Chapter VII

The Cornerstone of Field Work: Supervision and Recordings

Two components that are foundational to the field work experience are supervision and recordings. It is the supervisor as a mentor and guide that is able to anchor and nurture the field work experience and recordings that form the basis of this interaction. Recordings are a documentation of the students experience in the field work agency; and of their learning and reflection. While recordings reflect a student’s point of view, they also inform about issues, the agency, and scope for social work practice. It is this latter dimension that was focused on, in this study. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section one deals supervision. Section two is about the writing of recordings and a few case synopses highlighting aspects of student profile, recordings and their field work experience.

In the course of exploring the field work across the six-subsectors and looking at the student, the agency, the sector and curriculum; additionally there were two other aspects that emerged as significant. They were supervision and the writing of recordings. Both of them have an important role to play in field work, the first as the key facilitator in the experience and the second as documentation of practice.

Supervision: The Mentoring Relationship

Supervision can easily be called the most important link of the field work experience. No matter how challenging the agency is, how overbearing working in the sector is, how complex the issues are, how de-motivated a student is, a skilled and experienced supervisor can turn around the entire field work learning experience. Also in the context that the NGO presence in this sector is limited the supervisor has a key role to play both in mentoring a student and in exploring field work in this sector. Hence any study on field work will be incomplete without a mention about the supervision process.

From an analysis of the student field work recordings some general observations were made. First that the agency supervisors write lesser than the faculty supervisors; maybe they are talking about concerns they want to raise in the weekly individual conferences that they have with the students but in terms of comments in the recording file, overall they have been minimal. Also some faculty supervisors wrote more comments while other faculty
supervisors wrote comparatively lesser comments. Each supervisor had an individual style of supervision and their focal points differed. Rhea had a distinct input about issues, concepts, theories and often one found concept maps or theoretical frameworks drawn in the students’ recordings to explain things. Vasu had a definite input about cases, case handing and responsibility about case follow ups. It may be the result of his long years of association in the field and working with individuals being the main strategy used. Anita had an input about tasks and activities with a focus on minimal curricular requirements. The researcher’s own student recordings as a supervisor had a definite input about self and learnings around that. It reflects an area of interest in process work, individual behaviour and change.

Reviewing each of the supervisors work in detail revealed different methods and approaches of supervision. Vasu a strategy of the student being in the police station and handling cases that come there. He gave research inputs to a study the student was planning to conduct. At the court setting he made pointed comments, guided the student towards potential cases and paid attention to the student’s feelings of being lost and de-motivated. Specific facts and information were provided and positive comments were written. In the prison settings, he wrote words of encouragement at various points in time, gave ideas and specific inputs about case handling. In institutions he gave feedback on case work and group work. In rehabilitation he has guided the student systematically throughout and this was evident with the kind of input and time he had given her. His overall supervision style was very nurturing with a clear individual focus.

Rhea, a faculty supervisor at the police setting followed a strategy that she was equally focused along with the Police station on the community so she would encourage students to go into the community to understand local issues. She wrote in the recordings, points to be discussed in the next meeting with the student. There were critical cryptic comments made by her too. She did a linkages of themes across the Centre to explain to the student which was an interesting way of linking across settings. She gave lots of comments and asked them to maintain a separate administrative record of the police setting. She made a mention of curricular concepts thus hinting at theoretical links. This manner of constantly interlinking across sub-sectors and themes and being able to locate the issue within a larger context are key ideas to pick up. At the Institution she gave the student a lot of issue based comments.
Kalpana, the faculty supervisor’s approach was more about exploring work beyond the police station as work in that police setting was very challenging and not too favourable towards student learning. She wrote comments or suggestions of tasks thus giving direction to the work. She also wrote her displeasure about the student’s way of functioning in the comments. The supervisor solidly grounded the student’s ideas with practicality. Documentation by the student was limited and it could have been more. There seemed to be some kind of tension between the student and this supervisor. There were repeat entries by the student towards the end; that is the same recording seems to have been printed out on two occasions, and it seems like the supervisor did not pick it up and the student lost track of work or lost interest.

In Courts Anita the faculty supervisor wrote briefly at some point asking for clarification or made comments about how work should be done differently. It was a very task focused style with no component about self, written about at all. With another student she wrote minimally. In this case the student had listed out what her expectations were from the supervisor, so it was like the student was demanding attention from the supervisor. In Institutions, Anita wrote only a few comments. At the Observation Home setting a few comments were made especially with regard to procedures and tasks. At the NGO for addiction the student felt that the coordination between agency and the institute was not smooth and that affected his learning too. This student had two different supervisors with different supervision styles across both the semesters. Anita did not write many comments and the second supervisor gave suggestions and asked questions in the recordings, which prompted and motivated the student.

In the human rights commission there was a male student and a male faculty supervisor, Arjun. A few points were made by the supervisor to get the student to think but overall there was very little writing. In the Probation and Aftercare Association again with the same supervisor the students got comments on tasks and plans only. Maria as a faculty supervisor at the women’s commission did not write any comments, she had a meeting with the Member Secretary indicating field engagement. Often the recording was just signed to indicate it had been read. It is possible that she was keeping notes of what to discuss with the student.
Shobhana who was an FAP supervisor had an approach that was more about balancing both the police station and the community. Some feedback for a proposal for a study of women police constables was given otherwise no comments were written at all. Again here it is possible that they were talking in the individual conference.

The FAP Agency supervisor Vilas, in the prison setting wrote a few pointed comments. He was not happy with the way the student was working and wrote about that too. There was an element of questioning in his tone of comments. Ashima as an FAP supervisor in rehabilitation asked questions, gave feedback in the recording and was appreciative of some of the student’s observations and analysis.

The researcher herself was a faculty supervisor and she supervised at Institutions, Commissions and in the Juvenile Justice Board setting. There were a lot of comments written about feelings, planning and tasks. In the women’s commission regular comments were written, almost for every entry. The supervisor was focusing on cases of women as that was an obvious entry point. This was a first time placement and the student here worked at organising the documentation system and creating an intake form. This is one area of interest and strength of the supervisor herself so was it in a way reflecting that? The administration and self-connect was also evident. One observation was that as a supervisor there are lots of comments written in each recording (suggestions, responses, ideas, direction, critique) which adds a certain completeness to the learning journey. The comments of the supervisor also tell a story of input, orientation and direction. The supervisor was slowly guiding the student towards what needed to be done. For the researcher to read the work done after so many years was a pleasure. At the human rights commission there was a good student supervisor relationship. She was a very expressive student and learning to work through authority and her own baggage about government settings were challenges she faced. The component of self, evolved well in this placement. Sometimes administrative or documentation tasks are given to the student and if it is at an entry level, it is okay as it could be a way of making inroads into the agency itself. This was again the researcher’s student so it was interesting to relive the experience. There was a sense of intensity, as if one went back to all that journey again and yet there was a sense of maturity and distancing that one now experienced. The student’s self-growth part was quite amazing and that made the researcher feel a sense of satisfaction, almost happy with the way they had related and
the way it was handled. This insight came towards the end of the analysis and did not affect the analysis while the recordings were being read through.

Often field work agencies in this sector are government institutions or have a close connect with an authoritative overbearing CJS. The negative attitude of the staff sometimes de-motivates a young student just stepping into the profession, especially if they are about the profile of the client group or about the futility of reformation or the failure of rehabilitation. These are foundational beliefs that the student is being exposed to theoretically and to see a dismissive attitude in the field disturbs them. It is in situations like this that a mature supervisor plays a crucial role in terms of processing these kind of experiences by discussing, reflecting, reviewing and learning from them; and yet instilling a sense of belief about the profession in the student.

Students likewise get frustrated when they see the struggles that some clients go through. Here is a profile of people who are desperate, in pain and pinning their hopes on some semblance of justice that is still wanting. Since the student’s orientation professionally is with this vulnerable group, it sometimes distresses them especially when violence is witnessed or brutality and despair is high. At these moments intense discussions with supervisors gives them some solace and direction to contextualise work and also to understand the agency and its role from a different angle. Thus the demands of this sector on supervision are also unique and demand that the supervisor is able to hold and sustain emotional churnings and frustrations due to overt wrongs and yet nurture and guide a student to find and connect with their own personal identity and a professional role.

There appeared to be different styles of supervision and different levels of engagement with students and the whole field work experience. Overall there seems to be three levels of engagement in supervision, the first is basic, following the minimal requirements and a task focus according to the curriculum requirement. The next is a medium level with an administration structured focus according to the agency expectation. And the third is an intense individual focus with a nurturing, creative, self-exploring and self-expression focus.

Field work intrinsically facilitates growth either because it is so engaging or it is so challenging, so also can be said about the supervisory relationship and there is no debate that it is a critical component of field work.
The Writing of Recordings

‘I love field work. I see value, depth of those experiences, I revisit my field work times, draw energy from it.’ writes a student placed in an NGO working on legal aid. This is an excerpt from a student’s recording taken to especially demonstrate the kind of feelings students write about and their perception about field work.

Recordings are a mandatory requirement for each student and while there is a certain expectation stated about the nature of this writing itself there are variations among students in the way recordings have been written. This section is looking at the manner of writing that has been done. Some students have just listed their day in point form with no description or explanations, some have written long detailed essays explaining an issue or the way a certain intervention needed to be done, some have been formal in terms of just documenting a program and its logistic details while others have in detail captured interactions, dynamics among the various actors and the students own thought process and feelings about it. Some have written cases as pieces of facts while others have taken it further and commented on them from a theoretical perspective. It is evident that the depth of engagement in the field reflects in the writing. One can discount a bit of this to say some students may not be expressive in the written format but assessments demand writing for example examinations and so the same principle can be applied here for field work recordings. This is not only an open book exam but the duration is over a whole year with nurturance and support by the field work team. The recordings themselves can be grouped into two categories, the first were ones that had some aspects missing and could be strengthened and the second which were reflective of good elements and had both variety and depth and need to be retained as they are.

Recordings that need strengthening. For Suchitra at the Special Home, the writing on self could have been more. Theoretical links were very few. Her recordings were not detailed, they were one page long sometimes covering work done for the day. The student was not able to engage at a deeper level in spite of opportunities being available in the agency for the student to work. So it was not about the agency but about the student. Resistance in this student was seen towards learning itself and this was reflected in her writing.

For Jenifer at the Observation Home, her self-reflections were about work and not so much personal reflections. This in spite the fact that she is a BSW student and who had done field
work in an Observation home as part of her Bachelors course. The recordings were more task based and more in-depth writing could have been done. Sumitab at the commission did not write about himself much. There was no mention about learnings or growth and no feelings were written about. His writing style was also activity or external based.

For Priti at the women’s commission, there were no self-reflections. She had a background in journalism still her writing was not at all descriptive. For Deb at the Probation NGO there was no focus on self at all. This was a male student, it seems that the male students don’t write much about feelings and self and this could be due to gender conditioning. There have even been one paragraph recordings by this student. The entire writing was very task focused and the process element was very limited. For Suneet at FAP Youth Centre, his writing was style was basic and it hardly had any analysis or comments.

**Complete recordings.** Self of the student social worker was an aspect that was reviewed; it has various elements like knowledge gained, reflections, becoming aware of one’s self, positive and negative experiences. Anandi at police station had a file with very detailed recordings and all the relevant attachments. It was a good description of the FAP too. In the individual conference with the supervisor the student evaluated self, agency, wrote linkages about social work methods and about the agency and all of this was documented in the recordings. In the end a separate essay was written about profession development, suggestions for the next year and impression about the agency. It was almost an ‘ideal’ recording.

Srija at JJB was sincere, wrote detailed recordings and did try and work on a variety of tasks. For Sonia at the commission there was a strong self-connect, breakthroughs of bias and self-issues. This was handled in the individual conference or meeting with the supervisor and she also wrote about it. She used humour in her writing and had good writing skills. Field work gave opportunities to be aware of one’s self, overcome personal challenges and how one functions and this was written as follows:

° ‘I am beginning to get a sense that as a person I can’t usually come up with new, innovative ideas all by myself, I need something or someone to spark off the thought process in my mind.’
Learning to work with figures in authority has always been a challenge for me and especially in such a hierarchical setting was especially difficult initially.

I really like working independently, it gives me a sense of confidence and boosts my self-esteem and I like the fact that I don’t feel as lost and helpless alone like I always imagined I would. It helps me identify my own skills and build on them, it gives me a chance to objectively assess my performance and my creativity is enhanced.

Reflections like these can be intense and thought provoking and stay with the student for a long time.

Sophia at FAP After Care Women seemed very enthusiastic and interested in work. She has been open and on 3-4 occasions written about her own self and feelings very honestly. Work done was in-depth in terms of issues confronted and raised. She has written long narratives in detail and some good case examples were written. For Shaina at FAP Aftercare for Women, there were very detailed case based reflections which were written out very well. She wrote personal reflections at the end of each day and it was an analysis of her thoughts for the day. In this file, various dimensions of questioning the concept of aftercare have been highlighted which made interesting reading.

Dinesh at anti narcotic cell worked in a very closed and resistant agency in one semester and in the next semester he worked through NDPS courts. For him the challenge was constantly facing blocks or non-acceptance, in spite of it being the second year of field work in the agency. No application of knowledge was seen in the writings and it was almost as if the struggle was constant. Narendra at anti narcotic cell has not written about self at all in terms of individual self. Even reflection was about external as in tasks or activities and not internal as in his own reflections and learnings. It gave the impression that his field work was a lot about trying to explore work in this setting. The general style of writing by the student was minimal and limited; and it could have been more.

Sushma at railway Police wrote detailed process recordings of cases and experiences. It is a good document on the potential of work at a railway Police station. And being able to develop a holistic perspective of what one has learnt in this journey was evident in her
writing, ‘I could trace my growth as a professional social worker and the development of my skills. I feel more confident and effective.’

Thus what emerges as constituting a complete recording is if it is able to capture all happenings in the field from an ideation to the execution, to the evaluation and subsequent learning. Another important element is the process aspect of the various stages of on-going learning and the student being able to connect the learnings to both their self and the curriculum. Some questions that come to mind are whether the focus on the ‘self’ component is reflective about the student or the supervisor. It is probably the supervisor who draws the student’s attention to this aspect and ensures that the student is aware of the learning component there. And if it is the supervisor’s sole responsibility then the diminishing focus on this in supervision and a similar trend in the curriculum should be a cause for concern. This similarly raises other questions of a student’s interest or ability to express in writing, command over English language and patience to reproduce process elements of the day. Being detailed and descriptive also gives the supervisor (or reader) a complete idea of the field work experience. When issues or cases or even how the day progressed is documented in depth it is also a revision for the student to re-look at the way things were and to learn from them. This becomes a secondary source of learning over the semesters. Considering that the recordings are mandatory and become the foundation on which the evaluation of field work is based, it is necessary that students understand the value and importance of it. The faculty supervisor Vasu resonates this as a concern when he says, ‘Very few students write good reports, just bullet points, even their descriptions are brief and short. Writing as a form of expression of feelings, the students are not doing any more, maybe it a generation thing.’ The point of concern here is; are we as a generation moving away from writing as a practice as compared to before and whether our way of communicating is changing in terms or being expressive and descriptive. While it can be argued that recordings are not for general consumption but only between the student and the supervisor and inherently does not shoulder the responsibility of documenting practice or history, the aspirations of what constitute a complete recording would still remain the same even if the recording was to just fulfil the field work experience requirement.

Field work and recordings. The aim of this section was to document a few case examples of where the recording was done well in terms of reflecting documentation of a student’s learning and scope of work across different kinds of agencies.
1. Vidya-FAP Central Prison Women’s Section- Year 2000

Vidya’s recording was an example about social work in prison with women under trial prisoners. For a start she had a few reports and documents to refer to so she had the advantage of having a continuity of work since the agency, the FAP holds that information. The Field Contact who was a prison worker accompanied her on her first few days and demonstrated how to talk to women. She handled lots of cases both short term and long term. Vidya identified a few good ideas herself too like exploring short term courses and hobby classes. She got an exposure to institution living and its resultant dynamics, issues of corruption, bribe, torture, violence and understanding the social workers role in prison. She organized a party for African inmates, a film screening and a cultural program for staff. One of the issues she explored was that of women in dance bars and their rehabilitation challenges. She also had meetings with the agency staff and with the field contact about cases and general updates. She regularly visited the prison and explored identifying cases for eligibility for probation. Learning was largely seen in some aspects of adjusting to prison work culture. The supervisor was happy with her work. There was much detailed and varied work done.

This placement was about female prisoners so there was scope to do a lot of case work. Individual cases were used as an entry point of work in prison. She looked into aspects of physical health and mental health. She was developing an ideology for herself of social work in prison. Her writing style was very detailed and story like. Thus Vidya’s experience of field work seems rich and full of varied tasks as the FAP has anchored her well and it has a history of engaging students in its work. The scope of work also shows well in terms of tasks done. The focus was on the individual, their rights and accessing their support systems.

2. Sushma-FAP Railway Police-Year 2006

Sushma’s recording was an example about social work with the railway police. She focused on the issue of destitute women in and around the railway station and looked for single girls or women. Though Police station was the base, she was not there much. It was more of a community strategy and then bringing back to the Police station relevant cases. She identified NGOs through networking for referral options. She explored disability and destitution as issues. She handled a few long term cases especially those with health problems. Also being connected to the FAP, she looked at working at the railway station per se so patrolling was regularly done. She got an experience of ‘difficult clients’ and
experienced what the challenges of rehabilitation of women were. Detailed process recordings of cases and experiences were maintained.

This placement had an element of exploring a new territory. Outreach was a new experience. Prevention of trafficking of women was the issue, also homelessness, destitution, beggary and runaway. She had a first-hand experience of handling cases and observing the agency social workers in action. She visited institutions to get an idea of resources and services existing in the community. She looked at problems of police personnel, case follow-ups and community work with women residing in nearby pavements. A mid-term evaluation report in detail explains her experiences. It lists strategies she was oriented into, to making a space for herself at the Police station, to struggling, to finally getting accepted both by the police personnel and the women themselves. She wrote about the cases she handled and the various issues and also reflected on how working with women who are living by themselves was not simplistic, they are a challenging group and everyone is not waiting to be serviced or rescued. She also did a follow up on cases referred to institutions. Building relations with police and formal presentations about scope of work was done since this was a new placement there was a need to also build relations with the setting. She also made a database of people at the station, mapping their needs to identify scope of work. Her summary report was an essay of the potential of this kind of work, the categories of persons one comes across, the interaction with other government systems and NGOs in following up on cases and the kind of social work methods used. Over all it was a good document about work at Railway Police and the role of the social worker in it.

3. Veer-FAP District Prison- Year- 2006

Veer’s recording was an example about social work in prison with male young adult under trial prisoners. He had a very pleasant simplistic style of writing. The focus of his work was on young adult offenders. He did some interesting group work with them. He was like a youth role model. One innovation was the nursery idea, as a productive creative outlet of youth energy. He persuaded that with all authorities very patiently. Also in two cases breakthroughs were very well handled by the student. There was a nice mix of all kinds of work and writing about self too. Some critical reflection was also seen. He seems to have been able to relate to the boys well and found his space as a social worker in prison. The summary recording was well written. He did a tabular listing of all the cases he handled and what his learnings from that were, the group sessions he conducted, the topic and his role in it. The supervisor was happy with his work.
4. Adya-FAP Institution-Year-2006

Adya’s recording was an example about social work in a women’s institution. She was the researcher’s student but somehow the researcher was not able to remember much about her. She organised a picnic for the women and it was a huge success. She was very hardworking though she did come across as being a bit headstrong at times. She built good relationships with the women. She had an intense kind of relationship with the Superintendent. She did a lot of issue based analysis. Two case documentations were well written out. One was about referring an old destitute woman to another home, preparing her and helping her settle down, the other was of a young girl with a troubled relationship with her family and a subsequent desertion by her husband. Her summary report listed out the various tasks she undertook and the social work methods used. She also added some suggestions of follow up for future work.

5. Tina-Women’s Commission-Year 2007

Tina’s recording was an example about social work in the Women’s Commission. For the first time field work placement was explored in the Women’s Commission with this student. The idea being since work was going on in the Human Rights Commission, could a role for student social workers be explored here too. The student wrote detailed process proceedings. This was again the researcher’s student. This file had a lot of depth in terms of work done. She set a very good background to build work on. She initiated meetings of lawyers and counsellors. She conducted the first ever Domestic Violence Act Protection Officers orientation training program. The first case under DV Act was followed up on. She handled a lot of cases and wrote reflections continuously about links to themes of oppression. There was no scope to do group work, though for research, advocacy and policy change there was scope for work. The field contact was a bit resistant or disinterested but the students work was in spite of that. The Supervisor was happy with her work.

Legal aid was an issue identified. She met all staff, all departments for a holistic understanding so as to not get slotted only in the counsellor’s role. Her writing included doubts, concerns and points discussed with the supervisor. The documentation system and filing system was in a chaos so she helped sort that out. She discussed with team members on issues. She also made home visits in a few cases, this in spite of the agency not doing it. In cases she was able to link theoretical concepts of patriarchy. She reflected about gender, marriage, relationships and violence. The mid-term summary report was well written. The
report was like an essay taking one through the range of experiences and learnings that she had about the counsellors and how cases are handled, to the opportunity she had to deal with some cases herself and the newness in perspective that she was able to bring in, to actually being accepted as a peer by people who otherwise are very designation conscious and view students as non-important. Her tasks slowly opened up nuanced issues of documentation systems and that things are not in a systematic order affecting hand over, continuity and follow-up or being able to pin point the lack of communication and coordination between teams in the Commission. She was also able to write out her own thoughts, doubts and concerns of being a women in the light of violence, torture and disappointment seen in various cases. She developed an information template of services for the public. She also documented trend of cases and trend of responses. She got an exposure to bureaucracy and government mentality. She identified issues in the agency and gaps in service. There was a lot of self-connect and reflecting on issues of women. She developed a database of contacts and resource referrals. She wrote reports of meetings and of the protection officers training program. The final summary report was a comprehensive learning reflection document of the entire year of tasks, challenges, her own growth and opportunities of learning at this agency. She listed out the role of the social worker in detail in this setting and also the characteristics and limitations of government bodies like this in terms of functioning. One important aspect was the element of networking between the Commission as a central body and other NGOs so there is a sharing of resources and a unified approach to women’s issues per se. She has been able to document her own personal journey of being a woman and placing her own life experiences within that identity. Her recordings included pieces about interesting essays on women empowerment and on women’s issues.


Sonia’s recording was an example about social work in the Human Rights Commission. She spent time understanding the Commission and interacted with complainants. She did some administrative work like working on the brochure and website. She tried to do a public relation activity in the form of an essay competition and she did a complainant perception study. She helped out on a Vishaka guidelines study with developing the interview schedule and data collection. Research and documentation was the main work. There was a strong self-connect, breakthroughs of bias and self-issues, this was handled in discussions with the supervisor and she also wrote about it. She had problems of relating with her co-worker,
field contact and officials in the agency and worked through it. She has used humour in her writing and had good writing skills. She did a synopses of cases for the Annual Report. The supervisor had written a lot of comments throughout. She was the researcher’s student so it was interesting to relive the experience.

Student social workers had worked before in this agency and had done well, so there were expectations from her. The field contact was dominating and not allowing the student to explore work on her own. This is something that is commonly seen in Institutions or Government settings, the playing out of power. The case proceedings were in Marathi so language was an issue for the student since she did not understand the language. Writing on self, involved reflecting, critiquing one’s own role and limitations. She maintained an access to all, not getting aligned to one power source, communicated expectations with authority and used authority positively. Research was an area she worked on, then understanding what is human rights awareness among people and what programs to do to develop that. There was a huge scope to analyse and learn about self. Sonia was expressive and articulate and writing helped discuss issues threadbare. She had personal baggage influencing perceptions about government and authority. There was constant reflections on each small incident and deep personal sharing. For each task writing was in detail and the student’s role in it was also talked about. The supervisor gave a lot of positive encouragement. Sonia participated in routine work of the agency and often this became an important way to align and blend into the agency, being there in the day to day functioning. Some of the learnings were organising programs, learning to coordinate, to work with people and identifying new research ideas. She gave an orientation to interns about the system of functioning. Her mid-term summary report was a detailed essay on her whole field work experience, from listing of tasks to her reaction to each of those experiences, simple things like a visit to the Women’s Commission and a meeting with the Secretary gave a good exposure to government settings and their limitations or the visit to Mantralaya to get some information on a task that a Member assigned her, boosted her confidence in being able to approach and manoeuver through the maze of offices there. Or realising the tremendous amount of coordination, adjustment and diplomacy involved in just getting two government bodies to coordinate over a program. And reflecting on her own behaviour and attitude and personality issues when confronted with a difficult field contact and a challenging field partner. She was able to link life experiences to field work and develop insights. Self was a big part of her field work. Her relationship with her supervisor was good. At the end, a detailed essay was written, very
honestly, full of emotions, relating to self, highlighting her own limitations, breakthroughs in thinking and connecting it to each experience whether person or task related. It also included questioning processes and procedures followed in government systems and being sensitive to bias she has observed whether obvious or subtle, whether in words or in actions. In the end being able to consolidate all that into a life learning moment when she writes that she is now sure she would like to continue working on the issue of human rights but not in a government setting. That clarity which motivates to continue a professional journey with a sense of satisfaction personally is what the ideal field work experience should be like.

7. Naina-Police Station Year- 2009

Naina’s recording was an example about social work in the police station. This recording had parts that could have been compiled into a consolidated document about police personnel. A lot of training needs were identified and issues like religion, regional and gender bias, violence and corruption were identified. The student explored work well at the Police Station. She did a study of police personnel. She also documented a lot of cases, about 125 in all, basically listed the problem they came with, the response of the Police and her own assessment of the situation. She saw a wide range of issues that come to the Police station. A little start on community work exploration was done though she could not explore it more. The student was vocal and expressive. Two cases were well written, domestic violence and addiction were the issues engaged with. The supervisor was happy with work Naina’s writing skills were very good. She gave detailed descriptions, questioning and thinking about issues. She also expressed a lot of emotions and critical thinking. One interesting piece was an individual documentation of twenty-five interviews with the entire police staff on various dimensions like their motivation and their challenges. She got insights into their functioning, personality, fears, prejudices and problems. After observing cases she put it into a table format, this showed the variety of cases that come to the Police station. Scope for social work intervention in non-police cases was explored. There was intense writing about difficulty of field work in the agency. She visited different departments of the Police station and understood structures and this was even documented separately under the head of administration. She identified issues of persons in the CJS in general. She talked to complainants and police. She did a research study in access audit with interviews with police
officials. She visited other organisations for referrals. Small essay pieces on bias, prejudices and her own understanding of what work at police station entails were written.

One thing that emerges from what defines good recordings is the variety and depth of writing, it need not be the variety and depth of work done or opportunities one came across but it was about being able to learn and connect no matter what the actual experience and being able to reflect and link to self-learning. One of each kind of agency was chosen to get an idea of the variety of settings. Railway police and women’s’ commission were first time placements so the writing reflects more challenges and the students have shouldered the responsibility of charting the territory well. Prison and institution, both were through the FAP and were old settings. Human rights commission and the district prison were of medium familiarity. This study was not about learning during field work or supervision but about the scope of social work in these agencies and to see within that context; how the sector itself is opening up for social work intervention. These case profiles aid that understanding.

This chapter highlighted the important aspect of supervision, writing recordings and through a few case narratives gave a glimpse into agencies, students, and the way their field work experiences have been.