives with his photographs (Huff, 1998). Hine worked with such social work icons as Jane Adams, Florence Kelly, and Lillian Wald during this time period (Becker, 1974; Seixus, 1987).

Despite the background between early social work and photography there is concern that the profession's legacy through photography is in danger of being lost. Huff (1998) believes "social workers need to create new ways of communicating with each other and the public" (Huff, 1998). By injecting images, sounds, and music into reports and other documents an emotional component could be added providing the public with a more meaningful image of social work.

Altman (2000) contends that despite the fact we live in an increasingly visual world, social work education has not capitalized on learning how to incorporate the power of photography and other multi-media aids into the classroom or public arena. "Armed with

the technological tools to make visual imagery a ready resource, the time is ripe for its exploration as a teaching strategy.”

The researcher’s prior work with social work students illustrates students are able to utilize visual thinking during field work. The use of photography captures the essence of students’ perceptions of their environment much as it did with photographers during the early twentieth century.

Two studies worth noting, that incorporate photography as a teaching tool in educational settings, took place in South Africa. Karlsson (2001:24) conducted an image-based research study with primary and secondary children in six urban schools. The children produced photographs of their school environment and participated in photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher. The purpose of the study was to determine if unequal power relations and communication competencies were of concern due to the change schools were undergoing as a result of post-apartheid redistributive and equal education policies.

The other study involved social work college students taking photographs as part of a community development class (Gray, 2001). Students were instructed to take photographs of a community of women who had moved to Durban from rural areas looking for work. Students discussed their photographs in class and reflected upon their interpretations which were often drastically different. Both Karlsson (2001) and Gray (2001) acknowledge the benefit of using photography as a teaching tool. Students’ experience using photography as a visual medium created new meaning, understanding and insight into their worlds they might not have considered using traditional forms of communication.

Established higher education institutions offering social work as a four-year professional degree in South Africa are modeled after the North American and British educational systems (Drower, 2002; Mamphiswana & Noyoo, 2000:22). Some of the challenges social work education programs face in South African educational institutions is to teach social workers to work in “vast, poverty-stricken communities and to devise curricula to prepare them adequately for this context. Social work education and practice will continue to be judged in the light of its propensity to address these needs and challenges” (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002:197).

South Africa's massive social problems, such as unemployment and poverty, will require social work educators to develop more diverse methods of practice in "advocacy, community development, empowerment, consultation, networking, action research and policy analysis" to address these problems (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002:199).

Photography is one method that can be taught to social work students and can be used to expose social and economic injustices. By using cameras students can advocate for disenfranchised people by making their needs and lives "visible" to the general public and policy makers.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The reason the topic was chosen is because little is written in social work education literature about student's perception of field work using photography and reflective writing. As noted earlier, most studies in field education have been on the following topics: student satisfaction of field experience and student satisfaction with field instructor, methods of supervision and quality of placements.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how the use of photography and reflective writing as image-based research can contribute to social work students' deeper understanding and appreciation of the significance and meaning of their final field work experiences. To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To review social work practice education and capstone experiences in higher education.
- To present an overview of photo-elicitation methodology in visual anthropology and visual sociology.
- To provide an overview of the role photography has played in portraying social and economic justice and the status of visual imagery in social work practice education.
- To investigate the field work experience of students using photography and reflective writing as visual symbolic language for their thoughts, feelings and abstract concepts to convey their understanding and impact of the field experience upon them.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive qualitative study. Qualitative research crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Halimi, 1996:365). Qualitative research utilizes an inductive process and through the analysis of data, themes and categories emerge. The data is typically collected by such techniques as interviews, observations and in this case, photographs, reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher. The sample size is usually small, in this case eight social work students from the Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa (McRoy, 1995).

1.5.1 Literature review

The literature review for this study involved a thorough review of social work practice education literature and literature on capstone experiences, visual sociology, visual anthropology, image-based research, photography and reflective practice. Literature on social work practice education provides the foundation for discussing the concept and purpose of practice education as it relates to field experiences in higher education. Literature on visual anthropology and visual sociology provided the theoretical underpinning of the research methodology used in this study.

Reflective writing literature supports the importance of reflection as a learning tool for creating deeper understanding of an experience or subject. The literature search on image based research that incorporates photography and photo-elicitation interviews as visual communication tools supports the significance of embracing photography as a teaching/learning tool in social work education. By raising social awareness and understanding of students' perceptions of field work experiences social work educators and practice communities can gain a better appreciation and insight into the challenges and practice realities students encounter.

1.5.2 Empirical study

This study uses a qualitative exploratory design to investigate the use of visual imagery, reflective writing and photo-elicitation as measurement tools during social work students' final field work experiences. An exploratory design is appropriate because there is little literature in social work practice education that addresses students' perceptions and

meaning given to their field experiences (Halmi, 1996; McRoy, 1995). With the exception of one social work community group class project conducted in Durban, South Africa that used photography and discussion of their results, no other social work literature was found that incorporated photography and reflective writing. Most studies found in practice education that cover student perceptions, are in areas of supervision and satisfaction of the field experience.

A qualitative research process guided this study and incorporated three theoretical frameworks. These are (1) the use of participant-produced photography, (2) photo-elicitation interviews and (3) reflective writing as the means for data collection and analysis. The use of participant produced photography provided a venue for participants to “see” their world in a new and different way which words alone can not always describe. Photo-elicitation interviewing gave participants a “visual voice” in describing their perspective and reflective writing encouraged students to give deeper thought to the selection of their social artifacts.

Characteristics of a qualitative research study (Halmi, 1996) include a natural setting for data collection which, in this study, is the students’ field agency setting. The researcher serves as the data collector of products created by participants that include photographs, reflective writing worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews. Analysis of data is inductive in which themes and categories will emerge focusing on participants’ meanings and perspectives using expressive and persuasive language to describe the process. The photo-elicitation interviews with participants enable the researcher to develop additional insight into the experiences of the respondents regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Harper, 2002; Harper, 1994; Hurworth, 2003).

The sample size of qualitative studies is relatively small compared to quantitative studies which is consistent with this methodology (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The population for this study consisted of a non-random sample of eight female senior social work students at the University of Stellenbosch, Department of Social Work in South Africa. All eight students were in the final weeks of their field work in child and family welfare agencies that were representative of placement sites used by the Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University.

The eight student participants (N=8) represented half of the senior class (N=16) and gender at University of Stellenbosch, which consists of all female students. Participating students were recruited by the social work faculty; however, it was explained to the students that participation was voluntary and there were no negative ramifications for refusal to participate or failure to complete the study.

The intent of the study is to determine the meaning and significance of the social artifact photographs students chose to produce and reflect upon during their final field work experience. A copy of the instructions and worksheet is included in Appendix D and E. In the data gathered, the researcher utilized a photo-elicitation interview (Radley & Taylor, 2003; Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Hurworth, 2003; Harper, 2002) with each participant in an attempt to further ascertain what knowledge, values and skills students identified as significant in their photographs and reflective writings. The study was also designed to capture the level of social awareness as reflected by student perceptions of their field experiences and by providing feedback to the academic and practice communities.

Research methodology will be described in Chapter Five.

1.5.3 Definition of concepts

The following concepts are defined in the context in which they were used in this study:

Capstone experience: A culminating senior experience that seeks to integrate subfields, skills and perspectives of a student's major field of study.

Photographic phenomenology: A process in which participants are asked to produce photographs which show their own unique perceptual orientation.

Photo-elicitation interviewing: A personal semi structured interview between the participant and researcher to clarify and expand on the photographs produced by either the researcher or participant.

Polaroid camera: An easy to operate instamatic camera that produces a photograph within a few minutes.

Practice education/field work: These terms are used interchangeably in the study. The terms used refer to supervised education experiences at a social service settings designed to assist students integrate theory learned in the classroom and applied in field work. For

the purpose of this study the final field work experience is considered to be similar to the capstone experience used in other fields of study in higher education.

Reflection: An interactive process of learning that develops a deeper understanding and gives meaning to life/practicum experience.

Social artifacts: The items and objects participants chose to represent their individual perspective during their capstone field experience.

Visual anthropology: A subfield of anthropology that provides an alternative way of perceiving culture-perception through the use of images to describe, analyze communicate and interpret human and nonhuman behavior.

Visual imagery/image based research: The study and analysis of visual images and data to understand messages, meanings and their social impact on society.

Visual literacy: The ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate visual messages and communicate their meaning to others.

Visual sociology: A subfield of sociology; the recordings, analysis and communication of social life through photography, film and video.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations arising that should be considered include the following:

- There is a limited amount of literature in the field of social work that utilizes a combination of visual imagery, written reflection and photo-elicitation interviews for qualitative research.
- The number of participants was small (N=8) and represent one cohort of social work students from one education institution.
- Participants had a limited amount of time to take their photographs and complete written reflection worksheets.
- The design of the study relied heavily on the work of Blinn and Harrist.

In order to compensate for these limitations:

- The researcher established good rapport with the participants in a short period of time which helped motivate them to take part in the study and meet the deadlines.

1.7 DIVISION INTO CHAPTERS

This study is divided into seven chapters, as follows:

- Chapter One consists of an introduction to the study. This comprises the motivation for the study, the aims and the objectives of the study, methodology and literature review.
- Chapter Two provides an overview of social work practice education and capstone experiences in higher education.
- Chapter Three presents an overview of photo-elicitation in visual anthropology and visual sociology. In addition, contemporary, international and interdisciplinary research projects that incorporate photo-elicitation methodology will be presented.
- Chapter Four reflects on the role photography has played in shaping public awareness of social and economic justice issues. The status of visual imagery in higher education and social work practice education will also be presented.
- Chapter Five covers an explanation of the research methodology used in this study. The design of the qualitative study including literature review, research setting, research topic, population and sample, procedures, data collection, data presentation and analysis, ethical considerations and limitations are presented.
- Chapter Six contains the overall and Delphi findings of students' perceptions of capstone field work experiences.
- Chapter Seven presents the six overarching themes of the study.
- Chapter Eight covers the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE EDUCATION AND THE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to meet the first objective of the study which is to review existing social work practice education and the requirements and capstone experiences in higher education within the South African context. Firstly, social work education in South Africa will be reviewed and the social work practice education program of the Department of Social Work at University of Stellenbosch, South Africa will be discussed. This is a typical example of an educational institution in South Africa and this is where the research was conducted.

Then, the chapter will present a general overview of social work practice education. Instructional strategies are presented to reflect knowledge, values and skills practiced during field work. The concept of capstone experiences in higher education with examples of goals and models will be discussed to illustrate how students integrate their acquired knowledge into concluding learning experiences. This will be followed by a discussion of students' perceptions of their environments, images, metaphors and the meaning of objects during field work experiences.

Lastly, the correlation of transferable skills between final field work and capstone experiences of fourth-year Stellenbosch social work students will be discussed.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE EDUCATION

Practice education is an opportunity for students to get real life experiences with clients in a supervised social service setting. This experience is referred to in literature as practicum, field work, internship and field placement (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007). This study took place during students' final field work experience that is also referred to as capstone field work. For the purposes of this study the combined terminology of practice education, field work and capstone field work is used.

2.3 SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section gives a broad overview of social work education in South Africa in order to provide the context for the study. Then, practice education requirements at the Department of Social Work at University of Stellenbosch will be presented to provide an understanding of students' expectations during field work experiences.

2.3.1 Development of social work education in South Africa

Historically, social work education and the development of social work as a profession can be traced to the late nineteenth century in North America and Europe (Manis, 1972; Hokenstad & Kendall, 1995). According to Garber (1997:168) there are no known globally accepted academic standards in practice education or other curriculum areas such as ethics, research or statistics. As a result, social work curriculum content can be quite varied depending on the setting, faculty expertise and other considerations.

In the 1920's social work education began in South Africa as a response to the needs of "poor whites." Education was largely based on North American and European theory because South Africa had not developed social work practice adapted to the specific needs of the country (Mazibuko, McKendrick & Patel, 1992:121).

Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, South Africa's first Professor of Sociology and Social Work, played a central role in South African politics and in the development of apartheid after the 1948 electoral victory of the National Party. Verwoerd was instrumental in the development of social work training in South Africa and established the first Department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch in an attempt to reduce white poverty using Afrikaner-led development of social welfare policies and programs in South Africa (Thabede, 2005:20,21). The structure of social work in South Africa reflects both European and American practice which influenced Verwoerd's views on Sociology and Social Work practice (Thabede, 2005:21; Hokenstad & Kendall, 1995:1515).

The concept of social work was imported to South Africa from the Western World after World War II during the 1950's and 1960's. Although there have been variations over the years, social work education remains rooted in western European countries and United States models (Thabede, 2005:12, 13). The use of foreign educational materials continues

to reinforce South Africa's definition of social work as being conceived from abroad (Drower, 2002:13).

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has increasingly been challenged in educating social work practitioners to deal with wide spread poverty and inequality (Woodlard & Barberton, 1998). Potgieter (1998:66-68) and Engelbrecht (2001:313) identify other interrelated concerns that also need to be addressed in social work education curriculums that include: teaching about the interaction between people and their environments addressing the socio-political, economic and social changes South Africa is undergoing. These changes include, vast unemployment; malnutrition, infant mortality, teenage pregnancy; unsafe housing, water and adequate sanitation; illiteracy and violence, abuse and neglect. This is a result of the increased awareness of the need for social and economic justice and social systems that can meet those needs.

Traditional models of social work education in South Africa's universities offer some amalgamated professional programs for social work through four-year bachelor degrees (Mazibuko *et al.*, 1992:121). Practice education, a significant component of social work education requires students be assigned to community-based field agencies for field education experiences and instruction. Concurrent academic coursework occurs throughout each field education experience during the students' tenure at the university.

The South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in conjunction with National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed in 1995 to provide for the registration of national standards and qualifications and as a supporting-quality assurance system. SAQA determine that 480 credits were the minimum amount required for a social work degree from a four-year bachelor program. Because practice education courses add a considerable amount of credits to study plans, it was determined that programs could add to minimum number set by SAQA (Lombard, Grobbelaar & Pruis, 2003:1,6).

2.3.2 Overview of practice education in the Department of Social Work

This section will provide the aim of practice education and an overview of the practice education program at the Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch because this is where the research was done. The outcomes of practice education of the

undergraduate education program, specific outcomes of practice education for fourth-year students and contents of the practice education programme will be presented.

2.3.2.1 Aims of practice education

The aims of practice education at the University of Stellenbosch are to “prepare and train students for the social work profession in the South Africa context by providing them with learning opportunities” (Memorandum for Practice Education, Social Work 488, 2003:1). The Department of Social Work requires undergraduate students to successfully complete four modules of practice education.

Students receive supervision from social workers at the agency and supervision at the Department of Social Work from university faculty on a weekly basis. Agency supervision provides guidance regarding students work with clients while university supervision assists students with integrating classroom teaching and theory with field work experiences (Hoffman, 1990:8). In doing so, students receive more “hands on” supervision at the agency and more academic support at university with regard to administrative requirements regarding research, community projects, report writing and workload management statistics reflecting their productivity.

2.3.2.2 Overall outcomes of practice education

A summary of the outcomes of practice education of the undergraduate program in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch include: identifying with the practice and ethics of the profession, understanding human development and diverse client systems at all levels, understanding assessment, management and research on micro, mezzo and macro levels and understanding the process of social work intervention and research (Memorandum for Practice Education, Social Work 488, 2003:1-2). In other words, students receive a thorough and in-depth education of the major elements of social work practice that they will rely upon during their field work.

2.3.2.3 Specific outcomes for practice education of fourth year students

A summary of programme outcomes of practice education for the capstone field experience include: practice education at a welfare organization to implement intervention strategies on a micro, mezzo and macro level, integrating theory and practice by selecting

and implementing appropriate practice perspectives, theories, and models with client groups, conducting oneself in a professional manner, utilizing supervision for continuous improvement, conducting research-oriented practice and by applying creative and critical thinking skills when making decisions.

Both the overall and specific practice education outcomes appear to reflect the efforts of the Department to educate competent social workers capable of practicing with professional conduct and using effective intervention strategies with a diverse group of clients on a micro, mezzo and macro level. The most pertinent outcome for the purposes of this study is recognition of the importance of creative and critical thinking in field work that takes into consideration the importance of supervision.

2.3.2.4 Programme content

Students at the University of Stellenbosch are placed at non-government organizations (NGO) for practice education experiences in case, group and community work two days per week for a total of 16 hours throughout the entire academic year. Another half day is used for administration and research. As discussed before students receive their field supervision from agency field instructors and university faculty at the Department of Social Work. In 2003 when the study was conducted the specific requirements of casework, group work, community work, administration, research, supervision and assessment of student performance were as follows (Memorandum for Practice Education, Social Work, 488, 2003:3-6):

- (a) **Casework** requires students to accept responsibility for working with clients with different problems, stressors and of different sexes, age groups, cultures as well as socio-economic and ethnic groups on a short and long-term basis. Assessment and measurement aids as well as progress reports are required to meet university and organisation expectations.
- (b) **Group work** requires students to accept responsibility for continuously conducting a group, utilizing group discussion and peer group discussion, with first-year social work students the first semester. Students are expected to turn in an orientation report, progress reports and a final evaluation with a self-assessment scale to be used for the monitoring and grading purposes.

- (c) **Community work** requires students to accept responsibility in directing a community work project at their organisation. The nature of the community work project is determined in consultation with the agency field instructor and supervisor at the university according to the needs of the organization and the community.
- (d) **Administration** tasks require students to adhere to the policy and procedures of the organisation. Learning tasks include developing skills in report writing, correspondence, as well as understanding accounting responsibilities including the value of statistics in monitoring productivity and performance of students. Students are required to keep diaries, in duplicate, of daily tasks required by the agency and university.
- (e) **Research** as part of practice education requires students to utilize a single-system design project during their placement. Macro research is required as well as measurement of services rendering to two or more client systems. This is part of the single-system design.
- (f) **Supervision** is offered both by the field instructor at the organisation and at the university. Agency supervision requires a contract between the student and field instructor that specifies student's learning needs based on the work load allocated to the student by the organisation. Individual and/or group supervision are options available, depending on the agreement between the organization and university. University supervision is provided weekly either through individual or group sessions. Students are expected to prepare for supervisory sessions.
- (g) **Assessment** of students' performance is done by the field instructor at the organisation and by the university supervisor. Field instructors and university supervisors prepare written assessment reports and assist students with their oral assessment once at the end of each semester. Students are required to compile a report on supervision received from the organisation and university.

These seven areas provide further clarification of student expectations and responsibilities during field work and reinforce competent practice strategies as well as accountability expectations of the agency and school. This study could be of particular value in the area of assessment because the methodology used in the study introduces a new way of thinking and processing field work that has the potential of providing the university and

agency with information from students that they may not have, not heard, or understood before.

Overall how students integrate and synthesize the knowledge, values and skills they experience during this experiential learning process is challenging for instructors and students to orchestrate and evaluate. The challenge in making the experience quantifiable, transferable and relevant to their lives as social work students and citizens living in a diverse world is serious business. Consideration for the diversity of practice settings, student competencies and curriculum requirements requires thoughtful preparation and evaluation by university.

Social work students at University of Stellenbosch practice their field work in a variety of social welfare settings that serve a diverse group of clients who have many needs and few resources. There appears to be sufficient opportunities for students' to develop practice skills based on the expectations of the Department and agency that will be valuable to them as they transition from their students role to joining the work force upon graduation or continuing on in graduate studies.

In the following section social work practice education will be presented.

2.4 SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE EDUCATION

In this section a better understanding of practice education elements, instructional strategies that integrate classroom coursework and practice education will be discussed. This provides an understanding of the integration process used in experiential learning and examples of instructional strategies used in social work practice education programs.

2.4.1 Practice education

At most education institutions, students are required to complete practice education experiences at social service agencies, also called practicums, internships or field work as part of the undergraduate curriculum (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Lee, Kwong & Cheung, 1994; Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007). These final practice experiences during students' senior year can also be referred to as a capstone experience. Capstone experiences are designed to provide students with a culminating experience that provides the opportunity to integrate, extend, critique and apply knowledge they have learned from

their major area of study (Wagenaar, 1993; Kerka, 2001; Murphy, 2000). In addition, the experience can serve as a measurement of student learning and program evaluation providing valuable feedback to academic departments.

These structured and supervised field experiences have been part of social work practice education since the early twentieth century (Royse, Dhooper & Rompf, 1996).

Often referred to as practicums, these applied courses use experiential learning as the primary method of instruction. Emphasis is placed on socializing students into the profession by providing direct practice or hands-on experiences so students can learn to integrate knowledge, values and skills they are learning in the classroom and practicing in the field (Kissman & Van Tran, 2000; Lee *et al.*, 1994).

How to effectively integrate classroom knowledge and practice can be difficult to operationalize. One model that illustrates integration in social work education is Bongo and Vayda's (1998) Integration Theory Practice Loop (ITP).

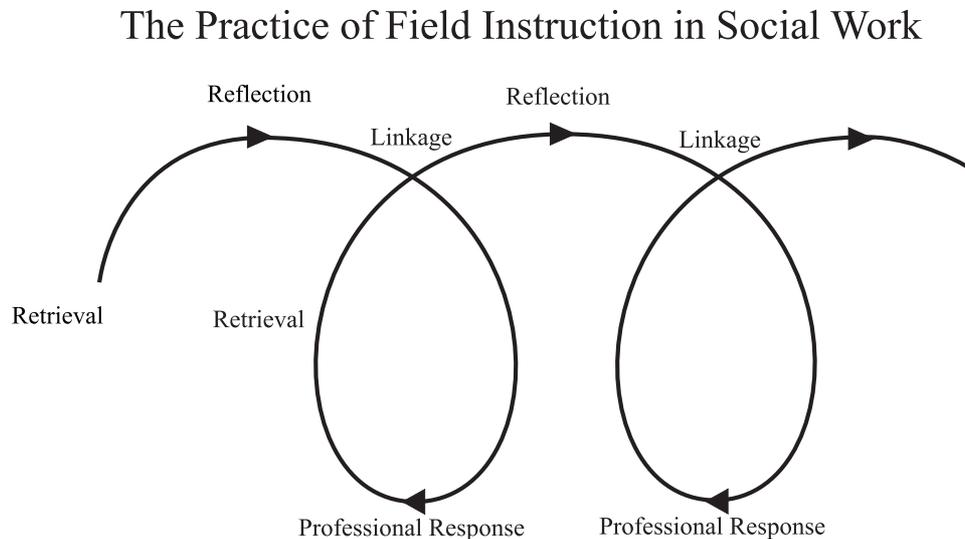


Figure 2.1: Integration Theory Practice Loop (ITP)
Source: Bongo and Vayda (1998)

The loop begins with the **retrieval** of information followed by **reflection** as social workers explore their personal association to the practice situation. The **linkage** is the

application of theory to practice, followed by **professional response** or action to the practice situation. Bongo and Vayda (1998:10) maintain the loop can be applied in a variety of social work practice settings. The model is generic and can be implemented in a variety of practice settings. In addition, the university and practice community can work together in providing a unified approach that cultivates the connection of theories and practice for students during their field work experiences.

Students generally consider field work the most influential component of their social work training. The micro, mezzo and macro experiences in social service agencies are experiences that students do not readily forget. The knowledge, values and skills acquired during students' final field experiences are considered to be the hallmarks of professional training and the heart of social work education.

The following student reflection provides some insight into the significance of the field work experience.

“It (internship) gives meaning to everything you have learned and makes practical sense of something you’ve only known as theoretical” (Sweitzer & King, 1999:3).

This quote exemplifies how students anticipate the field work component of social work education. The opportunity to experience the “real world” working at an agency while applying and integrating classroom knowledge can be challenging, frustrating and rewarding for students.

The researcher believes that students have a great deal of insight to share about their field work experience that may contribute to a greater university and agency understanding and appreciation of students' field work capstone experiences. One way to share these perceptions can be accomplished using visual imagery and reflective writing techniques that provide students an additional outlet for explaining their social and physical environments (Szto & Furman, 2005; Crockett, 2001).

2.4.2 Instructional strategies in practice education

This section will discuss a few instructional strategies from a variety of learning activities used in field education that can demonstrate the integration of knowledge, values and

skills taught in the classroom and practiced at the agency. Examples of instructional strategies include:

- Learning plans
- Portfolios
- Reflective writing/journaling.

2.4.2.1 Learning plans

The first instructional strategy is learning plans, also referred to as learning contracts or learning agreements. For discussion purposes, learning plan will be the terminology used. A well crafted learning plan addresses student responsibilities, expectations and educational opportunities, as well as addresses supervision responsibilities, agency supervisor and faculty liaison roles (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Grobman, 2002). These efforts should result in a learning plan that can help minimize misunderstandings and monitor student progress. By developing attainable goals relative to particular practice settings, students and supervisors can identify specific learning objectives that can be used to assess students' performances while producing measurable outcomes.

Learning plans also provide the framework in which learning activities can be introduced that coincide with the developmental stages students typically encounter in field work. These stages can include anticipation of the placement and getting started; disillusionment with the practicum and concerns with career choice; confrontation of concerns and issues; accomplishment and confidence and, finally, the culmination of the practicum (Sweitzer & King, 1999; Cochrane & Hanley, 1999; Bowles & Roberts, 1995). By specifying learning experiences, supervisors can assist in monitoring and evaluating students' performances according to school curriculum requirements. Additionally, students can gain a better understanding of agency and school expectations.

The next section will discuss the benefits of developing a portfolio for employment purposes or for professional education purposes.

2.4.2.2 Portfolios

A second instructional strategy is portfolios. Portfolios are often used by artists, architects, designers and others to showcase their creative talents, abilities and competencies. (Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002:1). Portfolios in social work can also assist students in demonstrating their distinctive abilities and competencies to potential employers, graduate education programs and advanced professional training. In addition, portfolios can also function as capstone projects to help students compile their educational materials that demonstrate transferable knowledge, values and skills that would be difficult to illustrate in a traditional resume format.

Examples of portfolio content in social work would include but are not limited to: school papers, reports, transcripts, job descriptions, resume, assessments and evaluations, learning plans, journal entries, personal and professional awards and certificates, volunteer recognitions and academic scholarships. This thoughtful collection of materials can help students demonstrate their integration of learning through their critical thinking and problem solving skills, leadership, initiative and follow through, communication and ability to work effectively with others (Orton, Freelin, Jacobs & Wingo, 2003).

The format and design of individual student portfolios varies. A few examples include: collecting items and placing them in a notebook, downloading documents on a compact disk or creating a personal website. Whatever presentation style is chosen, the challenge is to creatively and competently illustrate students' accumulated knowledge, values, skills and critical thinking that leave a lasting impression upon potential employers.

The next section will discuss how reflective writing can assist students to connect their thinking and perceptions of situations and experiences.

2.4.2.3 Reflective writing/journaling

A third instructional strategy is reflection. John Dewey is recognized as a key originator of the conception of reflection. Dewey's book, *How We Think* (1933) is considered to be a classic model for critical thinking and reflection during the learning process. Dewey considers the process of problem-solving to be dynamic and imaginative rather than linear (Fallon & Brown, 2002:38) and also helping make the search for solutions real by providing meaning to the experiences that are built on solid evidence (Dewey, 1933:7-12).

Donald Schön (1983, 1987), a more contemporary author, is well known for his academic writing on learning, reflection and change within organizations and communities. In Schön's books (1983, 1987) the concept of "reflection-in-action" plays an important role in assisting practitioners to deal with uncertain and unstable situations. The relationship social workers develop with their clients is based on one of discovery as "worker and client unravel the mysteries of the client's world and build their interactive relationship" (Pray, 1991:83). As a result, the client and worker as individuals bring a unique perspective of their interactions within their worlds to the interventive process (1987:83).

Reflective writing is one method of instruction that many professional disciplines utilize. It provides students the opportunity to reflect and contemplate upon events, episodes and interactions personally experienced inside and outside the classroom (Fulwiler, 1987). In social work education reflective writing, often referred to as journaling, can become a learning tool that assists students in linking theory with classroom learning while providing a platform that promotes increased self-awareness and development of personal and professional growth.

The literature (Bogo & Vayda, 1998) indicates a need for field education to focus on critical reflection especially during the practicum experience. However, while educators consider reflection to be a valuable tool, successful strategies on how to implement this process are lacking from the literature (Gustafson & Bennett, 1999).

Journaling is not just recording events, like a diary, but rather provides a venue to analyze, critique and challenge thinking. Journals can assist students in recording their thoughts, ideas and observations about experiences during field work. Through journaling, students can reread, revisit and revise their thoughts and impressions regarding a certain topic, incident or experience (Bromley, 1993).

Journals can be used in a variety of ways. They can encourage students to express their thoughts, feelings and reactions on a variety of topics during field work that could include topics such as: client confidentiality, ethical dilemmas, student safety and self-care intervention techniques. If field supervisors or faculty liaisons respond to journal entries, they can help students make connections to course material, help alleviate misunderstandings, provide information and clarify and extend thinking that could stretch students' thinking and reactions (Bromley, 1993).

A student journal reflection during field work offers the following insight:

“I have been in my placement for several weeks and have challenged my own philosophy many times. It frightens me to think that the very foundation on which I have based my life is being challenged by clients who believed we’re going to be textbook cases. Not that I assumed that I was entering a vacuum, but I didn’t think that my own beliefs could be shaken in such a short period of time. Maybe I am making no sense at all. Maybe I am making too much sense” (Sweitzer & King, 1999:17).

The above quote is an example of a student journal entry that can create personal and emotional reactions from students. The student’s reflection can serve as a “voice” providing educators who choose to “hear” substantive information to consider for curriculum revisions and address student and agency concerns.

Learning plans, portfolios and journaling are examples of instructional strategies in social work practice education that require students to integrate classroom knowledge and field work experience, illustrating their acquired knowledge, values, skills and abilities.

The next section will discuss the concept of perception, metaphors and the meaning of objects as they relate to field work.

2.5 PERCEPTIONS, METAPHORS AND THE MEANING OF OBJECTS

This section will present the importance of how we perceive our environment and give meaning to our experiences and the objects with which they interact. The way individuals communicate their perceptions, metaphors and the meaning of objects through the use of visual imagery and reflective writing are key elements of this study.

2.5.1 Perceptions

How we perceive and make sense of our world, interpret other peoples’ feelings, assess a situation or account for a situation is an individual experience. Social work authors, Goldberg and Middleman (1980:215) propose that perception “...is the end result of man’s interaction with the environment that perception pertains to experience.” How we “look” and “see” our environment and experiences requires an understanding of the two terms. “Looking” is considered to be a visual-perceptual experience and “seeing” is

considered to be a cognitive outcome of looking. So in essence, we can “look” at something without really “seeing it.” This premise is the same for hearing. “Listening” is comparable to “looking” and “hearing” is comparable to “seeing.” “Hearing” is considered to be the outcome of “listening.” (Goldberg & Middleman, 1980). Therefore, one could “listen” to people without really “hearing” them.

Using photography as a metaphor, Goldberg and Middleman (1980) contend social workers should use diverse angles so they can “see” and “hear” their clients’ strengths as well as problems, see potentials as well as consequences and help clients to do the same. At times, a social worker may need to use a *wide angle lens* in order to see the big picture, to gain insight, and at another time may need to *zoom* in to get a closer look at a particular situation. Both views require the social workers to “see” clients and situation by formulating perceptions based on their sensory and cognitive abilities.

How we “look” and “hear” in our environment will determine how we perceive our experiences. Student perceptions developed during field work and shared with educators can assist students in processing their unique experience so they can be “heard” and hopefully understood, appreciated and supported by educators.

Writing author Anne Lamott (1994:39) compares writing to watching a Polaroid photograph develop. Both are similar because one does not know what the photograph or writing is going to look like until after it has finished developing. Both processes take attention for a clear image to develop and as the two come into focus, more details will begin to develop as will a deeper understanding of the experience. This analogy is significant to note because this study used Polaroid photography and writing to give students tools to “develop” their unique perspectives of field work experiences by capturing them visually and reflectively.

Little attention has been paid in social work practice literature regarding creative mechanisms for students to share their perceptions, meanings and conceptualizations of the field experience. Studies found illustrating students’ perceptions during field work have been mainly in the following areas: satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the agency and on supervisor and learning opportunities. (Fortune, Feathers, Rook, Scrimenti, Smollen, Stemerman & Tucker 1985:92; Kissman & Van Tran, 2000).

Supervision and student and field instructor learning styles as indicators of successful field experiences were also found (Lee *et al.*, 1994; Van Soest & Kruzich, 1994). The literature (Fortune, McCarthy & Abramson, 2001:111-113; Kissman, & Van Tran, 2000:30) also shows that the quality of the field experience, supervision, feedback, students' performance, work autonomy, repetition, variety of relevance of learning activities and perceived application of the field experience to future social work practice are important factors that relate to better learning and satisfaction.

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A major aim of this study is to add to literature on social work practice education regarding students' perceptions of their field experiences. Through the use of visual imagery and reflective writing the depth and breath of students' field experiences are shared that words alone cannot convey. Students' perceptions of the knowledge, values and skills they learned in the classroom and practice in field are outcomes of the study.

The next section will discuss the concept of images and metaphors and how the meaning they convey can be illustrated using written statements, sayings and through social artifacts.

2.5.2 Images and metaphors

The Greek definition for metaphor is to transfer the meaning of something. According to the English Thesaurus it can also be a figure of speech, an image or be symbolic. We use metaphors to enliven our language, encourage interpretation, create new meanings and maximize the meaning of something with a minimum of words (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_metaphor.html).

Images and metaphors that illustrate this include: “I see what you mean”; “Seeing is believing”; “A picture is worth a thousand words” and “Seeing the big picture” are common metaphors used in everyday life that imply understanding or getting the point. Not understanding implies metaphors such as “I don’t see your point”; and “It seems fuzzy to me”. Gaining perspective on a subject can elicit metaphors such as “From my point of view”; “Seeing the forest and the trees”; and “Envisioning change” and finally when a new connection or understanding is made we often hear “A light bulb just went off in my head”. How these metaphors are used and in what context they are used can give new perspective and meaning to our world.

Images created from metaphors can move beyond fixed interpretations in developing new realities, understanding and awareness (Duffy, 2001). In the arts, metaphors are understood “as a means of stimulating and stretching imagination, which in turn, generates new and fresh connections and enhances the capacity to understand” (Fidler & Velde, 1999:125).

Social workers have the same capacity to enlighten others using metaphors; however, they can be time-bound and context specific that can vary from culture to culture. A loaf of bread can transcend different meanings depending upon the context in which it is presented. For example, as a group exercise in a day treatment center a loaf of bread was used to illustrate that a baker needed to be flexible when working with the ingredients perhaps needing to add additional ingredients, as well as the being sensitive to conditions of the environment which might require the loaf needing to be kneaded more (Fidler & Velde, 1999). A far different metaphor was a South African social work student’s perception of a loaf of bread representing her limited financial resources for a nutritious lunch further illustrating her hunger, and that bread with butter is often all she had for lunch.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphors not only make our thoughts and language more interesting and creative, but metaphors also structure our perceptions and understanding. As the examples above illustrate, metaphors can mean different things to different people. In field work, students have the ability to use metaphors to provide further understanding and interpretation of clients’ needs as well as personal and professional concerns and issues.

2.5.3 Objects and meaning

We interact with objects everyday. The meaning we attach to objects is directly tied to the activities we associate with them. Our reflection and recording of our attachment and engagement with objects hold personal meaning that can provide an avenue in addressing our concerns, fears, and other personal issues (Fidler & Velde, 1999). Csikszentimihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and Sears (1960:40) conceptualize “object relationship as symbols of the self representing and symbolizing the evolution of a personal identity, a sense of social belonging, and a connectedness with one’s total world”.

The meaning associated with objects and activities is the hallmark of occupational therapy. The field of anthropology has also contributed to the symbolic understanding attached to objects and activities that reflect and shape human existence and society (Fidler & Velde, 1999:1,4). The following quote provides a descriptive overview of objects and the importance of their meanings to people.

“Humans display the intriguing characteristic of making and using objects. The things with which people interact are not simply tools for survival, or for making survival easier and more comfortable. Things embody goals, they make skills manifest and shape the identity of their users. Man is not only homo sapiens or homo ludens, he is also homo faber, the maker and user of objects. This self to a large extent is a reflection of things with which he interacts. Thus objects also make and use their makers and users!” (Csikszentimihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:11).

The meaning and symbolism we attach to objects and activities is not limited to occupational therapy and anthropology. The social work profession also interacts with people in their environment who shape their identities based on the interactions and activities they have with objects. By understanding the significance of these meanings, social workers can learn to address the social, cultural and personal needs of clients and communities they serve.

2.6 CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section aims to give an introduction of capstone experiences in higher education. Transferable skills and their importance as an outcome of capstone experiences will be presented.

2.6.1 Conceptualizing capstone experience

One way higher education is responding in meeting the needs of a diverse student body living in a changing world is to provide capstone experiences for students that demonstrate what they have learned during their higher education experiences and knowledge and transferable skills. These transferable skills can effectively demonstrate to the workplace the evidence of a student's integrated learning, critical thinking and problem solving abilities.

A capstone experience is defined as “a culminating experience in which students are expected to integrate special studies with the major, and extend, critique, and apply knowledge gained in their major” (Wagenaar, 1993, p. add citations). In a student's major discipline a capstone experience is designed to help orchestrate these needs by providing senior undergraduate students with a sense of coherence and closure to their educational experiences and to assist their transitions from baccalaureate work to the ‘real world’ of work or graduate studies.

Capstone experiences are viewed as a “final, mastery experience” (Davis, 1993) and focus on the “ways of knowing” in the discipline and addresses the types of questions and issues faced by the discipline (North Dakota State University, 1998-2000). The linkage of connecting classroom instruction and practice through inquiry-based learning provides students an opportunity to broaden and deepen their capstone experiences (University of Missouri Undergraduate Catalog, 2001-2005).

2.6.2 Examples of capstone experiences in higher education

Examples of capstone experiences in higher education include field work, internships, practicums, independent case analysis, written papers, public presentations, portfolios, living cases, service experiences, problem-solving/critical thinking projects, computer simulations and games, multimedia presentations, creative art work and performance or

recital. These are just a few examples of what might qualify as a culminating activity (Kerka, 2001). In social work education the final field work experience would be considered the equivalent of a capstone experience.

2.6.3 Goals of capstone experiences

In order to make capstone experiences significant, it should be done in a purposeful manner and these should be done to meet certain goals. It is apparent that the specific outcomes of practice education for fourth year social work students at the University of Stellenbosch are very parallel to the aforementioned goals of capstone education experiences.

2.6.4 Experiential learning model

Practice education provides opportunity for experiential learning. Andreasen and Wu's (1999) experiential learning model designed for capstone experiences provides a framework that could be matched with appropriate learning activities. Andreasen and Wu's use of receiving, relating, reflecting, refining and reconstructing learning activities was useful in illustrating the experiential learning activities that took place in this study:

- To **receive** – study participants were given the learning activity during their final field work experience.
- To **relate** – study participants were prompted to relate the practice based learning activity to their educational field work experience and course work.
- To **reflect** – study participants responded to prompted statements on reflection worksheets.
- To **refine** – study participants participated in an interview with the researcher to further clarify their written reflections and photograph content.
- To **reconstruct** – worksheet reflection prompt asked study participants to relate what significance the learning activity and lessons learned had in relation to their academic training and field experience.

Andeasen and Wu's experiential learning model framework is similar to the data gathered and analyzed from the reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interview transcriptions in this study.

The next section will cover transferable skills acquired in higher education that students expected from their studies and are marketable to employers. Then these transferable skills and how they relate to the specific outcomes of practice education for fourth year social work students at Stellenbosch will be presented.

2.6.5 Transferable skills in higher education

According to the United Nations, in 1996 *“Education is considered the principal instrument which can assist both individuals and nations to shape their destinies, based on the universal principles of social justice. In this process, higher education has a unique role to play in that it prepares skilled human resources for a society where advanced knowledge and know-how are the essential forces directing social and economic growth. But this sub-sector is enduring an ongoing crisis in all regions of the world as governments reduce resources while questioning the real returns of this investment for the community”* (UNESCO, 1996).

Students expect their studies to help develop their qualities as citizens in a changing world; however, *“they are aware of the need to acquire even more sophisticated professional skills to equip themselves for a complex labour market because employment has become all too frequently an elusive goal for many governments. Moreover, students today are required to invest heavily in their own futures – hence their social and professional concerns are totally justified. Their reflection on their choice of studies, on the quality and relevance of the current curriculum offered and on the methods used to convey this knowledge constitutes a thought-provoking analysis of higher education on the eve of the 3rd millennium”* (UNESCO, 1996).

From the above it is clear that transferable skills are not specific to any particular subject but rather represent the skills, abilities and personal attributes that can be used in numerous activities and situations. Flinders University in Australia recognizes that most transferable skills can be summarized into four main categories (www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/skills):

- Communication and presentation skills
- Teamwork or interpersonal skills
- Management, organizing and planning skills
- Intellectual and creative skills such as problem solving abilities that require one to “think outside the box.”

These four areas are prevalent elements in any field work setting students would encounter and are the core content of professional education in social work curriculums. Students are taught these transferable skills by learning to be effective verbal and written communicators, be cooperative and productive team players, conduct themselves in a manner that reflect the profession’s values and ethics and apply critical thinking and problem solving skills.

2.6.6 Relationship of transferable skills of fourth year students at Stellenbosch

There is considerable overlap between the general transferable skills and the expectations of fourth year social work students at the University of Stellenbosch. Through practice education students are given opportunities to synthesize their classroom knowledge and apply learned theory and research to their specific practice settings. In doing so, a few examples include the following ways students demonstrate these transferable skills:

- **communication and presentation skills** by writing university and organisation reports,
- **managing** a diverse caseload with individuals, families and the community,
- **administrative responsibilities** include maintaining appointments, adhering to university and agency deadlines for reports and other documentation,
- **creative problem solving** complex social problems and
- **relationship building** by being cooperative and attentive with clients and professionals.

Figure 2.2 below is presented to illustrate the linkage between social work practice education goals at the University of Stellenbosch, capstone experiences in general, field

work, and the four common goals of transferable skills referred to as communication, teamwork, management and critical thinking that are a result of this overlap.

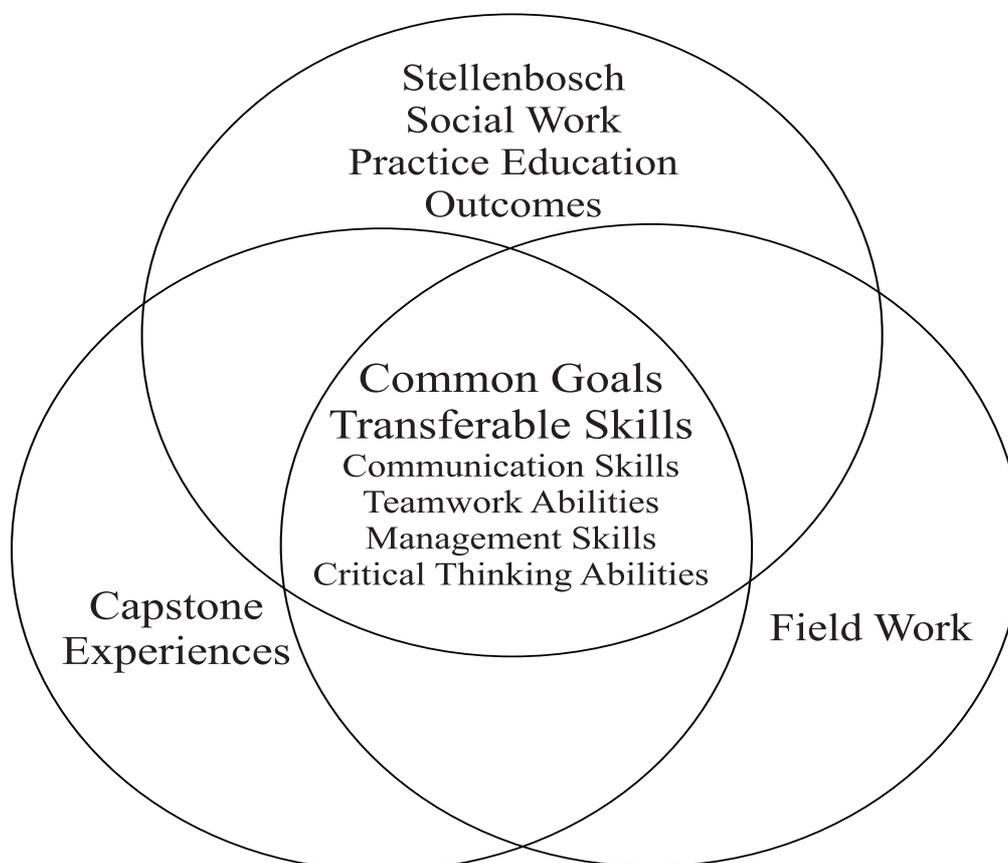


Figure 2.2: Transferable skills

From the above figure it is clear that there is overlap of transferable skills in these three areas. This study will attempt to illustrate how social work students using visual imagery and reflective writing techniques demonstrate these skills during their field work capstone experiences.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The first part of the chapter discussed social work education in South Africa with an emphasis on the overall and fourth-year practice education expectations at the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. The second section of the chapter focused on an overview of practice education and instructional strategies that

demonstrate knowledge, values and skills students learn in the classroom and practice during field work. The third segment of the chapter discussed the concept of capstone experiences in higher education and transferable skills students expect to learn at university so they can be marketable for potential employment or in pursue advanced studies.

In the next chapter an overview of photo-elicitation in visual anthropology and visual sociology are discussed. Pertinent studies that incorporate photo-elicitation methodology considered to be important by the researcher for the purposes of this study are presented.

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF PHOTO-ELICITATION IN VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to meet the second objective of the study, namely to present an overview of photo-elicitation methodology in visual anthropology and visual sociology. This is relevant because photo-elicitation methodology was utilized in this study. In order to gain a clear understanding of photo-elicitation it is necessary to briefly give an overview of visual anthropology and visual sociology, both disciplines where photo-elicitation originated and evolved. Firstly, an overview of photo-elicitation as a data collection methodology in visual anthropology will be presented. Then, the development of photo-elicitation in visual sociology will be discussed. Lastly, chosen contemporary, international and interdisciplinary photo-elicitation studies will be presented whose methodology is similar as this study.

3.2 VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

This section provides an introduction to photo-elicitation in visual anthropology. Terminology, advantages and disadvantages to using this methodology and noted visual anthropologists using photo-elicitation as their visual research methodology will be presented.

3.2.1 Visual anthropology as a sub-discipline of anthropology

The parent discipline, anthropology, uses scientific, historical and interpretive methods in understanding the diversity of human cultures (Bernard, 1988:11). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, anthropology came into existence and was closely related to biology. The use of photography provided visual documentation that was useful to anthropologists in classification of races to support theories of social evolution (Harper, 1994:203). Photographs recorded people's physical characteristics, built environments, rituals and artifacts.

The term “visual anthropology” came about after World War II and was associated with using cameras to study cultures. Visual anthropologists in Europe focused mainly on ethnographic film whereas in the United States all visual forms and media were considered part of visual anthropology (El Guindi, 1998:459).

However, visual anthropology (Prosser, 1998) has not been incorporated into the parent discipline of anthropology and works peripherally to mainstream academia. Many consider visual anthropologists to be concerned only with audio-visual aids for teaching and have ignored the visual-pictorial world because of the distrust of images to convey abstract ideas in a profession that is driven by words to describe complex fieldwork. According to Harper (1998:27) “visual anthropology does not make use of still photography and is mainly a discipline of film and video with texts written in service of the films and videos.”

Despite this fact, photography was widely used in the early part of the twentieth century. By 1920 the use of photography had lost its importance. It was Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, both noted anthropologists’ study in the 1930’s that reinvigorated the use of visual methods in anthropology (Harper, 1998). Their 1942 book, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*, featuring more than 800 photographs, remains probably one of the greatest accomplishments to date in visual anthropology or sociology (Harper, 2003).

The Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) developed as a constituent section of the American Anthropology Association in 1984 (El Guindi, 1998:460). According to the organisation’s website www.societyforvisualanthropology.org SVA promotes the study of visual representation and media. In addition, SVA encourages the use of a variety of media, including photography, film, video and non-camera generated images for the purpose of describing, analyzing, communicating and interpreting human and nonhuman behavior.

From the above, it appears that still photography does not play a major role in visual anthropology, despite the use of photography in the early work of Mead and Bateson, who pioneered the use of photography in their research and were both well known anthropologists in their field.

3.2.2 Photo-elicitation in visual anthropology

While visual elicitation techniques can be traced back to psychological research in 1909, it was Margaret Mead who introduced the concept of photo-elicitation in anthropology using still photographs to elicit responses from Samoan children in 1925 (El Guindi, 1998:475). However, it was John Collier's 1957 paper in *American Anthropologist Journal* as a participant on a multi-disciplinary research team that examined mental health in changing communities in Canada that the term photo-elicitation was first named. Collier's research found photo-elicitation interviews using participants' old and new photographs of their natural environments helpful in determining themes of psychological stress on families of their environmental living and working conditions. Using traditional survey methods would not have provided the same results. (Harper, 2002:13,14).

The development of photo-elicitation is a result of Mead's and Collier's research using this methodology to gain information from subjects in their natural environments.

3.2.2.1 Photo-elicitation terminology

There are a number of different terms that are associated with photo-elicitation used in both visual anthropology and visual sociology that warrant explanation. Hurworth's (2003:52,54) provides a summary of terms that are associated with photo-elicitation and used interchangeably depending on the researcher. They include:

- **Photo-interviewing and photo-elicitation**

Early anthropologists used photographs produced by the researcher to elicit responses from the subjects they were studying. By doing so, anthropologists learned about subjects' cultures including rituals.

This technique of using photographs to elicit a response became known as photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002; Collier & Collier, 1986; Worth & Adair, 1972). This technique was found to be valuable in working with children and young people and in educational evaluations.

- **Autodriving**

This technique requires more informant involvement in discussing their behaviors in photographs. This process gives informants more authority, perspective and meaning to events.

- **Reflexive photographs**

Using reflexive photography methods requires subjects to take their own photographs that illustrate impressions, perspectives of situations or events followed by a reflective interview with the researcher (Harrington & Lindy, 1998). In the interview, photographs are reviewed with the subject so the researcher can gain further understanding and meaning of the photographs.

- **Photo novella/photovoice**

Initially, photo novella, referred to as “picture stories,” empowered participants who, as marginalized groups with little access to decision makers, learned to produce photographs and reflective writing to share events and routines of every day living that could be used to effect political change (Wang & Burris, 1994).

Photovoice replaced photo novella using specific photographic techniques where people can identify, represent, and enhance their communities (Wang & Burris, 1994). Through the use of photography and reflection people learn to record and communicate their communities’ strengths and concerns to policy makers (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001; Wang & Pies, 2004).

This technique, used in macro settings, looks at the strengths and challenges of communities through the eyes of their populations. The use of photography and reflection is similar to this study in that participants used similar methodology. By empowering participants to look at their environments and share their perceptions with educators a better understanding of students’ field work experiences can be appreciated.

The terms described above illustrate the different techniques used in photo-elicitation methodology. This study draws from reflexive techniques because it requires subjects to produce their own photographs and participate in a reflective interview with the

researcher. This is important because subjects are more knowledgeable of their living environments than the researcher, therefore, the results truly reflect the subjects' perspectives and not the researcher's perspective.

3.2.2.2 Advantages and disadvantages to using photo-elicitation methodology

There are advantages to using photo-interviewing/elicitation (Harper, 1998, 2002; Hurworth, 2003; Hurworth, Clark, Martin & Thomsen, 2005; Wang & Burris, 1994; Collier & Collier, 1986; Worth & Adair, 1972) in qualitative research.

Some of the advantages of using photo-interviewing/elicitation are that it can:

- be used at any stage of research; pilot studies, evaluation and developmental work
- assist the researcher to get inside a program and its context
- help bridge psychological and physical realities
- enhance visual and verbal communication
- facilitate the development of trust and rapport with subjects
- provide a combination of multi-methods to increase the thoroughness of the research endeavor
- provide a technique that enhances participatory research and needs assessments
- promote unpredictable information from subjects
- reduce or repudiate the need of written literacy
- create more informative interviews (Hurworth, 2003; Hurworth *et al.*, 2005).

As noted above, photo-elicitation provides a unique interactive relationship between the researcher and participant that can build trust and rapport that may be missing from other types of interviews. In summary, photo-elicitation techniques can prompt participants' memories and provide a new viewpoint that the researcher may have overlooked or misunderstood.

There are also disadvantages or challenges researchers face using photo-elicitation methodology which include: the possibility participants may lose their cameras or use them in inappropriate ways or have technical difficulties with the cameras; financial considerations of purchasing cameras, developing film and time spent in conducting interviews are also potential limitations.

The intimacy of the photographs and face-to-face interviews may make it difficult for researchers to obtain support and permission from their institutions to conduct their research. Interviewees may be hesitant to provide permission, as well, that could affect recruitment for the research study (Clark-Ibanez, 2004:1518).

As can be deciphered, photo-elicitation methodology can provide social work with techniques to use in a number of areas from assessment to community development work. A major benefit is the involvement of participants during the interview process. For example, participants will be more likely to feel empowered if they get the opportunity to share their personal perceptions and insights regarding their environments. This may be difficult to achieve using more traditional methods of interviewing.

3.2.3 Noted visual anthropologists' use of photo-elicitation methodology

The following section will introduce four major contributors in the development of photo-elicitation as a visual analysis methodology.

3.2.3.1 *Collier and Collier, Jr.*

John Jr. and Malcom Collier's (1967,1986) texts, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, describes how photographs can be used in interviewing research participants that make durable, visual records of culture and social life. Collier Jr. considered the kind of image making most appropriate to the social sciences was "systematic, deliberate, and well articulated with a traditional research design" (Wagner, 2004:1477). Colliers' 1967 text became "the standard introduction to visual sociology and sociology" (Harper, 2002:14).

John Collier Jr. made significant contributions to visual anthropology. By applying still photography and film, his visual analysis methods provided data to gain cross cultural understanding of indigenous Native Americans and Alaskan Eskimo children. His childhood growing up near pueblos of New Mexico exposed him to a different culture and ways of expression, behavior and living. His hearing loss at a young age sensitized him to these cultural nuances and taught him to "seek beyond words to alternative bases of knowledge" (Barnhardt, 2006) that embrace visual communication. Collier believed words were not as reliable as visual messages that are researchable through photographs.

3.2.3.2 *Worth and Adair*

In 1966, Worth and Adair conducted a research project instructing Navajo Indians in the art of filmmaking as part of cross-cultural communication. Worth and Adair were interested in how the Navajo would portray their living as seen by outsiders and how Navajos see and structures their own lives and world around them. Their book, *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology* (1972), is often considered their most renowned research. Worth was identified as revitalizing the subfield of visual anthropology as the anthropology of visual communication. An important milestone of this research, according to Worth and Adair (1972:252) “for the first time, members of another culture radically different from ours in language, technological development, and the use of images, have been taught to use the film medium and have produced expressions of themselves and their world as they see it.”

These early visual anthropologists, Bateson and Mead (1942), Collier and Collier, Jr. (1986) and Worth and Adair (1972) began a new frontier using photography and film as photo-elicitation methodology to better understand their subjects and environments that did not rely on words alone. By involving their subjects in the process of data collection using visual imagery techniques, the researchers were able to garner trust and develop relationships with their subjects. Through the use of cameras, film and personal interviews researchers were able to elicit information from the subjects’ perspectives that were thought to be more intimate and meaningful than traditional research methods.

The next section will review the development of visual sociology as a sub-discipline of sociology, photography, photo-elicitation methodology and selected research studies.

3.3 VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

In this section, the aim is to provide an overview of visual sociology. Next, photography as a medium in visual sociology and as an educational tool will be reviewed, followed by photo-elicitation methodology terminology, analysis approaches and examples of photo-elicitation formats. Lastly, selected contemporary, international and interdisciplinary photo-elicitation studies will be presented.

3.3.1 Visual sociology as a sub-discipline of sociology

Visual sociology emerged as a sub-discipline of qualitative sociology in the late 1960's and has remained underdeveloped and peripheral to its parent discipline (Harper, 1989). Visual sociology is related to documentary photography and shares a relationship with visual ethnography as it developed in anthropology (Harper, 1994). Proponents of visual sociology and visual anthropology, both sub-disciplines of their parent disciplines, believe they should have more central positions within their respective parent disciplines and attend to issues of credibility in terms of methodology (Prosser, 1998).

Visual sociologists are interested in the use of photography, film and video to study and understand culture, society and social relationships (Harper, 1998, 1994). The first visual sociologists seemed to have been inspired by documentary photographers around the turn of the twentieth century in the United States. They closely identified with the photography of Jacob Riis (1849-1914) and Lewis Hine (1874-1940) who revealed the human condition of urban squalor and child labor working conditions (Huff, 1998). These photographers exposed societal problems to educate the public and were instrumental in making social reform.

According to Becker (1974) and Harper (1998), sociology and photography developed during the same decades in Europe. Photographers and sociologists both were interested in social problems of the time; the new social classes and the forgotten classes in society. Both brought a new kind of knowledge; photography provided a new way of seeing and sociology a new way of interpretation. Although social scientists in anthropology and sociology used photographs from the beginning, little attention has been paid to the kinds of knowledge these photographs can produce (Harper, 1998).

Another important development was in 1974 when the publication of *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* became the first journal in either sociology or anthropology devoted to the study of visual communication, and it defined the basis for visual sociology. Howard S. Becker (1974) describes photography being seen as either documentary photography or as art. In addition, Becker believes that social reform in the early twentieth century was influenced by the visual images of Riis and Hines photography. He suggests that sociologists study similar topics as photographers and

recommends sociologists should take up the camera and learn photography to further the significance of images and visual communication.

Another milestone in the development of visual sociology was the creation of The International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA). Approaching their twentieth anniversary, IVSA produces a peer-reviewed international journal, *Visual Studies*, that features image-based articles across a wide range of disciplines. Contributions cover topics related to research on visual and material culture, applied visual research, ethnography, essays, photo-elicitation studies, photography and documentary studies. The organisation also publishes a newsletter and organizes an annual international conference (www.visualsociology.org).

Visual sociologists embrace a variety of image-based research techniques as effective methods of communicating and interpreting visual data. Photo-elicitation methodology is only one image-based research technique that has a promising future in determining how researchers elicit information from subjects that words alone could not express.

3.3.2 Photo-elicitation terminology in visual sociology

The same terminology, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using photo-elicitation as research methodology discussed earlier in the section on visual anthropology, also apply to visual sociology methodology.

3.3.3 Analysis approaches to photo-elicitation methodology in visual sociology

The following section describes two approaches to data analysis: deductive and inductive approaches that use photo-elicitation methodology.

3.3.3.1 Deductive analysis approach

According to visual sociologist Harper (2002), photo-elicitation is an interview between the researcher and subject using photographs, typically produced by the researcher to elicit a response from the subject that words alone cannot convey. Photographs can assist in establishing rapport and trust between the researcher and interviewee, thereby facilitating more in-depth responses while providing a structure for the interview (Collier, 1967). Using this approach, photographs can also be used by researchers to expand upon

questions while providing a unique way for participants to communicate dimensions of their lives (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). This approach does not actively involve subjects in the process of producing their own photographs; therefore, they do not have ownership in the photographs taken by the researcher.

3.3.3.2 Inductive analysis approach

For a more inductive research approach, participants produce their own photographs that are later used to stimulate responses from participants during the interview process. This collaborative model where the researcher is the listener and the subjects interpret their photographic images becomes a powerful reflective tool that can provide deeper understanding and meaning to the experience (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Hurworth, 2003). While both approaches use photography to elicit responses from participants, the inductive approach requires that participants' not the researcher produce their own photographs. By doing so, participants are empowered and have a sense of ownership in the research process.

This study draws upon the inductive analysis approach to photo-elicitation by engaging participants in producing their own photographs and written reflections from a student perspective and participating in an interview with this researcher to further clarify participant- produced data.

3.3.3.3 Photo-elicitation formats and categories

Harper (1988) describes two photo-elicitation formats that require different involvement from participants. Format one is a collection of photographs and format two uses photographs of subjects' environments. This study utilizes the second format where participants were actively involved in producing photographs of their environments and shared their views with the researcher. The formats are:

- **Collection of photographs**

Photographs of scenes from subjects' lives were used to initiate discussion between subjects of similar social status or position. One example is Ximena Bunster (1977:290) who used this technique to study the attitudes of proletarian mothers in

Lima, Peru. The main purpose of the study was to try to understand the patterned ways Peruvian women felt, labeled and experienced their work and private worlds.

Another example is Harper (1987) who used this technique with a single subject to study a particular mechanic's skill over a period of time. The process provided a more in-depth look at rural life and provided additional information regarding the mechanic's values and norms of the community. Harper attributes the use of photographs for creating an environment in which subjects could open up more to the researcher that had not been anticipated.

- **Photographs of subjects' environments**

Subjects photograph and comment on their photographs from their viewpoints that give others a view of their social world. An example is Wendy Ewald, while not a sociologist, published *Portraits and Dreams* (1985:65), a project with children in Appalachia who were taught to take photographs of their environments, from their points of view. The children were able to provide a human side to their lives living in a poor area that is often stereotyped.

Harper (2002:16-26) categorizes photo-elicitation studies into four areas: social organization/social class/family; community; identity and culture. The following examples provides some insight into these categories:

- Social class/social organization/family – popular education movements and the impact of children on family dynamics;
- Community and historical ethnography – gentrification neighborhood studies and historical photographs that serve as the memory of the community;
- Identity – social identity of children, drug addicts, ethnically different immigrants, work world and visual autobiography studies;
- Culture/cultural – interpretation of culture through the meaning, insight and understanding of signs.

Photographs alone do not guarantee that the photo-elicitation interview will be meaningful. The relationship developed between the subject and researcher ultimately determines the success of the interviewing process.

The major difference in the researcher's study and that of Bunster's, Harper's and Ewald's work is that participants not the researcher produced the photographs of their social and physical environments. Subjects know and understand their environment better than an outsider researcher who is not as familiar with the social class, community, social identity or culture. Therefore, subject- produced photographs are more meaningful and insightful.

The researcher's study is a combination of identity and culture. Participants identified with their roles as social work students as this related to the agencies, university and personal environments in which they live and work. The cultural aspects are apparent in the social artifacts chosen to represent perceptions of their environments. Signs and symbols of South African culture provide additional meaning and insight into their field work experiences.

The next section provides an overview of seven photo-elicitation studies that looked at a variety of subjects' environments using visual imagery, a combination of photography and reflection to tell their unique stories that only they could tell.

3.4 SELECTED CONTEMPORARY, INTERNATIONAL AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY PHOTO-ELICITATION STUDIES

This section aims to give a global overview of photo-elicitation studies that most closely reflect the research methodology of this study. The successful use of cameras by subjects with a variety of ages and abilities further reinforces the feasibility of using photo-elicitation methodology techniques.

The methodology components used in this study: participant-produced photographs using Polaroid and instamatic cameras; photo reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews, limited the literature review. Studies in social work with these attributes were almost non-existent. Pertinent research studies from South Africa, Holland, United Kingdom and North America that incorporated similar photo-elicitation methodology techniques identified to be significantly relevant to this study are presented.

3.4.1 South Africa

In this section, two South Africa studies are presented. Both studies utilized photography to learn more about subjects' environments. In the first study, school age students

produced photographs and participated in an interview with the researcher as a method of assessing their school environments. The second example was a project where university social work students photographed the lives of working women to learn more about their living and working environments.

3.4.1.1 Primary and secondary school study

This study was chosen for the following reasons. Participants took their own photographs of their school environments and participated in photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher. The process empowered students in informing school administrators about their perceived concerns with the school and the environment. And, lastly, the study demonstrates that school-age participants were successful in operating cameras without difficulty.

Karlsson (2001:24) conducted an image-based research study with children in six urban schools in Durban, South Africa. Primary and secondary age school children photographed their school environments as part of a school evaluation and participated in photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher. The purpose of the study was to determine if unequal power relations and communication competences were of concern due to the change schools were undergoing as a result of post-apartheid redistributive and equal education policies. Participants were asked to produce photographs with disposable cameras about “me and my school” and complete a brief verbal explanation of the photograph.

Developed photographs were utilized during the interviews giving participants the opportunity to tell the researcher about the photographs, who were in the photographs and where they were taken. Participant photographs showed “places, practices and events that are part of everyday school life but which may not be apparent to the outsider visiting the school” (Karlsson, 2001:35).

Learners’ views in the past were often “hidden or muted in research by adults who would presume to speak on their behalf” (Karlsson, 2001:36). Karlsson’s study acknowledged the demands and expense of this type of research; however, she indicates the study was successful.

A common component of Karlsson's research and this study is that participants were given cameras to photograph their environments and participate in photo-elicitation interviews, providing additional clarification of the photographs. One difference is Karlsson's participants took photographs of people and objects in their environments, whereas this study restricted participants to taking photographs only of social artifacts in their environments.

3.4.1.2 Alternative view of Durban's living and working environment project

This project was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, the activity was conducted in South Africa and in a university social work program that helps to demonstrate how a visual imagery learning activity can be incorporated into the curriculum. Secondly, the activity looked at working women's living and working environments through the eyes of social work students.

An Alternative View of Durban, an audio-visual lecture was presented at the Annual Congress of the Photographic Society of Southern Africa (PPSA) in Durban in 1996 (Gray, 2001). The presentation was based on a student project as part of a social work and community development class. The students photographed a community of women living on the payment in Durban, South Africa, later referred to as Block A K. The women came from rural areas looking for work, many whom were supporting families, parents and children who were still living in rural areas. Banding together in entrepreneurial spirit these women began selling containers for income because of the high unemployment in Durban.

After photographing these women's lives, students came together in the classroom to view their photographs and reflect upon their experiences. By studying the photographs students began to see more than they had on their field trip taking the photographs. "The students realized how little they were seeing even though they were looking all the time" (Gray, 2001:207). Discussions were enriched with interpretations by the instructor and students which were often drastically different. Gray (2001:209) provides the following contributions she believes photography adds to social work education:

"Photography, like social work, is a vehicle for seeing. Just because you do not see the poverty does not mean it is not there and even if you do see it, it does not mean that you

see it as it really is. You impose your own insight, understanding, and experience on what you see. Often you might look and not see at all. We focus selectively on the world around us. Photography teaches us to see the whole frame, to see every element of composition. There is then a relationship between social work and photography. Both are media through which I have broadened my understanding of the world around me.”

Gray’s work provides an approach to investigating the use of photography with social work students as a community assignment. It is significant because the educator viewed it as a successful approach in teaching students an awareness in “learning to look” and “looking to learn” from a different perspective. Students were introduced to a new “tool” to see, understand and appreciate their clients’ environments and presenting challenges.

Some common components of Gray’s project and this study is that social work students took photographs of subjects’ living environments. In both cases photographs taken were decisions made by the social work students. Major differences were: in Gray’s project students only took photographs of the subjects’ living and working environments. In this study students took photographs of both their personal and working environments as well as clients’ living environments. Lastly, this study included photo-elicitation interviews. Photo-elicitation interviews were not included in Gray’s project.

3.4.2 Holland

This study describes a “photo walk” that was led by study participants. The researcher took photographs of participants’ neighborhoods while being accompanied by the participants. Participants directed the researcher on what to photograph that they believed reflected the relationships they had with their living environments.

3.4.2.1 Neighborhood study

This study was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, the focus was on the environment of a neighborhood that had a negative public impression and the impact that had on residents. Secondly, photo-elicitation was incorporated so the researcher could further understand the relationship participants had within their living environments. The study utilized photo-elicitation techniques to determine the meaning inhabitants gave to

social and ethnic interactions of their material environments in a low-income Dutch neighborhood (Van der Does, Edelaar, Gooskens, Liefing & Mierlo, 1992).

A diverse group of participants were chosen for the study. Researchers worked closely with participants by accompanying them on photo walks through the neighborhood. The purpose was for participants to identify places and objects they felt were important to them. Participants were not restricted in the subject matter of their photographs and were informed that the photographs' purpose was for information and not aesthetic value.

Researchers considered the method of using photo walks helped build relationships with participants that were active and not passive. It is important to note that weather influenced the research on a practical level and atmosphere of the photographs because the study mainly took place out of doors. The use of photographs encouraged participants to talk in more depth rather than rely on memory for discussion. Also, photographing the physical, material environment was easier than photographing social relations and other abstract concepts. As a result, researchers considered photo-elicitation to have advantages over interviews that did not use photographs and consequently their understanding of the neighborhood was varied and deep (Van der Does *et al.*, 1992:63,65).

A commonality of the study is that participants focused on their living and working environments. A major difference of this study was that participants did not take their own photographs but were accompanied by a member of the research team. They walked the neighborhood together and the researcher was instructed which photographs to take by the neighborhood participants.

3.4.3 United Kingdom

This study involved patients working with researchers to photograph their hospital experiences prior to discharge from the hospital. Hospital administration allowed patients to take photographs of the hospital environment, but not of people.

3.4.3.1 Hospital recovery study

This study was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, patients used Polaroid cameras and instamatic cameras to take their photographs. Secondly, they also were allowed to take photographs of social artifacts in the hospital environment but not of people.

Certain elements of Radley and Taylor's (2003) study of hospital patients' recovery using photography and interviews are considered noteworthy for the following reasons. Firstly, hospital administration restricted patient participants to taking photographs of spaces and objects; photographs of people were not allowed. Secondly, due to time constraints of patient discharges from the hospital, Polaroid cameras and 35mm cameras allowing for two photographs of each image were used allowing photo elicitation interviews to be conducted immediately after photographs were taken. Hospital administration also restricted patients from keeping cameras on the wards so the researchers stayed with participants as they took their photographs. Study participants (N=9) produced 82 photographs of places, spaces and objects they thought significant about their stay at the hospital.

The researchers thought this form of qualitative methodology data gathering would provide significant information on patient recovery. They also hypothesized that photographs alone would not have meaning without the context of the setting. Initially, researchers considered the photographs to be ordinary and disappointing. Upon further review, the researchers determined that the process was enriched because of their observations of patients taking the photographs and the ways in which patients related to the images produced. Photography was considered a useful device as a means of communicating what cannot be made visible (Radley & Taylor, 2003:97).

This hospital study used the same combination of Polaroid and instamatic cameras to collect participant produced photographs as the researcher's study. Also, participants were restricted to taking photographs of social artifacts in their environments which was true with the researcher's study. Additionally, in both case photo-elicitation interviews were conducted. A major difference was participants in the hospital study were required to be accompanied by one of the research team members when taking photographs. The researcher's study did not have this restriction.

3.4.4 North America

This section includes three studies from North America. All studies were of college/university students' perceptions and perspectives of their living environments. Two studies looked at campus environments and one study looks at a combination of campus, work and home environments.

3.4.4.1 Student perceptions of campus environment study

This study was chosen for the following reasons. First, participants were given cameras and instructions to take photographs that reflected their perceptions of the campus environment. Second, participants participated in a photo-elicitation interview with the researcher.

Perka, Matherly, Fishman and Ridge (1992) believed photography was useful in assessing students' perceptions of their campus environments in North America. Their study included African-American and White Greek-affiliated undergraduate students (N=6) taking photographs with the following instruction: "Show us what State University means to you" (Perka *et al.*, 1992:7). The study compared the environmental assessments of the participants.

Participants were given cameras and instructions and participated in a follow-up interview with one of the researchers. Results were the "categorization of photographs according to two perspectives: the content of the photographs and the significance or meaning of the photograph as interpreted by the participant" (Perka *et al.*, 1992:10). The researchers believed that their qualitative studies' use of respondent-generated photographs would provide rich descriptive information; provide a non-threatening venue to share potentially sensitive information and present findings that were not the typical quantitative studies approach to research.

The African-American participants' photographs reflected frustration and personal struggles with such photos as "a stack of unpaid bills that could not be returned to the bookstore, an empty refrigerator and a campus bus that often arrived late" with the student stating, "I had my camera with me, anytime something frustrating happened, I took a picture of it" (Perka *et al.*, 1992:13).

The researchers believed they were "able to tap into the complexities of the person-environment interaction" (Perka *et al.*, 1992:15). Limitations of the study included lack of flash attachments on cameras, resulting in poor quality pictures taken inside. Although the approach was time-intensive the researchers recommend incorporating photographic methods in research.

The importance of content and significance in participant-produced photographs were important to the study because they provided insight into participants' perspectives of their environments. The rapport developed between the researchers and participants was significant in the candor expressed in the reflections and interviews as was in the researcher's study.

3.4.4.2 First year college students' perception study

This study was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, researchers prompted participants to use disposable cameras in providing photographs that represented participants' perspectives of their environments at college. The person-environment interaction provided symbolic meaning to the symbols participants chose to represent their perspectives. Secondly, individual and small group photo-elicitation interviews were incorporated to discuss participants' photographs.

Douglas (1999) designed a study utilizing photography and photo-elicitation techniques to gather information from African American first-year students' impressions of a predominately White public university environment and explore the meaning of their perceptions. Participants (N=10) generated data by taking photographs with disposable cameras. Participants were told to "Take pictures that will illustrate your impressions of Willsfield University or that will help you to describe your impressions" (Douglas, 1999:419). They were instructed to record their reflections, also referred to as reflexive photographs, in notebooks provided. Participants were prompted to arrange the photographs in the album as to how they would like to discuss them in the photo-elicitation interview.

Each participant met with the researcher and completed a background questionnaire. After participants completed taking photographs and the film was developed, they met with the researcher again for a semi-structured photo-elicitation interview to further explore the meaning of their perceptions and factors that may have influenced their perceptions.

The open-ended statement technique eliciting a response to participant-produced photographs was similar to this study. This format provided a venue for students to respond openly without feeling confined to a structured question format and served as a starting point in the photo-elicitation interview with the researcher. As a result, the themes

regarding students' perceptions of campus (visual and size), being Black on campus, influence of Greek-letter organisations, and prevalence of voluntary racial and ethnic separation on campus may help to advance policies and practices to enhance the quality of life on campus.

In addition, participants were given a set of their photographs and were requested to place them in an album in a way that they would like to present them during the photo-elicitation interview. In a similar approach, the researcher's study prompted students to attach their photographs to Reflection Worksheets and Delphi rank their top five photographs.

3.4.4.3 Re-entry college student study

The re-entry study was the impetus to the development of the research methodology for this study. Firstly, Polaroid cameras were used for participant-produced photographs of their work, home and school environments. Secondly, participants were prompted to reflect and describe their photographs through open-ended questions that "looked" at both their perceptions and family perceptions of photographs. Thirdly, photo-elicitation interviews were incorporated to future explore the content and meaning of participant-produced photographs.

Blinn and Harrist (1991) utilized two visual strategies, native instant photography and photo-elicitation interviews, in their work with re-entry college women (N=27) who were experiencing role conflicts being a spouse and mother returning to college after being gone numerous years. The purpose of the study was to analyze the content of photographs that documented their lives as work, home and school environments. Native photography, also referred to as photographic phenomenology, was utilized because it involved study participants taking their own visual images which would be used as data. Photographs taken would show participants' own unique perceptual orientation. (Ziller & Smith, 1977). Polaroid cameras were chosen providing participants immediate feedback to reflect upon as they wrote about each picture that used open-ended questions on worksheets. The open-ended questions included: "When I look at this picture I feel...; When my family members look at this picture they think...; The title I would give this picture is...; and I would give it this title because..." (Blinn & Harrist, 1991:190).

Photo-elicitation involved participants discussing their photographs in interviews with the researcher. Collier (1967) describes the process as an opportunity for the interviewer to ask clarifying questions and gain additional information about the photograph. The process can also assist in building rapport and trust between researcher and participant.

Re-entry studies generally involve surveys and have not included photographic methods in data gathering. The authors believed the combination of native photography and photo-elicitation complemented each other by providing richer and more intimate findings that would have been difficult to obtain using other methods of data gathering. The photographs also assisted in creating rapport.

The researchers believed that their qualitative studies' use of respondent-generated photographs would provide rich descriptive information; provide a non-threatening venue to share potentially sensitive information and present findings that were not the typical quantitative studies approach to research to determine thematic content analysis initially categorized according to the location each was taken.

The written comments that accompanied each photograph gave additional data which the researchers utilized to further understand what participants were saying. The following quote from a participant illustrates the guilt felt over not being able to fulfill her responsibilities as housekeeper and cook. One woman's picture is of her husband doing laundry "New Jobs" and wrote: "I am proud of my husband. It looks like there is going to be more of this in the future, unfortunately, since I have decided to go back to school, John has had to take on some new jobs so that I can have more time" (Blinn & Harrist, 1991:183).

The researcher's study utilized the same methodology of incorporating Polaroid photography and photo-elicitation interviews in gathering data. Polaroid cameras provided immediate feedback for student reflection and were instrumental in clarifying student responses during the interviews. The open-ended statement worksheets prompted students to reflect on the photographs they produced.

Blinn and Harrist's (1991) North American study on re-entry college student perspectives documenting their home, work and school lives that most closely patterns the design of this study. Polaroid cameras, reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews are

common strategies. In addition, the perspective of students' experiences provides the reader with a more personal, intimate and meaningful look at their lives and the impact returning to college had on them and their families.

In summary, there are nuances with each study that do not exactly match the intent, techniques and academic discipline of this research project; however, some similar practices are evident. These include: (1) the use of photography in depicting participants' environments; (2) the use of instamatic and Polaroid cameras for either participant-produced photographs or researcher produced photographs with guidance from participants on what to take photographs of; and (3) the use of photo-elicitation interviews with participants to gain further clarification of the photographs.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a brief historical overview of visual anthropology and visual sociology, both sub-disciplines of their parent disciplines anthropology and sociology. The terminology, advantages and disadvantages of using photo-elicitation methodology were discussed. Selected international studies from South Africa, Holland, United Kingdom and North America that incorporated similar methodology were presented and compared to the researcher's study.

The next chapter explores the role of photography and status of visual imagery in higher education and social work practice education will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN SHAPING THE STATUS OF VISUAL IMAGERY IN THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION, HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to meet the third objective of this study which is to provide an overview of the role photography has played in shaping the status of visual imagery in the social work profession, higher education and social work practice education. Firstly, the historical relationship early social photographers had in shaping public awareness of social and economic justice issues will be discussed. Then, contemporary photographic initiatives that advance social and economic justice awareness will be presented. Lastly, the status of visual imagery in higher education and social work practice education will be presented.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE PHOTOGRAPHY HAS PLAYED IN SHAPING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ISSUES

The relationship between social work and photography is not new; in fact it can be traced to the early twentieth century when professional leaders used the new technology of cameras, discovered in 1839, to capture, document and express perceptions about the world (Szto & Furman, 2005). This section will present a historical overview of social photographers who advocated for social and economic justice using visual imagery methods as their communication tool. By producing compelling photographs and personal narratives these social photographers used “visual voices” to tell the stories of disadvantaged and oppressed children and adults.

4.2.1 Early 20th century social photographers

“Social photographers” Paul Kellogg, Jacob Riis, Dorothea Lang, Lewis Hine and Roy Stryker, better known as photographers rather than social workers, used photography to champion the causes of the working poor by looking at their living and working conditions in urban and rural America (Huff, 1998; Stanczak, 2004).

Huff (1998) provides a rich historical overview and contributions made by social photographers from the early twentieth century. Jacob Riis (1849-1914) was both a reformer and photographer as he illustrated the squalid living conditions in the slums of New York City during the late 1880's (Seixas, 1987). Riis wrote seven books and countless articles that he shared through lectures using lantern slides to illustrate the need for social reform (Huff, 1998).

Riis' highly acclaimed book, *How the Other Half Lives*, provides readers with lasting images of people he photographed (Davis, 2002-2003). After practicing photography for ten years Riis devoted his time to reform activities. However, his images live on in the Riis collection, located in New York City, of photographs that define his work in the settlement houses.

Another historical figure discussed by Huff (1998) is Lewis Hine. Lewis Hine, (1874-1940) as a "sociological photographer," was a pioneer of visual social science who had a life long collaboration with social workers such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and Lillian Wald. By combining captions and narratives with his images he advanced social and economic justice by exposing the terrible factory conditions children were exposed to in industrial cities. As a result of Hine's public exposure and documentation of factory conditions between 1908-1921, he was able to affect social change which resulted in the passage of child labor legislation to protect children (Szto & Furman, 2005; Stanczak, 2004; Seixas, 1987).

The National Child Labor Committee Collection (NCLC) <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/207-b.html> of Lewis Hines' work provides photographs and captions of "reform movements, labor, children, working class families, education, public health, urban and rural housing conditions, industrial and agricultural sites and aspects of urban and rural life". Hine's nearly 5,000 photographs with captions are in the following subject areas: agricultural, canneries, coal mines, glass factories, mills, street trades, tenement homework, children in West Virginia (United States), and miscellaneous child labor. The photograph captions provide a description of the photograph and often includes ages and details of the individual(s) work.

Equally important is Roy Stryker (1893-1975) who worked for the Farm Resettlement Administration as a team leader for an experimental program designed to help small

farmers in the 1930's. Stryker believed that incorporating images and script into his work would give the public an understanding of the economic and cultural context of rural American life. The images and social commentary his team assembled became important tools for social justice advocates during the middle and late 1930s (Stanczak, 2004; Huff, 1998).

Another pioneer, Dorothea Lange (1895-1965) was raised by her mother who was a social worker in New York City. Growing up in New York City, Dorothea saw many people that were poor and homeless that may have impacted her understanding of the people she would later photograph (Cerkowicz, 2006). As a Farm Resettlement Administration photographer her interests in advocacy and reform were similar to Riis and Hine. Lange documented rural social problems for the California Relief Agency illustrating the darker side of the human condition (O'Neal, 1976; Hurley, 1972). Her commitment was documenting the lives of dispossessed people such as migrant workers, the Japanese American internment camps during World War II and poor people in Africa, Asia and South America (Hurley, 1972; Huff, 1998).

Huff (1998) identifies Paul Kellogg (1879-1958) as a trained social worker who was also the editor of social work's first journal, *Charities*, which later was named *Survey*. Kellogg is probably best known for his documentation of Pittsburgh's working people using photographs and written reports. Kellogg created *Survey Graphic*, a reform magazine that used more art and images than did *Survey*.

Kellogg's images and essays did not sensationalize issues of the time such as unemployment, prohibition and child welfare but rather he used his understanding of images and artists to give life and dimension to the problems and events confronting the social work profession (Huff, 1998). "Using documentary writing and photography, the editors, writers, and artists of *Survey Graphic* presented a portrait of America that demonstrated their faith in social planning, their commitment to public education, and their interest in the human variety that made up the nation. These commitments are evident in the stories they published and in the photographs they selected to accompany them" (Davis, 2001; Seixas, 1987).

This section provided a historical overview of the early beginnings of photography that social photographers used beginning in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Their work

informed the public of social and economic justice challenges of the working and living environments of rural and urban communities. All these social photographers used a “visual voice” incorporating photography, captions and personal stories to document and influence public perceptions and public policy.

The next section will present a book, organizations, and websites that are actively using photography and personal stories to inform the public about the lives of vulnerable populations. These initiatives use cameras to tell their stories in much the same way the pioneering social photographers did.

4.3 CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHIC INITIATIVES

Globally speaking, social workers work with disenfranchised clients whose personal life stories go undocumented and unnoticed by the general public much in the same way they did in the early twentieth century. Despite the rich legacy of early social photographers who advocated for social and economic justice, social work education and the profession have done little to educate students about the power of visual imagery and personal narrative techniques that have sent such powerful messages in the past (Altman, 2000; Huff, 1998).

The following book, organizations, and websites are examples of contemporary initiatives to inform and educate the public of social and economic justice challenges.

4.3.1 Book

4.3.1.1 How the Other Half Worships: Book

This book was chosen by the researcher because it reveals and explores unseen impoverished worship environments of people in a variety of communities that are often disregarded by the general public. For the past thirty years Camilo Jose Vergara has used photography to document these worship sites in poor neighborhoods throughout North America that would go unnoticed by outsiders. Vergara’s book portrays how the other half worships and was inspired by the work of one of North America’s social photographers, Jacob Riis’ book, *How the Other Half Lives*, written in 1890 about tenement life in Manhattan’s Lower East side.

Vegara's photographs are of churches located in poor communities in such unlikely places as former car dealerships, restaurants and furniture stores. Despite these storefront churches whose pastors have little or no pastoral job training, Vegara's attention is on the devastating communities that surround them.

Vegara's research reflects an effort to inform the public that regardless of the physical environment of the building or neighborhood, congregations that reflect a variety of religions appear to be thriving. Vegara's hope is that additional research will continue regarding the significance of churches in communities that are poor and often abandoned (Zoll, 2006).

How the *Other Half Worships* is another example of an effort to inform the public about the practice of religion in unlikely neighborhoods and venues through the use of photography. Vegara's use of photography and personal descriptions of circumstances surrounding worship sites tells a compelling story that would most likely be overlooked if it were not for his use of visual imagery and personal accounting of experiences.

4.3.2 Organizations

4.3.2.1 Bread and Roses: Organization

Bread and Roses is an example of one national organization that has incorporated photography and personal narratives to tell the stories of their working, immigrant members (www.bread-and-roses.com/). Founded in 1979, Bread and Roses is the cultural not-for-profit arm of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) of hospital workers, Local 1199, located in New York City.

One of its projects, called *Unseen America*, gives working immigrants cameras to document important images in their working and personal environments. With the assistance of professional writers and photographers, participants in *Unseen America* learn to tell their own unique personal and working life stories from their perspectives. *Unseen America* recognizes and honors the lives of ordinary people who make up the fabric of society. Examples of the photographs and narratives of *Unseen America* include one migrant homecare worker who photographed chairs because she rarely got to sit down while at work and a homecare aid photographed her 25 year-old son getting a haircut because her work kept her from seeing him get his first haircut when he was a child

(Haughney, 2002). The photographs provide viewers a personal first-hand look at the lives of ordinary, hard working people whose stories would not resonate with words alone.

Because these working and personal stories typically draw from the human experience and condition they can be filled with a variety of emotions and may reveal beliefs, hopes, dreams and despair (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Stories are often shared when people gather at a workplace, family reunion, coffee shop, classroom or in a more intimate setting such as a parent sharing a goodnight story with a child. When photography is added to stories, a “visual voice” emerges that has the capability of enhancing richness, meaning and significance to the images being shared and will most likely stay longer within one’s memory.

Unseen America creates social awareness of immigrants whose lives are often misunderstood by sharing their photography and personal stories with the public. By using visual imagery, workers are able to bring the public’s attention to individual and community needs such as affordable housing and health care.

4.3.3 Organization/website

4.3.3.1 The National Association of Social Workers

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has 150,000 members making it the largest professional social work organization in the world (<http://www.socialworkers.org>). Recently, NASW launched a national public relations campaign to help expand the public’s perception of what social workers do and highlight the many practice areas of the profession. The website features articles, stories and resource links. In addition, messages have been placed on billboards, radio, magazines and newspapers reaching over seven million people. The site explains the uniqueness of the profession and explains how social workers assist people to function the best they can in their environments. Working with clients “in their environments” differentiates the profession from other helping professions (www.helpstartshere.org).

This robust website incorporates a compelling combination of real life stories from professional social workers and clients in the following areas: Kids and Families, Mind and Spirit, Health and Wellness and Seniors and Aging to creatively illustrate the depth

and breath of the profession. In addition to information on careers it also provides information on education, income, licensure and other facts about the profession.

4.3.3.2 Photovoice: Website

Wang and Burris, public health educators and researchers, have incorporated photography and reflection as qualitative methodology tools to research community needs since 1997. Their project, Photovoice, blends a grassroots approach to photography and social action using participatory action research methodology. Teaching people who have limited access to policymakers communicate, record and reflect their communities' strengths and problems to bring about social action and change is the goal of Photovoice (www.photovoice.com; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

According to this website, Photovoice is described as a process by which participants receive training in operating disposable and digital cameras. Participants learn how to analyze pictures they have taken by selecting photographs that accurately reflect their communities' strengths and concerns; tell stories about their photographs using a process called contextualizing and to identify issues, themes and develop theories that are grounded in data that have been systematically gathered and analyzed in a collective discussion. The expertise participants develop empowers them in promoting how professionals, researchers and specialists view their communities that can act as potential catalysts for social action and change.

The storytelling aspect of Photovoice used the acronym SHOWED in questions upon which participants reflected. They include: What do you see here? What's really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does the problem/condition/strength exist? How could this image educate the community/policy makers/ and What can we do about it (the problem/conditions/strengths)? The process helps community participants to develop potential solutions and areas of strength. Presentations, exhibits, books, videos, CDROM and the Internet are all venues used to increase awareness (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001; Wang & Pies, 2004).

Research projects that incorporate Photovoice methodology that are referenced on the website www.photovoice.com include global projects on a variety of issues such as: a youth against violence project in Michigan; a critical thinking and problem solving skills

project with underserved children in California; psychosocial outcomes of chronic pain with older Americans in Michigan; a Black youth AIDS project in Cape Town; African American cancer survivors in North Carolina; women's reproductive health and development in China and people with mental illness educating providers in Connecticut. All the projects actively involve participants photographing and writing about their perceived communities' strengths and concerns that they can share with the public and authorities regarding their particular issues.

The book, organizations and website examples illustrate a few creative initiatives that incorporate visual imagery techniques and narrative story telling from personal perspectives. The combination of photography and written words tell compelling stories of worship in poor communities, working immigrants, professional social workers and public health educators.

The next section will discuss the status of visual imagery in higher education and, more specifically, social work practice education.

4.4 THE STATUS OF VISUAL IMAGERY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In this section visual imagery expectations of contemporary students in higher education will be discussed. Educator response to visual imagery in the classroom and the status of visual imagery in social work education will be presented. Then, photography as a vehicle for communication in the classroom and examples of the use of visual imagery in field work will be presented.

4.4.1 Higher education

We live in a multi-media rich environment filled with images that send messages through all of our five senses; visual, sight, hearing, taste and tactile. We are virtually bombarded with noise, color, high tech and interactive media on a regular basis that has impacted education on all levels and has students becoming bored by traditional methods of teaching (Howard, Ellis & Rasmussen, 2004).

Contemporary students view knowledge and derive meaning very differently from their instructors (Schroeder, 1993). Today's college and university students have grown up watching television and are highly oriented to visual learning; however, "the classroom is

still mostly an aural and anachronistic instructional environment, unsuited to the nature and needs of students raised in an electronic environment and bombarded almost from birth by the bright, rapid-paced images of a multimedia culture in which pictures, not print, carry the message of culture” (Considine & Haley, 1999:34). As a result, educators are being challenged to revise their teaching practices to better meet the needs and demands of current student learners and to prepare graduates to meet the demands and expectations of employers.

Research shows that “learners who hear, see and interact with subject matter not only remember what they learn better, they also understand the underlying principles” (Considine & Haley, 1999:42). This multimedia approach encourages students to ask questions, access and analyze information, construct new meanings and, then, communicate effectively.

Educators are not accustomed to using high tech interactive technology that students are familiar with and expecting to experience in the classroom. This multimedia technology impacts students’ everyday lives and has researchers studying what influence these technologies have on student learning; however, studies on the impact of contemporary sensory rich media in higher education are limited (Howard *et al.*, 2004). It appears educators will continue to search for teaching tools in a variety of multimedia modalities that engage students as active participants in the teaching and learning environment.

4.4.2 Social work practice education

Despite social works early history of photography and visual imagery, the profession has paid little attention to visual learning in social work education programs. As a result, many programs are struggling to keep up with the pace and impact multimedia and technology has on student learning. Computer technology in the classroom and distance-education programs tend to be the primary instructional methods related to visual imagery that social work education programs have implemented in their curriculums.

Other technology teaching tools that look promising for social work education include: the World Wide Web; interactive video; presentation software such as Powerpoint, and conceptual software that facilitates mind mapping with shapes and digital imagery (Altman, 2000).

Szto and Furman (2005:6), two social work educators, support the use of poetry and photography in social research and contend photography has a more connected history with social research than poetry or other expressive arts. Szto is an advocate for using photography when words alone are not appropriate and cannot convey the message, believes “ photography is a one on one correspondence with the world, it is reality.”

Szto describes the use of photography in a variety of ways using the following words and phrases as examples: “photography is writing with light, documents, is more accurate than statistics, a tool, validates how things are, is convincing, photographs are the eyes with a memory, resonates with the human spirit more than numbers and reaches a wider audience” (Szto & Furman, 2005:8). Szto and Furman (2005:25,26) believe photography and poetry are valid means of collecting, organising and interpreting data and have potential for qualitative social work research providing ways to know and better understand and explain our social world.

This researcher is confident that the use of photography, especially in practice education coursework, has implications for many aspects of what social workers do in the profession. Working with vulnerable populations in field work either at a micro, mezzo or macro level provides students an opportunity to visually explore real life social and economic issues in areas of case work, group work, community work, social work administration and research. By conceptualizing these issues through the use of photography students and faculty can help the general public visually “picture” injustices. In doing so, the general public will be more informed and, as a result, may be more inclined to get involved in helping alleviate social and economic hardships clients face on a daily basis.

Through the use of photography, clients could be taught to use this medium as a technique to advocate for themselves by informing social workers and other professionals of their unmet needs. A few examples of issues clients might examine include unsafe housing, unemployment, sanitation concerns, domestic violence, and abuse and neglect issues. Clients’ active participation in the use of photography could help empower them to illustrate their needs and concerns that might be overlooked using traditional methods of documentation and reporting.

Vulnerable clients and communities face many challenges. However, they also have strengths and demonstrate remarkable resiliency in how they manage their lives and living environments that all too often do not receive attention. By actively engaging clients in the decision making process and shifting the focus from clients' weakness to identifying strengths helps preserve human dignity and respect. The use of visual imagery can help clients identify their strengths by using photography to capture images so others can gain a better comprehension of their inspiration, hope, encouragement, motivation and coping abilities.

The next section will discuss the use of photography in the classroom. Next, photography as a teaching tool with North American and South African social work students during field work will be presented. Lastly, examples of students' social artifacts and discussion of the use of visual imagery instructional activities in social work education will be presented.

4.4.3 Photography as a vehicle for communication in the classroom

Communicating with images can be a very powerful tool in how people think and expand how they might think about a subject. Photography today is more accessible, affordable and user friendly than ever before. America, alone, reports that in 1993, 17.2 billion photographs being taken compared to 8.9 billion in 1977 and 3.9 billion in 1967 (Cronin, 1998:69,70) making affordability and accessibility of using cameras in the classroom more achievable now more than ever.

Eastman Kodak (www.kodak.com) is an example of a company committed to teaching the public that in today's world pictures are as important as words and numbers. Kodak is eager to assist teachers and students to learn how to use pictures to enrich the learning process so students can succeed in an increasingly complex world.

Eastman Kodak's website features numerous education lesson plans and other creative examples of instructional activities that combine photography and writing activities. One activity example is a project, called "Old Snapshots," required students to look at old photographs and write in the "voice" of the person pictured, thus revealing personality, situation and setting. Instructor observations of the assignment: *"Student comments and actions reflected increased insight as they began to see photography as rhetoric, as*

language, and to see the analogies between photographic and verbal expression. That understanding expanded their concept of literary and encouraged them to explore new possibilities in their writing” (Eastman Kodak, 1994-2001, Plan 034). This reflection illustrates how the combined use of photography and reflective writing can enhance comprehension, insight and understanding.

Polaroid Corporation (www.polaroideducationprogram.com) is another corporation that supports the use of cameras in the classroom. Polaroid publishes an educational program called **Six Modes of Visual Learning in the Classroom** (2001). The program provides a framework for using cameras to teach imagery in the classroom to help students understand and communicate with imagery. Crockett’s framework (2001:6.7) outlines six modes of visual learning using photography in the classroom which follows. In addition, how Crockett’s framework applies to this study is provided.

1. Exploring – The camera serves as a tool to observe, study, identify and learn about our world. In this study, students explored their field agencies, clients and personal environments with the camera.
2. Recording – Using the camera to document our experiences helps in preserving our experiences. In this study, students recorded their photographed social artifacts, scenes and places at their agency, outside the agency and of personal items through written reflections.
3. Expressing – The camera can act as a visual voice giving new dimensions to our thoughts and emotions. In this study, students drew upon metaphoric and symbolic images to express their thoughts, feelings and abstract concepts of their field work.
4. Communicating – Sharing visual information is an effective way to inform others. In this study, students “learned to look” and “looked to learn” by sharing their choices of social artifacts that represented their experiences and perceptions.
5. Motivating – Images can influence others by changing perceptions, creating new viewpoints or advocating for change. In this study, students’ photographs can inform educators about curriculum issues, field work challenges and help educate the public about the profession and social and economic issues.

6. Imaging – Photography can make new connections in the way we approach our world. In this study, students learned new visual imagery methods to assist them in problem-solving and critically reflecting on their field work experiences.

The researcher believes social work education could benefit from incorporating photography and reflective writing into assignments on a micro, mezzo or macro level. Learning to apply imagery as a means of communication could empower students to produce images that represent the professional role of social workers, dispel myths about the profession and promote social and economic justice.

A person does not need to be a professional photographer to create photographs that could impact viewers' opinions about a topic or situation. This study is an attempt to illustrate the possibilities of integrating student writing and visual communication in field work.

4.4.4 Examples of photography and reflective writing

This researcher's initial work, called Snapshots (2000-2003), described in Chapter One, incorporated photography and reflective writing with North American and South African social work students during their field work experiences. The successful application of Snapshots served as the impetus for this study because it was able to demonstrate students' abilities to choose and reflect upon social artifacts. The photographed artifacts provided meaningful and insightful information from students' perspectives regarding their field experiences. The following Snapshot examples illustrate North American and South African students' social artifacts and writing.

4.4.4.1 North America social artifact examples

- The first artifact example is a bottle of **nail polish** from an emergency shelter that communicates one client's desire to feel pretty and feminine. Nail polish is an inexpensive commodity that she can take pleasure from despite her traumatic experience. With social service budgets being cut, something as simple and inexpensive as nail polish can be of special significance to the woman's story, to the staff that makes a difference in her life and in enlightening the community about domestic violence and emergency shelters. A bottle of nail polish does not tell the

whole story; however, adding descriptive words and stories from the individual's perspective can provide new and powerful meaning to the photographed artifact.

- A second artifact example is **glue and colored construction paper** from an adoption agency that represents the diversity in clientele served. These artifacts also represent the many times clients' lives have been disrupted and as a social worker it was her desire to help clients put these pieces back together, adding new color to their lives.
- A third artifact example is an **American flag** from a Latino Center that represents immigrants' journey to America in hopes of finding the American Dream that will bring their family out of poverty. Sadly, many Latinos are recruited to work at factory jobs that have little advancement. Their lives often become vulnerable and the cycle of poverty, oppression and discrimination continues with little hope that their American Dream will ever become a reality.

4.4.4.2 South Africa social artifact examples

- The first artifact example is a slice of **bread** with no butter, jam, meat or fish representing a student's own hunger with little financial resources to adequately provide her with nutritious meals. The lack of financial resources and subsequent nutritious food causes stress and anxiety in much the same way it does for the clients, with whom the student works.
- The second artifact example is a **bus token** that represents the use of public transportation as the means of travel to and from the agency as well as clients' homes which is also a financial strain. In 2000 when this project was completed, taxi and bus "wars" over territory served in the Cape Town area presented major safety threats for anyone riding public transportation. Numerous people were killed during this time that made for a hostile, fearful commute to the agency. As a result, this student was unable to keep our initial appointment, staying home because of her fear due to the unsafe situation.
- The third artifact is a **university textbook** that reflects a student's appreciation for the knowledge she has gained in the social work program, but also signifies her poverty. Because the student is unable to afford books for coursework she must rely on the school library having the required books. Unfortunately, while textbooks are on

reserve at the library, pages are often torn out or are missing. The stealing of books from the library is also an on going issue that effects the completion of reading assignments and preparedness for class.

The significance of the Snapshots examples was important because it provided the researcher opportunity prior to the study to experiment with the process of photography and reflection with students during their field work in two different countries. The examples of social artifacts; a bottle of nail polish, an American flag, a slice of bread, bus tokens and university textbook visually illustrate students' abilities to communicate the joys and frustrations of their field work experiences.

Students' chosen social artifacts often represent metaphorical expressions and visual images that can carry powerful messages illustrating their perceptions that could be misinterpreted or overlooked. It seems evident that the photograph of the social artifact, alone, is not as powerful as the photograph with words. An important difference in North American and South African examples was North American students tended to choose social artifacts that gave a perspective of their clients' struggles, while South African students chose social artifacts that reflected their own personal struggles and challenges; both tell a compelling story that words, alone, cannot express.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the power photography and reflection can have in telling the challenging stories vulnerable populations struggle with in their environments, the marketing efforts in educating the public about practice areas of the profession and the uniqueness of the profession and the use of visual imagery in higher education and social work practice education.

The next chapter will present the qualitative research design that guided this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the qualitative research design and methods that guided this study. The three conceptual frameworks; reflexive photo-elicitation interviews, reflective writing and participant-produced photographs provided the means for data collection and analysis. In this study, social work students from one university in South Africa produced photographs and reflective writing that illustrated their unique perceptual comprehensions of their field work capstone experiences. This chapter discusses the design of this study in terms of the following: literature review; research setting; research topic; research design; population and sample; procedures; data collection; data presentation and analysis; ethical considerations and limitations.

5.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In addition to the literature review in anthropology, sociology and social work education the researcher used three years of prior experience working with university students in the United States and South Africa using similar methodology techniques of data collection to help create the research design for this study. The researcher presented a portion of these previously collected photographs and reflections in a workshop session at the annual Association of Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) conference in Denver, Colorado, in 2002. BPD is an “association of BSW program administrators, faculty, field directors and others dedicated to the promotion of excellence in baccalaureate social work education” (www.bpdonline.org). The presentation was well received providing the researcher with valuable feedback and interest from educators and social work students in attendance.

The same photographic methodology is also published in *Helping Professions Journal: A Critical Thinking and Reflection Guide* that this researcher co-authored (Orton & Jacobs, 2004). The published activity instructs students to use photography and reflective writing as tools to communicate their perspectives of field work experiences that could

demonstrate new patterns of thinking to others, make new connections and tell stories about professional practice from students' points of view (Orton & Jacobs, 2004).

In addition to traditional literature review searches, the researcher posted notices on the BPD list serve requesting research and references on the subject of capstone experiences, photography and reflective writing. Responses reflected standard course assignments such as journaling, report writing and community surveys. More telling were the numerous responses from the list serve members stating an interest in locating new learning assignments that could be assigned to students during their field work that would elicit feedback on their capstone experiences.

5.3 RESEARCH SETTING

Stellenbosch University is an internationally recognized predominately Afrikaans university in South Africa. Stellenbosch is a university town with a population of about 90,000, excluding students. Located 50 kilometres from Cape Town, the town is set on the banks of a river in the wine-growing region and is encircled by majestic mountains (www.sun.ac.za).

A century-long tradition of quality teaching and research has ensured Stellenbosch University's place among the finest academic institutions in Africa. The aim of the academic program in social work at Stellenbosch University is "to enable students to deal with the tasks, needs and problems arising from the lives of other people; to empower clients from a development perspective; and to ensure that justice is served" (www.sun.ac.za/soc_work).

5.4 RESEARCH TOPIC

This research study explored social work students' perspectives of their capstone field work experiences. The intent of this research study was to determine the meaning and significance of social artifacts students selected, photographed and reflected upon during these field work experiences and to determine the extent to which this approach could be a viable field teaching tool for use in any social work program in United States, South Africa or otherwise. The literature search in social work education, specifically field education, did not produce much relevant information that explored student perspectives

of learning during field work experiences utilizing non-traditional methods of reflection and evaluation.

The use of photography in this study will be used to provide a new and creative venue for participants to see their worlds in new and different ways which words can not always describe. Reflective writing helps students give deeper thought to the significance of their photographed social artifacts and photo-elicitation interviewing provides students an opportunity to further clarify their artifacts. By doing so, students create a “visual voice” to share their own unique experiences in field that only they can tell.

5.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2,3) qualitative research in the human disciplines has a long and distinguished history dating back to the 1920's and 1930's. In qualitative research studies there is no one single methodology, rather, there are many methods utilized to reflect in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (1994:2-3). Qualitative research methods assume that quantitative research methodologies cannot study the subjective dimensions of the human experience because it is in constant flux. Emphasis in qualitative research studies focus on describing, comprehending and interpreting the dynamic, complex and subjective meaning of events experienced by individuals and groups (Halmi, 1996:364,365).

The researcher incorporated a multi-method combination of techniques using reflexive participant-produced photography, photo-elicitation interviewing and reflective writing to collect data from the participants (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Collier & Collier, 1986; Collier Jr., 1967; Harper, 1998, 2002; Clark-Ibanez, 2004). Reflexive produced photography, also referred to as photographic phenomenology, is a process that requires participants to produce their own photographs. Photographs reviewed by the participant and researcher in individual interviews are referred to as photo elicitation-interviews. The reflexive photo-elicitation interview provides participants the opportunity to discuss and further clarify their photographs and written reflections.

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because of the goodness of fit between qualitative methodology and the goal and intent of the capstone field work experience, namely, examining the person and environment in a way that leads to

understanding and problem solving. The research capitalizes on this interface. This design enhances both the field and theory development of naturalistic inquiry and interpretative approach to its subject matter (Taylor, 1977; Halimi, 1996). The inductive process will utilize generated categories and themes that emerge through analysis of data collected.

Qualitative studies usually have a small number of participants who are purposefully selected which was true of the study (N=8). According to McRoy (1995:209,210): “Qualitative research uses detailed descriptions from the perspective of the research participants themselves as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study and contends that field settings and social service agencies provide unique opportunities for the qualitative process of social processes.” Miles and Huberman (1984:37) describe the process of qualitative research comparable to the investigative process similar to detective work.

This study utilizes a photo-elicitation approach to theory building. Most published photo-elicitation research uses photographs generated by the researcher to provoke a response, memory and discussion from interviewees (Harper, 1984; Collier, 1979; Banks, 2001). While first described by Collier in 1967 as a variation on open-ended interviewing, the photo-elicitation technique redefines the relationship between the researcher and interviewee. In this format the researcher becomes a listener while the interviewee tells the story of the images. However, Harper (1994) points out that often the researcher/photographer knows little about the photographs taken or the cultural context the image portrays.

Photo-elicitation methodology, in this study, required participants to be more intimately involved in the process of taking photographs. Participants in this study produced their own photographs of their social and physical environments rather than photographs produced by the researcher. Participant-produced photographs used in the photo-elicitation interviews provided clarification and interpretation through participant dialogue with the researcher. The researcher becomes a listener to the story participants tell using their photographs and written reflections.

This study prompted students to identify social artifacts that were significant to them in their social and physical environments that would provide data in analyzing the following questions:

- What Delphi ranking of importance do participants place on their social artifacts?
- What social artifacts do participants identify as significant to their capstone field work experiences?
- How do participants describe their chosen social artifacts?
- What significance and meaning do the social artifacts have in relation to participant education/training and field experience?
- What lessons do participants report they learn from their chosen social artifacts?
- What transferable skills are identified?

The researcher experimented (2000-2003) with a variety of techniques using the original collective montage method described in Chapter One and, as a result, introduced the idea of student generated photographs and worksheets that became the methodology for this study. The researcher concluded that the use of Polaroid and instamatic cameras and reflection worksheets prompting students to respond to open-ended questions photo-elicitation interviews was the most effective method to gather data.

Polaroid cameras are easy to use and produce instant photographs that can be reviewed and checked before students write their reflections. An important feature of using Polaroid cameras is that, unlike digital cameras, Polaroid images are virtually impossible to modify and, as a result, are “therefore easily accepted and unquestioned when submitted as photographic evidence” (Polaroid, 10/4/05).

Students were prompted from the beginning not to take pictures of people for reasons already discussed. As a result, all data collected have been of social artifacts. It was also decided to include personal interviews referred to photo-elicitation interviews with each participant to further explore and clarify participant written responses using student-produced photographs to guide the interview. Literature review in the areas of visual sociology, visual anthropology and reflective practice, field education in the United States and South Africa and photography were ongoing throughout the process.

5.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Eight senior social work students (N=8) from a total of sixteen seniors (N=16) at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, enrolled in their final field work experiences were requested to participate in the study. Social work faculty chose participants who would be representative of the department's ethnic student composition and selected social work practice settings that reflected typical placement sites. All eight students were female with the average age of 22. The total senior class was entirely female and predominately White. Seven of the participants in the study were White and one student was Coloured. All participants spoke Afrikaans and English. The students had the right to decline participation in the study. One student originally selected decided she could not commit the time to do the project so the faculty chose a different student to take her place.

The eight participating students were placed in non-government organizations (NGO) that were community-based child and family welfare agencies. The agencies were representative of field work settings the Department of Social Work utilizes in their practice education program. Five students were placed in agencies in the Stellenbosch vicinity and three were placed in surrounding communities as far away as Cape Town. All eight students completed the study and participated in the photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher during the allotted time frame.

5.7 PROCEDURES

Prior to the study being conducted, student and agency consent forms were completed as required by the university. Due to logistics, this researcher was assisted by a consultant affiliated with the Department, who sent this researcher's explanatory letters to participating agencies requesting their cooperation in the study. Each identified agency agreed to participate and returned the permission form to the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch. In addition, the consultant obtained student permission forms and arranged the itinerary for this researcher's agency visits (see Appendix B for student consent forms and Appendix C for agency consent forms).

Participants met as a group on campus with the researcher for approximately two hours prior to the beginning of the study. All eight students were in the final weeks of their year-long capstone field experiences which added to their knowledge and role in the agencies.

The intent of the meeting was to develop rapport with participants through ice-breaker activities and a general question and answer session regarding participation expectations. An introductory exercise using Polaroid cameras and activity worksheets was also conducted (see Appendix E for an example of a photo reflection worksheet). At that time students had the opportunity to practice using the Polaroid cameras, ask questions and receive additional instruction as needed on camera use.

Each participant was given a point and shoot Polaroid camera with built in automatic flash and color exposure film. A disposable camera with color exposure film and automatic flash was also provided. The disposable camera served as a backup to the photographs students took with the Polaroid cameras. Student participants were told that the quality or aesthetic value of the photograph was not as important as the information it conveyed. In addition, a packet of information on camera use and 20 reflection worksheets were provided each participant (see Appendix E for reflection worksheet). Contact information was also provided in the event students needed more film or had additional questions. Students understood there was no financial cost to participate in the study and that their participation was voluntary. Upon the completion of the study, the students were offered the Polaroid cameras and film. As this offer was made at the completion of the study, it did not constitute any inducement to participate.

Each student was asked to take a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 photographs using both the Polaroid and disposable cameras; in other words, two pictures of each social artifact. The number of photographs requested of participants reflected the researcher's prior experience using similar methodology. Polaroid cameras were selected to give students immediate feedback that they could reflect upon on their worksheets. Students were prompted not to take photographs of clients or staff members because of the potential of intrusiveness of the picture-taking process and because it forced each participant to not just "look" at their environment but to "see" how their environment and agency nuances influenced their experiences. Each worksheet had the prompt "do not include photographs of clients or staff" prominently written at the top of each page.

Participants were requested to do the following: (1) attach each Polaroid photograph to one of the Reflective Worksheets and respond to the opened-ended statements; (2) note the order photographs were taken on the worksheet and (3) identify the significance of

each photograph using the likert scale at the bottom of each worksheet. (A copy of the study assignment explanation is located in Appendix A.) Each participant was requested to participate in an individual photo-elicitation interview with the researcher at her agency following the completion of the assignment. During the interview each participant was requested to Delphi rank the top five photographs they thought were the most significant out of all their photographs. In addition, participants provided further clarification regarding their reflection worksheet responses.

The dates for the agency visits to collect the data and conduct the photo-elicitation interviews were arranged by the Department consultant prior to the researcher's arrival, as it was the final meeting with the group of participating students. Participants had approximately nine working days to complete the study. Although this was a limited time frame, there were advantages. Students had to consistently focus on getting the "right" photos quickly and meaningfully knowing that this was an international research project that the researcher had limited time to conduct.

5.8 DATA COLLECTION

The eight participants generated all of the data collected and analyzed in this study. The primary sources of data were: (1) the photographs themselves; (2) verbatim transcriptions of each individual semi-structured interview and (3) reflection worksheets. Each individual interview lasted between 45 to 90 minutes and took place at the students' field agencies. The interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. There was no indication there were any problems with cameras or the ability to take photographs.

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher had all disposable camera film processed with double prints. One set of photographs was kept for analysis and one set was given to each participant with a copy of individual accompanying worksheets at the group meeting.

The group met formally for approximately 90 minutes. The focus was on students sharing their photographs and written reflections with their peers. Although this session was tape recorded the sound quality was so poor that there is not an audible record of that discussion and it was not used in the final data analysis. At the conclusion of the meeting, the researcher decided to give each participant a Polaroid camera and film.

5.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Analyses of the data required self-reflection over a period of time. This passage of time allowed the researcher to become thoroughly absorbed and intimate with the data. This allowed the richness of students' stories regarding their capstone field work experiences to be developed and adequately presented.

The abstract and concrete concepts as well symbolic relationships and metaphors, found in the research data were examined for content, as well as location of domains where students took their photographs. General categories emerged as a result of this examination that later developed into significant themes that were imbedded in all the identified domains, adding validity and authenticity to the study.

Trustworthiness in the researcher's study included a combination of the following elements: triangulation, peer debriefing and thick description. According to Oktay (2002:782-784) triangulation of data gathering and analysis from multiple sources increases the validity of the data. This study utilized a combination of three approaches to data collection and analysis: participant-produced photographs, reflection worksheets and photo elicitation interviews. This combination of elements strengthened the study by providing multiple perspectives that were reviewed and analyzed. These elements included:

- Participant-produced photographs provided data that captured students' visual perspectives of their physical, social and personal environments.
- Peer debriefing was accomplished through discussions with colleagues who engage in qualitative research. Discussion with colleagues provided the researcher with feedback regarding analysis of the data as it related to the development of codes and themes.
- Thick descriptions and quotes from participants' reflections and photo-elicitation interviews verified participants' descriptions and interactions with their agencies, clients and personal perspectives of their physical and social environments.

All the data collected for this study were entered into a software computer program called QUALRUS. Photographs were scanned and transcribed worksheets and personal interviews were entered into the program for analysis purposes. Qualrus is "a qualitative

analysis program that uses an array of intelligent, computational strategies to assist with coding, analyzing, and applying qualitative data” (Qualrus, 2002:1). The comprehensive analytic tools assisted the researcher in identifying codes, categorizing, identifying relationships and refining data using a variety of features to manage multimedia sources.

A major advantage of using Qualrus from other qualitative software programs in analyzing data is that Qualrus uses intelligent strategies that can assist the researcher in identifying and analyzing codes either manually or automatically by the program. In addition, the program can produce summaries and graphical overviews of texts, pictures, videos and audio files. This process aids the researcher in seeing patterns developed through coding strategies that might be overlooked in other programs.

Chapter Six will present the domains in which photographs were taken and themes that emerged from coding and analysis of the data produced by the researcher with software assistance from QUALRUS. All 110 participant-produced photographs are presented as one data group and the 40 Delphi ranked artifacts are presented as a second data group. Participant-produced photographs with written and verbal transcriptions will be presented to exemplify: major themes; Delphi ranking of social artifacts; titles given to social artifacts; description of social artifacts; significance of social artifacts (written and likert scale) and lessons learned.

5.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics in research is discussed here within the context in which this study was conducted. In social work literature ethics in research is defined as “the requirement that data be collected and treated experimentally with careful attention to accuracy of measurement, fidelity to logic, and respect for the findings and rights of the respondents” (Dawson, Klass, Guy & Edgley, 1991:432). In the field of anthropology an applied anthropologist formulated the first formal statement on ethics in 1949. The Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association states that “anthropological researchers must do everything in their power to ensure that their research does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research or perform other professional duties” (Flueher-Lobban, 1998:197).

For this study, the researcher abided by the guidelines outlined in the definitions social work and anthropology assign to ethics in research. The following considerations were followed in this study.

- Participants who constituted the sample of this study were briefed about their rights as participants, particularly the right to withdraw from the study at any point.
- The researcher explained the purpose of the study to participants.
- The researcher assured participants that identities would not be disclosed in the presentation or discussion of findings. In addition, all participants would be referred to by number, for example P 1.
- Data collected (photographs, transcripts and worksheets) would be handled confidentially and secured in a safe place during and after the completion of the study.

In other words, the researcher followed the ethical considerations outlined above.

5.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are discussed to highlight some of the issues that the researcher encountered that might have affected the quality of the study. This study has the following limitations.

5.11.1 Sample limitations

One shortcoming was that the number of participants in this study was small (N=8) and all were from only one higher education institution in South Africa. However, the sample does represent half of the senior class of social work students (N=16) which the researcher considers significant. In addition, the sample was not random because participants were selected by faculty members of the Social Work Department according to criteria provided by the researcher. The criteria were discussed earlier, in section 5.6 titled “Population and Sample.”

The researcher conducted all the individual interviews at students’ field agencies. A majority of these agency settings did not have private meeting spaces available. Interruptions from co-workers and telephone rings were noticeable, as was traffic noise

and other distractions. The quality of the tape-recorded interviews, due to the unavoidable office and street noises, was also a concern.

The expenses of cameras, film and processing are factors that should be taken into consideration, especially if a large sample was used to replicate this study. The researcher took advantage of camera and film discounts that reduced the operating expenses of this study.

5.11.2 Instrument limitations

The conceptual framework for this study used a similar process of participant-produced photographs and for collecting data on worksheets as was created by Blinn and Harrist for their research on re-entry college women published in 1991. Their study contained three elements. One, participants took their own photographs using a Polaroid camera. Two, participants completed open-ended reflective worksheets and Three, participants participated in photo-elicitation interviews with the researchers. This was the only data collection process that the researcher was able to locate that used participant-produced Polaroid photography, written reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews. The worksheet used in this study was patterned after this singular example. Any other similar studies that were reviewed did not contain all three elements found in the Blinn and Harrist study.

Participants were requested to have their five Delphi ranked social artifacts gathered for a collective photograph collage. This component of the study's instructions became confusing to the students because not all the artifacts could be tangibly made available. For those artifacts, students were instructed to use their Polaroid photographs. As a result of some confusion and mixed understanding of these instructions, the researcher determined that the collective photograph did not contribute to the significance of the study so it was eliminated.

5.11.3 Procedural limitations

The researcher, who resides in the United States, traveled to South Africa to conduct the research in a period of two and a half weeks, which could be considered a possible limitation. This time period was interjected into the students' academic schedule and may

have been a distraction. A consultant assisted in coordinating the schedule and other details which proved to be invaluable, given the limited amount of time in the country. This relatively short time frame had its advantages in that it required students to consistently focus on getting what they considered to be the “right” photos, quickly, but meaningfully.

5.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the research design and methods that guided this study. The overall findings of the study are presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FIELD WORK CAPSTONE EXPERIENCES: OVERALL AND DELPHI FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of this study's findings of senior social work students' perceptions of their capstone field work experiences. The research design and methodology were discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 of the dissertation.

6.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

- To determine the significance and meaning participants placed on their chosen photographed social artifacts in relation to their education and field work.
- To identify lessons participants report they learned from their chosen photographed social artifact.
- To ascertain what transferable knowledge, values and skills are practiced during field work.

The findings will be presented in the following format. Firstly, the content and frequencies of the overall 110 photographed artifacts, scenes and places will be presented, followed by a discussion of the three domains; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal* where the photographs were taken and their photographed contents.

Lastly, the contents of the Delphi ranked photographs will be discussed in the three domains; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*.

6.3 DATA COLLECTION

The data collected for the empirical study consisted of the following:

- Participant-produced photographs
- Reflection worksheets

- Photo-elicitation interviews.

The data in essence tells the story of the participants in a narrative form that is supported by evidence from these three sources.

6.4 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

All eight participants who were involved in the study were female, senior social work students from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, completing the final weeks of their field work experiences in NGOS (Non Government Organizations). Seven of the participants were White and one participant was Coloured. The age range of participants was between 21 years old to 25 years old with the average age of participants being 23.

6.5 PARTICIPANT PRODUCED DATA

Each participant was requested to take a minimum of 10 photographs. Figure 6.1 shows the total number of participant produced photographs.

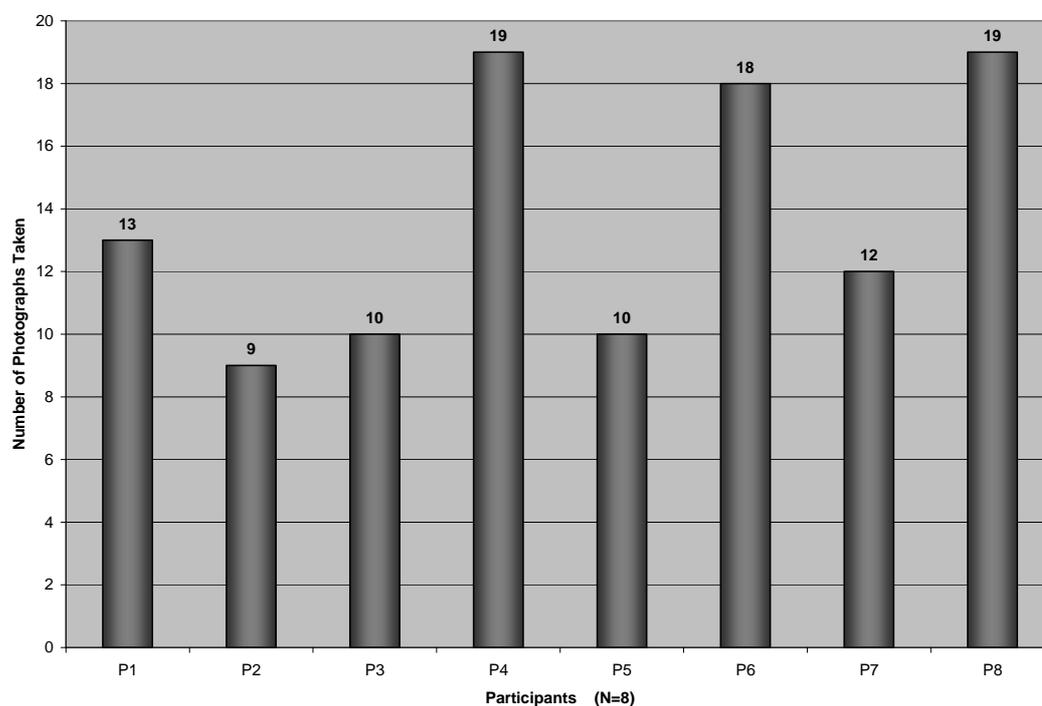


Figure 6.1: Participant produced photographs

Four participants took over 10 photographs each; two participants took 10 photographs and one participant took less than 10 photographs for a total of 110 photographs. All eight participants completed the accompanying reflection worksheets, participated in the photo-elicitation interview and attended the group debriefing meeting. All the data gathered is from student produced photographs, written reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews conducted with the researcher. Additional information gathered through interviews, but was not directly attached to a particular photograph, will be included if relevant.

The next section will discuss the overall findings of the study.

6.6 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Eight participants took a total of 110 photographs of artifacts, scenes and places they perceived to be significant to their field work experiences. It was decided to divide the photographs into three domains as they logically began to cluster from analysis of the photographed contents. Table 6.1 shows the three domains, content and frequency of the photographs; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*.

Table 6.1: Domains and content frequency

At The Agency	f	Outside The Agency	f	Personal	f
Wall posters	6	Client Home Settings	9	Diary planner	2
Client files	4	House (3)		Reading Glasses	2
Photocopy machine	4	Room (1)		Beer bottle	1
Telephone	4	Backyard (1)		Desk	1
Desk	3	Wooden Door (1)		CD Players	1
Buildings	3	Pig Farm (1)		Laptop Computer	1
Welfare org (2)		Outside Stairwell (1)		Backpack	1
Primary school (1)		Flats(apartments) (1)		Money	1
Bulletin (notice) board (3)	3	Playground Equipment	3	Sandwich	1
Agency car	2	Signs	3	Writing pen	1
Chair	2	South Africa Police (1)		Motorcycle	1
Pen	2	Wine farm(1)			
Coffee/tea refreshments	2	Intersection (1)			
Office	2	University transportation	3		
Map	2	Cars (2)			
Plant	2	Road rage scene (1)			
Room at agency	2	Washing clothes	2		
Lounge (1)		Washing bucket (1)			
Classroom (1)		Washing machine (1)			
Heater	1	Welfare office/referrals	1		
Power cord	1	Tree	1		
Intercom system	1	Nature scene	1		
Puppets	1	Religious Statue	1		
Computer	1	Religious House	1		
Clouds–view outside window	1	Street curbs	1		
Flowers	1	Dog Dish	1		
Trash can	1	Graffiti scene	1		
Tree	1	Dog Excrement	1		
Office door	1	Dumpster	1		
Printer/fax machine	1	Outside scene	1		
Agency letterhead	1	Primary school	1		
Message peg	1	School room	1		
Resource file	1				
Toy dinosaurs	1				
Crayons	1				
Telephone index	1				
Car keys with pepper spray	1				
Hand cream	1				
Hole puncher	1				
Total	63	Total	34	Total	13

Figure 6.2 summarizes what domain and percentage of photographs students took and where they were taken.

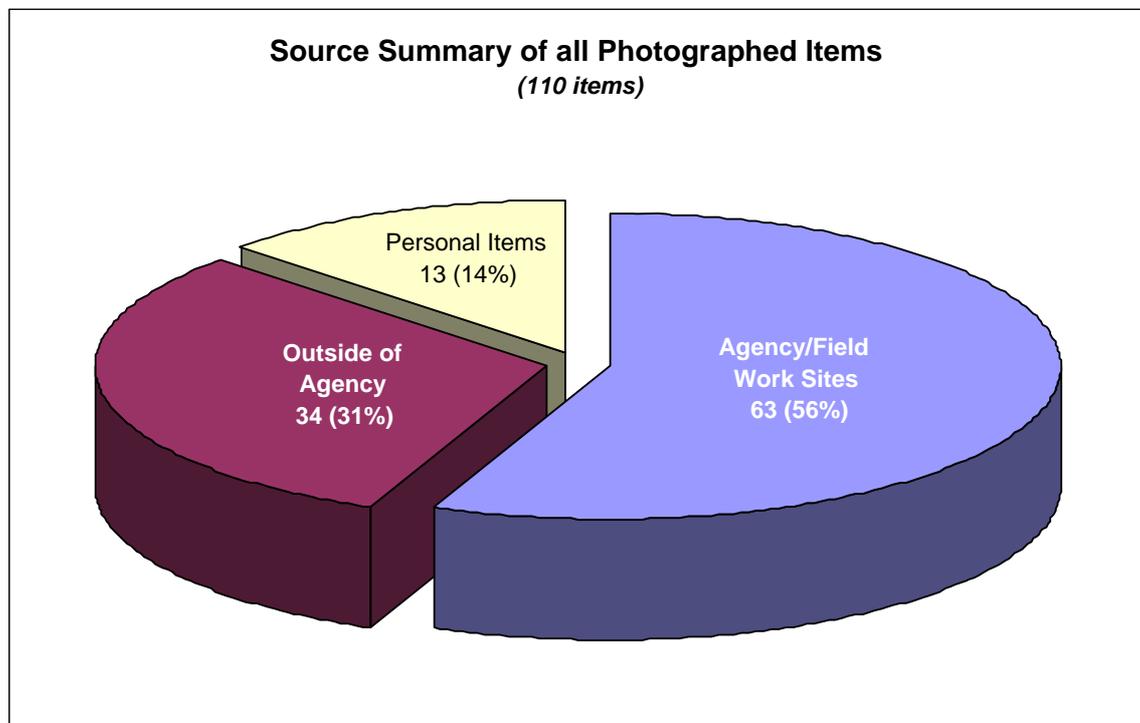


Figure 6.2: Domain summaries of all photographed artifacts

Over half of the photographs (63 or 56%) were taken at the students' agencies/field work sites. A significant portion of the students' field work with clients takes place at the agencies location which would account for this significant percentage. Approximately a third (34 or 31%) of the photographs was taken outside the agencies, reflecting those students who primarily work within the community and do not see clients at the agency. The remainder (13 or 14%) of the photographs was taken of personal items that are directly or indirectly linked to students' field work experiences.

6.7 DOMAINS AND CONTENT

The three domains will now be discussed, as well as the contents in each domain and only content that included two or more artifacts, scenes or places will be discussed. Photographs of only one item of an artifact, scene or place will be summarized if relevant, as they relate to the domain. Additional information gathered through the photo-elicitation interviews, but not directly linked to a specific photograph, will be included if relevant.

6.7.1 At agency/field work domain

The first domain is *At the agency*. Of the total 110 photographs 63 (56%) were taken at the agency/field work site. From Figure 6.1 it can be seen that of these 63 photographs 43 (70%) photographs consist of two or more artifacts.

These 63 (56%) photographs taken *At the agency/field work* site are divided into the following five content categories based on the category having two or more similar artifacts. The categories include: posters and pictures, communication devices, photocopy machines, transportation, office work area and the atmosphere students create at their agencies for client visits and the general atmosphere of the agency.

6.7.1.1 Posters and/or pictures

The first category of photographs was posters and/or pictures. Photographs of wall posters and pictures were hung in different rooms at students' agencies. They represent the powerful visual images that words can have on a person's frame of mind, and therefore, the posters and pictures appear to have a variety of meanings and significance for the students.

How we perceive, interact with our environment and make meaning of our world is an individual experience. Being open to looking, seeing, hearing and listening in regards to our environment is important in how experiences are processed and understood (Goldberg & Middleman, 1990).

One poster is a wall calendar that reminds this particular student of the importance of planning and organization of appointments and of her need to be seen as a professional social worker. Another poster represents a community AIDS project that weighs heavily on a student's mind. This student has worked an entire year for a one-day event and is concerned that even the weather conditions can affect her project and hard work. Other posters reflect more symbolic thoughts through poetic prose and "thought for the day" sayings. These posters recognize the importance of being calm and empathetic toward clients and their situations, especially when they (students) have few resources to offer clients who are in need of many services. This student reflection finds inspiration in a picture: "*This picture serves as an inspiration to me to express myself to my clients. It has*

significant value to me because it gives me the calmness or serenity to understand my clients and to be empathetic towards their situations/circumstances.”

The meaning we attach to objects is directly tied to the activities we associate with them.

According to Fidler and Velde (1999) our reflections and recording of our attachment and engagement with objects hold personal meaning that can provide an avenue in addressing concerns, fears and other personal issues. The students in the study were able to address their concerns fears and personal issues through visual imagery and their written reflections.

6.7.1.2 Communication devices

The second category of photographs was of communication devices that demonstrate the importance of communication in students' field work. A combination of report writing, client files, writing tools, telephones, photocopier machines and community referrals represent many of the communication devices social work students use to fulfill agency and university expectations. Client files reflect students' assessments and other relevant documentation they have secured through interviews, assessments, counseling sessions and case management. The files also reflect students' concerns with upholding confidentiality and safe keeping of records. Written and oral communication expectations represent important transferable skills students are learning and practicing in their field work (www.flinders.ssn.flinders.edu.au/skills/skills4.html; Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002; Orton *et al.*, 2003; Izumo, Carter & Ozee, 2002).

Documentation requires writing and copying of reports that agencies require and the university grades on technical merit, neatness and timeliness. One student stresses the authority a social worker “*can generate with an ink pen in securing services for clients that can be beneficial or damaging to the outcome.*” Another student's reflection regarding the importance of her pen in communicating is “*Without this artifact and its contents, there would be no record of the service that is given or any “map” to build on in the intervention process. Figuratively speaking, it provides the tracks of the client and the path that has been followed. A pen might be just another writing device to people in other professions, but in social work, it is as important as the worker herself.*”

The importance of telephones in connecting clients' with resources and making referrals was evident through the following student excerpts, *"In my profession a phone is quite important. I use the phone to make appointments with the parents of my clients, arranging meetings for our community project and phoning Child Welfare if I have any referrals or questions (or need advice). Although I don't use the phone a lot, it has its roll in my fieldwork. The reason why I don't use it that often is because more than 50% of my clients don't have phones and I would rather arrange meetings face-to-face than over a phone. Whenever people are looking for me they usually phone the school."*

"The telephone is an easy and very useful way of delivering a service to a client and enables the client to get in contact with the worker when it is not as easy or possible to deliver the message or report physically. The workers would not be able to handle the huge workload if this means of communication was not available. This telephone is necessary in order for me to do my job. I rely on the telephone to keep in contact with clients, make appointments and make arrangements for the other fields of practice like group work and community work. The telephone is very significant to my work as I cannot imagine being able to do my job without it."

According to students, photocopy machines are important in producing needed information for clients seeking resources. They said: *"Knowledge is powerful and can be easily reproduced that opens up countless possibilities for sharing and empowering clients with information."* Photocopied information is viewed positively by students because it can be referred to again and again in the helping process.

Photographs are valuable in communicating because photographs can encode a large amount of information in a single image (Grady, 2001). Some photographs upon first review as was the case in the hospital recovery study by Radley and Taylor (2003) discussed in Chapter 3 can look ordinary and disappointing. Photographs taken at the hospital were of places, spaces and objects representing patients' experiences. These photographs took on new meaning when the patient tells their story associated with it. As a result, upon further examination the researchers began to understand the reasons some places, spaces and objects became visible and why.

The hospital study, like this study had the same restrictions in taking photographs of people so participants concentrated on visually capturing their perceptions of their

environments. Participants in the hospital study produced photographs with the assistance of the researcher of places, spaces and objects. In this study the participants took their own photographs of artifacts, places and scenes which are similar type categories as the hospital study.

Simple photographs like telephones and photocopy machines in this study are not overlooked but rather valued and explored to determine the true worth of their significance. An example of this realization includes the following comment from a student during the photo-elicitation interview: “Seeing things in a different perspective, even here (*At the agency*) I didn’t see the phone as a lifeline until I thought about it.”

6.7.1.3 Transportation

The third category of photographs was of transportation artifacts. Many of the clients students are rendering services to do not come to the agency for services. Most clients do not have telephones to arrange appointments therefore, students visit clients at their homes or other locations. Therefore, the importance of agency cars to enable students in providing services to clients who do not have transportation and/or cannot afford transportation or leave their responsibilities at home is evident.

In addition, many areas where clients live do not have well marked streets, roads or sufficient maps making it difficult and time consuming for students to reach clients. Even the weather and resulting poor road conditions, especially in rural areas, can impact students’ ability to make home visits. One student reflects about transportation in writing “*My clients are unable to afford the taxi fare in order to come to the office for interviews, therefore; I conduct all the interviews at their home. Sometimes I wish the car was a 4 x 4 so that I could get to some of the areas that I work in.*”

Using a camera, students were able to visually articulate their concerns and issues with transportation. Photography provides students the opportunity to examine their own perspectives and provide others with an inner look at their critical thinking skills (Miholic, 1998).

6.7.1.4 Office work area

The fourth category of photographs was of office work area artifacts. These photographs reflect both the students' work area and the area where they see clients who come to the agency for services. Photographs include desks and notice (bulletin) boards. Supporting artifacts are of office equipment such as a trash can, message board, paper hole punch and agency letterhead. Keeping office space "neat and tidy" was expressed by many of the students in the photo-elicitation interviews. According to participants, office space at the agency can serve as neutral ground when working with clients and does not carry the stigma of seeing a welfare worker. Desks serve a purpose for planning and organizing clients work as well as compiling reports and conducting interviews and written assessments with clients.

Notice (bulletin) boards are visual images that serve a number of purposes. They serve as a way to communicate news in the community as well as at the agency. As one student states, "*The news can explain the impact of behavior or problems going on in the community and lead to informal communication with clients.*" The notice board can also keep students informed of meetings, appointments, reminders and relevant resource information. For one student a picture of a child with fetal alcohol syndrome reminds her of the challenges she faces in field work with substance abuse problems at the wine farms.

This visual image represents a good example of how to use Bongo and Vayda's, (1998) Integration Theory Practice Loop (ITP) to process information. The analysis of the photograph encourages retrieval of information, reflection and a professional response. Using the powerful image of the child with fetal alcohol syndrome in conjunction with information learned from university coursework the student is integrating what she has learned in the classroom and is practicing during field work. This integration of theory and practice is a major goal of practice education (Grady, 2001; Kissman & Van Tran; Lee *et al.*, 1994).

6.7.1.5 Agency atmosphere

Another category of photographs were of agency atmosphere. Atmosphere at the agency was divided in two areas. One was the atmosphere students worked on creating at the agency to develop better working relationships with their clients. The second was the

general working atmosphere at the agency and the effect it had on students' moods and attitude toward their field work experience. Students sought out a variety of ways and techniques to make the atmosphere and environment at the agency inviting to clients. Overall, students paid close attention to the agency atmosphere they worked to develop for clients. The desire to create a warm, comfortable and non-threatening environment was clear from students' reflections. The environment extended past the office space to the reception room where one student scrutinized the chairs because they were made of hard plastic and not comfortable for clients while they were waiting for their appointments.

According to the students, living plants in an office help to create an attractive atmosphere for workers and clients. The importance of living plants is symbolic to students' work because they thought it portrayed growth, both on the part of the student and the client. The relationships students fostered with clients were directly tied to the growth and development of individuals in general. According to them, "*A plant is a symbol of life and growth and it motivates me to grow in my professionalism. This also motivates me to help my clients grow as individuals.*" By understanding the meaning and symbolism artifacts represent, a richer perspective and awareness is shared (Duffy, 2001; Fidler & Velde, 1999). As discussed in Chapter 4 a bottle of nail polish from a domestic violence shelter can symbolize a woman's desire to feel pretty and feminine. Nail polish is an inexpensive commodity that the woman can take pleasure from despite her traumatic experience.

The welcoming and friendly atmosphere created by staff at the agency toward students was appreciated and significant in the attitude students had regarding their field work experiences. The opportunity to share tea and coffee with staff was important to students' general sense of well being and acceptance. It also provided the "fuel" they needed to continue with their work, despite the challenging circumstances.

Photographs of artifacts, scenes or places can result in discussions about subjects that may have been overlooked in the past. This was apparent in the Holland neighborhood study where residents participated in a photo walk with the researchers and by doing so discovered many aspects of their living environment that had gone unnoticed (Van der Does *et al.*, 1992). Further looking using visual imagery can reveal the significance of artifacts as it did for students in this study who took photographs of chairs, plants and tea break whose importance they had overlooked in the past.

6.7.2 Outside the agency domain

The second domain is *Outside the agency*. Of the total 110 photographs taken by students 34 (31%) photographs were taken outside the agency. From Table 6.2 it can be seen that 18 of these 34 (52%) consist of two or more artifacts.

The 34 (31%) photographs taken *Outside the agency* are divided into the following six categories based on the content having two or more similar artifacts. These categories include: clients' living environments, playground equipment, transportation, washing equipment, referrals and signs. Single artifacts in these general areas will be presented if they are pertinent to the category being discussed.

6.7.2.1 Clients' living and students' working environments

The first category in this domain is photographs of clients' living and students' working environments. Photographs of clients' living environments ranged from dilapidated homes, a pig farm and flats to single photographs of a door, window, room and stairwell. All the photographs show the dismal living conditions and environments of clients the students work with in their field work. These depressing and miserable living conditions of clients also represent the working environments of the students who serve these clients.

As photographs, the visual images of the poverty conditions and environment is powerful even without words. However; a closer look at students' descriptions of these artifacts, scenes and places provide a deeper understanding of the meanings the photographs have to the students, thereby giving the reader a richer perspective of the scenarios. This was also true of Gray's (2001) photography project with a community class of social workers who photographed a group of women who live and work on the pavement in Durban, South Africa. The project taught the students and professor to "see" poverty and "understand" poverty in ways that was new and meaningful.

A large portion of interviewing and assessments take place outside the clients' homes in the backyards, on the streets or elsewhere. Therefore, the weather plays a major role in how much one might accomplish in a day. In addition, the rain makes the already dirty ground smell, forcing the student and client to stand rather than sit. Trash and dog waste odors permeate the air in many locations. Coping with smell is a factor in many of the settings students write about. However, students' professional conduct and respect for the

client take precedence over students' concerns. One student's reflection on smell *"I have found the terrible smell that I experience in the Ottery Flats nauseating and it is very off-putting. I lose concentration when trying not to inhale through my nose as the smell is really awful at times."*

The environments students work in can be intimidating and unsafe for young, White women who are alone and not familiar with the area. Some students avoid going to these areas if at all possible and other students hope for rain so the roads in rural areas will not permit travel to wine farms and other locations.

The study Douglas (1999) did of African American first-year students' perceptions of a predominately White university provided students the opportunity to explore their campus with cameras to determine their impressions. Participants did not respond that they felt intimidated but they were very conscious of their race and felt more uncomfortable on campus than comfortable. Some participants felt that going to a predominately White university will help prepare them for learning how to succeed in similar settings.

Similar perceptions found in the Douglas study and this study is participants did not feel comfortable in an environment that was predominately a different race. Therefore, the environment had an affect on students comfort level, which was more negative than positive.

6.7.2.2 Playground equipment

The second category was photographs of playground equipment. A playground swing and other climbing equipment at school playgrounds reflect the care-free and positive attitudes of children students work with in their field work. Being knowledgeable about human development through academic training is important so students can relate to the children and teach them on their levels of understanding. Because the home life for many children is not pleasant, the equipment also serves as a symbol of what childhood should be like – carefree, positive and happy. A student's reflection: *"This is taken at one of the nursery schools where I do my community project. It is so striking when you arrive at any nursery school; all the apparatus standing around. It is a symbol of the children's ages I work with."*

It was meaningful for the student to see young children in a safe and supportive environment. As a student she learned about the importance of human development in the social environment through her coursework and as a field work student she could observe what she had been taught in class and apply it in her practice education setting.

6.7.2.3 Transportation

The third category was photographs of transportation. The university provides transport (university cars are paid for by the department) for students to get to field placements. Students are not expected to use their own cars and are instructed to use university vehicles. This affects only a handful of students; however, the frustration and anger it generates is genuine. Students who use university cars to commute to their agencies are frustrated with the early morning and evening traffic and time delays it causes. The result of the traffic and imposition it puts on students causes one student to believe that “*road rage is real.*” A photograph of a backpack reflects one student's concern about her safety when she has to meet other students so early in the morning at the car pool. She feels her heavy load and walking in the dark to and from the car pool area makes her very vulnerable to potential harm.

6.7.2.4 Washing equipment

The fourth category was photographs of washing equipment. A photograph of a washing bucket reflects what one student considers symbolizes poverty conditions in South Africa. Washing clothes in this manner is a domestic chore many clients are doing when the student visits them. A washing machine sitting outside a client's home represents the role the student takes in teaching her client how to improve her life. The student draws upon social work development theory she learned at university as the framework for her intervention. However, she reflects: “*Knowing the culture is important; knowing where they (clients) come from. Theories in context are not always appropriate for South Africa.*”

6.7.2.5 Referrals

The next category was photographs that reflect referrals. Students rely on the welfare agency as “backup” if they are unable to provide their clients with services, or need the

help of other professionals in the community. Many clients could benefit from more specialized services; however, budgets are limited and few of the referral agencies do pro bono work, resulting in long waiting lists to see specialists and counselors for treatment. In the process of helping clients, students interact with micro, mezzo and macro systems. It is important for the social worker to have knowledge about resources in all systems and to work interdisciplinary with other professionals toward empowering clients to improve their situations. In addition, a student writes: *“Because of my mass workload I sometimes need to refer cases, which are beyond my capabilities as a student. This ensures me that these cases will be followed up.”*

6.7.2.6 Road signs and maps

The next category was photographs of road signs and maps. Road signs and maps play an important role in field work for students who make home visits. It is frustrating for students to find clients' homes and other locations because many streets, and roads, and blocks of flats are not well marked. It is especially problematic in reaching clients who live on farms because many of the farm locations are unfamiliar to students leaving the students asking for directions because they are lost. According to participants, the time lost in losing one's way could be better spent providing direct services to clients.

For one student, a wine farm sign is a reminder that a young child, who was a client, was raped and murdered at a farm where she provided services. Other vulnerable children and their situations remind the student that social and economic injustices exist. Feeling overwhelmed, the student believes she can do little for them which leaves the student feeling helpless.

For another student, a South Africa police sign reflects concern for safety because of gang activity in the area the student works. The student reminds herself that things are not always as bad as they seem and that perceptions can be deceiving. After talking with people who may seem “dodgy” and “daunting” at first, the student realizes that first impressions of a situation or of a person can be unfounded.

6.7.3 Personal domains

The third domain encompasses personal artifacts. Of the total 110 photographs 13 (13%) were photographs of personal artifacts. From Table 6.2 it can be seen that of the 13 (13%) photographs four photographs consist of two or more similar artifacts.

The four photographs are divided into the following content areas; diary/personal planners and reading glasses.

6.7.3.1 Diaries/personal planners

The first category in this domain was photographs of diaries and personal planners. The task of planning and organizing appointments, school assignments and other activities are important to the students whose lives are busy at university, at the agency and at home. The university expects students to see their clients on a regular basis so efficient planning is important to students who have limited time. The importance of planning was discussed in the photo-elicitation interviews in general and not limited to just the diaries and planners.

The organization, preparation, planning and time management students displayed through their photographs and reflections are all examples of transferable skills students are learning and practicing in field work (www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/skills/skills4.html; Cournoyer & Stanley, 2002; Izumo *et al.*, 2002; Orton *et al.*, 2003).

6.7.3.2 Reading glasses

The second category of photographs was of reading glasses. Two of the participants believe that their reading glasses are significant to their work because of the amount of reading, writing and typing reports that are required. Without their glasses they would not be as efficient in their work, and as a result would not be serving clients to the best of their abilities.

At the agency, Outside the agency and *Personal* domain photographs and written reflections reveal the commitment and perseverance students illustrate in providing or arranging services to impoverished clients. Despite obstacles in the work environment and

expectations of the agency and university, students display resolve in their professional conduct and responsibilities to clients, the agency and university.

The next section will present the amount of student participation there was in taking photographs in the three domains. In addition, those artifacts that had a content of two or more items and received *Very Significant* Ratings on the reflection worksheets will be presented with student excerpts to illustrate the importance students placed on these artifacts.

6.8 STUDY PARTICIPATION, LIKERT RATINGS AND STUDENT EXCERPTS IN ALL THREE DOMAINS

This section will present the following information in the three domains: *At the agency*; *Outside the agency*; and *Personal*. First the number and percentage of participants who took photographs in the three domains will be discussed. Second the artifacts that had two or more similar content items and received *Very Significant* Likert ratings for both content items will be explained. Third students' personal excerpts from reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews regarding the artifacts that received *Very Significant* ratings will be presented.

The likert rating scale was presented on each reflection worksheet students completed. The scale ratings included a choice of the following ratings; *Very Significant*, *Significant*, *Neutral*, *Somewhat Significant* and *Not Significant*. Students were instructed to indicate the significance of each photographed artifact in relation to their field work experience.

6.8.1 At the agencies/field domain

6.8.1.1 Student participation

A total of 62 (56%) of all 110 photographs taken were of artifacts, scenes and places participants thought portrayed their field work experiences within the agencies. All eight (100%) participants participated in taking photographs of their agency environments.

Total participation reflects the importance the agency environment had on what artifacts students decided to photograph.

6.8.1.2 *Likert ratings*

According to the likert ratings three artifacts were identified having a frequency of two or more similar content and were rated **Very Significant** for the artifacts *At the agency/field work* domain include:

- agency cars (3) and agency car keys with self defense spray (1)
- pens and pencils (3)
- community maps (2).

Students' photographs reflect the importance these artifacts have on their ability to "get the job done." Visiting clients in communities that may be unsafe and difficult to find make transportation and safety issues an important component to field work. Pens and pencils reflect the importance of documentation for agency purposes and university coursework.

6.8.1.3 *Student excerpts*

The following student excerpts examples describe the artifacts that received **Very Significant** likert ratings.

(a) **Agency cars and car keys with self-defense spray**

"Without transport I would not be able to see any of my clients. The car also has the agencies name on it, so people generally allow me to go anywhere with it, as I am seen as having authority to go where service is needed."

"The self-defense spay doesn't have a lid or a cap, so it's always ready for action. Going into the field often implies going into very dangerous communities, especially in South Africa. It is often frightening, and it reminds me of the sacrifices I have to make in my field training. It is often very self-rewarding to know that I'm risking my safety for the help of my neighbors."

(b) **Pens and pencils in field work**

"Without the pen, there would be no record of the service that is given, or any map to build on the intervention process. Figuratively speaking, it provides the tracks of the client

and the path that has been followed. A pen might be just another writing device to people in other professions, but in social work, it is as important as the worker herself.”

“Just as a soldier shouldn’t go into war without his gun, I found that a social worker should never go into field without a pen. And just like a soldier’s gun, I found in this profession, my pen can do a lot of damage or a bit of justification, depending on how I use it.”

(c) Community maps

“If my clients don’t show up for their appointment, I have to go look for them at their homes or places they mentioned during assessment. Because my time to see individual clients is limited, it saves a lot of time if I know exactly where the given street or place is.”

The importance of agency transportation, safety issues, documentation and the use of community maps in field work are essential to the students.

6.8.2 Outside the agency domain

6.8.2.1 Student participation

A total of 31% of all 110 photographs were taken of artifacts, scenes and places participants thought portrayed the field work experience outside the agency settings. Six (75%) participants took all 34 photographs in this domain.

6.8.2.2 Likert ratings

Photographs of three artifacts, places or scenes having a frequency of two or more similar content and rated **Very Significant** for *Outside the agency* domain include:

- university cars (2) and road rage (1)
- washing equipment (2)
- Welfare office (2).

Students’ photographs of cars and road rage reflect the importance of university transportation to agencies, but the photographs also acknowledge the anger students feel with commuting to and from field work. Photographs of washing equipment to one

student symbolize poverty in South Africa and the welfare office is significant because it represents service assistance.

6.8.2.3 Student excerpts

The following student excerpts describe the artifacts that received **Very Significant** likert ratings.

(a) University cars

“I have found the long distance (to agency) very annoying and I have had to work hard at not letting it effect my mood negatively and therefore also the quality of my work.”

“Traffic plays a huge role in my practice education. I can not handle the bumper to bumper traffic, stop and go, stop and go. It is truly the bone of my practice education and I can truly understand the full meaning of the term road rage.”

(b) Washing equipment

“I work from a sensitive perspective where you as a social work student have insight for the client’s situation. The people I work with teach you the way they live. The also teach you coping skills and a positive attitude to life.”

(c) Welfare office

“It is necessary to build a good relationship with other social workers in the community you work in. They may have more experience in the community that can be of great help if they are willing to share those experiences.”

Even though some students are annoyed with their transportation situation, it does not appear to affect their commitment to serving clients.

6.8.3 Personal domain

6.8.3.1 Student participation

A total of 13% of all 110 photographs were taken of personal artifacts. Six participants (75%) took all 13 photographs in this domain.

6.8.3.2 *Likert ratings*

One artifact had a frequency of two or more similar content and received **Very Significant** likert rating for Personal domain. It includes:

- Diaries/planners (2)

Planning is important to students who lead busy lives. One student's diary had a saying on the cover which read "Making a Difference" which seems an appropriate saying for a social work student committed to helping others.

6.8.3.3 *Student excerpts*

The following student excerpts describe the artifacts that received **Very Significant** likert ratings.

(a) **Diaries/planners**

"In order to function in my profession, it is necessary to be organized in order to look professional."

"I have learned that PLANNING IS VERY IMPORTANT, there is real truth in the saying proper preparation prevents poor performance!"

Students consider careful planning to be a necessity in order to accomplish university and agency requirements and expectations as well as attending to personal needs. Professionally students recognize the importance and need for having planning and organizational skills.

The next section will present an overview of the Delphi ratings and the significance of the photographed artifacts in all three domains. Content of the photographed artifacts will be presented with accompanying student excerpts.

6.9 **OVERVIEW OF DELPHI RATINGS**

All eight participants in the study were requested to rank their top five photographs from the total number of photographs they had taken ($8 \times 5 = 40$). This means there was a total of 40 Delphi ranked photographs. Students were asked to numerically rank each of their top

five photographs from one to five. One being **Very Significant** and five being **Not Significant**. All students had the rankings completed by the time they met with the researcher for the photo-elicitation interview session.

All 40 Delphi ranked photographs (8x5=40), written reflection worksheets and transcribed photo-elicitation interview comments are located in Appendix A. It was decided to use either the Polaroid picture or instamatic picture for presentation depending on which photograph reproduced the best results for publication purposes.

The content and frequency of photographed artifacts, scenes or places taken in the three domains: *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal* are presented below in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Domain and content frequencies

At Agency setting	f	Outside Agency	f	Personal Items	F
Client files	3	Client Home Settings	3	Diary planner	2
Room at agency	3	Pig Farm (1)		Writing pen	1
Lounge (2)		Backyard (1)		Reading glasses	1
Office (1)		Room inside home (1)		Money	1
Photocopy machine	2	Washing clothes	2	Beer bottle	1
Agency car	2	Washing bucket (1)			
Calendar	1	Washing machine (1)			
Puppets	1	Nature scene	1		
Clouds-view outside window	1	Tree	1		
Telephone	1	Wine farm sign	1		
Tea trolley	1	Welfare office	1		
Primary school	1	South Africa police dept. sign	1		
Hand cream	1	University car	1		
Writing desk	1				
Hole puncher	1				
Chair	1				
Crayons	1				
Poster	1				
Resource file	1				
Total	23	Total	11	Total	6

The 23 (57.5%) photographs taken At the agency represent more than half of the total 40 Delphi ranked photographs taken by the eight participants. From Table 6.2 it can be seen that 11 (23%) photographs consist of two or more artifacts.

The following Table 6.3 shows the Delphi ranking and significance of all 40 artifacts participants photographed. Students numerically ranked each of their top five photographs from one to five. One being **Very Significant** and five **Not Significant**.

Content areas that had two or more similar artifacts, scenes or places are designated in capital bold letters.

Table 6.3: Delphi ranking and significance

Participants	Delphi Ranking				
	Very Significant 1	Significant 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Significant 4	Not Significant 5
P1	Calendar	Telephone	Family Service Agency	PHOTOCOPY MACHINE	Desk
P2	Ink Pen	Tea Trolley	PHOTOCOPY MACHINE	Hand Cream	Hole Puncher
P3	PIG FARM	CLIENT BED	BREAK ROOM – AGENCY	Tree	Police Station
P4	Puppet	WASHING BASKET	Primary School	WASHING MACHINE	CLIENT’S BACKYARD
P5	Beer Bottle	CAR	BREAK ROOM – AGENCY	Wine Farm Sign	Trees
P6	CLIENT FILE	CAR	DIARY	Agency Office	Chair
P7	Reading Glasses	FILE FOLDERS	Resource Files	Agency Logo – Car	Crayons
P8	Clouds/Sky	DIARY	CLIENT FILE FOLDERS	Money	AIDS Logo

* Items that are in small bold caps designate two or more similar photographed artifacts, places or scenes.

Key to Social Artifact’s Significance
1 – Very Significant
2 – Significant
3 – Neutral
4 – Somewhat Significant
5 – Not Significant

Over two thirds (30) of the 40 photographs were rated as being **Very Significant**. Of these 30 photographs over half (16) were of similar artifacts, scenes of places and included **CLIENT FILES**, **PHOTOCOPY MACHINES**, **BREAK-ROOMS** and **CLIENT**

FOLDERS (*At the agency*); PIG FARM, CLIENT'S BED, CLIENTS' BACKYARD, WASHING EQUIPMENT (*Outside the agency*) and Diaries (*Personal*).

6.10 DOMAINS AND CONTENT OF DELPHI PHOTOGRAPHS

The 23 (57.5%) photographs taken *At the agency* represent more than half of the total 40 Delphi ranked photographs taken by the eight participants. From Figure 6.3 it can be seen that 10 (23%) photographs consist of two or more artifacts.

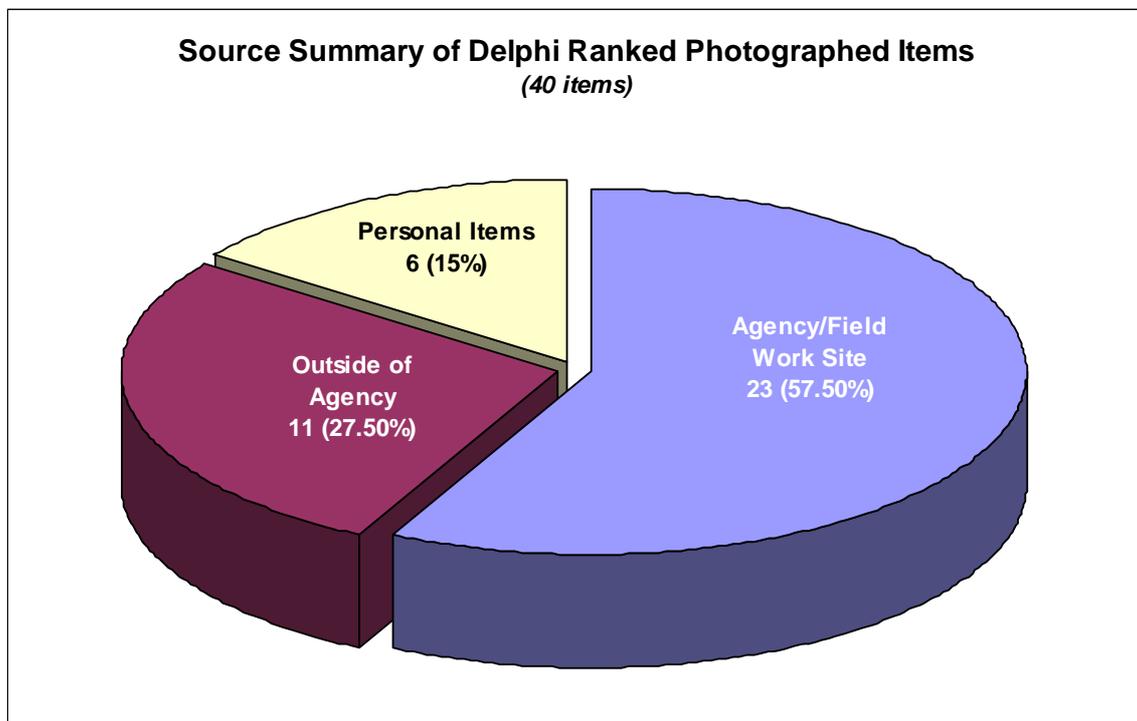


Figure 6.3: Domain summary of all Delphi Photographed Artifacts

Of the 40 Delphi ranked photographs 23 (57%) were taken *At the agency* domain, 11 (27%) of the photographs were taken *Outside the agency* domain and six (15%) of the photographs were taken in the *Personal* domain are illustrated in Figure 6.3. Content that included two or more photographs will be discussed and analyzed. Photographs of only one item will be summarized as they relate to the domain.

6.10.1 At agency/field work domain

The first domain is *At the agency/field work* site. The ten photographs taken *At the agency* domain are divided into four categories. The four categories that emerged from the photographs include the following communication devices:

- (1) report writing and client files,
- (2) photocopying,
- (3) creating comfortable atmosphere at field work site for building relationships with staff and clients, and
- (4) agency transportation.

These four communication devices will now be discussed.

6.10.1.1 Communication devices

(a) Report writing and client files

There are three photographs of report writing and client files in the first category. For practice education students are required to write agency and university reports regarding their work with clients on a regular basis. Students referred to client files and folders as “**The Goal**” “**Veins**” and the “**The Big Pain.**” The titles they gave to the photographs express the frustration, importance and significance of the files to the students field work.

The report writing format and content required by the agency and university while similar are not the same. As a result, students found report writing to be frustrating, time consuming and repetitive. While students understood the importance of keeping files up to date through report writing they question the purpose of writing so many similar yet different reports. Student excerpts from reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews regarding the **significance** of report writing and safeguarding client files and ways to cope with report writing are presented in Table 6.4. Excerpts from **lessons learned** by students reflect the importance of safekeeping and confidentiality of clients’ files.

Table 6.4: Report writing and client files

Title of Photos	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>“The Goal” Delphi 1 Photo No. 6*</p>	<p><i>These files are very important because I strive to help them all and eventually close the files because I have empowered them to help themselves. Although some of the files get closed, clients may come back and then it is of utmost importance to know what was done in the past.</i></p>	<p><i>Keep the files in a safe place so that it doesn't get in the wrong hands.</i></p>
<p>“Veins” Delphi 2 Photo No. 7*</p>	<p><i>The “life force” of the organization and their clients is the records that are kept. From each file you can piece together someone's existence. Without a file, there is no client.</i></p>	<p><i>The file is the client and organization. Record keeping and safekeeping of information does not only reinforce the services, it makes the existence of the organization and workers possible.</i></p>
<p>“The Big Pain” Delphi 3 Photo No. 8*</p>	<p><i>At times I feel the highly structured report writing trivializes what we do in the practice of social work.</i></p>	<p><i>I have learned that to cope one must enjoy that which we like to do and do our best at that which we don't like to do. I spend more time writing a report than I do with clients.</i></p>

*See Appendix A for these photographs

6.10.1.2 Photocopy machines

There are two photographs of photocopy machines in the second category. The two photocopy machine photographs were both titled **“Photocopy Machine.”** The name alone does not connote any special significance of the photographs until the meaning behind the photographs is shared. Because of the report writing requirements of the university and agency, the importance of the photocopy machine is realized. Students are expected to keep and hand in files of all reports written at the agency and university. Table 6.5 reflects the **significance** of the photocopy machines and **lessons learned** by students are illustrated in the following excerpts from reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews.

Table 6.5: Photocopy machines

Title of Photos	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>“Photocopy Machine” Delphi 3 Photo No. 2*</p>	<p><i>I keep myself covered by having copies of what I do. They provide a reference of the proof and clarity of work done. Should a situation occur when someone is unhappy with the situation and accusations are made, I have proof to keep my side clean.</i></p>	<p><i>There’s a lot of politics involved with the photocopy machine. The agency only has so much money each month for paper and there are three students here. If I copied my reports at university, I would have to use my own money.</i></p>
<p>“Photocopy Machine” Delphi 4 Photo No. 1*</p>	<p><i>It facilitates my practical work ensuring that all the needed information is available and accessible.</i></p>	<p><i>Making multiple copies of information also ensures that I am never out of information.</i></p>

* See Appendix A for the photographs.

Report writing and photocopying are interrelated because they are central to the work students are required to perform both for the university and agencies. With limited budgets, agencies and students are keenly aware of the expenses reports generate. In addition, the frustration with the report writing process is evident, especially regarding the university’s highly structured report writing requirements. The proof of work completed is relevant because students receive marks (grades) for their reports. Overall, the photocopy machines are essential in making copies of reports to hand in at university or send to agency.

6.10.1.3 Agency rooms and atmosphere

The third category of photographs was of agency rooms and atmosphere. The three photographs of rooms within the agency represent the atmosphere in these locations. Table 6.6 reflects the general atmosphere of the agencies and rooms in the agencies. Photographs with the titles **“The Difference”** and **“Neutral Ground”** reflect the atmosphere a space can represent in working with clients. The photograph titled **“The Safe Haven”** is a student’s office space. All photographs reflect the importance atmosphere has in developing working relationships with staff members and with clients who come to the school where the students are placed for field work. The **significance** of the atmosphere and **lessons learned** by students are illustrated in the following reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interview excerpts.

Table 6.6: Agency rooms and atmosphere

Title of Photos	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>“The Difference” Delphi 3 Photo No. 3*</p>	<p><i>The office is so alive. People laugh, they smile, and they greet you. You can joke. At other places (offices) you can't even smile. It makes me realize I know I can do this work.</i></p>	<p><i>I have learned how much the atmosphere or environment of work surroundings can affect my attitude to my practice education and the way in which I experience it.</i></p>
<p>“Neutral Ground” Delphi 3 Photo No. 5*</p>	<p><i>I use the room at the primary school to conduct interviews in a secluded place that offers privacy. The room has a bright tablecloth that makes me feel positive. I prefer not to conduct all my interviews in the client's homes because I feel more like an intruder there than in this space. This office breaks the stigma of going to see a welfare worker.</i></p>	<p><i>I prefer to build a relationship with clients as an equal rather than as an authority figure. I find more people are open on neutral ground than in a welfare setting.</i></p>
<p>“The Safe Haven” Delphi 4 Photo No. 6*</p>	<p><i>This is where the action takes place. Whatever the problem, they (school children) know that there is a willing ear to listen when they enter. I try to create comfort and privacy at my office..</i></p>	<p><i>To keep my door open gives the impression that I am inviting them (school children) to come in and talk to me. To keep my office clean and tidy so that nothing can distract their attention and a clean and tidy place reflects professionalism as well as organized. To create a warm, comfortable atmosphere.</i></p>

*See Appendix A for photographs.

These photographs reinforce the significance a positive atmosphere has on building working relationships and having a positive attitude regarding one's work, regardless if these relationships are with fellow workers or clients.

6.10.1.4 Agency transportation

The fourth category of photographs was of agency transportation. The two photographs of cars reflect agency transportation students use to visit clients. Table 6.7 refers to agency vehicles where photographs are titled **“Overcoming Limitations”** and **“Logo.”** Because so few clients have telephones, transportation is an important aspect of service delivery. The presence of the agency car serves an image of authority and provides an element of feeling safer going into certain areas. The comments regarding the agency logo on the cars provide some insight into the influence and authority social workers might have in gaining

access into areas where their authority is not welcomed, i.e. pig farm. The **significance** of transportation and **lessons learned** by students are illustrated in the following reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews excerpts.

Table 6.7: Transportation

Title of Photo	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>“Overcoming Limitations” Delphi 2 Photo No. 5*</p>	<p><i>Without transport (agency) I would not be able to see any of my clients. The vehicle is very significant in overcoming limitations. The agency logo on the car generally allows me to go anywhere with it, as I’m seen as having authority to go where services are needed.</i></p>	<p><i>Access is gained by qualifications. It makes our work more accessible. It’s not a ‘normal’ car (agency logo); suspicious farmers don’t like it.</i></p>
<p>“Logo” Delphi 4 Photo No. 7*</p>	<p><i>The orange beetle car is a very visible and distinctive vehicle that serves the same and even more purpose than a logo of any well known organization. Being a white woman, these are not areas (where clients live) people my age would go. You must be from some sort of organization to go there.</i></p>	<p><i>The logo is viewed differently in different communities. In some communities, clients, children and even the dogs come running towards the worker. In others, this logo serves as an instant repellent, causing clients to vanish into thin air.</i></p>

*See Appendix A for photographs.

Communication devices, photocopy machines, atmosphere and transportation all contribute to the overall experience students have at their field work agencies.

6.10.2 Outside agency/field work domain

The second domain is *Outside the agency/field work* domain. The 11 photographs taken outside the agency/field work domain represent 27% of the total 40 (8 students presented their top 5 photographs) Delphi ranked photographs. From Table 6.3 it can be seen that five photographs consist of two or more artifacts or 12.5% of the total. These photographs are of clients’ home settings (3) and of washing equipment (2).

These five photographs taken *Outside the agencies/field work* sites are divided into two categories: (1) clients living and work environments and (2) washing equipment. The major theme that emerged from these two categories centers on the impoverished living conditions of South African clients students work with in their practice education experiences.

The photographs and reflections regarding living and working environments and washing equipment will now be discussed.

6.10.2.1 Living and working environments

The three photographs of clients' living environments include two photographs of outdoor scenes and one indoor photograph of a client's home. Table 6.8 show outdoor scenes of photographs titled, "**Home Sweet Home**" a photograph of a pig farm where clients live and work and "**Backyard Interview**" which is a photograph outside a client's home that shows where interviews are conducted. The indoor scene photographed titled "**Life**" shows a client's home which is a single room where seven family members live and sleep amongst farm animals.

The students who took these photographs illustrate not only the living and working conditions of poor South African families; they also illustrate the working conditions student social workers work in and cope with on a daily basis. All three descriptions exemplify students going to where their clients are which, in these examples, was at their homes. Despite these circumstances, students brave the conditions in order to provide services to their clients. The **significance** of one's environment and **lessons learned** by students are illustrated in the following reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interview excerpts that reflect clients' living environments, students' working environments and resiliency of the human spirit.

Table 6.8: Living and working environments

Title of Photos	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>"Home Sweet Home" Delphi 1 Photo No. 3*</p>	<p><i>This pig farm illustrates the hectic conditions clients live in and the conditions they work in. The clients literally live in a pigsty with cows wandering around the room. The farm has a dreadful stink that stays inside my clothing for the rest of the day. I always leave the farm feeling really angry; angry at the injustice they experience and a feeling of hopelessness and desperation.</i></p>	<p><i>Injustices in our country still exist. I can never fully understand what they (clients) experience on a daily basis. If people actually saw the conditions these people live in, it would be a different story.</i></p>
<p>"Backyard Interview" Delphi 5 Photo No. 4*</p>	<p><i>This is an interview that takes place outdoors. It smells sometimes and we usually stand because the ground is wet and dirty. This is Africa. This is where I do my practicals. Academically, I must know my theory very well to be able to use it in the worst circumstances.</i></p>	<p><i>Life can be harsh and unfair. I have learned that people can be very resilient and no matter how harsh their circumstances, they (clients) somehow manage to do the best with what they have.</i></p>
<p>"Life" Delphi 2 Photo No. 3*</p>	<p><i>The single room my clients live in illustrates the poverty and hectic conditions that my clients live in. The room is also an office for myself. The client and I sit on the double bed to conduct our interviews.</i></p>	<p><i>Maslow's hierarchy is of significance for some of my clients. Some actualize themselves in the worst scenario with just a little basic needs satisfaction.</i></p>

* See Appendix A for photographs.

6.10.2.2 Clothes washing equipment

The second category is clothes washing machines. There were two photographs taken of clothes washing equipment at clients' homes. Table 6.9 explain a photograph titled "**The Washing Basket**" and according to the student is considered to be a symbol of South Africa. The other photograph titled "**The Outside Washing Machine,**" show a standing washing machine outside the client's home. It represents the student's role as an educator as described through social work systems theory. The educator role of the student social worker also reveals her interest in being educated about clients' lives so she can gain a better understanding of their hardships and realities of life. The **significance** of clothes washing equipment and **lesson learned** by students reflect insights into clients' abilities to cope with their circumstances that are illustrated through the following reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation excerpts.

Table 6.9: Clothes washing equipment

Title of Photo	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>"The Washing Basket" Delphi 2 Photo No. 4*</p>	<p><i>Working from an ethnic sensitive perspective you (student) must have insight into the client's situation. The field experience is incredible because the people I work with teach you the way they live. They also teach you coping skills and a positive attitude to life.</i></p>	<p><i>A lot of my clients don't always have the best of circumstances, but some are trying their best to have food on the table and clean their clothes.</i></p>
<p>"The Outside Washing Machine" Delphi 4 Photo No. 4*</p>	<p><i>Clients learn proper life skills, registration for her children, family conflict handling and hygiene regarding self, children and clothes.</i></p>	<p><i>If everything in life goes wrong, you must believe that there will be hope and better days.</i></p>

*See Appendix A for photographs.

Both clients and student social workers learn to cope with the limitations and challenges life presents. The ability of clients to maintain hope, while sharing their positive attitude towards life despite the hardships, is also reflected in the students' reflections.

6.10.3 Personal domain

The third domain encompasses photographs of *personal* artifacts. A total of six photographs were taken reflecting students' personal belongings or activities. There were two photographs of student diaries/planners representing 15% of the total number of personal artifacts (see Table 6.3). Table 6.10 explains these two photographs titled

“**Organization**” and “**The Boss.**” Both photographs describe students’ diaries as tools to help them keep track of appointments, assignment due dates, planning, important dates, necessary telephone numbers and a “to do list” for every day. The importance of the diary to these students cannot be overstated. They rely on their diaries both for agency and university appointments and assignments. Being organized reflects careful planning and gives the image of looking like a professional. The **significance** of the diaries and **lessons learned** by students from reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews is reflected in the following student excerpts:

Table 6.10: Organization

Title of Photos	Significance	Lessons Learned
<p>“Organization” Delphi 2 Photo No. 8*</p>	<p><i>I have to be very careful of planning correctly so that I have enough time to do everything. My diary has gone everywhere with me and I look at it a tons of times each day.</i></p>	<p><i>Without this, I don’t know what I’d do. I have to organize my whole life according to this diary.</i></p>
<p>“The Boss” Delphi 3 Photo No. 6*</p>	<p><i>Without my diary I am lost. In order to function in my profession it is necessary to be organized and to look professional.</i></p>	<p><i>It is necessary to organize a week ahead so you will be prepared for every client, every group and every meeting you may have, because we don’t just do practical work, you have to organize all your preparations around your lecture times.</i></p>

*See Appendix A for photographs.

The students recognize the need to manage and plan their time according to agencies and university’s expectations. Self-management reflects their desire to be professional while trying to manage busy schedules, attend lecture at university and fulfill other obligations.

The next section is a discussion of the **Very Significant** Delphi ranked students’ photographs of artifacts, scenes and places that represent their experiences in the three domains: *At the agency, Outside the agency* and *Personal*.

6.11 DISCUSSION OF THE VERY SIGNIFICANT LIKERT RANKED DELPHI PHOTOGRAPHS

This section will present and discuss the **Very Significant** likert ranked Delphi photographs in all three domains: *At the agency, Outside the agency* and *Personal* domain presented in Table 6.3.

6.11.1 At the agency domain

The three **Very Significant** photographs of clients' files *At the agency* represent the extensive report writing required by the agencies and university. Because the two system expectations are similar, yet require different formats, the process necessitates the doing and redoing of reports. Photographs with titles, "**The Big Pain**," "**The Veins**" and "**The Goal**," (see Table 6.4 and Appendix A for photographs) and accompanying photographs, significant messages are revealed. While there appears to be underlying frustrations with report writing expectations ("**The Big Pain**") students recognize the essential importance ("**The Veins**") of safeguarding accurate and timely documentation as being essential in order for clients to benefit from services and for students to be able to manage their caseloads ("**The Goal**").

The two photographs of photocopier machines in Table 6.5 each titled "**Photocopy Machine**," (see Table 6.5 and Appendix A for photographs) are directly linked to report writing. The frustration with operating the photocopier machines that have continuous breakdowns and the cost to the agency for students to copy reports for university are evident. It is also a tedious and time consuming task. However, students do look for the benefits and purposes to justify the amount of time that is taken away from direct work with clients.

The other **Very Significant** artifacts associated with report writing and office work include a pen, calendar, telephone, desk, hole punch and resource file. All these artifacts represent work place tools that assist in getting the required work done. One tool that is the exception is the hole punch, or "**Keep It Real**" to this student, represents the time consuming task of threading paperwork with holes and laces in files and having to take them apart anytime a new report or document is added. The student notes there are other more efficient ways to handle required paperwork. Probably more significant is the student's own realization that the act (lacing papers together) keeps her humble, down to earth and focused on her clients and helping them adapt to difficult situations.

The photograph of a view from the agency window of a cloud scene, titled "**Greener Pastures**," and a chair titled "**My Thinking Chair**," represent students' awareness of their need for reflection and contemplation. While the cloud scene represents the student's need to reflect on life outside of the agency and the value of family and friends support,

she also recognizes that it provides the opportunity to “regroup” and focus on other outcomes of services for her clients.

The photograph titled “**The Thinking Chair**” represents a safe place for this student to collect her thoughts in order to “think straight, professionally and effectively.” This is especially important because she deals with a significant amount of family violence, alcoholism and other drug dependencies that can be disturbing to her. The setting of the chair is interesting because it sits outside her office at the school but is in the shadows of the bars that secure her office. The picture of her office, “**The Safe Haven**,” discussed previously also shows a similar scene in which she describes creating a comfortable and warm environment for clients who must pass through the gate with bars to reach her office.

One student’s photograph titled “**Refreshments**,” is of significance because it illustrates the student’s need to take care of her physical needs (hot tea) after being out in the cold in order to “render better service” by comparing it to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, much in the same way the photograph titled “**The Backyard Interview**,” describes clients’ basic needs and ability “to actualize themselves in the worst case scenario.” No one is immune from having her/his basic needs met, no matter the circumstances.

The photograph of a bottle of lotion called “**A Kind Touch**” is used to help keep hands soft; however, the image serves as an inspiration because of the poster located behind the lotion that says “How Beautiful A Day Can Be When Kindness Touches It.” It is symbolic for the student because it reminds her to stay kind and have a soft touch when working with clients.

Communication devices *At the agency* represent the importance that written and oral communication have in the profession. Being able to articulate thoughts both on paper and orally is a critical transferable skill when communicating with clients, co-workers, other professionals, faculty as well as the general public (Izumo *et al.*, 2002).

Some photographs reflect images and metaphors to illustrate how students contemplate and problem solve personal concerns and field work issues. A simple chair, the sky and lotion take on new meaning when the student shares why it is important to her work. The

use of metaphors can help guide our actions and the way we think and perceive situations (Goldberg & Middleman, 1990).

Take care of meeting basic human needs is evident in the photographs and reflections. The level of need for a student can be readily satisfied by a cup of hot tea. Her clients however; have many more needs and struggle to survive. Gray's project (2001) also illustrates a of a group of women living and working in Durban, South Africa who are struggling to survive. Their poverty was also evident and was seen by social work students through the lens of a camera giving them a new perspective of impoverished living conditions.

Despite students frustrations regarding report writing that are directly tied to clients' files and the copying of reports, students are introspective about their work. By taking time to contemplate and process their experiences and feelings, students are able to regroup and focus on their clients.

6.11.2 Outside the agency domain

The three photographs of clients' homes and students' working environments representing field work *Outside the agency* generated mixed responses of anger, frustration, empathy and hope of students. The photographs titled, "**Home Sweet Home**," "**Backyard Interview**" and "**Life**" (see Table 6.8 and Appendix A for photographs) tell stories with accompanying reflection worksheets about poverty in South Africa. The feelings of injustices in South Africa are depicted in "Home Sweet Home" and "Life" One might imagine a comfortable home, but instead, see a pig farm where a family of seven live and work amongst farm animals. The family lives without running water, sanitation system or even a window in their one room that is shared by all. Anger and empathy were expressed by the students regarding the sustained poverty clients must tolerate and the frustration for wanting to do more to help, but having limited resources to offer. The realization that through it all, despite the environmental living challenges and feelings of despair, people learn to cope and manage in their environments. This is true both for the clients and the students working in these conditions.

One student took both washing equipment photographs, titled "**The Washing Basket**" and "**The Outside Washing Machine**" (see Table 6.9 and Appendix A for photographs). While "The Washing Basket" might reflect South Africa poverty, it also sensitized the

student about the client's situation. The student was open to having clients teach her about their ways of living and coping in their environments. The client is the expert in knowing her own situation and the student remains a student in the sense that she is willing to understand how clients cope and manage so that she might be able to share what she has learned with other clients.

Students' photographs *Outside the agency* center around their clients' impoverished living conditions that reflect the social and economic injustices in the country. Through the use of Polaroid cameras, students were able to symbolically capture and "develop" their own visual perspective of the poverty in South Africa (Lamott, 1994:39).

The social and economic injustices that exist in the work students do are a fact. The effect the impoverished conditions have on students is reflected in their feelings of frustration and anger. Students and clients are resilient in their efforts to cope with the challenging circumstances.

6.11.3 Personal domain

The *Personal* domains area has the least amount of photographs; however, the six artifacts are **Very Significant** because they reveal the busy and stressful lives the students lead juggling university, field work, part-time jobs and other personal commitments. The diaries/planners reflect students' hectic schedules as well as agency and university expectations. In addition, being organized reflects the association students make of being seen and treated as a professional who carefully plans and organizes tasks, assignments and appointments. The lack of time due to hectic schedules was pervasive in Blinn and Harrist's (1991) study of re-entry college women who took photographs of clocks to represent how they felt there was not enough time in the day to manage all their responsibilities of being a student, wife, and mother.

The photographs of reading glasses, headache medicine, money, beer bottle and pen (see Table 6.3 and Appendix A for photographs) all reflect different levels of stress. Students need their glasses and headache medicine because it helps them complete tedious report writing and other documentation. Drinking beer is one student's way to unwind from her stressful work with clients' who have substance abuse problems and live and work on

wine farms. Although she feels like a hypocrite, she continues to go to the bar to unwind and make sense of the injustice she sees.

Lack of money is a problem many university students face; however, one student is concerned that when she graduates she will not be able to make a decent living wage as a social worker, in addition to having a large university loan to repay. The pen represents the seriousness a student takes in her field work role because she realizes that the quality of her documentation could mean the difference of whether or not a client receives services.

Symbols of stress were evident in many of the photographs. In social work and other helping professions stress and burnout are common problems. The images students created allowed them to explore and gain new understandings of their personal stress as it relates to field work and university coursework. From the literature it appears agency budgets are experiencing more economic restraint and as a result there is more work-related stress that appears to be on the rise (Maidment, 2003). Student responses in this study would support that conclusion.

Report writing, the use of photocopy machines, contemplation and taking care of one's basic needs are reflected in *At the Agency* photographs. Photographs of clients' living environments were reflected in *Outside the agency* domain and *Personal* domain was depicted in artifacts associated with being organized and artifacts associated with stress.

In summary, the following studies (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Douglas, 1999; Karlsson, 2001; Perka *et al.*, 1992; Radley & Taylor, 2003; Van der Does, *et al.*, 1992) discussed in Chapter 3 share common elements with this study. These common elements were:

- (1) participants used cameras to look at their relationships with their social and physical environments,
- (2) the use of worksheets a photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher and
- (3) the heightened awareness and candor of participants who openly expressed personal joys, frustrations, struggles and challenges of their environments.

All the studies provide rich, descriptive feedback to researchers who are "looking" to gain a better understanding of participants' lives and the impact their environments have upon them.

6.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the overall and Delphi findings of students' perceptions of their field work capstone experience. The significance, meaning and lessons learned from students' photographed artifacts are presented using students' excerpts from reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews with the researcher in each of the three identified domains: *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*.

The next chapter provides the six Overarching Themes of the qualitative research study. Each theme is presented separately and discussed as it relates to all three domains: *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*. Following the themes will be a discussion of the analysis.

CHAPTER 7

OVERARCHING THEMES OF THE FIELD WORK CAPSTONE STUDY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the overarching themes of the study created from an analysis of a combination of all 110 participant-produced photographs, reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews that include the 40 Delphi ranked photographed artifacts, scenes and places that participants felt reflects their field work experiences. All the photographs (110) including Delphi photographs (40) were grouped in the three domains: (1) *At the agency* domain, (2) *Outside the agency* domain and (3) *Personal* domain. All identified themes are presented in the above described domains, because the content of the photographs has significance and meaning in all three domains.

Figure 7.1 below illustrates the six overarching themes of the study in the three domains, *At the agency* domain, *Outside the agency* domain and *Personal* domain. The six identified Themes include: (1) safety, (2) environment and atmosphere, (3) transportation, (4) frustration and stress, (5) inspiration, coping and hope and (6) transferable skills. Each theme will be presented separately as it relates to the three domains. One photograph representing each domain, chosen by the researcher to exemplify the Theme, is included.

7.2 OVERARCHING THEMES

The themes will be presented as they appear in the Figure 7.1.

Overarching Themes



Figure 7.1 Overarching themes

7.2.1 Theme 1: Safety

The first theme is on the subject of safety issues and concerns students expressed having in their field work experiences. Figure 7.2 presents students' safety issues and concerns in each of the three domains.

Concern for personal safety in helping professions is not a new subject in the literature. The social work role in helping professions is unique because it involves a combination of social caring and social controlling roles. In the social caring role social workers work with clients who are coping with poverty, drug addiction, mental illness, health problems and live in substandard housing. As social workers in the controlling role there is a limited amount of service resources to offer clients. As a result, clients are living very difficult and challenging lives faced with dwindling resources for assistance. All these factors can increase the amount of risk of violence for social workers (Newhill, 2003).



Figure 7.2: Safety

Unfortunately, many students who participate in field work have limited training in how to deal with violence either from their course work or through agency training. As a result, students feel most vulnerable when they go into unsafe neighborhoods where they are exposed to dangerous clients, illness and disease (Tully, Kropf & Price, 1993).

Participants in this study reveal personal safety issues and concerns are to be expected in South Africa. What is even more disturbing are the remarks students shared about

“sacrificing” their safety to do their required field work. Safety issues and concerns were prevalent in all three domains.

7.2.1.1 At the agency domain

Students who work primarily at welfare agencies or in schools and rarely make home visits in the community report that they feel safer than their peers who see clients in rural areas, townships or large blocks of flats. Many welfare agencies and schools have secure buildings and grounds that provide a perceived safer working environment for staff members. Because there is general concern for crime and violence in communities, meeting clients at agencies and school settings is seen as a more neutral and safe area.

Safety training is not offered at the university or the welfare agencies where students did their field work. Lack of this kind of training becomes a factor when students are making home visits in neighborhoods that are considered to be dangerous and unsafe. However, participants confront their own fear by acknowledging field work can be unsafe but that “it’s part of the job in South Africa.” Sacrificing her own safety, one student braves the situation by stating: *“Going into the field often implies going into very dangerous communities, especially in South Africa. It is often frightening but it reminds me of the sacrifices I have to make in my field training. It is often very self-rewarding to know that I’m risking my safety for the help of my neighbors.”*

Personal safety issues appears to be an accepted fact and is reflected by one student who has grown used to the feelings of being unsafe during field work and, if possible, tries to avoid going in the unsafe areas: *“It is not safe for a young white female to go into the flats on her own. This is especially so when gang activity is active. I was scared to go to the flats the first time but am slowly starting to get used to it. Generally I don’t go into the flats on my own though. I avoid going at all.”*

A photograph of a set of agency car keys with pepper spray sends a strong message of one student’s level of awareness for her own safety and states: *“I ALWAYS take my self-defense spray with me, it doesn’t have a lid or a cap so it’s always ready for action.”* This implies an awareness that safety is an issue and should be taken seriously. *“There is a board you sign out on at the agency. There’s been times when I’ve been one and a half hours late but nobody is concerned. It’s there, it’s recorded but not strictly.”*

Not all students share the same concerns regarding safety “*Some of the work is dangerous, but I don’t lock myself in the office. Agencies don’t give any tips on safety. In field, safety is your own discretion.*” This particular student accepts the fact that some of the work is dangerous, but it does not keep her from doing her field work, despite the lack of safety training.

Literature (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007) on safety in the practicum setting suggests that workplace violence inside the agency and outside the agency is on the rise. The anxiety students’ feel is real and if it is not addressed, could impede their delivery of social services to clients. Because social service agencies have different policies and protocols regarding safety guidelines, it is important for students to understand and gain a realistic perception of the safety risks at their agencies.

In a study by Gelman (2004) students in field work expressed that logistical issues regarding the location of the agency and the distance traveled to the agency were problematic and a concern. Unfortunately, according to Gelman’s study, social work programs are slow in addressing safety issues.

7.2.1.2 Outside the agency domain

Police assistance for students who must go into unsafe areas does not appear to be used and there appears to be a general lack of awareness of the use of police assistance. One student reflects: “*I’ve heard a rumor that you can have police accompany you sometimes when going into certain areas that you know have huge gang problems. You get a little afraid and you think, what am I doing? To date, I have never experienced any huge problem in the gang communities that I work in, but there have been times when I have been afraid to get out of the car. I heard that they (police) can accompany you on a domestic violence visit, but I’ve never seen anyone do it.*”

It does not appear as if students utilize the police for assistance, either because they are misinformed about police assistance or it is indeed not available. One student writes about an experience where, in lieu of police assistance, a gang escorted her and another student into an unsafe area where they needed to make a home visit.

“We went in trying to find a client, all the streets lead into one another and there are a lot of dead ends, they all intertwined. We drive by and there are about 15 guys on the street looking at us. We were feeling like we shouldn’t do this but one student said it was essential to see them (clients). As we were walking, they (men) asked who we were looking for and they said ‘come’ we’re going to escort you. They left a guy to watch our car. They walked us to the flat and waited for us. There was one guy on the street who started talking to us and they said ‘leave these ladies alone, we’re looking after them and there will be trouble. They stood at the door and waited for us to do the interview and then they took us back to the car. We felt really scared because we didn’t know if this was a good gang - we call them that. They could have been trouble. Sometimes your perceptions are deceiving and you think, gang, bad area but it’s not always like that.”

The university does not appear to provide any specific safety training for field students but does provide tips and precautions. Despite the lack of safety training students expressed feeling that the university is *“focused on our safety as students and they taught us to contact the police to escort us. They (agency) don’t give us cell phones, just our private ones. They tell us to lock the car and generally tell us, if you feel unsafe going into an area, don’t go.”* Despite the university’s recommendation to contact the police for assistance it is interesting to note that police assistance, according to one student, is considered to be more of a rumor than an actual possibility.

“I don’t think they (university) really talked to us that much because I don’t think they want to scare us but the first time I was upset this year is when I had to go into the community alone, individually. It’s the first time I discussed safety with anyone. What the school says is not to go on days not scheduled for field work because if something were to happen, they can’t take responsibility for us. Nobody really talks about it, everyone goes on as if it’s not to be discussed. If it is something that is going to occur, it’s something you have to sacrifice when you do social work. I think people just let it slide because it is a known fact and it would stir some unpleasantness. Maybe there should be guideline on how you should go about to take control of a situation; what to do if something occurs. For example, in the schools violence might not be directed at me but what should I do, what is my place?”

Students were vocal during the photo-elicitation interviews regarding their safety concerns, especially when they are seeing clients in the community. From the photographs, reflection worksheets and transcripts it is apparent that there are real safety issues that are not being addressed. The lack of safety training requires students to rely on their intuition when making decisions regarding their safety during field.

7.2.1.3 Personal domain

On a more intimate level, students' thoughts regarding their personal safety was most apparent in the photo-elicitation interviews where discussion revolved around friends and family's concerns regarding the student's career choice of social work. Specific photographed artifacts, a backpack and motorcycle, also reflect students' concerns with personal safety.

"It's a big thing for me, it is an issue in my life, my boyfriend is a little paranoid about me going into the community where there is a lot of violence, there are stories of a girl getting raped by 18 guys or a shooting or whatever, you never know if that could happen. I don't think the (university) really talked to us that much because I don't think they want to scare us but the first time I was upset this year is when I had to go into the community alone, individually. It's the first time I discussed safety with anyone. What the school says, is not to go on days not scheduled for working because if something were to happen, they can't take responsibility for us. Nobody really talks about it (safety) everyone goes on as if it's not to be discussed. If it is something that is going to occur, it's something you have to sacrifice when you do social work. I think people just let it slide because it is a known fact and it would stir some unpleasantness. Maybe there should be guidelines on how you should go about to take control of a situation; what to do is something occurs. For example, in the schools violence might not be directed at me but what should I do, what is my place?"

The photograph titled "Heavy Load" is one student's concern with her safety, as she walks to and from the car pool at the university in the dark: *"I have been carrying a heavy load of books, files and various goodies for group work every time I go to work. The bag is thus significant because it carries all my stuff, however, I find myself often taking a second bag, as my backpack is not big enough. I find the heavy load annoying, especially when*

walking to the car pool so early in the morning and it makes me feel vulnerable as far as safety is concerned.”

Another photograph titled “Renoster” is a student’s motorcycle that she relies on in her field work because she feels it provides her safety when she is out in the community “*I had this motorcycle since high school and my friends and I named it ‘Renoster’, Afrikaans for rhinoceros because it had so much power for someone who’s used to a bicycle! It’s still my rhinoceros, as it never fails to get me wherever I need to be, quickly, safely and on time.*”

Family and friends also express their concerns regarding students’ safety during field work. The comments made in Chapter 6 regarding personal “sacrifice” are troubling and need attention if indeed students think that being a social worker means putting one’s own safety in jeopardy.

The next theme on environment and atmosphere looks at how students’ work surroundings affects their work with clients and relationship they build with agency staff. In addition, they comment that it is through the photographs we learn what survival is like for clients’ in their impoverished environments.

7.2.2 Theme 2: Environment and atmosphere

The second theme is on the subject of environment and atmosphere and illustrates the effects they have on students who are providing services to clients in their living environments as well as the agency. How students relate with agency staff is also revealing in how comfortable students feel at the agency. Figure 7.3 illustrates some of the way students create a comfortable atmosphere at the agency and also show the harsh living environments clients’ contend with and students work in on a daily basis.

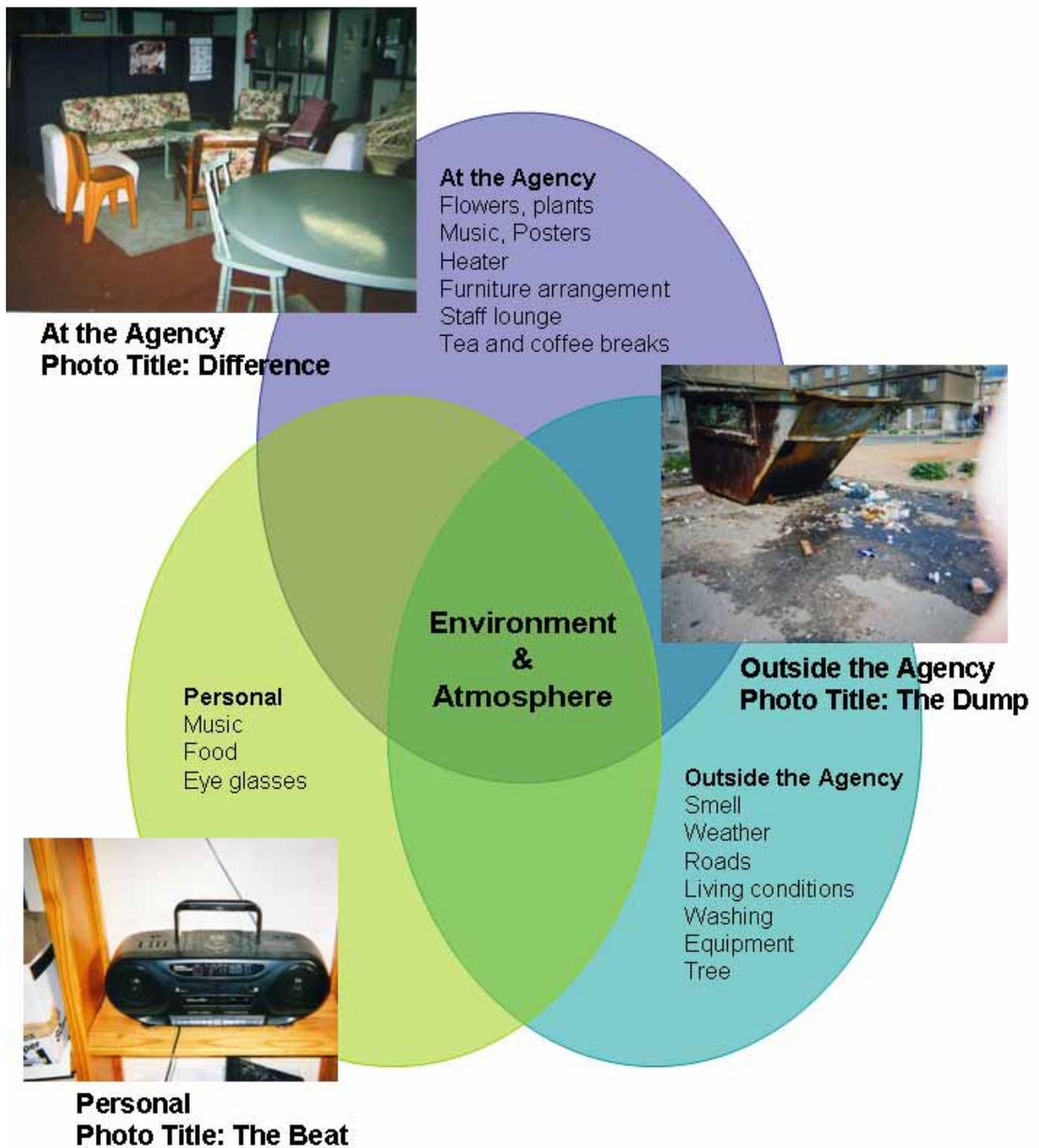


Figure 7.3: Environment and atmosphere

Using a combination of photographs, captions and narratives early social photographers in the early 1900's in North America visually exposed the squalid living and working

conditions of disenfranchised people. These social photographers were influential in exposing societal conditions that were prevalent at the time including unemployment, working conditions of factories, crowded tenement living conditions, exploitation of women and children laborers, dust bowl refugees, and the poor and homeless in urban and rural communities. Use of images to document social problems were effective in advocating for social reform (Huff, 1998; Stanczak, 2004).

Even today our living and working environments influences our behavior and the atmosphere affects our mood, attitude and motivation towards life. Social work as a profession is sensitive to and understands the significance environment and atmosphere can have on developing working relationships with clients and colleagues. The work atmosphere for social workers according to Botha (2000:201) is that the “workplace and working conditions of social workers should always be adequate, inspiring and professional.”

Students’ photographs of clients’ living environment and students’ working environments reflect the common struggles and challenges both face. The saying “one half of the world does not know how the other half lives” captures the essence of the photographed images and written reflections students produced.

7.2.2.1 At the agency domain

Students who primarily provide services at an agency or school were very attentive in creating a warm, comfortable and inviting atmosphere for their clients. This was seen in a number of photographs. Two photographs were of plants titled “**My Motivation for Life**” and “**The Group Plant.**” The symbolism of life and growth that plants provide was seen by the students in counseling clients and as well as helping the students grow as professionals.

The photograph “**The Group Plant**” “*was significant to the group process to help develop group cohesion as the plant grew. The message helped show clients how caring for the plant enabled it to grow. I was able to show them that life skills and caring for ourselves is also important in order for our successful growth. Flags were planted in the soil, decorated by the group members with their names. This served as an effective way to terminate the group process.*” The student further reflects the importance that caring for

the plant was personally symbolic to her in recognizing the need to develop a more balanced lifestyle.

Other artifacts include a bouquet of flowers, music, portable heater, trash can and arrangement of furniture. All artifacts reflect students' attempts in being sensitive in creating an atmosphere conducive to developing relationships with their clients. A few examples of these efforts include the following.

“The Bouquet of Smiles” photograph of flowers helps the student lighten her mood while facilitating services to her clients and she believes *“a social worker must be in a good mood to ensure friendliness, trust and warmth. Being in a good mood expresses friendliness and kindness.”*

A photograph of a portable heater titled **“Comfort”** creates an opportunity for the student to get inside information of the whereabouts of the teenagers in her community. *“In a very informal way I learn about the community, their resources and youth activities. The heater is also very important when I see individual clients, their parents, and even grandparents, because it creates a warm, comfortable atmosphere. This is very important during assessments/interventions, especially when there are a lot of emotions involved. Being warm and comfortable plays a great role in one's mood. To be comfortable and warm makes it easier to talk than being cold.”*

A photograph of a trash can titled **“My Office Cleaner”** conveys the importance of a “neat and tidy” office space that describes the significance of cleanliness and order in the work environment so clients are not distracted when students are providing counseling services. The arrangement and comfort of furniture was also important in creating an atmosphere conducive to counseling.

The general atmosphere of the agency and how students felt welcomed by staff was important in their attitude toward their field experience. Enjoying a cup of tea or coffee with staff after seeing clients is significant. If a student's basic needs are met, she can move forward to self-actualizing her needs, much in the same way it is with her clients.

“Since my first year at the University we've learned the importance of Maslows hierarchy of needs, with the basic need being physical. It is such a wonderful experience to come

from the cold after a long interview and have a cup of hot tea. It fulfills my basic needs and thus allows me to render better service. I've learned to take care of myself from basic physical needs to self actualization needs with as much care and consideration as I have when taking care of clients."

Another student recognizes the importance of a tea or coffee break for the opportunities it provides in getting acquainted with the staff and the realization of how the break helps reenergize the student. *"The coffee is significant as it is during coffee breaks and lunch time in that I am able to get to know my co-workers on a more informal manner. I enjoy this as it sets the ground for improved professional relationships as I feel more confident in knowing what to expect from co-workers and how to approach them. I have learned that it is very important to take a break and relax in order to "recharge my batteries." I have realized that social workers are not perfect people and need to take a break once in a while in order to function effectively."*

In summary, students are very thoughtful in preparing their office area so it is attractive and comfortable for clients. Just as important is the acceptance students feel they have with agency staff when socializing during tea and coffee breaks. The hot tea and coffee not only recharge weary students but also provides the opportunity to become better acquainted and feel more confident with staff. The literature shows that the support and acceptance students experience at the agency is more important than the actual physical atmosphere (Gitterman, 2004).

7.2.2.2 Outside the agency domain

The working environment that students practice in with clients outside the agency is very significant and meaningful to the study. The photographs of poverty reflected in clients' living and working conditions is indisputable. Dilapidated homes and unsanitary living conditions are not new to the story telling of poverty. What is exceptional is the impact these conditions have on social work students who work in these environments. Because students were not allowed to photograph clients for this study their choice of photographed artifacts, scenes and places required critical thinking that does not trivialize the messages they want to convey. Many photographs including four Delphi ranked photographs titled **"Home Sweet Home"** **"Washing Basket"** **"Outside Washing Machine"** and **"The Backyard Interview"**, illustrate the conditions of clients' living

environment and students' work environment. All four photographs are located in Appendix A. It is not only the visual images one sees but by reading students' reflections, one can image the smell of rubbish through the photographs titled "**The Dump**" and "**Big Stink**" of dog waste, and other unsanitary conditions and the impact they have on students.

"I have found the terrible smell that I experience in the Ottery Flats nauseating and it is very off-putting. I lose concentration when trying not to inhale through my nose as the smell is really awful at times."

"The rubbish bin represents the filth in the area. I have found it very difficult not to be taken aback or put off by the dirty area in which the clients live. It is difficult to maintain a professional relationship when one is surrounded by dirt in the community because it divides my attention because I feel uncomfortable."

Even a tree symbolically reminds a student how weather affects her direct practice with clients. *"This big tree stands in front of the organization. It is a typical symbol of the time of year. It also symbolizes the cold temperatures to work in and the suffering of the clients in the cold."*

Students know first hand what clients' living environments are like because they visit clients in their homes which also functions as their out-of-agency office. Despite the challenges these circumstances pose, students conduct themselves professionally and are respectful to their clients. By learning to trust their intuition in responding to a variety of circumstances, students gain confidence and experience less self-doubt in field (Ringel, 2003).

7.2.2.3 Personal domain

One student brings music from home to play in her office at school to help create an atmosphere that is attractive to teenagers. Her photograph titled "**The Beat**" helps the student attract attention to her office providing a welcoming setting for adolescents to stop by and eventually feel comfortable in sharing their problems. Music is also used in her group work interventions. The student reports *"music is something that they (teenagers)*

can relate to. Because there is a big age difference between myself and the school pupils, music helps to generate informal conversation.”

A photograph of a pair of reading glasses titled “**The Eyes**” is significant to one student who thinks that wearing glasses when she works with clients make her look like a teacher, which she is not, and because children think she looks angry when she wears her glasses. The glasses are also important when writing reports because if she doesn’t wear them she tends to get a headache resulting in a bad mood.

Another student talks about bringing food to her clients during group work at a squatter camp, because she thinks the children are not getting enough food at home. The lack of food results in children not being able to pay attention during the group session. The food was introduced as an ice breaker, *“all we did was eat; it really made them feel comfortable and they looked forward to it.”* By providing food during group work the student felt successful in meeting her clients’ basic needs of hunger.

These examples represent conscious efforts on students’ part to create an atmosphere that is conducive to developing meaningful relationships with their clients. Bringing personal items from home and spending their own money to provide food for group activities further illustrate this commitment.

The next theme on transportation seriously impacts students’ in a number of ways. From getting to and from the agency, use of agency vehicles and complications of poorly marked roads and other conditions effect students’ attitudes and what they can accomplish during field work.

7.2.3 Theme 3: Transportation

The third theme on transportation has implications that can negatively have effects on how students’ deliver services to clients’ in need. Figure 7.4 provides a look into how complicated the process of getting to work and seeing clients can be for students’.

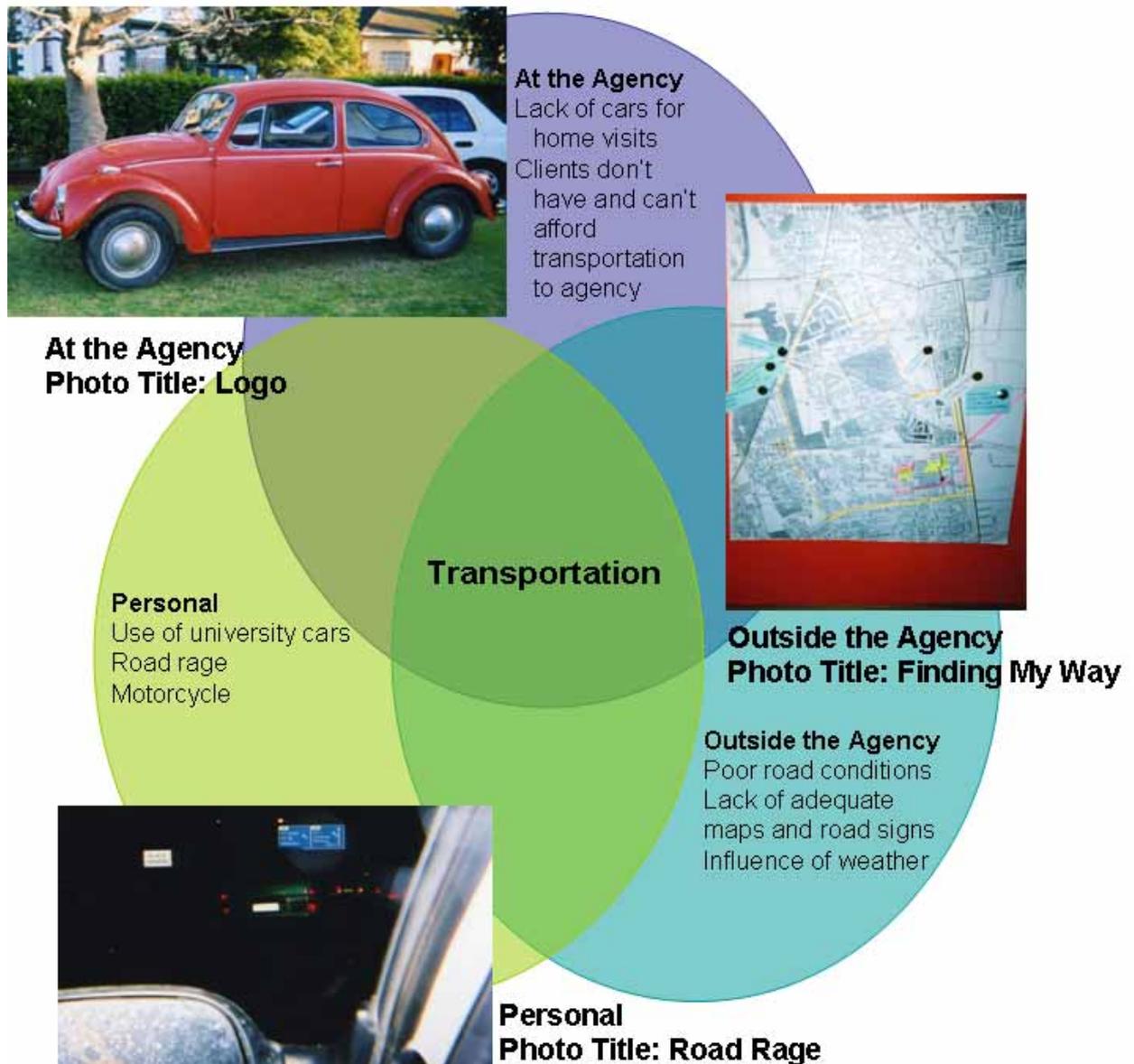


Figure 7.4: Transportation

In today's world many people rely on their personal cars or public systems to meet their transportation needs. In South Africa personal cars, buses, taxis and trains provide a variety of transportation choices. However; many of the poor clients students work with

cannot afford any means of transportation. This means students rely on agency transportation to reach their clients.

7.2.3.1 At the agency domain

A majority of clients do not come to the agency for services because they cannot afford transportation or they cannot leave their responsibilities at home. Therefore, students are required to make home visits. Students rely on agencies to provide the needed transportation to make home visits in the community. There are limited vehicles at agencies so securing transportation is not always a possibility. The importance of having transportation is reflected in the following quote: *“I have learned how valuable it is to have transportation in order to be able to see clients. Having the use of a vehicle is extremely important for a social worker, especially, in South Africa.”*

Vehicles that have the agency logo or are distinct looking, like an orange colored Volkswagen from one agency, are recognized in the community by clients and even dogs. The dogs are in terrible shape but come running in hopes the driver will throw bread to them. Not all workers feed the dogs, however; the student reports that it helps keep the dogs at bay, even though she’s been bitten a few times. The student’s quote reflects the image a car represents in her field experience *“I don’t distribute food, but the dogs still come.”* Without the words that are attached to the photograph, the viewer would not understand how poverty affects even the lives of dogs who are striving to survive just like their owners.

7.2.3.2 Outside agency domain

Some students must use university transportation to get to their field work agencies because not all students have personal transportation. Once students arrive at their agencies they use agency cars to make home visits. University cars are available for students to use for field work. All students pay for transportation. It is included in their tuition fees, and as a result, are a source of discontentment with the students. This is also true according to Maidment (2003) who reports that the cost of travel and distance students drive to their agencies are an issue in field.

The students who must travel outside the Stellenbosch area need to leave at an early hour in the morning due to traffic and commuting delays. These students are especially frustrated with the traffic and delays in reaching their placements. A photograph titled “Road Rage” tells the story. *“I have to leave at 06:15 to get to Child Welfare at 08:00 because of the traffic. I cannot handle the bumper-to-bumper traffic, stop and go, stop and go. It is truly the bone of my practice education. The taxis are the worst, and because of them I can truly understand the full meaning of the term ‘road rage’.”*

Poor road conditions, inaccurate and incomplete road maps, poor road signage and the weather all affect the ability of students to reach their clients. *“Road signs and a map book play a huge part in my practice education. Because I only do home visits, I have to find my way to all my clients’ homes. This can be extremely frustrating because often clients live in a block of houses in a street, but in that street there are six different blocks of flats and none of them have a sign on them. Often the street name road signs are missing so you are not quite sure if you are in the right place. And if your client lives on a farm, that is one of the worst. Often the farms aren’t named and all that you will have for directions is the name at the corner at the farm and one area in which the farm is located. If feeling lost at any point, stop and ask for directions because invariably I am lost. Patience really and truly is a virtue.”*

Transportation is a precious commodity in field work because agencies have limited vehicles for students to use in making home visits. Commuting to field work agencies, poor road signage and road conditions create additional frustration for students. The financial impact of field work is reflected in the following comment from a social work student who took part in an Australian study that looked at problematic areas of practice education “The distance and cost of travel were too much. Financial assistance to travel would have been helpful. I know it is a government issue.” (Maidment, 2003:52). This comment is very similar to concerns South African social work students expressed in this study.

7.2.3.3 *Personal domain*

Having to pay fees for transport as part of tuition fees in order to use university transportation irritates the students who commute and is reflected in the following quote *“We are the only group that travels so far and this has been a major irritation for us because we basically feel sorry for ourselves! The fourth year is so busy and tiring already and the far distance to work just doubles the fatigue and stress. I have found the long distance very annoying and have had to work hard at not letting it affect my mood negatively; therefore, also the quality of my work.”*

The irritation, however; gives way to one student’s ability to see the bigger picture regarding transportation issues and by doing so she increases her ability to learn from the situation *“Sometimes we have to be tougher than the situation we find ourselves in. I have learned to accept the irritation of the far distance that we travel and I now concentrate on controlling the potential negative effect on my mood. I see the value in the learning experience and realize that the rougher the situation, the more I can learn.”*

Some students are very annoyed and irritated with their transportation arrangements. The fatigue and stress of field work and university coursework appear to add to their discontent regarding transportation.

The next theme is on frustration and stress. While students struggle with issues at the agency and outside the agency that cause stress, it appears their personal lives suffer the most from the expectations and demands placed on them.

7.2.4 **Theme 4: Frustration and stress**

The third theme on frustration and stress presented through students’ photographs and writing leaves the reader without any doubt how students’ are experiencing and handling, or not handling their stress. Figure 7.5 gives intimate insight into students’ concerns and fears.

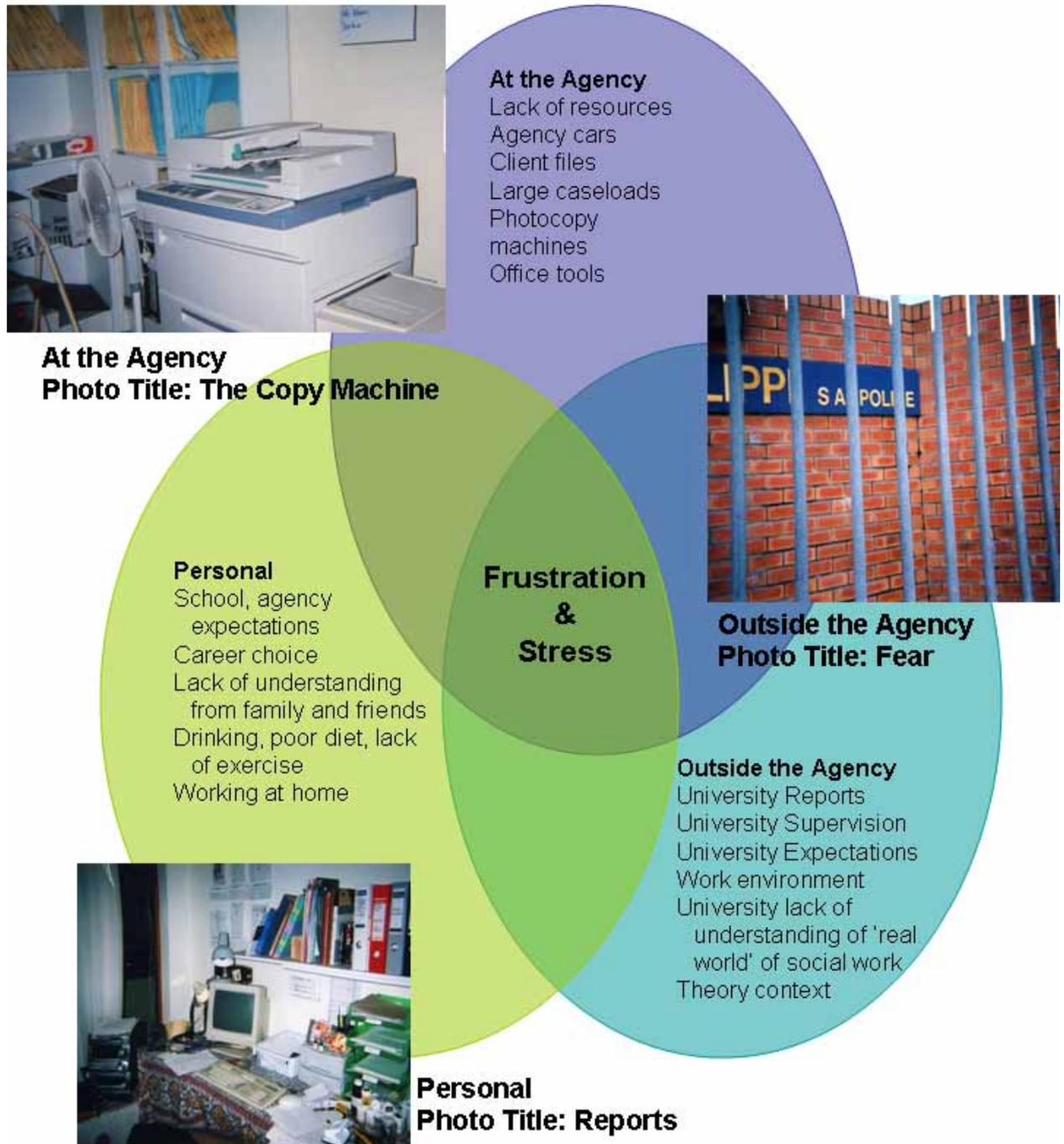


Figure 7.5 Frustration and stress

Stress and burnout are common problems for people in the helping professions. Agency budgets are experiencing more economic restraint and as a result there is more work-related stress that appears to be on the rise (Maidment, 2003). The way students frame stressors and react to them, in either negative, positive or a combined response, are critical to the success of students' field work experience and their career as beginning professional social workers. A negative response could leave a student feeling overwhelmed or intimidated that could lead to the misuse of alcohol or drugs to cope with their stress (Carol, Kropf & Price, 1993). A positive response could help the student see the stressor as a challenge and valuable learning experience. A combined reaction could result in a student fluctuating between the two responses (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007:39). Participants in this study fluctuated in how they responded to frustration and stress in all three domains.

7.2.4.1 At the agency domain

The stress students express at their agency placements mainly revolves around the demands of required report writing, lack of resources, managing large caseloads and lack of time to accomplish what is expected of them. What adds to students' stress is the requirement to make multiple copies of reports and the time consuming tasks of putting the reports in files. Many of these files are secured with an antiquated system of using laces and string to bind the file.

Students are required to submit numerous reports of their productivity in field to the university. The administration card reflects students' planning and monthly statistics at the agency. *"I think to relieve stress is to plan carefully and plan ahead so there are not so many struggles. They (university) teach us to always plan. I think all must do it. Show us ways to be plan full. Must turn in our administration card – shows how we plan, do diaries, and monthly statistics."*

Report writing is frustrating and stressful to students, mainly because of the duplication of reports. One student's frustration with the reporting system is reflected in her excerpt. *"I truly understand the importance of it (report writing) but I find it very frustrating because here at the organisation the format is very simple. The university has the same format but it is a little bit different and we can't just take the report we wrote here and hand it in, we have to use their format and I find I'm duplicating the work and it's very frustrating"*

because it's exactly the same work. Do they know that? I tell them but the university says it's what they require. At this organisation my supervisor wants to have documentation on my clients every day, I can't leave it for later because I'm not here every day and she wants to know exactly what's happening with my files. All my reports are kept up to date, daily, then I go back to university and rewrite everything again and I find that very, very frustrating. I would understand if it was different like an evaluation report, it's a totally different form, format from what we normally do but on general process notes I don't understand why we can't photostat (photocopy) and hand them in, I find it all very, very frustrating. I try to understand, I try."

The lack of resources students can utilize in their direct service to clients and through referral is frustrating and stressful to students. They know the limited amount of available assistance is not enough to meet clients' needs. The lack of resources students can access when providing direct service to clients and through referrals is frustrating and stressful to students, mainly because of the reality in knowing there is a limited amount of available assistance for clients. Regardless, the sharing of knowledge that can be transferred in helping make resources available to clients is important only if you share it, as one student reflects *"Knowledge is telling someone something when you share it with someone else – if we don't share it can't become knowledge. There's reward seeing someone share knowledge, growing themselves. The moment you share it (resources) it becomes knowledge."*

Supervisors' lack of sensitivity to students' feelings and reactions regarding their experiences is both disturbing and stressful to students. The significance is illustrated in the student's reflection: *"I was removing a client and it was the first time I had ever done something like this. It was really hectic for me because it was the first time I had ever done something like this; taking this client away from his home. The supervisor said "what's happening and she said make sure you write the report and didn't go knowing this was my first time doing this how and didn't even ask, how do you feel? There was nothing like that and it was a one to one session with her and she said just make sure you use the correct form so we didn't even discuss the emotions one thinks one would be there. Knowing I would have had this experience (supervisor) you would think they would ask how I felt."*

Botha (2000) points out that there are many different models and approaches to supervision in social work. One very important aspect is the supportive function of the supervisor toward the student. Given the stressful nature and complexities of work social workers do, it is understandable that there are issues with stress and burn-out in the profession. Supervisors do not always act empathetically towards students because it may be regarded as a therapeutic relationship and they do not want to treat students like clients.

In addition, the culture of participating parties as it relates to guidelines and standards must be taken into account in the supervisory process (Ming-sum & Wui-shing, 1997). Participants in this study received supervision from the agency and university on a weekly basis.

7.2.4.2 Outside agency domain

The main frustration and stress students report outside the agency is primarily with the university. Required report writing, statistics and other documentation are the primary sources of frustration, as well as the perceived lack of attention to South African culture in coursework. In addition, the authority and knowledge faculty portray, is revered but according to students seems to be lacking sensitivity in regard to their concerns.

Examples of student excerpts regarding report writing include: *“I talked to my supervisor and she talked to university supervisor about reports but nothing has changed. It’s the way the university does it, they have their reasons, I try to understand.”*

“Report writing is the bone of my life. I fully understand the importance of report writing but I find it extremely frustrating having to write reports about interviews with my clients, using the agencies format. Then I have to rewrite exactly the same report but using the format that the university requires. I feel that this process is a waste of time and all it does is add to one’s workload.”

“I can write a report and make it sound like I’m the best student but I’m not necessarily that. I can make it sound like I know exactly what I’m doing but I could be actually clueless. Until they sit and really talk with you they’re (university) not going to know that.”

An example of a student's concern with course content (theory) not being relevant to her field work with South African clients is reflected in the following excerpt: *"We learn all this but when you deal with the client this person is quite often illiterate and uneducated. I'm not helping them at all if I walk in with my big book on Freud I want to go in and apply all this but the practice experience we get now isn't complete. Sometimes it's like talking to them like a child because they don't know things. You have to simplify everything so what's the point with all the theory, it's impractical, you can't apply it here."*

The time and efforts students spend on report writing was a common complaint. Students did not think the university acknowledged these concerns and as a result students were frustrated with the amount of required report writing.

7.2.4.3 Personal domain

Personal frustration and stress for students were illustrated in a number of ways. The balance of work and school, poor eating habits, and lack of exercise, drinking, personal safety, financial concerns, career decisions and frustrations with curriculum content are prominent concerns.

The following students' personal excerpts reflect students' frustrations with field work and university requirements. *"When I think of the computer, I picture and remember the many late nights (at home) spent writing reports for university purposes. This is usually a frustrating experience that leaves me tired and wishing for sleep."* And, *"hours, and hours in front of the computer. It's so endless, it carries on forever."*

"I spend more time writing the reports than I do with the clients. If I spent as much time with them as I do writing reports, I think they would be sick of me. It, (report writing) trivializes to me the importance of the client. It's a necessary thing, writing a report, but we write it over and over. I really felt this today. Sometimes what I write isn't really the issue. If you can use agency time to write reports, but we spend hours and hours writing reports at home."

Poor eating habits and lack of exercise are reflected in the following students' personal excerpts: *"My schedule is very full and I find myself not having time to exercise and when I*

do have time I feel tired and lazy. I do not like this and feel unfit and unhappy about being so unfit. I believe strongly in being fit and that with more energy one can perform better in all areas of life. I feel that this is lacking in my life and I struggle to find a way to deal with the issue. It's such a long day, get home I don't exercise. The emotional side of everything you see. Eating habits are terrible; no time for exercise."

"I have also learned that having a balance is important. As a social worker you have to take time off and completely forget about work."

One student's struggle with drinking as a method of relaxation to relieve stress is reflected in the following student's personal excerpt: *"When I go to the bar after field work, I get upset but don't show it. I have the first one (beer) by myself and then my boyfriend comes. What I need to do, is to try to relax and make sense out of everything. This keeps me sane. After a days hard work I am always very upset and pissed off at society in general. I try to put things into perspective and not take my work home with me. This is very difficult to me and almost never works, but somehow I make myself believe that it is all going to be okay."* And, my supervisor at University knows that *"It's a well known fact, I don't handle stress very well."*

Personal concerns regarding student safety are reflected in detail in the Safety and Transportation Themes. One example of a commuting student's concern with safety is reflected in the following personal excerpt *"Traffic, taxis, leaving when it's dark coming home when it's dark."*

Many students struggle with money while they are in college or at university. This student's personal excerpt reflects her immediate concerns as a student and as a beginning social work professional in South Africa. *"Money is a worry for me and is therefore significant for the social work profession. In South Africa, social workers make very little money. In fact, I could make the equivalent of my starting salary working as a waitress. I have a huge study loan and have studied for four years at a good university and it is therefore a concern to me that I will not be able to make enough money to get through a month comfortably. Sometimes I feel that I was silly to study social work and at other times I feel it is noble; I guess I am undecided."*

Another factor that attributes to stress is that South African communities are becoming more dissatisfied with social workers who at one time were honored and trusted are now seen as being ineffective, inefficient and interfering. The lack of confidence from the community results in less financial support resulting in fewer services of less quality. The resulting tension can affect a social worker's moral and threaten their personal integrity (Botha, 2000:196-198).

The following student's personal excerpt reflects her concern in defending her career choice in social work to friends and family who do not validate her choice of study. Despite the lack of support the student validates her career choice and takes pride in her commitment to helping those less fortunate. *"To say I study social work is such an issue; number one, you always want to feel validated in what you do and what you do means something. The reaction of people is the misconception of social work. They think I'm studying a Mickey Mouse course. They don't think we work hard. They think they are clever and we are stupid that's why we come to do this. It's almost like you feel you want to disguise what you do because you want to feel people to see what you've done, everybody wants that in life. With social work you don't get that. You have to settle for less. If you're going to be a social worker forever you must just settle for less. People don't validate what you do, they don't understand it. Until you go through this process you'll never know. It's also been such a learning curve, you learn the true meaning of being noble and the true meaning of having to be wise about people and perceptive and use your intuition and that's what leaves me smiling. It's like a perfect way to a little saying, if somebody asks me about how I feel knowing you and all I could do is smile, you learn the true meaning of being noble and the true meaning of having to be wise about people and perceptive and use your intuition and sometimes you can say so much more in silence. To me that that's what social work is all about. If you ask me what I do I don't need to tell you anything because you'll never be able to understand until you've been there. I can practically say I've done this but in terms of what it has meant to me it's like words can't describe, it's such a learning curve. When you look at all the aspects of my life, personally things that have happened in my life and I put it all together it's been a grand experience for me."*

A few students during the photo-elicitation interviews shared their interests in pursuing advanced degrees in law and social policy. Other students talked about working in Britain

for a few years after graduation so they could earn enough money to repay their students loans before returning to South Africa. In doing so, students' money concerns regarding low social work salaries would not be such an issue.

“Family law is what I’m thinking of. I have a passion to help people but don’t want to work one on one with people. I like organizing and mobilizing resources. Definitely will use my social work in law even, if it’s just in communication skills.”

One student wanted to study psychology as an undergraduate but the program of study was too long and she did not want to be a burden on her parents. She plans to work part-time on getting her masters in psychology.

Students had numerous frustrations with the university. One major issue is the length and rigidity of report writing. Other issues, according to students are the lack of theories being taught in the classroom that are applicable to South African culture.

Photographs of report writing include such titles as “The Big Pain”. The title alone shows the sentiment students have regarding university report writing. One student’s opinion of the process follows.

“Report writing is the bone of my life. I fully understand the importance of report writing but I find it extremely frustrating having to write reports about interviews with my clients, using the agencies format. Then I have to rewrite exactly the same report but using the format that the University requires. I feel that this process is a waste of time and all it does is add to one’s workload.”

International social work literature from South Africa confirms students’ observations regarding British and American influence on curriculum content. Personal excerpts reflect the lack of South African culture in their coursework. *“So many of our textbooks are written by British and American authors that aren’t cultivated to the South African way of life and South African culture. Your working and adapting things the way you think is may be right and it might not be the right way to do it, there could be a better way. I don’t think we have enough theory focused on our culture.”*

A photograph of graffiti titled **“The Sub Culture of Clients”** reflects gang work a student encounters in her field work. The photograph reinforces how important it is for a social

worker to understand her clients' culture: *"To work with a specific person, (client) the social worker must understand his beliefs, religion, and group classification to be able to empower the situation."* And *"theories in context are not always appropriate for South Africa."*

Frustration and stress was prevalent in all three domains. Issues with report writing, lack of agency resources, a perceived lack of sensitivity from supervisors regarding students' concerns and the feeling of disconnect between theory and practice when working with clients. Poor eating habits, lack of exercise, money and drinking are examples of students' stress.

The next theme on inspiration, coping and hope covers a combination of concrete and abstract concepts students reflect upon regarding their current situation and plans for the future.

7.2.5 Theme 5: Inspiration, coping and hope

The fifth theme on inspiration, coping and hope leave little doubt that these issues are on students' minds as they wrestle with the complexities of their field work experiences and as they give consideration to what their future holds in store for them. Figure 7.6 gives personal insight into students' thoughts and feelings about their lives and the work that they are doing.

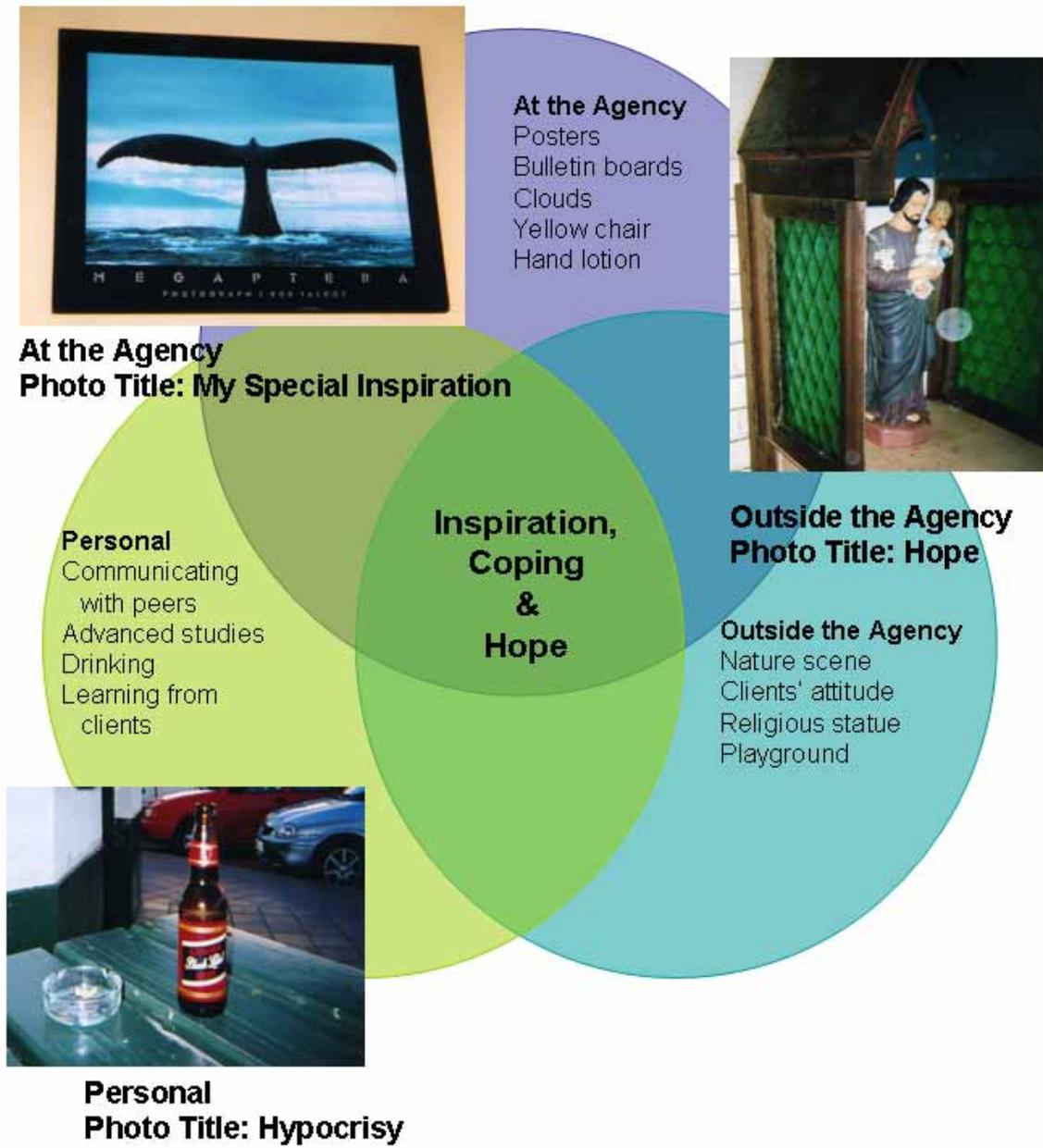


Figure 7.6: Inspiration, coping and hope

Participants were inspired by tangible artifacts. Posters with sayings and colorful pictures provide students with encouragement and motivation. More abstract examples are students

own reflections and personal insights that help them cope with their field work experiences. Students' hopes reflect their anticipation that things will get better for their clients despite the realism that, as students, they cannot change everything and have few resources to offer clients. Both the students and their clients are doing their best to manage with what little they each have.

7.2.5.1 At the agency domain

Visual images of posters, prose, and thoughts for the day serve as inspiration to students who reflect upon words and meaning to help them cope with the challenging work they do with impoverished, disenfranchised clients. The importance of creating a calm, supportive atmosphere that is conducive to communicating with clients is a major goal students hope to achieve.

Examples of inspiration and hope include: *“Always have a picture of inspiration in the office to give you and your client the calmness to communicate. Communication is important to build a relationship between client and social worker.”*

A photograph of a picture titled **“My Special Inspiration”** is one student's way to gather inner calmness. *“This picture serves as an inspiration to me to express myself to my clients. It has significant value to me because it gives me the calmness or serenity to understand my clients and to be empathetic towards their situations/circumstances. The significance of understanding and empathy is an important principle to enhance the communication and intervention process. It has significant value to me because it gives me the calmness or serenity to understand my clients and to be empathetic towards their situations/circumstances.”*

A photograph titled **“Thought For The Day”** poster is positioned for the student to see when she greets clients at her office. The poster provides her an opportunity to reflect upon the respect she has for clients' needs *“Every time I read the thought of the day, it is my inspiration to help my clients (school children). It is always in my view when I open the door for my clients. It lets me think before I bring a tear into clients' eyes. It enables me to have respect and interest for my clients' problems and situations.”* The student is composing and preparing herself for the unhappy news she delivers regarding the lack of resources she has to offer her clients.

One student's photograph titled "**Greener Pastures**" is a photograph of sky and clouds that the student sees outside her agency window and provides insight into her coping abilities. The student thinks the sky is peaceful and calming and provides her the realization that field work is just one part of life and can't be all consuming. *"Social work as a profession is not the be all and end all .You can only do so much. One must focus on remembering that you aren't all powerful. Some things you can't change must accept. You might not have the impact you want to have. If something doesn't work out it's not always your fault, there are greater forces that are there – it's a powerful thing, the expanse of life."*

The photograph also helps the student remember her life outside work; friends, family and good times. She values all of them and appreciates their support and friendship.

Looking at the photograph of the sky and clouds also reminds the student to look past her frustrations in order to focus on possible outcomes.

"A Kind Touch" is a photograph of a bottle of lotion that has a poster sitting behind it with the saying "How Beautiful a Day Can Be When Kindness Touches It". This student finds the message to be inspirational and symbolic. As a social worker she believes one should approach his/her services with a kind touch. *"Having pleasant smelling cream to keep my hands soft is symbolic to a soft touch when working with clients."*

"My Thinking Chair" is a photograph of a preschool plastic yellow chair that the social work student uses after seeing her clients but before she writes her reports. The chair helps the student to cope so she can *"switch off for a few seconds in order to clear my head so that I can think straight, professionally and effectively."* The student finds that her works with clients around issues of family violence, alcoholism and other drug dependencies can be disturbing so using the chair helps her think of ways to help *"relieve their agony."*

Students shared in the photo-elicitation interviews that the process of reflecting on their work through photographs resulted in learning that they use numerous objects and scenes at their agencies for inspiration, coping and hope that they had not considered before participating in the study.

7.2.5.2 *Outside the agency domain*

The photograph of a nature scene titled **“Perspective”** is one way a student copes with her field work experiences. By appreciating the beauty of the scene she reminds herself that there is still some beauty left in the world and that for a moment she tries to be calm and gain perspective. She acknowledges that the photograph is out of focus and that it is significant because *“I was very rushed, as usual, when I took it. Although I try to take it easy, it is not ever that easy.”* The student drives by this scene on her way to the wine farms and it serves as a reminder for the student not to get dragged down by the work that she does and acknowledges that it is difficult for her to stay focused and maintain a balance.

Students’ photographs and reflections of clients’ homes and their surroundings illustrate the resiliency and coping mechanisms of the human spirit to survive in environments that are difficult to comprehend. It is not only the clients who suffer but also the students working in these environments who are trying cope with their experiences and make sense of the injustice. *“I have to remind myself not to be judgmental. People are a product of their past and it is not my fault. I am only human and not responsible for saving the world, AND, everyone has coping mechanisms.”*

“Life can be harsh and unfair. I have learned that people can be very resilient and no matter how harsh their circumstances, they somehow manage to do the best with what they have.”

One student’s feelings of helplessness are reflected in her photography titled **“The Duck Pond”** that describes the circumstances animals live with in impoverished areas.” *For me as a social work student, one of the hardest things is to see the animals when moving in the field. They are underfed, locked up in small cages, fastened to chairs. The animals don’t know of any better circumstances. I can do nothing to help them.”*

One student’s photograph of a statuette of Jesus Christ with a baby is titled **“Hope”**. This photograph reflects hopefulness and reminds her that everyone needs to hold on to something greater than their selves to survive and that there is hope, even in the most devastating circumstances. The student attributes a religious studies course that helped her learn how to work with clients with different religious beliefs. She believes that a better

understanding of religion makes it easier to help clients. According to the student, *“religion plays a fundamental role in social work”* and that *“if everything in life goes wrong, you must believe that there will be hope and better days.”*

Students maintain composure and have learned to cope with the situation when visiting clients in their homes despite the feelings of helplessness that students feel: *“You go in and you feel apprehensive because everything looks dirty but you can’t be like that with your clients. You go in and you have to sit on the bed and you can see it’s dirty and it’s harsh and I’m feeling awkward but this is their home and I find that difficult but I’ve learned to deal with it. To see this little baby lying on this bed, they (clients) do their best to keep it as clean as possible but it will never be as clean as it should be for the baby and it’s hard to see stuff like that and you want to take the baby home, clean it and give it clean clothes but you can’t.”*

Inspiration and hope students reflected upon were inspired through their symbolic photographs of nature and religious statues. By learning to cope with their situation, students appear to be as resilient as their clients and manage to do the best they can despite feeling overwhelmed and helpless at times.

Ringel (2003:24-25) states that the feelings of helplessness experienced by beginning social workers could be the result of students’ not wanting to appear confused, helpless or inexperienced with supervisors and clients. A problem that can develop is students feel that they mistakenly are experts and have over confidence in their abilities to possibly cover up their fears as being seen as inexperienced. Showing signs of pressure to “be omnipotent” students think they can solve all their clients’ problems which is an unrealistic expectation. By students experiencing their own helplessness it is possible that students could develop a closer empathetic bond with their clients. The reflective process can help in processing these counter transference issues. This study incorporated the self-reflection process through the photographs students took and through their written reflections. The combination of techniques gave students the opportunity to further explore their feelings of helplessness and despair.

7.2.5.3 *Personal domain*

Students receive support from one another, especially those who spend time commuting together to and from their field work sites. Although students complain about the commuting arrangements and are frustrated with the situation, the relationships they develop and peer support they receive appear beneficial in helping students cope with the emotional demands of field work. *“Support group is peers when we drive - you keep it light at times, try to joke about things. We discuss everything with one another, relying on one another. Peers have support from one another too. We are all very, very close.”*

Overall students seem to gain inspiration and hope from their clients who teach them how they live and cope with their environments. *“The field experience is incredible because the people I work with teach you the way they live. They also teach you coping skills and a positive attitude to life”* and *“a lot of my clients don’t always have the best of circumstances, but some are trying their best to have food on the table, clean their clothes. About every client I work with struggles to survive.”*

One student personally takes pride in feeling that her work with children has had an impact on their lives. Despite the children’s unpleasant home circumstances, she believes they achieve above expectations. Another student who works with children feels sad because of the stress children experience at home. *“There’s no food in the house. What’s their inspiration – they don’t have any inspiration. Parents are not educated – can’t help them with their academic work. What is the future of these children? They drop out of school 6-7th grade. No inspiration, no education.”* The student feels that her work with the children has resulted in positive changes in their behavior and school work because she is able to give them individual attention. As a result, the student considers herself to be an important person in the lives of these children.

One very personal example that demonstrates how a student copes with her field work is the student who drinks after field work because she believes drinking helps keep her sane. The title she gives the photograph is titled **“Hypocrite”** and by doing so acknowledges feeling like a hypocrite because she works with clients who have substance abuse problems but rationalizes her drinking because *“it helps me put my life into perspective.”* The student finds it difficult not to take her work home with her and says *“it almost never works, but somehow I make myself believe that it is all going to be okay.”*

Another student has learned to cope with clients' living conditions by saying *"You go in and you feel apprehensive because everything looks dirty but you can't be like that with your clients. You go in and you have to sit on the bed and you can see it's dirty and it's harsh and I'm feeling awkward but this is their home and I find that difficult but I've learned to deal with it."*

Some students are hopeful that they might be of more assistance to clients professionally and able to meet their own financial needs if they pursue training and degrees in other areas than social work *"In a practical sense, I have learned that I will have to work hard and study further if I plan to earn a decent living as a social worker. The money concern has forced me to explore my other interests that I might be able to focus on in furthering my career and this has lead to an interest in policy planning. I have learned that the realm of possibility is a lot bigger than what I originally realized."*

Supportive supervision from university and the agencies is one way supervisors and faculty can show their concern and reinforce that they are interested in and care about the students who are struggling with emotional and academic demands.

The next theme covers the area of transferable skills. The learning activities students encounter at the university and experience in practice education settings provides students opportunities to build upon their developing collection of knowledge, values and skills that they will continue to grow throughout their careers.

7.2.6 Theme 6: Transferable skills

The sixth theme on transferable skills reflect the integration of acquired knowledge, values and skills students' have learned in the classroom and are applying in practice education. The final capstone field work experience provides the setting for students' to demonstrate these skills in a variety of ways. Figure 7.7 illustrates how students demonstrate their acquired knowledge, values and skills.



Figure 7.7: Transferable skills

Transferable skills participants demonstrated through their photographs and written reflections encompass the four primary transferable skills discussed in Chapter Two and

include the general outcomes of practice education at the Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch. Transferable skills are also referred to as knowledge, skills and attitudes/values and are typically divided into similar content categories. The set of content categories referred to in this study include: (1) communication and presentation skills, (2) teamwork or interpersonal skills, (3) management, organizing and planning skills and (4) intellectual, creative and problem-solving skills (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**; Orton *et al.*, 2003; Izumo *et al.*, 2002). This section will provide examples of participants' skills in the three domains; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal* domain.

7.2.6.1 At the agency domain

Communication skills are exemplified by the required agency reports and other documentation. Confidentiality and respect for clients' files illustrates students' professional conduct and values that are demonstrated in a variety of responses. Examples include a photograph of a cupboard used for files. The student wishes she could have her own file case that has a lock, because she was taught the importance of confidentiality as it relates to the Code of Ethics she learned in her course work at university. When students gather for breaks at field work they talk and share information and sympathize with each other but "*never mention names because of confidentiality.*" Even a fax machine that is found useful for copying reports for university purposes is not used to send reports to other agencies. The importance of safeguarding clients' confidentiality is reflected by one student "*I've never faxed anything where there is a risk of confidentiality.*" Students are very responsible in keeping confidential information safe by securing files and not participating in any discussions that would breach the confidentiality students have with their clients.

Managing the demands of university courses, field work, part-time jobs and other commitments requires students to be organized planners. The importance of planning is reflected in the following quote "*It is necessary to organize a week ahead so that you will be prepared for every client, every group and every meeting you may have, because we don't just do practical work, you have to organize all your preparations around your lecture times.*"

Planning for a community project reflects the importance planning has for one student. *“Planning is important. There is truth in the saying, proper preparation prevents poor performance.”* The opportunity for the student to learn about finding donations and developing relationships with key resources also reflects her teamwork and interpersonal skills.

Intellectual, creative and problem solving skills participants displayed were reflected in the following examples. One student uses crayons as writing tools in her group work in a photograph titled **“Participation.”** She writes that in a group setting *“crayons are inexpensive and allow the adult to feel comfortable and maybe more open to the session than the use of a pen could create”* and *“crayons also enable each party to participate.”* This method helps the student develop relationships with her clients. Another example is one participant’s use of visual aids to help develop relationships with her clients *“I find that aids, which are visual, are very useful because many of the clients are illiterate and therefore, it is often impossible to use any form of written aids with them.”* One student who works with traumatized children photographed plastic dinosaurs and titled it **“Therapy.”** Working with aids like the “monster in you” helps her move to the child’s level that opens up many possibilities. The students are respectful of clients’ limited abilities and have adapted their methods to meet these needs.

Students’ teamwork and interpersonal skills are primarily demonstrated through their collegial relationship that they have with their peers and staff at the agency. Networking with outside agency personnel in securing services for clients, also reflects their abilities in developing professional relationships.

7.2.6.2 Outside the agency domain

An example of communication skill is reflected in the highly structured report writing the university requires of students. Report writing has been discussed at length throughout the chapter. Participants do not think that the university understands how stressful and redundant report writing is to them.

The demands of university reports, statistic documentation and other requirements frustrate the students. However; they do what is required and are respectful of authority of university supervisors. *“Report writing is significant to me because one of the main things*

that I associate with social work is the writing of reports. So much time has been spent writing reports for University purposes. It becomes frustrating because it is not the same way that reports need to be written in the practice. Sometimes it feels as if I am repeating myself in reports and never actually saying exactly what I want to because everything said must be written according to confusing criteria. This has been a big frustration to me as at times I feel that the highly structured report writing trivializes what we do in the practice of social work.” The student also understands that in any job there will be duties that a person likes and does not like to do. By learning to cope “*one must enjoy that which we like and do our best at that which we do not like to do.*”

One participant’s photograph of a tree in a school yard titled “**Flexibility**” illustrates the student’s problem solving abilities and need for social work students to adapt to a variety of situations during practice education. This tree is especially significant because the student must look there when a particular client hides himself in odd places when upset “*One of his favorite places is this tree. Often in order to conduct a session with the client I have to spend 15-20 minutes coaxing him out of the tree.*”

One student believes that social workers need to empower and support clients “*through social work developmental perspective. By teaching clients skills on how to help one another and self-assertion skills, families can connect and help one another through good and bad times.*”

Another participant feels she must be adaptable and creative in her work because the theory she learns at university is not always applicable “*We learn all this but when you deal with the client this person is quite often illiterate and uneducated. I’m not helping them at all if I walk in with my big book on Freud I want to go in and apply all this but the practice experience we get now isn’t complete. Sometimes it’s like talking to them like a child because they don’t know things. You have to simplify everything so what’s the point with all the theory, it’s impractical, you can’t apply it here. So many of our textbooks are written by British and American authors they aren’t cultivated to the South African way of life and South African culture. Your working and adapting things the way you think is may be right and it might not be the right way to do it, there could be a better way. I don’t think we have enough theory focused on our culture.*”

7.2.6.3 *Personal domain*

Students reflect their discipline and commitment to their field work responsibilities by completing required reports and other documentation after they leave the agency. Due to agency demands there is little time to complete university reports during work. This then results in students having to complete these reports at home in the evening. Discipline and planning are essential in order for students' to meet university requirements. A photograph titled "**The Never Ending Story**" seems an appropriate title this student chose to describe her feelings regarding report writing. *"In order to make the hours in front of the computer more bearable I have learned that planning is very important. If I plan my time well then it is not necessary to sit in front of the computer until all hours of the morning. I have learned that academic discipline is, however, necessary to achieve this."*

Students' non-judgmental attitudes and actions regarding their clients living conditions are expressed in a respectful, professional manner. Students exhibit high integrity and are especially diligent in preparing themselves emotionally for work in less than desirable places. Maintaining the dignity of their clients is very evident in their reflections.

The photograph of dog waste titled "**The Big Stink**" reminds one student that when working in poor communities *"you always walk starring at the ground so you don't step in dog poop. Clients accept it, the smell is terrible. I become light headed and must breathe through my mouth, the smell is too much. I've never mentioned the smell."*

In contemplating her photograph the student adds *"I have truly realized that we cannot choose where we work and have to be mature in dealing with the reality of the situation."*

Again, the student is respectful of her clients' living conditions and maintains a professional image even though she finds the situation very difficult. The comment that she never mentioned the smell until she took the photograph reflects her acceptance of the circumstances she works in during field work as being part of the job as a social worker.

"Home Sweet Home" is a photograph of a pig farm where seven clients live in very impoverished conditions. The student struggles in how she manages the situation and has learned to deal with the conditions *"You go in and you feel apprehensive because everything looks dirty but you can't be like that with your clients. You go in and you have*

to sit on the bed and you can see it's dirty and it's harsh and I'm feeling awkward but this is their home and I find that difficult but I've learned to deal with it."

The four transferable areas that include communication and presentation; teamwork and interpersonal skills; management, organizing and planning and creative problem solving skills were found in all three domains; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*. The knowledge, values and skills students' photographs, reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews displayed are a testament to the personal attributes and professional education of the students.

The next section provides an overview of students' remarks regarding their participation in the study.

7.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

Participation in the research process provided students an opportunity to express their own unique perceptions of their field work experiences using a new method of communication using visual imagery and reflection. This new method of communicating is different from the traditional written reports and other forms of documentation the university requires of students during field work.

The researcher asked students during the photo-elicitation interview to reflect about their participation in the study and what it meant to them. Responses were varied and included such feelings as enjoyment, appreciation and confusion to apologetic feeling comments.

7.3.1 Feelings of enjoyment and appreciation

The following three excerpts reflect students' feelings of enjoyment and appreciation for participating in an assignment that was different from their typical classroom lectures, "*I enjoyed it very much. I wanted to participate, to learn new things. It is something to use in my occupation.*"

"I was excited. It's all so academic. You don't get to show your creative side at university."

Participation in the research "*taught me to appreciate things. Like the phone, how much it means to me.*"

A student's reflection on how university material is presented "*Material at university is put on blackboard, very boring.*"

7.3.2 Mixed emotions and confusion

Mixed emotions of confusion, validation and empowerment are expressed in the following student excerpt "*The strange thing is at first I was sort of confused. We very seldom given this freedom to write. You feel like this must be wrong because before you feel like a little child, that's touching something and you touch their hand and they know it's wrong whereas report writing is the same. You get it back (report) and the long list of right and wrong. I don't think there's right or wrong so you feel a little bit self conscious like boulder ball, what am I doing here, am I totally off the mark? This exercise has made me feel that validation from other people is less important because you sort it out in your mind. It's given you this freedom to tell yourself there's less need for validation. You know your situation better than anybody else so why let someone tell me that this is good or wrong, where in my heart I know that this is good or wrong. They don't have to tell me because I know best.*"

7.3.3 Apologetic feelings

Some students' felt apologetic because they could not spend the amount of time they wanted to on the project because they had other university assignments.

"I was hoping to spend more time on this. Some of them (photographs) I felt I was rushing through too much. When you do it you realize the value of this exercise. I wanted to formulate my sentences properly; if you're not going to do it right, don't do it at all. It would have been nice to have spent more time doing this."

7.3.4 New perspectives and realization

Other students shared a new perspective and realization into the significance and effect field work experiences had on them.

"Seeing things in a different perspective, even here (at the agency) I didn't see the phone as a lifeline until I thought about it."

“I realized more about how some things affect me. I’ve always been affected by the housing conditions, pig farm and my client in the tree, but I didn’t realize how significant it was because as soon as we got the assignment, the first thing I thought about was, I’m going to take a picture of that tree. The pictures I took, I had to do them, I wanted to. I didn’t realize they were so significant to the way I experienced it. It adds extra meaning to what I’m trying to explain.”

“I noticed a lot of stuff – the way I arrange things to create the environment. Putting up the posters, out of habit. Fun to think about it – taking photos and their actual meaning. Something new, a little scared at first. The downside was there was not enough time because a research project was due.”

Overall participants felt very positive about their involvement in this study. Some voiced their apologies for not having more time to spend on their responses. The researcher, however, disagrees and believes the photographs and reflections students produced provide a rich source of data that will enlighten the academic and practice world. The “visual voices” students created combining photography and written reflection to express their perceptions of the capstone field work experience, provides the academic and professional community an intimate look into the lives of social work students during their field work that only they can tell.

According to Gitterman (2004:109) there appears to be a need in higher education to balance a combination of lecture, peer discussion, visual representation and action methods of teaching rather than traditional methods of lecturing. The results of this study would also endorse Gitterman’s recommendations.

7.4 SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to demonstrate the significance and meaning of social work students’ perceptions of their capstone field work experience using visual imagery, written reflection and participation in photo-elicitation interviews. As a result of the data analysis, six overarching themes emerged. The six themes are: (1) safety; (2) environment and atmosphere; (3) transportation; (4) frustration and stress; (5) inspiration, coping and hope; and (6) transferable skills. All six themes were present in the three domains where

photographed artifacts were located. The three domains where the photographs were taken include: (1) *At the agency*; (2) *Outside the agency*; and (3) *Personal* domain.

Participation in the study provided intimate and candid information that would be difficult to collect using other methodology. The use of easy to operate cameras provided students the freedom to explore their physical and social environments. Reflecting upon their photographs gave students time for introspection and participation in the photo-elicitation interview provided the opportunity for students to clarify and expand upon their photographs and reflections with the researcher. This combination of data gathering techniques resulted in a qualitative research study that can provide new insights into field work for the academic and professional community.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF CAPSTONE FIELD WORK EXPERIENCE STUDY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Limited previous research has been done in social work practice education that looks at photography as a method of communicating students' field work experiences. Therefore, a major goal of the study is to provide the practice and academic community with a better understanding and appreciation of techniques of the study and students' perceptions of their field work experiences.

This chapter provides an overview of the study. The effectiveness of using the study's methodology will be presented followed by a discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the overarching themes. Next, the meaning in regards to social work students, social work education and the practice community will be shared. Lastly, recommendations for further research and final conclusions will be presented. The objective of this chapter is to present social work students' perceptions of their capstone field work experience through the use of visual images and reflections that represent participants' interactions with their physical and social environment.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study examined the meaning and significance of social artifacts participants photographed and reflected upon during their capstone field work experiences. The three objectives of the study were: (1) to determine if participants were able to share their perceptions of field work using the study's methodology of participant-produced photography, written reflections and participation in photo-elicitation interviews; (2) to determine the significance and meaning participants gave their photographed social artifacts in relation to their education and field work; (3) to ascertain what transferable knowledge, values and skills are learned and practiced during field work.

A qualitative research approach was chosen for the study because of the goodness of fit between qualitative methodology and the goal and intent of capstone field work experience, namely the transactions between person and environment that leads to

understanding and problem solving. Eight senior social work students enrolled in their capstone field work experience were chosen by Department of Social Work faculty at Stellenbosch University as being a representative sample of the study body and agency sites where students are placed. The data for the study includes participant-produced photographs, reflection worksheets and participation in a photo-elicitation interview with the researcher. Data was analyzed thematically, as explained in Chapter 1 and 5 of the study.

8.3 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.3.1 Profile of the participants

There were eight (N= 8) participants in the study. All participants were female, senior social work students from the Department of Social Work, Stellenbosch University, South Africa in their capstone field work experience. Seven of the participants were White and one participant was Coloured. The average age of participants was 23. One student took nine photographs, which was one less than requested. One student took the minimum number of photographs, which was 10 and the remainder took ten or more photographs. All eight participants completed the reflection worksheets and participated in the photo-elicitation interviews.

8.3.2 Study methodology

This study incorporated a combination of participant-produced photographs, written reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews. Figure 8.1 illustrates the relationship of these three elements that constitute the research approach used in the study. The bulleted points in the triangle are discussed in the three areas. The findings, conclusions and recommendations using this methodology follow.

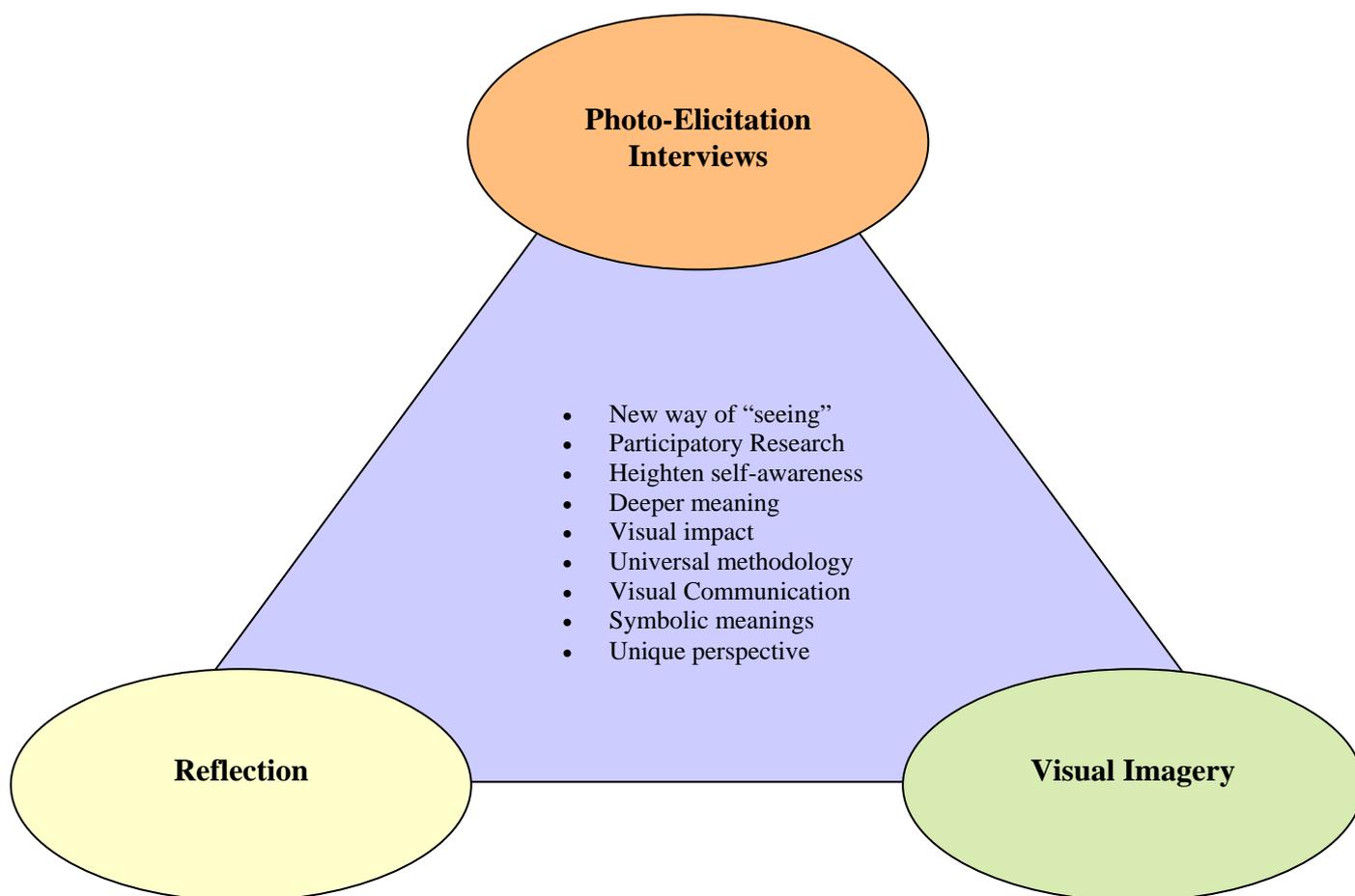


Figure 8.1: Photo-elicitation interviews

8.3.2.1 Elements of using visual imagery

It was found that the use of photography provided participants with a new method of **visually communicating** that produced **new ways of seeing** their physical and social environment. In addition, photographs provide a **visual impact** that words alone would be difficult to convey. In the study 110 participant-produced photographs were generated that students felt exemplified perceptions of their final field work experience.

Although social work education stresses the importance of communication skills, little has been done to incorporate visual learning as a way to communicate in the classroom. Visual imagery in social work, through the use of technology, has been most popular in distance education programs that are becoming more common in higher education.

One does not need to be a professional photographer to understand the influence visual images can portray. Modern technology has made instamatic, Polaroid and digital cameras user friendly and universal. As a result, it has never been simpler and more cost effective

for novice photographers to pick up a camera. A case in point, participants in the study did not experience any problems operating their instamatic or Polaroid cameras.

Chapter 2 discussed how social work used images effectively in the early 20th century to make citizens and government aware of social and economic injustices that were occurring in rural and urban areas in North America. The combination of photography with captions and narratives assisted social workers in using these powerful images and words to help organize and lead social reform movements that worked to better the lives of children and adults. With today's budget cuts and downsizing in human services, the time is ripe for social workers to be "visually literate" and advocate for the livelihood of the profession using visual imagery that gets the attention of stake holders that can make a difference in the future of social services.

The findings indicate that students were successful in operating both the Polaroid and instamatic cameras. Modern technology has made instamatic, Polaroid and digital cameras user friendly and **universal**. Students used both cameras to take their participant-produced photographs in their social and physical environment at the three domains; *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal*.

We know in the past visual images, mainly photography, can, did and will influence others. Through visual imagery in this study, students experienced "new ways of looking at and seeing" their social and physical environments as it did in the selected contemporary, international and inter-disciplinary studies discussed in Chapter 3. The social and physical environments studies included two studies in South Africa, a primary and secondary school setting (Karlsson, 2001) and a study of a community of women living and working in Durban (Gray, 2001). A neighborhood study in Holland (Van der Does *et al.*, 1992) and a hospital recovery study in the United Kingdom (Radley & Taylor, 2003). Three studies from North America include a study of student perceptions' of their campus environment (Perka *et al.*, 1992), a study of first year college students' perception of their environment (Douglas, 1999) and a study of re-entry college women (Blinn & Harrist, 1991).

It can be concluded that the use of photography as a visual imagery medium is a feasible technique to collect data during field work. By creating "visual voices" students can help

practitioners and faculty “listen” and really “hear” what they are experiencing in field. In addition, students can help educate the public about the profession.

Based on the findings and conclusions the following *recommendation* can be made:

- The academic community should explore the benefits of incorporating visual imagery as a teaching and learning tool in their curriculum.
- Using visual imagery techniques in practice education could help in creating a general awareness of social and economic justice issues.

8.3.2.2 Elements of using written reflection

The findings in this study incorporated a total of 110 written reflection worksheets that accompanied students’ photographs. From Figure 8.1 it can be seen that the opportunity to self-reflect upon their photographs provided students with a **heighten self-awareness** and **deeper understanding** of their field work experiences. **Symbolic** and metaphorical meaning of everyday objects, scenes and places became significant in ways students report they had not openly shared or comprehended in the past.

Reflection is often a singular experience. The simple act of looking at a beautiful sky or sitting quietly in a chair contemplating life, our hopes and dreams is both a natural and satisfying experience that often provides great insight into our lives. In higher education, reflection can become an instructional strategy requiring writing and critical thinking activities that help students contemplate ways to solve problems, address issues and provide meaning to their experiences.

In social work education, reflection can be compared to journaling. Journaling activities may require students to link classroom theory with practice education experiences, help alleviate misunderstandings and challenge students’ thinking about specific topics relevant to field work issues. They also heighten student self-awareness on a deeper level.

This study used a format that incorporated both Polaroid and instamatic photography and guided reflection prompts patterned from Blinn and Harrist’s (1991) research with re-entry college women. The immediate processing of the Polaroid photographs allowed students to reflect without having to wait to have film developed. The written prompts on the

worksheets provided participants the opportunity to give an introspective view providing meaningful and intimate information.

Participants in this study completed similar prompted reflection worksheets that accompanied their photographed artifacts (see Appendix E: photo reflection worksheet). Participants written reflections provided the researcher with significant and personal information much in the same way it did in Blinn and Harrist's (1991) study. The researcher also believes verbal inquiry would not be as robust or revealing as the combination of photographs, written reflections and photo-elicitation interviews.

Through their written reflections, study participants gave meaning to the artifacts, scenes and places they interacted with in the three domains: *At the agency*, *Outside the agency* and *Personal* domain. By understanding the meaning and symbolism artifacts represent, a richer perspective and awareness is shared. In this study, reflective writing was one technique used to help explore photographed artifacts meaning and symbolism participants related through stories and their association with people and places.

It can be concluded that written reflection is a technique that provides the opportunity for students to be introspective in exploring and sharing the meaning and significance of their field work experience.

From the findings and conclusions regarding reflection, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Written reflection opportunities should be implemented that would provide students the opportunity to freely communicate their thoughts, feelings and concerns that would not be judged or graded.

8.3.2.3 Elements of using photo-elicitation interviews

All students (N=8) participated in the photo-elicitation interview with the researcher. The findings show that the **participatory research** model used in this study helped in building a relationship with students that was based upon trust and rapport. The participatory aspect of this type of research made it possible for students to take ownership of their work and as a result become **empowered** in sharing with the researcher their **unique perspectives**,

because the students took the photographs and were intimate with their content and meaning, not the researcher.

In Chapter 3 the advantages of using photo-elicitation methodology were presented. According to the literature review, social work is currently not one of the disciplines using this technique. A major advantage is that the **methodology is universal** and in a limited amount of time, a valuable amount of information from participants was generated. The researcher attributes this to the participatory aspect of photo-elicitation methodology and the trust and rapport that develops with participants. Through participant-generated photographs and reflections, participants in essence become the teacher regarding their experience and the researcher becomes the student.

With few restrictions, participants in this study used cameras to explore their physical and social environments. Exploring artifacts, places and scenes through photography created a new form of “visual communication” and insight into participants’ lives. The participant produced photographs and written reflections stimulated participants to verbally share their work with the researcher in an open-ended interview format. The photographs guided the interview providing the student the opportunity to educate the researcher about the photographs and answer questions to clarify content. Participants took ownership in the research process making the discussion about their experiences in field work even more meaningful.

Most of the photo-elicitation studies discussed in Chapter 3 share common elements with the results of this study. These common elements were: (1) participants used cameras to look at their relationships with their social and physical environments; (2) the use of worksheets and or photo-elicitation interview with participants and (3) the heightened awareness and candor of participants expressed personal joys, frustrations, struggles and challenges of their environments. All the studies provide rich, descriptive feedback to researchers who are “looking” to gain a better understanding of participants’ lives and the impact their environments have upon them.

The findings indicate that the photo-elicitation process provided a safe setting for students to share their photographs and reflections of their field work experience. The interview process rendered additional information that went beyond the reflection worksheets.

It can be concluded that the photo-elicitation process was useful in learning more about the students' field work experiences in a short period of time. Furthermore, students were engaged in the process which empowered them to tell their stories.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- The benefits from using a combination of photography, written reflections and photo-elicitation interviews for collecting data in qualitative research is significant and should be used in social work education especially since there is a lack of research using this type of methodology.

8.3.4 Overarching themes of the study

With regards to the significance, meaning and lessons learned from participants' photographed artifacts, reflection worksheets and photo-elicitation interviews, the study found that there is a strong correlation between the photographed content identified in the overall 110 photographs and the 40 Delphi ranked artifacts. As a result, overarching themes emerged from the content of all the photographs. The themes include: (1) Safety, (2) Environment and atmosphere, (3) Transportation, (4) Frustration and stress, (5) Inspiration, coping and hope and (6) Transferable skills. All six themes were evident in the three identified domains: *At the agency*; *Outside the agency* and *Personal domain*. A discussion of each theme, findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

8.3.4.1 Safety findings

(a) At the agency domain

The major safety findings *At the agency* relate to students' concerns about the lack of safety training. This is especially important because students' field work experiences often require going into unsafe communities. There is also the perceived idea that the agency provides a safer environment for students than for those students working in the community.

(b) Outside the agency domain

Safety findings *Outside the agency* relate to concerns with crime and violence in the communities where students make home visits. Lack of safety training by university and

agencies requires students to make their own decisions regarding their personal safety. Furthermore, there appears to be confusion regarding what assistance is available and/or can be expected from the police.

(c) *Personal domain*

It was found in the *Personal* domain that family and friends also have expressed concerns regarding safety issues. Findings also indicate that safety concerns are “part of the job” in South Africa. It was also found that students were willing to make “sacrifices” for their safety to get the job done.

It can be concluded that safety issues are a concern in all three domains.

Based on the findings and conclusions regarding safety in the three domains, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Safety training at the university and agencies needs to be developed and both programs should be sensitive to safety issues raised by students.
- A system needs to be established at the agency that records and monitors when students are away from the agency on home visits. Cell phones should be provided or it should be a student requirement to have one.
- Students need to feel secure in expressing their personal safety concerns with supervisors.

8.3.4.2 *Environment and atmosphere*

(a) *At the agency domain*

The findings *At the agency* concerning environment and atmosphere underscore the importance of creating a comfortable atmosphere at the agency for clients. In addition, the camaraderie with agency staff is important to the mood and attitude of the students.

(b) *Outside the agency domain*

The findings regarding environment and atmosphere *Outside the agency* verify the impoverished living environments of clients. The findings also reveal that these

impoverished environments also represent the students' working environments. The challenges and stress related to the environment have an impact on students.

(c) *Personal domain*

The findings concerning environment and atmosphere in *Personal* domain indicate the importance students personally place on wanting to create an inviting atmosphere in their work with clients. Bringing music, colorful posters and food to field work are examples of their initiatives.

It can be concluded that the environment and atmosphere play a major role in students' field work experience and is conducive in developing meaningful relationships with staff and clients.

Based on the findings and conclusions from the three domains concerning environment and atmosphere, the following *recommendations* are made:

- Students need to be oriented to their working environment outside the agency so students feel more prepared and not so overwhelmed in coping with the living environments of their clients.
- Students should develop good working relationships with agency staff that is reinforced by the university.

8.3.4.3 *Transportation*

(a) *At the agency domain*

The findings regarding transportation indicate that agency vehicles are essential in working with clients because few clients have cars, requiring students to make home visits. In addition, agency vehicles are recognizable in the community and can either serve as being positive or negative to the client, depending on their individual circumstances.

(b) *Outside the agency domain*

The transportation findings indicate that the weather, poor road conditions and road signage as well as inadequate maps affect the amount of work students can accomplish in a day when they make home visits.

(c) *Personal domain*

It was evident from the transportation findings that the reliance on university cars and tuition costs associated with their use was upsetting to the students. In addition, early morning and evening commutes and road rage further angered the students that travel to their agencies for field work.

It can be concluded that vehicles and transportation in general are key issues that must be considered during field work assignments. Additional issues of safety when students are out in the communities was also evident.

From the findings and conclusions regarding transportation, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Agency staff should accompany students in learning the communities so they feel more confident when they are out in the communities looking for clients' homes.
- Provide students with adequate maps of the communities they serve.

8.3.4.4 *Frustration and stress*

(a) *At the agency domain*

The frustration and stress findings *At the agency* centered on extensive report writing, managing large caseload and the lack of resources to offer clients. In addition, students feel there is a limited amount of time to accomplish all the agency and university expectations

(b) *Outside the agency domain*

It was found that frustration and stress *Outside the agency* revolve around university reports and other required documentation. There is also a perceived feeling that university supervisors are not sensitive to student issues. And, students are concerned that the use of American and British textbooks in teaching theory and practice are not applicable to their work in South Africa.

(c) *Personal domain*

The frustration and stress findings in the *Personal* domain indicate that students continue their report writing at home because there is not enough time to accomplish their work at the agency. Students are frustrated with the lengthy reports the university requires.

Other findings indicate concerns with career choice and if they will make enough money to live and meet their bills (tuition) as a social worker in South Africa. Drinking, poor diet and lack of exercise illustrate the stress students are experiencing.

From the findings it can be concluded that students are frustrated, stressed and disillusioned about being a social worker in a country that has so much social and economic injustice. As a result, some students find their efforts at being social worker to be in vain and therefore, they feel diminished about their situations.

From the findings and conclusions regarding frustration and stress from the three domains, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Current university report requirements and other documentation should be reviewed so report writing could be made less redundant and more manageable.
- Social work curriculum should explore more theories and practices that acknowledge and embrace South African culture.

8.3.4.5 *Inspiration, coping and hope*

(a) *At the agency domain*

Findings *At the agency* regarding inspiration, coping and hope verify that visual images of posters, prose and thoughts for the day are used by students to help them cope with their challenging work. Inspirational words help students be calm and focused so they can better serve their clients.

(b) *Outside the agency domain*

Inspiration, coping and hope found *Outside the agency* is directly linked to clients. Students feel inspired by clients who survive despite the fact that many of their basic needs are not met. Despite the hardships, students believe clients are resilient and remain

optimistic and that their endurance is a tribute to the human spirit. Findings also indicate that students are resilient despite their feelings of helplessness.

(c) *Personal domain*

Students find inspiration, coping and hope by relying on support from family, friends and social work peers. Student support from social work peers involves talking with one another in their effort to cope with the emotional demands of field work.

It can be concluded that inspiration, coping and hope exist in tangible objects such as a religious statue or in more abstract ways that a special prose or thoughts can convey. Many artifacts are symbolic in the calming and serene messages student extrapolate from them. What appears most significant is the inspiration students receive from clients as they struggle to survive.

From the findings and conclusions regarding inspiration, coping and hope in the three domains, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Students should be encouraged in identifying their stressors during field work so supportive assistance can be given.
- Students should be helped in identifying ways to cope with their stress.

8.3.4.6 *Transferable skills*

(a) *At the agency domain*

It was found that transferable skills demonstrated *At the agency* centered on report writing, professional conduct including the importance of planning, managing caseloads and agency assignments. Using creativity in preparing activities that were suitable to the age and ability of the client was also evident.

(b) *Outside the agency domain*

The findings illustrate that transferable skills *Outside the agency* relate to the importance of written communication skills in university report writing and other documentation. Being flexible and creative in utilizing different approaches in working with clients in a

variety of circumstances was also found. In addition, the findings show students interpersonal skills in their work with clients and other community agencies.

(c) *Personal domain*

Findings in the *Personal* domain regarding transferable skills indicate that time management is very important in the organization and planning abilities students displayed. Findings show integrity and commitment students have to their work *At the agency* and in fulfilling university responsibilities. In addition, students are disciplined and are non-judgmental.

Based on the findings regarding transferable skills in all three domains, the following conclusions can be reached. Transferable skills are evident both on a personal and professional level. The compassion and respect students have toward their clients was evident.

Based on the findings and conclusions regarding transferable skills in all three domains, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Students should be taught ways to showcase their skills and abilities using visual imagery and reflective writing techniques.

8.4 COMPONENTS OF PRACTICE EDUCATION

Conclusions about and recommendations for using this study's methodology have implications to three components; social work students, social work education and practice community.

Figure 8.2 is presented to acknowledge key conclusions and recommendation in the three areas of the triangle; social work students, social work education and practice community. The bulleted points in the triangle are discussed in the three areas. The findings, conclusions and recommendations using this methodology follow.

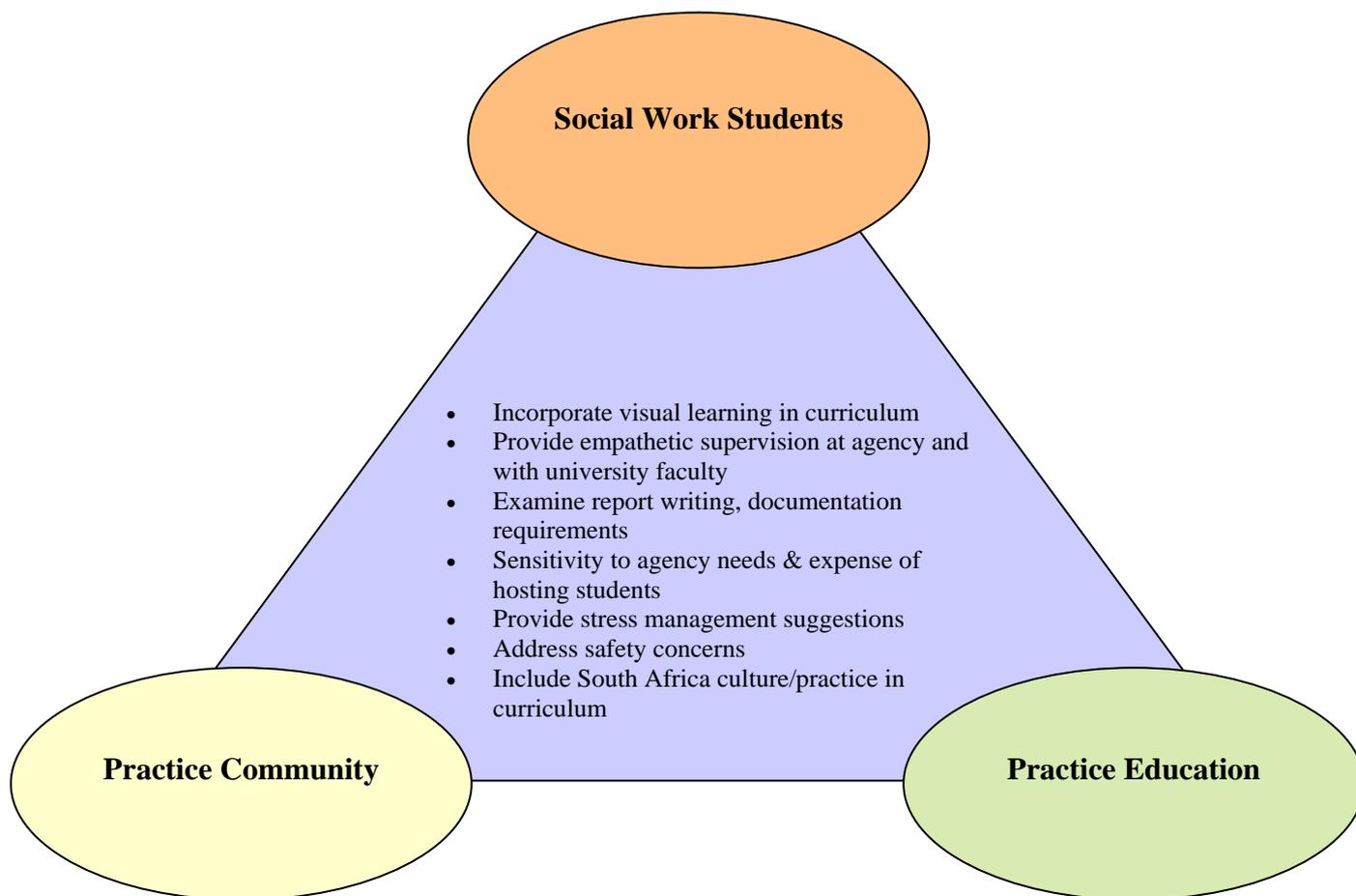


Figure 8.2: Components of practice education

8.4.1 Social work students

The findings demonstrate that participation in the study gave students an opportunity to “voice” their concerns and challenges regarding field work in a way that they had not experienced before in their coursework. Through the use of photography participants actively engaged in the research process that encouraged verbal and written contemplation as well as creative and critical thinking skills. This combination of techniques provided a venue for participants to exemplify their thoughts, feelings and opinions that had not been previously shared with the practice community or the university.

Using photography and reflection gave students more personal insight into their field work experiences and as a result they discovered there was deeper meaning and significance to their experiences that they had not recognized or processed before. Students learned a

valuable lesson that **communicating visually** what cannot be said in words alone is a powerful consequence of using photography.

Students learned that they had acquired many transferable skills as a result of their education and practice experience. The methodology used in this study helped in illustrating these skills in a way that was new and meaningful to students. Communication, interpersonal relationships, critical and creative thinking skills and planning skills were all used by participants in the study to produce their photograph, write their reflections and discuss in the interviews.

The depiction of incredible poverty and safety issues was a realization students showed in their photographs. It appears students are resigned to the conclusion that “this is the way it is South Africa” and that their work will not be significant enough to make changes. As a result, students expressed feelings of helplessness that nothing will change any time soon weigh heavily on their minds. This reality has caused a number of students to consider other career choices or move out of direct practice to policy work where they think they might have more of an impact. Sacrificing one’s safety to do field work is a concern and one that should be explored more fully.

Self-awareness helped students understand and explore their responses and emotions on a deeper level that they had not done in their practice education experience. Not every photograph they took or reflection they wrote was positive, therefore making it challenging for them to confront their values, roles and decisions. Overall, participation in the study seemed to give students’ a sense of empowerment that they had not experienced before in other field work assignments.

It can be concluded that participants actively engaged in the study and as a result gained personal insights that allowed them to explore their responses on a deeper level. In addition, students were able to recognize transferable skills that they were practicing in their field work.

Based on the findings and conclusions, regarding social work students, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Students would benefit from having field work assignments that incorporate photography and written reflection activities allowing students to express their creative and critical thinking abilities in ways that are not currently being offered.

8.4.2 Social work education

Preparing students for the work world by teaching transferable skills was evident in students' photographs and reflections data and findings that emerged from the study. Students need to be visually literate in a multi-media world that uses images to convey meaning. By incorporating **visual learning in the curriculum** visual teaching modalities could be beneficial in enhancing the learning process.

Students do not feel that they are being taught enough theory or practice content that is relevant to **South African culture**. Working in extreme poverty practice environments students feel ill equipped to meet the needs of clients and communities that are desperate for assistance. This frustration and stress students feel in the lack of not being able to meet clients' needs may partially be the reason some students are looking at other degree areas and careers where they feel they can make a bigger difference in social and economic justice issues. The lack of attention of social work programs in addressing **stress management** issues could result in students exiting the profession or not choosing social work as a career choice in the first place.

The amount and frequency of **report writing** was a significant issue in every aspect of the study. The limited amount of time to complete reports because of heavy caseloads and other field work responsibilities means that many students complete this work at home. This was considered a burden to students who need the time after field work to complete other assignments, work part-time jobs and other personal commitments.

Faculty does not appear to understand the conditions and expectations students are exposed to and expected to cope with in field work. Students' perception is that written reports, statistical reports and other documentation are viewed as being more significant than students' concerns. The desire for more **empathetic oversight during supervision** sessions and a need to **address safety concerns** with faculty was clear.

It can be concluded that the university is not teaching students to be visually literate. In addition, students do not feel they are being taught enough theory and practice that is relevant to South Africa. And, the amount of report writing and stress students are coping with in field does not seem to be acknowledged by the university.

From the findings and conclusions regarding social work education, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- Students need to be taught theory and practice that is relevant to South African culture.
- Report writing and other documentation needs to be assessed.
- Visual imagery techniques need to be introduced so students can benefit from learning how powerful images can be in relation to their coursework and practice education.

8.4.3 Practice community

Practice education is often referred to as “the heart of social work education” and as a result students tend to remember their field work experiences long after the experience has ended and find it is often more memorable than regular coursework. Students are very aware of their presence at the agency and for the most part felt welcomed at their agencies. However, all students expressed how busy their field supervisors are and hinted that hosting students could result in a perceived strained relationship between the agency and university. This appears to be the case in regard to **students’ use of valuable agency resources**. Multiple copies of reports that need to be photocopied are an additional expense as well as telephone calls that can burden already limited agency budgets.

Agency supervisors seem to lack **sensitivity** to students’ experiences and the impact they have upon their emotions, stress and coping abilities. Given the impoverished environment clients live in and students work in, students feel somewhat “thrown” into situations and suggest that they would greatly benefit from shadowing workers so they could process experiences prior to the student handling them alone. An example was one student’s experience in having to remove a child from a home for the first time.

It can be concluded from the findings that field experiences are a very important part of students' social work education. The relationship students have with their agency supervisors appears to lack sensitivity to the experiences students are having in their field work. And, the importance of university and agency relationships cannot be underestimated especially when budgets are limited and basic agency resources such as photocopying are scrutinized.

From the findings and conclusions regarding the practice community, the following *recommendations* can be made:

- The university needs to be **sensitive to the lack of agency resources** in sponsoring field work students.
- Training agency supervisors should include information on the importance of shadowing and observation before students are expected to manage their own caseload of clients.
- Agencies would benefit from incorporating visual imagery techniques that could be used in reports and other documentation. In addition, visual imagery could also help educate the public about social and economic issues as well as making them aware of their agency's mission and programs.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is *recommended* that future research be conducted using similar methodology in the following areas:

- Expand the size of the study and include a variety of social work agency settings to reflect more diverse service delivery and clientele.
- Conduct a similar study at the beginning of the capstone field work experience and again at the end to compare and contrast results.
- Conduct a longevity study beginning with the first year field experience and repeat each year through the capstone field experience.

8.6 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

From the study it can be concluded that the meaning and significance students generated from their photographed artifacts, places and scenes exemplify their capstone field work experiences. The lessons students reported they learned and openly shared about their field experiences with the researcher provides relevant feedback for social work education and the practice community to contemplate. Using visual imagery, written reflection techniques and participation in photo-elicitation interviews provided an opportunity for students to express their feelings, concerns and thoughts regarding field work. It is important that what students' are "looking" at and "seeing" in field work are also "listened" to and "heard" by the academic and practice community.

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APPENDIX A

Delphi photos

APPENDIX A

Delphi One No. 1

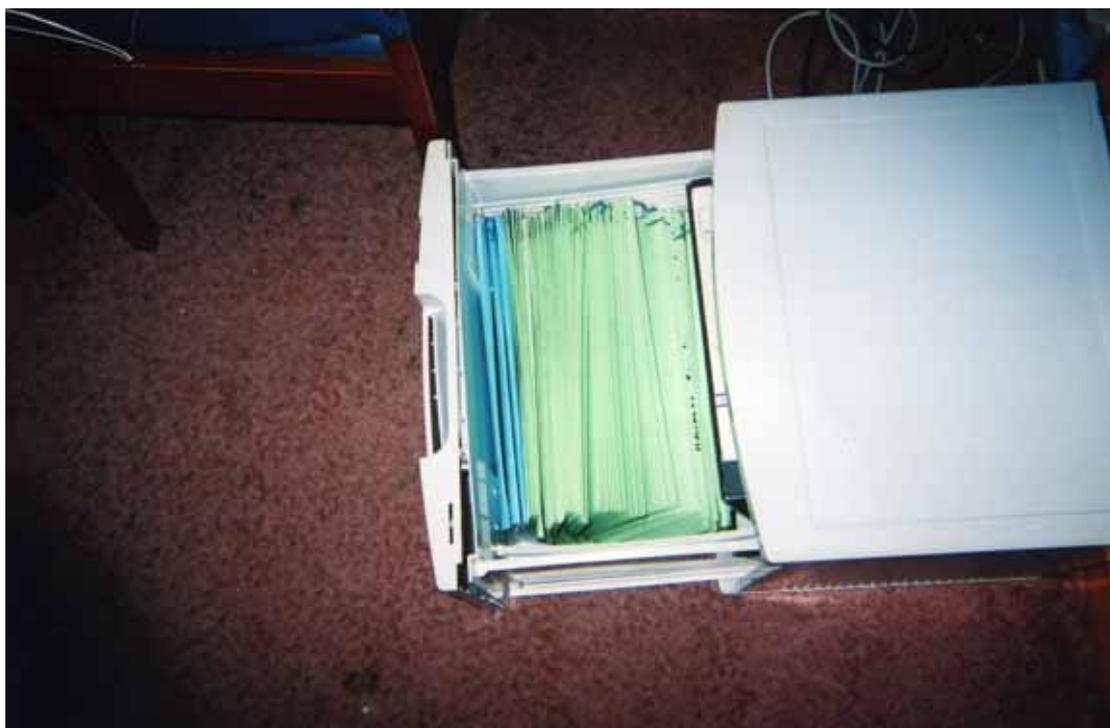


1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **My Planning Wall.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This calendar is of significance to me because it enables me to plan/organize my sessions with clients and other appointments in the community. The calendar is my helping tool to enhance my professionalism as a social worker. Remind students with a note to take with them reminding them of appointment. Teachers are helpful too.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Ahead planning and organizing is very important and fundamental in my occupation in order to structure and achieve my goals and objectives.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** without my calendar, it would be more difficult to attain my objectives and goals.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I think to relieve stress is to plan carefully and plan ahead so there aren't so many struggles. They (university) teach us to always plan. Management of work load. I think we all must do it. It shows us ways to be plan full. We must turn in our administration card that shows how we plan, do diaries and monthly statistics.

Delphi One No. 6

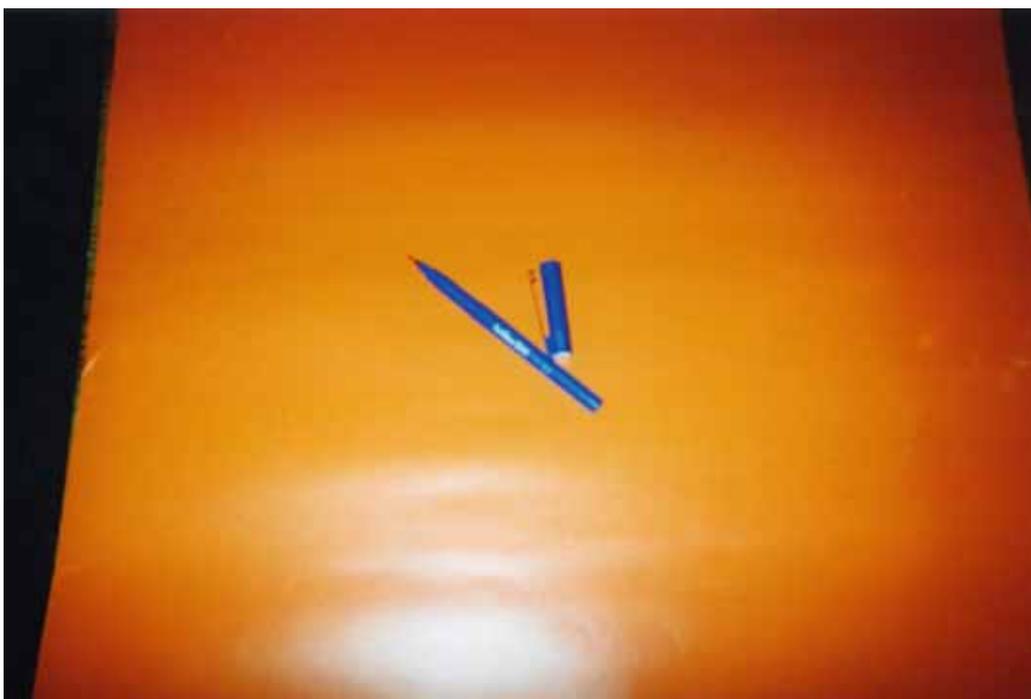


1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph. The Goal**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** All my individual clients’ files in a safe box.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** These are all the files since the beginning of the Macassar Community Project one year ago. These files are very important because I strive to help them all and eventually close the files because I have empowered them to help themselves. Although some of the files get closed, clients may come back and then it is of utmost importance to know what was done in the past. If the client’s situation is out of my field experience, I refer them, just taking the file with all the necessary information. It is necessary to keep these files up-to-date each time you see them because my caseload is so big things can be forgotten.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** To keep these files up to date because you never know when you might have to refer the client. To keep the files in a safe place so that it doesn’t get into the wrong hands.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The files are organized and up to date. I am protective of the files and take them home with me. They are in my suitcase.

Delphi One No. 2



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** Ak 47
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is my pen. It’s a blue Art line 200 fine liner with a 0.4 tip. It writes really easily and comfortably, as it has a soft, very inky tip. It’s my favorite pen.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Just as a soldier shouldn’t go to war without his gun, I found that a social worker should never go into the field without a pen. I make appointments with it, take notes with it, write reports, plan my schedule, etc. And, just like a soldier’s gun, I found that in this profession my pen could do a lot of damage or a lot of justification, depending on how I use it.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** You can’t always write with pencil before you copy with pen, so pay attention to what you do from the start as you work.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

We have so much paperwork to do. I don’t know if it’s a student thing or if it’s like that in practice. Reports are everything. The metaphor came from my mother. She told me if I went to church without my bible, it would be like a soldier going to war without his gun so you can’t go to church without your bible and the pen is like that.

Delphi One No. 3



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Home Sweet Home.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It is a photo of a pig farm. The brick face building houses a client of mine and there are some cows in the background.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This artifact is significant because it illustrates some of the hectic conditions which our clients live in and the conditions that we work in. This particular farm is quite harsh because the clients literally live in a pigsty. They have pigs that live in front of them and to the side of them. The cows also wander around their room. The farm also has a dreadful stink that is due to the pigs. After conducting the interview with the clients I feel as if the smell at the farm is inside my clothing for the rest of the day. After finishing an interview with the clients I always used to leave feeling really angry, angry at the injustice which they experience and a feeling of hopelessness and desperation.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Injustices in our country still exist. I then feel that the situation in relation to poverty is hopeless and I feel what can I really do to help my clients? I can never fully understand what they experience on a daily basis. I have learned about some of the harsh effects that poverty has on people and their lives.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The clients live on their employer farm where there are no rules set up so they live in minimal conditions. In the end the employer started building metal shacks for them because I told him “I’m going to take you to the newspapers” because there was nothing else I could do. He thought he was doing his part in caring for his workers. He’s a very Christian man, he takes them to church. He thinks God is going to look upon him and thank him for what he’s doing for the people. He didn’t feel embarrassed and he didn’t see anything wrong with what he was doing.

I think wine farms take better care of their workers. When the families believed there was something they could do about the situation the owner of the farm didn’t want anything to happen so the farmer was relocated to a different farm. As soon as they realized there were things they could do and there were people who could help them they didn’t have a problem with the farmer. I should have gone to the media to get more awareness. If people actually saw the conditions these people live in, it would be a different story.

Delphi One No. 7

1. **The “Title I would give this photograph: Panado (headache med)**
2. **Describe the artifact:** My reading glasses.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Without this artifact I would experience constant discomfort while reading, writing and working through numerous written pieces each day. It enables me to do an efficient job. Without it, the work will still be done, but definitely not as comfortable to me, or maybe efficient to the clients that are served.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Any aid that can be used to better the service that I render is greatly appreciated.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I get headaches when reading and writing. I couldn't do the work the way I do without it. It influences everything I do. It's such a part of social work.

Delphi One No. 4

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Prevention Puppets**
2. **Describe the artifact:** These puppets are used in a puppet show for prevention purposes. This prevention focuses on children to learn their basic rights, to understand feelings, secrets, touching right/wrong.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Very significant: Community project for 2003 is the relation to my academic training, very significant. Field experience is great, love my project and working with young children, PATCH!!
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Working with children is a wonderful way of experiencing social work in abundance. Teaching them what to expect from life; rights, good/bad touching, secrets, and what to do if they have a problem.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

No additional photo-elicitation transcript comments

Delphi One No. 8



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph. Greener Pastures.**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** This is a picture of part of the view that I see when I look out of my office window at work.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This view is a soothing sight. When I am at my desk feeling tired or frustrated I can always look out my window and see the beautiful sky. The sight of the sky helps me to remember the world outside; work, friends, family and good times. By thinking of these things I often feel recharged and excited for life outside work.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I have learned that it is important to look past my frustrations in order to see and focus on a more possible outcome. I have also learned about how valuable my friends are after a hard day of work or academics. I truly appreciate their friendship and support through everything this year.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The sky is peaceful and calming. If you look up at the sky you drift away with the clouds. The realization is that this is just one part of life and it can't be all consuming. Social work as a profession is not the be all and end all. You can only do so much. Must focus on remembering that you aren't all powerful. Some things you can't change and must accept. Might not have the impact you want to have. If something doesn't work out it isn't always your fault, there are greater forces that are there – it's a powerful thing, the expanse of life.

Delphi One No. 5



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is:** **Hypocrisy**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is a bottle of beer. Every day after working with people, who have been negatively affected by alcohol in the worst possible ways, I go to a pub and have a beer (or two).
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This keeps me sane. After a days hard work I am always very upset and pissed off at society in general. When I then sit alone at the end of a day and drink a beer I try to put things into perspective and not take my work home with me. This is very difficult to me and almost never works, but somehow I make myself believe that it is all going to be okay.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I have to remind myself not to be judgmental. People are a product of their past and it is not my fault. I am only human and not responsible for saving the world, and, everyone has coping mechanisms.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I get upset but don't show it. What I need to do is try to relax and make sense of everything. Social workers see themselves as different from clients but I don't. I'm confused with my values. I try not to be judgmental. Supervisor at university knows I don't handle stress very well. I give everything I can.

Delphi Two No. 1



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **My Walkie Talkie**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It helps me to get connected with my clients and resources and vice versa. Important appointments and cancellations can easily be done.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** It serves an important means to and end in the practice, as it facilitates the communication process via telephone ambiguities are eliminated between myself, the clients and resources.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** It ensures accessibility to clients and resources.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation interview

I use the phone for appointments and cancellations. I go to their home but not most of the time. I only work in the office. This area is not safe here, university is focused on our safety as students. There is no training in safety. They taught us to contact the police to escort us. Lock the car. I feel safe in the building, doors are locked. One classmate was a victim of crime.

Delphi Two No. 2



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Refreshment**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is the agency’s tea trolley. On it is herbal tea, English tea, coffee, sugar, milk, teaspoons and cups.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Since my first year at the University we’ve learned the importance of **Maslows** hierarchy of needs, with the basic need being physical. It is such a wonderful experience to come from the cold after a long interview and have a cup of hot tea. It fulfills in my basic needs and thus allows me to render better service.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I’ve learned to take of myself from basic physical needs to self actualization needs with as much care and consideration as I have when taking care of clients.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

All businesses have tea time, it’s a very important aspect, much more important than people think. If I didn’t have tea after coming in from the cold I would only be thinking about the cold and my hungry stomach and I wouldn’t care about paying attention to the rest of it.

Delphi Two No. 3



1. The “Title” I would give this photograph: Life

2. **Describe the artifact:** The photo is at a client’s home which is a single room. It has two beds, a double and a single. There are seven family members that live in this room.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This artifact is significant for two reasons. First, because it once again illustrates the poverty and hectic conditions that the clients live in. Secondly, because this room is also an office for myself. The client and myself sit on the double bed and conduct our interviews.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Life can be harsh and unfair. I have learned that people can be very resilient and no matter how harsh their circumstances, they somehow manage to do the best with what they have.
5. **Likert Scale rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

It’s dark, there’s no window. There’s always flies around because it’s a farm. It stinks. You go in and feel apprehensive because everything looks dirty but you can’t be like that with your clients. You go in and have to sit on the bed and you can see it’s dirty and it’s harsh and I’m feeling awkward but this is their home and I find it difficult but I’ve learned to deal with it. I was shocked to see this little baby lying on the bed. They do their best to keep it as clean as possible but it will never be as clean as it should be for the baby and it’s hard to see stuff like that and you want to take the baby home, clean it and give it clean clothes, but you can’t. University should make it a point to have you follow a social worker, to go into a township, start preparing you for it, discussing it when you get back. How did you feel, how do you prepare yourself for it?

Supervision at agency is more practical; university is more technical and focuses on research and reports.

Delphi Two No. 4

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Washing Basket.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** When I visited one of my clients she was busy washing. It is a South African symbol of poverty.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This artifact is very related to my academic training because I work from the ethnological sensitive perspective, where you as social work students, have insight for the client’s situation. The field experience is incredible because the people I work with teach you the way they live. They also teach you coping skills and a positive attitude to life.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** That a lot of my clients don’t always have the best of circumstances, but some are trying their best to have food on the table, clean their clothes.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

No additional photo-elicitation transcript comments.

Delphi Two No. 5



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Overcoming Limitations**
2. **Describe the artifact:** The car I use at work.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Without transport I would not be able to see any of my clients. Thus, the vehicle is very significant in overcoming limitations. The car also has the agencies name on it so people generally allow me to go anywhere with it, as I am seen as having the authority to go where service is needed.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Access is gained by qualifications.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

It makes our work more accessible. It's not a 'normal' car; suspicious farmers don't like it.

Delphi Two No. 6



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is. The Wheels**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** The University’s motor.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** I need the car to get from Stellenbosch to Macassar each Monday and Wednesday to see my clients, as well as do the necessary arrangements for our community project against drug misuse. Macassar is a low socioeconomic community; therefore, few of the people have telephones. It is necessary to go to their homes to do the necessary assessment with family members. Therefore, one car is of significance in relation to my work.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** In the social work profession a license and transportation are very important. Most of the time you have to see people who don’t have transportation, can’t afford transportation, and can’t leave their responsibilities at home to see you. You must not be scared to use the given transportation and go into the communities. Luckily I love driving around.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

It’s important to have a driver’s license so you can get to clients. It’s important to be knowledgeable about the community and learn street names.

Delphi Two No. 7

1. **The “Title I would give this photograph: Veins**
2. **Describe the artifact:** Files and folders.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:**
The “life force” of the organization and their clients is the records that are kept. From each file you can piece together someone’s existence. Without a file, there is no client. Without a client there is no service to be delivered, and therefore, the workers become redundant to the organization.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Record keeping and safekeeping of information does not only reinforce the services, it makes the existence of the organization and workers possible.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The file is the client and organization. All paper, no computers. University requires much different reports than the agency. We’d need a few more cabinets if the agency required similar reports.

Delphi Two No. 8



1. The “Title” I would give this photograph: Organization

2. **Describe the Artifact:** This is my diary that I use to keep track of all my appointments, assignment due dates, planning and any important dates.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This diary is very important to me. This has been a very busy year for me as I am involved in a variety of other student activities, besides my course. I have had to be very careful of planning correctly so that I have enough time to do everything. My diary has gone everywhere with me and I look at it tons of times every day. If I lost my diary I would be lost.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Planning is VERY IMPORTANT. I have also learned that having a balance is important. As a social worker you have to take time off and completely forget about work.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

This precious thing. I have a very busy schedule; everything comes together her. Without this I don't know what I'd do. I have to organize my whole life according to this diary. Every day I have a 'to do list'. It's very central to making it all work; I'm forgetful.

Delphi Three No. 2



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Photocopy Machine**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It’s the agency’s photocopier machine. It has all the relevant features and stocks of paper around it, barely enough for all the copies made.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** As a social work student I am required to have copies of almost every document I create for myself, the agency, the university, the clients, relevant resources, etc. It is very helpful to have many copies of a document for the reason that I have reference of what I did, proof and clarity of the work I did. In short, I keep myself “covered” by having copies of what I do. Should a situation occur where someone is unhappy with the situation, and accusations are made, I have proof to keep my side clean.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I’ve learned to not see administration procedures (like photocopying) as tedious or time consuming, but to look for the purpose and benefits of it.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

There’s a lot of politics involved with the photocopier machine. The agency only has so much money each month for paper and there are three students here. If I copied my reports at university, I would have to use my own money.

Delphi Three No. 1

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **My Backup.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is the Child and Welfare office in Macassar. It provides social services in the whole Macassar. We as the students work in cooperation with the Child and Welfare Office.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Because of my mass workload I sometimes need to refer cases, which are beyond my capabilities as a student. This ensures me that these cases will be followed up.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** To also have a back up when you are unable to address and resolve problems.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I'm a student and not as specialized so when I don't have information, I have backup.

Delphi Three No. 7

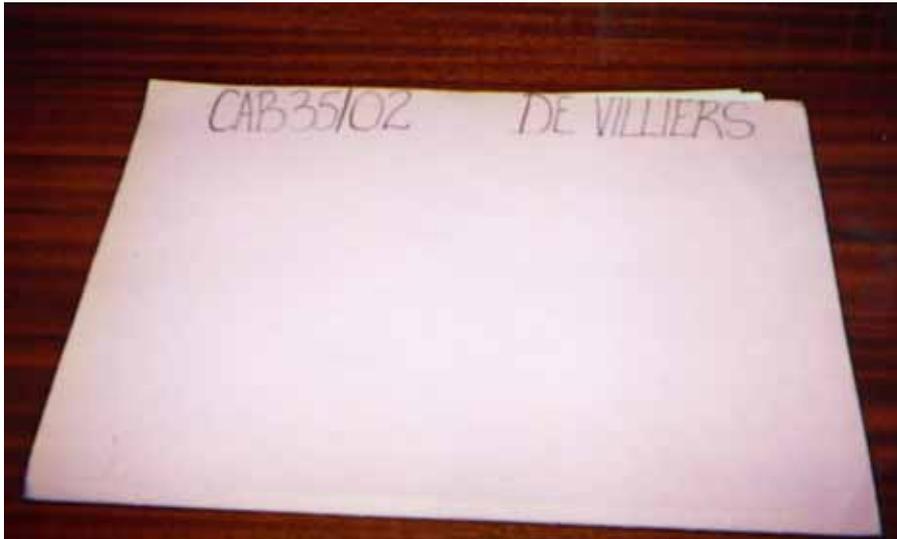


1. **The “Title I would give this photograph is: S.O.S.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** Organization file on available resources in the community.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** A client lives in a bigger system. The social worker needs to have knowledge about resources in the macro system to work interdisciplinary/multi-professionally toward empowerment and improvement of the situation. There is absolutely no way that any form of intervention can be attempted without the vital information that is in this artifact.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** There are no limits to the influence and power that is within the resources of the community.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Most clients don't have resources so I've gotten to know the resources. The fees (for therapy) are high. We can't pay it and neither can the clients – some work is pro bono. We actually have training to do therapy but we don't have time to do it. More is crisis therapy. We complain about the casework, we can't get to everyone. Why not put clients in a group? They don't see it that way. I'm disillusioned and perhaps idealistic. I don't want to change the world, but we could make it easier on ourselves.

Delphi three No. 8



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is. The Big Pain**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** This is a file of one of my clients. It represents all the report writing that we have to do as student social workers.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** The file/report writing is significant to me because one of the main things that I associate with social work is the writing of reports. So much time has been spent writing reports for University purposes. It becomes frustrating because it is not the same way that reports need to be written in the practice. Sometimes it feels as if I am repeating myself in reports and never actually saying exactly what I want to because everything said must be written according to confusing criteria. This has been a big frustration to me as at times I feel that the highly structured report writing trivializes what we do in the practice of social work.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** In any job there will always be some things that we like and some we don't. I have learned that to cope one must enjoy that which we like to do and do our best at that which we do not like to do.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The files represent the report writing. I spend more time writing reports than I do with clients. It's a necessary thing writing a report, but we write it over and over. Sometimes what I write isn't really the issue. If you could use the agency time to write reports, but we spend hours and hours writing reports at home.

Delphi Three No. 3



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Difference**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It is a photo of the open area for staff at Child Welfare Offices.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This artifact is significant because it represents the atmosphere which exists at Child Welfare in Wynberg. The atmosphere is totally different to any other organization that I have worked at before. Child Welfare in Wynberg is friendly, inviting and alive. This atmosphere and the people at Child Welfare have made a huge difference to my practical education.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I have learned how much the atmosphere or environment at my work surroundings can affect my attitude to my practice education and the way in which I experience it.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

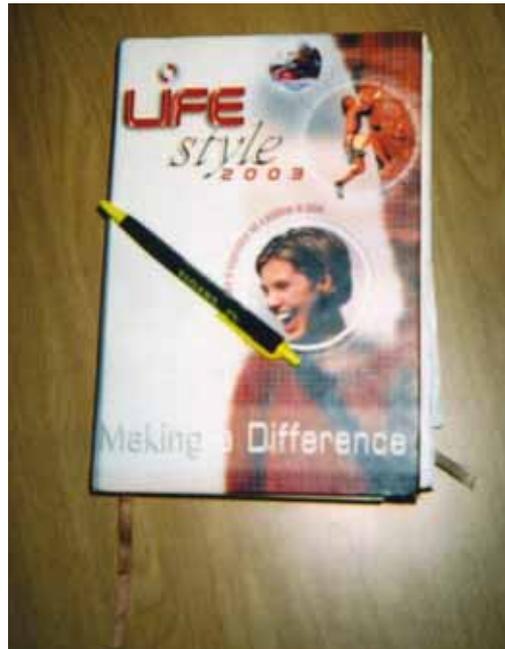
I really enjoy working at this office. It's so much alive. People laugh, they smile, they greet you. The atmosphere is very different, you don't mind coming to practice education because you enjoy it. You can joke. At other places, you can't even smile. It makes me realize I know I can do this work.

Delphi Three No. 4

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph: The Primary School.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This particular school, Danie Ackermann, was where my practical in-group work was done and my research. It is a lovely school and the cooperation between the role players was great.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Very significant. All the group work for 2003 was done at Danie Ackermann Primary School. The reason for the group was behavior modification and twelve children were involved between the ages of 8 and 12. We focused on aggression manipulation, good and bad behavior, good and bad actions, values and norms. Field experience was great and I know the work I have done had an impact on their lives.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** The slogan at the school is fight ignorance and that is what I was also trying to do, but more in a behavioral context. The home circumstances are not pleasant for these children, but they achieve above expectations.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

No additional photo-elicitation transcript comments.

Delphi Three No. 6



1. **The "Title" I would give this photograph is. The Boss**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** This is my every day diary containing all my appointments with my clients, necessary telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and a "to do list" for every day.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Without my diary I am lost. In order to function in my profession it is necessary to be organized in order to look professional. The school and university expects me to see my clients on a regular basis and to do that I have to organize my day carefully because, again, of time limitations.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** It is necessary to organize a week ahead so that you will be prepared for every client, every group and every meeting you may have, because we don't just do practical work, you have to organize all your preparations around your lecture times. Having necessary telephone numbers, e-mail addresses close by helps you to look more professional and organized.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The diary is necessary to make arrangements and be prepared for clients. I have to have it.

Delphi Three No. 5

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is: Neutral Ground**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is the room at a primary school where I did my group work and see clients.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** It is important to me to conduct an interview in a secluded place where the client has the privacy to talk only to me. The room has a bright tablecloth that makes me feel positive. I also prefer not to conduct all my interviews in the client’s homes because I feel more like an intruder there than in an office space. Yet this office is not my office at the Welfare and thus it breaks the stigma of going to see a welfare worker.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I don’t like spying on people, although, much of my work is observing housing conditions and hygiene. I prefer to build a relationship with clients as an equal rather than an authority figure. I find that people are often more open on neutral ground than in a welfare setting.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

No additional photo-elicitation transcript comments.

Delphi Four No. 1

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is:** **My Photocopy Machine**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It is a helping tool because it enables me to photocopy important information. The manual function is quite good as it enables me to eliminate blurred printing.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** It facilitates my practical work ensuring that all needed information is available. It’s accessible too.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Without a photocopy machine duplicating important (original) information would be difficult. Making multiple copies of information also ensures that I am never out of information.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I always need to make a photocopy of reports.

Delphi Four No. 7



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is. The Safe Haven**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** Macassar Community Project’s office at Zandvliet High School.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This is where all the action takes place. Schoolchildren regularly come and sit in my office just to chat about friendships, love lives or school problems. Whatever the problem, they know that there is a willing ear to listen when they enter.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** To keep my doors open gives the impression that I am inviting them to come and talk to me. To keep my office clean and tidy so that nothing can distract their attention and a clean and tidy work place reflects professionalism as well as organized. To create a warm and comfortable atmosphere.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I try to create comfort and privacy at my office. It’s convenient for clients to see me at one place.

Delphi Four No. 6



1. **The “Title I would give this photograph is: Logo**
2. **Describe the artifact:** Orange Volkswagen Beetle.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** A car might just be wheels to get the social worker from point A to B, but this specific, very visible and distinct vehicle serves the same, and even more purpose, then a logo of any well known organization.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** In different communities this logo functions differently. In some, clients, children and even the dogs come running towards the worker. In others, this logo serves as an instant repellent, causing clients to vanish into thin air.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

The orange beetle car is very distinctive. One worker hands out bread and food from the car to the dogs that are in terrible shape, to keep them at bay. I don't distribute food to the dogs from the car, but they still come. Being a white woman, these are not areas people my age would go, being white. You must be from some sort of organization to go there.

Delphi Four No. 2



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is:** A Kind Touch
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is the hand cream in the restroom. It smells good and makes one’s hands soft. If you look closely you will see that it is almost half – an indication that it is used often.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Behind the cream is a poster saying: “How Beautiful a Day Can Be When Kindness Touches It”. I find this very inspirational as I think a social worker should approach his/her services with a kind touch. Having pleasant smelling cream to keep my hands soft is symbolic to a soft touch when working with clients.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Every time I apply some cream I use it as a reminder to stay kind and have a soft touch in my work.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

In casework there’s an awful lot of sadness involved and particular situations that you have to handle with care, with empathy, be really kind, be gentle. It’s easy for clients to feel guilty about their situation where they might think you’re looking down on them and they get defensive. When they see that you have a kind touch, they don’t have to get defensive and think you are attacking them.

Delphi Four No. 3

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Flexibility.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** The artifact is a tree in a school yard.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** The tree is significant due to the fact that it represents the flexibility which is required of myself during practice education. I have a particular client, who when upset, hides himself in odd places. One of his favorite places is this tree. Often in order to conduct a session with the client I have to spend 15-20 minutes coaxing him out of the tree.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** That as a social worker one has to be flexible and willing to adapt to the situation.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Flexibility applies to everything.

Delphi Four No. 4



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Outside Washing Machine..**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This washing machine stands outside of the house at one of my clients. It can be described through the social work developmental theory because of the role I played as educator.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Very significant. Relation and field experience was suitable because the client learned proper life skills, registration of her children, family conflict handling, and hygiene on self, children and clothes.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** If everything in life goes wrong, you must believe that there will be hope and better days.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Knowing the culture and where the clients come from is important. Theories in context are not always appropriate for South Africa.

Delphi Four No. 5



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Hate**
2. **Describe the artifact:** The name board of a farm where one of my clients was raped and murdered.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** I do not like visiting this farm. The workers live in poverty and social chaos. I have never liked going there and after my seven year-old client was murdered, I hate going there. It reminds me of how vulnerable children are and how little I can sometimes do to help them because of all the legal procedures on must follow.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I sometimes have to go where I really don't want to because that is usually where the most problems are.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I've become demotivated; problems are so huge. What am I doing here? I accept all people for what they are. I'm not a racist, I'm trying to make things right.

Delphi Four No. 8



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is. What If?**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** This is the money that I had in my wallet at the time of taking the photograph..
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Money is a worry for me and is therefore significant for the social work profession. In South Africa, social workers make very little money. In fact, I could make the equivalent of my starting salary working as a waitress. I have a huge study loan and have studied for four years at a good university and it is therefore a concern to me that I will not be able to make enough money to get through a month comfortably. Sometimes I feel that I was silly to study social work and at other times I feel it is noble; I guess I am undecided.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** In a practical sense, I have learned that I will have to work hard and study further if I plan to earn a decent living as a social worker. The money concern has forced me to explore my other interests that I might be able to focus on in furthering my career and this has led to an interest in policy planning. I have learned that the realm of possibility is a lot bigger than what I originally realized.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I'm always wondering what if...will I be financially stable, what if I don't get married soon and have a husband to support me and I have to support myself? What if something happens to me? My parents can't pay my tuition bill.

Delphi Five No. 1



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **My Writing Desk.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is my writing desk. It gives me the opportunity to write reports of sessions. I also use it for my files and it makes it easy to draw a client’s file.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** It enables me to keep my reports and files neatly for myself to read and for my supervisor. Tidy and organized files can be accessible for any referral source (courts, psychologists, Child and Welfare, etc.)
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Always make sure that files and reports are neat.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Reports are graded and returned to us; there are marks for neatness. These are the expectations from the first year field work experience. It follows into the workplace because other professionals might read my work.

Delphi Five No. 2



1. **The "Title" I would give this photograph:** **Keep it Real**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is a hole puncher (if that is what you call it). It belongs to the agency that provides every social worker in the office with one. The one in the photograph belongs to my field instructor and on it is written "Idas Valley", which is the community in which I work.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** The hole punchers are used all the time as all documents are filed in paper form with holes and laces. In the age of computers, I find this very amusing. It kind of forces you to stay humble and down to earth, character traits I believe to be essential when working with clients and adopting to their situations.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** That greater successes are achieved when I remember that for a social worker it should never be about prestige or new technology, but the services rendered to those in need.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

There's two holes you lace the papers through, it's very tedious because if you want something out of the file you have to take all the paper out. I think it's pretty silly because I think there's a better way to do it. We have the facilities to use other methods to file our work.

Delphi Five No. 3



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **Fear**
2. **Describe the artifact:** It is a photo of a sign for a department at the South African Police.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Sometimes when going into certain areas that you know have huge gang problems. You get a little afraid and you think, what am I doing? To date, I have never experienced any huge problem in the gang communities that I work in, but there have been times when I have been afraid to get out of the car.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Things aren’t always as bad as they seem and perceptions can be deceiving because sometimes you see people who look really dodgy and daunting, but once you speak to them, you often realize that your first impressions were unfounded.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

We go into areas that are known for their gangs, we have clients in the area. We went in once trying to find a client. All the streets lead into one another and there are a lot of dead ends, they all intertwined. There were about 15 guys on the street looking at us. We felt like we shouldn’t do this but another student said she had to see her clients, it was essential. As we were walking, the men asked who we were looking for and they said “come, we are going to escort you.” They left a guy to watch out car. One guy on the street started talking to us. They said “leave these ladies alone, we’re looking after them and there will be trouble.” They stood at the client’s door and waited for us to do the interview and took us back to the car. We felt really scared because we didn’t know if this was a good gang. They could have been trouble. Sometimes your perceptions are deceiving about gangs because you’re in a bad area but it’s not always like that.

Delphi Five No. 6

1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph is. My Thinking Chair**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** A little yellow chair, usually used by preschool children.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** After seeing my clients I try to write/type their reports immediately, but sometimes I get a mental block. Then I will go sit on my thinking chair that looks out on the parking lot of the school. This chair also helps me to switch off for a few seconds just to clear my head so that I can think straight, professionally, and effectively.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** It is necessary for me to have my own safe haven where I can collect my thoughts. I have a lot to do with family violence, alcoholism and other drug dependencies, which can become disturbing. This chair helps me to work through the facts in my head or just to switch off for a few minutes before I start to think what I can do to relieve their agony.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

My thinking chair is a safe place to stop thinking for a moment.

Delphi Five No. 4



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph:** **The Backyard Interview.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** This is where some of the interviews take place for the one client. It smells sometimes and we usually stand because the ground is wet and dirty.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** This is Africa. This picture is directly related to circumstances I do my practicals in. Academically I must know my theory very well to be able to use it in the worst circumstances. Ex.: Ethnological oriented – task centered – non-judgmental.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** That **Maslow’s** hierarchy are of significance for some of my clients. Some actualize themselves in the worst scenario with just a little basic needs satisfaction.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Knowing the culture.

Delphi Five No. 5



1. 1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph: Perspective**
2. **Describe the artifact:** A scene of the beauty of nature.
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Whenever I go to this farm and drive past this scene I try to remind myself that there is still some beauty left. I try and be calm for a moment and get perspective. It is actually very significant that the picture is out of focus. I was very rushed, as usual, when I took it. Although I try to take it easy, it is not ever that easy.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** I must remember not to get dragged down by what I do, but it is very difficult for me to stay focused and maintain a balance.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I was a drug addict and almost died in a car accident. “There must be a reason I got this chance, make the most of it. I left everything to attend school in Stellenbosch. I was an art therapist. I would like to get involved in politics, policy and advocacy work.”

Delphi Five No. 8



1. **The “Title” I would give this photograph: Community Challenge**
2. **Describe the Artifact.** This is a poster that promotes the use of condoms in South Africa. The word “Viva” in the poster is a synonym “pro.”
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** My community work project for the year is an HIV/AIDS awareness project for the Redhill Community on 13 September. For the entire year at the organization so far, I have been planning this project. I am very nervous as it is the first time that I am organizing such a big event. I am very hopeful that it will be successful and have been anxious about the various factors that I cannot control. For example, the weather. The community work project has been a very significant part of my work this year as it is the area of social work that I knew the least about and I have therefore had to work really hard at it.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Community work can be fun, scary, exciting, boring, vibrant and annoying. I have learned that **PLANNING IS VERY IMPORTANT**, there is real truth in the saying “proper preparation prevents poor performance!” I have learned to integrate the theory and practice of community work and have learned about finding donations and developing relationships with key resources.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

I've been making arrangements and wonder if it's ok to be in the community on a Saturday. Is it safe? It's stressful. I'm working all year for one day and am worried what I have to show for it.

Delphi Five No. 7



1. **The “Title I would give this photograph is: Participation.**
2. **Describe the artifact:** Box of crayons
3. **The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is:** Working with groups and enabling each party to participate can be expensive and sometimes difficult for some clients. The use of crayons is very inexpensive and allows the adult to feel comfortable and maybe more open to the session than the use of a pen could create.
4. **Lesson(s) learned are:** Simplicity is a keyword in the process of working with people who have their worldly “adult” guards in place.
5. **Likert Scale Rating:** Very Significant

Photo-elicitation transcript

Adults working with crayons changes them completely. They revert to being more open. I would say I don't have any pens and pencils.

APPENDIX B

Student Consent Form for Participation in Snapshots Research Project

I hereby consent to take part in research conducted by Professor Dianne J. Orton Columbia, Missouri USA, University of Stellenbosch and local social service field agencies affiliated with the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch.

I understand that:

- a. The research is to understand students' perception and integration of classroom and practice learning during field practicum capstone experience.
- b. My part in the research will be to take photographs of social artifacts and write reflectively about them on worksheets and participate in a semi-structured interview to clarify responses. Participation in the research component of this assignment may result in publication of my work.
- c. Participation in the photography and writing will take approximately four to five hours to complete excluding the semi-structured interview, which will take approximately ninety minutes.
- d. Participation in the assignment is a requirement of the Department of Social Work. Participation in the research component is voluntary. I am free to stop participating at any time. If I do not wish to participate, or if my participation is ended for any reason, this will have no effect on my course grade.
- e. I will be told of any important new information that might affect my willingness to take part in the research.
- f. I understand that there are no monetary benefits involved in the study. There are no costs to the students; this researcher will pay for the cameras and film development. Benefits are focused on educational and professional advancement and understanding.
- g. My participation in this research should not pose any risks either emotional or physical.
- h. Research participants must be 18 years or older to participate in the study.
- i. The following steps will be taken to protect my identity and the information I provide:
 1. Results of the research will protect identity of the student.
 2. I may contact Professor Orton at any time to request that all identifiers linking my identity to the data be destroyed.
 3. Professor Orton will securely store data collected.
- j. The results of this research may be published but I will not be identified in any publication.

If I have any questions, I am to contact Professor Dianne Orton or Dr. Sulina Green.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Agency consent form

I am working with Dr. Green in having a select number of fourth year University of Stellenbosch social work students participate in a research project in August 2003. I will need the agencies permission to proceed with the project. I have attached a copy of the research abstract that summarizes the project.

The project involves photography, however, be assured that no photographs are to be taken of clients, staff or anything the agency would consider to be confidential. Students will be signing a consent form to participate which will reinforce the confidentiality of clients and staff.

If you have any questions about the project please don't hesitate to contact Dr. Green. I look forward to meeting you when I visit your agency in August. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dianne Orton, MSW, LCSW
 Field Practicum Coordinator
 University of Missouri – Columbia
 Columbia, Missouri USA

I have reviewed the abstract and **agree** that the assigned field student may participate in the study.

 Field Instructor – date

 Agency Director/Supervisor – date

Comments: _____

APPENDIX D

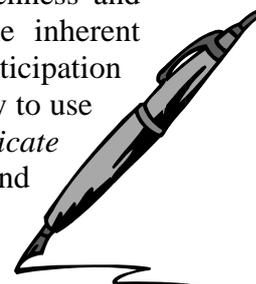
Instructions to assignments



Snapshots Project

Overview

A majority of social work academic and agency-based practice teachers assign student projects, reports and other documentation of field experience that rely on verbal and written reports. As a result, student's ability to adequately describe the richness and uniqueness of their field experience is often marginalized because of the inherent limitations of the traditional forms of spoken and written communication. Participation in **Snapshots** is an attempt to provide social work field students the opportunity to use their often-overlooked third channel of communication – the *ability to communicate visually* as a method of demonstrating the integration of knowledge, values and skills from classroom and practice learning experiences.



Instructions

Participation in this study encourages you to 'think outside the box,' by using **photography** to find a visual symbolic language for thoughts, feelings and abstract concepts that describe your perspective regarding your agency field experiences, the impact of the system (agency) in which you work and in understanding yourself in the social work role. This form of communication is about getting others to see what you see and understand your message. You will also engage in **reflective writing** about each social artifact photographed. A social artifact is an object, item that you select that *significantly** reflects, symbolizes and portrays your social work practice and role at your agency. By organizing the visual elements in a photograph you may see better ways to construct your thoughts both orally and written. Hopefully, participation in the project will help you create a new "visual" voice for communicating with peers, educators and other professionals. Your use of photography and reflective writing will hopefully help show others new patterns of thinking, make new connections and tell us new stories about social work practice from your unique viewpoint.

You will be given two cameras, a Polaroid Instamatic, and a disposal 33mm camera, and worksheets to complete. Professor Orton, the researcher for this project, will develop the disposable camera film and give you a copy of those pictures when you meet on Friday, August 22nd. Each student is requested to take a maximum of twenty (20) and a minimum of ten (10) photographs of selected social/cultural artifacts that include objects, items (not people) that the student feels *significantly* reflects and symbolizes their experience and role as a social worker in their agency. A picture of each social/cultural artifact will be taken once with your Polaroid camera and once with the disposable 33mm camera. Each Polaroid photograph should be secured to one of the worksheets and the worksheet completed by responding to the questions. It is important to respond to all the questions on the worksheet. Professor Orton will visit each student at his or her agency following the completion of the assignment. Professor Orton will take a **collective photograph**,

similar to a collage, of your top five (5) top social/cultural artifacts as you ranked them. Please have your top five artifacts ready to be placed in the collective photograph during this visit. If photographs were taken of large objects, for example an automobile that cannot be included in the collective photograph because of its size, students can use the Polaroid photograph of that item for the collective picture. Professor Orton will also personally interview each student to clarify responses on the photo reflection worksheets. The collective photograph and a personal interview will take place at your agency. Please allow one and one half-hours (1 ½ hours) for her visit to take the collective photograph and conduct the personal interview.

*Professor Orton's definition of the meaning of significance

The significance of objects often resides in their stories, context and associations with people and places; therefore the concept of significance reflects a summary of the values, meanings and importance of a chosen social/cultural artifact by someone.

White Sheets – Participant information, overview, worksheet pages:

1. Photo Reflection Worksheets
2. Seeing to Learn and Learning to See
3. Delphi Ranking

Yellow Sheets – camera instruction and tips

Green Sheets - examples of student snapshots

APPENDIX E

Photo reflection worksheet



1. **The 'Title' I would give this photograph is.....**

The Lucky Lemon

2. **I would give it this title because.....** It's kind of goofy but this ring is my good luck charm. It also has more symbolic meaning. I got this ring in high school and it began my big ring kick that still carries on....
3. **When I look at this photograph I** I think of me, my identity. I was always very insecure and shy. I wanted so badly to feel special and noticed. In a family of 11, this need for attention makes sense. So, this ring was sort of the beginning of me finding myself, establishing my identity, and expressing myself outwardly. Since this time in high school I have really gotten to know myself and my beliefs/values (so much that I stand up for them or act on them). My confidence and self-worth has risen a lot and no longer inhibits me as much as it used to.

**Now where does the next fit in?
instructions**

After the pen and camera – those are the

Photo Reflection Worksheet

Student Name: _____ Date of Photo _____ Photo # _____

Agency Name: _____

Do not include photos of clients or staff

Attach Photo

1. The "Title" I would give this photograph is
2. Describe the artifact
3. The significance of this artifact in relation to my academic training and field experience is.....
4. Lesson(s) learned are.....

Please indicate the significance of this artifact in relation to your field experience by circling the appropriate box.

Very Significant	Significant	Neutral	Somewhat Significant	Not Significant
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