Supervision in Child and Family Practice: What Works?

Submitted by

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Summary

Supervision in Child and Family Practice: What Works?

Child and family practice is recognised as a field of social work practice that has become increasingly complex. Whilst evidence is growing in relation to the significance of effective supervision, little is known about the attributes of an effective supervisor, or the components of effective supervision. This thesis reports on research undertaken which explored the experiences of practitioners and supervisors of effective supervision. This research sought to address an identified knowledge gap in this critical practice domain.

Objectives

To understand how practitioners and supervisors experience supervision and to identify and analyse the core functions of effective supervision. Secondly based on the analysis and literature to develop a framework for effective supervision which can be utilised to inform practice and policy.

Methods

This is a qualitative study. Data collection involved in depth interviews with experienced and post graduate qualified supervisors and supervisees in Victoria, Australia. The purpose was to explore the concept of supervision from the perspectives of supervisors and supervisees working in the Child and family practice domain. The data was systematically interrogated using a thematic inductive process. This process was designed to enhance the voice of the participant in the research process, drawing meaning from the data by those who hold the knowledge.

Results

The complexity and centrality of the supervisory relationship was highlighted, as was the importance of a contemporary knowledge base. The organisational context was described as constraining or facilitating supervision, with key implications for a contemporary framework of supervision.

Conclusions

A conceptual framework for effective supervision in child and family practice, drawing from a Topological Ecological Model (Bronfrenbrenner 1979) and derived from the research findings is proposed. Within the framework, a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Working with vulnerable children who have experienced abuse and neglect is recognised as a complex, emotionally demanding field of social work practice (Morrison 2010; Munro 2011). Practitioners need to have access to contemporary theoretical knowledge and research evidence, policy and procedural knowledge and self knowledge (Thompson & West 2013). Supervisors of practice may be charged with responsibility to support, educate and manage practitioners (Munson, 2002) whilst navigating what can be a complicated organisational context and a practice context where ambiguity and uncertainty prevail (Parton 2011, 2012, Munro 2011).

This research seeks to explore the concept of effective supervision in child and family practice. The introductory Chapter is presented in six parts. In Part One, the research problem is introduced while Part Two explores the background and rationale for the research. In Part Three, the research questions, working suppositions and key concepts embedded within the research are identified. Part Four examines the significance of this research, and Part Five provides a broad overview of the methodological approach selected to respond to the research problem, including the research limitations. Finally, in Part Six, an overview of the Chapters to follow is presented and I conclude with a Chapter summary.

Part One: Introducing the Research Problem

Child and family practice is recognised internationally as a field of social work practice that is growing in complexity. This study focuses specifically on child and family practice within the contexts of statutory child protection and preventative services, including family support for children who are vulnerable. It is a field requiring specialist knowledge, including theoretical and empirical knowledge, procedural knowledge, practice wisdom and self-knowledge (Thompson & West 2013). In addition, statutory child protection practitioners must manage the tensions inherent in their dual role of legally mandated intervener and 'helper' (Healy & Meagher, 2007; DHS, 2002; Trotter, 2005, 2013). It has been argued that the morally and emotionally demanding nature of this work

poses particular challenges for practitioners and their managers (Gibbs 2001; Morrison, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2010), and there are a number of recurring workforce issues across the child and family practice sector including practitioner workload, which was identified as a significant challenge in a recent report by the Victorian Ombudsman (Brouwer, 2009).

The attrition of practitioners has been identified as a related source of concern (Brouwer 2009; Healy & Meagher 2007; De Panfilis, McDermott Lane, Daining, Summers, Wechsler, & Zlotnik, 2005). High turnover rates of frontline staff are expensive, disruptive and burdensome for the employer, who needs to continually recruit and induct new staff. The service itself may be compromised when turnover is so great that the workforce becomes dominated by inexperienced workers. (Healy, Meagher & Cullin 2009; Russ, Lonne and Darlington, 2009; Nissly, Mor Barak, & Levin, 2005).

Research findings (Mor Barack, Travis, Pyun & Xie 2009) indicate that the retention of child and family practice staff is influenced by a range of personal and organisational factors. Personal factors include the individual characteristics and circumstances of staff, their professional commitment and education. Organisational factors include salary, workload, co-worker support, opportunities for advancement and, central to this research, supervision (De Panfilis, et al., 2005; Mor Barack, et al., 2005).

These findings have clear implications for senior managers and policy makers in child and family practice, who are looking to attract, develop and retain skilled professional practitioners. Recruitment strategies, for example, may be designed to screen for individual characteristics such as professional commitment. Organisationally, managers may look to act on findings relating to the issues of workloads, opportunities for advancement, salary and co-worker support as part of their retention strategies.

However, missing from the research is recognition of the importance of supervision. Whilst supervision is a common theme in the research (Mor Barack, et al., 2005), studies rarely offer

detailed findings that relate to the purpose, process and outcomes of supervision. Supervision is referred to by researchers as 'influential' in retaining professional practitioners in frontline positions in child and family practice, with a number of authors describing the importance of supervision in workplaces where the management of emotions is a central concern (Barth, Lloyd, Christ, Chapman, & Dickenson, 2008; Chen& Scannapieco, 2010; Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook & Dews, 2007; Faller, Grabarek, and Ortega, 2010; Gomez, Travis, Ayers-Lopez, and Schwab, 2010; Morrison 2007; Nissly, et al.,2005). Some authors describe the critical role of supervisors in analysing decisions for avoidable biases, and their role in creating and leading a workplace culture that values critical reflection (Gibbs, 2001; Morrison, 2010; Munro, 2008, 2011, Sedden, 2007).

Child Death Inquiries and serious case reviews (Brandon, 2009, Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, 2007, 2009) make reference to the need for well supervised practice, either implicitly through discussions of the importance of critical and systematic thinking (Brandon, 2009), or explicitly by identifying supervision as a source of practitioner support and learning (Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, 2007, 2009).

There is a gap in the literature, however, in relation to the role of supervision; specifically, what is meant by effective supervision or supervisory support appears to be theorised in the literature (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hughes & Pengelly 1997; Kadushin, 1976; Morrison 1993, 2001, 2005), rather than being the subject of rigorous inquiry.

Part Two: Background and Rationale for the Research

This research seeks to address an identified gap in a critical area. Whilst international evidence supporting the significance of effective supervision and leadership continues to grow, it is less clear what this might mean in terms of the attributes of an effective supervisor, their knowledge and skill requirements, and the components of effective supervision (Bogo & McKnight 2008; De Panfilis, et al., 2005; Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009).

Child and family practitioners are at the frontline in social work practice, working with the pain and powerlessness of children and their families who have experienced trauma (Morrison 2005, 2007; Perry, 1997, 2010; Van der Kolk, 2005). The potential role tensions faced by practitioners, who are required to strengthen families to care for their children, whilst maintaining a central focus on the safety and best interests of the child, imply a need for well informed, emotionally attuned supervision.

This research topic has evolved from my own experience as a social worker in the turbulent field of child protection in Victoria and Queensland, Australia. More than twenty years ago, as a social work practitioner in direct service delivery, I experienced the profound impact that an inspiring supervisor could have on my own direct practice with children and families, my commitment to the work and to my capacity to facilitate change. This experience of leadership and supervision was containing and nurturing, yet also served to encourage and extend my development. It motivated me to remain in the field and to take up the challenge of becoming a supervisor myself and, later, manager of groups of practitioners, before I eventually moved into a role as an educator and manager of a statewide child protection service professional development unit.

My ideas about effective supervision developed in the context of the dominant discourse and practice of 'managerialism' within the Victorian Public Service in the late 1980s. The threat to the social work profession posed by neo-liberal reforms, including the introduction of a competitive market for the delivery of non-government services, is well documented (Carrilio, 2005; Gardner, 2006; McDonald, Craik, Hawkins & Williams, 2011). The overarching ethos of these 'reforms' was that effective management of human services required demonstrated efficiency, accountability and continuous improvement (Paterson 1988).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s professional autonomy was increasingly regulated by emphasis on key performance indicators, evaluation and centralised control over an ever-increasing number of procedural requirements. This global phenomenon was the macro context within which the work

was conducted and coincided with a movement towards what Thorpe described, in his evaluation of Child Protection in the early 1990s, as the ‘over proceduralisation’ of child protection (Thorpe, 1994). As a beginning practitioner in the 1980s, I reasonably expected to become familiar with the legislative, policy and procedural requirements of my role, which identified some practice specific requirements as well as overarching case work principles. However, in 1993 the implementation of Mandatory Reporting legislation resulted in an unprecedented increase in workload, without a corresponding increase in resources. By the late 1990s, the procedural requirements filled four large volumes that continued growing, often in response to independent audits or child death inquiries. At the same time, the concepts of ‘measuring compliance’ and ‘reaching targets’ dominated senior executive discussions about the effectiveness of service delivery.

These developments had some potential to encourage a beneficial focus on the way that service delivery was organised and offered an opportunity to promote a better distribution of limited resources. However, in my own experience, these changes also created challenges and conflict, with undue attention to key performance indicators sometimes having the potential to compromise ethical decision making.

What were the implications then for the supervision of practice and practitioners? In the context of a dominant discourse promoting effective and efficient management of service delivery, I began to wonder what place there was for social work knowledge, values and ethics. Whilst I applauded a move toward greater transparency and accountability for public expenditure and service delivery to vulnerable children and families, I began to contemplate the links between the challenges faced by social work practice and the potential solutions offered by supervisory practice. I had been strongly influenced as a practitioner and supervisor by the strengths based/solution focused movement, and the application of narrative theory as a means of facilitating change. These approaches, in my view, had relevance to statutory child protection practice when applied in the context of a sound appreciation of the statutory role, and a comprehensive assessment of the potential risk of harm to the child (Turnell & Edwards, 1997; Weakland & Jordan 1990; Thoburn, Lewis & Shemmings

1995). I began then to explore the use of these approaches in supervisory practice in child protection. In recent times there has been a renewed call within Australia to conceptualise practitioners in this field from a perspective of resilience, rather than from a deficit perspective (Russ, Lonne & Darlington, 2008). These authors identify the understanding of complex contextual issues as fundamental to applying a resilience model of analysis to the child protection workforce.

Having developed a passion for supervision as a supervisor and manager, I took an opportunity to move into the area of professional development and training. In this capacity I developed an intensive residential training program for newly appointed supervisors in child protection, and over the course of a decade I delivered, refined and delivered this six day intensive residential training package to more than 400 supervisors across the state. This professional experience gave me enormous opportunities to learn about supervision from supervisors, and to read and reflect upon the relevant literature. A crucial insight I gained from this experience was that supervision can truly impact on the services accessed by children and their families. In reflecting on the literature, a second insight I gleaned was that there appeared to be little research evidence to inform the training of supervisors. I noticed in particular, that the bulk of the literature offering theoretical frameworks and guidance for supervisors and supervision was not grounded in research.

One of the greatest challenges facing social work leaders in the child and family sector was—and still is—the retention of qualified and experienced practitioners. As I began to explore the literature informing staff turnover and retention, I noticed that supervision was commonly referred to as a key factor in retaining child and family practitioners (Chen & Scannapieco, 2010; Faller, Grabarek, & Ortega, 2010; Morrison, 2007; Nissly, et al.,2005). These observations inspired me to advocate for change in my previous role as Manager of Workforce Strategy and Professional Development in the Department of Human Services. I developed recommendations for Senior Executives to fund specifically tailored postgraduate education for supervisors. My recommendations, whilst initially met with resistance, were eventually accepted. A Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice and a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership were subsequently tendered to a

Consortium of providers including two universities, a family therapy agency, a community services organisation and an Aboriginal community controlled organisation. I took up an opportunity to join the lead university in the Consortium and I am now a teacher for both of these courses, which have been designed specifically for the Child and Family Practice Sector.

It is in this context that I have had the privilege to undertake this doctoral thesis examining supervision. In doing so I am seeking to address a gap in the research for what I truly believe is a critical domain of practice.

Part Three: Research Aim, Questions, Working Suppositions and Key Concepts

The aim of the study was to explore what characterises 'effective' supervision in child and family practice. The concept of supervisory support was therefore explored as were other core functions of supervision associated with education, administration or management, and mediation or advocacy (Kadushin 1976; Morrison 2001, 2005; Richards, Payne & Shepperd 1990). A detailed review of the literature was undertaken with a view to determining how its functions are experienced by practitioners and what the components of effective supervision in contemporary child and family practice might include. Specific attention was given to the question of knowledge and skills required by supervisors to effectively lead practice.

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the components of an effective supervisory relationship in child and family practice?
2. How are the functions of supervision (administration, support, education and mediation) delivered in effective supervision?
3. What are the core knowledge, skills and value requirements for supervisors to be effective in this field?
4. What constitutes a conceptual frame of reference to underpin effective supervision?

5. What constitutes a core model of supervision for child and family practice?

Suppositions

Five key suppositions were proposed for exploration and analysis. These are outlined below.

- Child and family practice is a highly complex, emotionally demanding field of social work practice**.** Effective supervision will have a strong educative component, tailored to meet the unique needs of the practitioner and the complexities of practice. A sound knowledge of adult learning theory, along with expert knowledge in child abuse and neglect, and the neurobiology of trauma are essential for supervisors.
- The emotionally demanding nature of the work requires the supervisor to demonstrate attunement to the emotional support needs of practitioners and offer a strong professional relationship. Skills to manage distress and to appropriately contain practitioner anxiety, based on a sound knowledge of vicarious trauma, would be essential.
- Supervisors who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more likely to effectively engage and consequently motivate, maintain and develop their staff.
- Wider organisational constraints and issues needs to be managed and mediated by the supervisor, who is responsible for administration of practitioner workloads and caseload mix.
- A model of supervision which articulates the characteristics identified above should form the basis of a policy for child and family practice supervision.

Key Concepts

In this part of the Chapter key concepts referred to throughout the thesis are defined and discussed.

Supervision

> [The] supervisor is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, co-ordinate, enhance and evaluate on the job performance of the supervisee's work for whom he is held accountable. In implementing this responsibility the supervisor performs administrative, educative and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisees in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both qualitatively and quantitatively in accordance with agency policy and procedures. (Kadushin, 1976, p. 21)

This seminal definition, offered almost thirty-five years ago, makes a clear link between the provision of supervision and the outcome for the service recipient. In child and family practice, service recipients are children and families. Kadushin's definition and identification of three functions of supervision influenced the design of this research, including the interview schedule.

Harkness and Poetner (1989) identify early models of social work supervision as having a focus on casework, shifting in the second quarter of the twentieth century to a focus on the needs of social workers themselves, and conceptualising supervision as an educational opportunity. The purpose or priority of supervision has been a contested issue historically; for some. the developmental aspects of supervision have taken priority, whilst others have regarded a focus on the client to be of primary importance (Burns as cited in Harkness & Poertner, 1989). These issues are explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Social Justice

Social workers in Australia subscribe to a Code of Ethics which 'holds that social justice is a core obligation which societies should be called upon to uphold' (Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), 2010, p.13). Translating this into practice involves social workers actively reducing barriers for the vulnerable, advocating for systems level changes where appropriate, and

promoting community participation (AASW, 2010 p.13). The definition and the descriptions of supervision described above do not explicitly privilege the concept of social justice.

Natural Justice

Natural justice is a term often used interchangeably with the concept of 'procedural fairness', or processes which are conducted in a just and fair manner, transparent and free of bias (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). Whist drawn from legal philosophy, natural justice is used here as a term referring to processes and procedures within organisations, including governance of financial resources, selection, promotion and management of staff. The reference to natural justice principles in this context implies procedural fairness, transparency and an absence of bias.

Staff Turnover in Child and Family Practice

Staff turnover is used here to refer to the loss of practitioners from frontline positions in child and family practice. The term does not imply reasons for positions being vacated, and may occur as a result of resignation, non-renewal of contracts, or practitioners' choices and opportunities, including maternity leave or promotion. However, high levels of staff turnover tend to be associated with negative experiences of work, including secondary stress, vicarious trauma and burnout (Harrison & Westwood, 2009; Gibbs, 2001; Ruch, 2005; Rushton & Nathan, 1996).

Retaining staff at the frontline in child protection practice has been described by Healy, et al., (2009) as a significant international problem for the following reasons:

1. Service quality is likely to suffer when practitioners lack a depth of experience and practice wisdom. A lack of expertise at the frontline may be the result. Expert practitioners have much greater capacity than novices to respond holistically to inherent complexities and multiple perspectives.
2. High turnover is costly necessitating additional recruitment and induction training.
3. Case allocation can be compromised whilst vacancies wait to be filled.

4. Individual practitioners bear the burden, both those who remain and those who leave.
5. High turnover rates may deter new recruits from entering the sector
6. As a result of high turnover, novice practitioners have limited access to experienced practitioners for consultation and mentorship (Healy, et al., 2009).

Anxiety, Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Stress

An understanding of the emotional impact of the work in child and family practice will include reference to anxiety, vicarious trauma and secondary stress. Child protection practitioner anxiety was identified as a recurring issue in a Victorian study conducted by Gibbs (2001) who found that a number of child protection practitioners described an experience of supervision that was more akin to surveillance than an experience of emotional support and professional development. There is a growing awareness of the potential for anxiety, secondary stress, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Figley, 2002, 1995; Morrison, 2005; Rothschild, 2006) to adversely impact upon practitioners who work in fields of practice involving trauma. The nature of this form of stress and implications for supervision was considered in this research.

Leadership

Supervisors in child and family practice in Victoria, Australia, are usually agency representatives holding formal, delegated powers and accountability for practice quality. In this context their role as a leader is identified and examined.

As Neilsen, Randall, Yarker and Brenner (2008) have shown, leadership style, and specifically 'transformational leadership', has the potential to impact on employees' well being. Transformational leadership has been described as occurring when 'leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their followers, generate awareness and commitment of individuals to the purpose and mission of the group, and when they enable subordinates to transcend their own self-interests for the betterment of the group' (Seltzer, Numerof & Bass, 1989, p.174 cited in Nielson, Randall, Yarker & Brenner 2008).

Child and Family Practice

Child and Family Practice is defined here as including the direct casework practice with vulnerable children and their families. This definition includes practice performed by professionals engaged in statutory child protection and those who are employed by community services organisations to undertake family support services, or to provide residential care for children and young people. This definition of child and family practice is consistent with the current Victorian legislative and policy framework, enacted in April 2007 (DHS 2007).

Statutory Child Protection Practitioner

Child Protection practitioners are workers who hold a statutory responsibility under the Children Youth and Families Act (2005) to investigate and assess allegations of child abuse and neglect, and, where necessary, to take matters before the Family Division of a Victorian Children's Court for adjudication. Whilst these statutory responsibilities are unique to the statutory child protection role, casework practice, which is collaborative and conducted in partnership with families, is undertaken by both statutory and non-statutory practitioners in Victoria. The term child and family practitioner is an inclusive term, defined below.

Child and Family Practitioner

Consistent with the definition of Child and Family Practice, a child and family practitioner is a professional case worker working directly with vulnerable children and their families. In the context of this research, these practitioners may hold social work qualifications or a welfare diploma, a degree with a psychology major. In some instances, particularly in the non-government sector, they may be employed on the basis of their experience rather than their pre-service qualifications. Child and family practitioners may be employed by the statutory child protection service or in the non-government sector by community services organisations offering family support services or residential care.

Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is the Victorian State Government agency responsible for the provision of the statutory child protection service. The Department provides direct services as well as contracting community services organisations to deliver services to in the areas of Housing, Disability and Children and Families across the State of Victoria. Direct services are delivered by the Department across four regionally based 'Divisions', and from twenty-five area based offices.

Community Services Organisations

Community Services Organisations include those non-government agencies providing direct service delivery to children and families, funded or part funded by the Department of Human Services.

Part Four: The Significance of this Research

By exploring the components of effective supervision this research has significance for the development of theory, developments in training and practice in supervision, and for public and organisational policy.

Significance of the Research for Theory

The existing theoretical literature offers a number of competing theoretical approaches to supervision, with some theorists emphasising the supporting and emotional containment roles of the supervisor (Gibbs 2001; Ruch, 2005) while others stress the integration of the supervisor's 'inquisitorial' function and the 'empathetic containing' function (Rushton & Nathan, 1996). Supervisors may experience pressure to stay strongly focused on administration or, equally, to reduce their supervision to a purely 'clinical' activity with a focus on education and support (Baglow, 1989).

This research proposes a conceptual model of supervision that, based on the research findings, integrates these competing, complex priorities within the supervisor role.

Significance of the Research for Policy Development

At the wider community level, this research seeks to influence public policy impacting on practice and supervision in this critical domain. The research also seeks to inform organisational policy by enabling effective supervision to be conducted within agencies. Key findings of the research may be drawn upon to directly influence analysis of organisational barriers and constraints impeding the implementation of effective supervision. On the basis of this local analysis and the research outcomes, policy frameworks that support effective supervision could be developed and implemented in Australia and internationally.

Significance of the Research for Training

The research findings will provide a foundation for supervision training within organisations. A comprehensive communication and learning and development strategy could be developed and implemented in the wake of the research findings. This strategy could be designed and delivered to facilitate the dissemination of key messages to the child and family practice sector, targeting learning and development opportunities towards those with supervisory roles and responsibilities.

Significance of the Research for Practice

This research may contribute to the practice of supervision by promoting more effective ways of responding to the challenges faced by child and family practitioners, and those inherent in the role of supervisor. An objective in undertaking this research was to disseminate my findings via national and international publication and potentially, via training, in order to contribute to knowledge in this important domain.

Part Five: An Overview of the Methodological Approach Chosen for this Research

The methodological paradigm adopted for this research was qualitative in nature.

The limitations of the research evidence, and the complexities of the context within which supervision is undertaken, indicated a need for a methodological approach which captured the voice of the research participants in the context within which they work. In designing this qualitative study, narrative inquiry was identified as a method which hears the voice of research participants holistically and sensitively.

A constructivist epistemology was identified as one which is consistent with a qualitative paradigm, having a focus on the construction of knowledge and meaning within the partnership between researcher and respondent. This epistemology was seen as appropriate given the inherent complexity in child and family practice supervision and what was likely to involve multiple meanings.

The design of the research involved an exploratory analysis of perspectives offered by child and family practitioners and supervisors in relation to the concept of 'effective supervision'. I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 professionals, 10 supervisees and 10 supervisors. All respondents were experienced practitioners and had postgraduate qualifications in child and family practice, or child and family practice leadership. I then undertook a thematic analysis of these interviews, the majority of which were digitally transcribed.

The theoretical perspective guiding this study drew upon Bronfenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfennbrenner, 1979). The thematic analysis of the data was guided by an overarching ecological-developmental conceptual frame of reference (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A flexible research approach was chosen to allow for a process of discovery, with a focus on meaning from the perspective of the research participants. Ten core themes emerged from the

interviews. A conceptual framework for supervision based on the core emergent themes is proposed.

Limitations of the Research

Three potential limitations of the research were identified and considered. These are summarised as follows:

Critiques of interviewing as a method have pointed out that it is unable to provide anonymity to respondents and may potentially be insensitive and biased (Sarantakos, 2005). These concerns were carefully considered during the development of the proposal for this study submitted to the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee, and as the detailed design was constructed.

A second possible limitation was that each of the interview respondents had completed postgraduate studies in child and family practice. I am involved in teaching into these courses, and consequently the interview respondents were known to me. Each of them had completed the course and graduated, and did not have an on-going relationship with me. However, there was a risk that respondents would describe what they had been 'taught' was effective supervision without necessarily referring to their own experience. This risk was offset by the research design which involved in-depth interviewing, seeking rich descriptions and detailed examples from each of the respondents. Moreover, approaching experienced and postgraduate qualified professionals who had completed studies which included supervision was seen to be appropriate in that it increases the likelihood of the interviews yielding rich and insightful data.

A third potential limitation related to my own role and background as researcher and practitioner, and the potential for my own biases to contaminate the research. As a researcher undertaking this project, I strove to ensure that I genuinely 'heard' the respondents, whilst valuing the experience that I brought to the topic. I was assisted in this process by my experience of critically reflective PhD supervision. Following a careful review of the research limitations it was determined that each of the potential risks could be minimised in the ways outlined above in order to pursue this

research. The research was seeking to address an identified knowledge gap in this critical practice domain, and was seen to be potentially highly beneficial to future developments in practice and policy.

Part Six: Outline of the Structure and Content of the Thesis

In this part of the Chapter I outline the structure and content of the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two locates the present research in the context of what is known about supervision and identifies and examines the extent to which gaps exist in the current knowledge in this domain. The Chapter reviews key theoretical frames of reference relevant to supervision along with the body of existing research in this area.

Definitions and descriptions of the core functions of supervision are examined initially, looking first to the helping professions broadly, then to social work and, finally, to those descriptions of supervision specific to child and family practice. The major theoretical perspectives in the contemporary supervision literature are critically analysed, including a brief review of leadership theory.

Having reviewed the theoretical literature, this Chapter offers an analysis of research findings in relation to supervision in child and family practice. Four broad areas of research focus are identified as follows: the supervisory relationship and supervisor competencies; secondly, supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma; thirdly, supervision and client outcomes and, finally, supervision and staff retention. These areas of research are explored in some detail in the Chapter. Finally, the Chapter explores the contested issues arising from the literature review.

A major finding in this Chapter is the prevalence of theoretical literature, offering guidance for supervisors. These publications are of considerable value in their own right; however, few make

reference to recent, relevant research. Consequently, they make important contributions to theory, rather than research evidence relating to supervision.

The Chapter concludes with a summary of key findings from the theoretical and research literature and their implications for this study.

Chapter Three: The Context

This Chapter provides a detailed description of the context within which the research took place. The research context is the child and family practice sector in Victoria, Australia, and the study focuses specifically on the supervision of practitioners working within this domain of practice.

This Chapter begins by summarising the historical context for practice in Victoria, with reference to the main ideologies informing policy and practice. An exploration of the organisational context for practice follows, with reference to the impact of managerialism in the Victorian Department of Human Services and community services sector. The contemporary context for practice and supervision is then described and analysed. Finally, implications for supervisors and supervision are explored.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In presenting the methodological paradigm selected for the research, this Chapter discusses the epistemology informing the study, before presenting the qualitative methodological paradigm and the theoretical perspective informing the design. The Chapter outlines the study design in some detail, providing demographic detail in relation to the twenty research respondents involved in the research. Finally, the Chapter discusses research sensitivity, ethical clearance, limitations and trustworthiness for the research.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

This Chapter revisits of the theoretical framework guiding the study and informing the development of the research questions, before summarising key stages in the analytic process outlined in detail in the previous Chapter. Additional demographic detail in respect to the research participants is provided, along with discussion and observations relating to Victorian policies for qualifications across the child and family services workforce.

Ten core themes emerged from the interviews. These reflect issues that emerged at an individual level, within the supervisory relationship, and at the wider organisational and community levels of analysis (Belsky 1980), reflecting the design of the interview questions.

Chapter Six: A Conceptual Framework and Practice Model for Effective Supervision

In this Chapter the next level of thematic analysis is presented, which incorporates the findings of the literature review. This integration of the research findings and the literature is presented in the form of a conceptual framework for effective supervision. Based on the conceptual framework, a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed. The core model identifies the contemporary functions of the twenty-first century supervisor along with the central purpose of supervision in child and family practice.

Chapter Seven: Summary of Major Findings, Implications for Policy, Practice, Training and Research

In the final Chapter I revisit the major findings of the study, before examining implications for policy, practice, training and future research. My recommendations for policy begin at the national level with recommendations for a National Framework that holistically privileges children in the context of their family and their community. I then turn to organisations and make recommendations for policy and organisational culture. In order impact on organisational culture and effectively implement organisational policies promoting effective supervision, a comprehensive training

strategy is put forward. I then outline the key implications of the research for supervision practice. The Chapter revisits the limitations of the research and the ways in which the limitations were addressed, before making recommendations for future research.

Chapter Summary

In this opening Chapter I have introduced the research problem, highlighting the rationale for the research and relevant background issues. The research questions, working suppositions and defining key concepts embedded within the research have been presented. After establishing the significance of the research I have provided an overview of the methodological approach selected to respond to the research problem and outlined the research limitations.

In the Chapter that follows, I review and critically analyse the theoretical and research literature.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This Chapter reviews key theoretical frames of reference relevant to supervision, along with the body of existing research in the area. The purpose of the Chapter is to locate the present study in the context of what is known about supervision and to identify the extent to which gaps exist in the current knowledge.

Chapter 2 is divided into five parts. Part One revisits the questions underpinning the study, before examining definitions and descriptions of the core functions of supervision. Supervision within the helping professions is initially examined, before discussion turns to supervision in social work and supervision specifically within the child and family practice sector.

Part Two defines theory in social work before outlining four major theoretical perspectives in the contemporary supervision literature. A brief review of leadership theory concludes this section.

In Part Three I offer an analysis of research findings in relation to supervision in child and family practice. Four broad areas of research focus are identified from the research literature. These are, firstly, the supervisory relationship and supervisor competencies; secondly, supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma; thirdly, supervision and client outcomes, and, finally, supervision and staff retention. These substantive areas of research are explored in some detail in this Chapter. Part Four explores the contested issues arising from the literature review.

The Chapter concludes with a summary of key findings from the theoretical and research literature and their implications for this study.

Part One: Revisiting the Study Aim and Questions. The Search Strategy, and Review Limitations. Definitions and Descriptions of the Functions of Supervision.

Part One of this Chapter has two sections. Initially the study aim and questions underpinning it will be revisited, and the search strategy, along with the limitations of the review, will be presented. In

Section Two, prevailing definitions of supervision, along with descriptions of the core functions of supervision will be explored.

Revisiting the Aim and Questions Underpinning the Study

The aim of this study is to examine what constitutes 'effective' supervision in child and family practice, paying particular attention to the concept of supervisory support and the core functions of supervision including education, administration or management, and mediation or advocacy. The following research questions reflect the key concerns of this study:

1. What are the components of an effective supervisory relationship?
2. How are the functions of supervision—administration, support, education and mediation—delivered in effective supervision?
3. What are the core knowledge, skills and value requirements for supervisors to be effective in this field?
4. What constitutes a conceptual frame of reference to underpin effective supervision?
5. What constitutes a core model of supervision for child and family practice?

The Search Strategy

The search strategy involved a search of academic electronic databases and a manual search of the 'grey' literature. Grey literature is defined as government publications, newsletters, guidelines and practice standards, and theoretical 'texts'. The search strategy comprised three steps. Initially, six relevant electronic databases were trawled. These were Social Services Abstracts, Pro Quest Central, Expanded Academic ASAP, Family (Informit), Human Resources Abstracts (EBSCO) and SCOPUS (Elsevier).

The following terms were searched for either in titles or abstracts: Child Welfare Practice Supervision / Child Protection Supervision / Child and Family Practice / Supervision / Practitioner burnout / Child Welfare Supervision and Leadership.

Secondly, websites and clearinghouses were searched. Thirdly, the reference lists of two literature reviews for relevant studies were searched. The time period for the review was 1990-2013 – this twenty three year period was considered to offer a thorough response to the research question.

Literature Review Limitations

Although a comprehensive search strategy was implemented, it is possible that not all relevant studies, reports or papers were identified using this method. It is likely that there are evaluation reports, government publications and other grey literature that have not been accessed. The volume of potentially relevant material is vast. However, on the basis of the rigorous search strategy undertaken, I have confidence that I have accessed key theoretical and research literature.

What is Supervision? Definitions and Descriptions of Core Functions

This section examines definitions and conceptualisations of supervision in the helping professions generally, and in social work and child and family practice specifically.

Supervision in the Human Services Organisations and/or 'Helping Professions'

A number of authors define supervision as a process that is multi-disciplinary, collaborative and relevant across a range of 'helping professions' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Hughes & Pengelly, 1997,). Ferguson (2005) proposes a definition of supervision which is intended to be applicable across disciplines, stating;

> professional supervision is a process between someone called a supervisor and another referred to as a supervisee. It is usually aimed at enhancing the helping effectiveness of the person supervised. It may include acquisition of practical skills, mastery of theoretical or technical knowledge, personal development at the client/therapist interface and professional development (Ferguson, 2005, p.294).

This definition privileges the promotion of practitioner competence, personal development and the importance of learning, without assuming that the role includes administration or management of the supervisee. In a similar vein, Ryan (2008) described supervision as 'located as a form of compassionate inquiry, a consciousness raising activity and a lifelong learning'.

The significance of the quality of the supervisor-supervisee relationship is highlighted by a number of authors (Cousins, 2004; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Proctor, 1988).

> There needs to be a degree of warmth, trust and genuineness and respect between them in order to create a safe enough environment for supervision to take place (Hunt, 1986, p.20).

Supervision has more recently been identified as 'both context–dependant and context specific' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010), posing a challenge for the development of a universally accepted definition. Davys and Beddoe emphasise the role of reflection, learning and replenishment in the context of an 'interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is a supervisor' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p. 21).

Social Work Supervision

Definitions specific to social work supervision focus variously on the purpose of supervision, the functions of the supervisor and the principles underpinning supervision. Social justice, as a value position or set of principles, is seen as fundamental to social work practice and, as a consequence, to the supervision of practice. Carroll and Tholstrup (2001) identify some of the ways in which fairness, equity and advocacy might be considerations for supervisory practice, along with the appropriate use of power, contracting, confidentiality and recognition of difference.

Alfred Kadushin classically defined supervision by the functions of supervision in the 1970s (Kadushin, 1976), identifying what he considered to be its critical elements:

> [A] social work supervisor is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, co-ordinate, enhance and evaluate on the job performance of the supervisee's work for whom he is held accountable. In implementing this responsibility the supervisor performs administrative, educative and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisees in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both qualitatively and quantitatively in accordance with agency policy and procedures. (Kadushin, 1976, p.23)

This definition makes a link between the provision of supervision and the outcome for the service recipient. However, the nature of the supervisory relationship is a particular feature of Kadushin's definition. That is, that the supervisory interaction occurs 'in the context of a positive relationship'. In looking at Kadushin's early work, Schulman (1993) points out that he tends to stress the importance of the supervisee in the supervisory process, and explores implications for their active engagement. Schulman goes on to show that the nature of the interaction between supervisee and supervisor is one which has critical implications for the supervisor's capacity to effectively operationalise their role. (Schulman, 1993).

The Victorian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers, in its local Practice Standards for supervision, appears to draw upon Kadushin's work in defining supervision:

> Social work supervision encompasses administrative, educational; and supportive functions, all of which are interrelated (AASW, 2000 p.3)

Munson (2002) identifies clinical (social work) supervision as involving an 'interactional process in which a supervisor has been assigned or designated to assist in the practice of supervisees in the areas of teaching, administration and helping' (Munson, 2002, p.10), and goes on to specify the requirement for social work supervision to be conducted by social workers for social workers.

Munson (2002) identifies ‘consultation’ as a term that has been used interchangeably with supervision and argues that this is inappropriate because a critical component of consultation is that it is without ‘official sanction’. The issues of power and authority are central to the regulatory function that Munson identifies as a core component of clinical supervision within an agency setting, and these two issues are examined in more detail later in this Chapter. Similarly, the AASW’s practice standards indicate that ‘supervision is broader than consultation as it encompasses hierarchical administrative responsibility, which is part and parcel of social work as it is practiced in an organisational context’ (AASW, 2010, p.3).

Recently, Schuck and Wood (2011) proposed that:

> Supervision is a collaborative process in which the supervisor works with the supervisee to explore their work reflectively. The functions of supervision are often viewed as a mix of educative, mentoring, holding the ethical position and ensuring the safety of the supervisee and the supervisee’s client. Fundamental to the relationship is good rapport and a working alliance. (Schuck & Wood, 2011, p.15).

Historically, definitions of social work supervision specify three supervision functions: education, administration and support (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Schulman, 2003). Richards, Payne & Shepperd (1990, p. 14) add a fourth supervisory function to their definition of social work supervision, that of mediation. Mediation is described as:

> capacity to act as a representative for the team and to enable others to participate in service delivery’ and is identified by these authors as a ‘crucial role’ for the first line manager or supervisor.

Mediation may include interpreting organisational policy and performance requirements for the worker, or advocating before senior managers on behalf of a worker. The mediatory role may become complex when workload demands and organisational processes conflict with the supervisor’s duty to support and educate a supervisee. Morrison (1993, 2005) also included

mediation in his definition of supervision's functions, listing it alongside the managerial function, the development function, and the supportive function, and suggesting that 'the four functions are interdependent, [and that] you cannot perform one function effectively without the others' (Morrison, 1993, p.19).

By contrast, Hughes and Pengelly (1997) list only three functions of supervision, presenting a triangular model of the supervision process. The three functions are identified as:

(i) Managing Service Delivery, or ensuring appropriate compliance with policy and monitoring of the supervisee's work

(ii) Focusing on Practitioner's Work, entailing the detailed exploration of issues within a practitioners' caseload, and

(iii) Facilitating Practitioner's Professional Development.

Interestingly, Hughes and Pengelly exclude the 'support' function from their conceptualisation of the functions of social work supervision, whilst acknowledging the importance of supervisory support. These authors argue that the elevation of 'support' to the status of a supervision function may distract from the agreed purpose of supervision, which is to enhance the service to the client. Using the model of a triangle, Hughes and Pengelly (1997) highlight the danger of over-emphasising one 'corner' of the triangle, stressing the need to balance each of the functions. Davys and Beddoe build on the Hughes and Pengelly 'model by placing 'support' at the centre of the triangle as a 'core condition of supervision, but not a function' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p.29). They propose that support includes 'validation, respect, the creation of a safe environment and anti discriminatory practice' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p.30).

Supervision in Child and Family Practice

There are different contextual parameters for supervision across child and family practice, which range from the statutory investigation of abuse to voluntary family support. Common to all aspects of child and family practice is work with vulnerable children and families. As a result, vulnerability,

disadvantage, and disempowerment are key concerns for supervisors supervising practice in this field.

Supervision in child and family practice has drawn from the social work literature for its definitions and approaches (Kadushin, 1976; Morrison, 1993, 2001, 2005; Munro, 2002, 2008; Rushton & Nathan, 1996). For example, the Victorian statutory body responsible for the child protection, the Department of Human Services, has constructed the following definition of child protection supervision:

> [Supervision is] a process by which the Department gives a Child Protection practitioner responsibility to work with another practitioner to meet the department's objective to ensure the safety and well being of children at risk of significant harm. The functions of supervision are:
>
> - managerial: to ensure competent, professional, accountable Child Protection practice
> - developmental: to provide continuing professional development
> - supportive: to ensure adequate workplace safety for practitioners
> - mediative: to mediate between practitioners, the department and others[.]
>
> (Department of Human Services, 2005, p.2)

Clearly, definitions of supervision in social work and child and family practice feature the supervisor as an agency representative, hierarchically responsible for the supervision of a staff member. As a consequence, a defining feature of supervision is the line management of the staff members' performance, whilst supporting and facilitating their learning and development. Three or four functions of supervision are variously identified in the major texts as fundamental to an understanding of supervision. These functions are described broadly as management, managing

the service delivery or administration, education or facilitating professional development and support, identified as either a function or 'core condition' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Finally, mediation is identified as a fourth function (Morrison, 1993, 2005; Richards, et al., 1990,). It could be argued, however, that mediation is an implicit component of managing service delivery and administration.

An additional issue raised by the literature relating to supervision in child and family practice is the organisational and socio-political context within which practice, and consequently supervision, takes place (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs, 2001; Morrison, 2005; Wonnacott, 2012). The 'turbulent' environment within which supervision occurs suggests the potential for the supervision process to lack the essential balance identified by Hughes and Pengelly's (1997) triangle model and these issues are explored in some detail in Chapter Three.

Finally, supervision of child and family practice is described as needing to contain or manage anxiety and to help practitioners to cope with the demands that their work entails (Gibbs, 2001; Morrison, 2007; Ruch, 2005). The literature on worker stress and burnout (Coffey et al., 2004; Collins, 2008; Figley, 2002; Huxley et al., 2005; Lloyd et al., 2002; Rose, 2003) is useful in relation to understanding the potential impact of practice with vulnerable children and families upon practitioners. This will also be explored in Part Two of this Chapter.

Part Two: Defining Theory in Social Work, Theoretical Perspectives of Supervision and Leadership Theory

Part Two of the Chapter has three sections. Section One examines the role of 'theory' in social work practice and how this relates to professional supervision. Section Two identifies the four broad theoretical perspectives that dominate the contemporary supervision landscape. These are developmental theories, reflective theory, 'strengths based' theory and finally, theories which

explicitly take into account culture, power and difference (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). The essential elements of each approach are outlined in this section. Section Three looks at the role of leadership theory in contemporary supervision.

Defining Theory in Social Work Practice

Historically, social work theory was seen as holding an objective explanatory function, based on a modernist view which valued 'evidence' and made a clear distinction between theory and practice models or frameworks. Theory was seen to be prescriptive and regarded as the basis for practice models. A postmodern approach offers a paradigm shift and includes models or frameworks of practice as 'theory' (Nash, Munford & O'Donaghue, 2005). This perspective moves from a linear process of practice model development to one which is more dynamic and iterative, involving practice developing from theory and theory developing from practice. Theory, in this sense, is understood by Nash, Munford and O'Donaghue as one or more of the following:

- Provable explanations as to why something happens (explanatory theory)
- Organised descriptions of an activity in a structured form (model)
- Ways of conceptualizing the world or a particular subject (perspectives). (Nash, et al.,2005, p. 22)

This definition is consistent with my own view that theory is pluralistic and should be understood within context.

Four Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning Supervision

Developmental Theories.

The first of the four broad perspectives is developmental theory (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). The developmental approach has been a feature of the supervision literature since the 1980s (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). Fundamental to this approach is an assumption that the supervisor should draw upon a repertoire of styles and techniques to respond appropriately to the developmental needs of

their supervisees, with supervisee development described as moving through various levels of experience and competence (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). Carroll (2008) describes five stages of practitioner development or learning, identified as 'downloading, noticing outside of ourselves, awareness and making sense of, critical reflection and finally transformational learning' (Carroll, 2008, p.43).

Hawkins and Shohet (2000) combine a number of developmental models to articulate four major levels of supervisee development, each with specific implications for the supervisor and supervision: level 1, self centred; level 2, client centred; level 3, process centred; and level 4, process in context centred.

Critics of developmental approaches highlight the complex nature of practice and of the supervisory relationship, warning that a Western, linear approach to learning and development is highly individualistic and can limit the valuing of collaboration (Nye cited in Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Others critique an approach with implicit expectations of 'normal' development (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000), advising that, just as in the case of human development as a theory informing practice, this approach might serve as a useful broad framework, allowing for an informed application which embraces diversity and difference (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

Reflective Theories

The second of the four major approaches is reflective theory (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).The concept of reflective practice is one which has resonated across a range of disciplines including teaching and nursing (Gardner, 2006), and has been found to have particular relevance to social work practice. In his seminal work in this area, Donald Schon (1983,) challenged prevailing perceptions of professionals as 'experts', questioning the positivist paradigm of 'scientific knowledge in the human service professions, marked by technically rational attitudes that were seen to be patronizing or paternalistic. Schon concluded that by adopting a less 'expert', overtly reflective approach, the practitioner could serve the client more flexibly, and have a greater capacity to

respond to client need while engaging in a genuine partnership (Schon, 1983, p.3). Schon's 'process' of reflective practice paved the way for models of reflective supervision.

Gardner (2006) suggests that at its simplest, reflective practice in social work encourages practitioners to 'stop and think about their practice—often using a particular incident from practice, taking into account what they think and how they feel about it. … 'The 'critical' element adds an expectation of exploring practice in the context of the social system in which it operates' (Gardner, 2006, p.18). This definition of critical reflection in practice has implications beyond the individual practitioner and the relationship between supervisee and supervisor.

Reflective approaches to supervision are most often described as those which seek to develop practitioner knowledge and skill by engaging in a collaborative learning process that involves proactive reflection (Carroll, 2008; Gardner, 2006; Morrison, 2005; Wonnacott, 2012). Models of reflective supervision are most often designed to guide and promote learning and enhance practitioner knowledge, skill and self awareness (Carroll, 2009; Davys, 2001; Morrison, 2001). Kolb's model of reflective learning is often described as the 'best known model of adult learning' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). Whilst a review of adult learning theory is outside the scope of this thesis, Kolb's model (1984) is frequently cited in the supervision literature as one which values practitioner experience, promotes critical reflection and is a powerful tool for promoting collaborative learning in supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs, Dwyer & Vivekanda, 2009; Morrison, 2001). Kolb's four-stage cycle (2004) follows the 'experience' of the actively reflective practitioner, who, having had a concrete experience, moves through a process of reflection—abstract conceptualization—to active experimentation based on the reflection and new learning. Morrison extended Kolb's work by identifying implications for supervisors at each stage of the learning cycle, giving consideration to what may happen when practitioners get 'stuck' at any one point on the cycle (Morrison, 2001, 2005).

In a recent addition to the models of reflective supervision, Davys and Beddoe (2010) have developed a Reflective Learning Model of supervision. These authors propose a four stage cycle identified as 'the Event, the Exploration, the Experimentation and the Evaluation stage' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p.95) and locate this cycle in the context of a supervision session.

Learning has been described as 'the heart of supervision' with the learning requirement spanning knowledge and skill, wisdom, self awareness, ethics, sensitivity and an ability to draw upon intuition (Carroll, 2010, p. 1). Models of professional social work knowledge have been constructed by others as inclusive of theoretical knowledge, empirical knowledge, personal knowledge, practice wisdom and procedural knowledge (Hudson, 1997) and, more recently, as formal knowledge, values, reasoning skills, emotional wisdom and practice wisdom (Munro, 2002, cited in Dalzell & Sawyer, 2008, p.15).

What each of these reflective models have in common is a privileging of the opportunity for supervisees to actively reflect upon their experiences and to build upon this reflection, in partnership with the supervisor in order to enhance their professional knowledge and self awareness. The centrality of learning is highlighted and contrasted with Kadushins' model (1976), which posits learning or education to be a single function, and emphasizes the supervisor's focus on service delivery rather than supervisee learning.

Strengths Based Theory

The third of the four major approaches is strengths based theory, which is closely aligned with solution focused theory**.** Contemporary child protection practice literature has seen a move away from traditional 'child rescue' paradigms (Scott & Swain, 2002) toward approaches that embrace relationships and build solutions with families. Along with critically reflective approaches, these approaches represent a postmodern paradigm shift away from traditionalist, positivist perspectives and approaches. Strengths based case practice identifies families as partners in defining problems, goals, strategies and success (Lohrbach & Sawyer, 2004) and holds core underlying

assumptions that people have the capacity for growth, change and adaptation. These ideas have been used to develop models of practice with mandated clients, who may have traditionally been seen as resistant, or uncooperative (Durrant, 1992).

When these approaches are applied to supervision, success is recognised and amplified (Davys and Beddoe 2010), potentially challenging other understandings of supervision, including Kadushin's approach (1976) which reflects the traditional problem solving paradigm of social work practice.

These approaches are consistent with Schulman's thinking in relation to the importance of relationship, which emphasised collaboration and partnership as key components of the supervisory relationship (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). They are also consistent with reflective approaches to supervision discussed earlier, and a postmodern perspective that 'brings to the forefront issues of identity, stories and the language of supervision encounters' (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p.36), challenging the modernist assumption that the supervisor is the 'expert' (Adamson, 2011).

In summary, a strength based approach to supervision is one which seeks to identify and build upon the existing strengths or competencies of the practitioner and to 'celebrate success' by identifying and articulating practice that is effective (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). The approach contrasts with those that identify problems in practice and performance, and 'pathologize' the practitioner by focusing on deficits rather than strengths.

Theories that Privilege Culture, Power and Difference

Hawkins and Shohet (2000) suggest that imbalances of power evident in the community will inevitably impact upon the relationship between supervisee and supervisor. At the same time, the issue of power and authority is one which must be considered by supervisors, who are agency representatives and have accountability for the quality of the service delivered by the supervisee (Kadushin, 2002; Morrison, 2005). Appropriate use of authority is a recurrent theme of the

supervision literature, and it is recognised that it presents a complex problem for supervisors, who need to be sensitive to the potential to misuse power (Brown & Bourne, 1996; Davys & Beddoe, 2010, Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).

Models of supervision which emphasise an awareness of culture as a foundation issue for the professional relationship are articulated by Hawkins and Shohet (2000). These authors highlight the importance of anti-oppressive practice principles (Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). In this instance, anti-oppressive practice can be understood as going beyond anti-discriminatory practices which challenge injustice, by proactively developing models of empowerment. In summary, 'to be anti-oppressive entails attending to the experiences of oppression in both the supervisees and the clients, and also attending to becoming aware of our own cultural biases and become more adaptive to difference' (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000, p. 97). These authors have developed a 'seven mode' approach to supervision which is designed to attend to cultural and power dynamics within the complexities of the supervisor, supervisee and client relationships.

Furthermore, Davys and Beddoe identify 'culturally explicit' approaches to supervision, describing these as approaches that are developed locally to respond to indigenous and minority cultures. In Aotearoa New Zealand, where one of these approaches was pioneered, a feature of this approach is that the local Maori 'worldview' is congruent with the theoretical basis of supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). In elaborating upon this approach, Hair and O'Donoghue (2009) suggest that, historically, supervision texts failed to integrate the need to address racism with principles of social justice. These authors advocate an alternative conceptual framework for supervision, one which is 'culturally relevant' and based on a postmodern, social constructionist framework (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). Cultural supervision practices in Aotearoa New Zealand have been consequently shaped by the Maori and Pacific Island peoples, who 'co-create their own conceptions of social work supervision' (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009 p.84). Each of the theories propose an active reflection on the part of the supervisee and supervisor, of particular personal

characteristics and wider issues, including ‘gender, sexual identity, age, educational background and culture, religious beliefs and values’ (Davys & Beddoe, 2010, p.42).

It is important not to overstate the distinctions between the four broad theoretical approaches, nor to assume that the approaches are mutually exclusive. It might be argued that a blend of the four approaches could form the basis of an integrated approach to critically reflective supervision.

Leadership Theory and Supervision

It has been suggested that a ‘really good’ supervisor does far more than merely supervise staff in accordance with agency policy. A highly skilled supervisor will also ‘inspire, motivate and act as a leader of social work practice’ (Wonnacott, 2012, p. 30). However, this review has identified a scarcity of literature examining leadership approaches as they relate to social work. A search within the *Harvard Business Review*, one of the seminal management and leadership journals, yielded no articles that addressed leadership in social work. The reasons for this absence are unclear. It may be related to the critique and rejection of business models of management within the field of social welfare and in social work literature (Morrison, 2010; Munro, 2011, 2008). Some of the social work literature, however, identifies links between mainstream leadership theory and the role of social work supervisor (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Morrison, 2005; Wonnacott, 2012; Zwanenberg, 2010).

It is beyond the scope of this literature review to examine the evolution of leadership theory per se. What is relevant to this research are leadership theories that have been described as consistent with social work values (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Zwanenberg, 2010). Skinner argues in favour of leadership theory that is consistent with developments in neuro-science. This leadership would have a focus on relationship, use relationship for social work supervisors to lead social and emotional behaviour in the workplace (Skinner, 2010; in Zwanenberg, 2010, p.42).

Leadership theories that emerged in the 1980s, described as relevant to social work supervisors, include transactional and transformational leadership theory and distributed leadership theory (Gellis, 2001; Hughes & Wearing, 2013).

Transactional leadership has a focus on stability and efficiency, and has been described as an approach that has more a focus on maintaining order within the organisation rather than inspiring or innovating change (Lawler, 2007). In transactional leadership, two core types of leader-follower exchange have been identified (Hughes & Wearing, 2013). In the first type of exchange, known as contingent reward leadership, leaders reward followers for successfully completing agreed tasks. In the second type of exchange, referred to as management by exception, leaders transact by focusing on problems or mistakes, or by not taking proactive leadership action (Hughes & Wearing, 2013).

In contrast, the transformational leader is one who motivates and inspires others, and manages 'meaning' rather than merely process and procedure, and, consequently, is a leader capable of influencing organisational culture and communicating the values and mission of the organisation (Bryman, 1999; in Hughes & Wearing, 2013). Transformational leadership is described as going beyond transaction, to inspire and motivate followers to set aside individual interests to pursue the common goals of the work unit, team or organisation (Gellis, 2001). Four distinct features of transformational leadership include:

(1) 'Charisma (idealized attributes and behaviours), (2) intellectual stimulation, (3) individual consideration and (4) inspirational motivation' (Bass, cited in Gellis 2001, p.18).

Gellis (2001) found that transformational leadership practices in a health care social work setting, when compared to transactional practices, were positively related to perceptions of leader effectiveness, satisfaction with leaders and a willingness for social workers to engage in additional activities, or to make 'extra effort' .

‘Distributed leadership’ (Lawler, 2007) is consistent with transformational leadership but extends the focus to processes within the group, rather than the characteristics of the individual leader, who is, in turn, responsible for developing the capacity of others within the organisation in order that they may take on leadership roles.

It could be argued that leadership styles or behaviours based on transformational or distributive approaches have much in common with Goleman’s work on ‘emotional intelligence’ (Goleman, 1996). Drawing on this theory of leadership for social work, the emotionally intelligent social work practitioner has been described as one who ‘recognises the emotional nature of her work and the emotional impact that it has on self and others. It is in the intelligent use of emotions and understanding of the part that emotions play … that effective practice and psychological well being occur’ (Howe, 2007, p.195).

The ‘emotionally intelligent’ social work supervisor has been conceptualised as one who can regulate her own emotional responses to the work in order to respond to the actions and needs of her supervisees (Wonnacott, 2012).

‘Emotionally intelligent’ leadership styles are summarised as: visionary, affiliative, coaching, democratic, pacesetting and commanding (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), with leaders needing to adapt their leadership style to the particular context and/or individual need. It is suggested that social work supervisors should be able to draw upon each of these styles as required, and that the skill in application is to be mindful of the need to work with relationships and emotions, while maintaining a focus on outcomes for the service user (Wonnacott, 2012, p. 35).

In summary, contemporary leadership theory, which recognises the importance of relationship and values based leadership and the ‘emotional intelligence’ of leaders (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), would seem to be a ‘good fit’ conceptually with approaches to the supervision of social work. In addition, approaches highlighting the significance of partnership and collaborative work, which distribute power and responsibility (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Lawler, 2007), can be seen as

having a strong relevance to 'really good' supervision in child and family practice (Wonnacott, 2012).

In summary, this section has looked at what 'theory' in social work means before examining definitions and functions identified by major supervision theorists. Four broad theoretical approaches to supervision were outlined: learning approaches, reflective approaches, strengths based approaches and approaches that consider culture, power and difference. Finally a brief examination of the relevance of contemporary leadership theory has revealed a high level of relevance for supervision of child and family practice.

Part Three: Researching Supervision

Despite an explosion in the number of supervision textbooks and guides published in the past two decades (Davys & Beddoe, 2010), research that looks specifically at supervision in the helping professions is limited to a few studies, the majority of which are small in scope. The exception is research on staff retention and supervision, which is a topic that has been extensively studied in North America. What follows is an examination of the research literature relating to the effectiveness of supervision in child and family practice. Four broad areas of research focus were identified as a result of a review of the research literature. These were, firstly, the supervisory relationship and supervisor competencies; secondly, supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma; thirdly, supervision and client outcomes, and finally supervision and staff retention. These four substantive areas of research are explored here in some detail.

The Supervisory Relationship and Supervisor Competencies

The first broad area of focus in the research literature is the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee that is the supervisory relationship. The majority of studies identifying the importance of the supervisory relationship were based in North America and were small qualitative studies (Hanna & Potter, 2012; Hensley, 2003). In one instance, Bogo and McKnight reviewed 11 studies of social work supervision undertaken in North America and published by peer reviewed

journals (Bogo & McKnight, 2008), and the authors concluded that these studies were 'beginning to contribute to evidence' since they were small and exploratory in design (Bogo & McKnight, 2008, p.61). Key issues arising from this body of literature are explored below.

Another study examined the concept of effective supervision from different perspectives, including those of practitioner, supervisor and managers. This study, focusing on excellence in supervisory practice, developed a survey tool which was completed by 100 respondents (Clark, Gilman et al., 2008). The nature of the supervisory relationship was highlighted by all three groups as fundamental to effective supervision. They agreed to a number of indicators of effective supervision, including 'encouraging and listening to work related thoughts and opinions, and showing empathy and sensitivity to staff' (Clark, Gilman et al., 2008, p.26). Some difference in views between the groups was identified, in particular in relation to views about aspects for the role of supervisor. Managers and supervisors have been noted to emphasise administrative components of the role, with a focus on accountability, whilst supervisees have emphasised the importance of expert knowledge in their supervisors (Clark, Gilman et al., 2008). A further study concluded that, in addition to providing effective support, supervisors needed 'excellent capacities to absorb and communicate knowledge of child welfare practice, to establish clear standards, and to explain complicated policies and procedures' (Clark, Gilman et al., 2008, p.26).

The importance of the supervisory relationship is a key finding in research concerned with effective supervision of case practice (Bogo & McKnight, 2008; Hensley, 2003). Hensley concluded that the 'relationship [is] the core ingredient that runs through every aspect' (Hensley, 2003, p.104). Supervisor qualities associated with promoting practitioner competence include warmth, a sense of humour and a capacity for role modeling (Hensley, 2003) whilst the supervisor values considered essential for effective supervision included integrity, loyalty and honesty (Hensley, 2003).

In an evaluation of training undertaken in North America, the key predictors of supervisee satisfaction were consistent with the findings of the above studies and included: supervisor

availability and the quality of the supervisory relationship (Lietz & Rounds, 2009). These authors also found that supervisees valued the level of critical thinking in supervision. The study, evaluating a strengths based supervisor training strategy, involved 189 participants (75% of all participants) completing a 'satisfaction survey' on completion of the training (Lietz & Rounds, 2009).

In of the few studies conducted in the United Kingdom, authors England, Rushton and Nathan (1996) undertook a small (n=12) qualitative research project in which focus group participants, all child protection supervisors, were invited to articulate the competencies that they saw as critical for good quality supervision. The findings of their study again support the significance of the relationship, whilst highlighting the value of supervisor expertise in the area of child abuse and neglect. Three general aspects of competency were identified:

1. Competence in overseeing the investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect and holding line management accountability for child protection decision making.
2. Competence in functioning as an expert advisor on the team member's cases
3. Competence in building an appropriate relationship with the team member and promoting staff functioning and development. (Rushton & Nathan, 1996, p.369)

In summary, views expressed by supervisees, supervisors and agency managers consistently stressed the importance of the supervisory relationship for 'effective' supervision in child and family practice (Bogo & McKnight, 2008; Hensley, 2003). The supervisor competencies identified as essential for a sound relationship fell broadly into three categories: firstly professional values, including honesty, loyalty and integrity (Hensley, 2003) were specified; secondly, demonstrated behaviours, including role modeling, use of humour, offering support, communicating complex concepts and promoting critical thinking (Clark, et al., 2009). Finally, a sound knowledge base including expertise in child abuse and neglect was seen as a cornerstone of effective supervision, particularly when supervisors were accountable for complex case-related decisions, and held responsibility for staff development (Rushton & Nathan, 1996).

Supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma

The second broad area of focus in the research literature is supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma. Studies focused on the emotional impact of practice are typically qualitative in design, small and exploratory (Bowers, Esmond & Canales, 1999; Gibbs, 2001; Harrison & Westwood, 2009; Ruch, 2005; Rushton & Nathan, 1996). In one example, Brandon, Belderson, Warren, Gardner, Howe, Dodsworth & Black (2008), intensively examined a sample of 47 cases of child death or serious injury as a result of abuse, noting that the 'emotional impact of working with distress and hostility from parents and working with resistance from older adolescents can impede engagement, judgment and safeguarding action' (Brandon, et al., 2008, p.328).

The organisational and community context within which supervision takes place may be seen as a critical influence on the quality of both practice and supervision in an emotionally charged environment (Bowers, et al., 1999; Gibbs, 2001). An organisational culture that promotes learning and reflection (Gibbs, 2001; Ruch, 2005,) is seen to be more likely to value the supportive and educative functions of supervision, and to promote the integration of theory, research and practice at the frontline (Collins, Camargo & Millar, 2010). Whilst the organisational and community context is explored in Chapter 3, it is clear that child and family practice can involve work that is distressing and at times positively dangerous for frontline practitioners, entailing threats of and actual assaults on staff by aggrieved clients (Stanley & Goddard, 2002). Anxiety, stress, burnout and vicarious trauma are among the potential negative outcomes of practicing in this field (Gibbs, 2001; Ruch, 2005; Rushton & Nathan, 1996).

The growing body of literature on stress and burnout (Coffey et al., 2004; Collins 2008; Figley 2002; Huxley et al., 2005; Lloyd et al., 2002; Rose, 2003) is useful for understanding the potential impacts of practice with vulnerable children and families upon practitioners. Child protection practitioner anxiety was identified as a significant theme in a small (n= 22) Australian study

conducted by Gibbs (2001), who found that a number of child protection practitioners described an experience of supervision that was more akin to surveillance, than an experience of emotional support and professional development. In this context, supervision seemed to be a means of containing the supervisor's demands for accountability and potentially assisting them to manage their own anxiety. Gibbs identified practitioner anxiety as relating to case specific issues including fears of child death or client threat and assault, as well as workplace issues including a lack of job security or fear of peer negativity, and she called for supervision to be 'refocused' in order to meet its requisite support and educative functions (Gibbs 2001).

An emerging body of knowledge focussed on complex trauma is paving the way for a new appreciation of the potential neurobiological impact of stress (Perry, 1997; Siegal, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2005). For practitioners in frontline practice, the experience of vicarious trauma may be understood as a potentially 'normative' response to exposure to personal threat or extreme human suffering, for example child sexual abuse. Vicarious trauma is a relatively recently identified phenomenon grounded in new knowledge about the impact of trauma on brain development (Perry, 1997; Siegal, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2005). It has been defined as the experience of 'those individuals who are impacted by working with traumatised individuals … the observers and listeners have not actually been exposed to the event, though they can really feel it' (Rothschild, 2006, p.4).

In response to the complexity and unpredictability of social work practice, the concept of 'emotional containment' was put forward by Ruch (2007) as the cornerstone of effective reflection on practice. The containment concept is promoted as one which facilitates learning whilst allowing the practitioner a safe reflective space, where practitioners are able to work with the ambiguity and uncertainty (Ruch, 2007).Influenced by psychodynamic theory and in particular the work of the psychoanalyst Bion, who 'developed the concepts of contained-container' and identified the potential of therapeutic relationships (individual and/or collective) to act as containers for unmanageable feelings', (Bion,1962, cited in Ruch 2007, p.662).' Of importance in the process of

being contained is the experience of uncertainty. Immediate solutions to sources of anxiety may not be forthcoming, but the experience of containment is sufficient to offer relief … 'and enables individuals to keep going' (Hughes and Pengelly 1997 in Ruch 2007,p.662).

Exploring 'what worked' in response to traumatic case material, a small qualitative study conducted in the mental health field drew upon the experiences of purposefully selected 'peer nominated master therapists', who were asked to identify ways in which they sustained themselves given the challenge of working with traumatised clients (Harrison & Westwood, 2009). The findings indicated that these 'exemplary' clinicians were typically taking a proactive approach to counter the potential for vicarious trauma as a result of case practice. Strategies that were used to prevent or minimise the emotional impact of the work included: countering isolation (in the professional, personal and spiritual realms), developing mindful self-awareness, consciously expanding awareness to embrace complexity, active optimism, holistic self care, maintaining clear boundaries, 'exquisite' empathy and creating meaning (Harrison & Westwood, 2009, p.213).

The authors identify these nine strategies as critically integrated and as the key factors for protecting and sustaining these therapists, thereby reducing the risk of vicarious trauma. Of particular interest in this research was the concept of 'exquisite empathy'. Whilst some, including the researchers, may assume that empathy was a risk factor, this study found the opposite to be true. They found that 'when clinicians maintained clarity about interpersonal boundaries, when they are able to get very close without fusing or confusing the client's story, experiences and perspectives with their own, this exquisite kind of empathetic attunement is nourishing for therapist and client alike' (Harrison & Westwood, 2009, p. 213).

In summary, much of the literature describing the emotional impact of practice upon the practitioner is based on research that is small in scope and focuses on practitioners rather than their supervision. This review found a dearth of supervision literature that explicitly linked the

issues of vicarious trauma, or emerging findings in the area of the neurobiology trauma with supervision and supervisor characteristics and competencies.

Tentative conclusions from the available literature in this area are that supervisors require an understanding of the emotional impact of child protection practice upon the practitioner (Morrison, 2001, 2005) and an understanding of the potentially damaging effects of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. They also require an understanding of the ameliorating potential of an effective supervisory relationship (Figley, 2002) and the capacity to both model and implement strategies that may minimise the emotional impact of the work upon the practitioner (Harrison & Westwood, 2009).

Supervision and Client Outcomes

The third broad theme in the research literature is supervision and client outcomes. Given the commonly held view that the purpose of supervision is to 'deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both qualitatively and quantitatively in accordance with agency policy and procedures' (Kadushin, 1976 p.23), there was remarkably little research examining the relationship between staff supervision and client outcomes. It does appear that the majority of the published commentary in this domain is theoretical, assuming a correlation between supervision of practitioners and client outcomes. Two North American studies were found that specifically examined the role of social work supervision and client outcomes (Harkness, 1995; Harkness & Hensley, 1991). A third, British study, in the field of nursing, proposed a tool to measure the effectiveness of clinical supervision, and found to have limited relevance (White and Winstanly, 2011). A fourth and final study conducted in Australia evaluated the implementation of a program for supervisors, drawing assumptions about client outcomes which are not validated. These studies are explored below.

Harkness and Hensley specifically investigated social work supervision and supervisor behaviours, the impact on staff behaviour and outcomes for clients in two studies (Harkness, 1995; Harkness &

Hensley, 1991). The initial study sought to investigate the relationship between the focus of social work supervision and client outcomes using an experimental design that involved 6 social work supervisors specifically focusing on client outcomes in supervision sessions, and 6 supervisors offering a 'mixed focus' in their supervision sessions. This research found a positive correlation between staff and client outcomes where the focus of supervision was focused specifically on the issues faced by the client, staff interventions and desired client outcomes (Harkness & Hensley, 1991). These early findings were further examined and developed to identify associations between supervisor behaviour and client outcomes in two areas. Firstly, supervisor problem solving skills were found to relate positively to client goal attainment. Secondly, supervisor empathy was found to relate to client generalised contentment. Overall, whilst specific supervisor skills were found to impact positively on specific client outcomes, the quality of the supervisory relationship was found to be a better predictor of client outcomes than supervisor skills. The author concluded with a recommendation that 'attention be given to the supervisor skills of empathy and problem solving as predictors of client's outcomes, as well as the supervisory relationship itself' (Harkness, 1995, p.73).

These findings offer some important considerations for understanding 'effective supervision' in the context of the service received by and outcomes for clients. The studies were undertaken in the USA in a clinical mental health setting, and do not appear to have been replicated internationally or in other fields of practice.

Two contemporary studies seeking to identify client outcomes relating to supervision were located in the field of nursing (Edwards et al., 2005; White & Winstanley, 2011). A 'tool' to assess the effectiveness of clinical supervision was developed by Winstanley and White and implemented internationally, and was claimed to be 'the longest established, internationally validated, copyright, research questionnaire to measure the effectiveness of clinical supervision' (White & Winstanly, 2011, p.160). Initially piloted in the United Kingdom, the Manchester Clinical Supervision Scale measures the effects of Clinical Supervision using a 36-item scale. The potential relevance of this

‘tool’ to examine the effectiveness of social work supervision is unclear. However, an important distinction to be observed is that ‘clinical’ supervision is defined as akin to the concept of ‘consultation’ in social work, that is, a relationship involving ‘facilitated, reflective discussion, in confidence, around matters of professional relevance and importance’ (White and Winstanly, 2011, p. 161). This definition does not assume that the supervisor has ultimate responsibility for the service to clients as an agency manager, or that the function of administration or management was a core component of the role.

Finally, there is emerging evidence that a proactive strategy focusing on supervisory practice will impact on the skills and practices of supervisors, and will impact, too, on client outcomes (Wilson, 2009). Australian research (Wilson 2009) was located in the domain of child protection practice and involved the systematic training and mentoring of frontline managers across four child protection regions. Outcomes for supervisor behaviour were found, however outcomes for services to clients are assumed. Further investigation of the model’s effectiveness over time, with specific client outcome measures in place, is recommended by the author. (Wilson, 2009).

In summary, whilst the theoretical literature assumes that ‘the supervisor’s ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service (Kadushin, 1976 p.23), there is a lack of research specifically investigating a link between the provision of supervision and client outcomes. Where this research has occurred in relation to social work, the most important predictor of impact on client outcomes was the supervisory relationship, with evidence that the demonstration of the supervisor skills of problem solving and empathy were related to enhanced client goal attainment and generalised client contentment.

Supervision and staff retention

The fourth broad area of focus in the research literature is supervision and staff retention. In stark contrast to a lack of research in relation to supervision and client outcomes, there was a plethora of material relating to the association between supervision and staff retention, much of it in the form

of large quantitative studies focusing on workforce retention undertaken in the USA. In Chapter One I identified the issue of staff turnover among frontline in child protection practitioners as a significant international problem (Healy, et al., 2009). It is not surprising, given the costs associated with staff turnover (both financial and in terms of service quality) that this issue has attracted significant research funding.

The studies surveyed for this literature review typically sought to understand the factors aiding the retention of staff in frontline child welfare practice (Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook & Dews, 2007; Dickenson & Painter, 2009; Mor Barack, et al., 2005; Renner, Porter & Priester, 2009). Rather than having a specific focus on supervision, these studies looked at child welfare workers' intention to leave versus intention to stay in employment as a proxy measure for actually leaving, and involved large numbers of employees (n=418, Mor Barack, et al.,2005) completing surveys instruments. The study by Barth et al., examined factors pertaining to job satisfaction in child welfare and involved the implementation of a survey instrument across 36 states, completed by 1729 employees (Barth et al., 2008). In terms of their focus on supervision of practice, this group of studies had only limited relevance to the present study, since they were focused on a wide range of personal and organisational factors that contributed to staff turnover or retention Nevertheless, their key findings are outlined below in light of the commonality of finding pertaining to supervision.

Studies typically found an association between an experience of 'supervisory support' and a decision by case practitioners to 'stay' (Barth, et al.,2008; Dickenson & Painter, 2009; Ellett, et al.,2007; Mor Barack, et al., 2009; Renner, et al.,2009; Zlotnik, et al, 2005). Posing the question 'what conditions and strategies influence the retention of staff in public child welfare?', Zlotnick et al. undertook a systematic review of original research articles published over a thirty-year period (Zlotnick et al., 2005). Of 154 papers identified and screened for relevance, 25 articles or reports were included for analysis. The findings of the systematic review highlight the complexity of the issue of staff retention and showed a wide range of personal and organisational factors to be involved. This review found that positive personal factors included a professional commitment to

children and families, previous work experience, education, and being bilingual. Positive organisational factors included supervisory support, reasonable workload, co-worker support, opportunities for advancement, organisational commitment and valuing employees. The review concluded that 'professional commitment and level of education are the most consistent personal characteristics and supervisory support and workload are the most consistent organisational factors' (Zlotnik et al., 2005, p. 3).

Although this review did not define supervisory support, it set the scene for a number of subsequent studies to add to the emerging knowledge in relation to worker retention, including several that examined supervisory support (Bath, et al., 2008; Dickenson & Painter, 2009; Ellett, et al., 2007; Gomez, et al.,2010; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Landsman, 2007; Mor Barak, et al., 2006; Mor Barack, et al.,2009; Nissly, et al.,2005; Renner, et al.,2009;).

The role of supervisors as 'practice experts' was subsequently explored by a number of these studies, as was the importance of expert practice support for their staff. Barth et al., who looked at helpful supervisor attributes, found that the 'quality of supervision was the strongest predictor of satisfaction among child welfare workers' (Barth et al., 2008, p.206), which they defined as the 'worker's perception of emotional support and advice received'.

Findings relating specifically to supervision were identified by another research project described as the 'largest known, statewide, qualitative study of child welfare employees' views of personal and organisational factors that contribute to employee turnover and retention' in the USA (Ellett et al., 2006). The study's findings highlighted 'supportive, quality supervision, consultation and mentoring' as keys to staff retention (Ellett et al., p.274). Looking beyond the supervisee-supervisor relationship, organisational and community context and a sense of inclusion were shown to be of critical importance, with Ellett et al.'s study concluding that practitioners who elected to remain in the work were people who:

(a) are professionally committed to child welfare,

(b) believe the larger organization cares about them as both employees and individuals,

(c) find personal challenge and meaning in the work,

(d) function best in a professional organisational culture of collegiality and strong supervisory leadership and administrative support,

(e) Believe the external environment (policy makers, general public, the courts) care about them and the children and families they serve. (Ellett et al., 2007, p. 278)

The proactive decision to stay in the work was associated with 'good supervision, with a significant connection between supervisors' support and stronger sense of inclusion in the organisation'… (Mor Barak et al., 2009, p.567). The importance of organisational culture and climate has again been a recent finding in a large Northern American study, which found that higher organisational commitment was predictive of lower turnover (Hwang & Hopkins, 2012). Relating this material to the role of supervision, Collins-Camargo and Millar (2010) found a strong relationship between effective supervision and an organisational culture that promoted evidence based practice, with supervision shown to be the most helpful with less experienced staff.

Overall, the research literature indicates a strong association between the experience of 'supervisory support' and the decision by practitioners to stay in their role (Barth, et al., 2008; Dickenson & Painter, 2009; Ellett, et al.,2007; Gomez, et al., 2010; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Landsman, 2007, Mor Barak, et al., 2006). The provision of supportive supervision was associated with supervisors having practice expertise, providing emotional support, consultation and advice, and mentoring practitioners. The organisational culture and climate, and a sense of inclusion were also identified as being of critical importance to practitioners' decision to stay, suggesting that supervisors have a part to play in promoting a positive workplace environment.

Summary

The research evidence could be described as extensive in relation to the issue of staff retention in child and family practice, and very limited for all the other relevant domains. Four areas have been identified as emerging from the research literature, the first of these relating to the supervisory relationship and supervisor competencies. Secondly, research identifying the supervisor's role in managing anxiety and 'containing' their supervisees in an emotionally charged environment is complemented by relatively new material relating to the neuro-biology of trauma and the importance of relationship. Thirdly, whilst the purpose of social work supervision is said to promote client outcomes (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), only two studies were identified as examining this link. Finally, a large number of studies, mostly North American, have examined the relationship between supervision and staff retention in child welfare.

Part Four: Contested issues

This part of the Chapter will explore the contested issues arising from the literature review. Three contested issues have been identified as: the supervisory relationship and power, the role of emotion, and the ultimate purpose of supervision. A fourth contested issue relates to the organisational and wider community context within which supervision takes place. This fourth issue is explored in Chapter 3, where the context for this research is discussed.

The Supervisory Relationship and Power

A notable finding of the review of the theoretical and the research literature has been the emphasis on the importance of the supervisory relationship. Traditional texts identify a 'positive relationship' as a fundamental requirement for the supervisor to exercise his/her responsibilities and perform the functions of education, support and administration (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), or education, support, management and mediation (Morrison, 2005; Richards, Payne & Sheppard, 1990). The interaction between supervisee and supervisor is identified as crucial to the supervisor's capacity to undertake supervision (Schulman, 1993), with recent literature upholding the view that 'fundamental to the [supervisory] relationship is good rapport and a working alliance'

(Schuck & Wood, 2011, p.15). Whilst upholding the importance of the relationship, these ideas suggest more of a mutuality of responsibility for the development and maintenance of a 'working alliance'.

The research evidence supports the theoretical centrality of the relationship, suggesting an association between the experience of supervisory support and practitioners' decisions to stay in their job (Barth, et al.,2008; Dickenson & Painter, 2009; Ellett, et al.,2007; Mor Barack, et al.,2009; Zlotnik et al., 2005). Whilst a detailed exploration of the nature of this 'support' is not available in the research literature, there are some findings indicating that supervisor qualities associated with promoting practitioner competence include warmth, a sense of humour and capacity for role modeling (Hensley, 2003), whilst supervisor values identified as essential for effective supervision include integrity, loyalty and honesty (Hanna & Potter, 2012).

Ironically, it is the relationship between supervisor and supervisee that emerges as a key contested issue. Both traditional and contemporary textbook descriptions of the functions of supervision espouse the need to 'balance' the functions of supervision in order to offer an integrated experience which supports, educates, and manages staff (Kadushin, 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002; Morrison, 2005; Schulman, 2003).

The potential for tension as a result of the organisational and wider community context within which supervision is practiced will be explored in some detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Of concern here are issues of power and authority which are an inevitable feature of the micro-level relationship between supervisee and supervisor, and the question of whether these issues pose an insurmountable challenge to the supervisor's capacity to effectively 'balance' education and support with the requirement to exercise power and authority. Typical examples of the need for balance include administrating supervisee workload and managing the performance assessment of staff.

Hughes and Pengelly, for instance, identify the functions of supervision as corners of a triangle that are ‘dynamically and functionally interrelated and cannot be regarded separately from each other’ (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997, p.43) and the authors propose that an on-going effort is required to achieve an optimum balance between the functions. Davys and Beddoe (2010), who built upon the Hughes and Pengelly model by placing support at its centre, suggest that a triangle best depicts the ‘sense of tension inherent in supervision arrangements’ (Davys & Beddoe, 2010 p.26), highlighting the value in identifying and actively balancing these points of tension, in order to ensure that the triangle does not ‘collapse’. Both authors clearly assume like Kadushin (1976), that supervision is usually conducted in the context of an hierarchical, agency-based relationship that will involve line management of the staff member, education and support, and that a ‘balance’ of these functions is possible.

Munson (1993) identified two types of power within the supervisory relationship, both held by the supervisor. The first was agency sanctioned power, where the supervisor holds a position that is ‘senior’ to the supervisee and, as a result, has a mandate to supervise the worker and to manage their performance. The second source of power is less formal and is described as knowledge power; that is, the accumulated knowledge and expertise held by the supervisor, which is brought to the supervisory relationship. Exercising this power in the context of a ‘balanced’ supervisory relationship is not specifically addressed by Munson.

The supervisor as the holder of ‘knowledge power’ (Munson, 1993) is a construction of social work supervision that is challenged by some, who suggest that it is based on modernist ideas about knowledge and a worldview that assumes there is one ‘right’ way of knowing (Hair & O’Donoghue, 2009). Based on a modernist worldview, a supervisor could emphasise their role as the monitor of practice standards and assessor of practice quality, as the one who truly ‘knows’ what is in the best interests of the staff member and service user (Hair & O’Donoghue, 2009). Novice practitioners may well benefit from the supervisor’s ‘expertise’; however, a developmental approach to supervision would assume that, as the supervisee gains experience, the style of the supervisor

should become more facilitative, involving more sharing of knowledge power rather than instruction.

An alternative, paradigm is one which underpins strengths based approaches identified earlier, that are culturally sensitive, promote solution oriented practice and consider actively issues of power, gender and difference (Davys & Beddoe, 2010). As a result, the supervisory relationship would be one which could be robust enough to incorporate multiple sources of knowledge and perspectives, to emphasise collaboration and be sensitive to power, politics and the influence of context (Hair & O'Donoghue 2009).

In looking at the importance of the supervisory relationship, it could be concluded that power and authority should be identified as issues to be considered and worked with. Supervisors of practice in child and family practice can—and do—exercise power and authority in the supervisory relationship, delegating and overseeing workload and appraising practitioner performance. The supervisor-supervisee relationship could be described as mandated and at times involuntary, much like the practitioner-client relationship in many child and family practice settings. Literature that recognises the inevitability of working with issues of power and control in child and family practice supervision, and identifies approaches which engage productively with the nature of the supervisory relationship (Brown & Bourne 1996; Davys & Beddoe 2010; Hawkins & Shohet 2000), would seem to be most relevant to the central research question for this thesis: what is effective supervision in child and family practice?

The Role of Emotion

A second, contested issue in the literature pertaining to child and family practice supervision is the role of emotion and, in particular anxiety and distress in response to the work, and the implications for supervision. The issue of the emotional impact of the work is discussed in part two of this Chapter; supervision responding to stress and burnout, anxiety and vicarious trauma. More recent publications (Gibbs, 2001; Hughes & Pengelly, 2007) Morrison, 2007; are in contrast to traditional

social work supervision textbooks where the 'process' of supervision appears somewhat sanitised, based on formulas of phases and functions that appear to lack an appreciation of the emotionally charged nature of the work (Kadushin, 1976; Munson, 1979; Schulman 2003). Some of the literature describes supervisors as needing to balance 'inquisitorial and empathetic–containing functions' in light of the potential emotional impact of the work upon practitioners (Gibbs, 2001; Hughes & Pengelly, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Rushton & Nathan, 1996). In this context it is argued, that both the 'inquisitorial' function and the 'empathetic containing' function of the supervisor's role need to be integrated. 'Experienced supervisors learn to perform these two functions simultaneously and […] it appeared that they were ultimately inseparable' (Rushton & Nathan, 1996, p.366).

Child and family practice has been defined earlier as a term including both statutory child protection roles and wider child welfare roles which are usually conducted in a non-statutory or voluntary context. The 'inquisitorial' and 'empathetic-containing' functions of the supervisor could be seen to apply across both the statutory and voluntary domains, wherever supervisors have responsibility both for the performance of the supervisee and service received by the client, as well as a role in supporting and 'containing' the supervisee who may be exposed to trauma in the work.

The integration of the duality of role for the supervisor is consistent with the statutory child protection practitioner's requirement to manage the dual role of investigator and helper in child protection practice (Trotter, 2002, 2006, 2013). Australian research looking at child protection practitioner behaviours that impacted positively on client outcomes, found that a key component of effective case work practice was the practitioner's capacity to convey to clients the dual nature of their role, that of mandated child protection investigator and 'helper'. Implications of this research into the client-practitioner relationship may potentially be drawn in relation to the supervisor–supervisee relationship, highlighting the duality of the supervisor role, that of empathically attuned support person and inquisitive monitor of practice quality, with the authority and power to impact on a supervisee's career.

The Ultimate Purpose of Supervision

The third and final contested issue in the literature is the ultimate objective or purpose of supervision. Kadushin and Harkness are unambiguous in their assertion that the 'supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policy and procedures:

> Supervisors do not directly offer service to the client, but they do indirectly affect the level of services offered through their impact on the direct service supervisees. (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002, p. 23).

Similarly, Morrison proposes as the first principle of supervision that 'the best interest of the client must always come first' (Morrison, 2005, p.14), implying that the needs of the supervisee are addressed in supervision in order to meet the needs of the client, and that, where there is a tension or conflict, the needs of the client are given priority by the supervisor. This view is reflected by both the theoretical literature and 'grey' publications, in particular, agency practice standards (DHS, 2007).

Whilst the purpose of supervision is not explicitly contested in the literature, the literature itself focuses almost exclusively on the importance of supervision for supervisees, on the needs of supervisees, and the importance of supporting educating, leading and inspiring supervisees (Harkness & Kadushin, 2002, Kadushin, 1997; Munson, 1979; Schulman, 2003). The literature is almost silent in respect of clients, with the exception of the broad definitions identified above, and some research in the 1990s that examined a link between supervisory behaviour and client outcomes (Harkness, 1995; Harkness & Hensley, 1991). It does appear that a widespread assumption might be that 'what is best' for the practitioner is 'what is best' for the service to the client.

Appropriate support for and professional development of practitioners is not contested as a core component of supervision. What is contested are the apparently simplistic assumptions that this will lead to better service quality, and that the complexities of the 'real world' of practice, including poor and dangerous practice which is not recognised by the practitioner, may from time to time require the supervisor to actively articulate whose best interests he or she is serving. My own experience of supervision and management has included particularly challenging situations where I have been faced with a dilemma as to whose interests I should serve, that of my supervisee or the client. Morrison (2001, 2005) is an exception to the majority of theorists here. Having identified the supervision principle that 'the best interests of the client must always come first' (p.14) he goes on to dedicate a Chapter to the issues of supervisor control and tackling poor staff performance.

Methodological Issues

The prevalence of theoretical literature, primarily textbooks offering guidance for supervisors has been indentified earlier. The majority of these books are conceptual and do not refer to contemporary peer reviewed studies They do contribute to the theoretical debates surrounding supervision rather than the evidence base. A number of apparently untested assumptions, including the relationship between supervision and client outcomes can be found in these texts (Kadushin, 1976; Schuck & Wood, 2011).

Research that specifically looks at supervision in social work or supervision in child and family practice is limited to a few studies, the majority of which are small and exploratory in scope. These studies typically explored with supervisees and/or supervisors what were the characteristics of effective supervisors, what were the components of an effective supervisory relationship and could only be seen as 'beginning to contribute to evidence' since they were small and exploratory in design (Bogo & McKnight, 2008, p.61). One recent exception was a study which gathered data from 100 respondents including the practitioner, supervisor and managers, in order to examine 'excellence' in supervisory practice (Clark, et al., 2008).

In contrast to the paucity of social work supervision research is an abundance of research which has a focus on staff retention in child welfare. This is a topic that has been extensively researched in North America, primarily using large scale, quantitative design studies, seeking to understand from survey respondents what has contributed to their intent to stay in or leave their jobs as child welfare practitioners. A resounding conclusion of these large studies is that the experience of supervisory support is positively associated with intent to stay in the job. Conversely, the experience of high levels of stress and distress are positively associated with intent to leave the job. In summary, a range of complex personal and organisational factors are identified as contributing to staff turnover and retention, with 'supervisory support' being just one. These are large scale quantitative studies which do not 'tell the story' about the experience of supervisory support. Rather, they report on an association between supervision and retention without elaboration.

An additional methodological issue is the context within which the bulk of the literature is located. The majority of the publications were North American or from the United Kingdom and only two from Australia. Each of these countries has a unique historical, legislative and organisational context for child and family practice. Mandatory qualifications of supervisees and supervisors may vary, as might the presence or absence of policies and practice standards which support supervisory practice. In short, the transferability of findings from other countries to Australia may be limited.

Of the two Australian studies identified, one was an evaluation of a training project implemented to enhance statutory supervision (Wilson, 2009; Wilson & Tise, 2006). The second Australian study was a small exploratory one, conducting in-depth interviews with 22 child protection supervisees (Gibbs, 2001). This research does offer some important insights into the experiences of practitioners as to the importance of supervision, in particular highlighting the value of allowing opportunities to reflect, build knowledge and attend to stress and anxiety. A limitation of the study, acknowledged by the author, is that it was undertaken at a single location in regional Victoria.

In summary from the research available, what exactly 'works' for supervisees experiencing supervision is unclear although there is evidence pointing to the significance of the relationship and qualities of the supervisor. There remains a clear knowledge gap in relation to what 'effective' supervision is, both as it is experienced by child and family practitioners and from the perspective of the supervisors themselves. The present study seeks to go some way toward addressing this gap.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter has reviewed the theory and previous research relevant to supervision. The review of the literature has shown that definitions of child and family practice supervision draw from social work to define the supervisor as a member of staff responsible for managing the supervisee and for undertaking appraisals of supervisees' performance. Supervisors are typically described as balancing the functions of education, administration and support (Kadushin, 1979), with some authors adding the function of mediation (Morrison, 2005; Richards, et al., 2000).

Having shown the defining feature of social work supervision to be its management function, the literature suggests some commonality of view in relation to the other core functions or core components of supervision and draws attention to the potentially 'turbulent' environment in which supervision takes place. Four major theoretical approaches to supervision, which are not regarded as mutually exclusive, are outlined. Each of the approaches offers the potential to contribute to an integrated model of supervision in child and family practice.

An examination of the research identified that a number of studies found the experience of supervisor support as central to the wellbeing and the emotional maintenance of supervisees, and a key contributor to staff retention in child and family practice. Whilst a link between supervisory support and staff retention was a consistent finding across a number of large quantitative studies, limited knowledge is available in relation to the critical detail of the support experience. A paucity of research identifying a relationship between client outcomes and supervision was identified, even

though the theoretical literature suggests that the ultimate objective of supervision is to enhance service delivery.

Contested issues include the role of power in supervision. Issues of power and authority have been given limited consideration in the research literature, yet are potentially a source of conflict or constraint within the supervisory relationship if not transparently and proactively worked with. Secondly, whilst the role of emotion and the emotional impact of the work are well documented, the implications for supervision are not. The theoretical and research literature has begun to articulate the pervasive nature of anxiety and potential for vicarious trauma in child and family practice. However, it stops short of a detailed analysis of implications for supervision.

A final contested issue is the supervisory relationship itself, consistently identified as a central feature of supervision. The experiences of client service users are also absent from the literature and there is limited discussion of the ways in which the 'ultimate objective' of supervision—to enhance the service to clients—might be realised.

From the research available, what exactly 'works' for supervisees experiencing supervision is unclear although there is some information pointing to the nature of the relationship and qualities of the supervisor. There is a lack of clarity in relation to what 'effective' supervision is, as experienced by child and family practitioners, or from the perspective of the supervisors themselves. The present study, located in Australia, seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of 'effective' supervision than is available from the existing literature.

The literature review has identified critical gaps in the knowledge base which support the need for the current research. The prevalence of Northern American and British literature implies a need for caution in relation to the generalisability of these studies to an Australian context. Chapter 3, The Context, will explore and analyse the historical and contemporary context within which the present study is located.

Chapter Three: The Context

This Chapter provides a detailed description of the context within which the study took place. The study is located in the Victorian child and family practice sector. As I have indicated, child and family practice in this study encompasses the statutory child protection service and those community-based non-government services offering services to vulnerable children and families. The particular focus of the study is the supervision of practitioners working within these service settings, and involved in practice with vulnerable children. This Chapter outlines the context within which the work is undertaken. In seeking to locate this study in context, some analysis of the prevailing ideologies is offered.

The Chapter is divided into four parts. Firstly, the historical context for practice in Victoria is described and the ideologies informing policy and practice are examined. Secondly, an exploration of the organisational context for practice is undertaken, with particular reference to the impact of managerialism in the Victorian Department of Human Services and community services sector. Thirdly, the contemporary context is described and analysed. Finally, implications of context for supervisors and supervision are discussed, and I conclude with a Chapter summary.

Part One: The Historical Context for Child and Family Practice in Victoria

This part of the Chapter will outline the historical context for practice, identifying shifting understandings and ideologies relating to child abuse over time, which in turn influenced policy and service responses.

Historically, legislation, policies and practice in child welfare in Australia were influenced by a Victorian-era philanthropic response to child cruelty, which particularly focussed on the plight of orphaned, destitute and vagrant children, who formed part of the ‘under-life’ of the rapidly expanding industrialised cities of Europe and North America. It was their plight that inspired the development of the great nineteenth-century children’s charities (Scott & Swain, 2002 Thorpe,

1994). European settlement in Australia saw many young children identified as being in need as a result of their parents being dead, incarcerated or 'insane' (Liddell p.30 in Goddard and Carew 1993). In Victoria, the initial response was, in fact, an early form of foster care, with children being boarded out to 'approved families'. Boarding out practices continued throughout the 1800s. However, the practice eventually proved unable to meet the demand for placements, and in 1851 the Melbourne Orphan Asylum, the first of many large institutions to house children, opened its doors. A number of these institutions were run by voluntary organisations, and a pattern of government subsidy for voluntary services established at that time. In 1864 Victoria proclaimed its first child neglect legislation and, in what reflected a shift toward government responsibility for child welfare, the Victorian Children's Court was established in the 1890s (Liddell, cited in Goddard & Carew 1993). These developments were not dissimilar to those in occurring Britain and North America, and were consistent with developments in other Australian states and territories where similar legislative framework and systems were introduced.

Prevailing Ideologies and the Service Response: The Nineteenth Century

The prevailing ideologies of the late nineteenth century stressed blame, punishment and the moral necessity of child rescue. As authors have observed:

> the child in need of welfare assistance was regarded as the victim of an immoral and socially inadequate family situation, and implementation of welfare policy usually resulted in the child being segregated from his family (Picton & Boss, 1981, p.21)

Ideology can be defined broadly as set of beliefs or values. In child and family practice, ideology, although a powerful force, it is often unacknowledged, and is subject to change and challenge over time. Societal attitudes and beliefs about the role of family and the responsibility of the state, and the value and rights of children, have changed markedly over time and are reflected by historically diverse approaches to policy and practice. Ideology informs both how we 'see' the problem that we are trying to respond to and the way in which we construct our response (Gillingham, 2009).

Identifying ideologies can assist one to understand the basis for key policy, legislative and practice reforms and, ultimately, the context for practice. Carter (1974) described three distinct ideologies in child welfare—namely, a penal or punitive ideology, a medical ideology that pathologised parents and led to individualised treatment responses, and a social welfare ideology that located the problem in both the individual and wider societal/structural spheres.

Prevailing Ideologies and the Service Response: The Twentieth Century

The early twentieth century saw legislative and bureaucratic systems developed in Victoria as the State Government gradually assumed greater responsibility for child welfare. The Victorian Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established in 1896; its successor—the Children's Protection Society—became the voluntary agency with a legal mandate to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect in Victoria (Scott and Swain, 2002).

During both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was widespread support for the systematic removal of Aboriginal children from their families, who were subsequently placed into institutional care or with European families to be 'taught' European ways (Goddard and Carew 1993). The reasoning for this forced removal was influenced both by the punitive ideologies concurrent with child rescue, and insidious racist beliefs in the supremacy of European child rearing practices (Goddard & Carew, 1993; Tilbury, Osmand, Wilson & Clark 2007).

The Victorian Children's Welfare Act (1954) saw the beginning of efforts to close large institutions that cared for children and the development of smaller 'group homes' and home based care. This movement accelerated in the 1960s with non-government services described as being in the 'vanguard' of this movement (Goddard and Carew 1993). Services offered by these voluntary agencies were primarily focussed on children in out of home care, and consequently were 'child but not family centred' (Liddell p. 47, in Goddard and Carew 1993).

The Battered Baby Syndrome and Modern Child Protection Systems

A different form of child rescue took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, known as the 'battered baby' syndrome (Scott & Swain 2002). As a result of new radiological survey techniques, images of bone fractures in children became a compelling source of evidence of physical abuse. For the first time, professionals, initially paediatric radiologists, could offer evidence that infants had been physically assaulted from previously undetectable bone fractures that had not been attended to. The highly emotive term 'battered baby' was coined by an American paediatrician Henry Kempe and his colleagues to explain this shocking phenomenon (Scott and Swain 2002). The syndrome was defined as 'a clinical condition in young children who have received serious physical abuse [and] a frequent cause of permanent injury or death' (Kempe, cited in Scott & Swain 2002, p.121).

Dr John Birrell was appointed Victorian Police Surgeon in 1957 to serve as full-time advisor in forensic medicine. It was the first position of its kind in the world. Dr Birrell is credited with having taken a lead role in the development of a service designed to assess and treat child victims of abuse in Melbourne, initially known as VICSPAN and now known as Australians Against Child Abuse (Birrell and Birrell, 1968).

The service system response to the 'discovery' of child physical abuse focussed on the detection and investigation of parents, and this approach continues to inform the development of definitions of child abuse, and contemporary legislative frameworks and service systems to respond to child abuse and neglect (Scott & Swain 2002). In other states, the response was led by Government. However, in Victoria, the independent Children's Protection Society held the legal mandate to 'investigate' child abuse allegations.

As Goddard and Carew note, the prevailing ideology at this time defined the 'problem' of child abuse as a 'medical' concern, with parents being the source of the problem (Goddard & Carew, 1993). The 'medicalisation of child abuse emphasised detection and diagnosis' and forced social workers to defer to the medical profession. In emphasising parental psychopathology, the medical

model tended to ignore the social context of child maltreatment. The view that this clinical condition was caused by the impairment in the parental personality typically arising from the parent's own early childhood experiences became the prevailing orthodoxy (Scott & Swain 2002, p.123)

As the numbers of children coming to the attention of agencies increased in the 1960s and 1970s, and the child protection service system emerged in Victoria, so, too, did debates about the causes of child abuse and conflicting views about appropriate responses. Conflict within the social work profession itself was described as 'intense', with social work academics debating who was responsible—the state or the individual—and what was the most appropriate form of response—social change or individual case practice (Scott & Swain 2002).

The resolution of this conflict produced very different responses to the problem in Victoria. An emphasis on social change led to community development activity resulting in a number of locally delivered, 'consumer' managed services for children and their families. Concurrently, the establishment of casework models to respond to children who had experienced abuse and neglect positioned abused children as 'victims' who required an individualised, therapeutic response (Scott &Swain, 2002).

The sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s created an environment that was ready to acknowledge the existence of child sexual abuse. The 'discovery' of this form of abuse has been largely attributed to the feminist movement, which gave many women the opportunity to 'speak out' about their childhood experiences (Scott &Swain 2002). The 1980s have been described as a 'watershed' for the (re)discovery of child sexual abuse in Australia (Scott and Swain 2002, p.154) with reports of sexual abuse consistently rising in Victoria during that decade.

In the wake of these significant developments, the Victorian State government commissioned the first of a series of major inquiries into child welfare, publishing the Child Welfare Practice and Legislation Review in 1984 (Carney 1984). Known as the Carney Report, it was described as 'the first comprehensive review of child welfare in our State for over 100 years' (Hogg, p.iii in Carney

1984) and heralded wide-ranging reforms based on ‘a commitment to social justice and equity [and] a commitment to support families’ in Victoria (Carney,1984, p.2). The state welfare department and the then Community Policing Squad assumed full responsibility for the investigation and assessment of child protection matters from 1985 onwards, and the Children’s Protection Society ceased to operate as the ‘mandated’ intervener. The Carney Report also identified the need for a commitment to the provision of support for families via the development of a range of more flexible voluntary services.

These reforms were supported by the development of a new legislative framework: The Victorian, 1989 Children and Young Persons Act. This Act was seen as a fresh opportunity to define the grounds upon which the state might intervene in family life, building on a conceptual platform of the ‘rights’ of individual children and their parents. It was also served to establish the concept of ‘significant harm’, representing a move away from definitions of harm based on perceived threats to children’s moral welfare, towards a definition that reflected considerations of infringement of children’s rights to remain with their family unless the ‘threshold’ of significant harm was established (Children Youth and Families Act 1989).

An unintended consequence of this focus was an increase in the number of parties legally represented in the Children’s Court, leading to the view that proceedings, heard before what was previously seen as a relatively informal Court had become highly legalistic (Fogarty,1989). A strongly legalistic response has been critiqued as one which values correct process and procedure over the complexities of professional knowledge and wisdom, inappropriately simplifying complex and at times ambiguous issues (Braye & Preston-Shoot 2002).

With the enactment of the Act, ‘practice’ in child protection had become highly regulated and proceduralised, strongly influenced by ‘evidence’, and affected by what child protection practitioners experienced as an overwhelming increase in workload.

The role of Media in Child Protection

The role of the media in the development of policy and as an expression of community ideology is noteworthy during this period. In the late 1980s, the Victorian child protection system was the target of sustained media criticism, particularly from *The Age* (Melbourne) which published a five-part newspaper series 'Our Children, Our Shame'. The series commenced on 2 July and ended on 7 July 1988 when an additional 118 staff and a $7.2 million increase in the child protection budget were announced by the state government (Loane, S.1988).

Another inquiry into Victoria's child protection service was to follow, this time criticising the 'dual track' system in Victoria which allowed the State Government department to share the responsibility for child protection investigations with the Victoria Police (Fogarty & Sargeant, 1989). The dual track system came to an end as a result, with the then department, Community Services Victoria, assuming sole responsibility for this role from 1990 onwards.

More media coverage followed in the wake of the murder of Daniel Valerio, a child known to the health system. Daniel's bruised face featured on the front pages of Melbourne's newspapers, triggering a highly emotive campaign that resulted in a large public rally calling for legislative reform. This call was strongly contested by some professionals who argued that mandatory reporting of child abuse would intensify the focus on investigation of reported concerns about children, at the expense of a range of well resourced family support services, which could attend to the identified risk issues (Mendes, 1996).

The Introduction of Mandatory Reporting in Victoria

In 1992, a conservative Liberal Government was elected and a new era in Victoria's child welfare system commenced. A significant restructure of what was now known as Health and Community Services was undertaken, and a new wave of privatisation, and competition and performance based funding was introduced across government and non-government services alike. Non-government services were described as fearful of speaking out against the government for fear of

losing their funding (Pegler, 1996). The newly elected Kennett government announced cuts of $240 million dollars to health, community services and education in December 1992. These cuts were announced just months before the introduction of mandatory reporting by the Government. Initially, mandatory reporting was required only when physical and sexual abuse was suspected by a narrow range of professionals: doctors, nurses, teachers and police. However, it seemed that the government of the day:

> had no intention of increasing resources to deal with the expected increase in notifications from mandatory reporting. In fact, it had already decided to do the opposite—to severely cut support services for victims of child abuse (Mendes, 1996, p. 29)

In the wake of mandatory reporting legislation, announced by Minister John in March 1993, notifications rates of suspected abuse soared. One estimate put the overall increase in reporting rates at 55% by August 1994, some seven times greater than what had been anticipated prior to mandatory reporting being introduced (Swain,1998).

As a manager in Child Protection throughout this period, I experienced the Child Protection service to be at an all time 'low'. Community sector professionals expressed anger and frustration about losing funds to deliver services. At the same time, as the unprecedented increase in workload for Child Protection was recognised as unsustainable, announcements were made by government to employ more child protection practitioners (Mendes 1996). The wider managerialist context is described in some detail below, and included the enactment of a government policy of 'compulsory competitive tendering', which saw some smaller sector agencies amalgamating with others as their only means of survival.

In short, I saw professional relationships between the sector and the state become highly fractured in the 1990s, and they lacked the goodwill required for effective collaboration to take place. Morale within the Child Protection service was also affected by the enormous increase in workload demand as a result of the introduction of mandatory reporting legislation.

In 1993, a further review of the child protection system in Victoria was commissioned and undertaken by Justice Fogarty. This report identified some improvement in the Victorian Child Protection Service, including the phasing out of the dual track system, highlighting on-going concern about the state's failure to respond to adolescents (Fogarty, 1993).

The contemporary context for practice is described in Part Three of this Chapter. The context continues to be affected by the implementation of business-like principles for managing welfare services, a process that accelerated following the 1992 election outcome. What follows, in Part Two of the Chapter, is a summary of the influence of 'managerialism' in organisations responsible for delivering services in this complex and challenging field of practice.

Part Two: Organisational Context for Child and Family Practice—The Experience of Managerialism in Victoria

This part of the Chapter will trace the history of managerialism from the mid twentieth century to the 1980s when it found its way into the Victorian welfare landscape. The changes that accompanied the introduction of managerialist principles will be explored in terms of their implications for service delivery.

As this study has indicated, supervision in this field of practice usually takes place within the context of an organisation and, in recent decades, managerialism has been central to the establishment and operation of welfare organisations. Managerialism, whilst defined by Gillingham (2009) as an ideology, has been described as the adaption of market principles, including competition and efficiency, to the governance of welfare policy and practice. Typically, it involves discourses and practices that looked to big business techniques to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. From a managerialist perspective, successful welfare organisations are relatively 'flat' in structure and highly regulating of professional autonomy in order to ensure efficiency (Hughes and Wearing, 2013).

The Origins of Managerialism

Theorists recognise 'scientific management theory' or managerialism to have had a pervasive impact in industry in the USA and in many Western nations (Coulshed & Mullender 2001; Dustin 2007). The principles of scientific management, first published in 1911 by Frederick Taylor reflect the use of a 'machine-like' metaphor to analyse organisations, having a relatively mechanistic approach and narrow focus on effective governance, goal setting and high levels of specialism, which are designed to enhance output (Taylor, 1947). Organisations are seen to require a relatively narrow management focus to manage production and outputs, with an emphasis on measuring efficiency in in terms of relatively blunt measures of numerical output as an indicator of outcome (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010, Hughes &Wearing 2007).

Often referred to as 'Taylorism' in contemporary management literature (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010, Hughes & Wearing 2007), the five key principles of management are:

- Clear division of tasks and responsibilities between management and workers
- Use of scientific methods to determine the best way of doing a job
- Scientific selection of the person to do the newly designed job
- The training of the selected worker to perform the job in the way specified
- Surveillance of workers through the use of hierarchies to perform the job in the way specified. (Taylor cited in Buchanan & Huczynski 2004, p.429)

In a paper developed for delivery to an audience of mechanical engineers over a century ago, Taylor expressed the view that he hoped that these management principles could 'be applied to all social activities; to the management of our homes, the management of our farms, the management of the business of our tradesmen, large and small; of our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities and our government departments' (Taylor, 1911 p.120).

‘Taylorism’ has been widely criticised for failing to provide scope for managers to be flexible, creative and responsive to the complexities of individual and social problems (Hafford- Letchfield 2010).

With a strong and narrow focus on prosperity and efficiency, the appropriateness of the application of this approach to professional practice could well be challenged. An examination of recent history and current trends in the Child Protection service in Victoria, however, suggests that the pervasive influence of ‘Taylorism’ in the public welfare sector lives on as ‘managerialism’ (Tilbury, et al; 2007;Tilbury, 2004, 2006).

The Emergence of ‘Managerialism’ in Victorian Child and Family Services

The organisational response to the increase in service demand in the 1980s was very much influenced by the ideology of ‘managerialism’. The emphasis on reporting requirements that were dominated by blunt quantitative measures, and on meeting key performance indicators, many of which also ‘counted’ effectiveness in terms of the timeliness of response and allocation, replaced what was seen as less strategic methods of management throughout Health and Community Services in this decade (Markiewicz,1996). The impact on the non-government sector was profound, with the introduction in the 1990s of the ‘purchaser-provider split’ involving Government contracting out service delivery in what was described as a new wave of contractualism (Paterson, 1988).

The ideology of the then Department of Community Services reflected the neo-liberal approach to public policy, founded on the belief that the free market is the best way to transact any activity. Its basic tenets included that:

> Government should be ‘steering’ not ‘rowing’, restricted to creating and protecting free markets and distinguishing between the role of government as funder or contractor and the role of community sector organisations as service providers only (Paterson, 1988 p. 288)

Writing in defence of the introduction of a managerialist approach to the welfare sector, the then Director General of the Department identified the fundamental attributes of this approach as 'performance measurement, performance improvement, program based organisational structures, program budgeting, corporate planning, senior executive service, program evaluation, effectiveness review, performance payment, cash limits, devolution, financial management and so on' (Paterson, 1988 p.288). What is not articulated by Paterson is the underlying assumption that better management would effectively address a wide range of service delivery issues in child and family practice (Carrilio, 2005).

It would appear that this shift in ideology continues to dominate the Child Protection service delivery agenda at the expense of professionalism and the development of contemporary professional knowledge. In the interests of 'efficiency', for example, children and families moving through the Victorian child protection system will have a number of caseworkers, each involved at different 'points' of intervention as a part of the program design. An initial report is screened by an intake team, and a practitioner or practitioners will make initial telephone calls to other professionals and, in some cases, to the family themselves to determine whether the matter warrants a child protection investigation. If it does, a second team of practitioners from an initial response team will then go out to undertake the first assessment, interviewing the child and family and speaking again to relevant professionals. If it is determined that the child's situation is of concern, this investigation team will then transfer the case to a 'short term' team and a new practitioner will be allocated to handle the matter. The primary purpose of this team will be to work with the child and family to resolve the identified issues where at all possible, via direct case work intervention and/or effective referral and case management. If the child continues to be at risk and it is deemed appropriate, the matter may be taken before a Children's Court to allow for longer term intervention or, in some cases, removal of the child from family. This is usually another point of 'transfer' to yet another child protection practitioner from a 'long term' team. In short, children who have experienced trauma—and those close to them—must tell their story to multiple

professional strangers over time in the interests of 'efficiency', as they move through a minimum of four teams or four practitioners (including intake) sometimes within a matter of weeks. In response to my own concern about this issue and its implications for children, I was advised by the senior bureaucrat responsible that the child protection service could not 'manage demand' any other way.

The Rise and Rise of 'Risk Management' in a Managerialist Environment.

Another development stemming from managerialism was the rise of 'risk management' as the core business of the Child Protection service. The preoccupation with risk was consistent with managerialism's emphasis on a need for certainty. It has been challenged as indicative of a need for 'knowledge based control and authority over nature, social events, and their own practices' (Green, 2007, p.397). Green goes on to identify the real concerns in contemporary practice, which are that, as a result of the emphasis on risk management, 'risk' may be prioritised over need, and professional roles may change from those of support to surveillance within the context of a wider 'blame culture' (Green, 2007, p.397). A significant allocation of resources in the 1990s was dedicated to the development of and training in what became known as 'The Victorian Risk Framework' (DHS 1999), while funding to train practitioners to respond to identified needs assumed lower priority at that time (Health and Community Services Annual Reports, 1994/5). At the practitioner level, the 1990s saw a rise in social workers' interest in 'risk' in child protection, both in Victoria and internationally (Green, 2007; Parton, Thorpe & Wattam, 1997).

According to Green,

> risk assessment and risk management [had] emerged as central organising principles for an increasing number of health and welfare programs … [and] the language, technologies and imperatives of risk have assumed considerable prominence in the practice of many social workers (Green, 2007, p.347)

A core belief of the risk management approach appears to be that an increase in proceduralised responses would eventually leave no margin for error on the part of professional workers. The

underlying assumption is that if child protection systems are made more prescriptive, injuries to children and deaths of children can be stopped.

Processes at work in complex adaptive systems such as child protection tell us that prediction and prevention of abuse can never be assured because of procedures or standards. Stacey (2000) observed that decision makers must understand and manage the dynamic system which arises from the interaction between all participants in the system and its environment, and that they must acknowledge and live with the fact that there can be no fail-safe strategy. Similarly, in her conclusion of a study reviewing 161 reviews of child death and serious injury as a result of abuse, Brandon remarked 'that most of these worst outcome cases were mostly too complex to be predictable or preventable' (Brandon, 2009, p.1107). Brandon concluded that 'Professional judgement, based on a sound theoretical understanding, is … a better route to safe practice than over adherence to performance indicators' (Brandon, 2009, p.1107).

Part Three: The Contemporary Context

Having examined the historical context for child and family practice in some detail, this part of the Chapter turns to the contemporary context. What follows is a description of the context for and implementation of the 2005 '*every child every chance'* reforms in Victoria, which saw the 'joining up' of child welfare, family support and child protection systems to privilege a common set of 'best interest' principles, enshrined in legislation as a framework for practice across the sector (DHS, 2007). Part Four of the Chapter offers an analysis of the tensions associated with implementing these reforms in the context of a dominant managerialist and legalistic paradigm.

The Context for (More) Change in Victoria

The early years of the new millennium in Victoria saw a continued rise in notification rates of suspected child abuse and neglect, in Victoria and across Australia. Recognition of the limitations of what had become a highly adversarial system, based on a narrowly defined, forensically-focussed response to child protection, was beginning to influence policy development

internationally, across Australia and in Victoria (Munro 2010; Thorpe 1994). Arguments about the need to move away from a focus on 'dangerous' families toward an approach which sought to support families to parent were being made in Britain in the late 1990s, with a view emerging that 'the priority should be on helping parents and children in the community in a supportive way and should keep notions of policing and coercive intervention to a minimum' (Parton 2011 p.859).

The Victorian state government department, by now known as DHS, initiated the 'Child Protection Outcomes Project' in a review of the Child Protection Service in Victoria in 2002. A series of reports followed (DHS, 2002), paving the way for a redevelopment of the Victorian Child Protection service sector, and the establishment of the *every child every chance* reforms, founded on a newly developed legislative base. These reforms were described as an opportunity to move away from a narrow forensically-based service, to policies that and practices that were more preventative. (DHS, 2007).

A new practice ideology was flagged in the implementation of the reforms which essentially emphasised the importance of partnership with families and collaborative ,cross sector practices. Section 10 of the Children Youth and Families Act (CYFA, 2005) built in requirements that specified the 'need to strengthen, preserve and promote positive relationships between the child and the child's parent, family members and persons significant to the child' (CYFA, 2005 s.10b). A key driver of the reforms was the need to engage non-government services in the task of protecting children via the creation of a new referral pathway. The Child FIRST program provided a new 'gateway' for concerns about children, where professionals and members of the community could report concerns about children to a local community services organisation. All services delivered to vulnerable children and their families were to be underpinned by the best interests principles (CYFA, 2005 s.10).

> [The] active embodiment of the Best Interests Principles is the dynamic integration of the child and family service system, to enable safety, stability and healthy development for every

> child. […] The Best Interests Principles require practice to be both strength-based, engaging the possibilities for change and healing and forensically astute (DHS, 2007, p iii)

This development saw an attempt to move away from the rigid distinctions of 'child protection' and 'family support' toward a more generic 'child and family practice' paradigm.

These principles, along with the emerging evidence in the area of infant brain development and the closely related impact of trauma, influenced the Victorian reforms. Technological advances had enabled the development of a deeper understanding of the needs of children with complex trauma histories, including the neurobiological implications of sustained trauma in infancy and early childhood (Perry, 1997, Van der Kolk, 2005). This new science was used to strengthen the case for earlier intervention with children and families and enhanced support for families to care for their children. My own memory of the early policy development phase includes a timely visit by Jack Shonkoff, M.D., who presented to the then Treasurer John Brumby his work, *Neurons to Neighbourhoods* (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Jack Shonkoff is Professor of Child Health and Development at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard and Boston Children's Hospital, and the Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (Harvard University 2013). Shonkoff presented a compelling argument, based on his research, for early intervention and prevention services for vulnerable children and families. It was this presentation that senior executives at the time credited with influencing the subsequent, successful bid to Treasury for significant funding to implement the reforms, as an 'investment' in the future of Victoria's children.

The *every child every chance* (DHS 2007) reforms were heralded as an opportunity to change policy to emphasise preventative measures (Scott, 2009). Victoria was seen as a leader by implementing these reforms. They were regarded as a proactive attempt to build the prevention and support capacity within the sector, moving toward what was seen as a public health model of child protection, rather than continuing to add to the ambulance service at the bottom of the cliff

(Scott, 2009). The reforms attempted to move toward an ideology that supported vulnerable parents whilst upholding children's right to safety and stability (CYFA, 2005).

In 2005, the Executive Director of Child Protection and Youth Justice, Gill Callister, emphasised the proactive and planned nature of the Victorian reforms, since they had not been a defensive response to a major media scandal or inquiry like others before them.

However, critics of the *every child every chance* reforms highlight the failure of resources to match the rhetoric, and challenge the motivation for the restructuring of the service system. The extent to which the implementation of the *every child every chance* reforms has succeeded in changing prevailing practice ideology remains contested. For example, a recent Victorian study , involving individual interviews with 20 magistrates and six focus groups with 60 practitioners from a range of disciplines, found that in spite of the changes introduced by the Children Youth and Families Act the 'Children's Court and the Child Protection service remain embedded in an adversarial legal system' (Borowski & Sheehan 2013, p.127). They also added that:

> Child protection workers were the subject of significant criticism … were overworked given high case loads, with little support … poor performers as witnesses … and often provided testimony that lacked relevance and cohesion. (Borowski & Sheehan 2013, p.133)

Review and Restructure

In the years following the implementation of the Victorian reform agenda and significant investment in prevention and earlier intervention, a series of reviews and restructures have since taken place, overshadowing the promised change in ideology in child and family practice. In spite of the best efforts of those responsible for implementing the change, the dominant agenda of the Victorian child protection service system in the past decade has been one of restructure and reorganisation. Periodically, some twenty years following his death, Daniel Valerio's face appears in the newspapers to remind us of the media disdain for community ambivalence about statutory

child protection work. The prevailing view of the media over time has been that child protection is not doing a good job. This view has been supported to some extent by various influential public figures undertaking reviews, including the Victorian Ombudsman (Brouwer, 2009) and the Victorian Law Reform Commission (2010).

Figure 1. (below) summarises key reviews, legislative and policy reforms in this period.

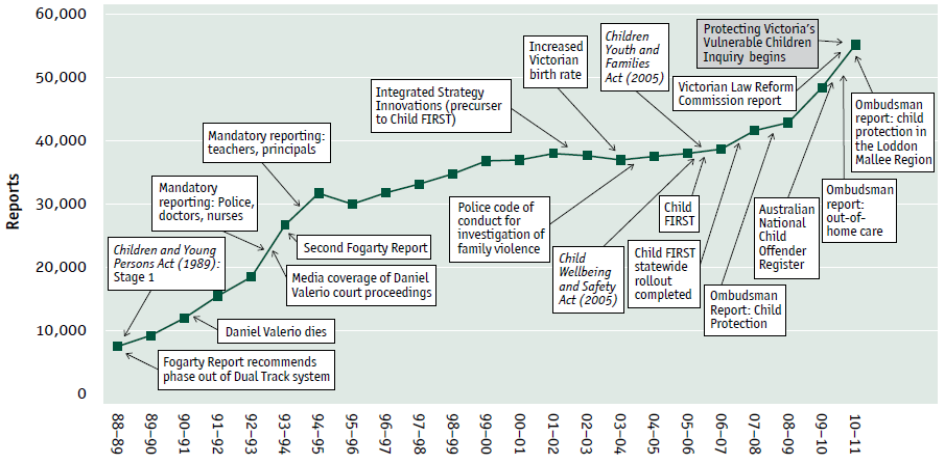


Figure 1: Review reports and significant legislative and policy reform in Victoria from 1989- 2011 (DHS 2012).

2009 saw the release of the Victorian Ombudsman's own motion investigation into the Department of Human Services Child Protection Program (Brouwer, 2009). This 144-page report concluded with forty-two recommendations, and addresses the protection of children, statutory obligations, the legal system, privacy and information management, accountability and transparency and workforce issues.

The Victorian Ombudsman indicated that 'serious case practice issues identified during my investigation appear related to staffing problems,' and he noted that 'low retention rates resulted in a staff group lacking experience' (Brouwer, 2009, p.108).

In 2010, the Victorian Law Commission Report—*Child Protection: Protection Applications in the Children's Court*— was released. In the wake of the Victorian Ombudsman's report, the Attorney General requested the Commission to review the Children's Court and present to Government a range of options that may 'minimise disputation and maintain a focus on the best interests of children' (Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2010, p.9). Following a seven month Inquiry, a comprehensive report was released in June 2010 offering five options for reform for Government to consider. Implementation of the options was not fully explored in the wake of an impending Victorian State election, which saw the Labour Government of the day lose power.

The incoming Liberal Government announced its own intent to 'comprehensively investigate systemic problems' in the State's Child Protection system, and the *Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry* was launched by Premier Ted Baillieu on 31 January 2011 (Media Release, Premier of Victoria, 2011).

Prior to the release of the final Inquiry report, the new Government announced two significant restructures—one of the Department of Human Services as a whole, and another of the Child Protection service itself. The Child Protection Workforce: Case for Change report identified 'evidence to support change' as a result of 'extensive research and consultation' (DHS 2011a, p.1). Areas for action included child protection practitioner career structure, pay and conditions, staff retention, support and supervision. This document foreshadows a significant reorganisation of the workforce and service delivery, described as the development of a 'new operating model'.

The follow-up report to Child Protection Workforce: Case for Change was Protecting Children, Changing Lives: Supporting the Child Protection Workforce (DHS, 2011b). This report articulated how the restructure would be achieved. At the time of writing, the likelihood of a high level of instability and uncertainty within the statutory child protection workforce, including for frontline practitioners and supervisors, is high. The implications for community services organisations are

unclear. Both of these major organisational initiatives were announced prior to the release of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry findings.

The final Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry (Victorian Government 2012), reaching to nine hundred pages and encompassing ninety recommendations, was tabled in Parliament in February 2012. A recently published 'Directions Paper' outlined the Government response to these recommendations, and described the intention to restructure and reorganise the child protection service system (DHS, May, 2012).

At the time of writing a significant departmental restructure and reorganisation of roles and responsibilities within the Department of Human Services had just been implemented. The implications of the current reforms, including the *every child every chance* reforms introduced by the previous government, and the recent child protection restructure implemented by a new conservative government, are at this stage unclear. What is clear is that, in spite of an introduction of a preventative pathways for vulnerable children and their families in 2007, and the introduction of the Best Interests Case Practice Model (DHS, 2007), notifications of alleged child abuse and neglect in Victoria have continued to climb. Nationally, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania showed declines in notification rates over the past five years, while Victoria, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory saw increases in these rates (AIHW, 2013). In Victoria these figures have continued to increase each year, from 38,675 notifications in 2006-2007 to an unprecedented 63,830 in 2011-2012 (AIHW, 2012, 2013).

Across Australia, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, 2009-2020 (Commonwealth of Australia 2009), is a recently implemented policy framework that is working toward a broadly consistent response to protecting children. A series of implementation plans have sought to prioritise and address pressing issues, for example, discrepancies across State borders in the implementation of Working with Children Checks. The immediate impact of this framework in

practice, however remains to be seen, since the States and Territories will continue to have individual jurisdiction in relation to child protection matters.

Part Four: Analysis of the Current Practice Ideologies and Implications for Practice and Supervision

Ideology

An analysis of the contemporary forces and tensions present in Victorian child and family practice indicates the influence of four distinct, potentially conflicting ideologies that are impacting on contemporary practice.

The first of these is the dominant and dominating managerialist ideology outlined earlier. This ideology privileges efficiency and looks to positivist models of 'evidence' that rely on adherence to key performance indicators and counting rules. Consistent with the principles of Taylorism, the managerialist agenda is one which maintains that the correct organisational 'structure' is required to respond to new and emerging organisational challenges.

Management systems to enhance transparency and accountability and to promote efficiency may be seen as fundamental to sound governance. An overreliance on 'structure' as a means to address fundamental and complex problems, however, may be potentially dangerous when applied naively to a complex child protection service system.

Concerns about the managerialist agenda in welfare settings are not new (Gardner 2006; Goddard & Carew 1993). From the distance that an academic perspective offers, it is not difficult to recognise a conflict between the ideology underpinning professional practice which privileges knowledge development, reflection and autonomy, and a managerialist perspective which privileges regulation, systems and efficient processes.

My own experience, however, is not one which is reflected in the literature. As manager of professional development and workforce strategy in the Victorian Child Protection Service, I was

responsible for the professional development of 1100 child protection practitioners and managers who, in turn, were responsible for responding to approximately 40,000 reports of suspected child abuse each year. These figures contrast starkly with the responses to child abuse in the early 1980s, when the Children's Protection Society responded to 1036 reports of suspected child abuse per year with an unknown total number of staff (Scott & Swain 2002).

When one considers the massive growth in the child and family practice 'industry', an argument for sound governance of resources (both financial and staffing), and appropriate systems and process can be made. As a manager, having systems in place to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of workload was a priority. In my experience it is possible to apply the most useful elements of efficient and effective administration that managerialism requires, whilst upholding social justice principles in practice.. As a supervisor responsible for service delivery, I held the view that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were useful indicators of the timeliness and responsiveness of the service that my team were offering to children and families. KPIs did not indicate to me the quality of the service offered. However, they did provide a monthly indication of whether children were visited by a practitioner within the required time frame. Rather than rejecting these tools as processes that 'drove' practice inappropriately, they were, in my view, a useful mechanism for analysing some aspects of the Child Protection service. In summary, in my experience, a manager's interest in 'metrics', systems and efficient processes can assist one to oversee reflective, professional practice.

That said, the time required for practitioner knowledge development and critical reflection may be constrained, by requirements to meet key performance indicators demanding efficiency. Implications for supervisors are explored below.

The second contemporary ideology flows from the legal paradigm that came to the fore with the implementation of the Children and Young Person's Act in 1989. This was identified earlier as an ideology which values correct process and procedure over the complexities of professional

knowledge and wisdom, inappropriately simplifying complex and, at times, ambiguous issues (Braye & Preston-Shoot 2002). A recent Victorian study focussing on infants in the child protection system found that 'a strong cultural difference, and indeed tension, between the legal and social work paradigms appears to be affecting practice in a way that is damaging to infant's wellbeing' (Humphreys & Kiraly 2009, p.65). This research highlighted 'concerns about the Court system, [where] parental contact decisions were seen as being made by a process of argument and negotiation, contrasting with the case planning processes, where the possibility of working co-operatively exists' (Humphreys & Kiraly, 2009, p.58).

The third contemporary ideology is that which underpinned the 2005 *every child every chance* reforms, informing the legislative framework and subsequent policy development. The best interests practice series (DHS, 2007), developed on the basis of Sections 10-14 of the Children Youth and Families Act, established a comprehensive framework to 'protect the child from harm, to protect his or her rights and to promote his or her development' (Children Youth and Families Act Section 10, 2005), and, in doing so, attempts to bring together the statutory and non-government services to create a single child and family practice sector. These reforms represent a paradigm shift from the highly proceduralised, forensically-driven investigations into suspected child abuse during the 1990's, undertaken at times in isolation from other services involved with the child and family.

The metaphor of a pendulum swinging comes to mind in an analysis of the implementation of this 'new' ideology for practice. On the one hand, a move away from blaming parents towards partnership practices that are collaborative and consultative is welcomed. At the same time, the capacity of the service system to truly 'hear' from children who are at risk of harm may be compromised where the dominant paradigm is to 'form partnerships with parents'.

In reality, the new ideology has inherent tensions and dilemmas in implementation and yet is interpreted on a daily basis at the frontline by practitioners and their supervisors.

Additional contextual issues: preparation for practice, workload and workforce

Practice in child and family work has become increasingly complex in Victoria, with greater numbers of families presenting with a combination of issues impacting on their capacity to parent (DHS, 2002). The work itself requires specialist child and family practice knowledge. For statutory child protection practitioners this includes a capacity to manage the inherent tensions in their dual roles of legally mandated intervener and 'helper'. Healey and Meagher described the debates about child protection practice as reflecting traditional social work values and 'the realities of child protection practice, which involves the overt exercise of authority, working with involuntary clients and a focus on assessing and responding to risk' (Healy & Meagher 2007 p. 323). Traditionally, a distinction had been made in Victoria in relation to statutory work involving 'involuntary' clients and community services organisations working with 'voluntary' clients. It remains the case that the statutory child protection practitioner alone has a mandate to investigate allegations of 'significant harm' to a child (Children Youth and Families Act 2005) and to take matters before a Children's Court. The voluntary/involuntary distinction is not nearly as clear, however, when one adopts a broader definition of involuntary client as including those clients who 'despite their wishes to the contrary, are forced by those around them, such as parents, spouses, neighbors [sic] … to seek assistance from social workers' (Murdach cited in Borowski, 1989, p.3). Child FIRST practitioners, for example, are all employed in the 'voluntary' sector, yet are now legally mandated to accept reports of 'significant concern about the well-being of a child' under the Children Youth and Families Act (s. 31 2005).

For practitioners across statutory and 'voluntary' services in child and family practice, a sophisticated understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and the impact on the developing child is now requisite knowledge for practice. Both groups work with the poverty, powerlessness and pain associated with child abuse and neglect (Morrison 2007).

It is not surprising that Healy and Meagher (2007) found that some of their survey participants, in responding to an invitation to reflect upon the value of their educational background in preparing them for practice:

> found it difficult to integrate their generic learning with the specific demands of tertiary child protection work. A common theme among these respondents, then, was a heavy reliance on workplace learning rather than on their formal education as their primary source of knowledge for tertiary practice. (Healy & Meagher, 2007, p.329)

The AASW recently teamed with the Australian Centre for Child Protection Studies to examine the child protection-related content in qualifying and post-qualifying social work courses across Australia. The findings of this review indicated a need to ensure greater consistency of child protection content in the social work curriculum (Arnold, Maio-Taddeo, Scott and Zufferey, 2008).

A further dilemma exists where social work is not the only minimum qualification accepted by the Department of Human Services for entry-level child protection practitioners. In the late 1980s, following a 'category review' of staffing roles and qualifications, the qualification base was widened to include the Diploma of Welfare and more generic degrees, such as a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology, as acceptable qualifications to undertake child protection practice. This policy has essentially remained unchanged. However, in 2012 a departmental policy was adopted that identified a social work qualification as the 'preferred' qualification, whilst not excluding others. The long-term implication of this policy has seen staff promoted throughout the bureaucracy with a wide range of qualifications and, consequently, theoretical orientations. It would not be unusual today for a supervisor and manager to hold a Diploma of Welfare and to be responsible for supervising a new graduate holding a qualifying Master of Social Work.

The picture in the community services sector in relation to the qualifications issue is less clear. Data are not publicly available and policies in relation to qualification requirements vary. Until

recently, a number of agencies advertised caseworker positions as requiring eligibility for membership of the AASW. This is a requirement seldom seen in advertisements for positions in the sector today.

The issue of workload was one identified as a significant workforce challenge in child protection by a number of 'witnesses' reporting to the Victorian Ombudsman, and should be seen in the context of a reported 2000 cases awaiting allocation across the state (Brouwer, 2009). Put simply, the demand for a child protection and, more recently, a Child FIRST service, continues to rise and to outstrip the available staffing resources across both the statutory and voluntary services. The concept of a 'waiting list', when the list is comprised of children suspected of child abuse and neglect, is politically highly unpalatable and difficult to justify ethically. Equally, in my experience, ministerial and senior executive directives to reduce or eliminate waiting lists 'at all costs' may result in premature closure of cases involving risk and potentially dangerous practice.

Finally, in addition to the issues of workload and the extent to which qualifying programs prepare graduates to practice in the sector, there remains the vexed issue of staff turnover in this sector.

In my experience as manager of Workforce Strategy for the State's Child Protection service in 2009, the issue of turnover was seen as one of the greatest challenges facing the program. While publicly released figures are not available, an internal audit in 2008 had revealed that more than 50% of the State's child protection workforce, at practitioner level, had less than twelve months' experience. Experienced practitioners would commonly argue that a minimum of twelve months to two years experience was required in this field to achieve a minimum standard of competence. Besides the real presence of large numbers of highly inexperienced staff, the vacancy levels within teams and across regions, which were monitored monthly, were a cause of on-going concern. This context alone had significant implications for supervisors and supervision. Workforce data for community services organisations was not systematically collected in 2008. Anecdotally, however, Chief Executive Officers in community services organisations and Aboriginal community controlled

agencies were expressing concern about high rates of turnover and difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified and experienced staff. A number of 'staff retention' initiatives were explored across the sector at that time as a result.

One such initiative, funded by the Department of Human Services and available across the sector, was the implementation of two postgraduate programs: the Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice and the Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership. Funded from 2009, a public tender process saw these courses awarded to a consortium including two university social work departments, a community services organisation, a family therapy centre within a university, and an Aboriginal community- controlled service. The goals of the courses as identified by DHS were to 'enhance the quality of practice with vulnerable children and families by offering enrichment development programs based on the every child, every chance government reforms', and to:

> further develop the professionalism of the workforce by integrating relevant theoretical frameworks and contemporary research findings into child and family practice. An anticipated outcome of the project was that staff retention will improve and that work in the Victorian community services sector will become a career of choice. (DHS, 2008)

At the time of writing these courses had been running continuously since July 2009, with early evaluation findings indicating a high level of success in relation to the identified goals.

Implications for Supervisors and Supervision

Throughout this chapter implications for supervision of the historical and managerial context are identified and include a significant burden placed upon supervisors to monitor supervisee compliance as opposed facilitate their professional growth and development.

It is within this highly scrutinised, frequently reviewed, redeveloped and reformed practice context, one with a rapidly developing knowledge base that supervisors and supervision must operate. Supervisors are responsible for 'translating' changing legislative frameworks and policy and

guideline statements into concepts that can be operationalised by their staff. This might seem a relatively straightforward task until one considers the competing and conflicting ideologies that shape the context in which practice takes place. Supervisors need to understand and communicate the contemporary practice paradigm, and to ensure that their staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively practice in the manner required.

On a daily basis a supervisor must consider the individual developmental and support needs of their staff, while juggling the demand for cases to be allocated. This 'juggling' may take place when staff are relatively inexperienced, vacancies may exist and the demand for cases to be allocated is unrelenting. Supervision itself may be compromised when workload demands require the supervisor to privilege the direct service required by the child and family over other aspects of their role.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter has explored the historical and contemporary contexts for child and family practice, looking at both the statutory child protection service and the relevant community based non-government services offering services. The Chapter outlined the context within which the work is undertaken and an analysis of the dominant ideologies over time. Supervisors may be seen as holding a pivotal position within the organisation. As supervisors of practice they are ultimately accountable for the service received by children and families. As supervisors of staff they are required to support, develop and manage teams of practitioners undertaking highly complex work which may be emotionally distressing and at times dangerous. As frontline managers they may be responsible for managing data, systems and budgets. In doing so they may be responding to senior executive or Ministerial requirements for briefings, or responding to negative and often sensationalised media reports. The tensions within the supervisor role may mirror the experience of practitioners who, on the one hand, are under pressure to complete their case work efficiently, yet operate in a complex, emotionally charged environment where critical reflection is required.

The next Chapter presents the methodology and outlines and defends the methodological paradigm adopted for this research.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This Chapter will present the methodology utilised for the study. The Chapter is divided into four parts. Based on the preceding literature review, Part One commences with a summary of the implications for an appropriate methodology for the study, and the research aim, questions and suppositions are also revisited. Part Two of the Chapter discusses the epistemology informing the study, presents the qualitative methodological paradigm and the theoretical perspective informing the study design. Part Three outlines the study design itself, including an overview of the study participants of the study. Part Four of the Chapter discusses research sensitivity, ethical clearance, limitations and trustworthiness of the study. The Chapter concludes with a Chapter summary.

Part One: Implications of the Literature Review for the Methodology, Research Questions and Suppositions

Implications of the Literature Review for Methodology

In the previous Chapter, I examined the literature relating to supervision theory and research, concluding that a vast array of theoretical literature has been developed over time to offer guidance to supervisors in the field. What became apparent, however, was that the literature based on evidently rigorous and readily replicated research was limited to a few small and exploratory studies. The bulk of the research effort into this complex issue has concentrated on examining the association between staff retention and supervision, utilising large scale studies informed by a positivistic paradigm. This has resulted in a clear knowledge gap. The voices of people experiencing and offering supervision have rarely been heard in the existing literature, as I indicated in Chapter Two. The absence of a rich understanding of how supervision 'works' and what effective supervision is, from the perspective of supervisees or supervisors, led me toward a methodological paradigm which is qualitative. The research questions and suppositions were

consequently designed with this paradigm in mind. I will discuss this in further detail in Part Two of this Chapter.

Research Aim and Questions

To recap, the aim of the study was to explore 'effective' supervision in child and family practice.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the components of an effective supervisory relationship?
2. How are the functions of supervision—administration, support, education and mediation—delivered in effective supervision?
3. What are the core knowledge, skills and value requirements for supervisors to be effective in this field?
4. What constitutes a conceptual frame of reference to underpin effective supervision?
5. What constitutes a core model of supervision for child and family practice?

Suppositions

Having reviewed the literature, five key suppositions were proposed for exploration and analysis. Unlike hypotheses, suppositions are not developed to be tested or verified, but seek to clarify certain information. Suppositions are commonly used in place of hypotheses and are often 'written as declarations and without the predictive statements of hypothesis' (Liamputtong, 2013, p.270). The suppositions identified for this study are outlined below:

- Child and family practice is a highly complex, emotionally demanding field of social work practice**.** Effective supervision has a strong educative component, tailored to meet the unique needs of the practitioner and the complexities of practice. A sound knowledge of adult learning theory, along with expert knowledge in child abuse and neglect and the neurobiology of trauma, are essential for supervisors.

- The emotionally demanding nature of the work requires the supervisor to demonstrate attunement to the emotional support needs of their practitioner, within the context of a strong professional relationship. Supervisor skills to manage distress and to appropriately contain practitioner anxiety, based on a sound knowledge of vicarious trauma, are essential.
- Supervisors who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more likely to effectively engage and therefore motivate, maintain and develop their staff.
- Wider organisational constraints and issues needs to be managed and mediated by the supervisor, who is responsible for administration of practitioner workload and caseload mix.
- A model of supervision which articulates the characteristics identified above should form the basis of a policy for child and family practice supervision.

Part 2: The Qualitative Methodological Paradigm, Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective Informing the Study

In this part of the Chapter I will present the qualitative methodological paradigm. I will then discuss the major epistemological theories considered in relation to this study as potentially appropriate frames of reference, or means by which the nature of knowledge is explained (Bazely, 2013; Cresswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln (eds) 2011, 2013; Liamputtong 2013;Punch 2005; Sarantakos 2005), before summarising the theoretical perspective adopted for the study.

The Qualitative Methodological Paradigm

Qualitative research has been described as a form of social research that has as its central focus the way in which people ‘make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live’ (Holloway & Wheeler, cited in Liamputtong, 2013 p.xi). The qualitative research paradigm is one

which recognizes that the subjective human experience and understanding of events may change over time and may be sensitive to difference in social context. Consequently, a flexible research approach is required to allow a process of discovery, with a focus on meaning from the perspective of the research participants, as opposed to a fixed view of the researcher's reality (Cresswell 2012; Denzin & Lincoln (eds), 2011, 2013; Liamputtong, 2013; Punch 2005). Qualitative research is involved in 'meaning making' in that it endeavours to interpret and understand the human experience. It is particularly useful where there are identified gaps in knowledge in a particular area of investigation because it aims to generate detailed and integrative analysis of data which is strongly contextualized (Liamputtong, 2013). Qualitative research has been described as a tapestry of approaches used by a range of social science disciplines, and its common concern or characteristic is a 'commitment to theoretically and conceptually formulating an engagement with the world that produces vivid descriptive accounts of human experience' (Preissle in Denzin and Lincoln (eds) 2013, p.524). On the basis of the identified knowledge gaps discussed earlier, it is just such an approach that is required for this study, in order to produce meaning in relation to the experience of supervision.

In contrast to the qualitative paradigm, a quantitative research paradigm is one which privileges a methodology that does not allow for interpretation of meaning in order to ensure true and objective results This paradigm is based on a belief that social science can be investigated in the same way as the physical sciences, using standardised tests and testing an existing hypothesis. Fundamental to this paradigm is the practice of theory testing, as opposed to the theory generating work of the qualitative paradigm. (Bazely, 2013; Cresswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln (eds) 2011,2013; Liamputtong 2013; Punch 2005; Sarantakos 2005).

Epistemology

In examining the most appropriate epistemology or 'philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible' (Crotty,1998, p.8) I was conscious of the contested nature of

research methodology, in particular, the relevance of the ‘politics’ of evidence (Denzin & Lincoln (eds) 2011, 2013; Sarantakos, 2005). I was mindful of the potential to be seduced by the appeal of positivism. My motivation in undertaking this research is based on a belief that the outcomes of the study may be of value to practice and policy development in child and family practice.

In my experience, senior executives and politicians who make decisions about policy and resources are more easily persuaded by arguments based on ‘objective facts’ and by research outcomes offering a level of certainty in the findings. Positivistic studies utilising quantitative methods, presented as objective, detached and value neutral, are more likely to appeal to this audience than those that are seen as subjective and value-laden. Government Ministers and Heads of Department are often more able to persuade treasury departments to fund initiatives with a strongly positivist range of ‘evidence’ supporting their case.

A positivist paradigm, however, is not appropriate to this research, which is seeking to build theory. My recent exposure to complexity theory leaves me unable to pursue the positivist epistemology when the context within which the research will be located does not lend itself to objective, fixed reality (Crotty,1998 Sarantakos, 2005). Rather, the key elements of complex problems lend themselves to a philosophical approach which is open to multiple ‘truths’ or meanings. It is suggested that ‘in complex systems, unpredictability and paradox are ever present, and some things will remain unknowable. New conceptual frameworks that incorporate a dynamic, emergent, creative and intuitive view of the world must replace traditional ‘reduce and resolve’ approaches to clinical care and service organization (Pisek and Greenhaigh, 2001, p.625).

These ideas resonate strongly with my own experience of child protection practice. I was persuaded by critique of the traditions of positivism; I became convinced that a positivist approach could offer little but ‘false promise’ for this research.

A constructivist epistemology is consistent with the overall qualitative paradigm and focuses on the construction of knowledge and meaning in a partnership between subject and object, rather than

on objective truth. This epistemology is one which accommodates the inherent complexity in child and family practice supervision and the likelihood of multiple meanings. Constructivists reject the case for a single or absolute 'truth', arguing instead that there may be multiple ways of knowing and multiple 'truths' that are individually socially contracted and influenced by context. Rather than rejecting qualitative research as somehow less credible because of subjectivity, constructivists suggest that research is, in fact, a very subjective process as a result of the researcher's active role, which should be actively explored and explained as a component of the process (Bazely, 2013; Cresswell, 2012; Denzin &Lincoln, (eds) 2011, 2013; Liamputtong, 2013).

Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective guiding this study draws upon Bronfenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfennbrenner, 1979). There is a wealth of literature supporting the ecological developmental orientation (Belsky, 1980, Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Caliso & Milner, 1992; Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988; Rak & Patterson,1996; Travis & Combs-Orme, 2007). Belsky's adaption of the Bronfenrenner (1979) model includes four levels of analysis (Belsky 1980);

> (a) ontogenic development, (b) the micro system, (c) the exo system and (d) the macro system (Belsky 1980, p.321).

Each of the 'levels' of analysis is not seen in isolation, with attention drawn to the 'nested' relationship between each of the levels, drawing attention away from the individual components. This theoretical framework, highlighting the relationship between the dynamic processes at each of the levels, seemed highly relevant as a means of considering supervision in the context of the individual participants, the wider organisational context and the wider community context within which practice and supervision occur.

In summary, an exploration of child and family practice professionals' experience of the provision or receipt of supervision involved a process of theory development. The qualitative research paradigm was informed by a constructivist epistemology. The theoretical perspective adopted is

drawn from the Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfrenbrenner 1979). An overview of the methodology for this study is summarised in Figure 2 below, using a framework proposed by Crotty (1998).

Figure 2: Methodology

Epistemology	**Theoretical perspective**	**Research Design**	**Method**
Constructivism	The Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979) provided the theoretical lens through which the data were analysed	Narrative Inquiry	Purposive Sampling In-depth interviews: Individual supervisees and supervisors Thematic Identification and Analysis

Source: Crotty (1998)

Part Three: Research Design

In this part of the Chapter I describe and defend the use of Narrative Inquiry as the most appropriate approach to inform the research design. I then outline the sampling and recruitment strategy and highlight the general characteristics of the study participants. The data collection and data analysis plan are also discussed, along with some contextual considerations in relation to analysis. Finally, I identify criteria that I have applied to ensure a rigorous and trustworthy approach.

The design of the study involved an exploratory qualitative analysis of perspectives offered by child and family practitioners and supervisors in relation to the concept of 'effective supervision'. I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 professionals; 10 supervisees and 10 child and family supervisors, who had all completed graduate courses in child and family practice. I then undertook a thematic analysis of the interviews, the majority of which were digitally transcribed.

In constructing the study design, I was aware of the need to select a method that would be seen as appropriately thorough, enabling me to demonstrate trustworthiness and maintain credibility by its application (Cresswell, 2012; Denzin &Lincoln (eds) 2011, 2013; Liamputtong, 2013; Punch, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005). I considered a number of alternative traditions of qualitative research as potentially of value. In particular, the use of grounded theory was initially appealing because its generation of theory from data was consistent with the research intent (Charmaz, 2006; Cresswell, 2012). However, this approach was examined and ultimately rejected for this study as impractical, primarily because it requires data to be collected and analysed iteratively, therefore necessitating an extended period of time to complete the data collection process. The context for the study, which will be explored and explained in the following Chapter, did not accommodate a lengthy period of data collection. Indeed, at the time this study commenced, Department of Human Services employees, both supervisees and supervisors, were on the brink of experiencing transitions in their roles as a result of a significant organisation-wide restructure. It was determined that this major upheaval would affect the respondents, causing a number of them to change positions and location in the workforce, or even to leave the workforce completely. In consultation with my supervisors, I decided it was determined that it would be prudent to complete the data collection process prior to any significant organisational change.

Narrative Inquiry

The term 'narrative' has a number of meanings, usually implying personal 'story' in the human sciences, which might be obtained in the course of single or several interviews. Consistent with the

requirements of this study, narrative research recognises 'that meanings are socially constructed and human actions and agency are contingent upon socio- cultural, historical and political influences' (Gill & Goodson 2001, in Liamputtong, 2013 p.120). Narrative inquiry in research essentially involves the examination of stories about life events as expressed by those individuals who have had the experiences. It is an approach which endeavours to ensure that the 'voices' of the participants in this study were heard and privileged. The use of narrative inquiry as a research method emphasises capturing and analysing stories (Bold, 2012; Cresswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln (eds) 2011, 2013, Liamputtong, 2013, Punch, 2005, Sarantakos 2005, Webster, & Mertova, 2007). The benefits of narrative inquiry to this research specifically include the capacity to provide an account of the human life experience, capturing key events that mark development and growth and change. Narrative inquiry as a research method has been identified as having particular appeal in 'its capacity to deal with the issues of human centeredness and complexity in a holistic and sensitive manner' (Webster & Mertova, 2007; p.24).

In light of the dearth of research examining supervision in child abuse work, narrative inquiry presents as an approach which is not restricted by preconceived ideas about what should be analysed. The analysis in this study was governed by what was actually observed in the data collection phase, allowing for unanticipated material to be explored, and leads to be followed as they emerged. Practitioners, rather than the researcher, were considered to be the sources of knowledge, rather than simply the 'subjects 'of the research (Ospina & Dodge, 2005).

Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

The prospective participants were drawn from a total pool of 90 former postgraduate students of La Trobe University. Prospective 'supervisee' participants had completed a Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice, delivered by a consortium led by La Trobe University. Prospective 'supervisors' had graduated with a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership offered by the same consortium. Each course required participants to have a minimum of two

years of experience in their current role within the child and family sector on entry to the program. In addition to a minimum level of professional experience as supervisees or supervisors, prospective participants were drawn from the highest achievers academically in the courses. The identification of prospective participants was undertaken by La Trobe University's Student Services, which also led the recruitment process. My own role in the postgraduate courses should be noted here. As subject co-ordinator and lecturer I was known to each of the prospective participants. It was an important ethical consideration that I did not approach former students directly in light of my prior, although not ongoing, relationship with them.

The selection of former students from these courses ensured that a depth and range of practice and supervisory experience would be held by prospective participants. The rationale for 'ranking' prospective participants academically assumed that higher performing former students would be well able to conceptualise and articulate their experience of the supervisory process as supervisees or supervisors.

Contact details for supervisees and supervisors were accessed by Student Services from the course alumni data base. Former students who were the highest academic achievers were invited to participate in the study, and were approached initially by Student Services via e-mail. This e-mail provided a broad outline of the study, seeking initial permission for me (as the researcher) to make contact with them. The e-mail from Student Services assured prospective participants that their anonymity was protected if they did not give permission to be contacted. That is to say, I was not given the names of any prospective participants who declined to make contact.

The e-mail from Student Services resulted in a positive response from 19 of the 20 prospective participants and nil response from the remaining person. Students Services then issued one additional e-mail to an additional student as agreed. This resulted in a positive response. I then issued a written invitation directly to the 20 prospective participants who had consented to being contacted. Approaches in this manner to former students were made through the ranked list of

students, until 10 supervisees and 10 supervisors had agreed to participate. Following two rounds of initial e-mails to a total of 21 prospective participants, 10 supervisees and 10 supervisors had consented to be contacted, and subsequently all consented to be interviewed. At the outset, I sought permission from the University Human Research Ethics Committee to interview up to 12 supervisees and 12 supervisors. However, as redundancy was reached (Lincoln and Guba 1985) in terms of content and themes emerging from the data analysis, the decision was made to cease data collection after interviewing 10 supervisees and 10 supervisors. Lincoln and Guba recommend sample selection

> to the point of redundancy….In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximise information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming…. (Lincoln & Guba,1985, p.202).

An overview of the study participants by age, employer, qualification and professional experience follows.

The Participants: Supervisees

The cohort interviewed ranged in age from 27 to 59 years, with a median age of 43. Eight of the participants were employed as statutory senior practitioners within the Department of Human Services, two were employed by non-government community service organisations. One male and nine female supervisees were interviewed. The qualifications base of the cohort varied widely, and included individuals with a Bachelor of Social Work (n=3), a Bachelor of Social Work and a Master of Social Work (n =1), a Nursing Certificate (n =1), Welfare Diploma or Welfare Degree (n=3), Diploma of Teaching (n = 1), and a Bachelor of Arts with a Psychology major (n=1).

Supervisees' Professional Experience

Consistent with the inclusion criterion that the supervisees must be experienced practitioners, the length of professional experience within the cohort ranged from 5 years to 24, with median of 14.5

years of relevant professional experience. Typically a participant supervisee had worked extensively across both community services organisations and the statutory Child Protection Service in the course of their career (n=8). Two participants had worked in related fields (early parenting services and family violence services) for almost a decade before coming into a family support service role.

The Participants: Supervisors

The cohort interviewed ranged in age from 34 to 56 years, with a median age of 45. Seven of the participants were employed as supervisors, practice leaders or managers within the Department of Human Services, in roles which included Team Leader, Unit Manager or High Risk Infant Manager. Three respondents were employed by non-government community service organisations in supervisory roles. Three males and seven female supervisors were interviewed.

The pre-service qualification base for this cohort also varied widely, reflecting the Victorian policies identified in Chapter Two. The qualifications included a Bachelor of Social Work and/or a Master of Social Work (n=5), a Bachelor of Arts with either a major in Psychology or a Graduate Diploma in Psychology (n = 3), a Diploma of Welfare (n=1), and one participant had no formal pre-service qualification (n=1).

Supervisors' Professional Experience

Consistent with the inclusion criterion that the supervisors were experienced in their role, the length of professional experience within the cohort ranged from 12 years to 25 years, with median of 18.5 years of relevant professional experience. Typically participants (n=10) had more than a decade of experience as supervisors and had worked across both the community services sector and in the statutory Child Protection Service.

The participants, both supervisees and supervisors, shared a wealth of experience during the interviews. Of the 20 interview participants, fourteen were based in metropolitan Melbourne and six in regional Victoria.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews were seen as the most appropriate method of exploring complexity, meaning and interpretation of concepts. I considered other forms of data collection including the use of surveys, which could be potentially distributed to a wider audience. However, the literature review had revealed a lack of depth in the understanding of supervision, which would not readily be remedied by using a survey instrument in this study. Focus groups were also considered, allowing for in-depth discussion and reflection. These were ultimately rejected in favour of a method that preserved participants' anonymity. My view was that participants might be more able to provide rich and uninhibited responses to the interview questions in a private and confidential setting. An in-depth interview aims to capture the unique perspectives, feelings, and experiences of the research participant, in their own words (Byrne, cited in Liamputtong, 2013). In-depth interviews usually involve face to face interviews in order to develop sufficient intimacy for personal disclosure, allowing the researcher to obtain a 'deep' understanding of the participant's story.

The 20 interviews conducted were largely non-directive and used a small number of open-ended questions based on the identified research questions as prompts to facilitate rather than direct discussion. Interview participants were invited to reflect on their experience of the supervisory process and the attributes of their past and present supervisors, with a view to identifying what 'effective supervision' entailed for them. Specific stories illustrating their experience were sought. Supervisors were also invited to reflect on what they believed they offered their supervisees in terms of supervision, and to consider whether they believed this to constitute 'effective' supervision. These interviews provided an opportunity for 'thick' descriptions of the experience of supportive supervision (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Nineteen of the 20 interviews were conducted

face-to-face, lasting for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. One 1-hour interview was conducted by telephone as a result of logistical challenges.

A schedule of questions used is provided in Appendix 1.

Data Analysis

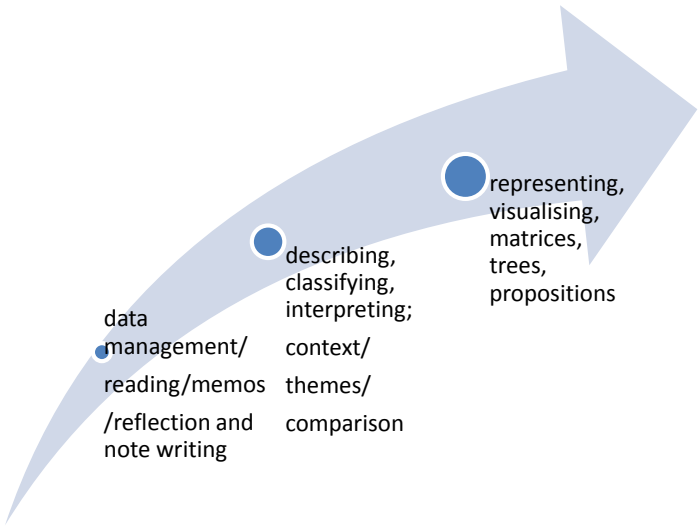
Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify three approaches to analysing qualitative data. These are described as ranging along a continuum of depth of interpretation; from a relatively low level of interpretation on the part of the researcher, where the data is presented as essentially speaking for itself. At the far end of the continuum, a high level of abstraction and theory building on the part of the researcher is required. A 'middle ground' allows for some analysis and interpretation of the data. It is this middle ground that I have sought for this study.

The approach privileges the research participants 'as people with a perspective and wisdom that are worthy of hearing' (Dutton, 2003, cited in Ospina & Dodge 2005). This mode of analysis allowed for 'a more holistic and complex understanding' to emerge than might otherwise have been the case, and emphasised 'interpretive and non-linear processes' (Fook, 1996 p.6). In doing so, the approach offered a means of validating the experience of supervisees and supervisors, along with the 'actual integration of theory, practice and research' (Fook, 1996, p.6). This approach was attractive because it was consistent with a reflective approach to casework practice which is widely regarded as effective.

The construction of a data analysis 'spiral' is a useful illustration of the key steps in the analysis that were undertaken (Cresswell, 2007). The reflective process outlined above is utilised across each stage of the 'spiral', with particular emphasis on the initial stage of data management.

Figure 3 (below) is an adaptation of this spiral (Creswell 2007) which gives an overview of both the procedures used at each stage of the analysis and examples of tools and techniques, including codes, themes and comparisons.

Figure 3: Analysis Spiral, adapted from Cresswell (2007)



Based on the six stage Model of Thematic Analysis described by Clarke and Braun (2006), my work in the analysis phase specifically involved a series of tasks outlined below. The tasks were not undertaken in a linear process. Rather, as far as time and resource would allow, the analysis unfolded as a recursive process, during which I moved back and forth through the six stages as required. By way of example, before completing the 20 interviews, I undertook an initial review of transcribed interview recordings after the second and tenth interviews. The purpose of this was to determine whether the process was, in fact, successfully addressing the identified research questions and to identify any potential amendments to the interview guide. I did note some duplication in responses within the guide, as well as a need to provide encouragement and space for participants to illustrate their responses to my questions with specific stories or examples.

Analysis Phase 1: Becoming Familiar with the Data Set

In this phase, which took place in the course of data collection and on completion of data collection, I familiarised myself with the data set. I read and re-read transcriptions of interviews, 18 of which were transcribed from digital recordings and 2 from detailed handwritten notes. Only one

participant did not give permission for their interview to be digitally transcribed, and it was not possible to digitally record the participant interviewed by phone. Reviewing written material in this way involved 'reading the data in an active way—searching for meanings, patterns and so on' (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.87), noting points of interest in margins and in my reflective journal. In doing so I was able to reflect not only on the verbatim transcripts of interviews, but also my journaling of reflections throughout the data collection phase. This was a painstaking and time consuming process, yet one which truly facilitated immersion in the data set. As an outcome of this phase I generated a preliminary list of points of interest.

Analysis Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The process of coding was undertaken manually rather than using software programs available to me. It seemed to me that, having immersed myself in the data set, I was reasonably well placed to begin coding manually. The data set was manageable enough for me to manually review each transcript. Working methodically through the data set I generated an initial list of codes, aligning them with data extracts using a colour scheme to highlight relationships between data extracts and codes. I was cognizant of the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006) in this phase, who advise coding as many themes/patterns as possible in order to retain context as much as possible. I then took volumes of data extracts and initial codes to my thesis supervisors seeking clarification and reassurance that I was 'on track' in this process.

Analysis Phase 3: Searching for Themes

In this phase I began to take 'a step back' from the voluminous data set and initial coding to identify themes. I initially attempted to cluster these themes diagrammatically using the thematic mapping process (Braun & Clarke 2006). This did not prove very helpful in the first instance, in that rather than developing a 'thematic map', my initial diagrams did not represent the themes in any coherent or structured way. I then looked at the themes from an ecological perspective (Bronfennbrenner, 1979) and found that at the micro, meso, exo and macro levels that themes were 'nested'—they

connected with each other and that the ‘whole’ picture had coherence. This was a breakthrough moment in the analysis as I realised that a consideration of the ‘ecology’ of supervision could potentially capture critical issues for individual supervisees, supervisors, teams or work units and the wider contextual issues within the organisation and community. This phase in my analysis concluded with a collection of themes organised throughout the various interconnecting levels within the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Belsky, 1980).

Analysis Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Whilst the review of themes was an iterative process, I used this phase as an opportunity to reflect and review the ‘story so far’. This involved my returning to the detailed data extracts identified in Phase Two and reviewing the alignment between those extracts selected, the codes and themes. Some refinement occurred once I again immersed myself in the data set and noticed nuances that had not been evident to me earlier. I concluded this phase with a sense of confirmation that the thematic map, developed in the previous phase, was an excellent visual representation of the analysis to date.

Analysis Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

This phase offered a final opportunity for refining and defining further my themes and sub-themes, with a view to confirming a ‘coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). I was challenged by my supervisors in this phase to ensure that I had moved beyond initial description, which they described as moving from first to second level analysis. In this phase I actively reviewed the thematic analysis to date and reconsidered the key findings of my literature review. This reflective process enabled a deeper analysis of meaning than was previously possible. I was confident by the end of this phase that what had been produced was a rich interpretive analysis of the data set.

Analysis Phase 6: Producing the Report

Before commencing the 'write up' phase of my study I found it useful to review a number of PhD theses and other published and unpublished qualitative studies. I was particularly keen to identify other qualitative studies that had undertaken a thematic analysis. I noted a wide range of style, presentation and format and formed a tentative view that there could be some flexibility in terms of the final presentation of my findings. In drafting my Findings and Discussion Chapter I was keen to ensure that the study participants' 'voice' could be heard, whilst at the same time producing a rich analysis of the meanings I attributed to the voices.

Part 4: Sensitivity of the Topic, Ethical Approval, Limitations and Trustworthiness

In this section of the Chapter I will draw attention to the sensitivity of the research, and describe the ethical and organisational approval obtained to undertake the research, as well as the limitations of the study and considerations for ensuring trustworthiness.

Sensitivity of the Topic and Consequently of this Research

The issue of research sensitivity is particularly relevant, given the research focus on the field of child and family practice, a field which involves the highly emotional issues of child abuse and is often subject to intense media scrutiny.

The supervision of child abuse work is a complex and sensitive phenomenon that is frequently reviewed following significant injury or deaths of children known to child protection services (Baglow, 2009; Brouwer 2009). Risks associated with this particular research therefore included the potential to compound a simplistic a view that supervision is a panacea for all that has 'gone wrong' in the protection of children. It was important to locate the research findings within a complex practice, organisational and wider community context.

Another consideration was the potential unwillingness of the statutory authority, the Department of Human Services, to provide access to staff who may offer information to the researcher that might

be regarded as critical of the child protection service. In light of the political context within which the child protection service operates, and the service's sensitivity to media scrutiny, this perceived risk was carefully navigated with the statutory service. The Department of Human Services Research Coordinating Committee granted approval in December, 2011 (see Appendix 2 for details).

Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations of interviewing as a method were identified. These included the possibility of bias, inconvenience, lack of anonymity and sensitivity (Sarantakos, 2005). Each of these was carefully considered while developing the proposal for this study submitted to the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee, and as the detailed design was constructed. I will also make reference to the issue of bias in my discussion of the study's design, rigour and trustworthiness.

A further possible limitation was that each of the interview respondents had completed post graduate studies in child and family practice. The Graduate Certificate included study in supervision and the Graduate Diploma included study in supervision, management and leadership. There was a potential risk that respondents would describe what they had been 'taught' was effective supervision without necessarily referring to their own understanding or experience. The risk that respondents' would respond 'theoretically' was offset by the research design, which involved in-depth interviewing to seek rich descriptions and detailed examples from each of the respondents. Since the aim of the research was to discover what 'effective' supervision involved, approaching experienced and post-graduate qualified professionals who had completed studies relating to supervision was appropriate.

A final limitation I identified was my own role as researcher, and the potential for my own bias to contaminate this research. I did not come to the research as a novice in the area of supervision, bringing many years of experience as a supervisor and educator of supervisors in this sector. For example, I developed and co-ordinated training for child protection supervisors and managers in

the Department of Human Services for more than a decade. This included the delivery of intensive residential training to equip supervisors to undertake their role. I consequently developed a broad knowledge of the experiences and perspectives of more than 500 supervisors and managers over time. As a researcher undertaking this project, I strove to ensure that I did justice to the 'voices' of the research participants and to truly hear them, whilst valuing the experience that I brought to the topic. I was assisted to keep my own biased perspective in check through regular reflective discussions with my supervisors. I needed to continuously reflect on my own role in the process and to ensure that my questions and 'prompts' were not leading, but were, rather, designed to elicit the participant's own story.

Ethics Approval

The Department of Human Services Research Coordinating Committee granted approval for the research in December 2011. Please see Appendix 2 for details.

La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Approval was granted in December, 2011.

UHEC approval number 11-082. Please see Appendix 3 for details.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research must be demonstrated in order to ensure that a rigorous and competent process has been adhered to. Unlike positivist science, which is guided by concepts of reliability, objectivity, internal and external validity, a qualitative approach is guided by establishment of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, to establish trustworthiness (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, Krefting, 1990, Liamputtong, 2013). I have summarised the key elements of the process adopted in this study in relation to each of these strategies as follows:

Credibility

Whilst prolonged field experience was not possible, varied field experience was a feature of the study. Prospective participants were drawn from across the state of Victoria and included both regional and metropolitan professionals, in either supervisee or supervisory roles. This allowed for a range and a depth of participant responses based on their wide ranging experience across both the statutory child protection service and community services organisations.

A second strategy was that of peer review or peer examination, which was adopted as a continuous process throughout the study. Primarily a function of my own supervision, I regularly reflected and subjected my data set and emerging analyses to the rigorous inquiry of my supervisors, who reviewed transcripts and coding documentation from time to time. In addition, at certain points in the process I sought the counsel of trusted colleagues who agreed to review draft documentation or to act as a sounding board for my emerging ideas.

A third strategy to establish credibility has been the use of a reflective journal, both as part of the data collection process, and throughout the entire study to document ideas and important moments of learning or insight.

Finally, the use of digital recording and verbatim transcription of in-depth interviews enhanced the quality of the data set.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research looks at the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other settings, although it is noted that findings in qualitative research are usually highly context specific. A key transferability strategy then, is a thick description of the context for the research. In order to ensure that the trustworthiness criterion of transferability is met, the historical and contemporary context is offered in the form of a ‘thick description’ in the previous Chapter, The Context.

Dependability

This criterion essentially looks for a consistent trail from data collection through analysis to findings and discussion. An audit trail that I established initially included consistent documentation and record keeping, from the literature review phase, and data collection and analysis. It was clearly my responsibility to ensure that I developed and maintained systems that would ensure that the process of design and implementation of the study was, as far as possible, transparent, traceable and logical. This included the provision of a thick description of the methods used in the study, outlined in some detail in this Chapter.

Confirmability

An audit trail was the principal strategy employed, regularly reviewed by the supervisors of my study. Well documented field notes and memos assisted in this process. Constant critical reflection or reflexivity was a core component of the process undertaken, in particular reflection on my own potential for bias and capacity to truly 'hear' the voice of the study participants. I have already indicated that the recording process involved (n=18) digital transcription of interviews. As a result, the transcriptions of the interviews are of an exceptionally high quality since they are verbatim accounts of what was said. I have made the original detailed transcriptions available to my supervisors as part of the confirmability strategy. I have also made available my initial coding and thematic mapping documentation for exploration and reflection in supervision.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter has outlined the methodological paradigm for this study as qualitative, consistent with the outcomes and implications of the literature review. The major epistemological position and theoretical perspective is presented, as is a detailed description of the study design. The literature review had indicated the need for a methodology which could provide detailed, practical insights about effective supervision that were not available in the existing research.

A qualitative paradigm was identified as one which best matched the need, in this study, for a research method that could generate theory on the basis of an in-depth exploration of the meanings and interpretations that people constructed in response to their experiences of supervision. The theoretical perspective guiding this study draws upon Bronfenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfennbrenner, 1979). In summary, the design of the study involved an exploratory qualitative analysis of perspectives offered by child and family practitioners and supervisors in relation to the concept of 'effective supervision'. I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 supervisees and 10 child and family supervisors, and I systematically interrogated and reflected on data gathered using thematic analysis. This process was designed to enhance the voice of the participant in the research process, based on an assumption that research subjects can play an active part in the research process (Ospina & Dodge, 2005). As participants in the analysis process, my interview subjects assisted me to draw meaning from the data. The interviews were analysed using a thematic identification and analysis process, in a manner which is consistent with the 'spiral' described by Cresswell (2007). The final analysis involved a thorough examination of themes emerging from the interview data, and relating these to the literature with a view to proposing the essential components of a framework for effective supervision in child and family practice.

Chapter Five presents and discusses the key findings of the research.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

This Chapter reports on the process of analysis undertaken. It presents the major findings of the research and discusses their implications.

The Chapter is presented in four parts. It commences with a revisiting of the theoretical framework guiding the study and informing the development of the research questions, and the key stages in the analytic process outlined in detail in the previous Chapter. Secondly, additional detail in respect to the research participants is provided, along with a discussion of the Victorian policy relating to pre-service qualifications across the child and family services workforce.

Thirdly, eleven core themes identified from the interviews are reported and discussed in response to the first three research questions and the identified suppositions. These core themes are located in the ontegenic, individual and micro, supervisory relationship, exo, organisational level and macro or community levels of analysis (Belsky 1980), reflecting the design of the interview questions. This discussion paves the way for Chapter Six, which introduces a conceptual model for effective supervision based on the data analysis and literature review, and in doing so builds on the themes at each level of analysis.

Part One: Revisiting the Theoretical Framework Guiding the Study

A qualitative research paradigm was adopted for this research. Qualitative research can be sensitive to social context and offers a flexible approach that permits a process of discovery. Qualitative research seeks to interpret and understand the human experience. This qualitative paradigm was informed by a constructivist epistemology, which focussed on the construction of meaning, accounting for inherent complexity and the potential for there to be multiple meanings.

The theoretical perspective guiding this study drew upon Bronfenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological-Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979) and, more specifically on Belsky's modification of the model, which includes the following four levels of analysis (Belsky 1980):

> (a) ontogenic development, (b) the micro system, (c) the exo system, and (d) the macro system. (Belsky 1980, p.321).

This theoretical framework informed the development of the research questions identified in Chapters One and Four and the interview schedule (see Appendix1). The interview questions were offered as prompts for discussion and were relatively broad, drawing research participants' attention to the micro system of supervision initially, before exploring some of the ontogenic development issues pertaining to supervisors. Questions then sought to explore the exo system or wider organisational impact on supervision and, finally, the macro system or wider community influences.

The research design was informed by a narrative approach which endeavoured to ensure that the 'voices' of the participants in this study were heard and privileged.

A thematic analysis of the data included the digital recording and transcription of the interviews, allowing me to examine in detail the nuances of each respondent's narrative. I then immersed myself in the interview transcriptions and my reflective journal where I had regularly recorded memos prior to and following interviews. The literature was used as an additional data source, guiding and informing my developing awareness of key issues. Braun and Clarke (2006) summarise the stages of the analytic process as follows:

> becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. (Braun & Clarke 2006 p.87)

My own analysis has been guided by this approach and the initial phases of analysis form the basis of this Chapter. The final phase of analysis is presented in Chapter Six, which introduces a conceptual framework based on the integration of data analysis with the literature.

I have endeavoured to privilege the voice of the participant in the research process, and in the presentation of the findings. The narrative design is based on an assumption that research participants can play an active part in the research process, not merely as subjects but 'as people with a perspective and wisdom that are worthy of hearing' (Dutton cited in Ospina & Dodge, 2005). I have consequently included extensive excerpts from the participants' responses in this Chapter.

Part Two: The Research Participants—Who Were They?

In this part of the Chapter I report on the demography of the research participants, including their age, gender, professional experience and education background.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 individuals, 10 supervisees and 10 supervisors. The interview questions were based on the identified suppositions, offering respondents a series of opportunities to respond to prompts including statements or open-ended questions.

Participants were purposively selected. The inclusion criteria were that they were Victorian child and family practice practitioners or supervisors, with a minimum of two years' experience in their role. All interview participants had successfully completed a postgraduate program, either a Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice or a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership.

The Supervisees

The 10 supervisees interviewed are described in the Methodology, and ranged in age from 27 to 59 years. Eight of the participants were employed as statutory advanced child protection practitioners within the Department of Human Services; two were experienced practitioners

employed by non-government Community Service Organisations. One male and nine female supervisees were interviewed. The workforce in child and family practice has traditionally been dominated by women, reflecting their dominance across the 'helping' professions generally, including social and welfare work.

The qualification base of the cohort varied widely, and included individuals with a Bachelor of Social Work (n=3) and Master of Social Work (n =1), a Nursing Certificate (n =1), Welfare Diploma or Welfare Degree (n=3), Diploma of Teaching (n = 1) or a Bachelor of Arts with a Psychology major (n=1). A summary 'snapshot' of the supervisees by age, employment status and pre-service qualifications is at Figure 4 below. Each of these participants had recently qualified in a Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice.

Figure 4 Supervisee Cohort: Age, Employer and Qualifications

No	M/F Age	DHS/CSO	Qualifications (+ graduate certificate)
S1	F 53	CSO	Nursing Certificate
S2	M 37	DHS	BA BSW
S3	F 51	DHS	Dip of Teaching
S4	F 45	DHS	Welfare Diploma Youth Work Diploma
S5	F 27	DHS	BSW
S6	F 29	DHS	Bach of Science, BSW
S7	F 38	DHS	Dip of Welfare
S8	F 27	CSO	MSW
S9	F 30	DHS	BA major Psych
S10	F 59	DHS	Community Welfare Degree

Supervisee's Professional Experience The length of professional experience of the cohort ranged from 5 to24 years, and a selection of participants' 'stories' about their professional backgrounds illustrates the breadth and depth of their experience.

I worked for seven years as a counsellor with the Department of Education, so I worked in a couple of different schools, some from really low socioeconomic backgrounds, and some not so much. [Also in] secondary schools, so lots of adolescent work, and then, from that, then started working in Child Protection, so I've now been in Child Protection for about four, yes, and going on just about four years . . . (child protection practitioner)

For sixteen years I have worked in family violence, youth justice, adolescent, community placement . . . and the past four years child protection[.] (child protection practitioner)

I came to this region for my placement. At the end of that they offered me the opportunity to apply for the job and I did, so I basically I have been in this region in the child protection program since '07, so five years. I've worked in different areas of the program but that's the total of it. (child protection practitioner)

[I] worked in childcare, for about twenty years, and the last seven to eight years of that was coordinating childcare services, …and then went on to early parenting centres, and was seconded . . . to this program, five and a half years ago. (family support worker).

In summary, the supervisee respondent cohort were a group of professionals with extensive experience in child and family practice and related fields. The cohort held a wide range of pre-service qualifications, and had each recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice.

The Supervisors

The 10 supervisors interviewed ranged in age from 34 to 56 years. Seven of the participants were employed as supervisors, practice leaders or managers within the Department of Human Services, in roles such as team leader, unit manager or high risk infant manager. Three respondents were employed by non-government Community Service Organisations in supervisory roles. Three males and seven female supervisors were interviewed. The pre-service qualification base of this cohort also varied considerably,. The qualifications included a Bachelor of Social Work/Master of Social Work (n=5), a Bachelor of Arts with either a major in Psychology or a Graduate Diploma in Psychology (n = 3), a Diploma of Welfare (n=1), and no formal pre-service qualification (n=1). A summary 'snapshot' of the supervisors by age, employment status and pre-service qualifications is at Figure 5 below. Each of these participants had recently qualified in a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership.

Figure 5 Supervisor Cohort: Age, Employer and Qualifications

No	M/F Age	DHS/CSO	Qualifications (+ graduate diploma)
D1	M 38	CSO	Extensive experience, no formal qualification prior to Grad Dip
D2	F45	DHS	BA Psych major
D3	F 34	DHS	BSW
D4	M 42	DHS	BSW,MSW
D5	F 52	CSO	BA, Grad Dip Psych
D6	F 39	DHS	BSW
D7	F 54	DHS	BA, BSW
D8	M 56	DHS	BA Grad Dip Psych
D9	F 52	CSO	Dip of Welfare
D10	F 50	DHS	BSW

Supervisor's Professional Experience Consistent with the inclusion criterion, the experience of the supervisors ranged in length from 12 to 25 years.

I started as a volunteer, working with high-risk adolescents in residential care. I guess I probably worked for about four years in residential care with high risk adolescents, in a range of roles, from direct carer, to case manager, to residential unit team leader, to case management, then managing the actual program, did a stint in . . . DHS, managing residential units, then I changed direction, . . . so I guess, roughly 14 years' experience, 10 years of those in . . . Family Services. (Program Manager Community Services Organisation)

My experience in Child Protection is probably now 23 years' experience, probably 10 of which I've been a unit manager, in some way—well in some capacity, mainly with case management, so long term cases, statutory involvement . . . I would probably say from, oh, from 18, I reckon I've had at least 18 years of supervisory experience. (Child Protection Unit Manager)

I've worked in every facet of child protection, including intake, response, long-term, case contracting. I've done permanent care, exclusively on permanent care reports, supervision, community ed . . . Over, oh, 20 years. (Child Protection Team Leader)

I had 10 years as a mediator with [organisation name] and then I had eight years in Home-Based Care, as a caseworker, and then for a short period of time as a team leader, and since then I've had a further, it must be, almost a further six years in Family Services. . . . [It's] about half my work, and I've got other programs as well. (Program Manager, Family Services)

Clearly, supervisors also came to the interviews with a wide range of experience gained both while working in and prior to entering the child and family practice sector.

In summary, the research participants brought a wealth of direct practice and/or supervisory experience and insight to the research questions. Both the Department of Human Services staff and those employed by Community Services Organisations had a wide range of pre-service qualifications, ranging from no formal qualifications before enrolling in the Graduate Diploma, to a Master of Social Work. The numbers were too small to comment with any confidence on any difference between the qualifications of the community services organisation employees versus the Department of Human Services employees.

Pre-Service Qualifications for Practice: Discussion

The range of qualifications held by participants reflected the Victorian policy of recruiting child protection practitioners from a wide range of undergraduate programs. This policy commenced in 1988 when a 'categeory review' of the statutory workforce resulted in a widening of the qualification base from social work degrees to include other, more generic, qualifications including the Diploma of Community Welfare. The rationale for this decision was never formally announced. However, informally, it was said to be a response to an identified shortage of qualified social workers available to work in the statutory child protection service. A similar change appeared to occur in the community services sector where positions were no longer advertised as requiring eligibility for Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) membership. Instead, the 'preferred' qualifications included degrees or diplomas in social work or 'other' appropriate disciplines.

As a consequence of this policy, the supervisory relationship frequently involves a supervisee and supervisor coming from different academic backgrounds and, potentially, different theoretical perspectives, skill sets and value bases. In addition staff with a limited theoretical base may be responsible for supervising staff with higher degrees. A diploma-qualified supervisor, for example, may have been promoted based on their years of experience and demonstrated skill. As a supervisor, they are responsible for the supervision of all staff in their team, including those with a Masters degree in Social Work.

In my experience, the implementation of this policy has had mixed results. On the one hand, the proportion of social work qualified staff employed at the frontline of child protection practice has declined over time, as is evidenced by the wide range of qualifications held by the twenty research participants. In addition, there have been situations where a newly qualified social worker could not be assured of supervision by a qualified social worker in their first professional role. On the other hand, child protection offices that traditionally had difficulty recruiting practitioners, particularly in regional Victoria, appeared to benefit from a wider pool of prospective applicants.

The long term consequence of this policy appears to have been its impact on the professional status of the child protection workforce, which now has many diploma qualified staff in senior, and some in senior executive, positions.

Just recently, however, this policy was amended in 2012 to explicitly privilege a degree in Social Work as the 'preferred' qualification for those undertaking child protection practice—whilst not excluding other qualifications (DHS, 2012). This decision came about as a result of a growing concern within the Department of Human Services about the need to strengthen and professionalise the workforce, and is discussed briefly in Chapter Three.

The current policy position in relation to Community Services Organisations is less clear, where a range of recruitment practices, unique to individual agencies, are in place.

Part Three: Core Themes

In this part of the Chapter, findings are outlined in relation to the first three research questions and are set within the context of the aim of the research: to determine what is 'effective' supervision in child and family practice. The first level of analysis generated many codes. These have been organised into a series of ten core themes, which were eventually developed using the analytic process outlined in the Methodology in Chapter Four. In analysing the data for supervisees and supervisors respectively, I found a high level of commonality across the two groups. The nuances

of difference are noted where it was found, as are the distinctions between statutory supervisees and supervisors and those employed in the community sector. What follows is a presentation of the eleven core themes that emerged from the data analysis, presented in response to the research questions 1, 2 and 3.

Question 1. What Are The Components of an Effective Supervisory Relationship?

Safety: Core Theme One

Overwhelmingly, both supervisees and supervisors talked about the need for safety in the context of a professional supervisory relationship. Safety, as they saw it, lay at the heart of effective supervision. This theme transcended all others and was considered vital by every participant interviewed. Whilst the emphasis on a safe relationship was not surprising, what was remarkable was the consistency of this view across the entire cohort and the degree of detail given by participants specifying the nature of a 'safe' relationship, including personal and professional factors.

Supervisors responded primarily in their capacities as senior staff members offering supervision to practitioners, and from time to time discussed their own need for and experience of supervision. Supervisors described the relationship as offering a safe 'anchor point' in a workplace that was experienced as a turbulent, emotional environment. The presence of a safe relationship was critical for supervisors to understand the impact of the work experienced by supervisees, and to explore and reflect on this in order to help staff to remain positive and motivated. Safety was described explicitly as the outcome of a 'trustworthy' relationship. The characteristics of a 'safe' supervisory relationship were talked about in detail by respondents, and are presented below. Individual supervisor characteristics promoting safety were also outlined spontaneously by respondents with a high level of detail.

Sharing power within a hierarchical supervisory relationship was regarded not only as possible, but a necessary pre-condition for safety. A safe relationship shared power within the context of the mandated roles and responsibilities. Where decision making power could be shared, for example in complex case related matters, a safe relationship ensured that these were shared decisions as far as possible. Where decisions about workload and case allocation could be shared, this too was a process that, as far as possible, was shared across teams by the supervisor who held ultimate responsibility and authority. Moving away from practicalities of the work, knowledge sharing was an additional means by which power was distributed across the supervisee and supervisor cohort, with individuals, irrespective of their employment status, sharing responsibility for disseminating new knowledge with colleagues in the workplace.

Safety: the supervisor's perspective

A safe relationship was identified by supervisors as the means by which they could undertake an inquisitorial approach to supervision, balancing the need to provide safety for supervisees with the need to focus on the needs and safety of children.

This safe relationship gave supervisors an in-depth knowledge of their supervisee's strengths and limitations.

Supervision has to be built on a concept of safety, and safety, in this context, is relational safety, the supervisor and supervisee need to be clear about what the relationship is, and that this is a trust worthy relationship . . . (Supervisor 8)

The elements of a 'safe' supervisory relationship are described by supervisors as trust, collaboration, joint accountability or co-creation of safety, honesty, integrity, openness and the use of a non-judgmental approach. Essential building blocks for the development of a safe and trusting relationship included the supervisors' demonstration of genuine interest in the supervisee as a person and a professional, and the offer of regular, predictable supervision meetings that were private and uninterrupted. Whilst creating an optimum environment for support, supervision was

distinguished from therapy in terms of the ultimate focus on the child, and the presence of power within the hierarchical relationship.

It [consistency] builds, like, it imprints a memory of whether you are going to be that supportive person, that reliable person . . . or you're going to be that person who is only about getting the job done. (Supervisor 1)

The honesty's about modelling the difficult, not just the easy, things . . . It's about being a place where people feel comfortable to be silly as they need to be, to ask stupid questions, to not feel vulnerable when they do that. So, it's okay to make mistakes, you don't have to know the answers. (Supervisor 2)

[Be] really mindful that you don't mistake supervision as therapy. And I absolutely understand how they say that and then, in my own learning and my own delivery of supervision to an Aboriginal workforce, it is almost essential that there are therapeutic elements to your supervision. Because of the work itself you have the risk of vicarious trauma, counter transference . . . that's the nature of the work. . . .being a good or effective supervisor is being able to connect with another human being. (Supervisor 1).

Regularity, consistency and predictability were identified as the antithesis of the prevailing workplace culture, described as crisis driven by the statutory child protection supervisors. The provision of a 'safe' supervisory relationship was seen as possible and involved offering a 'counter cultural' experience in the workplace. An effective supervisory relationship was explicitly described as one which mediated between the practitioner and the wider organisation. This will be explored in more detail later in examining implications for the wider organisation.

The importance of a safe supervisory relationship was passionately argued by one supervisor who in her years of experience had not experienced this, in spite of an agency policy prescribing supervision as mandatory.

In my 23 years as a practitioner, supervisor and manager, I have never experienced an 'effective' supervisory relationship, nor have I experienced regular, consistent, supervision. What has occurred were regular 'chats' where we ticked boxes to alleviate the anxiety of the supervisor. It has never been a 'safe' relationship. (Supervisor 3).

This respondent was unable to explain with any certainty why this had happened, although she suggested that it may be because she tended to present as confident and competent, and supervisors in the past had assumed that she did not need supervision. She was, however, emphatic that this was not the case and that she believed all practitioners and supervisors needed and had a right to supervision which was supportive and developmental as well as administrative.

Safety: the supervisee's perspective

In a similar manner, supervisees identified safety in the relationship with their supervisor as pivotal. They identified a powerful outcome of a safe supervisory relationship to be the experience of feeling 'valued' as a person and a professional. Being valued was motivational, inspiring and promoted a desire for learning.

Supervisees also described the supervisory relationship as an opportunity for practitioners to attend to their own emotional needs. The concept of safety in the relationship was directly linked to the impact of case practice on supervisees, and the need to experience 'safety' in the context of potentially 'unsafe' work. An example of this is outlined below.

A case comes to mind . . . he child . . . was out of control . . . [H]e was hissing a lot, spitting a lot at workers, and trying to get out of the car . . . for the three or four hours that we were there. . . [W]hen we got to the hospital the young person was very hard to contain, jumping all over beds, in and around reception, dragging things off the wall, knocking things over, locking himself into rooms . . . turning the shower on me a few times . . . so it was quite full-on for those few hours. But my supervisor at the time was available by phone, and even though she gave advice throughout the

situation, it was afterwards that she really helped me kind of calm down. And it wasn't just a de-briefing, it was like a supervision-session, over the phone. (Supervisee 4)

This supervisee readily recalled the horror and distress of this incident when she felt professionally powerless and unable to protect the child or herself from the child's aggression. At the same time, throughout the incident she experienced her supervisor as calming, supportive, and continuously available in an advisory capacity. This supervisee explained that the 'safety' in the relationship was evidenced by her own ability to be vulnerable and accept the validation and detailed debriefing that her supervisor offered.

The role of 'emotional containment' was raised in relation to safety by seven of the ten supervisees, particularly by those for whom case work generated high levels of anxiety or distress. Sometimes, for example, a supervisee had faced threats to his/her personal safety as a result of direct aggression or threats by clients. A calm and calming supervisory presence that was empathetically attuned to the needs of the supervisee was one which facilitated and empowered staff in these situations to continue to work with uncertainty and anxiety.

I think understanding and empathy are critical in building that sense of trust; you know, somebody actually cares about me as a human being and on a human level about how I'm coping . . . and to show that they can cope and remain calm[.] (Supervisee 3)

A safe supervisory relationship is one that values me as a person and a professional. (Supervisee 1)

As a practitioner, I value the importance of supervision, and I need safe, regular, effective, and informed supervision in my practice (Supervisee 3)

It involves deep listening, it requires the supervisor to be a point of safety, to be 'in tune' with the supervisee, it involves coaching, it is not judgmental, it's developmental, and feedback is constructive. (Supervisee 6).

In summary, the components of a 'safe' supervisory relationship from the perspective of supervisees, were described as trust, collaboration and a relationship which was open and honest, non judgmental, and jointly accountable. The critical importance of consistent, reliable and regular meetings was highlighted by supervisees as the foundation upon which a safe and trusting relationship was built. Two of the supervisees, both employed in the statutory child protection service, also highlighted the qualities of an 'unsafe' or ineffective supervisory relationship. The focus of supervision in these situations was not on the needs of the practitioner, but was described as meeting the organisational requirement to 'tick boxes'. Whilst regular supervision sessions were taking place, they were experienced as surveillance rather than supportive or developmental for the supervisee. Both of these supervisees described as sense of being 'unsafe', either as a result of the experience of direct threats to personal safety, or as a result of a lack of support and feeling emotionally vulnerable.

My own reflection on the core theme of safety, and the degree of specificity offered by participants in relation to what safety was and was not, led me to the view that safety is a core precondition for effective supervision. In the absence of a safe relationship, supervisees are more likely to experience the work environment as hostile, threatening and, at times, physically and emotionally unsafe. It is unlikely that learning, development and professional growth could take place under these conditions. It is also unlikely that team work, including knowledge sharing, would be a feature within an unsafe workplace. Conversely, having a sense of safety may be a core factor in participants' decisions to stay in frontline practice. I was struck by the prominence of the theme of safety, especially considering that it had not been a noted issue in the literature.

Proactive responses to the emotional impact of the work: Core Theme Two

This theme related closely to safety in the supervisory relationship. Again, supervisors and supervisees were almost unanimous (n=9 Supervisors and n=8 Supervisees) in their views about the emotional impact of the work, variously referred to as experiences of trauma or vicarious trauma, secondary stress, anxiety distress, or the emotionally charged nature of the work.

Proactive responses to the emotional impact of the work: the supervisor's perspective

Supervisors indicated that it was necessary to be aware of pre-existing emotional vulnerabilities that supervisees might bring to the workplace, and to have strategies in place to deal with this. Supervisors highlighted the need for pro-activity in relation to tailored, preventative self care plans for staff and timely and appropriate responses to both critical incidents in the workplace and cumulative distress in response to the nature of the work. These issues were raised both by statutory child protection practitioners and by those in the community services sector, who recognised that these issues stemmed primarily from the nature of the work, which involved family violence, substance misuse and mental health concerns, and supervisees being charged with responsibility for resolving parenting concerns. Others focussed on the impact of high levels of anxiety on the supervisees' capacity for flexible and creative practice. A selection of comments from supervisors highlights the prevalence of these issues:

Lots of people that come into this work also have a history of trauma in their own right, and some have processed this trauma and understand it very well, others do not. Supervision needs to understand what the impact is on staff, whether they be personal, or work, or otherwise, in order to help them remain optimal. (Supervisor 4)

In my last two roles I can absolutely see the impact of trauma, and the way in which trauma radiates through teams of people. As a manager . . . [it's] important that you are proactive, that you can ascertain when staff have been traumatised. (Supervisor 7)

We can see the impact of anxiety in decision making. Some workers become very concrete in their thinking, and can be quite punitive, and shut down. I understand, sometimes there is a need for quick decisions, and that we can't always reflect, but sometimes it's more a function of worker

anxiety, that they want a quick decision. My role then, as a supervisor, is to try to slow things down, to enable that reflection. (Supervisor 3)

Two supervisors highlighted the workforce demographic as often relatively inexperienced, young and female, and the potential implications for supervisor knowledge and skill. One participant spoke quite explicitly about the need to develop an awareness of the difference between one's own experiences of the work and the potential impact on a young, relatively inexperienced supervisee.

You know, I didn't come into this field 'til later in life, and I had very different work history before that . . . and so if a man told me I was a 'fat slut', you know, really, it just rolls off like water off a duck's back. But . . . I've got young women that are in their late twenties, and their families never talked like that. They haven't lived in those environments, and that actually does have an impact on them. . . . I worked with high risk adolescents, you know, I was dodging punches every day of the week, and I do think that's why I have to stop and make myself think about it . . . What I think might not be such a big deal is often a very big deal for some people, like the example I gave before, about one worker being talked about in a personal way. (Supervisor 8)

This example was fairly confronting, yet refreshingly graphic to hear from a supervisor who had had considerable life experience prior to qualifying and working in the child and family practice sector. Her understanding of the potential emotional impacts of the work on young women, who may not have experienced these issues, enabled her to routinely predict and plan for the challenges with her staff. Another supervisor had initiated biannual team self care days, when team members were charged with responsibility for initiating and developing a day of reflection and self care. These days had included facilitated discussion followed by picnics in a park, massages and a variety of group sporting activities. Finally, a number of supervisors (n=6) described the documentation of the self care process as important, and one which needed to ensure joint supervisor/supervisee accountability and responsibility for successful implementation.

Proactive responses to the emotional impact of the work: the supervisee's perspective.

Supervisees needed to feel able to share their anxiety and distress with supervisors as a normative response to a distressing or traumatising context, without fear of blame or punishment from their supervisors. Three supervisees articulated a need for 'emotional containment' by the supervisor, who was charged with responsibility for modelling the emotional climate of the team, and the extent to which the team culture facilitated regular de-briefing and pro-activity in relation to self care.

I need to, to 'let off steam' in a way that isn't going to be seen as critical and that isn't going to go against me in my career. (Supervisee 6)

[I]t's extremely emotionally charged. Supervision needs to understand where you are at emotionally, and that you may be having a bad day for whatever reason. (Supervisee 2)

Sharing the 'emotional load' was also elegantly described:

[M]y supervisor is jointly accountable for what's occurring in cases, is able to reflect, with me, and is able to be open and honest about which case is keeping us awake at three a.m. . . . offers regular debriefing, shares the workload, has an agreement about what's required that's collaborative, and will follow up, will manage and 'hold' my anxiety. (Supervisee 4)

Demonstrating a real understanding of the issues faced by supervisees was seen as important:

It is important for her to have an insight, to [grasp] the issues that we're facing every day, and what it feels like to stand in front of a client who might have a significant borderline personality, and get yelled and screamed at, for half an hour, and then be able to say: "Okay, now let's sit down and talk about . . ." Because that does impact on how you feel, and it can make you feel weary. (Supervisee 2)

Finally, two supervisees identified the implications of the absence of pro-activity on the part of supervisors in relation to the impact of the work, describing staff turnover as a result of stress and

burnout. The demoralising impact on those staff that remained had compelling implications for supervision.

[W]hen a peer's burning out it can really bring you down; at a higher level, the constant and continuous change, can be very distressing. (Supervisee 9)

I see new graduates burning out, where they can't contain themselves . . . (Supervisee 4)

While the nature of case practice was familiar to me, what surprised me about this research finding was the acceptance on the part of the participants that the work, whilst distressing and at times dangerous, could be successfully managed with a proactive response by supervisor and supervisee. Rather than emphasising their powerlessness and despair, this experienced group of practitioners and supervisors held the view that it was possible to plan for, implement and maintain strategies for emotional self care as a proactive means of addressing the risk of vicarious trauma or secondary stress. It should be noted that not all of the participants described current supervisory relationships in which this kind of proactivity was a feature. However, 9 supervisors and 8 supervisees identified it as possible within the context of their workplace.

Learning and Growth: Core Theme Three.

An effective relationship underpinned the supervisor's capacity to facilitate supervisee learning, through models of teaching and learning that promoted safe, critical reflection on practice and performance. Specific areas of knowledge, skills and values that were identified are outlined in response to the second research question: 'What are the Knowledge, Skills and Value requirements for Supervisors to be Effective in this Field?'

Learning and growth: the supervisor's perspective.

Within the context of a 'safe' supervisory relationship, a focus on the development of the supervisee was highlighted as a priority by nine of the ten supervisor participants. Maintaining the

perspective that safety was of paramount importance, supervisors then talked about the critical importance of learning, and of their need to understand ways to facilitate knowledge development.

That respectful relationship, that was a partnership, more than . . .my being the supervisor, her being the supervisee . . . And I think we spent a lot of our supervision time . . . we might talk about the administrative stuff, but we would also do it in a much more reflective sort of way, and in an educative way, and spend much more time . . . arriving at decisions, through that . . . mutual . . . feedback, and exploring . . . and that might be case-focused, but it was also very much about her learning her skills too, so we would spend quite a lot of time talking about how she was growing. (Supervisor 4)

Effective supervision, in my experience, is when a supervisor could talk about how my performance could be improved in a way that made me feel valued, and confident that I would go away from supervision feeling as though I'd learned something, not feeling as though I was in trouble. (Supervisor 5)

Yes, I think it's, well for a start it's about that adult learning style, so that you're not just telling people how to do it, and how to do the work, and they're sort of going: "Yes, yes, yes, I know, you know, thank you for your advice, blah, blah, blah." It's . . . so that's what I suppose I mean in that sort of partnership role, that it's sort of I would have valued that person's input as much as she would have valued mine. (Supervisor 7)

Supervisors were aware of theories that informed approaches to learning, and related their own experience of being supervised and of providing supervision in a developmental manner. The collaborative relationship and the co-creation of knowledge development that occurred as a result were central to this theme.

Learning and growth: the supervisee's perspective.

Learning within the context of a safe relationship was a core component for supervisees, who referred to learning as coaching, being constructively challenged, offering guidance and direction and having an opportunity for critical reflection. Learning opportunities that allowed for 'stupid' questions to be asked, for supervisees to declare a lack of confidence or competence in particular areas without fear of reprisal or implications for future career development, were only possible where the supervisory relationship was safe, trusting and when supervisees were listened to.

I need to feel listened to. I need to know that if I say something, I won't be rejected, or shot down for saying something wrong. (Supervisee 3)

So, for example, when I'm sitting with a really challenging situation, for example in the area of child sexual abuse, it's really important for me to be challenged to link back to theory and research, to understand better what my role is, what I'm seeing, and what decisions I should, and could, be making. (Supervisee 7)

One supervisee offered an example of a previous supervisory relationship in which she had not felt challenged to learn, and experienced supervision as patronising at times:

I was an experienced Child Protection worker. An example of supervision that just did nothing for me at all was, I had a case load of, you know, 15 or 20 kids, and the person that was giving me supervision at the time, as opposed to challenging me, . . . was looking at my 'list' of children and telling me: "Oh, well you've got this infant on your list, . . . and you'll need to see them on a weekly basis," and giving me really direct tasks that weren't things that I didn't know already. So it was more checking in, on a really administrative level, that they are aware that they've told me that I need to be doing a weekly visit for this one, bringing up really straight, specific tasks about cases, as opposed to: "How are the family going, and what's happening?" and really exploring what my thoughts were around the case. (Supervisee 9)

Clearly, whilst not all supervisees have consistently experienced supervision that promoted learning, all held a view that an effective supervisory relationship would be both safe and developmental.

Question 2: What are the Knowledge, Skills and Value requirements for Supervisors to be Effective in this Field?

Expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership: Core Theme Four

The knowledge requirements for supervisors were outlined with a much higher level of detail and consistency by supervisors than by supervisees. This may have been in part because they had each completed a Graduate Diploma, a course specifically catering to their roles as supervisors and leaders in the sector. Responses by supervisees were consistent although typically less detailed than supervisors in relation to knowledge requirements.

Expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership: the supervisor's perspective.

Supervisors identified many aspects of knowledge relating to case practice itself, including expertise in child development and attachment theory, child abuse and neglect, parenting constraints and structural issues (including poverty, substance use, violence, mental health), alongside theories underpinning assessment and intervention. Emerging knowledge in relation to the neuro-biology of trauma and its implications for practice with children was a key issue. Supervisors highlighted the need to understand trauma in two ways. Initially, the emerging knowledge pertaining to the neuro-biology of trauma was an area of knowledge identified by most supervisors (n=9). Based on this knowledge, supervisors also identified implications for knowledge and skill in their role with staff. This will be explored in more detail in looking at skill requirements below.

Related to a knowledge of family systems, supervisors stated that they need to understand parenting and community standards, the current policy and legislation and their own value base in relation to prevailing ideas about what is ‘good enough’ parenting. They were also described as needing a sophisticated understanding of diversity, culture and class, and to be sensitive to ‘difference’ in models of child rearing. Supervisors showed that they needed to be able to take a ‘meta’ position in relation to complex case material in order to facilitate effective analytic decision making, or make recommendations for decisions in respect of children, according to their role and delegation.

Wider theoretical knowledge, in particular complexity theory and ecological developmental theory, was seen as informing the way that supervisors approach the work and their role as leaders. Taking a wide perspective on child abuse and neglect, which drew upon a multi-dimensional systemic approach, was seen as consistent with the current Best Interests Case Practice paradigm and the existing legislation. Similarly, an understanding of complexity theory was seen to give supervisors a greater capacity to work with ambiguity and uncertainty, since the quest for concrete solutions to complex problems was seen as unhelpful in a complex context.

The body of knowledge informing supervision, leadership and management included emotional intelligence and self knowledge, and models of leadership including transformational leadership. Commonly, supervisors referred to the importance of interpreting policy direction statements for their staff in a way which tried to actively recruit or motivate staff to comply with requirements.

In one instance, staff members were described as unhappy with additional requirements associated with the Looking After Children system of recording for children in out of home care. As the supervisor responsible for compliance with the system, one participant described a detailed communication strategy which identified the principles underpinning Looking After Children, the problems or ‘gaps’ which had led to the creation of the system and the evaluation of the implementation outcomes. This information was referred to formally and informally in a series of messages delivered by the supervisor, who then measured the compliance with the requirements after four weeks of consistent communication. This participant reported that all of her seven staff

had met the Looking After Children recording requirements, attributing their changed behaviour to the new meaning given to them about the task by the supervisor.

Whilst confirming the need for practice knowledge, one supervisor suggested that they did not need to be an expert in all areas, but needed to be able to facilitate and guide knowledge development:

We do need to have an understanding about the different elements that pose risk to a child, according to their age, age development, gender, culture, all of those aspects. So we need to be alert, I don't need to know it all . . . (Supervisor 4).

Others referred to leadership knowledge and skill as a priority for the role:

I need to understand people, I need to understand leadership, I need to understand Child and Family Practice, supervisors do need a higher level of content knowledge, about the business, so, child development, child trauma, child abuse, in order that we're able to give helpful advice, but capabilities also, around developing team culture, developing groups, leadership, are very important. (Supervisor 8)

One supervisor, in highlighting the need for theoretical practice and leadership knowledge, also stressed the importance of developing knowledge about the individual supervisee:

So then, of course, the other area [is] understanding and having knowledge of your worker about their level of competency. How much does that need to be guided? How much does that need to be alluded to? And that's where your knowledge of your worker comes in. (Supervisor 2)

Expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership: the supervisee's perspective

Typically, supervisees responded to questions about supervisor knowledge, skill and values in a manner that was consistent with the supervisor cohort, yet far less detailed. The importance of knowledge in relation to trauma and the neuro science of trauma were identified by eight of the 10

supervisees; however, other areas of knowledge tended to be referred to more generically as 'theory', usually related to practice rather than leadership or supervision.

Supervisors need knowledge about current best practice, contemporary theory. They need knowledge of trauma, and vicarious trauma, stress, and they need to be able to apply all of that, to the supervisory relationship. (Supervisee 5)

It's important that supervisors have a sound theoretical knowledge, that they have good solid skills, casework, with mandatory clients, that they can name models of practice, and demonstrate them, that they can conceptualise and integrate theory with practice. (Supervisee 3)

In summary, a vast amount of theoretical knowledge relating to practice, supervision and leadership was identified as necessary by supervisors. The knowledge spans those broad theoretical frameworks which provide the lens though which we understand society, disadvantage and human suffering, as well as those specific models of practice and research evidence informing practice in this particular field. This knowledge, coupled with the body of knowledge underpinning learning, supervision and leadership, was identified by supervisors, whilst supervisees highlighted knowledge in the area of direct case practice. I am left reflecting on the implications of this finding for the promotion of practitioners into supervisory roles, and the implications for their learning needs prior to and at the time of transition.

Knowing policy, process, procedure and organisational awareness: Core Theme Five

This knowledge could broadly be defined as procedural knowledge, and involved a working knowledge of policy (including legislation) procedure and process requirements to undertake the work. This was an area identified by each of the statutory child protection supervisors (n=7) and supervisees (n=8), but not by the community services organisation supervisees or supervisors (n=5). This distinction may reflect the highly proceduralised nature of child protection practice.

Knowing policy, process, procedure and organisational awareness: the supervisor's perspective

A well developed understanding of key aspects of legislation and the 'spirit' of particular aspects of the legislation was seen as important. An example of this was the introduction of a change in the Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) requiring children to have 'stability plans', within particular time frames according to their age and length of time in out of home care. This may have been seen by practitioners as yet another burdensome process, unless understood in the light of children's needs for a secure base and the critical importance of attachment. This example, highlighted by Supervisor 9, also demonstrated the value of leadership skills where supervisors are making sense of legislation and policy requirements, or managing the meaning of these requirements.

Included in this core theme was a need for supervisors to demonstrate organisational awareness, including the formal knowledge of occupational health and safety requirements, for example, and informal knowledge that enabled strategic advocacy, or 'managing up' by supervisors who understood how to successfully 'navigate' the organisation. Having strong professional networks as a supervisor, and being willing to 'share' those relationships with supervisees, was seen as an important contribution to the supervisees' development.

Knowing policy, process, procedure and organisational awareness: the supervisee's perspective

Statutory child protection supervisees were unanimous in their views relating to the importance of procedural knowledge (n=8), whilst the community services sector supervisees were silent on this subject (n=2). Supervisees in statutory child protection were more forthcoming in the area of procedural knowledge than in the area of theoretical knowledge, reported on earlier. This may reflect the highly proceduralised nature of the work, which is discussed in Chapter Three in some

depth. In addition to their need to know about procedure, supervisees wanted and needed their supervisors to have experienced their 'journey' as practitioners:

I think what's worked with me in the past is the supervisor being able to relate, in some point, to what I'm saying, so I think it's helped in the past, when supervisors had had a similar experience, or a similar position, and are also able to reflect on the situation with you. (Supervisee 8)

Supervisors must know about process . . . There is so much to know and so many staff [are] inexperienced. They do need to have walked the journey. (Supervisee 6)

In summary, this core theme was one which was not shared across the statutory child protection and community services organisation respondents. Community services organisation staff were silent in relation to the need to know policy, process, procedure and to have organisational awareness. In stark contrast, the statutory child protection respondents saw this area of knowledge and skill as critical. On the basis of these differing responses, I reflected that the context within which the statutory respondents work appears to have a significant impact on their perception of the supervisory role. Another major difference between the groups of child protection and community service organisation workers is identified below as Core Theme Ten, and relates to the wider community understanding of the work undertaken by child and family practitioners, and the impact on professional identity and morale that this may have.

Practice wisdom and self knowledge: Core Theme Six.

This 'knowledge' was identified by all supervisees (n=10) and a number of supervisors (n=6). There was no discernable difference between responses of statutory child protection and community services organisation participants. Practice wisdom and self knowledge, sometimes described as personal maturity or self awareness, were seen as the ingredients that made an important contribution to the development of an effective supervisory relationship.

Practice wisdom and self knowledge: the supervisor's perspective.

On the basis of this wisdom, supervisors described being able to privilege the emotional support and learning needs of their supervisee, whilst maintaining their primary focus on service delivery to the child and family. This was a complex and at times very difficult aspect of the supervisor role, particularly when a supervisee's emotional needs sometimes compromised their capacity to offer an effective service to children and families.

Practice wisdom was described as demonstrating a knowledgeable, calm and calming professional demeanour. Even in a 'crisis service' such as statutory child protection, this was said by supervisors to be a powerful contribution to effective supervision, based on the supervisors' wisdom, professional experience and self knowledge, and an understanding of the importance of modelling behaviours. The relevance of 'modelling' behaviour will be discussed in more detail in looking at relevant 'skills' for supervisors.

Practice wisdom and self knowledge: the supervisee's perspective.

Supervisees talked about maturity and wisdom gained from professional experience and personal self knowledge:

Underpinning the theoretical knowledge must be a strong sense of self, or self knowledge, and the practice wisdom that comes from really integrating theory with practice and continuously learning on the basis of that. (Supervisee 4)

These qualities in turn were integrated with the capacity to develop and maintain a safe supervisory relationship, and included the capacity for attunement and deep listening on the part of the supervisor.

Leadership skills: Core Theme Seven

Skills were described as those behaviours that reflected expert knowledge in any of the following domains, all aspects of complex case practice and skills to support, educate and lead staff. Skills were also referred to as approaches that enabled the creation of a reflective space, enhancing the capacity of supervisees to conceptualise, learn and to practice creatively. Leadership skills were consistently mentioned as a skill set distinct from 'knowledge' and for this reason leadership skills form a core theme in their own right.

Leadership Skills: the supervisor's perspective

The significance of leadership skills that included modelling behaviours was strongly emphasised in responses from supervisors, and was consistent with their messages in relation to self regulation and self awareness. Supervisors held the view that role modelling the desired attributes of self awareness and self knowledge in the workplace was essential, and demonstrating regard for consistency, respectful behaviour, transparency and openness to dissent was fundamental too.

It's not sharing everything with your staff, because it is your role to actually lead through the uncertainty, and that and how you manage that is critical for your staff, in terms of engaging them, in whatever process it is that you're actually undertaking, on that day. (Supervisor 6).

One of the outcomes of skilfully implemented supervision was identified by supervisors as role clarity. For supervisees to gain and maintain a sense of role clarity; what was expected of them and what was outside their sphere of influence, was seen as related to the 'anchor' that supervision can offer. Role clarity held particular meaning for the Aboriginal workforce:

Aboriginal workers need to learn how to perform the role but also how to live in the community and stay within the role . . . Yeah look, it's about, it's about certainly in terms of the role, it's about really understanding and creating role clarity. (Supervisor 1)

Practising skills of self regulation and mindfulness was important to supervisors and supervisees, who saw this as the demonstration of knowledge, personal maturity and practice wisdom.

[T]he capacity to be able to be highly self-aware, to practice mindfulness and reflection, in this process, and to assist supervisees to engage in the same sorts of processes, are essential elements of really effective supervisory practice. (Supervisor 1).

Leadership Skills: the supervisee's perspective

Whilst the supervisee cohort did not identify frameworks or theories pertaining to leadership, the demonstration of leadership behaviours, including visibility, good communication and coaching, was seen as an important component of the role:

Being great at doing the, you know, walk-around, talk to staff, make sure that they're known, that they're caring about how everyone's going, and have a presence, and will be fair and 'just'. (Supervisee 4)

A leadership style that's a coaching style, not a corrective, or directive, style, is that which is most helpful, and developmental. (Supervisee 9)

On reflection, both supervisors and supervisees were readily able to identify and articulate the leadership skills that contributed to effective supervision. Both groups were equally able to identify relevant examples of effective leadership skills demonstrated in their workplace, in their own work, or by their own supervisor.

Integrity, honesty and a commitment to natural justice and social justice: Core Theme Eight

Integrity and honesty underpinned the creation of a safe, mutually respectful supervisory relationship, and were seen as essential elements of supervision by both statutory and community services organisation supervisors and supervisees. A lack of integrity and honesty was also

remarked in some instances, for example, when a supervisee's personal information, believed to have been shared in confidence, was later disclosed outside the supervisory relationship. While values are discussed in the context of Core Theme One, they are also relevant to Core Theme Seven, which relates to the enactment of natural justice and social justice principles by supervisors. The importance of natural justice was referred to by statutory child protection respondents (n=5 supervisors and n=3 supervisees), and not mentioned by community services organisation respondents. This may be related to the focus on process and procedure by the statutory child protection respondents, discussed earlier. Natural justice principles informing practice were seen as important by both supervisees and supervisors and are elaborated below.

Integrity, honesty and a commitment to natural justice and social justice: the supervisor's view

Integrity in integrating knowledge, values and skills in the supervisor role was eloquently expressed by one participant:

When we keep the child at the centre of our decision making, we rarely go wrong, but when we lose sight of the child as the centre of our decision making, at the centre of our supervisory processes, at the centre of our leadership, and at the centre of our policy making, we actually rarely go wrong, …so a leader who is actually able to hold the child at the centre of all of those things, despite the brickbats that you'll receive by aligning yourself with the clients, is the most effective sort of leader . . . (Supervisor 4)

This statutory Child Protection supervisor had 15 years of supervisory experience. His reflections highlighted some of the challenges that he had faced over time in the context of a service system that had undergone continuous review and restructure.

And from another:

My team don't always like my operating arrangements. For example the delegation of new work is difficult and uncomfortable at times. But at least . . . I hope . . . that they can see that the processes are fair and that I adhere to principles of natural justice in making these kinds of decisions. (Supervisor 2)

Integrity, honesty and a commitment to natural justice and social justice: the supervisee's view

One example, relating to performance management, demonstrated a lack of integrity. In this example, critical feedback impacting on the performance appraisal outcome was not conveyed by the supervisor as a concern, prior to the formal appraisal meeting taking place. This was experienced by the supervisee as denying her right to natural justice in the workplace:

I felt betrayed and let down. I mean, if she had those concerns about my performance all along, why didn't I know about it? (Supervisee 7)

And from another, who had experienced a sense of fairness in the workplace:

We might not always agree with the decisions . . . but we can see that there has been fairness and integrity in the process. (Supervisee 3)

Finally, a demonstration of a commitment to social justice in practice was seen as important. This was often raised in relation to practice with clients, when,, for example, supervisors had used their experience or authority to advocate on behalf of children for an appropriate placement or a particular resource.

She never gives up . . . I mean we all know that there are not enough placements for our children . . . but she (my supervisor) is tenacious in her advocacy to get the right place at the right time. (Supervisee 3)

In summary, the core themes relating to knowledge, skills and value requirements for effective supervisors (research question two) span a wide range of theoretical knowledge pertaining to practice, supervision and leadership, knowledge of procedure and organisational awareness, practice wisdom and self knowledge. Demonstrated skills in leadership were a core requirement, with implications for supervisors to communicate well, to advocate, be visible and 'transformational' as leaders. Finally, value requirements for effective supervisors include integrity, honesty, a commitment to natural and social justice.

Question 3: Delivering the Functions of Supervision: Administration, Support, Education and Mediation

Balancing the Functions of Supervision and the Inevitable Role Tension: Core Theme Nine

The four functions of supervision (administration, support, education and mediation) were discussed by both supervisees and supervisors. This may reflect their exposure to learning and development opportunities and postgraduate study. Interview questions invited participants to reflect on 'balancing' the functions of supervision in the context of the wider organisation and community. Participants reflected on factors impacting on supervision, both facilitators and constraints. Initial codes generated included the 'dual purpose', and need to 'juggle' the functions. The theme was eventually identified as balancing the functions of supervision and the inevitable role tension.

Balancing the functions of supervision and role tension: the supervisor's perspective

Supervisor respondents (n=10) readily discussed the potential for role tension and role conflict when a supervisor is also a manager with administrative responsibility for supervisee workload and performance assessment. Whilst a number of participants offered examples of supervision where the 'balance' of the functions had not been achieved, a number offered what they described as 'effective' examples. Overwhelmingly both statutory and community services groups held a view

that an effective balance was possible; that is, that a supervisor could 'line manage' the supervisee whilst effectively offering support, development and mediating on their behalf. Statutory Child Protection supervisors and community service organisation supervisors operate in different contexts, with differing capacities to control workload demand using strategies such as waiting lists. There was no discernable difference between the Child Protection supervisors and the community services organisation supervisors in relation to this issue.

It takes a lot of energy, thought, and it's not seamless. My staff sees that I do try to be supportive and responsible for their work. New workers don't always understand . . . the hardest thing for them to get their heads around is that supervision isn't just to meet their needs, but it's also to ensure a service to the client. (Child Protection Supervisor)

I manage to balance a lot of the admin sort of stuff, with me floating in and out, being floating in and out. I try to actually overt it, so I say in the supervision . . . "these are the things I like to cover, what would you like to cover?" and I actually talk about it, in some ways maybe even apologetic. And I just say . . . "there's some things I need to talk about here that are sort of business, and then, and then we'll do this other bit." So I guess I try to just label "This is what we're doing now" so that I can genuinely not be doing "Oh and how're you feeling?", you know, and then going: "Oh, right, now, your time-in-lieu is too high!!" [laughs] You know, so I try to sort of split it up, and say "This is what we're doing now." (Community Services Organisation Supervisor)

There is a tension. I'm the line manager of those I supervise. There's a tension always between management, or admin and support, but it's possible to manage that tension. (Supervisor 5)

One supervisor expressed a firm view that it was not only possible to achieve a 'balance' but that a model of supervision ensuring that administrative/managerial power and accountability was held by the supervisor, who was also responsible for support, development and mediation, was an ideal model in the context of the child protection workforce.

I think that, in fact, if you don't address all of those [functions] really effectively, you fail the supervisee. I think we see . . . external supervision being used as a mechanism to bolster the supervisory practice. However, external supervision really can only be effective in the area of development. Because the balance ultimately lies within the context of what is an appropriate case to allocate to a particular worker, and the underpinning for what is an appropriate case to allocate comes in terms of understanding the knowledge, and capacity of that worker, from both a skill base, but also in terms of their emotional capacity, and what energy they have available to them to work with a particular case, that can't be done, outside of that process. (Child Protection Supervisor 4).

Balancing the functions of supervision and role tension: the supervisee's perspective

Similarly, supervisees across both community services organisations and statutory Child Protection highlighted the potential for and experience of a tension in the role, with one describing a sensation of betrayal when this balance is not achieved:

The key to juggling the functions, for me, is a positive relationship. If that doesn't exist, it can be tricky. I can feel betrayed; the nature of the relationship is the key. Performance management is a core part of education and support. It's all got to be one package. If there isn't positive engagement and trust, where there are differences in philosophy or beliefs, this can create problems. (Supervisee 10)

The majority of supervisees had at some point in their career experienced a relationship where the functions were, in fact, effectively balanced (n=8).

These comments indicate that, in spite of the potential for competing priorities and a tension within the supervisor role, that a balance could be achieved. No new information surfaced in response to these questions in relation to how the balance could be achieved. Rather, the importance of a safe

relationship, where transparency, integrity and honesty were features, was again highlighted, as was the importance of learning and development.

I do think it's possible to have performance discussions, and feel safe, and nurtured; for most of my career I've been very fortunate, most of my managers have had a really good relationship with me, that's been helpful, developmental, challenging, and has also built on my performance. (Supervisee 3)

Management processes constraining and supporting practice: Core Theme Ten

In looking at the impact of the wider organisation on supervision, the influence of 'managerialism' emerged as a theme for most supervisors (n=9) and was referred to indirectly or directly by most supervisees (n= 8). Respondents described the pervasive impact of this dominant and dominating organisational culture that privileged the operation of the 'business' over people and appropriate process. However, one supervisor respondent, quoted below, highlighted the value of sound monitoring systems to ensure that supervision occurred.

Management processes constraining and supporting practice: the supervisor's perspective

Interestingly, this was discussed not only in relation to the dominance of the administration of the work, but in relation to Human Resource business processes such as the 'Disease Injury and Near Miss' forms (DINMAs), that were developed as standard operating procedure following incidents in both the Department of Human Services and Community Services Organisations. These forms are a reporting and recording mechanism designed to track and ensure responses to injury at work.

So we have an HR department, who don't have a background in welfare, don't understand the nature of the work, and yet they question what the workers are doing in inappropriate ways. For example, they implemented a DINMA incident form that read like: "We work in the factory, driving a forklift." So . . . the incident report, the language was very blaming. It read like "What did the worker do, that they shouldn't have done?" That sort of stuff. (Supervisor 4)

Many references to managerialism were made in relation to the concept of 'efficiency over effectiveness', with a pressure to achieve case 'throughput', and to manage what was described as an overwhelming workload volume, at all costs. The organisational culture was described as a constraint to reflection and learning.

I think that the system itself is very driven by administrative requirements, and I think it's too easy for supervisors just to fall in line with that, and I think that there's also an experience, in terms of, if that's the culture, and that's how you've been supervised, then that's how you generally will then take that on. (Supervisor 2)

In spite of the negativity about the use of management systems, the development, implementation and maintenance of models of management that promoted good governance was identified as important, particularly for supervisors who were senior managers. One supervisor had recently moved into a more senior position, and found to her surprise that the business systems for monitoring the frequency of supervision across the work unit did not exist:

I previously felt very negative about the monitoring of supervision, but I've recently moved into a new role, and I've had to develop some systems to ensure good governance for the monitoring to happen. Because I found that, whilst I thought that the most important thing, and I still think the most thing, is the quality of supervision, there does need to be in place some processes to ensure that it happens, and in the absence of those systems or processes, the risk is that it doesn't happen at all. So, I guess what I'm saying, is that I'm in favour of both—systems that measure quantity, but also quality of supervision that staff are receiving—and that they have a right to [it]. (Supervisor 7)

Supervisors, in particular, identified aspects of their organisation that they believed facilitated opportunities to ensure the promotion of both efficiency and effectiveness.

The organisation does develop policies to assist people to do good casework, for example one DHS, or it's now called Services Connect, it feels good to have permission to be able to access across divisions, and to be able to work across divisions, on behalf of clients, where there might have previously been silos. (Supervisor 6)

The organisation can support—and has supported—me by funding leadership training, and funding people to undertake further learning is critical. The wider organisation supports us by valuing continuous learning. (Supervisor 7)

Management processes constraining and supporting practice: the supervisee's perspective.

Supervisees were perhaps predictably less concerned about the implementation of business processes, although one described the impact of these processes and systems on practice. One supervisee indicated that a common response to a case tragedy or scandal was one of greater aversion to risk within the organisation:

What tends to happen when those things [child deaths] occur is that the sort of managerial mind set of the department will . . .say, "Well this mistake happened because we weren't following the procedures properly, so what we need to do to stop this from happening again is to tighten up the procedures. So instead of doing form A once a month we are going to do form A once a week . . . " (Supervisee 7)

Most supervisees (n=9), both statutory child protection and community services organisation staff, identified the dominant organisational constraint as workload:

The constraints are caseloads, excessive caseloads, and staff-turnover. There's a huge dilemma with unallocated cases, and a push to allocate, or to close, inappropriately, and team leaders do need to advocate for their staff around this issue, and are placed often in a very difficult position. (Supervisee 5)

One supervisee talked about the lack of space to have a confidential conversation:

The physical environment can be a constraint. We don't have a space. We used to have a little office for supervision, but that was taken away. Now, supervision happens in a stationery cupboard if we want confidentiality. Space is a problem. Everyone talks about supervision being important and mandatory, but it's the first thing to go. It's not a priority, when the organisation is responding to crises. There isn't a shared understanding that it should be prioritised, no matter what. (Supervisee 6)

Finally, insensitive human resource management systems were also highlighted by this supervisee as a constraint:

Even if things were raised, very little was done about it. You can fill out DINMA forms, but at the same time, when you fill out a DINMA I think one of the questions you're asked, is your cost-centre (identified source of funds). So again, it's very much procedurally driven, and there's . . . a diagram of a body, where you can circle what part of the body is affected. So it was very much placed on the physical. . . . A lot of workers used to draw a big love-heart in the middle of the body, and for the emotional, yes. But it wasn't very user-friendly in terms of Child Protection. And I was in the position where I had to help a new member of staff, to fill one out, and she found it quite overwhelming, saying: "Well, it doesn't really fit into the form, what I've experienced!" (Supervisee 6)

Finally, there was a level of commonality across the sector in relation to the impact of business processes on practice, with most identifying insensitive systems and workloads as constraints.

A real distinction was found in this research, however in relation to the participants' experience of their respective organisations. For Child Protection supervisors and supervisees, the experience of their organisation was mixed, ranging from an appreciation of the policy framework and support for training, to discernable anger and disillusionment. Some of these sentiments are evident in the

respondents' statements above. I have been careful, however, not to identify respondents as located in either statutory or community services organisations for fear that this would compromise respondent confidentiality.

Each of the community services organisation participants, however, expressed a sense of pride in and appreciation of their organisation, including the community services organisation supervisor quoted below:

Oh, well one of the reasons I've hung round in this joint for thirteen years, is . . . the organisation is great. I said this to [laughs] the CEO. . . . We sit well with anxiety, we'll try things, we're supported to do things. It's not perfect, but no relationship is. But it does have a very good culture of, staff are important, sometimes to the point where you bend over backwards too far in that context [and] I think it's also relevant to the regional office, and I think that the current regional director, as is the previous one I worked for, they also are approachable, and you don't feel like you're going to be blamed if you put a foot wrong. That culture of blame doesn't exist here. (Supervisor 9)

Many of these reflections resonated with me in terms of my own experience. In terms of the application of business processes, I had developed a view that good governance of the limited public resource was both necessary, required a particular skill set and could be consistent with social work values. In relation to the finding about professional identity and pride, it would be fair to reflect that few of my statutory colleagues felt proud to be employed by the State Government, whereas our colleagues in community services organisations were more inclined to express a sense of loyalty to their employer, and were proud to be associated with their particular agency. My sense is that these differing attitudes may, in part, relate to the wider community's understanding of the child and family practice sector, reported on below.

Community understanding and valuing of the work: Core Theme Eleven

The impact of attitudes held within the wider community was raised by all participants (supervisees and supervisors), who spoke of community misconceptions about their client groups and their work. Typically, participants referred to a sense of the community's 'judgement' in relation to vulnerable families experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

Participants also referred to their wider professional community, observing that chronic clashes of views about what was in the 'best interests' of a child could impact upon practitioners' capacity to achieve safety or offer support.

Here, there was a marked distinction between the child protection and community services organisation participants, with a number of statutory staff describing a sense of shame that their employer was the State Child Protection Service. The dominant story from child protection participants was that there were entrenched community misconceptions of their role as a result of negative media reports.

Community understanding and valuing of the work: the supervisor's perspective.

When asked to comment on the wider community's understanding of child and family practice, there were only negative responses from supervisors in child protection (n=7), who were particularly affected by sensationalised and negative media reports, and recognised that it impacted on staff and supervisor morale and sense of professional identity.

Community services organisation supervisors (n=3) held mixed views about the influence of community attitudes, indicating that their employing agencies were sometimes widely respected in the community, whilst the work itself was not well understood.

Negative media is demoralizing. People in the community tend to have a very negative script [in] relation to Child Protection, and that plays itself out on the front page of the Herald Sun *regularly.*

There's a very limited understanding in the community about our business and our service. (Supervisor 5)

Community understanding and valuing of the work: the supervisee's perspective

Supervisees' expressed strongly held views about the lack of understanding on the part of the community about the work, and their experience of the work:

There's a limited understanding, and not a real understanding, I find, of the work that we do. I find my work very rewarding, and I don't understand it when people in the community say "How could you do that job?" (Supervisee 4)

Other supervisees lamented the lack of valuing or 'celebration' of the work itself by the wider community:

Child Protection is not a celebrated service, it's not understood, even though, for example, we do community education, we speak in schools, we talk to police, we talk to in-patient units. But that the process of education is very slow. (Supervisee 1)

Another supervisee spoke openly of her need to mislead others about her employment in child protection:

The community is informed by the media. I don't tell people that I do this work, because there's too much understanding, or misunderstanding, in the community, as a result of the media, which fuels community outrage that there's either too much, or too little, intervention. The community doesn't understand the complexities in our day to day work. (Supervisee 2)

In summary, community attitudes affected staff and practice in a variety of ways, particularly by making staff feel reliant on support and understanding from within their workplace.

Those employed by Community Services Organisations, expressed a sense of pride in their employing organisation and related this to both the organisational culture and to positive wider

community views of the agency itself. In stark contrast, it seemed that statutory child protection staff found themselves demoralized and on the defensive, and needed more support accordingly.

This concludes the presentation and discussion of findings in relation to Research questions one, two and three. The fourth question: what constitutes a conceptual frame of reference to underpin effective supervision, and the fifth question: what constitutes a core model of supervision in Child and Family practice are addressed in the following Chapter, Chapter Six. Before introducing Chapter six, however, I will revisit the Suppositions identified for this research.

Revisiting the Suppositions

The suppositions were written as declarations for this study. The suppositions are revisited below.

- *Child and family practice is a highly complex, emotionally demanding field of social work practice. Effective supervision accounts for the high level of complexity with a strong educative component, tailored to meet the unique needs of the practitioner and the practice. A sound knowledge of adult learning theory, along with expert knowledge in child abuse and neglect are essential for supervisors.*

This supposition is both confirmed and extended. As complex as the work may be, it is the emotional demands and sense of threat within the work that must take priority over the need for knowledge in order for supervision to be truly effective. A safe supervisory relationship shares power and is founded on trust, collaboration, joint accountability or co-creation of safety, honesty, openness and a non-judgmental approach. A safe relationship involves supervisors demonstrating genuine interest in the supervisee as a person and a professional, offering regular, predictable supervision meetings times which are private, uninterrupted and 'safe'.

A safe supervisory relationship is one that provides a foundation for learning. The knowledge requirements for supervisors are vast. They include expert theoretical knowledge of child abuse

and neglect, supervision and leadership, a sound knowledge of policy and procedure with organisational awareness, practice wisdom and self knowledge.

- *The emotionally demanding nature of the work requires the supervisor to demonstrate attunement to the emotional support needs of their practitioner, within the context of a strong professional relationship. Supervisor skills based on sound knowledge of secondary stress or vicarious trauma, would be essential.*

This supposition is confirmed and extended. Casework in child and family practice is emotionally demanding. It can also involve incidents of threat or actual assault, work with trauma and tragedy and a workplace culture that is experienced as unsafe and unrelenting in terms of workload demands. In addition, the wider community does not understand or value the work that practitioners do. Supervisors do need a high level of self regulation and self knowledge, along with an understanding of the implications of vicarious trauma in order to proactively respond to the emotional needs of their supervisees.

- *Supervisors who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more likely to motivate, maintain and develop their staff.*

This supposition is confirmed and extended. Both transformational leadership practices and distributive, power sharing leadership practices (Hughes & Wearing, 2013) are more likely to motivate, maintain and develop staff. Leadership skills need to be 'modelled' in the workplace and include visible, open and transparent communication processes. Effective supervisors demonstrate consistency and fairness, a commitment to natural justice and social justice principles, and are open to dissent and challenge.

- *Wider organisational constraints and issues needs to be managed and mediated by the supervisor, who is responsible for administration of practitioner workload and caseload mix.*

This supposition is confirmed and extended to incorporate the wider organisational facilitators and constraints and the impact of the wider community.

The wider organisation may privilege ‘efficiency over effectiveness’, maintaining a culture that is not conducive to safety, reflection and learning. As a result of negative media and public ambivalence about the State intervening in family life, the wider community may not have a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of practitioners’ work. Within this context, effective supervisors can advocate for their supervisees and promote wider organisational and community awareness and sensitivity.

- *A model of supervision which articulates these requirements should form the basis of a policy for child and family practice supervision.*

A response to this final supposition is presented in the following Chapter. The research findings presented clearly endorse and extend the first four suppositions.

Chapter Summary

The potentially traumatic and unsafe nature of the work and the need for a safe supervisory relationship were the most significant themes identified from the interviews. Safety in the relationship was seen as a foundational requirement for effective supervision. The creation of a safe relationship was informed by an understanding of the need for calm within what could be a chaotic and distressing context, where supervisees could experience a sense of being valued and were challenged to learn.

The research findings present insights into the perspectives of supervisors and supervisees and the findings indicate that supervision of child and family practice is highly complex work, requiring sound theoretical and procedural knowledge, practice wisdom and self knowledge. Theoretical knowledge required includes advanced practice frameworks along with expertise in leadership and management of people and process.

Effective supervisors demonstrate a high level of self knowledge and personal maturity in the workplace and model the values and skills that they want to promote in their supervisees, including self regulation and self care, integrity, honesty and a commitment to social and natural justice.

The wider context within which the work and supervision of the work take place is highly influential, and shows a need for organisational policy that endorse supervision to be matched by an organisational culture that actively supports reflective practice and high quality supervision. The wider community's understanding of practice is limited, informed by sometimes sensationalised media reports. This can have a demoralising impact on the workforce, who need to feel that they are valued in undertaking important work.

The next Chapter integrates these findings with relevant literature and develops a conceptual framework for effective supervision based on this analysis. On the basis of the conceptual framework, a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed.

Chapter Six

Conceptual Framework and Practice Model

This Chapter extends the initial findings in order to integrate the emerging themes with the literature. The Chapter is presented in four parts. It commences in Part One with a summary of the themes identified in the initial phase of analysis, discussed in the preceding Chapter. In Part Two, the next level of analysis is presented, which incorporates the findings of the literature review. The literature is integrated with the findings of this research and presented in the form of a conceptual framework for effective supervision and supported by the literature as being core components of effective supervision. In Part Three of this Chapter, a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed based on the wider conceptual framework and its implementation is discussed. The Chapter concludes with a summary.

Part One: Summarising the Eleven Core Themes

Eleven core themes emerged in the analysis of the interviews and are reported on in some detail in the previous Chapter. The data were analysed drawing upon an ecological-developmental frame of reference (Bronfennbrenner, 1979; Belsky, 1980) and consequently have implications for individual supervisors, the supervisory relationship, the organisational context and the wider community. The features of effective supervision concomittant with the eleven key themes emerging from the analysis are re-visited briefly here.

Safety

A ‘safe’ professional relationship, founded on trust, collaboration, joint accountability, honesty, openness and a non-judgmental approach, underpins effective supervision. Effective supervision considers and works with issues of power, gender, culture and difference. Effective supervisors value their staff, demonstrating genuine interest in the supervisee, and leaving an ‘imprint’ of trustworthiness and predictability.

Proactive Responses to the Emotional Impact of the Work

A calming supervisory presence, attuned to the needs of the supervisee, facilitates and empowers staff to work with uncertainty and anxiety, and may proactively address the emotional impact of the work.

Learning and Growth

An effective supervisory relationship extends supervisee learning through models of teaching and learning that promotes safe, critical reflection on practice and performance.

Three knowledge areas were identified as requisites for effective supervision. These are discussed below.

Expert Theoretical Knowledge of Practice, Supervision and Leadership

Knowledge, skills and value requirements for supervisors include firstly theoretical knowledge. This includes expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership. Knowledge includes an understanding of and respect for 'different approaches to child rearing. Wider theoretical knowledge, in particular complexity theory and ecological developmental theory, informs the way that supervisors approach the work, giving them a broad perspective on child abuse and neglect, supported by a multi-dimensional systemic approach. The body of knowledge informing supervision, leadership and management includes emotional intelligence and self knowledge, and models of leadership including transformational leadership.

Knowing Policy, Process, Procedure and Organisational Awareness

A second body of knowledge required is procedural knowledge, which encompasses the working knowledge of policy (including legislation), procedure and process requirements needed to undertake the work.

Practice wisdom and self knowledge

A third body of knowledge related to the supervisors' familiarity with the work as practitioners themselves, and their ability to demonstrate the practice wisdom gleaned from their own experiences. Practice wisdom and personal maturity were seen as ingredients that made an important contribution to practitioners' capacity to develop an effective supervisory relationship.

Leadership Skills

Skills were described as those behaviours that demonstrated expert theoretical knowledge in the workplace. Skills were also articulated as approaches that create a reflective learning space for supervisees to conceptualise their practice in partnership with supervisors. Leadership skills included transparency and consistency, modelling self regulation and self awareness, and distributed power and authority.

Integrity, Honesty and a Commitment to Natural and Social Justice

Values such as integrity and honesty, and a commitment to social justice and natural justice principles, underpinned the creation of a safe, mutually-respectful supervisory relationship, and are clearly elements of effective supervision.

Balancing the Functions of Supervision and Role Tension

The potential for tensions between the different functions of supervision is a challenging and complex issue, and requires supervisors to be consistent and proactive in their endeavours to balance the competing functions of their role within the context of organisational priorities and wider community pressure. An effective supervisor integrates the knowledge, skills and values required to perform the role, while keeping the child at the centre of all that they do.

Management processes constraining and supporting practice

Developing, implementing and maintaining models of management that promote 'business insight and good governance' are important. Organisational policy can be developed to enhance rather than constrain practice. Leaders can promote an organisational culture that values effective supervision, critical reflection and continuous learning.

Community Understanding and Valuing the work

The wider community needs to develop a sophisticated understanding of the work in child and family practice, and recogise the complexity of issues faced by vulnerable children and families. Deeper understanding and appreciation would enable the community to respect and value more highly the work of those engaged in professional practice in this field.

Summary

After identifying the eleven Core Themes, I returned to the conceptual framework informing the study (Belsky, 1980) to integrate them. Belsky's adaption of Bronfenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological Development (Belsky, 1980; Bronfennbrenner, 1979) informs the study design including the research methodology and interview questions.

Initially, I grouped the themes according to the level in Belsky's framework that they corresponded to. My next task was to consider my findings in the context of the existing theoretical and research literature. My findings essentially confirmed and extended the literature in ways which will be discussed in Part Two of this Chapter. What follows is an integration of the core themes that emerged from the interviews and the literature. A conceptual framework for supervision is proposed. This is one which incorporates considerations for effective supervision at the ontogenic, micro, exo and macro levels.

Part Two: A Conceptual Framework for Effective Supervision

The conceptual framework draws upon Bronfrenbrenner's Topological Model of Ecological Development (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979) and, more specifically, on Belsky's modification of this model (Belsky, 1980). This modification incorporates ontogenic development in order to extend the model's relevance to a multi-systemic understanding of child maltreatment (Belsky 1980). The conceptual framework therefore includes the four levels of (a) ontogenic development, (b) the micro system, (c) the exo system, and (d) the macro system.

Building on the findings of this research, each of the levels identified above is described in relation to effective supervision. It is important to note that the 'levels' of analysis are not seen in isolation. The four levels are 'nested' in the way that Bronfennbrenner (1979) and Belsky (1980) originally conceptualised. By focusing on the 'nested' relationships between each of the levels, attention moves away from the individual components. highlighting the relationship between the dynamic processes at each of the levels. What follows is a detailed description of each of the levels within the framework and some discussion of the relationships between them.

Level One: Ontongenic Development

In Belsky's framework (1980) ontological development considers the individual with particular reference to what they bring to the relationship. Attention is paid to developmental history and the potential impact that early experiences may have had on the individual's capacity to develop relationships as a parent or child. These factors may not be predictive in and of themselves; however they may provide important information about personal capabilities or predisposing issues.

Developmental History: Supervisee and Supervisor

An implication of the foundational principle in supervision of 'safety' is the active consideration of the developmental histories of both supervisee and supervisor. The neuro-science literature

indicates that a sense of safety is a prerequisite for the ability to regulate affect and to process complex and challenging information (Perry, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2005). The study findings are supported by the literature (Morrison 2001, 2005) in highlighting that the personal development and professional background of the individual supervisee and supervisor may strongly influence the individual's perception of the nature of the problems faced by children and families and, therefore, their ideas about appropriate intervention. Five key areas of developmental history and current development relevant to both supervisee and supervisor were identified in this research and are discussed below. They include: individual values and beliefs, previous experiences of supervision or 'supervision history', knowledge development and the development of individual resiliency. Finally consideration of the development of individuals' identities as leaders and models of leadership are discussed.

Individual values and beliefs about childhood and parenting

The question of 'Who do we think we are?' based on 'Where have we come from?' is at the heart of this developmental area. The data emergent from the interviews suggests that it is important to consider early experiences of childhood and being parented, of relationships and parenting or being a carer, of exposure to trauma and adversity, within the context of culture, gender, religion and socio-economic history. Interview respondents indicated that sensitive supervisory discussions may evolve as a safe and trusting relationship develops, when each party can be assured of a non-judgmental response to their personal narrative. The need to actively examine and 'work with' the relevant historical issues, in particular issues of 'difference', was indicated by the research respondents.

In Chapter Five I identified one supervisor respondent who had a background working on building sites and with young people in residential care. This respondent noted that abusive behaviour rolled off her 'like water off a duck's back,' whereas her younger female staff who 'haven't lived in those environments' were much more affected by aggression.

This supervisor had learned that an understanding of her supervisee's developmental history would assist her to offer appropriate and timely emotional support to her staff.

These findings are consistent with literature that identifies personal development as relevant to the professional 'lens' that the individual brings to the complexity of the work in child and family practice (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Ferguson, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000, Hughes & Pengelly, 1997; Morrison, 1993, 2001, 2005).

Personal experiences of adversity per se may or may not have current relevance to current professional capacity. Supervisor respondents, in particular, noted that the extent to which individuals has resolved these issues, and/or were aware of any potential emotional impacts, was highly relevant in terms of their response to issues arising in professional practice.

Implicit in the literature is a sense that a failure to consider the 'whole' person in terms of their developmental history, would be to limit the potential for continuous professional growth (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gardner 2006; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Morrison, 2005).

According to the literature, individual values and beliefs that motivate and inspire individuals to work in the helping professions are also important considerations. Personal views about structural disadvantage including poverty and powerlessness, the role of the state in addressing child abuse and neglect, and the rights of children all impact upon what each individual 'brings' to supervision (Adamson, 2011; Morrison, 2001, 2005; Schulman, 1993).

Individual resiliency

Individual resiliency is the second developmental consideration. In the context of a potentially adverse and highly emotionally charged environment (Morrison, 2001, 2005), professionals require

a capacity for healthy functioning, to perform optimally in their work. The interviews highlighted the potentially traumatic nature of the work, and the need for self care, self awareness and—for supervisors—self regulation. In light of the emotionally charged nature of the work in child and family practice, individual resiliency is said to be the extent to which individuals demonstrate factors which support resiliency (Beddoe, Davys & Adamson, 2011; Coffey, Dugdill, & Tattersall, 2004; Collins, 2008). These individual factors have been identified in the literature as including:

> Hardiness, Optimism and Hope, Coping Mechanisms, Coping Mechanisms, Cognitive Behavioural Approaches, Dispositional Goal Orientation, Self–Efficacy and Strong Valuing of Practice, Competence and Knowledge, Work-Life Balance, Subjective Well Being, Emotional Competence, Reflection and Empathy.
>
> (Beddoe et al., 2011, p. 103)

The literature refers to emotional competence, reflection and empathy as important factors to consider in the context of the work, including regulation of mood, empathetic reflection and a capacity to contain distress (Figley, 2002; Gibbs, 2001; Hernandez, Engstrom, & Gangsei, 2010; Morrison 1993, 2005; Wonnacott, 2012). These factors also underpin an individual's capacity to form or participate in a 'safe' supervisory relationship. They inform the extent to which individuals take responsibility for self care in what can be a turbulent professional environment. The capacity for and demonstration of 'exquisite empathy' is identified as one of the key 'protective' characteristics of the resilient practitioner (Harrison & Westwood 2009). Rather than becoming desensitized to chronic emotional pain and distress, these practitioners embrace a sense of 'empathetic attunement' with their clients and draw satisfaction from staying close to the issues that they present with. Of interest here then, is the extent to which individuals can 'stay close' without becoming overwhelmed.

The literature indicates that the supervisor's role as an emotional 'container' (Wosket & Page in Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001) is premised on their capacity to individually 'model' a calm and regulated

approach to the work. The importance of emotional containment was raised in the context of a safe supervisory relationship by seven of the ten supervisees interviewed, who noted the potentially distressing nature of the work. A core theme emerging from the interviews was that of the need for a proactive response to the emotional impact of the work. This theme implies a capacity for resiliency in the face of adversity, on the part of both supervisee and supervisor.

Individual supervision history

A third developmental consideration is that of the individual's history of being supervised. The consideration of an individual's supervision 'history' emerged primarily from the literature (Morrison 2001, 2005), and involves the identification of the expectations, hopes and fears each individual brings to the supervisory relationship. Consideration of these issues at the commencement of a supervisory relationship may enable a transparent understanding of mutual expectations and responsibilities to be 'contracted', and reviewed for relevance on a regular basis. This requires a preparedness on the part of supervisees to identify their perceived knowledge 'gaps' and areas of personal and professional vulnerability. Based on the literature pertaining to strengths based perspectives, individuals might examine 'what has worked' for each of them in the past during supervision and what elements of those experiences might be brought to current relationships (Berg & de Jong, 2004; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Early & Glen Maye, 2000; Lietz & Rounds, 2009; Lohrbach & Sawyer, 2004, Schuck & Wood, 2011).

Individual knowledge development

A fourth developmental consideration is that of previous learning on the part of supervisee and supervisor. The significance of previous learning was primarily identified from the literature (Morrison, 2001, 2005; Munson 2002) and from my own experience of the current context, and includes historical knowledge development relevant to the supervisee and supervisor. In my own experience, pre-service qualifications and post-qualifying professional experiences are important for the development of one's identity and developing practice as a professional. The identification

of the influence of pre- and post-qualifying programs and relevant professional experience is consequently important for understanding the respective sources of knowledge that the supervisee and supervisor draw upon. For example, some literature indicated that theoretical approaches informing the practitioners' understanding and approach may be unfamiliar to supervisors coming from a different pre-service qualifying background (Gibbs, et al., 2009; Munson, 2002).

My own familiarity with the current contexts within which supervision takes place leads me to emphasise the value of identifying potential 'difference' in pre-service qualifications and theoretical background, with a view to invoking a strengths based perspective to examine how each individual will contribute their knowledge in supervision.

Procedural knowledge requirements within a given agency may be uniform, with practice standards, protocols and legislative requirements equally applicable to the supervisor and supervisee. Other sources of knowledge (Gibbs et al., 2009; Hudson 1997; Munro, 2002, 2008; Thompson & West, 2013) include background knowledge, empirical knowledge and self knowledge, and, along with procedural knowledge, inform the development of practice wisdom and practice knowledge, and may not be shared or congruent within the Supervisee/Supervisor dyad. This is entirely consistent with the interview data, which indicated the value of supervisors' capacity to give guidance and direction across a vast range of theoretical knowledge relating to practice and to the specific procedural, process or legislative requirements of the role.

In summary, an active consideration of this particular aspect of 'developmental history' might inform the best possible 'match' of supervisee and supervisor in a given situation. It may also inform strategies for knowledge sharing on the basis of a collaborative relationship.

Individual identity and development as a leader

A fifth and final individual developmental consideration is that of leadership development and identity. The literature suggests that the extent to which individual supervisees and supervisors identify themselves as leaders and take responsibility for leadership behaviour may impact on the

supervisory relationship, supervision and practice (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Gibbs et al., 2009; Morrison, 2010).

Supervisees may not be in formally prescribed leadership roles within their organisation. As practitioners in child and family practice, however, this conceptual framework considers the extent to which they demonstrate leadership in practice innovation, ideas and advocacy on behalf of clients, within the organisation and wider community.

Supervisor leadership behaviour that inspires and motivates practitioners in child and family practice emerged as a priority consideration from both the contemporary literature and the interview data (Gibbs, Dwyer, & Vivekanda, 2009; Morrison, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012). This behaviour is consistent with developments in neuro-science and, as a consequence, has a focus on relationship (Bloom & Farragher 2011; Perry, 1997, 2005, 2009, 2013; Zwanenberg 2010). Relational neuroscience identifies the foundational role of the neural system in regulating the stress response via relating and relationship (Perry, 1997, 2005, 2009, 2013). Humans have been described as having a 'relational contagion' and it is said that the direction of this contagion will follow the power differential (Perry, 2013). There is evidence both from the findings of this study and from the literature that supervisors who display well-regulated leadership behaviours may enable their staff members to move their internal state from distress to calm because of the presence of this 'contagion'. A useful strategy for individual leadership development might be to explore the capacity to be informed by supervisee's individual arousal state and to respond 'relationally' (Perry, 2013).

The development of 'distributed leadership' skills (Lawler, 2007; Hughes & Wearing, 2013), however, extends the supervisors' focus to the process of the group of supervisees, with the leader taking responsibility for developing the capacity of others within the organisation in order that they, too, can take on leadership roles. These ideas highlight the significance of partnership and collaborative leadership which distribute power and responsibility.

Summary

In summary, the ontogenic level of analysis, focusing on individual development, is an important consideration in the conceptual framework for effective supervision. This level of analysis takes include account factors including personal and professional growth, and developmental issues relevant to understanding what each individual brings to the supervisory relationship.

The 'nested' nature of the conceptual framework is highlighted in the description of resiliency factors and leadership approaches, in that each of these will be also be evident in the context of the next level, the micro system, or the supervisory relationship. Clearly, as is the case in the Bronfenbrenner model (1979) and Belsky's adaption of the model (1980), individual 'levels' within this conceptual framework should not be considered in isolation. The implications of this in practice will be discussed when the model is presented in Part Three of this Chapter

Level Two: The Micro System

In Belsky's (1980) framework this system is concerned with the examination of family relationships and behaviour patterns; it places the developing child at the centre of the nested systems. Belsky (1980) was particularly interested in the dynamic interaction between the developmental history of individual family members and the patterns of behaviour within the relationship, which may predispose the parent to abuse or neglect the developing child. The micro-system central to the conceptual model proposed here is the supervisory relationship.

The Supervisory Relationship.

In light of the 'nested' nature of the conceptual model, the preceding section, outlining individual developmental characteristics, made some reference to implications of individual development for the supervisory relationship. This section elaborates on the supervisory relationship. The theoretical literature highlights the importance of the nature and quality of the supervisory

relationship (Cousins 2004; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Kadushin, 1976; Harkness & Kadushin 2002, Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Morrison, 1993, 2001, 2005, Munro 2002; Proctor, 1988; Schulman, 2003; Richards & Payne with Shepperd, 1990; Rushton & Nathan, 1996; Wonnacott, 2012).

The interview data indicated that the purpose of the supervisory relationship was consistent with Kadushin's model (Kadushin 1976; Kadushin & Harkness, 2002), which puts the vulnerable child at the centre of the supervisory relationship. While the focus of supervision is the child's well being within the context of their family and their community (DHS, 2007), this research found that effective supervision is equally concerned with supervisee safety. The supervisory relationship may be informed by the neurobiology of trauma and relationship (Perry, 2005, 2009, 2013). The literature and the interview data suggest that effective supervisory relationships also facilitate deep learning and professional growth (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

This research found that the creation and maintenance of a 'safe' supervisory relationship requires the supervisor to demonstrate genuine interest in the supervisee as a person and a professional, and to offer regular, predictable supervision meetings which are private and uninterrupted. According to both supervisee and supervisor respondents, safety is a pivotal component of the relationship, with other key supervision functions able to occur only when safety exists. Respondents and the literature suggest that contemporary, effective supervisors actively consider and work with issues of power, gender, culture and 'difference' in the context of the relationship (Davys & Beddoe 2010; Gibbs, et al., 2009; Morrison 2010; Wonnacott, 2012).

The four functions of a core model of effective supervision are undertaken in the context of an effective supervisory relationship. A 'safe' supervisory relationship has been identified in this research as fundamental to effective supervision, with supervisors demonstrating transparent ethical principles of conduct and practice. Whilst the supervisee and supervisor relationship was seen by respondents to be pivotal, supervisors were identified by respondents as holding simultaneous responsibilities to the staff member, the service user, the organisational setting, and

the self. The purpose of supervision, identified above, suggests that the nature of the supervisee/supervisor relationship is critical—however, ultimately, the supervisors' primary responsibility is to the service user in child and family practice: the child. One supervisor described the complex task of navigating and balancing multiple responsibilities, whilst maintaining a sound supervisory relationship, by saying:

It takes a lot of energy, thought, and it's not seamless. . . . New workers don't always understand, and that the hardest thing for them to get their heads around, is that supervision isn't just to meet their needs, but it's also to ensure a service to the client. (Child Protection Supervisor 4)

The four functions of supervision are explained and explored in Part Three of this Chapter in further detail. What follows is an exploration of the exo and macro levels within the conceptual framework.

Level Three: The Exo System

According to Belsky,

> Basic to an understanding of the ecological approach to human development is an appreciation of the embeddness of the individual and the family within larger social units. *(*Belsky 1980, p.327)

The primary interest of the exo-system is identified as the 'world of work' by Belsky, which in relation to the developing child includes parental unemployment and the neighbourhood (Belsky 1980). In applying this domain of Belsky's conceptual framework, we focus on the organisational context within which supervision is located.

Organisational Business Processes Promoting Efficient and Effective, Reflective Practice.

The goal of becoming a reflective organisation is an aspirational one, particularly when the aspiration is to be efficient, effective and reflective. It was, however, one which is drawn from this

research finding. Many supervisors strove to create and maintain a culture of reflection across their teams. In this sense, reflective practice is not seen as a disconnected, separate activity but integral, supported by structures and the culture of the workplace, affecting organisational decisions, priorities, and business processes.

A key insight drawn primarily from the interviews with supervisors is that effective supervisors may implement systems of governance for limited resources and, in doing so, will ensure fair and transparent processes, including those to guide rather than prescribe professional practice. Interview respondents indicated that there is much to be learned from efficiency management in business, where systems and processes are developed to ensure efficient operation of large scale industries.

Managerialism has been described in Chapter Three as the adoption of market principles, including competition and efficiency, to the governance of welfare policy and practice (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Gardner, 2006). The literature has strongly critiqued the influence of managerialism on organisations and the delivery of services (Adamson, 2011; Gardner, 2006; Hafford-Letchfield, 2010; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Jones & May,1992; McBeath & Meezan, 2010; McDonald,et al., 2011; Munro, 2002, 2008, 2011; Parton, 1998, 2009, 2011; Zwanenberg, 2010). These authors highlight the reduction of professional autonomy for social work practitioners, expressing concern about collaboration and partnerships with service users and across the service sector being replaced by hierarchical systems and relationships.

The findings of this research suggest a new social work perspective in relation to supervision and managerialism. Supervisor respondents were mindful of the limitations of the application of managerialist business tools and techniques, including key performance indicators, monitoring of compliance with agreed procedures and regular reporting on ‘performance’ against these measures. The enormous growth in the child and family practice ‘industry’, identified in Chapter Three, however, implies a requirement for good governance of limited resources, using efficient operating systems. A key message from supervisor respondents in this context was that the

effective application of business systems was a vital component of the management function for supervisors. Effective systems measuring and monitoring 'performance' in terms of case allocation, case 'throughput', or the frequency with which supervision sessions are conducted within a particular work unit, are examples where measures are needed, in particular for supervisors responsible for large staffing groups, overseeing many hundreds of cases. What was also evident was recognition that these systems did not measure effectiveness, and that a range of processes, including direct observation of practice, were put in place by supervisors to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

As I have indicated, there are inevitable dilemmas for supervisors when the time required for practitioner knowledge development and critical reflection competes with the requirement to attend to key performance indicators and efficiency measures (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Munro, 2002, 2011). Supervisor respondents, supported by an organisational culture that privileges both professionalism and efficiency, indicated that they may need to openly deal with the tension where it arises in order to actively privilege both reflection and efficiency. Rather than being constrained by business systems and processes, supervisor respondents embraced the need to actively manage and govern, whilst promoting a culture of reflection and development.

Trauma Informed Organisational Culture.

A trauma informed organisational culture is one described by the literature as nurturing, healing and supportive of strong team relationships and networks—one where safe supervisory relationships can flourish (Bloom & Farragher 2011; Bloom 2007; Butterfield, Trevino, Wade, & Ball, 2005). Organisations have been described as living organisms with complex systems which adapt to environmental stressors (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Hughes & Wearing, 2007, 2013; Gardner, 2006; Perry, 2013).

Interview respondents typically identified stress factors within their organisations as: staff turnover and staff shortage, unmanageable caseloads, and high levels of conflict, aggression and trauma

within workloads, both as a result of the work itself but also as a consequence of fractured professional relationships across the service system. Added to this was a sense of shame that some of the statutory child protection staff felt in response to the actions or policies of organisation.

Contemporary literature suggests that organisations may experience chronic stress, leading to chronic 'hyper arousal' (Bloom & Farragher, 2011). This may result in damaging patterns of communication, poor decision making and a culture that inhibits creativity and learning and discourages or punishes dissent (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Butterfield et. al., 2005; Morrison 2010; Munro, 2011).

Conversely, an organisational culture that is 'trauma informed' has an organisational culture that facilitates strong and open communication, tolerates and values critical feedback and challenge and encourages people to grow and to learn (Morrison, 2010; Munro 2011).

A trauma informed culture is one where effective supervision is prioritised at all levels of the organisational hierarchy (Morrison, 2001, 2005). Organisational 'memory' is valued in this environment and new policies and organisational innovations build on past learning rather than rejecting it as no longer relevant (Bloom & Farragher, 2011).

Trauma Informed Organisational Policy

It is suggested here that trauma informed organisational policy integrates trauma awareness and responsiveness into policies, and that the implementation of trauma informed policy is evaluated.

For example, trauma informed organisational policies supporting human resource management are sensitive to the complexity of the work and reflect a holistic approach to staff care. Trauma informed supervision policy would facilitate the creation of a safe, reflective space for supervision to occur, within which accountability requirements were managed and a supervisee's needs for learning and emotional support were addressed.

Trauma Informed Senior Leaders

The emergent data suggests that trauma informed leaders incorporate an understanding of trauma into their work and are informed about, and sensitive to, trauma-related issues present in service users, staff and the service system. Based on this finding, trauma informed leadership practice is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, and emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both staff and service users.

The behaviour of senior leaders within the trauma informed organisation can have a significant impact on staff. Senior leaders who practice in a manner that shows them to value their staff, and who maintain safe supervisory relationships with those who report directly to them, contribute to the development of an organisational culture which privileges a balanced approach to supervision (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Morrison, 2010; Perry, 1997, 2005, 2009, 2013). Senior leaders may act as a 'buffer' between their staff and the wider community, particularly when the community appears ambivalent about or is openly mistrusting of those in frontline child and family practice (Bloom & Farragher, 2011; Morrison, 2010; Perry, 2013). Senior leadership behaviours could include publicly celebrating good practice, promoting public knowledge and contributing to media debates about children, childhood and child and family practice (Liddell, 1993; Mendes, 1994; Munro, 2011).

Level Four: The Macro System

Belsky suggested that

> By examining the larger cultural fabric in which the individual, the family and the community are inextricably interwoven, we can analyze the role of the macro system in child maltreatment. (Belsky,1980, p.328).

This conceptual framework will focus on the community context, within which the supervision of child and family practice is located.

A Community Valuing Children and Child and Family Practice

The literature indicates that a community demands the highest level of professional service and response in order to value and 'celebrate' good practice in this sector and develop the maturity to overcome its ambivalence about children and childhood and the fundamental rights of the child (Liddell, 1993; Parton, 2009, 2011). Interview data suggested that valuing children and those who work with children as child and family practitioners would be evidenced by the public valuing of those professionals engaged in child and family practice. This would be consistent with current community attitudes toward emergency services including police, fire fighters and nurses. All are seen as providing a worthy community role which is highly valued.

Child protection is an emergency service, mandated by the community who require a professional response to the problem of child abuse and neglect. Child protection practitioners are involved in work which can be lifesaving for children and their families, yet according to interview respondents they are not publicly valued in the way that nurses, ambulance drivers and doctors are.

The features of a community that values children and child and family practice could be seen similar to with those qualities and features of an effective supervisor. Like a supervisor, the community needs to demonstrate a commitment to social justice, a capacity to value diversity and difference, and a calm, non-judgmental approach to difficult matters.

A Community Understanding Complexity

Interview respondents in this research stressed the demanding nature of child and family work, particularly in terms of practice and systems complexities. The interviewees also lamented the failure of the community to understand these complexities, expressing frustration about sensationalised media coverage of their work.

A sophisticated community understanding of the complexity of issues faced by child and family practitioners would potentially serve to alleviate this frustration and to enable the community to value practice. Commonly identified characteristics of complex systems include firstly multiplicity, or many interacting components; secondly, interdependence, where a number of those components will have critical connections and, thirdly, diversity, with those components being more or less diverse (Sargut & McGrath, 2011). These defining characteristics provide a contrast to other systems, which are essentially able to be predicted, in light of their established and known patterns. In complex systems, child and family practice supervisors cannot predict the outcomes of certain complex interactions, and may face unintended consequences as a result of their actions or decisions. Given that complexity is an inherent feature of contemporary communities (Green 2006; Munro 2011; Sargut & McGrath, 2011; Snowden & Boone, 2007; Stacey, 2000), effective supervisors work with evolving and complex systems, rather than denying their existence by seeking concrete solutions to complex problems (Munro, 2011). The community, in turn, can support good practice in this context by avoiding simplistic demands for 'linear' and unrealistic solutions to complex problems.

Such change could be encouraged, at the community level, by adopting a new approach to mass media coverage of child abuse and neglect, which would endeavour to convey some of the complexity of decision making in these matters, based on those 'unknowable' outcomes and ambiguous scenarios. Formal inquiries, investigations, royal commissions and audits into the performance of the 'system' responsible for child and family practice would avoid the tendency to scapegoat the individual professional or group and to offer linear solutions, including more training and more supervision (Brouwer, 2009, Cummings, 2012).

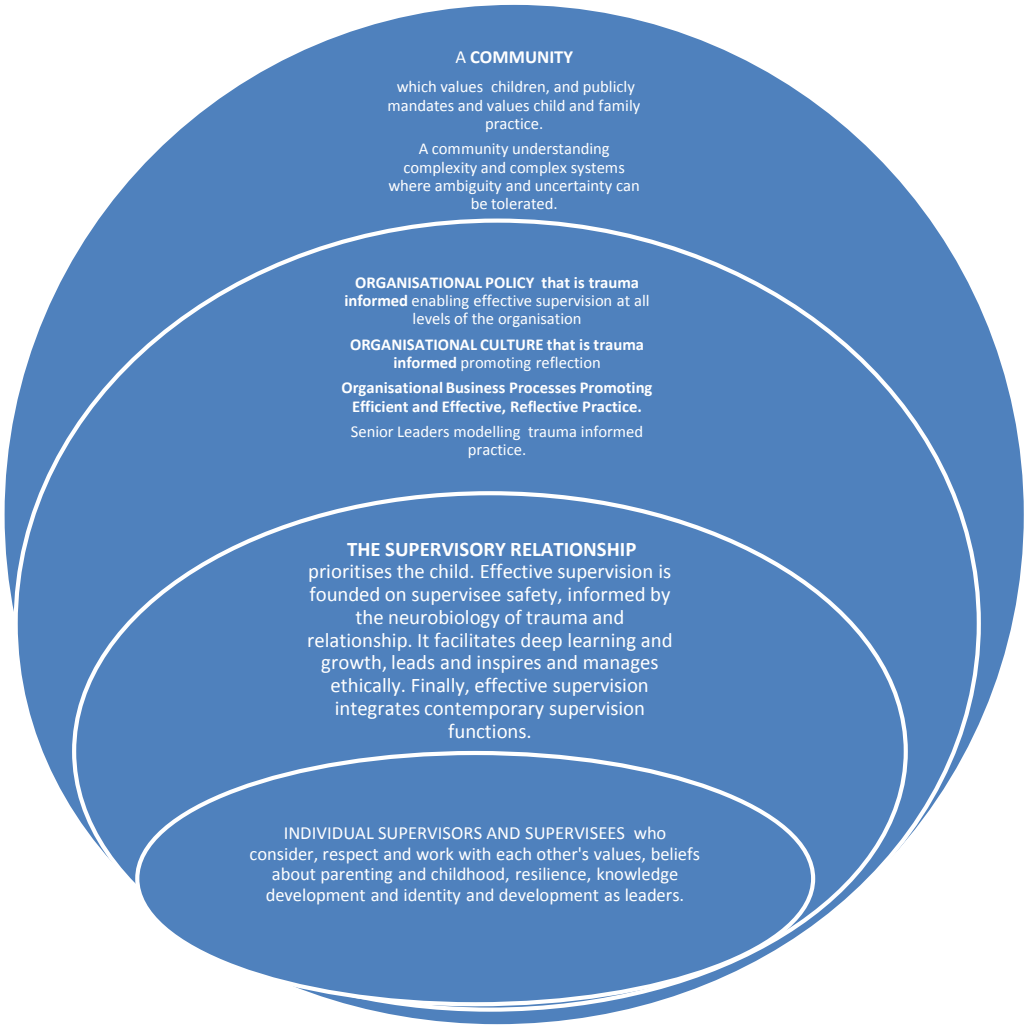
In summary, the proposed conceptual framework for effective supervision is based on an adaption Belsky's multi-dimensional analysis of the phenomenon of child maltreatment, in which four divergent layers are presented as integrated or 'nested' (Belsky, 1980). In proposing a further adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's seminal work (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I have employed a

conceptual framework that translates the levels of Belsky's model into the context of child and family practice.

Embedded within the micro system, a contemporary 'core' model of supervision is presented. A diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework for effective supervision is at Figure 6 below.

The third part of this Chapter will present a Core Model for Effective Supervision.

Figure 6: A Conceptual Framework for Effective Supervision



Part Three: Keeping the Child in Mind: A Core Model of Supervision for the Twenty-First Century

In this part of the Chapter a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed. This model is conceptualised as emerging from an analysis of the interview data and integrated with the literature. A CMES can act as a 'container for creativity and chaos' (Wosket & Page cited in Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001, p. 17) and the advantages of basing supervisory practice on a core model of supervision include:

> Providing knowledge and security . .Establishing a reliable framework . . . Providing way markers . . . Averting the danger of random eclecticism . . . Building confidence . . . Managing doubts and insecurities . . . [and] providing techniques and intervention strategies[.] (Wosket & Page, cited in Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001, pp.16-18)

A CMES is proposed based on the three traditional supervision functions: education, administration and support (Kadushin, 1976; Schulman, 2003). The fourth supervisory function, mediation, first suggested by Richards and Payne with Shepperd (1990), is replaced by 'advocacy' in this model, with mediation seen as a component of the management and leadership function.

The ultimate purpose of supervision, in accordance with Kadushin's perspective, to 'deliver agency clients the best possible service' (1976, p. 23), and is conceptualised in this model as keeping the child in mind and at the centre of all considerations in the supervisory relationship.

Overview of the Core Model of Effective Supervision.

The CMES is comprised of four integrated functions which are summarised below. At the heart of the core model is the child and a guiding principle of constant consideration of the child, with the child considered in the context of their family and community. The ultimate purpose of supervision, in the context of competing priorities and demands within a complex environment, is to ensure that

the child is kept ‘in mind’ and at the heart of supervisory reflections (Kadushin, 1976, 2002; DHS, 2007).

The first function of the CMES, ‘safety’, emerges from Core Theme One of this research and from Core Theme Two: ‘Proactive responses to the emotional impact of the work’. ‘Safety’ is the function that transcends all others. The central guiding principle is that safety within an effective supervisory relationship is co-created and maintained by supervisor and supervisee. In effective supervision, the implementation of ‘support’ is, in the context of a safe relationship, based on a working knowledge of relational neurobiology, and actively takes into acount issues of power, gender, culture and difference (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs et al., 2009; Morrison, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012).

The second function is knowledge and skill development, developing empirical and theoretical knowledge, procedural knowledge and self knowledge. This function is based upon Core Theme Three: ‘Learning and growth’ Core Theme Four: ‘Expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership,’ and Core Theme Five: ‘Knowing Policy, Process, Procedure and Organisational Awareness. Drawing from the literature, evidence informed approaches to learning, including modeling, mentoring and coaching, are collaborative in nature and replace modernist perspectives that the supervisor holds all expertise (Davys and Beddoe, 2010). This function involves active exploration, critical reflection and integration of knowledge, skills and values. Knowledge development aims to empower supervisees to work with ambiguity and uncertainty in a complex environment (Carroll, 2008; Dalzell & Sawyer, 2008; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gibbs et al., 2009; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).

The third function is management and leadership, based on Core Theme Seven: Leadership skills; Core Theme Nine: Balancing the functions of supervision and role tension, and Core Theme Ten: Management processes constraining and supporting practice. This function draws strategically upon managerialist approaches to enable enhanced governance, transparent processes, and fair

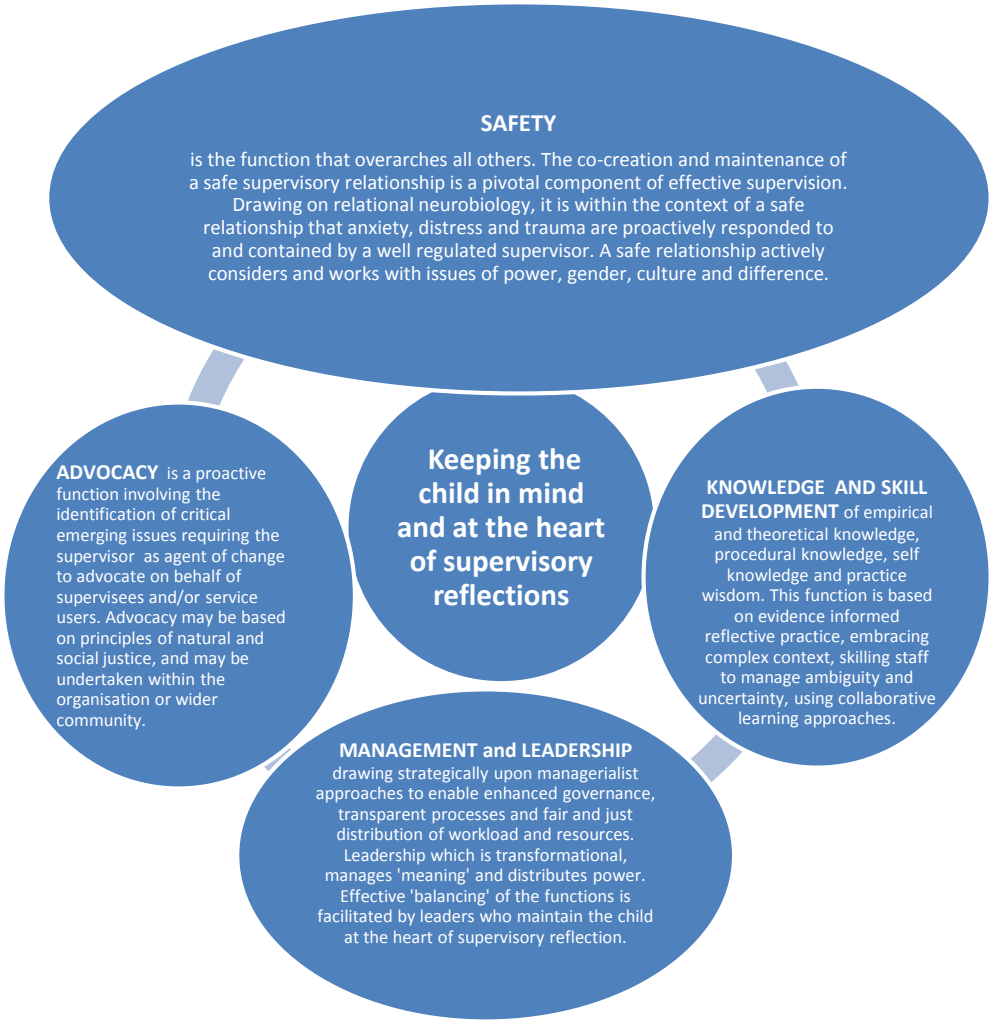
and just distribution of workloads and resources. Effective 'balancing' of the functions may be managed by keeping the child in mind and at the centre of reflection, and by mediating between supervisee and the wider organisation as appropriate. Transformational approaches to leadership that seek to appropriately distribute power are seen as those which are most congruent with social work values (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Lawler, 2007; Wonnacott, 2012; Zwanenberg, 2010).

The fourth function is advocacy. This function is based on Core Theme Eight: Integrity, honesty and a commitment to natural justice and social justice, and Core Theme Eleven: Community understanding and valuing the work.

Advocacy is a proactive function involving the identification and analysis of critical issues emerging in practice that require the supervisor, as an ‘agent of change’ to act as advocate. These issues may relate to issues of procedural fairness or natural justice within the organisation or, within the context of the wider community, may be based on social justice concerns. In this function the supervisor may strategise and advocate on behalf of supervisees and/or service users. The supervisor as advocate operates within the organisation and wider community, drawing upon the business acumen demonstrated in the management and leadership function, to strategically identify issues of concern, to advocate and to ‘manage up’ as appropriate (Gibbs et al., 2009; Morrison, 2001, 2005).

A diagrammatic representation of the proposed core model is at Figure 7.

Figure 7: Keeping the Child in Mind; A Core Model of Supervision for the Twenty-first Century.



Further detail in relation to the Core Supervision Model is outlined below.

Keeping the Child in Mind, and at the Heart of Supervisory Reflections.

The primary objective of supervision is to focus on the service delivered to the child, who is seen in the context of their family and community. To that end, the vulnerable child is central to the supervisory relationship. Whilst the four functions of supervision focus on supporting, developing, managing and leading, and advocating for supervisees, this work is undertaken not as an end in and of itself, but to strengthen the quality of practice that the child experiences. (DHS, 2002, 2007; Kadushin, 1979, 2002; Morrison, 2001, 2005; Munro, 2011).

There is some limited research evidence in the field of mental health indicating a positive relationship between the focus of social work supervision and enhanced client outcomes, based on the focus of supervision (Harkness & Hensley, 1991, 2001; Harkness & Poertner, 1989). A positive correlation between staff and client outcomes where the focus of supervision was focused specifically on the issues faced by the client, staff interventions and desired client outcomes (Harkness & Hensley, 1991).

Drawing from the interview data and the literature, effective supervisors endeavour to have a sustained focus on the safety and well being of the client child. This implies a focus on the quality of the relationship that the supervisee has developed with the child, including evidence of the supervisee's level of empathy with the child, which has been demonstrated to impact on client outcomes (Gerdes & Segal, 2011). Supervisory reflections might consider issues faced by the child, intervention strategies to be trialed and desired outcomes for this child, whilst facilitating a deepening of an empathetic response to the child. The capacity for supervisee empathy with children may be enhanced by the experience of an empathetic supervisor (Perry, 2013). This is explored in more detail in the function of 'safety, below.

Four Functions of Twenty-first Century Supervision;

Safety It is through the vehicle of a 'safe' supervisory relationship that effective supervision is facilitated. This function emerges from Core Theme One: 'Safety', and Core Theme Two: 'Proactive responses to the emotional impact of the work'. This is the function that is overarching all others, consistent with the pivotal finding of this research that a safe supervisory relationship transcended all of the other themes. The guiding principle is that safety within an effective supervisory relationship is co-created and maintained by supervisor and supervisee.

A 'safe' professional relationship offers an opportunity to actively explore and consider individual ontegenic issues. This research found that a 'safe' supervisory relationship has implications for both parties since it is founded on trust, collaboration, co-creation, honesty and openness. According to the interview respondents, supervisors who demonstrated commitment to the process of supervision, offering regular, predictable formal supervision meetings, may leave an 'imprint' within the relationship of consistency, reliability and trustworthiness. An empathetic approach (Harrison & Westwood, 2009) toward supervisees may trigger certain neurological responses, known as 'mirror nuerons' (Perry, 2013), which, in turn, may enhance the capacity of the supervisee to offer empathy to their clients (Gerdes & Segal, 2011; Perry, 2013).

The literature highlights the value of informal opportunities for consultation and guidance. Seizing upon 'teachable moments' and learning opportunities comprises an important component of the supervisory relationship (Carroll, 2010; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012). These informal learning opportunities cannot, according to both the literature and the interview respondents, replace the safety of a dedicated space and consistent time for formal supervision meetings. (Connolly & Morris, 2012; Wosket & Page in Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001).

A commitment to the process of supervision, including active participation in the consultation and reflection processes, was emphasised by both supervisor and supervisee research respondents, as was openness to critical reflection and respectful challenge (Morrison 2001, 2005; Wonnacott,

2012). A core theme emergent from the interview data suggests that the supervisory relationship needs to proactively address the emotional impact of the work. This was consistent with the literature suggesting that supervisees need to feel 'safe' enough to identify past trauma experiences and to reflect on the strategies that may be required for them to remain optimal in the work (Davys, 2001; Harrison & Westwood, 2009; Figley, 2002).

According to the literature, preventative self care plans for staff and appropriate responses to critical incidents and cumulative distress may be valuable tools for preventing and managing vicarious trauma (Figley, 2002). Relational neurobiology research indicates that it is within the context of the relationship that anxiety, distress and trauma may be contained by calm, well regulated supervisor (Perry, 2007, 2013; Van der Kolk, 2005).

Under the overarching function of 'Safety', the contemporary supervision literature highlights the need to work with issues of power, culture, gender and difference, with principles of anti-oppressive practice underpinning the supervisory relationship (Beddoe & Davys, 2010; Brown & Bourne, 1996; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000). That said, in child and family practice supervision within organisations is usually conducted within the context of a hierarchical relationship, where the supervisor has agency sanctioned power over the supervisee (Kadushin, 1979, 2002). This form of power is identified as mandated power, and involves the supervisor in delegating tasks, assigning responsibilities and monitoring the performance of individual supervisees (DHS, 2005). Within the hierarchical system these tasks clearly involve the use of power, which from a critical post-structural perspective (Healy, 2000) is acknowledged as appropriate within the context of the work.

This research found that effective supervisors of child and family practice exercise power and authority in the supervision, whilst empowering and supporting their supervisees. Whilst acknowledging an inherent tension within the role of supervisor, supervisor respondents identified the need for transparency and honesty in using their position of power, for example, in delegating new cases to supervisees. The second source is described as knowledge power. which is the

accumulated wisdom held by the supervisor that is brought to the supervisory relationship (Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). This power is shared in this conceptual model where the knowledge and wisdom of the supervisee is also recognised and validated (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000; Wonnacott, 2012). Similarly, interview respondents typically described a safe relationship as one where the power was shared and the relationship itself was co-created and maintained.

An implication is that an effective supervisory relationship is one which may incorporate multiple sources of knowledge and perspectives, emphasises collaboration, is sensitive to power, and the influence of context (Adamson 2011; Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). Both the literature and this research have considered the particular needs of indigenous supervisees, in terms of the incorporation of 'culturally explicit' models of supervision (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009). For Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners, this research indicated that supervisors of indigenous practitioners should consider the implications of being a member of the community and working 'with' the community in the context of child and family practice. One supervisor respondent suggested that:

> *There is high impact from [the Aboriginal] community. . . in supervision when you're working with an Aboriginal worker, who has this immense internal dialogue that comes from family experiences . . .. . some supervision is being able to talk about this . . . and yes that did happen and it's about acknowledging that that's occurred but it's also about trying to distinguish a perspective now between recreating traumatic histories and us as an Aboriginal workforce, really saying who we will be from this point on. (Supervisor 1)*

The advice from this interview respondent articulates some of the complexities for Aboriginal supervisees working in child and family practice within their community, and the need for a safe supervisory relationship in that context.

Knowledge and Skill Development A second function in the CMES is knowledge and skill development, and is based upon emergent Core Themes Three: Learning and Growth, Four: Expert theoretical knowledge of practice, supervision and leadership, and Five: Knowing policy, procedure and organisational awareness. The learning process is identified in the literature as a critical function of supervision (Connolly & Morris; 2012; Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Morrison 2001, 2005; Wonnacott, 2012). Learning is premised in the CMES on a 'safe' relationship, where supervisees have permission and space to 'creatively conceptualise' new approaches and practice strategies. Knowledge is defined broadly as encompassing empirical and theoretical knowledge, procedural knowledge, self-knowledge and practice wisdom (Thompson & West, 2013). The literature considers individual motivation for learning as relevant to the capacity to learn (Morrison, 2001, 2005). In this context, a supervisee who is a motivated learner may bring a willingness to consider, reflect and explore new knowledge in the context of their practice. The supervisor, in collaboration with the supervisee, may facilitate development and the acquisition of new knowledge (Gibbs et al., 2009; Morrison, 2001, 2005).

Areas for knowledge development are potentially vast, reflecting advances in research and the complexity of the context (Green, 2007; Snowden & Boone, 2007). In partnership with supervisees, supervisors may identify the existing strengths and priority areas for learning and continuous development. In doing so, they may analyse the developmental 'stage' of their supervisees, with supervisee development described in the literature as moving through various levels of experience and competence (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hawkins & Shohet, 2000).

Critical reflection was identified by supervisees and supervisors as an important vehicle for learning and growth. Models of reflection are complex and, according to the literature, can incorporate different levels, including technical reflection, practical reflection, critical reflection and process reflection. Actively incorporating the four levels of reflection in the context of child and family practice may involve anxiety, distress and 'messiness' (Gardner, 2006; Miller & Bromfield, 2010; Munro, 2011; Ruch, 2010).

Management and Leadership This function is based on Core Theme Seven: Leadership skills, Core Theme Nine: Balancing the functions of supervision and the inevitable role tension and Core Theme Ten: Management processes constraining and supporting practice.

Literature indicates that effective supervisors are managers who implement, review and maintain business systems as aides to effective management of financial or staffing resources. In doing so, supervisors consider the need for efficiency, effectiveness, value for money in terms of outputs compared to the inputs, and equitable resource distribution. Multiple stakeholders need to be considered and consulted (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010; Paterson, 1988). The outcome of this research confirmed the value of effective business systems. However, it identified the safety and well being of the child as the primary consideration. In addressing this, the CMES proposes that business systems to measure outcomes for children are designed alongside those measuring service delivery outputs, and that supervisors might manage both output and outcome measures.

According to both the literature and the research respondents, the organisational requirements to manage the 'business' may create a tension in the supervisory relationship. Within a managerialist context, reporting requirements, 'business' rules and measures of performance may undermine the capacity of the supervisory relationship to remain a collaborative space where the child is at the heart of reflection and where learning and reflection are of paramount importance (Carrilio, 2005; Gardner, 2006; McDonald, et al., 2011; Munro, 2010; Tilbury, Osmand, Wilson, & Clark, 2007; Tilbury, 2004, 2006).

This research found that effective supervisors are those who can embrace the opportunities presented by efficient operating 'systems', yet strive to 'balance' the four functions in a complex environment. The management function includes the management of this sense of 'balance', facilitated by keeping the child, in child and family practice, at the heart of supervisory reflection.

Supervisor leadership behaviour that motivates good practice was identified by research respondents as inspirational and sustaining. Leadership skills that are congruent with social work

values are identified in the literature, in particular, those skills used in the promotion of social justice. In addition, the literature and the emergent themes from the data point to the importance of transparency and procedural fairness as important leadership attributes for supervisors to model, particularly in relation to the appropriate use of authority, and distribution of power (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gardner, 2006; McDonald, et al., 2011; Munro, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012; Zwanenberg, 2010). Transformational leaders are described in the literature as 'managing meaning' for supervisees, influencing and shaping organisational culture, and communicating the values and mission of the organisation (Hughes & Wearing, 2013). 'Emotionally intelligent' leaders are described in the literature as having vision, are democratic yet pacesetting and commanding (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), adapting their leadership style to the particular context. Interviewees emphasised the powerful impact that modeling leadership behaviours could have in the workplace, in particular, transparent decision making practices, sound communication and personal leadership attributes, including self knowledge self regulation.

In summary, supervisor leadership skills are an important consideration in the CMES. The literature strongly supports effective supervisors drawing upon contemporary leadership theory and social work values in fulfilling this function (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Gardner, 2006; McDonald et al., 2011; Munro, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Wonnacott, 2012; Zwanenberg, 2010). This literature was consistent with a strong core theme that emerged from the interview data. where leadership skills included transparency and consistency, modeling self-regulation and self awareness, and distributed power and authority.

Advocacy Advocacy is a proactive function involving the identification and analysis of critical issues emerging in practice that require the supervisor, as an 'agent of change', to act as an advocate. Whilst not emerging as one of the core themes, the role of advocate for a supervisor is identified in the CMES as one of the implications of Core Theme Eight: Integrity, honesty and a commitment to natural justice and social justice. Based on this theme, the issues raised for advocacy may relate to issues of natural justice within the organisation or, within the context of the

wider community, may be based on social justice concerns. This research indicated a grave need for the wider community to understand and value the work of practitioners in child and family practice. Rather than experiencing shame in identifying their work and their employer, in the words of one respondent:

> *On a logical kind of level, one would think, within our community, those that are engaged with the protection of the most vulnerable children would be held in the highest possible esteem. (Supervisor 4)*

In this function the supervisor may strategise and publicly advocate on behalf of supervisees and/or service users. The literature indicates that the supervisor as advocate operates within the organisation and wider community, drawing upon the business acumen demonstrated in the management and leadership function, to strategically identify issues of concern, to advocate and to 'manage up' for change (Gibbs et al.,2009; Morrison, 2001, 2005).

Mediation was identified previously in the literature as one of the four functions of supervision, defined as acting 'as a representative for the team' (Richards, Payne & Shepperd, 1990, p.14). Some of the tasks regarded as mediation, like interpreting policy for staff, would be regarded in the CMES as tasks relating to the management and leadership function, which accord importance to sound communication processes and leadership behaviours.

As an advocate, the supervisor can advocate for change or on behalf of supervisee and other stakeholders, including service users, the organisation, wider professional networks and the community. The inclusion of 'advocacy' as one of the four functions of supervision grounds the model in the historical roots of social work, a profession whose members have traditionally been viewed as 'agents of change' (Perlman, 1957). Whilst putting the child at the heart of supervisory reflection, this function gives supervisors opportunities to strategically intervene as change agents on behalf of agency clients or supervisees or both.

In conclusion it is proposed, on the basis of a review of the literature and an analysis of the emergent data from this research, that a CMES is embedded within a wider ecological framework, with its ontological and micro systemic elements. Keeping the child in mind is at the heart of the CMES. The co-creation of a safe supervisory relationship is an overarching function and pivotal to the model. Each of the functions—Safety, Knowledge and Skill development, Management and Leadership and Advocacy—are dynamically integrated and interdependent to facilitate effective supervision.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter extended the initial findings by integrating the emerging themes from the data analysis with the literature. The Chapter commenced with a summary of the themes identified in the initial phase of analysis, discussed in the preceding Chapter. In Part Two of the Chapter, an overview of a conceptual framework for effective supervision was presented, before a more detailed examination of each of the components of the ecological supervision framework was offered. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) originally and Belsky (1980) later proposed, the ontogenic, micro, exo and macro components of the conceptual model are each integrated or 'nested'. Finally a core model of effective supervision was proposed, embedded within the ecological conceptual framework. The next Chapter is the final Chapter. It presents a summary of the major findings of the research, examining the contribution of this research to the existing literature and proposing implications of the findings for policy practice and future research.

Chapter Seven

Summary of Major Findings, Implications for Policy, Practice Training and Research

This is the final Chapter in my research exploring supervision in Child and Family practice.

This research makes an important contribution to knowledge in a critical area of practice. Effective supervision in Child and Family practice has been explored, and on the basis of this exploration and integration with existing literature, a contemporary model of effective supervision (CMES) has been developed. Whilst the context within which supervision takes place was found to be of high importance, the CMES has relevance internationally and transculturally.

The purpose of the Chapter is to summarise the major findings of the study, before examining implications for policy, practice and future research. The Chapter is presented in four parts. In Part One, the overall aim of the study and the research questions undertaken are revisited. Part Two of the Chapter summarises a conceptual framework and a Core Model for Effective Supervision (CMES), derived from the research findings. In Part Three of the Chapter the contribution of this research to the existing literature is examined, as are implications of the findings of this research for policy, practice, training and future research. The Chapter concludes with a summary.

Part One: Revisiting the Study Aims and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to examine what is 'effective' supervision in Child and Family practice. Child and Family practice, defined as including statutory child protection and more preventative services including family support, is recognised internationally as a field of social work practice that is growing in complexity, requiring specialist knowledge, (Thompson & West 2013). It has been argued that the morally and emotionally demanding nature of this work has particular implications for practitioners and their managers. (Gibbs, 2001; Morrison, 2010). Workforce issues across the

child and family practice sector are a recurring theme, including practitioner workload and the attrition of practitioners. (Brouwer, 2009; Healy & Meagher, 2007).

Whilst supervision has featured heavily in the literature (Barth, Lloyd, et al 2008, Dickenson & Painter, 2009 Ellett, et al 2007; Mor Barack, Levin et al 2005; Renner, et al., 2009; Pyun & Xie 2009;), a clear gap in the existing knowledge was identified. Little was known about what effective supervision actually was in practice, even though it was said to contribute to staff retention. This research sought to address that gap.

The Research Questions

To address the aim to examine the concept of effective supervision, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the components of an effective supervisory relationship?

2. What are the core knowledge, skills and value requirements for supervisors to be effective in this field?

3. How are the functions of supervision; administration, support, education and mediation delivered in effective supervision?

4. What constitutes a conceptual frame of reference to underpin effective supervision?

5. What constitutes a core model of supervision for Child and Family practice?

Both the limitations of the research evidence, and the complexities of context, are highlighted in detail in Chapter Three, The Context, lend themselves to a methodological approach which privileges the voice of the research participants in the context within which they work. In designing this qualitative study, narrative inquiry was identified as a method which captures and analyses stories and privileges voices of research participants holistically and sensitively. A thematic

analysis of the data was guided by an overarching ecological- developmental conceptual frame of reference (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Belsky, 1980).

The methodological paradigm adopted for this research was qualitative in nature. The qualitative research paradigm recognises that the subjective human experience may be sensitive to difference in social context. A flexible research approach was chosen to allow for a process of discovery, with a focus on meaning from the perspective of the research participants. These participants were experienced and post graduate qualified practitioners and supervisors in child and family practice.

Part Two: A Conceptual Framework and a Core Model for Effective Supervision

What follows is an integration of the core themes emergent from the interviews and within the literature, in the form of a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework for supervision was proposed in Chapter Six, and is summarised below. It is one which incorporates considerations for effective supervision at the ontogenic, micro, exo and macro levels (Belsky, 1980).

A Conceptual Framework for Effective Supervision

Features of effective supervision are summarised as follows:

(a) Supervisee and Supervisor Individual Factors

Four broad areas are identified for active consideration at this level. These are personal developmental history, individual values and beliefs about childhood and parenting, individual knowledge development, history of experiencing or providing supervision and leadership development and identity (Wonnacott, 2012).

(b) The Supervisory Relationship

This research found that a foundational requirement of effective supervision is the relationship itself and the creation of ‘safety’ for the Supervisee, in what can be experienced by practitioners as an unsafe practice context. The co-creation and maintenance of a safe supervisory relationship is

a pivotal component of effective supervision. An effective supervisory relationship is founded on trust, collaboration, joint accountability, honesty, openness and a non-judgmental approach. Effective supervision considers and works with issues of power, gender, culture and difference. Effective supervisors value their staff, forming an 'imprint 'of trustworthiness and predictability. A calming supervisory presence, attuned to the needs of the supervisee facilitates and empowers staff to work with uncertainty and anxiety, proactively addressing the emotional impact of the work.

Three knowledge areas were identified as required for effective supervision. These are:

(i) Expert Theoretical Knowledge of Practice, Supervision and Leadership**.**

(ii) Knowing Policy, Process, Procedure and Organisational Awareness.

(iii) Practice wisdom and self knowledge.

Leadership skills were described by respondents as those behaviours that demonstrate expert theoretical knowledge in the workplace. Skills were also articulated as approaches that create a reflective learning space for supervisees to conceptualise their practice in partnership with supervisors. Leadership skills underpinning effective supervision included transparency and consistency, modelling self regulation and self awareness, and distributed power and authority.

Values, including integrity, honesty, a commitment to social justice and natural justice principles, were experienced by supervisees and supervisors as fundamental to the creation of a safe, mutually respectful supervisory relationship. Integration of the elements of effective supervision and a child centred approach were highlighted. An effective supervisor integrates the knowledge, skills and values required to perform the role, keeping the child at the centre of supervisory considerations.

(c) Trauma Informed Organisational Culture, Policies and Senior Leaders. Effective Organisational Business Processes.

This research found that a trauma informed organisational culture is one which facilitates effective supervision, informing policy development and the practices of senior leaders within the organisation. The findings identified the powerful impact of organisational process on supervision, suggesting that business systems can be used to ensure efficient and effective operation of large scale child and family practice operations. These systems can be used to assist supervisors to oversee reflective, professional practice.

(d) A Community Valuing Children and Child and Family Practice. A Community Understanding Complexity and Tolerating Uncertainty.

This research found that the attitudes and understanding held by the wider community about child and family practice had an impact on staff morale, professional identity and capacity to participate in effective supervision.

A community which values both statutory and voluntary practice in this sector, is a community valuing children as individuals who hold fundamental rights (Liddell, 1993; Parton 2009, 2011). The findings suggest that features of such a community include a commitment to social justice, a valuing of diversity and difference and the promotion of anti discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. In this context, complexity is understood and uncertainty and ambiguity tolerated (Munro, 2011; Parton, 2011).

Keeping the Child in Mind: A Core Model of Effective Supervision for the 21st century

The Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is comprised of four integrated functions, with the child and constant consideration of the child, held at the 'centre', or heart of the model.

'Safety' is the function that is pivotal and overarching in this model. A safe supervisory relationship is informed by relational neurobiology and implications for the supervisory relationship, is a pivotal

finding of this research. This ‘safe’ relationship is one which actively considers and works with issues of power, gender, culture and difference (Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

Knowledge development is the second function within the core model, and assumes a broad definition of sources of knowledge (Thompson & West, 2013). This function involves active exploration, critical reflection and integration of knowledge, skills and values. Knowledge development aims to empower supervisees to work with ambiguity and uncertainty in a complex environment.

The third function is ‘management and leadership’, drawing strategically upon business approaches to enable good governance, and enabling ‘just’ processes. Effective supervisors adopt transformational approaches to leadership which appropriately distribute power (Cherniss & Goleman 2001; Zwanenberg, 2010).

The fourth function is advocacy, where the Supervisor as advocate operates within the organisation and wider community to strategically identify issues of concern and to ‘manage up’ as appropriate and advocate as an agent of change.

The four functions of the core model are conceptualised as integrated. Effective 'balancing' of the functions is managed by keeping the child in mind and at the centre of all considerations, and by mediating between supervisee and the wider organisation as appropriate.

Part Three: Contribution to the Existing Literature and Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research

In this part of the Chapter I examine the contribution of this research to the existing literature.

This research both confirms and extends the existing theoretical and research literature. The literature is dense in terms of supervision models or frameworks (Kadushin, 1976, 2002; Morrison 1993, 2001, 2005; Munro, 2002, 2008; Richards, et al., 1990; Rushton & Nathan, 1996). These were discussed in this literature review, as largely untested by research.

This research confirms the theoretical centrality of the supervisory relationship and found a broad consistency with the seminal work of Kadushin (1979), and Kadushin and Harkness (2002), in identifying the core functions of support, education and administration. The purpose of supervision, identified by Kadushin as enhanced service delivery (Kadushin, 1979) is consistent with the proposed model that continuously considers the child, in the context of their family and community. An examination of the three Kadushin functions alongside the findings of this research follows.

Support This research has revealed that contemporary context in child and family practice requires 'support' to be premised on an expert understanding of the emerging knowledge in relation to the neurobiology of relationship (Perry, 1997, 2009, 2013, Van der Kolk, 2005) and for the supervisory relationship to be a 'safe' place of refuge. The understanding of 'safety' was enhanced by extending the concept of 'support', to the provision of a well regulated, well informed role model as a supervisor, who co-created and maintained the supervisory relationship as a safe 'anchor point'.

Education 'Safety' must first exist in order for supervisees to effectively reflect, learn and develop across a range of domains of knowledge and skill. Developmental theory and teaching and learning theory have been identified in the findings as relevant to an understanding of effective supervision. Expert contemporary theoretical, empirical, procedural and self knowledge, as well as a well developed repertoire of skills in the work, and leadership capabilities to transform, motivate and enable were important for supervisee learning.

Administration Finally, confirming the import of Kadushin's (1979) administrative function, this study's findings suggest that the contemporary context requires the effective Supervisor to have advanced expertise as a professional, a manager and a leader. This is essential to transformational and distributive leadership and communication, sound governance, transparent processes and fair and just distribution of workload and resource.

An additional function, advocacy, extends the initial theoretical conceptualisation and accounts for the potentially turbulent and complex environment within which supervision takes place.

In a further extension to the existing literature, this research identifies the critical importance of an ecological-developmental perspective in effective supervision (Belsky 1980; Bronfenbrenner 1979).

This perspective identifies the supervisory relationship in the context of each individual, the supervisory relationship itself, organisational policy mandating effective supervision at all levels of the organisation and organisational culture promoting quality supervision and continuous learning and 'safety'. Senior leaders modelling good practice and supervision empower Supervisors to lead and supervise effectively. At the macro level, effective supervision requires a community which values children and publicly mandates and values child and family practice.

Finally, this research addresses a critical gap in this important practice domain. It offers a contribution to the international research literature and developing knowledge base. This research has drawn from the wisdom of experienced and post graduate qualified supervisees and supervisors, who offered their stories about experiences of a 'safe' supervisory relationship, which was sustaining and developmental, in the context of a complex and unsafe environment. A critical addition to the existing literature is the conceptualisation of 'safety' as the overarching function of supervision, and the complexities inherent in that where the overarching purpose of supervision is to focus on the child. Premised on an understanding of the neuro biology of relationship (Perry, 2013), a safe relationship facilitates and integrates each of the core functions of effective supervision.

The CMES, as a theoretical model emerging from this research, is a key contribution to existing knowledge. This model implies the need for supervisors to bring a depth of experience, personal maturity and knowledge to the role. Policy and training implications for supervisors are discussed below. On the basis of this research, an exclusive focus on the supervisory relationship or the individual contributions to supervision made by supervisee and supervisor would be inappropriate.

What follows is a reflection on the implications of this research at these and the organisational and community levels, for policy, practice and future research.

Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research.

The findings of this research have implications for national and international supervision policy and practice in this domain of practice. A key implication is for organisations to plan for, resource and prioritise effective supervision practice in child and family practice services. This will of course look differently in different organisational settings. What would be a constant, however, are the inherent complexities in the role of supervisor, when considering the Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES). On the basis of the complexities inherent within the role, organisations could resource strategies for transition planning into the role of supervisor, and develop policies to ensure that prospective supervisors held a minimum, relevant qualification and level of professional experience, that matched the requirements to co-create a safe relationship, facilitate learning, manage, lead and advocate, keeping the child in mind. Once in the role of supervisor, policies to promote supervision as an activity of critical importance at all levels of the organisation would promote a pro-supervision, trauma informed organisational culture.

Looking to the local context in Victoria, Australia, the findings of this research are timely. The Department of Human Services, in implementing a new 'operating model' just eight months ago, identifies the importance of the continuous learning and development for frontline practitioners, and the value of structures which offer greater access to supervision, mentoring and support (DHS 2011a, 2011b). To this end, I have already made arrangements with senior managers within the Child Protection Service to discuss my research and the potential implications for Victorian supervision policy. Before I discuss those implications however, I will turn first to consider the role of wider public policy to enrich community understanding and to provide a conceptual and resource framework that is holistic in respect of children.

Implications for Wider Public Policy.

In considering the implications of this research for wider public policy, I was reminded of my supervisors' reflections that a number of the participants interviewed appeared to be somewhat 'aspirational' in their descriptions of effective supervision. I too was struck by their sense of vision, hope and a sense of 'what was possible' within a challenging practice context. I have drawn inspiration from this group of experienced professionals to also become 'aspirational' in my recommendations relating to public policy and children.

A message from this research is that the apparent community ambivalence about children's rights and views about the 'sanctity' of private family life inhibits community understanding of the work undertaken by child and family practitioners. This situation continues to flourish in the absence of a sophisticated public awareness of the complexities of child abuse and neglect, fuelled by sensationalised and usually negative media.

A whole of government, proactive approach to children is required, to address significant service system gaps and discrepancies and to develop a sophisticated community understanding of the issues. This would potentially enable a focus on the important work with children undertaken by the child and family sector, enhancing community understanding in the complexities of the work. Supervisors and practitioners would directly benefit from working and living in a community where their work was understood, respected and valued, as a result of a national prioritising of children and childhood.

This national priority should span prevention and support to protection and healing across all domains of development and include health, education and well being. Prioritising children at a bi-partisan, national level implies an investment in childhood. A national policy framework would replace the current 'piecemeal' approach to children in Australia, which focuses on aspects of children's development only, such as health or education or protection from harm.

The Australian National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) goes some way toward addressing the state by state differences in responding to vulnerable children. The series of implementation plans have sought to prioritise and address pressing issues, for example, discrepancies across State borders in the implementation of Working with Children Checks. Whilst the Framework claims to be based on a 'Public Health Model for Child Protection' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012, p.12) it is just this approach which, in my view reinforces, the fragmented response for children. Rather than implementing a Public Health Model for Children, the focus on 'Protecting Children' means that the framework itself is silent in relation to key issues pertaining to children's development, including health and education.

A National Framework for Children would be an integrated framework promoting community understanding and community responsibility for children. It would consequently publicly value and acknowledge the work undertaken by the child and family service sector. In turn, practitioners and supervisors would be proud to identify as professionals working in this field, either for government or community services organisations. On the basis of this National Framework, individual States and Territories would achieve a well resourced, public health system for children, which promoted well being, prevented vulnerability and proactively responded to the need to protect.

Implications for Organisational Policy and Culture

Organisational policy and culture were found, in this research, to be powerful forces impacting on practice and supervision. In particular, the individual's sense of being valued by the organisation, and their capacity to engage in safe, developmental, reflective supervision, related strongly to the organisational culture and specific policies and processes.

One implication of these findings is that policies supporting human resource management, including occupational health and safety policy, should reflect a trauma informed and practice informed approach to staff care. As an example of this templates developed to record critical incidents involving harm to staff should not be premised on an assumption of implicit blame. A

trauma informed understanding of practice would ensure that incident reporting and recording was sensitively done and attended to the immediate needs of staff, rather than the immediate needs of the organisation. In the same way, business systems and recording requirements within organisations could be developed and implemented on the basis of a trauma informed understanding of practice.

Supervision policies, based on the findings of this research would promote the development of a safe supervisory relationship, which can co -create knowledge and skill, advocate and lead effectively, balancing these with requirements to manage well. Human Resource Management frameworks within organisations could include consideration of transition pathways into the role of supervisor, mentoring and developing prospective supervisors within the organisation, recruitment and induction practices into supervisory roles and ongoing knowledge and skill development, including effective supervision for supervisors. On the basis of this research effective supervision could be seen to enshrine effective supervision as a 'right' of the practitioner and a responsibility held by the practitioner, the supervisor and an enabling organisation. This would have implications for Senior executives within government and Chief Executive Officers with community services organisations, along with their leadership teams to model effective supervision practice in their own relationships with staff, leading the creation and on-going development of a culture that 'supervision matters'.

The development and growth of a trauma informed culture within organisations may present a challenge for some with entrenched patterns of behaviour that are not conducive to facilitating effective supervision. A trauma informed organisational culture is one which responds proactively to developing cultures of chronic crisis, leading to chronic hyper arousal, values organisational history and organisational memory, implements open healthy communication and feedback loops and promotes healing and 'sanctuary' in the workplace (Bloom and Farragher, 2011).

Implications for Training

It is my recommendation that a multi-faceted communication and learning and development strategy be developed and implemented within child and family practice organisations, in the wake of these research findings. This strategy could be designed and delivered to impact on agency culture as well as to facilitate the dissemination of key messages to the child and family practice sector. An advantage of a learning and development designed as 'saturation training' in local areas has, in my experience, the potential to impact on agency culture and to introduce change in an engaging manner. Such a strategy would include practitioners, supervisors, managers and senior executives as key stakeholders in the delivery of effective supervision. Sessions would be developed and delivered specific to agency roles and responsibilities, with senior executives delivering clear messages to all staff about the value of participation and the importance of effective supervision.

Implications for Supervision Practice

On the basis of the recommended policy development within organisations, supporting a strengthened trauma informed culture, along with a multi-faceted learning and development strategy, supervision practice would be potentially transformed. The significance and complexity of a safe supervisory relationship would be recognised at all levels of the organisation, as pivotal to effective supervision.

The implications of this research for local Victorian practice, as indicated above, are timely.

The CMES model of supervision recognises the critical importance of learning and growth that is based on a safe, trauma informed supervisory relationship. The model recognises the complex nature of the work and the range of contemporary leadership, management and advocacy functions that need to be effectively 'balanced' by supervisors who can effectively self regulate and facilitate deep learning. I will refer again to the CMES below in my recommendations for future research.

Limitations of the Research

A number of limitations of this research were identified.

Interviewing as a method has been critiqued as potentially insensitive to the need for anonymity and allowing for bias (Sarantakos, 2005). I carefully considered the need for anonymity in developing the proposal for this research, which was endorsed by the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee. I certainly considered the issue of my own bias continuously throughout my involvement in this research. I did not come to the research as a novice in the area of supervision, bringing many years of experience as a supervisor and educator of supervisors in this sector. I strove to ensure that I did justice to the 'voices' of the research participants and to value the experience and knowledge that I brought to the topic. I was assisted to keep my own biased perspective in check through regular reflective discussions with my own supervisors.

A further possible limitation was that each of the interview respondents had completed post graduate studies in child and family practice. The Graduate Certificate included study in supervision and the Graduate Diploma included study in supervision, management and leadership. There was a potential risk that respondents would describe what they had been 'taught' was effective supervision, without necessarily referring to their own context or experience. This risk was offset by the research design which involved in depth interviewing, seeking rich descriptions and detailed examples from each of the respondents.

Implications for Future Research

As a small and exploratory study, this research aimed to build theory. This design was selected as appropriate in the absence of comprehensive research evidence enabling an understanding of 'effective supervision' in Child and Family practice.

As a result of this research an important gap in knowledge has been addressed. An ecological developmental conceptual framework for effective supervision has been constructed, with implications at the individual, supervisory relationship, organisational and community levels. Grounded in this conceptual framework, a Core Model of Effective Supervision (CMES) is proposed. This model features safety within the supervisory relationship as pivotal to other functions. The CMES is seen as a model of supervisory practice to aspire to. It is also seen as a model that is realistic and achievable within a contemporary context.

Future research could extend this small, exploratory study to capture the voices of a far greater number of prospective participants. The views and experiences of greater numbers of supervisees and supervisors, at different levels within the organisation and with varied levels of experience, could add a depth to the initial findings reported here.

Research that took these findings to the next stage of knowledge development could include the implementation of the CMES across identified child and family practice agencies, both within Australia and beyond. Future studies could then examine the impact of the implementation of the CMES, in terms of implications for supervision and implications for practice.

If, in fact the ultimate purpose of supervision is to enhance service delivery to children, future research effort could also be designed with the 'child in mind', designing studies that look at the association between supervision and client outcomes.

Supervision is a topic of national and international importance in this sector. This implies a need for future research to explore these issues internationally.

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Appendix 1

Attachment 1

Guidelines for questions: Practitioner in depth Interviews

(The practitioner group will be given the following schedule. The supervisor group will be asked to respond to the same schedule with an additional dimension, the consideration of the experience as a supervisor.)

A series of topics, based upon the research questions and suppositions, will be used to prompt discussion as follows:

Demographics

Personal Information:

Gender M/F

Age

Statutory/Community Services Organisation employee

Formal Qualification/s

Brief description of professional experience

Professional Information:

What is the nature of your role in the Child and

Family Practice Sector?

How long have you been in this, or a similar role?

Do you have regular, formal supervision in this role?

If not, do you have a professional experience in the sector where you did receive regular formal supervision?

Do you have an organisational policy in respect of staff supervision?

If yes, what are the essential elements of this policy, in terms of guidance and/or requirements?

Discussion Topics for Detailed Exploration:

1. **What are the components of 'effective' supervision in your view? Please consider both the experience of the supervisory process and the components of an 'effective' supervisory relationship in your response, elaborating with examples where possible.**

2. **What are the core areas of knowledge (for supervisors) from your perspective, taking into account the complexity of the work, and the consequent educative requirements of supervisors? Think about areas of practice expertise, and contemporary theoretical and research knowledge in your response.**

3. ***Please reflect on the following statement:***

The emotionally demanding nature of the work requires the supervisor to demonstrate attunement to the emotional support needs of their practitioner, within the context of a strong professional relationship. Supervisors need a high level of competence to support staff and to appropriately contain practitioner anxiety, based on a sound knowledge of vicarious trauma.

Discuss this from your own perspective as a supervisee. Can you recall a time when the trauma associated with child abuse work impacted on your well being? What did you need from your supervisor at that time? In thinking about the cumulative nature of stress in child protection practice, what are the qualities of an effective supervisor?

(including knowledge, skill and values)

3. **Is your current supervisor also your 'line manager?' If so, how can supervisors most effectively implement the 'management' or administrative functions of the role, including delegation of responsibilities and performance management, whilst attending to the supervision function of education and support? Please respond using examples from your experience. If your supervisor is not your current 'line manager', can you also respond to the above, whilst describing the model that you work within?**

4.What are the wider organisational constraints to good practice in the child and family practice sector? Please consider constraints or pressures within the organisational hierarchy and external to the organisation. How can a supervisor effectively mediate these in the interests of the practitioner?

5 ***. Please reflect on the following statement:***

Supervisors who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more likely to motivate, maintain and develop their staff. Transformational leadership has been described as occurring when 'leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their followers, generate awareness and commitment of individuals to the purpose and mission of the group, and when they enable subordinates to transcend their own self-interests for the betterment of the group'(Seltzer, Numerof and Bass, 1989,p.174 cited in Nielson, Randall, Yarker and Brenner 2008).

Discuss your observation and experience of leadership styles in child protection, with particular reference to styles that have enhanced your well being in the workplace.

6. What are the wider organisational constraints to good practice in the child and family practice sector? Please consider constraints or pressures within the organisational hierarchy and external to the organisation. How can a supervisor effectively mediate these in the interests of the practitioner?

7. Are there any other comments that you wish to make, having reflected on what effective supervision involves- from your perspective?

Attachment 2

Guidelines for questions: Supervisor in depth interviews

Demographics

Personal Information:

Gender M/F

Age

Statutory/Community Services Organisation employee

Formal Qualification/s

Brief Description of Professional Experience

Professional Information:

What is the nature of your role in the Child and

Family Practice Sector?

How long have you been in this, or a similar role?

Do you have regular, formal supervision in this role?

If not, do you have a professional experience in the sector where you did receive regular formal supervision?

Do you have an organisational policy in respect of staff supervision?

If yes, what are the essential elements of this policy, in terms of guidance and/or requirements?

What is your experience (in years and months) in providing supervision?

What are the qualifications of the staff that you currently supervise?

Discussion Topics for Detailed Exploration:

1. **What are the components of 'effective' supervision in your view? Please consider both the experience of the supervisory process and the components of an 'effective' supervisory relationship in your response, elaborating with examples where possible, from your experience as a supervisee and supervisor.**

2. **What are the core areas of knowledge (for supervisors) from your perspective, taking into account the complexity of the work, and the consequent educative requirements of supervisors? Think about areas of practice expertise, and contemporary theoretical and research knowledge in your response.**

3. ***Please reflect on the following statement:***

The emotionally demanding nature of the work requires the supervisor to demonstrate attunement to the emotional support needs of their practitioner, within the context of a strong professional relationship. Supervisors need a high level of competence to support staff and to appropriately contain practitioner anxiety, based on a sound knowledge of vicarious trauma.

Discuss this from your own perspective as a supervisee. Can you recall a time when the trauma associated with child abuse work impacted on your well being? What did you need from your supervisor at that time? In thinking about the cumulative nature of stress in child protection practice, what are the qualities of an effective supervisor?

(including knowledge, skill and values.) Please now discuss in relation to your role as a supervisor.

3. **Is your current supervisor also your 'line manager?' If so, how can supervisors most effectively implement the 'management' or administrative functions of the role, including delegation of responsibilities and performance management, whilst attending to the supervision function of education and support? Please respond using examples from your experience. If your supervisor is not your current 'line manager', can you also respond to the above, whilst describing the model that you work within?**
4. **Now can you consider the above in relation to your own role as supervisor, and those for whom you have line management responsibility?**

5.What are the wider organisational constraints to good practice in the child and family practice sector? Please consider constraints or pressures within the organisational hierarchy and external to the organisation. How can a supervisor effectively mediate these in the interests of the practitioner?

5 ***. Please reflect on the following statement:***

Supervisors who demonstrate transformational leadership practices are more likely to motivate, maintain and develop their staff. Transformational leadership has been described as occurring when 'leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their followers, generate awareness and commitment of individuals to the purpose and mission of the group, and when they enable subordinates to transcend their own self-interests for the betterment of the group'(Seltzer, Numerof and Bass, 1989,p.174 cited in Nielson, Randall, Yarker and Brenner 2008).

Discuss your observation and experience of leadership styles in child protection, with particular reference to styles that have enhanced your well being in the workplace.

How would you describe your own style of leadership?

5. **What are the wider organisational constraints to good practice in the child and family practice sector? Please consider constraints or pressures within the organisational hierarchy and external to the organisation. How can a supervisor effectively mediate these in the interests of the practitioner? How have you been able to do this as a supervisor?**
6. **Are there any other comments that you wish to make, having reflected on what effective supervision involves- from your perspective?**

Attachment 3 (a)

Initial contact with prospective participants seeking consent for researcher to make contact

Dear former Post Graduate Student,

I am writing to you on behalf of Associate Professor Margarita Frederico, Dr Patricia McNamara and Ms Lynne McPherson, in relation to a current proposal to conduct research.

You have been identified as a prospective interview participant in this research.

What is the aim of the study?

This study will seek to examine what 'effective' supervision is in child and family practice. The concept of supervisory support will be specifically explored as will other core functions of supervision identified widely as education, administration or management, and mediation or advocacy. A detailed review of the literature will be undertaken with a view to determining how the functions are experienced by practitioners and what the components of effective supervision in contemporary child and family practice might include. Specific attention will be given to the question of knowledge and skills required by supervisors to effectively lead practice.

This e-mail is sent to you in order to seek your consent to be contacted by Lynne McPherson, in relation to the research. With your consent, Ms McPherson would make contact with you to provide detailed information about the research, what it will involve for interview participants, and finally will seek your consent to participate.

Consent to contact you?

If you do **not** consent to contact being made with you please simply respond by clicking 'reply' to this e-mail and responding 'no consent'. No further contact will be made with you in relation to this request. The research team will not be aware that you have been approached, nor will they have access to your response to me.

If you **do** consent to contact being made with you please click 'reply' to this e-mail and respond

'I consent'. This consent will then be forwarded to Lynne McPherson who will make direct contact with you.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeannette Wilkins

Post Graduate Student Services

Faculty of Health Sciences

La Trobe University

Attachment 3

What Works in Supervision of Child and Family Practice?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS: Supervisees

Interview Invitation and Participant Information Sheet

We are writing to invite you to participate in the important research examining supervision in Child and Family Practice.

Who is conducting this study?

Lynne McPherson, lecturer and PhD candidate from the School of Social Work and Social Policy at La Trobe University is undertaking this study. Lynne is supervised by Associate Professor Margarita Frederico and Dr Patricia McNamara.

Who is funding this study?

This study is an unfunded project.

What is the aim of the study?

This study will seek to examine what 'effective' supervision is in child and family practice. The concept of supervisory support will be specifically explored as will other core functions of supervision identified widely as education, administration or management, and mediation or advocacy. A detailed review of the literature will be undertaken with a view to determining how the functions are experienced by practitioners and what the components of effective supervision in contemporary child and family practice might include. Specific attention will be given to the question of knowledge and skills required by supervisors to effectively lead practice.

What does the study involve for me?

We are inviting you to participate in an in depth interview which will last for approximately 60 minutes. The location for the interview will be in an interview or meeting room at your workplace, which allows for both convenience and privacy.

Whether you choose to participate in this survey is entirely up to you. You will not be disadvantaged if you decide not to participate. You are also able to contact the research team directly to discuss the findings. Contact information is provided at the bottom of this sheet.

What other data will be collected?

Data collection will involve a series of in depth interviews with experienced supervisors and supervisees. The purpose will be to explore the concept and experience of supervision and supervisory support from each perspective. The emerging themes from these interviews will then be shared in a focus group setting with identified experts.

Finally, essential components of a framework for effective supervision in child and family practice, based on the literature review and an analysis of the data, will be proposed.

Who is eligible to participate?

We are inviting up to 12 supervisees and 12 supervisors in Child and Family Practice to participate in the interviews. All participants will be recent graduates of the Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice, or the Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership.

How will my identity be protected?

This Project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of La Trobe University. Strict protocols will be followed in relation to confidentiality, de-identification of data and secure storage procedures. All transcripts associated with the study will be de-identified and coded by the researchers; any preliminary identification data will be stored securely and separately from other coded data at all times. Following completion of the study all data will be stored securely in an archive at La Trobe University for a period of five years and then destroyed.

What are my rights?

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. All data will be de-identified.. You may withdraw your consent to participate within seven days of the interview being conducted. In the event that you do withdraw your consent, all interview records will be destroyed.

Will I receive any benefits for participating in the study?

Whilst you may receive no direct benefits from participating in this study the Research Team believes that you might find this a valuable opportunity to reflect on your experience of supervision and to learn of the Study's findings.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the study?

The Research Team does not believe that engaging in this research presents risks to you. However, it is possible that revisiting aspects of your work and supervision of the work may prove distressing. Should you require de-briefing or counselling assistance a member of the Research team is available to assist you with accessing this support either within your organisation or externally. Following the interview you will be given a De-Briefing Sheet outlining sources of support.

How will the information be used?

Findings will inform future development. It is likely that the Research Team will report the findings at Conferences and in Publications.

How do you ask a question about this study?

If you have any complaints or queries that the researchers have not been able to answer to your satisfaction you may contact the Secretary, Human Ethics Committee, Research Services, La Trobe

University, Victoria, 3086 (03 9479 1443; email: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au

We look forward to working with you all on this most important exploration of Supervision in Child and Family Practice.

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Attachment 4

What Works in Supervision of Child and Family Practice?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS: Supervisors

Interview Invitation and Participant Information Sheet

We are writing to invite you to participate in the important research examining supervision in Child and Family Practice.

Who is conducting this study?

Lynne McPherson, lecturer and PhD candidate from the School of Social Work and Social Policy at La Trobe University is undertaking this study. Lynne is supervised by Associate Professor Margarita Frederico and Dr Patricia McNamara.

Who is funding this study?

This study is an unfunded project.

What is the aim of the study?

This study will seek to examine what 'effective' supervision is in child and family practice. The concept of supervisory support will be specifically explored as will other core functions of supervision identified widely as education, administration or management, and mediation or advocacy. A detailed review of the literature will be undertaken with a view to determining how the functions are experienced by practitioners and what the components of effective supervision in contemporary child and family practice might include. Specific attention will be given to the question of knowledge and skills required by supervisors to effectively lead practice.

What does the study involve for me?

We are inviting you to participate in an in depth interview which will last for approximately 60 minutes. The location for the interview will be in an interview or meeting room at your workplace, which allows for both convenience and privacy.

Whether you choose to participate in this survey is entirely up to you. You will not be disadvantaged if you decide not to participate. You are also able to contact the research team directly to discuss the findings. Contact information is provided at the bottom of this sheet.

What other data will be collected?

Data collection will involve a series of in depth interviews with experienced supervisors and supervisees. The purpose will be to explore the concept and experience of supervision and supervisory support from each perspective. The emerging themes from these interviews will then be shared in a focus group setting with identified experts.

Finally, essential components of a framework for effective supervision in child and family practice, based on the literature review and an analysis of the data, will be proposed.

Who is eligible to participate?

We are inviting up to 12 supervisees and 12 supervisors in Child and Family Practice to participate in the interviews. All participants will be recent graduates of the Graduate Certificate in Child and Family Practice, or the Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Practice Leadership.

How will my identity be protected?

This Project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of La Trobe University. Strict protocols will be followed in relation to confidentiality, de-identification of data and secure storage procedures. All transcripts associated with the study will be de-identified and coded by the researchers; any preliminary identification data will be stored securely and separately from other coded data at all times. Following completion of the study all data will be stored securely in an archive at La Trobe University for a period of five years and then destroyed.

What are my rights?

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You may withdraw your consent to participate within seven days of the interview being conducted. In the event that you do withdraw your consent, all interview records will be destroyed.

Will I receive any benefits for participating in the study?

Whilst you may receive no direct benefits from participating in this study the Research Team believes that you might find this a valuable opportunity to reflect on your experience of supervision and to learn of the Study's findings.

Are there any risks associated with participating in the study?

The Research Team does not believe that engaging in this research presents risks to you. However, it is possible that revisiting aspects of your work and supervision of the work may prove distressing. Should you require de-briefing or counselling assistance a member of the Research team is available to assist you with accessing this support either within your organisation or externally.

How will the information be used?

Findings will inform future development. It is likely that the Research Team will report the findings at Conferences and in Publications.

How do you ask a question about this study?

If you have any complaints or queries that the researchers have not been able to answer to your satisfaction you may contact the Secretary, Human Ethics Committee, Research Services, La Trobe

University, Victoria, 3086 (03 9479 1443; email: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au

We look forward to working with you all on this most important exploration of Supervision in Child and Family Practice.

CONTACTS

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Attachment 5

Consent to participate in an interview for the purpose of researching supervision in Child and Family Practice (supervisees)

I ……. have read the information in relation to the research project 'Supervision in Child and Family Practice: What Works?'

I hereby consent to participating in an interview for a duration of approximately one hour

Signed and dated

…….

Attachment 6

Consent to participate in an interview for the purpose of researching supervision in Child and Family Practice (supervisors)

I ……. have read the information in relation to the research project 'Supervision in Child and Family Practice: What Works?'

I hereby consent to participating in an interview for a duration of approximately one hour

Signed and dated

…….

Attachment 11

De-briefing from Interviews- Participant Information.

Dear Interview Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research interview in relation to supervision in child and family practice.

Whilst we do not anticipate that there will be any adverse consequences for interview participants, it is possible that as a result of discussing your professional practice and experience of supervision, you may experience some anxiety or distress. This may occur at the time of the interview or in the days or weeks that follow.

If this is the case for you you are encouraged to contact the researchers for assistance., You are welcome to e-mail Lynne McPherson on l.mcpherson@latrobe.edu.au or telephone 94792760. Lynne would be very happy to put you in touch with relevant support services as required.

Alternatively, should you wish to seek access to counselling and support independent of the research team, you may wish to contact Lifeline on 13 1114 who can offer service information that is relevant to you and your situation, along with crisis support if required.

Associate Professor Margarita Frederico

Appendix 2

Chief Investigator

Research Team.

Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Community Services, Housing, Women's Affairs and Youth Affairs
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001

50 Lonsdale Street

DX210081
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Telephone: 1300 650 172

Facsimile: . 1300 785 859

OUR REF: ADF/11/17774

6 December 2011

Ms Lynne McPherson
La Trobe University, Department of Social Work and Social Policy
Health Sciences 2, Room 514
Kingsbury Drive
Bundoora 3068

Dear Ms McPherson

Thank you for your application and your subsequent correspondence regarding the research project 'Supervision in Child and Family Practice; What Works?'

The Children Youth and Families Division Research Co-ordinating Committee (RCC) recently considered your application, and I am pleased to inform you that DHS will support the research project subject to the following conditions:

- The research is conducted in accordance with the documentation you provided to the RCC, in particular the revised application ;
- The provision of the approval letter from Latrobe University Research Ethics Committee (HREC) prior to commencement of the project;
- The provision of interim reports every 12 months commencing December 2012 until the completion of the project;
- The provision of a final report to the RCC at the completion of the research;
- The provision of a one page summary of the outcomes of the research and how this relates to the Children Youth & Families Division;

- The provision of a seminar/presentation to Children Youth & Families staff on the outconies of the research – with details to be arranged with the RCC Secretariat;
- That you provide the RCC with the opportunity to review and provide comment on any materials generated from the research prior to formal publication. It is expected that if there any differences of opinion between the RCC and yourself related to the research outcomes, that these differences would be acknowledged in any publications, presentations and public forums;
- That you acknowledge the support of the Children Youth & Families Research Coordinating Committee in any publications arising from the research; and
- The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter, after this time the approval lapses and extensions will need to be considered by the RCC.

State Government Victoria

If you have any further enquiries, please don't hesitate to contact the RCC Secretariat on 03 9096 7480 or via email RCC@dhs.vic.gov.au. The RCC wishes you the best in your researchand we look forward to seeing the results in due course.

Yours sincerely

John Prent
Chair
Research Coordinating Committee Children,Youth & Families Division
Department of Human Services

Appendix 3

RESEARCH SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

To: **Assoc. Prof. Margarita Frederico, School of Social Work and Social Policy, FHS**
Ms. Lynne McPherson, School of Social Work and Social Policy, FHS

From: **Secretary, La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee**

Subject: **Review of Human Ethics Committee Application No. 11-082**

Title: **Supervision in Child and Family Practice; What Works?**

Date: **21 December 2011**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in relation to the research project referred to above. The project has been assessed as complying with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. I am pleased to advise that your project has been granted ethics approval and you may commence the study.

The project has been approved from the date of this letter until 31 July 2013.

Please note that your application has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the University Human Ethics Committee (UHEC) to facilitate a decision about the study before the next Committee. meeting. This decision will require ratification by the full UHEC at its next meeting and the UHEC reserves the right to alter conditions of approval or withdraw approval. You will be notified if the approval status of your project changes. The UHEC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans- March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The following standard conditions apply to your project:

- **Limit of Approval.** Approval is limited strictly to the research proposal as submitted in your application while taking into account any additional conditions advised by the UHEC.

- **Variation to Project.** Any subsequent variations or modifications you wish to make to your project must be formally notified to the UHEC for approval in advance of these modifications being introduced into the project. This can be done using the appropriate form: *Ethics - Application for Modification to Project* which is available on the Research Services website at *http://www.latrobe.edu.au/research-services/ethics/HEC_human.htm*. If the UHEC considers that the proposed changes are significant, you may be required to submit a new application form for approval of the revised project.

- **Adverse Events.** If any unforeseen or adverse events occur, including adverse effects on participants, during the course of the project which may affect the ethical acceptability of the project, the Chief Investigator must immediately notify the UHEC Secretary on telephone (03) 9479 1443. Any complaints about the project received by the researchers must also be referred immediately to the UHEC Secretary.

- **Withdrawal of Project.** If you decide to discontinue your research before its planned completion, you must advise the UHEC and clarify the circumstances.

- **Annual Progress Reports.** If your project continues for more than 12 months, you are required to submit an *Ethics - Progress/Final Report Form* annually, **on or just prior to 12 February**. The form is available on the Research Services website (see above address). Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean approval for this project will lapse. An audit may be conducted by the UHEC at any time.

- **Final Report.** A Final Report (see above address) is required within six months of the completion of the project or by **31 January 2014.**

If you have any queries on the information above or require further clarification please contact me through Research Services on telephone (03) 9479-1443, or e-mail at:

humanethics@latrobe.edu.au.

On behalf of the University Human Ethics Committee, best wishes with your research!

Ms Barbara Doherty
Administrative Officer (Research Ethics)
University Human Ethics Committee
Research Compliance Unit / Research Services
La Trobe University Bundoora, Victoria 3086
P: (03) 9479 – 1443 / F: (03) 9479 - 1464
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/research-services/ethics/HEC_human.htm