Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methodology of the study. It is divided into three sections: 1. The theoretical understanding of the methodology. 2. The research design. 3. The experience and process of collecting data.

The objective of this study is to examine and gain insights into the field of Social Work in Criminology and Justice in India through field work.

Specific Objectives

1. To obtain an overview of the nature and value of field work in criminology and justice.
2. To highlight aspects of student experiences and learning with regard to programs undertaken, challenges faced, value conflicts and methods used.
3. To study field work settings to understand issues, scope for social work practice, research, advocacy and the role of the social worker.
4. To study the evolution and growth of certain sub-sectors of field work in criminology and justice.
5. To examine the challenge of connecting classroom learning with the field in this sector.

Theoretical Understanding of the Methodology

Qualitative research has been defined by Sherman and Reid (1994) as research that produces descriptive data based upon spoken or written words and observable behaviour. In qualitative research, Nakkeeran (2006), states how data collection and analysis proceed concurrently with constant iteration between field data and theory formation. This is especially relevant for this study as it is about culling out information from what has been written by the students in the form of their field work recordings. The study being
exploratory lends itself to a qualitative approach. Creswell (2003:30) explains how exploratory that means not much has been written about the topic and the researchers seek to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas and data. The listening aspect in this study is actually paying attention to the student’s ‘voice’ as reflected in what they have written. These texts form the foundation of the study. Words is what we largely transact in. Recordings are about words trying to document tasks, capture feelings, reflect, think, and demonstrate what the student learnt and what more they have to learn. And it is these words that the student gets evaluated on. It is like writing one’s own text book for a course.

According to Flick (2009), texts serve three purposes in the process of qualitative research: not only are they 1) Essential data on which findings are based, but also 2) The basis of interpretations and 3) The central medium for presenting and communicating findings. Documents, represent a specific version of realities constructed for specific purposes. Someone (or an institution) produces them for some purpose and for some form of use….

When documents are used they should be seen as a means of communication. Analysing a document is often a way of using unobtrusive methods and data produced for practical purposes in the field under study. This can provide a new and unfiltered perspective on the field and its processes Scott (1990, cited in Flick, 2009:14).

Content Analysis is a method of social research that aims at the analysis of the content, qualitative or quantitative, of documents and other forms of written material, both manifest and latent. Evolution of the method dates back to the early 1900s where references of its use were documented largely within the world of communications in countries like Sweden and Germany. References have now even traced it back to a study idea that Max Weber had proposed using this technique as far back as 1911. This was also explained within the emergence of print media and the need to understand and analyse messages in it.

In 1931, Alfred R Lindesmith developed a methodology to refute existing hypotheses, which became known as a content analysis technique and it gained popularity in the 1960s. Glaser (1964) referred to it as ‘The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis’. Later Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to their adaptation of it as ‘Grounded Theory’. The method of content analysis enables the researcher to include large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties by locating the more important structures of its communication content (Glasser 1996, cited in Cohen 2008:491).
The growth of content analysis as a method is again seen in the light of the emergence of electronic media, its influence on social and political processes and the emergence of empirical methods of inquiry in the social sciences. By the mid-1950s, the method was written about in academic journals but it got a mention in Webster’s only in 1961 though it had been around for 50 years (Krippendorf, 1980).

Thus content analysis is defined by Krippendorf (1980:21) as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. It is further explained to be able to provide knowledge and new insights. The method itself has been differently understood to mean counting qualities in texts; these could be words or attributes, to drawing out data from the text. The method lends itself to some assumptions about how people communicate, interpret and understand the communication process. It is precisely within this complex understanding that the context becomes what gives direction to the interpretation. It has been used in disciplines like history, psychology, sociology and mass communication to build on an understanding from various forms of written documents and then to make sense of that data in connection with an external reality or existing theory. Subsequently content analysis was used to understand a wide range of themes such as social change, cultural symbols, changing trends in the theoretical context of different disciplines (Devi Prasad 2008).

Recognizing the important role that the data, the context, and the researcher, play in this method, Krippendorff (1980) presented a framework that highlighted these dimensions, in a way reiterating the role of the researcher and their knowledge, the purpose of the study itself, and inference, as a basic intellectual task. Thus, that same data is being sourced with a different purpose. This disassociation is what many theorists have also talked about. The data is disassociated from its source, for example, student recordings used in this study were written with a certain specific academic requirement. One is then re-looking at it to derive an understanding of the evolution of social work in the sector of criminology, from the student social worker’s perspective. Within field work the students as part of the curriculum requirement are meant to document on a regular basis their learning in a written format. These texts or documents in the form of student recordings will be analysed using the method of content analysis.
Therefore, content analysis is the process of summarizing and reporting written data (Cohen et al. 2008). It takes texts analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes, in order to generate or test a theory.

A few of the characteristics that supporters of this technique list out are that it is unobtrusive. It does not engage with or influence the data source in any way as secondary data (here it implies documents or written material) is being worked with thus also eliminating errors due to subject influences (Webbe et al. 1966, cited in Flick 2009). Thus, because one is dealing with secondary data that is already documented the scope of the researcher’s interference or influence of it in any way is eliminated in comparison with engaging with primary data where the subjectivity of the researcher is an important aspect to be considered.

The two ways that qualitative content analysis can be done as stated by Mayring (2000) are, inductive category development, where tentative categories are developed based on the material and it is revised as one works through the text. So one reads through half the material to keep testing the categories, eventually finalises it and then engages with the data. The other is the deductive category application where the categories are formulated before, based on literature review and prior readings and then it is applied to the text. No matter which way is used it is important to give explicit definitions and coding rules for each category, determining exactly under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category. The researcher has followed the inductive category development for this study.

**Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Some of the ontological assumptions on which the study is based are that field work is an important entry point to the field of practice. Field work allows experimentation, pushing of boundaries and presenting models of intervention. This sector (field of practice) itself is rigid, governed by laws and bureaucracy and the social worker's role is not clearly defined. Field work has been the space to demonstrate the role of the social worker in the criminal justice system.

The epistemological focus would correspond to the lack of literature; about field work, about organisations (agencies) in Criminology and Justice, and about student social workers’ experiences. Thus, field work recordings could be a valuable source of data which can be
used for learning and as teaching material. Texts could depict a history of the way the field of practice evolved along with voices from the field that could narrate experiences. The identity of the social worker would become clear in the Indian context for this field of practice and this understanding of the identity could be compiled, consolidated, and communicated for review. Finally the aim of the study is about theorising field work in Criminology and Criminal Justice Social Work in India.

**Research Design**

An analysis of social work student field work recordings over a decade (2000-2009), was undertaken to understand the trajectory of field work in criminology, criminal justice and allied systems (that is, related systems like the commissions, legal aid services, correctional institutions for women and children) with a view to review and enhance it.

The study is essentially exploratory in nature as it was about examining and developing an understanding about various aspects of field work in criminology, criminal justice and allied systems. It analysed the tasks undertaken by the students and their experiences during the course of field work. An analysis of annual reports and old documents was undertaken to understand changes in the Centre and field work placements. The primary focus was content analysis of the field work recordings, case documentation, process recordings, field studies or any other written material developed by student social workers placed in field work settings over the last ten years. The secondary focus was interviews with key informants like faculty advisors, field work supervisors, academicians, agency personnel and students. (Annexure I, Research design)

The stratified sampling method was used where by strata or categories were listed out or defined, in this case, students’ recordings of different placements or settings per year were taken up. These were second year students of the MA in Social Work course, as the second year allows for a specialisation focus. For the purpose of this study, the last ten years 2000 to 2009 was focused on, about three recordings per year, so thirty recordings were taken up for analysis. A period of 10 years was chosen mainly because it was a long enough period to see what changes were happening in the field. This period of 2000 to 2009 also saw some

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6 Centre here refers to the Centre for Criminology and Justice, School of Social Work, of the University on which this study is based.
curricular structuring in the year 2006 at the Institute. The practical consideration of choosing this 10 year period was due to the fact of whether student recordings would be available since they are usually destroyed after a term of 3 years or handed back to the student on request as per existing practice; so whether recordings would still be available to access was a concern. It was also the decade immediately prior to when this study was started. All available recordings that is forty eight recordings of the section of the universe, were screened for content and thirty recordings were chosen accordingly. As a starting point previous settings, that is pre-2000 (police, prison and court and institutions) were retained to see work over a period of time but each year and overall within the defined period of study a balance of new agencies, different supervisors, male and female students was maintained to determine variety and scope.

The unit of analysis was the student recording file and the setting, which is the agency or the site of field placement. Some criteria for choosing a student recording were availability, accessibility, completeness (entries of both semesters exist), legibility of handwriting, especially when hand written. Another additional important criteria was the size of the recording file; so thicker if hand written, or the volume of writing if typed, so the more substantive one was chosen. Also if there were two students in one setting any one was chosen on the basis of either gender balance across the years or the volume of data available in the recording file.

Key informants were interviewed; they were selected from among those who have been associated with field work of the Centre in various capacities as agency personnel, field contact, agency or faculty supervisor, or as faculty advisor and some students who had studied in the Centre during the period of the study. A few senior academicians were also interviewed to understand the initial phase of the Centre and the context of field work then. Two persons per type of setting and category of person were chosen so a total of ten to fifteen approximately were to be interviewed. Thus the study captured both the students’ experiences and voices of people who have a history of having facilitated student field work. What emerged from the analysis of annual reports and content analysis of field work recordings was triangulated with the key informant interviews. Though the focus was on the student learner the study did not look at pedagogies or style of teaching even though these contribute to the learning experience. Permission to access this data that is, student recordings, was formally sought from the concerned officials in the Centre and the Institute.
The Process of Gathering Data and working with it

Tools of data collection. The following tools were developed for the study.

1. Frameworks for analysing the content of field work recordings. (Annexure II)
2. Interview guides for interview of faculty advisors, faculty or field supervisors, field contact, agency personnel, senior academicians and students whose recordings have been analysed. (Annexure III)

Data was collected from three main sources, annual reports, students recording files, and key informants. The first source was secondary data in the form of annual reports, documents and reports available in connection with the Centre. The second source was student field work recordings. The third source was the key informant interviews.

Methods of data collection. Data was collected through the following:

1. Analysis of annual reports and other documents.
2. Content analysis of student recordings.
3. Key informant interviews.

Organising and presenting the data. There are five ways of organising and presenting qualitative data as explained by Cohen et al (2008: 467), that is, by people, so either by group or by individual responses, by issue or by research questions or finally by instrument. For this study the researcher used both the research question and the instrument as the way of presenting the data, details of which are listed below.

1. Analysis of annual reports

Initially the annual reports for the decade chosen were collected and read through. Data was collated regarding field work agencies (first year and second year), block placement agencies, number of faculty members, and number and names of students, to subsequently identify the recording files. Also any additional information or comments pertaining to the Centre or curriculum were noted down. These annual reports were analysed; further documents written about the Centre were also reviewed.
2. Content analysis of student recordings files

Since the period of study was determined to be the years 2000 to 2009, the universe for the study comprised of student recordings of the second year of the MA Social Work program pertaining to the said Centre under study. The stratified sampling method was used to determine the thirty recordings finally chosen for the study.

Criteria of choosing the student recordings for content analysis -the sampling process

In the method of content analysis the preparatory phase of determining themes, categories and codes is crucial and extremely important to the study itself. The rigour of this phase determines the framework that is being developed through which the content, in this case, student recordings will be seen. Thus it is necessary to explicitly state how the units of analysis are being chosen, and the reason some content is being excluded.

The researcher was able to collect student recordings from various sources like FAPs and the Centre faculty members. In all, forty eight student recordings pertaining to the second year were collected. Of these sixteen were male students and thirty two were female students. There were eleven supervisors in all ranging from fourteen out of the forty-eight supervised by a single faculty member at the highest count and one each as a minimum. They were a mix of faculty and agency supervisors. In all there were six faculty supervisors and five agency supervisors. All the agency supervisors belong to the oldest FAP of the Centre. A total of thirty recordings out of the forty eight recordings, were taken up for analysis, which is about sixty three per cent of the section of the universe available for analysis.
Table 3.1

Sample Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Units and Respondent</th>
<th>Section of the Universe (Recordings available for analysis)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Recordings</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Students</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 is about the male-female break up of total number of recordings that were available, so a section of the universe and the sample chosen. Instead of a convenience sampling as thought of initially a stratified sampling technique was used and the different strata identified were as follows: In the chosen decade, recordings were chosen for each year. This was to cover the entire range and not leave out any year in between.

1. **Year of the recording**: In the year 2000, that is, all available recordings were taken since it is the first year of the period identified 2000 to 2009. It would give insights of work done at the start.

2. **Sequential**: The same agency was chosen at least twice during the period of the study. In the decade chosen wherever it appeared that an agency previously taken up has come up subsequently, it was taken up once more to be able to match what was documented across two years. They were not necessarily consequent years but any two years in the period of study. This was done to capture any growth in the field work experience itself in terms of variety of tasks thus indicating the sub-sector opening up, or the agency becoming comfortable with the idea of student social workers. It would also highlight one more student’s experience with that agency and issue.
3. **New agency:** Subsequently, every new agency was taken up. The focus was not only the agency but the site also. For example, in the FAP, if prison has been covered by a Central prison and subsequently a district prison came up, that recording was taken up since they are two different types of prisons, central and district prisons or the profile of client was different, women under trial prisoners and young adult offenders. This even though the agency, the FAP, was the same. So the focus is also on the location and not only the agency. This was done to see how each issue within the theme was engaged with. For example work in prison would involve similarity in focus of rights of under-trial prisoners but the nature of the prison would expose the student to a different profile of people and their issues, as for example, an urban or a rural focus.

4. **Sex of the student:** Within the defined ten year period as far as possible a balance was maintained between recordings of male and female students. This would take care of any inherent assumptions that may have been made about the effect of gender and writing skills for example, that boys may not write as much as compared to girls. This also needs to be seen in the context of the ratio of male and female students in the class, it has largely been ten girls: three boys.

5. **Variety of Supervisors:** This was to maintain parity across different supervisors. Within the decade decided when a choice was being made of recordings then the option of exercising a choice of a new supervisor was done. Though supervision inputs per se were not the focus of the study, it was done to also to capture variety in supervision that may have contributed to the field work experience indirectly.

6. **Each year was covered:** Recordings from each year were selected with what was available so there is no gap within that ten year period. Within the defined decade, no year was left empty without any recordings being taken up. Since ten years itself is not a long duration, it was important to be able to capture experiences of every year since that would then take care of any other external realities that may have changed at the Institute level in terms of decisions affecting field work.
7. **Number of recordings available for each year**: In keeping with three per year across the ten years criteria, if in any particular year there were less than three, all were included. If there were more than three then the other criteria were used to determine the recording file that was finally chosen.

8. Balance in terms of number of recordings across the ten years was maintained as far as possible. The availability of recordings may not be identical so overall a certain balance was maintained of total number of recordings being chosen over the total number available in a particular year.

9. **Student number**: In a particular year if there was more than one student in an agency, only one was taken up. This was to maintain the parity of variety across students in other agencies.

The section of the universe comprising of forty-eight recordings can be broken up into two phases of five years each: Phase One-Year 2000-2005 had nine recordings in total and Phase Two-Year 2006 to 2009 had thirty-nine recordings in total. Since Phase One had a limited number of recordings available it was decided to take up all nine recordings. From Phase Two, of the thirty-nine recordings, twenty-one needed to be chosen following the strata defined. Thus Phase One sets the criteria in place with all that is available and it is in Phase Two that the stated criteria were actually used to determine and choose from the universe of all available student recording files.

The main criteria out of the nine outlined above, used were settings and male-female students as the other listed criteria were more or less followed. There are some settings that are particular about access only to the same sex for example, male or female sections in prison or closed institutions and in some settings both are actually preferred like in a police station or the human rights commission.

In qualitative research threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely, rather the effects of these threats can be attenuated by attention to validity and reliability throughout a piece of research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2008:133). With regard to the method of content analysis, special mention needs to be made about inter-coder reliability. Holsti (1969) describes inter coder reliability as important in establishing validity. It
indicates if categories developed are valid or not. Thus two or three persons agreeing upon
the theme and category link is in a way validating the soundness of the technique established.

Since, inter coder reliability is an important component in the content analysis method, one
actual recording file from the chosen sample was given to a senior faculty member of theCentre to do a content analysis along with the framework tool that was designed. This was
done because content familiarity would be there about field work and its requirements and
codes could be independently identified and then matched. Some of the feedback that came
in was that it was time consuming and while most aspects were evident and could be directly
marked some aspects had to be inferred, for example, gaps in theoretical linkages and points
related to self. Also the feedback was filled like an overall cover sheet whereas the researcher
was following a more in-depth listing process which would then be analysed in detail later.
This exercise also helped in pilot testing the framework that was developed.

With regard to reliability in content analysis, Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2008:490) highlight
several issues to be noted, but two points that the researcher found most relevant to this study
were that the text may have not been written with the researcher in mind and may have been
written for a very different purpose from that of the research; hence the researcher would
need to know or be able to infer the intentions of the text. Also it has to be understood that
documents may be limited, selective, partial, biased, non-neutral and incomplete because
they were intended for a different purpose other than that of the research. This is extremely
important to keep in mind so the researcher is able to contextualize what the texts are about
and it is also true that each recording must not be taken as the only word about that field
work setting. Thus it is not about what is missing but what is there, meaning the focus was
on what content was available in a particular recording at a particular point in time with the
understanding that it may not be a final or complete statement of the setting or the field work
experience.
The Process of Content Analysis of Student Recordings

Many theorists have talked about how there is no single right way to do content analysis and that researchers must judge what methods are appropriate for their substantive problem. Various steps and approaches have been proposed by theorists like Carley (1990, 1992), Mayring (2000) and Zhang (2009).

Listed below are steps indicating the process of how the content analysis was actually done in this study; these are based on some readings that give a general idea of how this can be done; the researcher then documents the way she handled the entire process which can be divided into three phases.

1. **Preparatory phase**

   1. All available recordings pertaining to that time period were collected and sorted according to their years.
   
   2. Using the criteria defined, the sample of thirty recording files were chosen. They were then labelled as CA 1 to CA 30.
   
   3. Each recording file was first checked to exclude reports of institutional visits or brochures and other material that may have been a part of the file but that was not being included in this study. In each file, the pages were numbered, so every side got a page number. Summary recordings and any material written by the student that was in the file like reports or proposals connected to field work was included.

2. **Defining the categories**

   1. A few recordings were read through and on the basis of that reading and keeping the objectives in mind the tool, a Content Analysis (CA) framework, was designed. This had themes on student, agency, sector and curriculum and was aligned to the research questions and objectives of the study.
   
   2. The Content Analysis framework was set based on the available recordings so that was the starting point. It was initially developed out of recordings outside the sample chosen to avoid any inherent bias.
3. Also from the initial readings of recordings outside the sample chosen, a few key words under each theme were identified.

4. Then a recording file from the actual pool was purposely chosen (to eliminate any bias by ensuring that the faculty member in her role as a supervisor, did not get one of her own field work student’s file) and given to a faculty colleague asking her to do a content analysis according to the framework developed. This confirmed a few things, the usability of the CA framework itself, its applicability, and scope for any further inputs or changes. It also highlighted some other parameters like time taken and the actual technique used. This was done to ensure inter-coder reliability and was a way to pilot test the tool.

5. From each objective a theme was identified like about the student, about the agency, about the sector and about the curriculum. Within each theme a list of initial categories were determined. This was done by scanning through some of the student recordings so a few commonly used words and terms were picked up.

6. Thus, an immersion into content was needed in order to develop these categories. Each category had to be operationally defined to further explain what it represents.

3. The coding process

1. For each recording file, a first level reading was done to familiarise oneself regarding the setting and the work done.

2. Then using the CA framework a manual coding in pencil was done in the file itself; so according to the themes defined, each relevant section was given a code number. Usually it took a minimal of three thorough readings to go through one file. The researcher realised the intensity and time required for a process like this was hugely under rated before. It was only after doing the first file that she realised how much time this process actually took. It is at this stage that crucial decisions were constantly being made, for example, under which theme something would get coded; at times it may seem like an overlap between two codes but the researcher entered it only in one place which she felt was most relevant. This was done to maintain a certain clarity and focus.
3. A table with a tally of number of codes per themes was also maintained to later analyse within and across files, to determine frequency and important areas that emerged from the data.

4. The coded data was once again checked and then entered into the computer. Since all of this was in hard copy form the only way to do it was to actually type the entire coded data. As far as possible the writing was used exactly as it was.

5. During this process any additional points or insights were also documented separately by the researcher to be analysed later.

6. The researcher would work on two files simultaneously, while one was being transcribed, in this case typed, the next one would be taken up for coding thus ensuring steady flow of files to work on and a break in the monotony of one task.

7. During transcribing sometimes it would happen that a code would have to be changed because it now looked like a better fit for some other theme so this correction was also done. At the end of the file the frequency of codes was re-checked and any correction in the number and the total which may have changed due to the code change during the process was made.

8. Within each theme a list of initial categories were determined. This was done by scanning through some of the student recordings so a few commonly used words and terms were picked up.
Listing of Categories and defining them

Category development is an important part of working with the data. According to Berelson (1952:147, cited in Devi Prasad, 2008) one of the early contributors to the method, content analysis stands or falls by its categories and works well when the categories are well formulated and adapted to the problem. Ely et al. (1991, cited in Basit, 2003) contend that the process of establishing categories is a very close, intense conversation between a researcher and the data that has implications for ongoing method, descriptive reporting and theory building.

The following are the themes and category listing used to develop the CA framework. There were five broad categories. This first part deals with identifying data. This was information about the respondent, like year of study, work experience, sex, information about the field work agency like type and nature of setting, number of years as a field work agency, information regarding supervision mainly who the faculty advisor, supervisor and field contact were and type of supervisor, information regarding the recording file like number of pages and mode that is, hand written or typed.

The next part of the CA framework deals with qualitative dimensions. This was divided into fourteen themes. They were as follows:

a) Types of activities conducted: This would list what all students did, like sessions on awareness about health, legal rights, festival celebrations, home visits or family contact, camps or picnics, recreation, fund raising, job placement, vocational training classes, education literacy, formal, informal, health care specialist, mental health, documentation and concept notes.

b) Social work methods used consists mention of case work, group work, community organisation, research, welfare administration and social action.

c) Challenges / Concerns / Problems / Obstacles; consists of permission to access, restrictions, bureaucracy, attitude of staff, inmate and staff dynamics, not getting information, not getting services, dealing with authority and administration problems with CJS or government.
d) Value conflicts/ethical dilemmas faced consists of physical violence, abusive language, corruption, favouritism and prejudices.

e). Social work issues identified are mainly of domestic violence, mental illness, shelter, rehabilitation, and gender.

f) Scope for social work practice, research and advocacy had to be inferred. Actual listing of tasks done by the social worker from any writings about the field was noted.

g) Role of the social worker had to be inferred, how to list it and terms that were actually used in the recordings were documented.

h) Innovations / creative responses could be new activity started like a literacy class and balwadi.

i) Special points: This included significant cases/ reflection/ work done as an example, a case of a mentally ill person picked up from street and admitted with the help of the police into a hospital and a picnic organised for inmates of an institution.

j) Evidence of theoretical linkages/classroom connect anything that is documented which is a reference to a topic explained in class or a theory the student had read about.

k) Gaps in theoretical linkages/ classroom connect as written by the students. Any mention of a name of a theory or a class input or discussion mentioned or any reading or any research study.

l) Self of worker could include reflective thinking, self-assessment, assumptions about police, negative feelings of frustration, anger, positive feelings of satisfaction, hope, knowledge gained, emotional and personal aspects.

m) Identity, ideology and philosophy of the student social worker.

n) About agency, history, vision, future. Any changes or developments in the agency that have had a direct bearing on a student’s field work.

All of these are indicative and not definite in the sense that the pilot largely reflected these and there was scope for a few more to emerge during the data collection.
It did not matter the number of student recordings that belonged to one supervisor since the study was not about supervision inputs per se, so there is a certain delinking of the supervisor and the student. There were some assumptions being made about writing skills and the sex of the student, new agency and choice of placement, affecting the field work experience. To counter that, parity of choice of new agency and a male-female balance was paid attention to. Since we do not know which of the students got what they asked for as a choice of placement that could be also be a factor that influenced the field work experience.

Since acquiring consent of students who studied during the period chosen for the study may have been a problem, it was decided that confidentiality of name and identifying information will be strictly maintained since the focus was largely about how the experience was and not who experienced it. Also for the year 2009-2010, since it is still within the three year period that a recording is kept for when a student could request for their recording back, it was decided to approach students for consent wherever possible.

Rubin and Babbie (2005) state how to strengthen the rigour of data, triangulation is required which is the use of more than one source of data. Thus the key informant interviews were conducted after the content analysis so that gaps in data could be focused on.

**Key Informant Interviews**

Interviews are defined by Kvale (1996:14, cited in Cohen et al 2008:347) as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest and that they are the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data. He further sets out a few key characteristics of qualitative research interviews such as use of natural language, to be able to explore the nuanced descriptions of the life worlds of the participants and to adopt a deliberate openness to new data and phenomena (1996:30 cited in ibid:355).

For the key informant interviews also, different strata were identified and two interviews were conducted per strata chosen. The different strata were senior academicians, Centre faculty members, agency social workers, agency field contacts, part time supervisors, and agency personnel of government institutions, NGOs, officials of the three wings of the CJS that is, Police, Court, Prison and students. Thus about twenty four interviews were done across all categories. Also each sector had to be defined, issue wise and identity wise; State
and non-state; or institution and non-institution could be some parameters to be used for this. The objective three, that is, the evolution of sectors and sub-sectors, may have to be looked for in archival data and interviews, if it is not present in the recordings.

**About the Researcher**

Qualitative research is as much about the subject as it is about the researcher. The self as a starting point is important to highlight. The researcher is an alumnus of a social work institute and did her master’s in social work with a specialisation in Criminology and Correction Administration in 1993. Her own experiences of field work with the hearing impaired in the first year and a de-addiction centre in the second year were instrumental in her developing an interest for social work itself. Of the twenty one years of a career connected with social work, the researcher has been involved with social work education as a faculty member with a Centre for Criminology and Justice for ten years and as a field work supervisor at an NGO (of which she was a founder member) for eleven years.

The researcher is quite passionate about field work education and truly believes that it is really the heart of the entire program. Working individually with every student, facilitating their understanding of issues, interventions and motive for social work as a profession is her way of giving back, both, to an institution and a profession that she has received a lot from. Along with this there is a deep conviction to continue working in the sector of Social Work in Criminology and Justice. The research interest stems from this.

The researcher is also attached to the said Centre as a faculty member and thus accessing the files was not a problem. Her colleagues willingly shared whatever files they had in their possession and there was an element of eagerness and curiosity that someone other than the concerned student or teacher was interested in what was written. The researcher had some files kept with her too that were used. There were many files with the FAP too, they are after all a valuable documentation of a time that was and needs to be further nurtured. This FAP has a culture of being respectful towards students in general and the files were archived with the same spirit.
The Experience of Data Collection

Formal permission for access of student recordings for the study was sought from the Dean of the School of Social Work and the Chairperson of the Centre.

Doing content analysis was both an exciting and frustrating exercise. The exciting part was reading through narratives, stories of people’s experience, successes, insights, moments of growth, of times that were, how some issues were identified, developed and subsequently how work was initiated. The frustrating aspect was trying to decipher illegible writing, bad handwriting, working through dusty, yellowing, fragile pages, reading through pieces of anguish, of being lost, directionless, of a hostile, unwelcoming system, of being challenged, mentally and emotionally. The lighter vein was about resisting a temptation to correct spelling mistakes or grammar and enjoying a good laugh at instances where some student has used humour to deal with their disappointments. There were some very interesting case interventions that were documented and some beautiful small essays related to issues of self, self-awareness and growth.

In discussion with an alumnus, he casually asked if what students wrote could be believed since the researcher was investing time not only reading it but trying to ‘make sense’ and analyse. His perception was that students made up things to write, and those who genuinely worked did not write, and that quite a few of them made up stories and went on to get good grades. The researcher thought about it and decided that she cannot run a lie detector test on data, she cannot do any plagiarism check too; as it may be original writing about non-events. The researcher decided to start with trust and work with trust. Even if they have imagined, visualised, made it up, it is about making a connection of Criminology and Social work. They are applying their minds and even that is a good starting point.

Being known to most of the respondents was an advantage in a way, since most people immediately responded to the researcher’s requests for time for interviews. The students were vocal about their opinions, showed a level of maturity and spoke at length. The group connected to the Centre that is, the faculty members and the part time supervisors stood out in terms of the depth of things they had to say, this was also probably because of their prolonged involvement with the field work process and the entire MA Social Work program, so their exposure to the education system and expectations were much more and much clearer. The faculty members both current and senior, additionally had a lot to say and it was
organically emerging as a self-reflection, it was critical, like a stock taking and with a subtle message being ‘individually I did what I could’, to a ‘I am happy for the discipline and the field of practice but there is so much more to do and let others come forth and take up those responsibilities.’ They were very candid while talking and a few mentioned how even having that conversation was an interesting experience because it allowed them to reflect on their own journey and it was an uncommon opportunity of stepping away a little and looking at how this experience and journey had been. The agency social workers connected to the Centre that is, of the field action projects, resonated a sense of displeasure or almost disappointment with the ‘quality’ of students, it was as if they had some memory or an image of ‘an ideal’ student and the ones who recently passed by their lives did not match up at all. Also their narrative reflected the frustration of having survived in this field for so long; there was an honest open sharing of what all has been done and yet how the system seems aloof. Agency personnel across different settings mentioned that they were completely unaware of the curriculum aspect. Either they had not been given a proper orientation or then they have not internalised or retained it. That was a gap that was seen throughout. Most agency personnel were busy, it was normal work days and during work hours so half an hour was the maximum they could spare in the midst of their busy schedules and if something interested them in the conversation it stretched for another half hour maximum. Agency personnel gave the least amount of time and their inputs were also minimalist.

Doing the interview itself was a challenge, trying to balance keeping a conversation going, maintaining eye contact, listening, internalising, preparing the next set of questions to ask and making notes all at the same time. Also struggling between the need to capture each word as it was said (after an intense engagement with the CA methodology there is a heightened sensitivity to words as they are) or does one largely document the essence of what is being said. In most occasions the researcher tried to stick with the former.

The next aspect was about translation or dual language. Across agency and field personnel, there was a comfort in switching between two or three languages, English, Hindi and Marathi at times, the researcher was documenting it in English and so was doing an instant translation.

The researcher was finding it difficult to disassociate from the Centre so sometimes she would find people talking to her about a point that they wanted to make about the University in general but addressing it to her, other times she had to check herself from trying to respond
or clarify on behalf of the Centre. When in conversation with two senior faculty members the researcher almost felt a sense of responsibility, as if a legacy was being handed over, the baton was being passed on. Again the struggle of shrugging the reality of her identity as a faculty member and staying with that of ‘being only the researcher’ surfaced. But being aware of one’s subjectivity is also part of the research journey. One of the challenges has also been to be objective about some students she may have known or even about some faculty members who are colleagues. This conscious distancing or separating oneself from that was a challenge too.

There were three recordings of students in the data that the researcher herself had supervised. One student the researcher could not remember much about but the other two were intensely positive experiences. Reading through the recordings revived for the researcher a certain enthusiasm in the process of supervision itself. In one example, the researcher as the field work supervisor had written lots of comments in each recording which added a certain completeness to the learning journey. The comments of the supervisor also told a story of input, orientation and direction. To read the work done was a pleasure. The other example evoked a sense of intensity, as if one went back to that journey again and yet the researcher could recognise a sense of maturity and distancing that she now experienced. The student’s self-growth part was quite well written and that made the researcher feel a sense of satisfaction, almost happy with the way she related and handled it. The researcher identified with this student, her sense of being an over-achiever, constantly over-anxious and in self-doubt, great at analysis and easy with expressing herself especially in the written world and even worried about non-existent people skills. Was this a projection or did the researcher just get someone who reminded her so often and so much of her own self!

Applying her research knowledge to her own self, she kept thinking she is a qualitative research inclined person but she now feels she is more positivist with a quantitative bend; the need for control over process is immense so also the need to be systematic and organised. And yet, ‘I don’t know and I will figure it out’ are common remarks she makes which is so qualitatively inclined. Her whole life has been about figuring it out, and so has been and is process oriented, however the anxiety and stress is fully about the outcome, which is result oriented. There is a co-existence of the process and the outcome and of the confusion and the clarity of result. Where does that leave the researcher; as a person with a mixed methodology orientation or just plain confused!
The Process of Data Analysis

Nakkeeran (2005) explains how the strength in qualitative research lies in capturing processing. By focusing intensively it can capture a process from the beginning to an end as a pathway with details of all branching and iterations. The transcribing of data is foundational to the process of data analysis. The element of training for this aspect is very important so that some element of objectivity is maintained and it is not marred by a researcher bias. The following steps illustrate how the data was analysed.

Analysis of Annual Reports

The annual reports from the year 2000 to 2009 were reviewed and the following components were culled out: the field work agencies of both first year and second year, to get an idea of the range of placements being offered by the Centre though the study focused only on second year field work settings as the concentration or field of practice. Block field work agencies were also listed separately, as this pertains to the second year so this was also looked at. The FAPs were also reviewed, as they are an indication of new ideas and the need for intervention being demonstrated by the Centre, the number of faculty members at the Centre and the number of students.

Additionally analysis was done based on the following:

- Nature of Setting: Government, NGO or FAP
- Type of Setting: Institution, community or both
- Sex of the student as per agency requirement
- Age of the target population
- New agency start date
- CJSW focus areas
- Victim or offender focus
- Issues working on

Pie charts for each of this were generated and analysed.
Content Analysis of Field Work Recordings

Following the CA framework, a tally of frequency counting of data across themes (fourteen in total) within a recording and across the thirty recordings was done. Simple frequency tables for this were generated. This exercise highlighted themes that were over or under emphasized. A code book was manually prepared in which each theme was separately listed. An initial listing of codes was done from reading through some files and then a revision based on working with the actual data was done, after which a final version of codes emerged. Then entries of each theme were collated and actual quotes from the data were chosen.

The next level of analysis was done where themes were clubbed according to the agency setting so as to be able to look at the identity of a particular agency as affecting the learning or practice experience, so they were clubbed as police, court, prison, commissions, institutions and rehabilitation.

Coding: developing the code book

Listed below are steps on how the coding was done by the researcher:

1. Entered the frequency count for each file, for each theme and then totaled it. Numbers were now available for themes within a file and for themes across files.

2. An excel sheet of all profile information for analysis was made.

3. Each theme was transcribed separately at the data collection stage itself, so when data was being transcribed from the file to the computer it was directly entered into the relevant designated document as per the fourteen themes that were predetermined.

4. All files in each theme were sequenced according to the serial number since the CA process itself was done randomly from among the thirty files.

5. Read through them to check for inter coding or false coding errors and made the shift across themes if any.
6. Corrected the number in the tally grid so it is adjusted. On each line added its CA number total for re-checking.

7. Made a master grid of CA number, name and agency. This is an important reference point during the entire process when there is a need to track parts of the data or correct typing errors. Sometimes the content would be of a police station and the serial number was incorrect or the name was incorrectly written as prison, so this was an important main reference to correct these data entry errors.

8. Some miscellaneous data that was there but not fitting into any category was gleaned out and kept aside to be looked at later.

9. Any part of the content that seemed relevant to be used as a quote in the final text was highlighted in bold to be used later in the relevant sections.

10. At the end of each theme, for each file a small summary note was made highlighting the gist of what that data was about.

**Analysis of Interviews**

The interviews were transcribed. They were then collated according to the themes of student, agency, sector, curriculum, corresponding to the four research objectives. Further analysis of this was done again according to the sub-sectors so as to be able to look at identity of a particular agency affecting the learning. Since triangulation of CA data was also one of the additional aims of the interviews, more focus was given to questions of sector and curriculum which did not emerge out of the content analysis of the recordings. Finally, all data was collated together from three sources of, annual reports, content analysis of student recordings and key informant interviews and presented according to the themes.
The next steps, analysing across sources and merging them

At this stage the data was still according to the recording file that is, CA 1 to CA 30. The summary was copied out along with the notes and with relevant quotes to further authenticate the point being made. The text has now moved from data to researchers notes. It was possible that there may have not been entries for each file for each theme, even this was noted so that it could be analysed later. For example, what would a blank entry say about a theme pertaining to that setting?

All sub-themes were clubbed together across files so now the focus had shifted from files to themes thus from thirty files to fourteen themes. Also another clubbing was done according to six sub-sectors across themes so the researcher looked at police, court, prison, institutions, commissions and rehabilitation separately. Then each unit of sub-theme was read and observations, notes, insights and comments were made about it. The final link was of adding the data from annual reports to the data from content analysis to the data from key informant interviews. Then, across themes linking it to the objectives and research questions. Finally, findings and discussion were written out linking it to the literature review and introduction.

Apart from the manual analysis of the data, the entire data was also analysed with a qualitative computer software Atlas ti version 5. The data was prepared into thirty files and this formed the base data. Thus the data was reconstructed from the original transcribed fourteen themes, to a new format of having them as per the file itself rather than the theme. Since coding was being done a second time there was a slight variation in terms of how some parts were re-coded for example whether something would be a comment about a reflection or an activity done, there could be inferences for both codes. In some places multiple coding was done so it is likely that the Atlas-ti code numbers are slightly more than what was manually done for the same reason. The output from the software was further compared to what emerged from the manual analysis as a value addition to the analysis process itself. The findings from this process has also been included in the data chapters at the relevant sections.
Limitation and Scope of Content Analysis

While CA is an intense process, there are some limitations. The first being in terms of the data engagement itself. The tally and volume needs to be seen as one potential way of interpreting and not necessarily absolutely representing the data. This has limitations in application and usage. Some limitations are, that it is a purely descriptive method, it describes what is there but may not reveal underlying motives. Also that it is time consuming, devoid of theoretical base, often disregards the context that produces the text and can be insensitive to data as it cannot differentiate between meanings (Busch et al 2012).

Content analysis works best when combined with another method and it really depends on the research question and the depth of what is being studied. Content Analysis could be used to further study key words associated with any sub-sector, for example, violence or torture or corruption or bribery or human rights violation or even the role of the social worker. This can then determine what was more active for the student social worker and then can be applied to the concerned sub-sector to see what seems to be the most emergent issues there.

Ethical Considerations

There are a few instances where the researcher herself was the field work supervisor. There was a dilemma regarding whether those student files should be taken up for the purpose of analysis in this study. It was decided to do so since the focus of the study was not on supervisory inputs, but on the sector via the students experience; so there was no real conflict of interest in that sense.

The student recordings were originally written for a different purpose as a curricular requirement. Now would going back to them breach a certain sense of confidentiality as students are encouraged to be candid and descriptive in their documentation with the understanding that it will be read only by the supervisor. As a way of being sensitive to this aspect, the identity of the student was kept confidential in this study. This element of an ‘outsider’ reading through field work files can be seen and understood in the context that the recording is being referred to with a larger purpose, to reflect about field work and the sector. Also the researcher belongs to the same discipline and profession so the element of interest and commitment to strengthen, was present.
Many of the key informants were known to the researcher by virtue of their being part of this very Centre that she has been and is associated with. Again individual identities of key informants were kept confidential with an understanding of what they say being more important than who said it. Their description will only be about the kind of role they played and as part of which agency or setting. All names of the students and key informants have been changed to protect identities. The names of the field work agencies have also not been revealed.

**Limitations of the Study**

Access to student recordings itself could be a challenge since ten years is a long period of time and the aspiration for variety to be explored may not be available. There is an underlying assumption being made about the quality and content of writing of the recordings. This needs to be seen in terms of writing skill, comfort of expression and English language as a medium. The question of authenticity of the writing itself did come up as a point that a key informant also raised. The researcher believed what the student had written and has taken it at face value. Also only the student recordings were looked at but other related and equally important documents like IC/GC (individual conference and group conference) forms or the mid-term and final evaluation records were not included as it may not have been possible to access them as they are a part of examination material that is officially submitted. The files meanwhile were retained by the faculty members or the agency.

Even though the focus was on Criminology and Justice as a field of practice mainly second year field work agencies were reviewed but the researcher is aware that this may not give a complete picture since first year field work agencies also contribute to the growth of the sector. The study does not look into the student’s motivation, past education, experience with social work, relation with supervisor, supervisory inputs, choice of placement and any of these may also affect the field work experience.
Scope of the Study

An understanding of forms of practice with regard to field work in the sector of criminology and justice will in turn help design both a model of reference and a consolidated identity of this specialized worker in the Indian context. Student field work recordings will be presented as a valuable source of data and as teaching-learning material. It would give clarity of perspectives held and methods used in working with the system. The linkages of field work and theoretical inputs could be strengthened and relevant changes in the curriculum could be proposed. The identity of the social worker in this sector could be firmly established thus opening up employment opportunities and in turn escalating interest in this subject and profession.