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Social Work Field Instructors' Perceptions of On-Line Training

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SOCIAL WORK FIELD INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ON-LINE TRAINING

by

Denise E. Dedman

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Advisor: Louann Bierlein-Palmer, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 2008
UMI Number: 3323519

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I would like to thank the members of my committee: Dr. Louann Bierlein-Palmer, chair, for her gracious advice and patience during this process; Dr. Andrea Beach, for her enthusiasm and persistent belief that I could manage the statistics; and Dr. Ineke Way, for helping me look at the details and beyond to see this study in the context of social work education.

Without the cooperation of the following field placement coordinators, this study would not have been possible: James Edwards, Grand Valley State University; Jackie Harvey, University of Michigan—Flint; Betsy Voshel, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor; and Sandy Murphy, Western Michigan University. Thanks also to the field instructors who took time to complete this survey—I know their time is precious! A particular thanks to the field coordinators and students that I worked with during my years as a field instructor; this research topic is the result of that experience.

Many people contributed to my intellectual development; none more than my parents, Helen and Haywood Dedman, who continue to encourage my curiosity about everything, and were my first models of inquiry-based teaching. Carolyn Masters particularly influenced my desire to enter academia, and provided support to make that path easier. Lillian Pancheri, of Auburn University, became a role model of resourcefulness, respect, and creativity in the classroom.

Finally, I’d like to thank my dean and colleagues of the University of Michigan—Flint School of Education and Human Services who have offered suggestions and
Acknowledgments—Continued

encouragement these last 3 years, especially Hannah Furrow and Kathleen Woehrle, without whom I would still not be finished; Deborah Thalner, my peer writing group member who stuck with me 'til the very end; and Tamra Brunke, who helps me remember the purpose of all of this is to provide the best educational experience for our student social workers who will, in turn, change the world.

Denise E. Dedman
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. ii
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................ viii
LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................... x

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1
   Background ............................................................................................................................. 1
   Problem Identification .......................................................................................................... 2
   Research Study Overview and Questions ........................................................................... 4
   Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................................... 5
   Delimitations and Limitations ............................................................................................. 9
   Chapter 1 Summary ............................................................................................................. 10

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ............................................................................................ 12
   History and Role Description of the Social Work Field Placement ................................. 12
      Field Placement in Higher Education Institutions ........................................................ 13
      Contemporary Patterns in Field Instruction ................................................................. 14
      Motivations of Field Instructors .................................................................................... 16
   Issues in Orientation and On-going Training of Field Instructors ................................ 17
      Problems in Providing Training to Field Instructors .................................................. 17
      Agency Factors Impacting Field Instructors’ Participation ........................................ 19
   Field Instruction as an Adult Learning Experience ......................................................... 21
      Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners ......................................................................... 22
      Adult Learning Preferences and On-line Courses ....................................................... 23
Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Parallels in Teaching of Social Workers and Health Care Professionals ....... 24
Use of Internet for Teaching.................................................. 25
Changing Perceptions of Social Workers Regarding On-line
Instruction.............................................................................26
Use of On-line Training for Healthcare Professionals..................... 27
Perceived Disadvantages and Advantages to On-line Learning......... 28
Chapter 2 Summary ..................................................................32

3. METHODOLOGY .....................................................................34
Research Questions....................................................................34
Sample Design...........................................................................36
Data Collection..........................................................................36
Instrumentation..........................................................................37
Data Analysis............................................................................39
Chapter 3 Summary ..................................................................41

4. RESULTS ..................................................................................42
Respondent Description.............................................................42
Field Instructors’ Perceptions Regarding On-line Training...............43
Willingness to Participate in On-line Training.................................43
Influence of Adult Learning Style Preferences..............................44
Influence of Personal Demographics...........................................47
# Table of Contents—Continued

## CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of External Factors</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Perception of Advantages/Disadvantages of On-line Instruction</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictive Model</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended Questions</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Summary</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5. DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Participate in On-line Training</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Adult Learning Preferences</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Personal Demographics</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of External Factors</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Perception of Advantages/Disadvantages of On-line Instruction</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for Future Research</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Research Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REFERENCES                                                                 | 78   |

## APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Survey of Field Instructors</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Invitation E-mail</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Reminder E-mail</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval Letter</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Research and Survey Questions</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents—Continued

APPENDICES

F. Responses to Open-ended Questions.................................................................105
# LIST OF TABLES

1. Respondents by University Affiliation ................................................................. 42
2. Response Rate by University Affiliation ............................................................... 43
3. Willingness to Participate in Training Via the Internet ........................................... 44
4. Correlation Between Institutional Affiliation and Willingness to Participate .......... 44
5. Interest in Items Related to Adult Learning Style Preferences ............................... 45
6. Correlations Between Adult Learning Preference Items and Willingness to Participate ........................................................................................................ 46
7. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Adult Learning Preferences ............ 47
8. Years of Practice Experience (Recoded) ................................................................. 49
9. Years of Field Instruction Experience ..................................................................... 50
10. Location of Field Instructor Training Attended .................................................... 50
11. Primary Field of Social Work Practice .................................................................. 51
12. Internet Access and Connection Type ..................................................................... 52
13. Self-Rating of Computer/Internet Skills ................................................................ 53
14. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Computer Skills .............................. 54
15. Frequency of Checking E-mail .............................................................................. 54
16. Belong to E-mail Users Group ............................................................................. 54
17. Number of On-line Courses/Workshops ................................................................ 55
18. Participation in Discussion Boards and Chat Rooms .............................................. 56
19. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Interaction with Others On-line ...... 56
20. Agency Support ..................................................................................................... 57
21. Change in Agency Support .................................................................................... 57
List of Tables—Continued

22. Availability of Continuing Education Credits for Internet-based Training ............. 58
23. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from External Factors .......................... 58
26. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages .................................................................................................................. 61
27. Spearman Rho Correlations Between All Previously Correlated Variables ........ 62
28. Model Discrimination ......................................................................................... 63
29. Prediction of Willingness to Participate from All Correlates ............................... 64
30. Research Variables Significantly Correlated to Willingness to Participate .......... 67
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Conceptual framework for study .......................................................... 8
2. Field instructor age distribution .......................................................... 48
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

"If field education is truly a central piece of social work education, it would seem that the profession needs to better understand field instructors" (Rohrer, Smith, & Peterson, 1992, p. 369).

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has identified the field placement as the “signature pedagogy” of the profession (CSWE, 2008). According to Lee Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies “form habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand” (p. 59). Indeed, when social workers recall their university education, the most vivid memories are frequently those of their field placement. Students are guided through this experience by a field instructor who is an employee of a community agency serving as an unpaid adjunct instructor for an university. By modeling the use of professional skills, this experience becomes the template for future relationships the social worker creates with clients. However, relatively little research has been done in social work education to determine an efficient means of training these field instructors about their role in supervising students (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2006).

Limited work has been done to examine what role on-line training and support activities can play in these efforts (Hartsell & Henry, 2003).

The national accreditation standards of the CSWE the required field placement experience for those preparing to become social workers is a minimum of 400 hours of field instruction for baccalaureate students, and 900 hours for master’s students. For
instance, at one university, this accounts for up to 30% of the total hours spent in M.S.W. graduate preparation (Grand Valley State University, 2001).

Although field instructors are seasoned social work practitioners, having several years of experience in their agencies and demonstrating professional comportment and ethical behavior (Wilson, 1981), the skills necessary for their daily practice may have little to do with supervision or teaching (Short, 2001). As these volunteer field instructors make the transition from practitioner to instructor, they need to acquire new skills, both in teaching and in managing a new type of relationship (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Knight, 2001). Field instructors who have better skills in instruction, supervision, and evaluation are seen by students as providing a more supportive learning environment (Garner, 2001; Knight; Short, 2001). Indeed, accredited social work programs are required to provide training for their field instructors but there is no standard for what that training should include (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Further, the provision of such training is made more difficult by the distribution of placements over a large geographic area, often involving hundreds of miles (McFall & Freddolino, 2000). Research related to the best methods for training field instructors has been identified as a concern of social work programs (Raskin, 1994; Wayne, et al., 2006).

Problem Identification

Previous researchers have cited a significant lack of research on the social worker field instruction experience as a reason for their studies (Bedard, 1998; Garner, 2001; McChesney, 1998; Short, 2001). As evidence of such limited research, Bedard (1998) looked to the literature on characteristics of internship supervisors in criminal justice in developing research questions for her study of field instruction. While there continues to
be limited research regarding the specific training of social work field instructors, there is a growing body of research related to the mentoring and continuing education of healthcare providers. Both professions engage experienced practitioners with students placed in practice settings in order to complete their training (Barretti, 2004).

A national survey of field placement directors, identified as faculty of the universities’ social work programs who are responsible for coordinating field placements, brought to light a concern regarding the lack of resources available to provide training, wide variation in content of training, and difficulty in attracting agency-based field instructors to campus-based training (McChesney, 1998). Though time constraints related to budget cuts within the agencies in which social work students are placed are associated with a decrease in availability of field instructors (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Knight, 2001), no studies have yet been undertaken to determine the field instructors’ preferred manner of delivery of that orientation and in-service training.

Social work programs have been slow to engage in using new technologies to bring the training directly to the field instructors, and to offer more immediate support to them (Kolar, Reeser, & Conroy, 2003; Krueger and Stretch, 2000; Moore, 2003; Padgett & Conceição-Runlee 2000). However, use of on-line communication for students, along with their field instructors, has resulted in high levels of satisfaction regarding this more efficient means of communication (Wolfson, Marsom, & Magnuson, 2005). When social work programs have provided coursework on-line, both students and faculty have responded positively to the medium (Cascio, & Gasker, 2001; McFall & Freddolino, 2000; Potts & Hagan, 2003; Van Soest, Canon, & Grant, 2000). These studies have involved on-line provision of instruction to students, but have not involved field
instructors. Despite evidence that social work faculty members using computer-mediated communication have found it to be effective, the possibility of using such technology to provide training to agency-based field instructors has been largely unexplored. Given the lack of studies involving field instructors' interest in participating in on-line training, research regarding on-line training preference of healthcare professionals is reviewed in the next chapter and was used to help shape this research.

Research Study Overview and Questions

This study explores field instructors' perceptions of factors associated with utilizing on-line coursework for training in their roles. Previous research has identified being accessible anytime/anywhere, facilitating peer-to-peer interactions, and providing immediately useful knowledge as positive motives related to on-line training (Charles & Mamary, 2002; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Palloff & Pratt, 2003). Previously identified barriers to potential use of on-line training include: lack of access to computer equipment (Mamary & Charles, 2000), lack of skill and experience in using computers/internet (Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006), and loss of face-to-face interactions (Krueger & Stretch, 2000; Moore, 2003; Padgett & Conceição-Runlee 2000).

As a means to capture information on field instructors' perceptions of on-line training, the following research questions were examined:

1. To what extent is there inclination among social work field instructors to participate in an on-line class for training?

2. To what degree do the following factors influence field instructors' willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) availability of on-line documents related to the administration of the placement (e.g., learning contract, evaluation forms), (b) availability
of discussion with other field instructors, and (c) availability of communication with the field placement liaison and/or director?

3. To what degree do the following personal demographics or characteristics predict field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) age, (b) field of practice within social work, (c) length of practice at the highest degree level, (d) previous experience as a field instructor, (e) prior attendance at a field instructor training event, (f) distance from location where training takes place, (g) means of accessing the internet, (h) technical computer/internet skills, and (i) experience interacting with others online?

4. To what degree do the following external factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) perceived support from their agency for supervising an intern, and (b) availability to acquire social work continuing education credits through participating in an online class?

5. To what degree do factors advanced by the literature as being (a) advantages and (b) disadvantages of online instruction, influence field instructors’ interest in participating in online training?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is built upon previous research knowledge from several different theoretical aspects. First, the social work accreditation standards require that field instructors must be trained (CSWE, 2008) and previous research indicates better outcomes and satisfaction for students if field instructors have training in their roles (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Garner, 2001; Short, 2001). Field placement coordinators at social work programs have indicated a number of problems in conducting
the training of field instructors (Bedard, 1998; McChesney, 1998; McFall & Freddolino, 2000; Raskin, 1994; Rogers & McDonald, 1992; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2006). These problems include being uncertain on what content should be provided in training, the best means for providing training, and lack of time and money to conduct training. This earlier research noted a difficulty in getting field instructors to attend training and a decline in agency support for time spent in their roles as field instructors.

Second, research on adult learning styles emphasizes the impact of learners selecting their own goals, and being able to learn information that helps solve immediate problems (Gordon & Gordon, 1982; Knowles, 1972, 1980; Knowles & Associates, 1984; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006). Also, adults typically communicate with peers to investigate options and gain information needed for solving problems (Knowles, 1972; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Third, research into on-line training has indicated that it provides both flexibility of time and place (Palloff & Pratt, 2003; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006) and that communication on-line can be effective in building relationships between participants in a course (Edwards, & Huff, 2001; Frey, Faul, & Yankelov, 2003). Concerns about on-line training include loss of warmth and richness in communication (Cascio & Gasker, 2001; Edwards, & Huff), access to computer hardware (Charles & Mamary, 2002; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong); access to and speed of internet connection (Mamary & Charles, 2000), and the technological skills of the person being trained (Curran, Hoekman, Gulliver, Landells, & Hatcher, 2000; Mamary & Charles; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong).
Overall, the current study examines the impact of both advantages and disadvantages of on-line training for social work field instructors in the light of adult learning styles. Variables that are explored as impacting field instructors’ willingness to participate in such training include demographic characteristics and experience and skill with technology.

As indicated in Figure 1, the need for training field instructors in their roles is stipulated. Earlier research on concerns of the field coordinators had identified their concerns about such training. The body of research on adult learning styles provided a starting point which the current researcher used to inform the proposed features of an on-line training program. Previous research on continuing education of professionals was used to identify potential advantages and disadvantages to on-line training.

The current study surveyed field instructors directly, as opposed to earlier studies which used surveys of field coordinators, regarding their preferences for features of on-line training, any concerns they had regarding such training, and their willingness to participate in such training. Independent variables in the study were analyzed to determine correlation with field instructors’ willingness to participate in on-line training. A regression model was used to analyze which personal characteristics of field instructors and features of on-line training might be predictive of willingness to participate in such training.
Field instructors must be trained in their roles

- Experience as social worker is insufficient to new role
- Accreditation agency requires training

Social work program concerns regarding training

- Field coordinators lack resources for training
  - Time
  - Money
- Field coordinators lack direction in providing training
  - Content of training
  - Means of training
- Field coordinators have noted some field instructors cease volunteering because of time pressures

Adult learning styles

- Learner directed
- Immediacy of application
- Peer collaboration

Field instructor concerns regarding mode of training

- External variables
  - Agency changes create time pressure for field instructors
  - Required continuing education for licensure
- Personal variables
  - Age
  - Distance to campus
  - Computer skills
  - Access to technology
  - Appeal of adult learning styles

Study variables

On-line training

- Advantages
  - Flexibility of time/place
  - Time for reflection
- Disadvantages
  - Technology/hardware
  - Skills/previous exposure
  - Loss of personal contact
  - Social work slow to adopt on-line teaching

Regression analysis for predictive variables

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for study.

Using an on-line survey, current field instructors were asked about their skills and confidence in on-line communication and their willingness to participate in training on-
line. The responses of experienced field instructors were compared with those of new field instructors to explore the impact of experience on their level of motivation to engage in a different modality for learning. Factors related to field instructors’ distance from face-to-face training locations and time-away-from-work spent in training were studied to determine their relationship to field instructors’ perceptions of on-line training. Communication components of an on-line course, (e.g., discussion board and chat room) were presented as options to determine whether their inclusion would be perceived as a barrier or inducement to participation in such training.

There are several potential beneficiaries of this study. These include schools of social work, field instructors and, indirectly, social work students in field placement. Schools of social work may use the results of this study to plan field instructor orientation and training. Both the schools and field instructors may benefit from exploring field instructors’ perceptions of different training modalities. Field instructors may benefit from research-based options for training that reflect their perceptions of on-campus and on-line training. Finally, social work students may benefit by having field instructors whose training needs have been more fully explored.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This proposed research project is a quantitative study of field instructors from 4 universities in Michigan. The social work departments within these universities were selected because of common program traits, with their programs being accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (2007). All are public universities. Three BSW and 3 MSW programs are represented in this survey. The social work departments also have central campus and extension programs. Approximately 680 individuals serve as field
instructors for these university social work departments. All field instructors with email addresses were surveyed, a random sample was not used. Thus, it is not possible to generalize to other social work programs. Also, a study of primarily quantitative data does not include the more detailed or individualized data that would be available in a qualitative study.

Since the survey was administered on-line, response was limited to only those field instructors for whom the university had email addresses. By report of the field placement coordinators, email addresses were available for more than 95% of the field instructors for each department. In the analysis of data, the ratio of field instructors to whom a survey was emailed to the total population of field instructors is reported. In addition, responses may not have been received from those field instructors who had e-mail addresses, but were uncomfortable or unable to participate in internet-based surveys.

Chapter 1 Summary

Field placement is a crucial part of the education of social workers. Agency-based field instructors require training in the roles expected of them in this status. Little research has been done on the means of training field instructors in the teaching and supervisory skills associated with this role. Bringing field instructors to university campuses for orientation and in-service training is often not feasible because of lost time at their agencies. Providing training through the use of on-line technology—email, discussion forums, and courseware—has been successful in a number of other areas in social work education and is regularly used in the continuing education of other professions. This study explores field instructors’ perceptions of such potential internet-based training.
Chapter 2 provides additional information on research related to field instruction, adult learning principles that may impact field instructors' preferences in training, and significant variables identified in research of on-line training issues in other helping professions; Chapter 3 details the methods of the proposed research study; Chapter 4 profiles the results of the survey; and Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results and their implications for practice and future research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first section of this chapter describes the history of field placement in professional social work education and reviews the roles of field instructor, field director, field liaison and student within this context. The second section examines the role of the field instructor in light of adult education theories. Theories of adult learning provide a background for field instructor-student interactions as well as the orientation and in-service training of field instructors. The third section examines influences that provide motivation for social workers to become field instructors and the shift in role expectations from being a practitioner to a supervisor of students. The fourth section describes issues of accreditation standards and the provision of initial and on-going training to field instructors, including an examination of continuing professional education within adult education, and challenges faced by schools of social work in providing this training. The final section presents a variety of ways distance learning technology has been utilized in social work and health care professional education including perceived barriers and advantages to using this technology in the training of field instructors.

History and Role Description of the Social Work Field Placement

The field placement in the training of social workers has evolved from its inception in the 1880s as an apprenticeship of a novice caseworker to an experienced caseworker—a person who visited clients in their homes to engage them in actions that would improve their circumstances (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; George, 1982). This training took place within a charitable agency with no association to a college because there were,
as yet, no professional schools of social work (Kadushin, 1976). The apprenticeship model involved making home visits with a caseworker, reading the case notes of several workers in the agency to learn their process of rendering assistance to clients, and attending presentations and discussions by senior caseworkers.

Field Placement in Higher Education Institutions

Universities first began offering courses in “social work,” a part of applied sociology, and “practical philanthropy,” within economics and political science, in the mid 1890s (Kadushin, 1976). From that time to the present, an exposure to field work under the supervision of an experienced social worker has been an essential part of the socialization of new workers. Curriculum standards for accreditation, dating back to 1932, have required schools of social work to provide field placement (George, 1982). The CSWE has recently identified field placement as the “signature pedagogy” of the profession (CSWE, 2008).

Over time, placement of students within social service agencies moved from an apprenticeship model to an “articulated model” in which classroom theory was integrated with its application in agency settings (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; George, 1982; Jenkins & Sheafor, 1982; Regehr, Regehr, Leeson, & Fusco, 2002; Wayne, et al., 2006). The contemporary manifestation of field placement is typically a seminar within a social work curriculum jointly taught by an agency-based field instructor and the college faculty (Jenkins & Sheafor; Wayne, et al.). Current accreditation standards require that schools of social work provide a minimum of 400 hours of field instruction for BSW students with 900 hours for MSW students (CSWE, 2008).
Contemporary Patterns in Field Instruction

Schools of social work typically have a director or coordinator of field instruction who facilitates placements of students, recruits agencies for placement, recruits and trains field instructors, and assists field instructors and students in resolving problems arising in placements (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Short, 2001). It is common for directors of field instruction to have other duties within the school such as teaching classes (McChesney, 1998; Wayne, et al., 2006). A field liaison is assigned to contact each student/field instructor and monitor the progress of the student each term. It is typical for the school to provide faculty members, perhaps specially hired for this function, to be liaisons (Wayne, et al.; Wilson, 1981). In some schools, the director of field instruction may act as a liaison for several agencies. The field liaison faculty may provide minimal training to the field instructor in the process of resolving specific issues that arise as the instructor works with a student but the responsibility of both orientation and ongoing training rests with the director of field instruction. McChesney, in her survey (N = 92) of directors of field instruction, found that field liaison faculty were sometimes called on to provide orientation to new field instructors when they were unable to easily attend a campus-based orientation.

The field placement engages a social work student in an agency under the supervision of an experienced social worker in order to gain practice experience and consolidate theoretical concepts learned in the classroom with their application to "real world" situations (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Wayne, et al., 2006). Gordon and Gordon (1982) describe this process as "knowing, understanding, and doing" (p. 28) and locate the outcome of professional training as behavior guided by an integrated set of
knowledge. The field placement situation should provide the student with both a chance to apply that integrated knowledge and guidance from a field instructor to assist in its application.

The student continues to receive instruction from social work faculty in theoretical models and professional values and ethics while the field instructor supervises the application of these concepts in the agency (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Jenkins & Sheafor, 1982; Knight, 2001). The role of field instructor combines elements of role model, supervisor, and instructor (Bogo & Vayda; Garner, 2001; Knight; McChesney, 1998; Short, 2001). The field instructor provides a role model for techniques of intervention and a more global model of the comportment of a professional at work (Bogo & Vayda; Jenkins & Sheafor). As a supervisor, the field instructor both assigns appropriate tasks to the student and provides consultation on the means of performing them (Bogo & Vayda; Gillis & Lewis, 2004; Kadushin, 1976). Beyond this supervision, however, the field instructor must be able to teach concepts that are specific to that agency context and may also teach—or reinforce—the student in applying knowledge learned in the classroom (Bogo & Vayda; Jenkins & Sheafor; McChesney; Short).

The field placement is expected to develop the students' skills for social work practice through supervision by volunteer, agency-based field instructors (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Garner, 2001; Knight, 2001; Regehr, Regehr, Leeson, & Fusco, 2002; Short, 2001; Wilson, 1981). These instructors are typically experienced practitioners selected by the field instruction director from a variety of agency types, e.g. mental health, criminal justice, protective services, schools. The field instructors should demonstrate both professional competence and ethical practice. Field instructors are
expected to supervise the practice of general skills of social work within the specific context of a given agency and the student learns to apply theoretical skills within that context.

These skills include supervision (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Garner, 2001; Short, 2001; Wilson, 1981), instruction (Armenta, Haulotte, & Linseisen, 2003; Bogo & Vayda; Knight, 2001; Wilson), evaluation of the student’s performance (Armenta, Haulotte, & Linseisen; Bogo & Vayda; Knight; Short; Wilson), understanding the fit of field placement within the curriculum of the school (Bogo & Vayda; Short), guiding the student through ethical dilemmas (Bogo & Vayda; Garner; Wilson), managing behavioral issues students may exhibit (Bogo & Vayda; Gillis & Lewis, 2004; Wilson), and knowing the forms and timelines necessary to document the student’s acceptance in and progress through the placement (Armenta, et al.; Bogo & Vayda; Knight; Wilson).

Motivations of Field Instructors

Some research exists on why field instructors volunteer to provide supervision of students in addition to their other job responsibilities (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Wilson, 1981). They report their motivations as a sense of affiliation with an institution of higher education (Klein, Weisman, & Smith, 1996), exposure to current trends in the field (Short, 2001), and the fulfillment that comes from teaching students (Noble, 2000; Short; Wayne, et al., 2006; Wilson).

Agencies derive some benefits from having students placed with them. It provides additional staff—if only at a student’s level of functioning—and creates an opportunity to screen and groom potential new employees (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Wilson, 1981). The agency may increase its reputation by having students routinely placed there.
Creating closer lines of communication between agency and school allows for increased agency access to recent research (Globerman & Bogo). Increases in skills in direct practice and as a supervisor benefit both field instructors and the agencies in which they work (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Globerman & Bogo; Wilson).

Issues in Orientation and On-going Training of Field Instructors

As field placement is an integration of classroom-taught theory with agency-based application, field instructors must possess both practice wisdom and knowledge of educational processes (Bogo & Vayda, 1987). Even practitioners with interest in educating students have need of training in skills for their new roles. Bogo and Vayda note that there are times when the social work practitioner, particularly in a mental health setting, must refrain from using practice skills with the student and rely on a different set of instructional and supervisory skills. Developing the skills for supervising and evaluating students requires a commitment of time and effort on the part of the field instructor and the agency (Bogo & Vayda; Sherer & Peleg-Oren, 2005; Wilson, 1981).

Problems in Providing Training to Field Instructors

There is considerable agreement that field instructors must receive training to support the shift from their core roles as social work practitioners. Schools of social work vary widely in both the initial orientation and in-service training of their field instructors (McChesney, 1998). Accreditation standards do not specify the content or amount of time required in training field instructors, though they do state that schools should make such training available (CSWE, 2008). “The 2001 EPAS [Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards] has few specific mandated filed requirements and almost no proscriptions on ways to carry out those mandates” (Wayne, Raskin, & Bogo, 2006, p.
This has not altered in the 2008 EPAS. Schools may have formal training over multiple sessions (Armenta, Haulotte, & Linseisen, 2003; Bogo & Power, 1994) or provide a brief orientation on an individual basis with newly recruited field instructors (Rogers & McDonald, 1992).

Bogo and Power (1994) described a training program for first time field instructors consisting of 24 hours of instruction spread over 12 sessions. The content of this orientation program was designed to help the new field instructors with both technical competencies of interfacing with the school’s calendar of placing and evaluating students and the relationship competencies of instructing and supervising a student. This content is quite similar to the 12 hours of training provided in a 4 session pilot program studied by Armenta, Haulotte, and Linseisen (2003). Beyond defining content of training to be provided field instructors, few studies have addressed the issue of how to provide such training.

McChesney’s national survey of graduate directors of field instruction (1998) elicited responses from 92 directors. The majority of these directors reported spending between 2 and 6 hours per year conducting group orientation sessions for new field instructors. Seventy-five percent of the schools required new field instructors to complete an orientation. Fifty percent of the respondents reported in-service training for on-going field instructors of 15 hours or less per year. The majority of respondents provided only one training session per year, and some programs alternated locations of training during the year to accommodate field instructors from more distant locations. In addition, some programs made video or audio tapes of training sessions available to participants who
were not able to attend. Directors of field instruction reported concern about the level of participation of field instructors and means of increasing training available to them.

Agency Factors Impacting Field Instructors’ Participation

Directors of field instruction perceive reductions in funding to social agencies as adversely impacting field instruction (Bedard, 1998). In Bedard’s survey of both BSW and MSW directors of field instruction, 63% reported a negative impact on field education resulting from funding cut-backs within agencies in which students were placed. Agencies have shown a trend toward reducing placements or eliminating positions for interns altogether because of budget cuts (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Knight, 2001; Wayne, et al., 2006). As a result, field instructors are often given no release time or other consideration from their agencies for supervising interns (Globerman & Bogo; Wayne, et al.; Wilson, 1981). Bogo and Power (1992) found that field instructors reported the most valuable type of agency support that they received was release time to attend training at the university. In the same study, they found that the turnover rate of new field instructors was 46%—that is almost half of newly trained field instructors did not continue beyond their first supervisory experience, largely because of the time consumed in supervising students. This fact was the basis for the recommendation by Wayne, Bogo and Raskin that field instructors should be explicitly told of the time commitment expected of them.

Bogo and Power (1992) recommended making new field instructors aware of the time commitment required to perform the role and increasing university support to agencies so that the field instructors might perceive greater benefits from volunteering.
their time. Social workers who continue to be field instructors may feel pressed for time to provide this supervision (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Knight, 2001).

Budget cuts within agencies are associated with reduction in the number of social workers available to perform the necessary services of the agency (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Knight, 2001). These budget and personnel cuts create pressure for social workers who had previously taken students in field placement to cease doing so—even though some benefits accrue to the agency through these placements (Globerman & Bogo). This increases the need for schools of social work to find new and efficient ways of managing their field placement program, including the orientation and on-going training of field instructors (Globerman & Bogo; Wayne, et al., 2006).

Though field instructors in the past might have received some reduction in workload from their agencies for providing supervision to students (Jenkins & Sheafor, 1982), this is often not the case today (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Knight, 2001; Wayne, et al., 2006). Many field instructors have diminished time to attend training sessions because of downsizing in their agencies (Globerman & Bogo). Although schools offer orientation and on-going training to their field instructors in order to comply with CSWE accreditation standards, assuring that a significant number of their field instructors participate in the training is a widespread concern (McChesney, 1998; Wayne, et al.).

The empirical studies conducted to date have involved group training of field instructors at a central location—usually the school of social work (Bogo & Power, 1994; McChesney, 1998). In this study, the impact of previous experience as a field instructor and exposure to face-to-face training are included as variables. Also, perceived agency
support for being a field instructor and distance traveled to trainings are included as variables.

Field Instruction as an Adult Learning Experience

The social work field placement experience involves adult field instructors teaching adult learners (students). In this process, a number of elements associated with education of adults are found, e.g., students set their own learning goals, apply existing knowledge to solving novel problems, and reflect on the skills they have gained in the experience (Bogo & Vayda, 1987; Gordon & Gordon; Wilson, 1981). Field instructors provide what Houle (1970) refers to as "direct guidance of learners" (p. 113) and must have both the mastery of the content to be taught as well as skills of instructional techniques. He notes that professionals usually have ready access to the means of obtaining the content to be conveyed, but may have more difficulty in developing the skills of transmitting that content. The opinions of earlier researchers in field instruction bear out the need of field instructors to develop skills in supervision and instruction of students (Bogo & Vayda; Raskin, 1994).

Utilizing existing skills to develop new skills and adapt to new situations is a characteristic of the adult learner. In this manner, as they learn to relate to students, field instructors—whom Gordon (1982) refers to as "super" adult learners—bring to their new roles their expertise in engaging and interacting with clients. Though their social work practice skills are not abandoned in the new relationship, a new application of those skills must be made. What is known about adult learners, therefore, should be applied to providing training to field instructors.
Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners

Characteristics of adult learners (Knowles, 1972, 1980; Merriam, 1994; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006) include being motivated by internal desires rather than external forces, ability to take responsibility for themselves and choose their own learning goals, and basing their desired goals on what they perceive as their need to know based on their life experience. Adult learners seek delivery models that emphasize convenience—having an existing repertoire of skills, they desire to quickly add knowledge that will help solve a recognized problem (Knowles, 1980). Knowles relates adult learners’ recognition of educational need to the “perceived gap” between their present level of competency and their desired level of competency.

The “teachable moment” in adult education is the juncture at which a learner realizes a need for information or skills and becomes ready to acquire them (Knowles, 1980). The immediacy of being able to apply new learning to solve a self-perceived problem is appealing to adults (Merriam, et al., 2007). This applies not only to students in their field placement but to field instructors as well (Gordon, 1982). Field instructors’ eagerness to learn about supervising interns with psychiatric disabilities (Gillis & Lewis, 2004) is an example of this. As field instructors deal with problems in supervising students, they identify their learning needs and often desire to increase their competence in instructional techniques. This exemplifies the adult learning model of seeking information to address self-identified needs (Merriam, et al.).

Fitting the model of instruction to the needs of adult learners is important (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, et al., 2007). The adult learning model stresses “process design”—creating learning experiences that are best suited to the skills and preferences of
the learner (Gitterman & Miller, 1977; Knowles & Associates, 1984). This emphasizes setting a climate appropriate to self-directed adults and involving learners in active pursuit of their own goals. A collaborative climate that facilitates learner-to-learner communication is usually preferred by adults (Johnson, 1994). Recent critiques of Knowles’ work note his lack of emphasis on the cultural context and social interactions of the learner (Merriam, et al., 2007). The concern about cultural context involves the creation of a learning environment that encourages exchange between learners who have adult life experience on which to build new knowledge. Adults are likely to value input from peers who have the same learning objectives or who are trying to learn about similar issues. These adult learners value the opportunity for interaction with peers in addition to a teacher or facilitator.

In this study, concepts related to adult learning are included as variables. This involves variables of communication with peers, access to documents or tools needed to address self-perceived needs of the learner, and access to information related to problems identified by the learner.

*Adult Learning Preferences and On-line Courses*

Distance learning has changed over time to utilize current technologies—first using print media correspondence courses and later broadcast or video courses (Merriam, et al., 2007). The third generation of distance learning uses computer-mediated instruction, of which on-line courses are a significant part. As with most distance learning, on-line learning allows for flexibility in learner time and location. The on-line environment is compatible with the described preferences of the adult learner:

Valuable features of Web-based learning include its potential for empowering the
learner, for enabling individualized instruction and collaborative peer-to-peer
learning, and for transferring greater control to adult learners to decide when, how
much, and to what extent study and instruction takes place. (Curran, Hoekman,
Gulliver, Landells, & Hatcher, 2000a, p. 98)

In addition, Palloff and Pratt (2003) describe the on-line environment as providing
students with greater time to reflect on the content of both instructional material and peer
comments. Merriam (1994) describes the need of the adult learner to reflect on current
learning materials in light of their life experience. She suggests that this reflective process
is more often preferred by the adult than by younger learners.

Parallels in Teaching of Social Workers and Health Care Professionals

As discussed earlier, there is a lack of research on how to meet the training needs
of social work field instructors, yet such research is available for the healthcare
professions. In the following sections, which discuss means to provide training through
on-line technology, research from continuing education of healthcare professionals is
examined. Barretti (2004) proposes that issues of professional socialization of social
workers is similar in nature to that of medicine and nursing in that they are “practical”
professions—they use strategic analysis for “real world” problem solving and are guided
in this process by a professional culture. These “practical professions” share socialization
components in training new professionals through both academic or “pre-clinical” and
clinical settings. The social work field placement is the equivalent of the nursing
profession’s clinical socialization component.

Literature on the supervision of nursing students through this clinical socialization
experience indicates shared patterns with that of social work field instructors. Clinical
supervisors, called “preceptors,” are seasoned professionals who supervise student nurses in clinical application of skills learned in classroom settings (Kaviani & Stillwell, 2000). Preceptors share similarities to field instructors in regard to their experience as benefiting themselves through exposure to new practice techniques, incentives to model practice excellence, and the experience of contributing to the profession through training students (Kaviani & Stillwell; Masuda, 1998). Though preceptors are selected for their professional experience skills, they still need training in the instruction and supervision of students (Hrobsky & Kerbergen, 2002; Kaviani & Stillwell). Preceptors require support from the organization in which they work in order to have sufficient time for their own initial orientation to preceptorship and associated in-services as well as time to train and supervise students (Kaviani & Stillwell). In order to facilitate efficient training of preceptors, some nursing schools have developed web sites to provide orientation, information, and communication linkages (Hrobsky & Kerbergen).

Use of Internet for Teaching

The social work profession as a whole has tended toward a slow adoption of technology in teaching and communication (Krueger & Stretch, 2000; Padgett & Conceição-Runlee, 2000). The perception of communication technology, particularly internet-based technology, as removing the non-verbal and purely physical presence of the parties communicating has been cited by Krueger and Stretch (2000) as a part of social workers’ reluctance to engage with the medium. Loss of this sense of warm, personal communication is offered as a reason for reluctance in utilizing internet communications (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Moore (2003) surveyed social work faculty (N = 56) who were teaching using on-line technology regarding their perceptions
of the effectiveness of those classes versus the same course taught face-to-face. She found that faculty rated courses across 9 content areas as less effective when taught online. However, the mean difference in perception varied from a high of 0.763 (field instruction) to a low of 0.148 (policy). Some content areas (e.g., policy and human behavior in a social environment) were close in faculty perception of effectiveness between the modalities.

**Changing Perceptions of Social Workers Regarding On-line Instruction**

Earlier concerns about the negative effects of using distance learning technology on the development of relationships between communicators seem to be dispelled by studies of the relationships developed in on-line social work classes which indicate that internet-based communication can effectively engage participants in relating to each other (Edwards & Huff, 2001, 2003). In internet-based classes, some participants seem to engage more readily, asking questions and taking risks in sharing their opinions, and the overall level of communication seems no less than in a traditional classroom setting (Edwards & Huff, 2003; Van Soest, Canon, & Grant, 2000; Wolfson, et al., 2005).

Wolfson, Marsom and Magnuson studied the communication of students, their field instructors, and seminar teachers through a WebCT course site. After assessing satisfaction of students, field instructors, and campus faculty, they reported this was an efficient means of conducting the seminar accompanying their placement.

York (2008) studied student outcomes in 3 sections of the same social work course, all taught by the same instructor, in face-to-face (N = 18), hybrid (N = 13), and on-line (N = 11) formats. He found there was no statistically significant difference in course grade, gain in knowledge, self-efficacy, or satisfaction with the course between
the face-to-face and internet formats. York notes that these findings are similar to those of other recent studies in that on-line instruction seemed at least equal to that of face-to-face instruction.

An internet-based training module for new field instructors at their university was introduced by Hartsell and Henry (2003). This web site used documents and web-based content to convey instructions for completing necessary paperwork to enroll and evaluate students in field placement, and provided readings on instructional and supervisory skills. The web site did not provide a means for discussion between field instructors either asynchronously or in real time. Field instructors using this site may print a certificate for themselves at the end of their self-guided course. Hartsell and Henry reported anecdotal evidence that the on-line orientation has been well received by field instructors who had voluntarily participated.

*Use of On-line Training for Healthcare Professionals*

As social work education has previously been compared to the education of health care professionals (Barretti, 2004), literature regarding the preferences of physicians and nurses involving use of internet-based continuing education was explored. The health care professions have been exploring the use of on-line education to meet the continuing education needs of practicing clinicians. In 1999, a survey of providers (N = 200) of continuing medical education (CME) programs—both university and non-university-based—showed that 32% of respondents provided distance education, with 16% using on-line distance education modalities (Carriere & Harvey, 2001).

The providers of both categories of distance education programs were offering distance learning opportunities for the same principal reason: the enhanced access
to CME and specialized resources that can overcome time and distance barriers. Also, private companies favored the nontraditional learning modes they saw as better suited to the needs of adult learners and less costly to the user by avoiding office shutdown and travel expenses. (Carriere & Harvey, p. 152)

Providers who were not using distance education reported a reluctance to develop such programs because of the time and cost of creating programs in a new modality. Citing the time and expense involved in creating continuing education programs for nurses, Charles and Mamary (2002), point out the importance of having a good understanding of the instructional delivery preferences of the practitioners themselves. Their studies of nurses and physicians indicated a significant preference for in-person instruction (Mamary & Charles, 2000). This unwillingness of healthcare practitioners to participate in on-line training was cited as a reason to continue providing a range of other options.

**Perceived Disadvantages and Advantages to On-line Learning**

Research on the learning preferences of adults has identified a number of barriers to participating in on-line learning. Demographic variables of age, sex, level of education, and geographic location were significantly correlated with likelihood of using on-line technology for educational purposes (Selwyn, et al., 2006). The authors also found that people who used computers and on-line technology at work were more likely to use it at home as well. They found that some respondents had adequate skills and access to on-line technology but chose limited or no use of it for education because of personal preferences for face-to-face contact. However, they concluded that “people’s present state-of-being regarding their use of technology for educational purposes is shaped both
by their present temperament and motivations but crucially by their life-histories of technology use and education” (Selwyn, et al., p. 189).

There are also potential social and economic barriers to on-line learning. “Although new technologies may have the potential to overcome barriers to education their use is also just as capable of introducing new forms of impediment to full participations in education” (Selwyn, et al., 2006, p. 19). The authors note the phenomenon of the “digital divide” is more complex than access or lack of access to the internet, but involves the age and compatibility of hardware and software as well as the speed and reliability of connectivity to the internet. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) add a concern that many potential users of on-line learning are shut out not only by the expense of equipment and access but by lack of cultural capital to be able to fully utilize such technology.

In their study of adult learning using computer technology, Selwyn, Gorard and Furlong (2006) criticize earlier research that has focused solely on participants’ access to technology. Such studies frequently ignored the economic, cultural, and educational characteristics that impact the use of information available through on-line technology. They note that adults who do not use on-line technology may lack the cultural capital of exposure to such technology in their earlier socialization. Further, they emphasize the importance of studying the different ways adults engage with technology and the use participants make of the information they have accessed. These studies have focused on the general community, other research has been done specifically on continuing education use of on-line learning.
Turning from general research on adults’ preferences for continuing education to specific studies of the preferences of professionals shows a similar pattern of disinterest based on age and previous exposure to such technology (Charles & Mamary, 2002; Mamary & Charles, 2000). This suggests that the concerns of Selwyn, Gorard and Furlong regarding the “capital” of exposure apply to college-educated professionals as well as the general public. Younger professionals may have had greater levels of exposure to computer and internet technology in their initial training, and thus may be more inclined to participate in such training (Mamary & Charles, 2000). Indeed, exposure to the experience of computer-mediated or on-line education may influence willingness to do so again in the future (Curran, et al., 2000a).

A survey of 103 nurse practitioners in the state of Nevada compared the modes of continuing education delivery in the 12 months prior to the survey with their preferred modes of acquiring continuing education (Charles & Mamary, 2002). The results for both past practice and current preference showed in-person conferences as the top-ranked delivery mode. Use of internet-based continuing education was ranked 4th of 9 for both past practice and current preference. The survey explored reasons for preferences related to internet-based continuing education and found that “Respondents identified lack of knowledge or skills as the main reason for declining to choose the Internet or CD-ROM for obtaining CE” (Charles & Mamary, p. 90). The authors noted that 85% of the respondents reported having access to the internet, and cited lack of skills, rather than a lack of interest in internet-based continuing education, as a barrier to this as a delivery method. An expanded study (N = 1,120), included the nurse practitioner data as well as responses to the same survey by physicians and physician assistants. These results
showed similar issues, with respondents of all professions citing lack of skill and difficulty in means of access to the internet as barriers to utilizing on-line continuing education (Mamary & Charles, 2000). Further, age of the clinician was inversely associated with increased skill and use of the internet.

Curran, et al. (2000b) conducted a study to determine physicians' perceptions of computer-mediated CME. This course utilized a hybrid computer-based design that incorporated instructional material on a CD-ROM as well as an internet-based discussion board and assessment procedure (Curran, et al., 2000a). Physicians who completed the course were surveyed on their satisfaction with the experience. Respondents rated the course as effective in meeting their educational needs and favorably reacted to the format of the course as well as its content. Specific positive attributes included the availability of discussion boards so that peers could seek input from each other, the ability to work from home or the office at any time of day, and easy access to learning resources via web-site links in the course.

As the process of educating health care professionals has been compared to that of social work education, issues that relate to practitioner satisfaction with on-line training may be similar between these professions. In this study, variables of familiarity with computers and internet-based communication, type of access to the internet, and the desirability of flexibility of time and place of accessing the internet are examined. Additionally, the variables of age of field instructors and length of time since acquiring their terminal degrees are included.
Chapter 2 Summary

The field placement experience involves students applying professional skills in an agency setting. Students are supervised by volunteer field instructors who work in the agencies in which the students intern. The field instructors have considerable experience as social workers but little or no training in supervision and instruction; thus, schools of social work must provide such training to them. Though some research on the content of field instructor training programs exists, few studies have been undertaken to explore the best means for providing this training. Recent studies have found an increasing concern about constraints on field instructors’ time, both to attend training and to supervise students.

Studies in continuing education of practicing healthcare providers suggest that on-line education can effectively meet their needs and provide flexibility in when and where they will engage in the education program. Barriers identified in providing on-line education programs to healthcare professionals include both practitioner lack of confidence and skills with technology and increased development costs for the education providers. Although social workers have been somewhat slow to warm up to the use of on-line teaching, research in several areas of social work education—including field seminars—have shown it to be effective in meeting learning goals and to be well received by students. Because of the time and expense of developing on-line courses and the general reluctance of social workers to engage with computer technology, it is important to determine whether field instructors would even consider participating in such courses. Surveying field instructors to determine their perceptions of on-line training is necessary to determine if they would be inclined to participate in such a program.
Several critical variables related to field instructor willingness to participate in on-line education are examined in this survey. These variables include length of experience as a field instructor, previous exposure to field instructor orientation and continuing education, distance traveled to a face-to-face training site, familiarity with computers and internet communications, speed of computer equipment and internet connection, interest in the flexibility offered by on-line learning, preferred type of communication with peers and facilitator, and perceived agency support for training in being a field instructor.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The practical concern regarding the best means to train social work field instructors has been raised through previous studies (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; McChesney, 1998) and specific problems have been identified. Through a qualitative study, Globerman and Bogo identified time constraints of field instructors as a significant issue in their willingness to continue accepting interns. Their study involved individual interviews with 20 field instructors. McChesney’s study of field instructor orientation and training issues involved a survey of 140 field placement directors of graduate programs of social work. As this current study is pragmatic and pursued issues raised in other studies, a quantitative approach is used (Creswell, 2003). The use of an on-line survey allowed for a much broader exploration of variables that have been identified in earlier research.

Overall, this quantitative study explores the impact of factors that might affect field instructors’ willingness to participate in internet-based training. Technical issues related to on-line instruction were explored as well as experiences with previous training that may relate to field instructors’ motivation to participate in training through this modality.

Research Questions

The dependent variable of this non-experimental survey design is the inclination of field instructors to participate in an on-line training program. Independent variables include the distance the field instructor would travel to a campus-based training, amount of experience and previous training as a field instructor, confidence with internet and
computer skills, age, and desire to obtain professional continuing education credits. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. To what extent is there inclination among social work field instructors to participate in an on-line class for training?

2. To what degree do the following factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) availability of on-line documents related to the administration of the placement (e.g., learning contract, evaluation forms), (b) availability of discussion with other field instructors, and (c) availability of communication with the field placement liaison and/or director?

3. To what degree do the following personal demographics or characteristics predict field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) age, (b) field of practice within social work, (c) length of practice at the highest degree level, (d) previous experience as a field instructor, (e) prior attendance at a field instructor training event, (f) distance from location where training takes place, (g) means of accessing the internet, (h) technical computer/internet skills, and (i) experience interacting with others online?

4. To what degree do the following external factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) perceived support from their agency for supervising an intern, and (b) availability to acquire social work continuing education credits through participating in an online class?

5. To what degree do factors advanced by the literature as being (a) advantages and (b) disadvantages of online instruction, influence field instructors’ interest in participating in online training?
Sample Design

Field instructors from the social work programs of Western Michigan University (WMU), the University of Michigan (UM-Ann Arbor) and the University of Michigan-Flint (UM-F), and Grand Valley State University (GVSU) were surveyed (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey used). This researcher had been a field instructor for both WMU and GVSU and had personal contacts with the field instruction directors at all 4 universities. All programs are accredited by CSWE (2007). Each university has both MSW and BSW programs, and both central campus and extension programs.

The field placement directors for these 4 universities had email access to more than 95% of their field instructors. The total number of field instructors for all universities was just over 600, and the entire population with email addresses was emailed a letter (see Appendix B) asking them to participate in an on-line survey. Only those field instructors who had email addresses were surveyed. Although not capturing the views of those without e-mail access was a study limitation, the overall percent of such individuals was relatively small.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a web-based survey. The “e-survey” technique is an accepted research form, having been used for surveys in previous studies of social work field instruction issues (Bedard, 1998). When there is a standardized collection of email addresses for persons in a defined group within an organization, an e-survey can be considered (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliott, 2002). Anderson and Kanuka (2003) report advantages of e-surveys as significantly reduced cost of administration, faster return of responses, increased accuracy of responses through prompts to the respondent during
administration, elimination of accidentally skipped items, and controlled branching of
questions based on responses. Further, the authors provide evidence that return rates are
equal to or greater than those of paper surveys.

Beginning in late August, 2007, field instructors were emailed an invitation to
participate (Appendix B). To protect the privacy of each university's field instructors'
email addresses, the invitation was sent to the field placement director who forwarded it
to all field instructors on their mailing list. This email included a link to the web site
through which the survey was administered. Those who did not respond within 2 weeks
were emailed a reminder, distributed in the same manner (Appendix C), with another
follow-up reminder coming about one week after that.

The survey instrument and research proposal were reviewed by the Western
Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (Appendix D).
Approval for the research under the "exempt" category was given on August 20, 2007.

Instrumentation

This researcher-constructed survey incorporated factors identified in previous
focus group explorations with field instructors (Globerman & Bogo, 2003) and surveys of
field directors (McChesney, 1998). Additionally, specific elements related to adult
learning styles (Knowles, 1980; Johnson, 1994; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner,
2007) and on-line learning (Edwards & Huff, 2003; Selwyn, Gorard, & Furlong, 2006;
Wolfson, et al., 2005) were included in this survey to address issues identified with adult
satisfaction in on-line learning environments.

The survey covered 10 factors including (1) demographics, (2) experience as a
field instructor, (3) previous training as a field instructor, (4) agency support for field
instruction, (5) skills and experience with internet-based communication, (6) means of accessing the internet, (7) perceived barriers to participating in on-line training, (8) perceived advantages to on-line training, (9) interest in continuing education credits for on-line training, and (10) content that would be desired in an on-line training site. A comparison of survey questions and the research questions to which they are related is included in Appendix E.

Likert scales were used in questions related to perceptions and to behaviors involving computer/internet usage. Use of Likert scales is helpful when respondents are asked to quantify an attitude or behavior (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Each Likert scale response was a choice of 4 levels with no neutral option.

In the demographics section there are 2 multiple-choice questions. In the section on adult learning preferences there is one question with 4 Likert scale items. In the section of agency support there are 2 multiple-choice questions. In the section of experience and previous training as a field instructor there are 9 short answer open-ended questions. In the section of means of accessing the internet there are 2 multiple-choice questions. In the section of skills and experience with internet-based communication there is 1 question with 6 Likert scale items for perception of computer/internet skills and 3 short answer open-ended questions and 1 multiple-choice question about on-line communication experience. In the section of perceived barriers there is one question with 8 Likert scale items rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree and one open-ended item, “Other.” In the section of perceived advantages there is 1 question with 3 Likert scale items rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the section of interest in continuing education credit there is 1 Likert scale question. The dependent variable,
“would participate in on-line training for field instructors” uses a Likert scale rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Two open-ended questions allowed respondents to identify areas of concern regarding field instructor in-service training and topics they would want provided on a field instructor internet site. The latter question was of interest to the universities providing access to their field instructors and summary results will be provided to those field placement directors.

Because this survey was constructed by the researcher, no previous studies of validity and reliability exist. Information on validity establishes whether or not an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Creswell, 2003). To assist in improving the survey, a panel of experts, including social work professors, field instructors, and a field placement coordinator, reviewed the survey for question construction, and their suggestions were incorporated.

A pilot study of six field instructors from the researcher’s social work department was conducted. Information on time to complete the survey, ease of using the survey technology, question construction, and content were used to refine the survey. No data collected in the pilot study was incorporated into the research analysis.

Data Analysis

This survey was administered via Zoomerang, a web-based survey tool. Respondents were recruited through emailed invitations. The data returned from this was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For the purpose of this analysis, Likert scale data was assumed to be interval level (Ravid, 2000). A p-value of .05 is acceptable in the social sciences and was set for all tests. All quantitative data
were analyzed using SPSS and qualitative data (answers to open-ended questions) were grouped and reported by analysis of common remarks (Patton, 2002).

The survey contains 27 questions, some with multiple items. Standard descriptive statistics—frequencies, means, and ranges—are given for the independent and dependent variables. Some of the items are related to specific factors including skills and experience with internet-based communication, perceived barriers and perceived advantages to field instructor training on-line. To facilitate analysis, several Likert scale rated items related to these specific factors were grouped into new variables. Prior to grouping these items, an analysis of internal consistency (Chronbach’s alpha) was performed. This test is used to determine the reliability with which each item measures a common variable (Morgan, Reichert, & Harrison, 2002). Only items meeting the Cronbach’s alpha of .70 or higher were grouped into a single new variable.

A correlation analysis was performed on all independent variables and the dependent variable (Weinbach & Grinnell, 2004). Regression analysis was used to determine whether and to what degree the independent variables could predict the likelihood of a field instructor being willing to participate in on-line training (Ravid, 2000). Because responses to the question related to the dependent variable were given on a 4 point scale (“1= no, definitely not; 2= probably not; 3= I might participate; 4= yes, I definitely would participate.”), this was interval data of very few categories and thus did not fit well with a linear regression model (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). While the 4 responses might have been regarded as interval data, the more conservative approach was taken, and they were regarded as only categorical data. Because the middle choices left some doubt as to the intent of the respondent to participate in an on-line course, they
were grouped together with "no." This avoided the assumption that respondents who indicated they "might participate" were the same as those who said "yes." By recoding the responses from 4 alternatives to 2 ("yes" and "all other responses") a binary variable was generated and logistic regression was used. A logistic regression analysis was performed for all variables that had significant positive or negative correlation with the dependent variable.

Chapter 3 Summary

Little research has been done on the means of training field instructors. Other than focus groups, and in-house surveys by institutions that are not published, no mass survey of field instructors had previously been undertaken. Studies of other professions utilizing on-line technology in continuing education of practitioners have identified some barriers to participation, including technological access and skill deficits and desire for interaction with other adult learners. Until this research, no such study has been undertaken for social work field instructors.

This quantitative study explores factors related to social work field instructors' inclination to participate in on-line training. An invitation to participate in an on-line survey was emailed to all field instructors for whom email addresses were available (N = 642) of 4 universities' social work programs. Analysis of the responses was performed using SPSS and a grouping of qualitative responses. The interpretation of these findings compares this study to the findings of earlier studies by other researchers.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents results from the field instructors' perception of on-line training as collected via a survey distributed through four universities in Michigan. First, this chapter describes the researcher's reduction or manipulation of certain variables prior to further analysis. Second, this chapter presents demographics and response rates from institutions. Finally, this chapter addresses the research questions posed in the previous chapter.

Respondent Description

Of 208 responding field instructors, 6 reported they were not field instructors for any of the schools sending out the survey, 187 were field instructors a single school, 11 were field instructors for 2 schools, and 2 were field instructors for 3 schools.

Table 1

Respondents by University Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GVSU</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM-Ann Arbor/ UM-Flint (aggregate)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMU</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response rates by institution were calculated on the basis of respondents’ report of institution of affiliation. Because of the 13 overlapping field instructors, the total response rate exceeds 208. Respondents completed the survey once, regardless of how many programs the represent. Table 2 displays the total number of valid email addresses for field instructors of each school and the response rate for that school.
Field instructors were asked to indicate their highest degree earned. Of these respondents, 164 (78.8%) had earned an MSW, 6 (2.9%) had earned a BSW, and 38 (18.3%) indicated having some other terminal degree. Of these, 16 (8%) specifically noted they had a degree in a discipline other than social work. Other demographics such as age and professional experience will be discussed in the section responding to that research question.
Table 3

Willingness to Participate in Training Via the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though not included in the research questions, the researcher examined the possible correlation of institution with which respondents were affiliated and their willingness to participate. There was no correlation noted, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation Between Institutional Affiliation and Willingness to Participate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GVSU</th>
<th>UM-Ann Arbor/ UM-Flint (aggregate)</th>
<th>WMU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to participate</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 208
*p<.05

Influence of Adult Learning Style Preferences

Research question 2 asked “To what degree do the following factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) availability of on-line documents related to the administration of the placement (e.g., learning contract, evaluation forms), (b) availability of discussion with other field instructors, and (c) availability of communication with the field placement liaison and/or director?” On survey question 22 (a-d) respondents were asked to rate their interest in features that might be used within a field instructor web site. Responses were indicated with a 4 point Likert scale, i.e. 1=no interest at all, 2=little interest, 3=moderate interest, and
4=sigificant interest. Table 5 displays responses to that question ranked from highest to lowest mean.

Table 5

*Interest in Items Related to Adult Learning Style Preferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>$M$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access documents</td>
<td>7 (3.4%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access articles</td>
<td>8 (3.8%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board</td>
<td>35 (16.8%)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat room</td>
<td>70 (33.7%)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=no interest at all, 2=little interest, 3=moderate interest, 4=significant interest

The availability of documents directly related to supervising the field placement was the most highly rated as a preferred feature, with 58.2% ($N = 121$) rating that as of "significant interest" to them. Accessing articles related to topics regarding the field instructor's specific concerns was the next most preferred feature, with 52.9 ($N = 110$) rating that as of "significant interest" to them. Communication between peers and with the field liaison were of lower interest with only 17.3% ($N = 36$) indicating "significant interest" in a discussion board and 8.7% ($N = 18$) indicating "significant interest" in a chat room. Use of a chat room was the least desirable of all features with 33.7% ($N = 70$) indicating that they had "no interest at all" in it.

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between all items related to adult participation in on-line learning and the respondents' willingness to participate in an on-line course. The Spearman rho correlation was chosen because the dependent variable was offered to respondents as 4 unique answers that were not scaled, thus it was treated as nominal data. Table 6 displays the correlation of each of those items.
Table 6

*Correlations Between Adult Learning Preference Items and Willingness to Participate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to participate</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Relevant Articles</th>
<th>Discussion Board</th>
<th>Chat Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.326*</td>
<td>.389*</td>
<td>.479*</td>
<td>.389*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 206
*p<.05

There was a high degree of correlation between respondents who had lower interest in a chat room feature and those who had lower willingness to participate.

Survey question 22 had multiple Likert scale items exploring similar issues. Because of similarity in content for these question items, an analysis of inter-item correlation (Cronbach’s alpha) was performed using SPSS. The Cronbach’s alpha is used to test the extent to which any single item correlates with other items in a given set (UCLA, n.d.). Typically, social sciences consider a Cronbach’s alpha of .7 or higher as a level indicating sufficient inter-item correlation to group the items. A new variable of the combined items was created by using the mean of the individual items.

For the 6 items of survey question 22, the Cronbach’s alpha was .755, and thus no items needed to be removed to improve the score. Accordingly, the researcher created a new variable “adult pref” from the items of survey question 22. There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between the composite variable “adult pref” and willingness to participate in on-line training $r_s = .419, p = .000, n = 204$).

As the research questions involve prediction of the influence of several variables on willingness to participate in on-line training, a regression analysis was used. The logistic regression uses a binary option for the dependent variable (UCLA, n.d.). A new variable was created from the results of survey question 25 “would you participate in an
on-line training if it were offered?” Respondents picked from 4 options indicating likelihood of participation including “no, definitely not; probably not; I might participate; yes, I definitely would participate.” In order to facilitate the use of a logistic regression, all responses other than “yes” were collapsed into “no” and this variable was recoded as “absolute yes.” An additional variable, “absolute no,” was created so the researcher could determine the direction of correlation between some variables. In this transformation all responses other than “no” were collapsed into “yes.”

A logistic regression model was used to predict willingness to participate in on-line training from variables thought to be related to adult learning preferences. As displayed in Table 7, there was a significant correlation at an alpha of .05.

Table 7

*\( p < .05 \)

**Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Adult Learning Preferences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>Wald( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult preferences composite</td>
<td>1.788</td>
<td>28.751</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>5.976</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Influence of Personal Demographics**

Research question 3 asked “To what degree do the following personal demographics or characteristics predict field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) age, (b) field of practice within social work, (c) length of practice at the highest degree level, (d) previous experience as a field instructor, (e) prior attendance at a field instructor training event, (f) distance from location where training takes place, (g) means of accessing the internet, (h) technical computer/internet skills, and (i) experience interacting with others online?”
Age, field of practice, and length of practice at highest degree. The responses to some survey questions were wide ranging with only a few cases at each level. This was particularly troubling for the variables “age” and “years of practice experience.” The report of frequency for the variable “age” ranged from a minimum of 25 years to a maximum of 76 years with a mean age of 46 years and standard deviation of 11.5. This population was negatively skewed (-.415) with the mean being less than the median (48 years). The population was bimodal, with modes of 36 and 56 years, see Figure 2.

![Field instructor age distribution.](image)

Because of the spread of ages, the variable was subsequently recoded, first as the variables “age groups,” using observed cumulative percentage quartiles, and as then as “bimodal” using the median as a cut point. There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and either “age groups” or “bimodal groups” ($r_s = .043, p = .540, n = 202, ns$ and $r_s = .009, p = .901, n = 202, ns$).
When asked how many years of practice experience they had at the highest degree level, responses ranged from 0 to 37 years with a mean of 14.8 and standard deviation of 8.8. This population was positively skewed (.517) with the mean being greater than the median (13). Multiple modes occurred between 7 and 15 years of practice experience with 39% ($N=82$) of respondents falling within this range. This variable was subsequently recoded as the variable “practice experience groups,” breaking at observed quartiles of the cumulative percentage in the number of years of experience, as displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-7 years</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-13 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-21 years</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22+ years</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between years of experience as a social worker and willingness to participate in on-line training $r_s = .019$ ($p = .787, n = 208, ns$).

*Previous experience and trainings as a field instructor.* Respondents were asked how many years of experience they had as field instructors; responses ranged from 0 to 35 years with a mean of 6.97 and standard deviation of 6.69. Details are reported in Table 9.
Respondents were asked to report the total number of field instructor training events they had attended. There were 23 cases of missing data for this question.

Responses given ranged from 0 to 20 with a mean of 2.6 and standard deviation of 2.87.

There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and either years of experience as a field instructor or number of field instructor training events attended ($r_s = -.046, p = .506, n = 208$, and $-.025, p = .737, n = 185$, respectively, $ns$).

Respondents were asked if they had attended a field instructor training on the campus of the university with which they were affiliated or if training had been provided by the university at their agency. Table 10 displays those results.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Remember</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Campus</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Agency</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked the number of miles they would travel one way for
training on the university's campus. Responses ranged from 0 to 150 miles with a mean of 28.48, mode of 30 and standard deviation of 26.30. There was a negative correlation (Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient) between the number of years of experience field instructors had and the number of miles they would drive to training on campus $r (-.153) = .038, p < .05$). There was no (Spearman rho) significant correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and distance they would drive to attend a field instructor training event ($r_s = .056, p = .448, n = 184, ns$).

Respondents were asked to select from a list their field of practice within social work. Table 11 includes the information on responses to survey question 5.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; Children's Service</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Health Care</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organization</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between field of practice and willingness to participate in on-line training $r_s = -.12 (p = .680, n = 203, ns)$.

**Means of accessing the internet.** The respondents' means of accessing the internet is addressed in survey questions 14 and 15. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate the location(s) from which they access the internet and the type of connection to the internet they most frequently used. Table 12 includes the frequencies and percentages of responses to survey questions 14 and 15.
Table 12

Internet Access and Connection Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Internet Access</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Work</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Internet Connection</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialup Modem</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable Modem</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Broadband</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between the location at which respondents accessed the internet and type of connection to the internet $r_s = -0.198(p < 0.01)$. The negative direction of correlation is expected as work locations are less likely to use dial-up modems than homes. There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and either location of internet access or type of connection to the internet ($r_s = 0.110, p = 0.113, n = 208$, and $-0.105, p = 0.131, n = 208$, respectively, ns).

Technical computer/internet skills. On survey question 16 respondents were asked to rate their own skills using the computer and internet. Responses for 6 skills were indicated with a 4 point Likert scale, i.e. 1=strongly disagree, 2= slightly disagree, 3= slightly agree, and 4=strongly agree. Table 13 displays responses to that question ranked from highest to lowest mean.
Table 13

*Self-Rating of Computer/Internet Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Send and receive documents</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (1.0%)</td>
<td>5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>27 (13.0%)</td>
<td>172 (82.7%)</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable navigating Internet</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>7 (3.4%)</td>
<td>46 (22.1%)</td>
<td>154 (74.0%)</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download files</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
<td>8 (3.8%)</td>
<td>49 (23.6%)</td>
<td>150 (72.1%)</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read articles on-line</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (1.0%)</td>
<td>9 (4.3%)</td>
<td>53 (25.5%)</td>
<td>144 (69.2%)</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer literate</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
<td>7 (3.4%)</td>
<td>75 (36.1%)</td>
<td>125 (60.1%)</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy &amp; paste</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (4.8%)</td>
<td>23 (12.0%)</td>
<td>38 (18.3%)</td>
<td>133 (63.9%)</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=strongly disagree, 2= slightly disagree, 3= slightly agree, and 4=strongly agree

Survey question 16 had multiple Likert scale items exploring similar issues.

Because of similarity in content for these question items, an analysis of inter-item correlation (Cronbach’s alpha) was performed using SPSS. The Cronbach’s alpha is used to test the extent to which any single item correlates with other items in a given set (UCLA, n.d.). Typically, social sciences consider a Cronbach’s alpha of .7 or higher as a level indicating sufficient inter-item correlation to group the items. New variables of the combined items were created by using the mean of the individual items.

For the 6 items of survey question 16, the Cronbach’s alpha was .874, and thus no items needed to be removed to improve the score. Accordingly, the researcher created a new variable “computer/internet skills” from the items of survey question 16.

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between the composite variable “computer skills” and willingness to participate in on-line training \( r_s = .270, p = .000, n = 203 \).
A logistic regression model was used to predict willingness to participate in online training from the composite variable of self-reported computer skills. As shown in Table 14, this was at an alpha of .05.

Table 14

*Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Computer Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Wald χ²</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills composite</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>8.459</td>
<td>.004*</td>
<td>1.241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

*Interacting with others on-line.* Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they checked their email. Table 15 includes the frequencies and percentages of responses to survey question 17.

Table 15

*Frequency of Checking E-mail*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Email</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times a week</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 times a week</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a day</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to indicate if they belonged to an email users group. Table 16 includes the frequencies and percentages of responses to survey question 18.

Table 16

*Belong to E-mail Users Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belong</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a not unexpected significant (Spearman rho) correlation between frequency of checking email and belonging to an email users group $r_s = .190, p = .006, n = 207$.*
Respondents were asked to indicate if they had taken any courses or workshops on-line. To evaluate whether field instructors with more recent degrees were likely to have taken courses on-line, a bivariate analysis was performed. There was no significant correlation (Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient) between the number of years of experience at their highest degree level and the number of courses they had taken on-line \( r = -.112, \rho = .106, p < .05 \). Table 17 includes the frequencies and percentages of responses to survey question 19.

Table 17

**Number of On-line Courses/Workshops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and either frequency of checking email or belonging to an email users group \( r_s = .130, p = .062, n = 207, \) and \( .004, p = .960, n = 208, \) respectively, \( ns \). There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and number of on-line courses a respondent had previously participated in \( r_s = .139, p = .046, n = 208 \).

Respondents were asked about their rate of participation in discussion boards and chat rooms on survey question 21. A brief description of each was included in the survey (see appendix A). As shown in Table 18, the majority of respondents indicated that they did not participate in either.
Table 18

Participation in Discussion Boards and Chat Rooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion Boards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Often</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chat Rooms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Often</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and both frequency participating in discussion boards and chat rooms ($r_s = .243, p = .000, n = 205$, and $r_s = .244, p = .000, n = 207$, respectively).

A logistic regression model was used to predict willingness to participate in on-line training from variables of interacting with others on-line. Table 19 shows that only “participating in chat rooms” was significant at an alpha of .05.

Table 19

Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Interaction with Others On-line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Wald $\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of checking email</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>1.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to email users group</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>1.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of on-line courses taken</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>1.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of using discussion boards</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>1.111</td>
<td>.292</td>
<td>1.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of using chat rooms</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>5.324</td>
<td>.021*</td>
<td>2.223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<.05$

Influence of External Factors

Research question 4 asked “To what degree do the following external factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) perceived
support from their agency for supervising an intern, and (b) availability to acquire social work continuing education credits through participating in an online class?"

*Agency support.* On survey question 12 respondents were asked to indicate their agency’s level of support for such training. Table 20 includes frequencies and percentages of those responses.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly supportive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat supportive</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very supportive</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey question 13 examined change in agency support. Table 21 includes frequencies and percentages of those responses.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less supportive</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More supportive</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and either level of agency support or change in agency support ($r_s = .029, p = .680, n = 206, \text{ and } .000, p = .995, n = 201, \text{ respectively, ns}$).

*Continuing education credit.* Survey question 26 examined the influence of availability of continuing education credit for participation in an on-line training. Table 22 displays frequencies and percentages of those responses.
Table 22

Availability of Continuing Education Credits for Internet-based Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little more interested</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more interested</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and availability of continuing education credit ($r_s = .159, p = .023, n = 204$).

A logistic regression model was used to predict willingness to participate in on-line training from variables related to external factors. Table 23 shows that none of these variables was significant at an alpha of .05.

Table 23

Prediction of Willingness to Participate from External Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Wald$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency support</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>1.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in support</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>1.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of CE</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>0.935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05

Influence of Perception of Advantages/Disadvantages of On-line Instruction

Research question 5 asked “To what degree do factors advanced by the literature as being (a) advantages and (b) disadvantages of online instruction, influence field instructors’ interest in participating in online training?” Survey question 20 examined advantages and survey question 23 examined disadvantages.

On survey question 20 respondents were asked to rate the appeal of possible advantages of on-line training. Responses for 3 areas were indicated with a 4 point Likert
scale, i.e. 1=not appealing, 2=slightly appealing, 3=somewhat appealing, and 4=very appealing. Table 24 displays those responses ranked from highest to lowest mean.

Table 24

Advantages of On-line Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any location</td>
<td>21 (10.1%) 20 (9.6%) 45 (21.6%) 121 (58.2%)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work anytime</td>
<td>22 (10.6%) 33 (15.9%) 39 (18.8%) 114 (54.8%)</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at own pace</td>
<td>18 (8.7%) 32 (15.4%) 51 (24.5%) 106 (51.0%)</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=not appealing, 2=slightly appealing, 3=somewhat appealing, and 4=very appealing

On survey question 23 respondents were asked to rate their level of concern regarding possible disadvantages of on-line training. Responses for 8 areas were indicated with a 4 point Likert scale, i.e. 1=no concern at all, 2=a little concern, 3=moderate concern, and 4=significant concern. Table 25 displays responses to that question ranked from highest to lowest mean.

Table 25

Issues of Concern Regarding On-line vs. On-campus Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantage</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No face:face presenter</td>
<td>43 (20.7%) 58 (27.9%) 57 (27.4%) 50 (24.0%)</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No face:face peers</td>
<td>52 (25.0%) 61 (29.3%) 45 (21.6%) 50 (24.0%)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time required</td>
<td>57 (27.4%) 74 (35.6%) 46 (22.1%) 30 (14.4%)</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat room</td>
<td>79 (38.0%) 56 (26.9%) 49 (23.6%) 23 (11.1%)</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board</td>
<td>91 (43.8%) 62 (29.8%) 37 (17.8%) 16 (7.7%)</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not go to campus</td>
<td>108 (51.9%) 68 (32.7%) 23 (11.1%) 8 (3.8%)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>128 (61.5%) 46 (22.1%) 22 (10.6%) 5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection speed</td>
<td>143 (68.8%) 44 (21.2%) 13 (6.3%) 5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=no concern at all, 2=a little concern, 3=moderate concern, and 4=significant concern

Survey questions 20 and 23 had multiple Likert scale items exploring issues related to the concepts of advantages and disadvantages of on-line learning. The researcher performed an analysis of inter-item correlation (Cronbach’s alpha) using
SPSS. Survey question 20 contained 3 items and yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .904, and no items needed to be removed to improve the score. The researcher created a new variable “advantages of on-line” from the items of survey question 20. Survey question 23 contained 8 items representing 2 conceptual areas of disadvantage of on-line learning—social disadvantages and technology disadvantages. The items of survey question 23 were separated accordingly. The 3 items related to social disadvantages yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .821, if item c were removed, the score improved to .882, therefore it was omitted. The researcher created a new variable “disadvantages of on-line/social” from items a and b of survey question 23. The 5 items (d-h) related to technology disadvantages yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .814, no items needed to be removed to improve the score.

There was a significant (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and the composite variable “internet advantages” $r_s = .609$, $p = .000$, $n = 206$). There was a significant negative (Spearman rho) correlation between willingness to participate in on-line training and both disadvantage composite variables (“disadvantages of on-line/social” and “disadvantages on-line/technical”) related to internet use ($r_s = -.447$, $p = .000$, $n = 208$, and $-395$, $p = .000$, $n = 194$, respectively).

A logistic regression model was used to predict “willingness to participate” from variables of perceived advantages and disadvantages of internet use. Table 26 shows that both perceived advantages and social disadvantages of on-line courses were significant at an alpha of .05.
Table 26

*Prediction of Willingness to Participate from Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Waldχ²</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>16.574</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>1.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages- Social</td>
<td>-.197</td>
<td>4.684</td>
<td>.030*</td>
<td>.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages- Technical</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>1.201</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Predictive Model

This study has attempted to determine the extent to which variables identified as advantages and disadvantages of on-line instruction actually influence the perceptions of social work field instructors. Before creating a final regression model of all the correlated variables, a correlation matrix was produced to assess the degree of relationship between the variables. Table 27 presents Spearman’s correlations of all previously correlated variables. Of these, the correlation between the composite variables “internet advantages” and “internet disadvantages/social” was the greatest at \( r_s = -.534, p = .000, n = 206 \). This negative correlation results from respondents who gave higher ratings to flexibility of time and location (internet advantages) also giving lower ratings to loss of face-to-face interaction. The next highest correlation was between “computer skills” and “internet disadvantages/technology” \( r_s = -.510, p = .000, n = 190 \). This negative correlation results from respondents who gave higher ratings to computer skills giving lower ratings to concerns about technological barriers to participating in on-line training. Both of these pairs of variables are within a .300 to .600 range of correlation, which suggests a relationship exists, but not to the extent that the pairs are the equivalent in meaning.
Table 27

*Spearman Rho Correlations Between All Previously Correlated Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Pref</th>
<th>Comp Skills</th>
<th>Internet Adv</th>
<th>Internet Disadv Social</th>
<th>Internet Disadv Tech</th>
<th>Prev Online Courses</th>
<th>Cont Ed Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comp Skills</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.187(**)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Adv</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.333(**)</td>
<td>.279(**)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Disadv Social</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-.182(**)</td>
<td>-.292(**)</td>
<td>-.534(**)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Disadv Tech</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-.210(**)</td>
<td>-.510(**)</td>
<td>-.445(**)</td>
<td>.496(**)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prev Online Courses</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.281(**)</td>
<td>.221(**)</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>-.242(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont Ed Unit</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.159(*)</td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A logistic regression model was used to predict "willingness to participate" from all the correlated variables. The model predicting willingness to participate in on-line training contained the following variables: adult learning style preferences; computer skills; internet advantages; internet disadvantages- social loss; internet disadvantages- technological concerns; number of on-line courses previously taken; and availability of
continuing education units for participating. As shown in Table 28, this model’s positive predictive value is 37/53 (or 69.8%) and its negative predictive value is 109/129 (or 84.5%). The overall ability of this model to predict field instructors’ willingness to participate in on-line training is 80.2%. This is derived by comparing observed results with predicted results, and analyzing the rate of correct predictions.

Table 28

*Model Discrimination*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Percentage Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to participate</td>
<td>No or uncertain</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No or uncertain</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. The cut value is .500

Table 29 shows that “adult preferences” and “internet advantages” were significant at an alpha of .05. These variables are associated with increased odds of willingness to participate in on-line training at 5 times more likely for field instructors with strong adult learning style preferences and 2 times more likely for those who strongly value internet advantages.
Table 29

Prediction of Willingness to Participate from All Correlates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>Wald( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult learning style preferences</td>
<td>1.619</td>
<td>13.801</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>5.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>1.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Advantages</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>12.657</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>1.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Disadvantages- Social</td>
<td>-.267</td>
<td>2.327</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Disadvantages- Technological</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>1.898</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of On-line Courses</td>
<td>-.247</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of CEUs</td>
<td>-.209</td>
<td>.563</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*\( p < .05 \)

In attempt to refine the predictive ability of the model, the researcher ran the analysis leaving out the least predictive variable (computer skills) but did not achieve a higher rate of correct prediction. Subsequent analyses did not improve the predictive value of the model, therefore, the model shown in table 28 appears to be the most predictive of field instructors’ willingness to participate in on-line training.

Open-ended Questions

An open-ended question, Survey Question 24 asked respondents to “offer any other thoughts or concerns you have about an on-line field instructor training site.” This followed Survey Question 23, which asked respondents to rate their level of concern regarding 8 issues previously identified as being barriers to participation in on-line training. Responses to this question were grouped according to theme.

A total of 76 respondents made comments on Survey Question 24. As expected, given the wording and position of the question, most of the comments were of a negative tone (\( N = 45 \)), though some comments were neutral (\( N = 7 \)). A third of the respondents gave positive remarks (\( N = 24 \)).
The majority of negative concerns referred to loss of face-to-face communication ($N = 21$). Respondents often used emotional references when describing these concerns. For example, one commented: “Part of what I enjoy is the face to face interaction with faculty and field instructors. This is an opportunity to personally network that would be lost.” Another observed: “I would greatly miss the interaction between the faculty and colleagues and the synthesis that happens in a live setting.” Other respondents remarked: “I like people more than computers” and “Too impersonal, boring.” The general feeling that on-line settings lose both richness and warmth of communication was captured by the response: “There is more to observe and absorb in a live classroom. I would be more motivated and inspired by a live classroom.”

There were also concerns about the amount of time on-line training would take ($N = 14$), whereby one noted: “I would hate to spend more time on the computer than I already do!! I already spend way too much time on the computer.” Another commented, “Lack of motivation--online instruction strings out over a longer period of time and gets pushed aside when competing with other more pressing priorities.”

Computer skills and security issues were raised ($N = 5$), with one noting: “It probably would be fine, but I have never used these systems so there is a certain [amount] of concern due to the unknown of how to use them.” Another commented, “Would it be a secure site? Would information be forward-able? How to maintain confidentiality?” A few respondents ($N = 3$) addressed the desire to be on campus: “I enjoy going to campus and interacting with faculty. On line would be a good option if I were unable to attend a scheduled, on campus training.”
Positive comments often included brief remarks, such as: "Would love to participate in a pilot" and "GREAT idea!" Some respondents (N = 8) specifically addressed issues of time and distance, for instance: "I have a very busy schedule and driving to Ann Arbor or even MSU disrupts my schedule. I enjoy working with students, but any time I can get the training on line is a bonus." Another observed, "This would be an amazing help, because I wouldn't be worried about what I'm missing because I can't make it to the 'land-based' trainings." A final respondent noted, "While I have attended an orientation with each of the Universities going every year seems redundant [sic] and time consuming - it's nice to visit, the coffee's great, but I really don't have the time."

The final survey question was designed to generate information for the field placement directors who allowed their field instructors to be contacted for this study. Survey Question 27 asked "In closing, if such on-line training for field instructors was created, what topics, information, or materials do you think it should include?" Eighty-eight respondents provided answers to this question. Though this question did not directly relate to the research questions of this study, the responses to this question are included in Appendix F.

Chapter 4 Summary

This study has explored field instructors’ perceptions of the use of on-line training to determine what aspects might influence them in their choice of participating in such training. Though there have been previous surveys of field placement directors at universities, there had been no multi-institutional studies of field instructors themselves. This study has attempted to determine the extent to which variables identified as advantages and disadvantages of on-line instruction actually influence the willingness of
social work field instructors to participate in on-line training. Table 30 presents an overview of all significantly correlated variables.

Table 30

*Research Variables Significantly Correlated to Willingness to Participate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult learning style preferences</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous on-line courses</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in discussion boards and chat rooms</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of continuing education credit</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet advantages</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet disadvantages-social</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet disadvantages-technical</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents’ degree of interest in variables associated with adult learning preferences—means of communicating with peers, access to documents related to the task of being a field instructor, and articles related to problems they experience in that role—were all correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. None of those variables, however, were predictive of willingness to participate.

Field instructors indicated high rates of confidence in their computer and internet skills. These skills were correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. The majority reported having access to high speed internet connections and accessing the internet from both home and work. Neither of these variables were correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. While just fewer than half the field instructors had previous experience with taking courses on-line, this was correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. None of the variables related to computer
and internet use were found to predict whether a field instructor would participate in on-line training.

While the majority of field instructors indicated that receiving continuing education credit for participating would make them more interested, the only correlation was between those who indicated they would not participate. Those field instructors indicated that the availability of continuing education credits would not influence them to participate.

Overall, this study found the responses of field instructors to features of on-line learning identified in the literature as advantages and disadvantages were correlated with their willingness to participate. Specifically, the advantage of flexibility of time and place was a variable that predicted field instructors’ willingness to participate in such training. Disadvantages included both loss of social interaction and technological concerns. Of these, concern over the loss of social interaction was found to predict field instructors’ willingness to participate. Field instructors indicated that, if they were to participate in an on-line training, discussion boards were of greater interest to them than were chat rooms for facilitating social interaction among respondents.

Variables of field of practice within social work, age, years of experience as a social worker, and years of experience as a field instructor were not correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. The number of previous trainings attended and location—on campus or at the agency—of that training was not correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training. There was no correlation between the distance traveled to on-campus training and willingness to participate in on-line training.
In contrast with focus groups described in the literature, more than half the field instructors reported their agencies to be “very supportive” of the time they spent training for that role. Only 5% of the field instructors reported their agencies to be less supportive over time. These variables were not correlated with willingness to participate in on-line training.

The final predictive model shows both adult learning style preferences and internet advantages as being significantly predictive variables. Field instructors with strong preferences for immediacy of access to documents and information for administering the field placement, and for flexibility in time and location of learning, were more likely to respond that they were willing to participate in on-line training.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings from this exploratory survey of field instructors’ perception of on-line training survey. As this study was based on a convenience sample, the findings are not generalizable to all social work field instructors.

Willingness to Participate in On-line Training

Previous research findings that indicated social workers’ lack of interest in on-line technology (Krueger & Stretch, 2000; Padgett & Conceição-Runlee, 2000) were not supported by the findings of this study. Because this survey was administered via email, it is likely that the current respondents represent more technologically inclined social workers. Even so, an unexpected number (82%) of respondents indicated either “yes” or “I might participate” in on-line training.

Only 3.4% of respondents indicated that they would not consider participating in on-line training. In general, they were a bit older than other respondents, with a mean age of 52 years (compared to 46 years for the total population), and ranged from 33-65 years. Other than age, they were similar in characteristics to the overall population. The distance they would have to drive for on-campus training was a mean of 25.6 miles (compared to 28.48 miles for the total population), with a range of 0 to 65. Only 1 of the 7 had taken a course on-line previously, but this is remarkably close to the percentage of the whole population (1/7 = 14.3% and 32/208 = 15.4%). Four of the 7 indicated it would make no difference whether they received continuing education credit for participating. Four of the 7 indicated “4=strongly agree” that they were computer literate, comfortable navigating the internet, and can send and receive documents. Four of the 7 made comments (all
negative) to the open ended question regarding concerns about on-line training. Their responses are marked (*) in Appendix F.

These 7 respondents who said “no” were adamant in their rejection of such training. Though the potential of continuing education credit was of great interest to the majority (67%), there was a significant correlation between field instructors who said they would not participate and those who responded that they were not interested in continuing education credits. It appears that the offer of continuing education credits would be insufficient to induce respondents who said “no” to become willing to participate. In addition, 4 of the 7 (57%) responded with comments to the open ended question “offer any other thoughts or concerns you have about an on-line field instructor training site” compared to an overall response rate of 37% to this question. This supports the observation that the few who said “no” felt strongly about their response.

Influence of Adult Learning Preferences

Literature on adult learning preferences describes adults as desiring knowledge related to recognized needs, favoring self-selected goals and methods of learning, and engaging with peers in order to learn (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, et al., 2007). Respondents in this study endorsed some of these concepts as they indicated a significant interest (59%) in having access to documents that were directly related to their role as field instructors. They also indicated a high level of interest (53%) in accessing articles related to problems they encountered in their role. However, they indicated only moderate interest (40%) in communication with peers through a discussion board and no or little interest (74%) in communication with peers using a chat room.
Respondents who were concerned about the loss of face-to-face contact with peers were evenly represented—51% indicated that this would be a moderate to significant concern. About the same number had concerns over lack of face-to-face contact with the instructor. However, those who were concerned often had very strongly held concerns. The open ended questions resulted in numerous comments regarding loss of face-to-face contact (21 of 76 respondents addressed this). Some expressed the view that particularly social work education should not be on-line, e.g., “Social work is a relational profession. Interaction among peers is critical to the process, I believe.”

An implication of this study relates to the design of on-line training sites for field instructors: respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in on-line training valued web site features that utilized concepts of adult learning styles. These included easy access to documents and forms for administering the field placement, articles on issues of immediate use to their supervisory concerns, and ability to communicate with field coordinators and other field instructors using a discussion board.

Influence of Personal Demographics

Previous studies suggested that age (Selwyn, et al., 2006) was a significant factor in predicting whether adults found internet-based classes to be of interest. That differs from this study in that field instructors of all ages were likely to view on-line training as a favorable option. In addition, earlier studies suggested exposure to computer-mediated learning during professional preparation might be connected to receptivity of such as a continuing education modality (Charles & Mamary, 2002; Mamary & Charles, 2000). In this current study, the variable “years of practice at highest degree level” was used to gauge the recentness of professional training. While that variable was not correlated with
field instructors’ willingness to participate in on-line training, the variable of number of previous on-line courses was significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Since there was no correlation between “years of practice at highest degree level” and the number of previous on-line courses, this suggests that taking courses on-line is independent of recentness of professional preparation.

**Influence of External Factors**

A specific concern of earlier studies was the erosion of agency support for field instructors. These studies involved focus groups of field instructors (Globerman & Bogo, 2003) and a group of field placement directors (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2006). The current study differs significantly in that 57% of field instructors reported their agencies to be “very supportive” with another 32% saying they were “somewhat supportive.” In addition, 82% indicated there was “no change” in the support they received from their agency and 11% reported their support had increased during the time they were field instructors. This variable was included in the current study because one might expect that, if there are stressors from loss of agency support for field instructors, this would cause some reluctance to spend face-to-face time in attending training, thus increasing willingness to participate in on-line training. Because of the significant difference in field instructors’ perception of agency support in the current study, future research using a larger sample should examine this further.

**Influence of Perception of Advantages/Disadvantages of On-line Instruction**

Despite the previously described slowness of social workers to adopt new technology (Padgett & Conceição-Runlee, 2000), respondents to the current survey, even those who indicated no interest in on-line training, reported good skills in use of
computers and the internet. While social workers, like the general public, have increased their use of computers and internet technology since 2000, there continues to be a perception within the profession of reluctance to engage in using this technology. York (2008) makes reference to this reluctance, and discusses the need for social work education to utilize on-line technology in light of research that suggests comparable outcomes to traditional class models. The majority of respondents in this 2008 study indicated great confidence in their skills using technology (60% asserting they were computer literate and 74% that they were proficient at navigating the internet).

Previous studies (Mamary & Charles, 2000; Selwyn, et al., 2006) found that slowness of connection to the internet reduced interest in on-line training, however, this does not seem to be an issue for respondents to the current study. Most respondents used high speed internet connections (80% had cable or other broadband access) and accessed the internet from both home and work (75%).

In terms of on-line communication patterns, the great majority (84%) check email more than once a day. Other forms of on-line communication were less frequently used. Only a few respondents (8%) participate in discussion boards at least weekly and only 1% in chat rooms.

One of the often touted benefits to on-line courses is flexibility of location (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). Field instructors responding to this survey did not indicate that distance to training on-campus was a concern, but did indicate that a benefit of on-line training was the ability to participate at a flexible location (58%) and time (55%). The early literature had suggested campus visits were a motivator of field instructors, this is not supported in the current study as only 15% of the respondents reported moderate to
significant concern about "not going to campus," and 52% reported they had "no concern at all" about this.

Implications of this study include the awareness that most social work field instructors are comfortable using the internet and would consider on-line training a viable option. They particularly valued the advantage of flexibility of time and location in accessing training on-line. If on-line training sites were designed, this suggests that discussion boards may be preferable to chat rooms whereby the asynchronous nature of discussion boards would provide greater flexibility. In addition, field instructors’ low rate of participation in chat rooms suggests a lower level of comfort with this medium of communication.

Directions for Future Research

An obvious need is to more broadly survey field instructors across multiple states in order to be able to generalize findings on their training needs. Internet-based surveys have been used since the early 1980s (Schonlau, et al., 2002), and may not be less expensive than mailed or telephone surveys, if email addresses must be purchased; however, this is not a factor in surveying field instructors. In the current study, field placement directors had access to the vast majority of their field instructors’ email addresses. A future study, utilizing email address lists of all accredited social work programs, would allow for inexpensive and fairly rapid deployment of a national survey.

As noted previously, the distribution of ages was bimodal. There were 43 respondents between the ages of 35 and 42, 33 respondents between the ages of 43 and 50, and 61 respondents between the ages of 51 and 58. The larger number of older respondents makes sense intuitively, as field instructors are sought because of their
experience. However, the lower number of field instructors in the middle group is intriguing. Though this population is small (N = 202) the lower number of field instructors between the ages of 43 and 50 is something that might be of interest in future research on field instructors.

Additional areas of exploration include field instructors’ use of internet communication. While the current study explored e-mail, discussion board, and chat room use, future studies might include instant messaging and voice over internet phone calling. With the large percentage of respondents to this survey reporting high speed internet access, the usage patterns of these communication modes using higher bandwidth should be investigated.

Finally, a pilot project offering on-line training to field instructors should be undertaken. With a third of respondents offering an unequivocal “yes” to participating, and more than 80% indicating they might consider it, this survey suggests that there is a willing pool of field instructors who would engage in piloting such a project. Based on this survey’s respondents, a web-based course should include tools for field instructors to administer their activities as instructors (contract, evaluation forms, etc.) as well as providing information on training topics. The respondents indicated strong skills at downloading documents or reading them on-line, so articles regarding the training topics could be placed on-line with a discussion board available to provide interaction among participants.

Overall Research Summary

No extensive studies of field instructors’ preferences regarding on-line training options could be found prior to this study. The current study is significant as much for its
method as its actual findings. Through the use of e-surveys, future direct studies of the attitudes and concerns of field instructors could be undertaken with relative ease. This is important given the role field instructors play within social work's signature pedagogy. We simply need to know more about their perceptions and how best to support their work in educating future social workers.

This study brings into question assumptions about social workers' use of technology. The body of literature from the late 1990s to 2001 reflects social workers' general pattern of reluctance and outright rejection of communicating or teaching through on-line technology. Since that time, cable and other broadband access to the internet has become much more common, thus reducing problems of access speed. Respondents to this survey made extensive use of various internet communication forms and displayed comfort with computing skills. As social work educators explore means for providing training to the agency-based field instructors who supervise their students, revisiting their views regarding on-line training seems warranted. However, judging from the emotional responses of those who wrote comments about their concerns, those social workers who are uncomfortable with on-line training are appreciably so. It would seem, as several comments suggested, that this would be an additional means for training, but should not replace face-to-face training.
REFERENCES


Schonlau, M., Fricke, Jr., R. D., & Elliott, M. N. (2002). *Conducting research surveys via e-mail and the web.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.


Appendix A

Survey of Field Instructors
Field Instructor Online Training Survey

History of Field Instructor Training and Experience

1. What level of students do you supervise in field placement?
   - BSW
   - MSW
   - Both
   - Other, please specify

2. What is your highest degree earned?
   - MSW
   - BSW
   - Other, please specify

3. Identify if this is your first experience as a field instructor, and if not, how many years you have served in this role?
   - This is my first experience as a field instructor.
   - I have served as a field instructor more than once. Please list the number of years (counting this one) in the comments line below.
   - Total number of years:

4. Have you ever attended a field instructor training on the campus of the university for which you are serving as a field instructor?
   - yes
   - no
   - don't remember

5. How many miles would you drive (one way) to training held on that university's campus?
6 Has the university provided field instructor training to you at your agency or other work location?

- yes
- no
- don't remember

7 Counting your initial training as a field instructor for that university, what is the total number of field instructor training events you've attended (for that university) at any location?

8 My agency is supportive of time I have spent (or will spend) receiving training for my role as a field instructor.

- very much
- somewhat
- slightly
- not at all
If you have been a field instructor before, has that agency support for your
time spent in training as a field instructor changed over time?

- yes, more supportive of my time training as a field instructor
- yes, less supportive of my time training as a field instructor
- no, there has been no change in my agency’s support of my training time
- not applicable, this is my first experience as a field instructor

Technology issues

Where do you access the Internet?

- from work
- from home
- both
- other, please specify
Is the Internet connection you most often use:

- a dial-up (phone) modem
- a cable modem
- other broadband access
- don't know
- other, please specify

The following items relate to your perception of your own computer/internet skills.

Using a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 means "strongly agree" and 4 means "strongly disagree," how much would you say you agree or disagree with each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I have excellent computer skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) I can easily read professional articles or literature on-line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) I am comfortable with downloading files (articles, music, etc.) from the Internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I am easily able to copy and paste information from a web site into a document</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) I am easily able to send and receive documents attached to email</td>
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</table>

How often do you check your email?

- More than once a day
- Once a day
- 3 to 5 times a week
- Once or twice a week
- Almost never
Do you belong to an email users group (like LISTSERV) so that all members can email each other without entering individual addresses?

- yes
- no
- I think so
- I don't know

Have you ever taken a course or workshop on-line?

- yes
- no

One possibility for providing training to field instructors is through an on-line course instead of having them drive to campus (or other central location).

Like a campus training, this would offer specific training in certain topics, ranging from "paperwork" to dealing with supervisory issues, ethics, etc.

Please indicate your rating of the following features of an on-line training program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Appealing</th>
<th>Somewhat Appealing</th>
<th>Slightly Appealing</th>
<th>Not Appealing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) It would allow me to participate from home or office at my convenience

b) It would allow me to work anytime of day or night

c) It would allow me to work at my own pace

For the next few questions, there are two web site features that you may not be familiar with, a discussion board and a chat room. Both involve communication via a secure web site, which means that only certain people (usually with passwords) are allowed to enter and participate on that web site.

The first on-line web feature, a discussion board, involves participants posting and reading (and responding to) messages in a secure web site. This is done asynchronously—participants do not have to be on-line at the same time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>daily</th>
<th>weekly</th>
<th>less often</th>
<th>never participated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) How often do you read or post messages to on-line discussion boards?
The second feature, a chat room, involves participants online at the same time writing, reading, and responding to each other in a secure website.

b) How often do you participate in online chat rooms?

There are a number of features that could potentially be included in a secure website for training field instructors.

Please rate your interest regarding the following features within such a potential field instructor website:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant Interest</td>
<td>Moderate Interest</td>
<td>Little Interest</td>
<td>No Interest at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) A discussion board to post and read messages to the field liaison or other field instructors?

b) A scheduled chat room for field instructors?

c) Access to student contracts and evaluation forms and/or other documents for field instructors?

d) Articles, related to specific topics you have requested, e.g., supervisory techniques or dealing with student conduct?

How would the availability of continuing education credits for Internet-based training in field instruction affect your interest in participating in such training?

- much more interested if credits were offered
- a little more interested if credits were offered
- no difference whether or not credits are offered
- other, please specify

To what extent might the following issues be of concern to you if such online training for field instructors was developed:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant Concern</td>
<td>Moderate Concern</td>
<td>Little Concern</td>
<td>No Concern at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) The lack of face-to-face interaction with the presenter or instructor?

b) The lack of face-to-face interaction with peer field instructors?

c) Not going to the university campus for meetings?
d) The amount of time on-line training would take (as opposed to coming to campus-based training)?

- - - -  

e) The slowness of my Internet connection?

- - - -  

f) My current computer skills?

- - - -  

g) My comfort level at communicating on a discussion board?

- - - -  

h) My comfort level at communicating in a chat room?

- - - -  

Please describe any other thoughts or concerns you have about an on-line field instructor training site.

If the university offered its field instructor in-service training via the internet, would you choose to participate in it?

- Yes, I would definitely participate
- I might participate
- There is little chance I would participate
- No, I would not participate

What topics, information, or material do you think an on-line field instructor site should provide?

Which group best describes your age?
Appendix B

Invitation E-mail
Dear Field Instructor:

This study on field instructor attitudes toward on-line training is a part of my dissertation research on potential use of on-line training for orientation and in-service training of social work field instructors. Below is a link to the web-based survey for this study.

The survey will take between 7 and 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential. Information gathered from field instructors of 3 universities will be combined and individual responses will not be made available to the university with which you are associated.

You may choose not to answer any question and simply leave it blank. The benefit of your participation includes assisting social work programs in identifying efficient means of providing training to their students' field instructors. If you wish to receive a summary of the results of this study, please email me at the address below.

Because the survey is anonymous, two follow-up reminders will be e-mailed in a few weeks to all field instructors, whether or not you have completed the survey. If you have taken the survey, please ignore the reminder email.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (810) 210-9493 or e-mail me at denise.e.dedman@wmich.edu, or contact my dissertation chair, Louann Bierlein Palmer at Western Michigan University (269) 387-3596, or l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu. The participant may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269-387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (269-387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

Clicking below indicates that I have read and understood the description of the study and I agree to participate.


Sincerely,

Denise E. Dedman, MSW
Appendix C

Reminder E-mail
Dear Field Instructor:

This is a reminder and invitation to participate in a study on field instructor attitudes toward on-line training. This is a part of my dissertation research on potential use of on-line training for orientation and in-service training of social work field instructors. Below is a link to the web-based survey for this study.

The survey will take between 7 and 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential. Information gathered from field instructors of 3 universities will be combined and individual responses will not be made available to the university with which you are associated.

You may choose not to answer any question and simply leave it blank. The benefit of your participation includes assisting social work programs in identifying efficient means of providing training to their students’ field instructors. If you wish to receive a summary of the results of this study, please email me at the address below.

Because the survey is anonymous, another follow-up reminder will be e-mailed in a week to all field instructors, whether or not you have completed the survey. If you have taken the survey, please ignore the reminder email.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (810) 210-9493 or e-mail me at denise.e.dedman@wmich.edu, or contact my dissertation chair, Louann Bierlein Palmer at Western Michigan University (269) 387-3596, or l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu. The participant may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269-387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (269-387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

Clicking below indicates that I have read and understood the description of the study and I agree to participate.


Sincerely,

Denise E. Dedman, MSW
Appendix D

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
Date: August 20, 2007

To: Louann Bierlein-Palmer, Principal Investigator
Denise Dedman, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-08-17

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Field Instructors’ Perceptions of On-Line Training” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 20, 2008
Appendix E

Research and Survey Questions
Appendix E: Research and Survey Questions

### Research/Survey Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Research/Survey Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>For which university are you currently a field instructor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>What level of students do you supervise in field placement?</td>
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**Research Question 1:** To what extent is there inclination among social work field instructors to participate in an on-line class for training?

Q25 Overall, if a university offered its field instructor in-service training via the internet, would you choose to participate in it?

**Research Question 2:** To what degree do the following factors influence field instructors' willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) ability to online documents related to the administration of the placement (such as learning contract, evaluation forms), (b) availability of discussion with other field instructors, and (c) availability of communication with the field placement liaison and/or director?

Q22 There are a number of features that could potentially be included in a secure web site within an on-line training program for field instructors. Please rate your interest regarding the following features within such a potential field instructor web site:

a) A discussion board to post and read messages to the field liaison or other field instructors?

b) A scheduled chat room for field instructors?

c) Access to student contract and evaluation forms and/or other documents for field instructors?

d) Access to articles, related to specific topics you have requested, e.g., supervisory techniques or dealing with student conduct?

**Research Question 3:** To what degree do the following personal demographics or characteristics influence field instructors' willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) age, (b) field of practice within social work, (c) length of practice at the highest degree level, (d) previous experience as a field instructor, (e) prior attendance at a field instructor training event, (f) distance from location where training takes place, (g) means of accessing the internet, (h) technical computer/internet skills, and (i) experience interacting with others online?

Q3 What is your highest degree earned?

Q4 How many years of practice experience do you have at that degree level?

Q5 What is your primary field of social work practice?
Q6 Identify if this is your first experience as a field instructor, and if not, how many years you have served in this role?
Q7 What is your age?
Q8 Have you ever attended a field instructor training on the campus of the university for which you are serving as a field instructor?
Q9 How many miles would you drive (one way) to training held on that university’s campus?
Q10 Has the university provided field instructor training to you at your agency or other work location?
Q11 Counting your initial training as a field instructor for that university, what is the total number of field instructor training events you’ve attended (for that university) at any location?
Q14 Where do you usually access the Internet?
Q15 What type of Internet connection do you most often use?
Q16 The following items relate to your perception of your own computer/internet skills.
   Using a scale from 1 to 4 where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 4 means “strongly agree,” how much would you say you agree or disagree with each statement:
   a) I am computer literate
   b) I am comfortable navigating the Internet
   c) I am able to download files (articles, documents, etc.) from the Internet
   d) I can read professional articles or literature on-line
   e) I am able to copy and paste information from a web site into a document
   f) I am able to send and receive documents attached to email
Q17 How often do you check your email?
Q18 Do you belong to an email users group (like a LISTSERV) so that all members can email each other without entering individual addresses?
Q19 How many on-line courses or workshops have you taken?
Q21 For the next few questions, there are two web site features that you may not be familiar with, a discussion board and a chat room. Both involve communication via a secure web site, which means that only certain people (usually with passwords) are allowed to enter and participate on that web site.
   The first on-line web feature, a discussion board, involves participants posting and reading (and responding to) messages in a secure web site. This is done asynchronously—participants do not have to be on-line at the same time.
   a) How often do you currently read or post messages to any on-line discussion boards?
   The second feature, a chat room, involves participants on-line at the same time writing, reading, and responding to each other in a secure web site.
   b) How often do you currently participate in any on-line chat rooms

Research Question 4: To what degree do the following external factors influence field instructors’ willingness to participate in an on-line class: (a) perceived support from their agency for supervising an intern, and (b) availability to acquire social work continuing education credits through participating in an online class?
Q12 Considering the agency you work for, to what extent is that agency supportive of the time you have spent (or will spend) receiving training for your role as a field instructor.
Q13 If you have been a field instructor before, has that agency support for your time spent in training as a field instructor changed over time?
Q26 How would the availability of continuing education credits for Internet-based training in field instruction affect your interest in participating in such on-line training?

Research Question 5: To what degree do factors advanced by the literature as being (a) advantages and (b) disadvantages of online instruction, influence field instructors’ interest in participating in online training?

Q20 One possibility for providing training to field instructors is through an on-line training program (instead of having them drive to campus or other central location).

Like training on campus, such on-line training could offer specific topics, ranging from “paperwork” to dealing with supervisory issues, ethics, etc.

If such on-line training were available, please indicate to what extent the following aspects would appeal to you:

a) It would allow me to participate from the location of my choosing
b) It would allow me to work anytime of day or night
c) It would allow me to work at my own pace

Q23 To what extent might the following issues be of concern to you if such on-line training for field instructors was developed:

a) The lack of face-to-face interaction with the presenter or instructor?
b) The lack of face-to-face interaction with peer field instructors?
c) Not going to the university campus for meetings?
d) The amount of time on-line training would require?
e) The slowness of your Internet connection?
f) Your current computer skills?
g) Your comfort level with communicating on a discussion board?
h) Your comfort level with communicating in a chat room?

Q24 Please offer any other thoughts or concerns you have about an on-line field instructor training site.

Q27 In closing, if such on-line training for field instructors was created, what topics, information, or materials do you think it should include?
Appendix F

Responses to Open-ended Questions
Appendix F: Responses to Open-ended Questions

Question 24: Please offer any other thoughts or concerns you have about an on-line field instructor training site. Respondents who said “no” are marked with *.

Sometimes the networking that takes place face-to-face is missing in a chat room. I did my PhD online and missed this.

I think it could be beneficial, but suggest that it not be a complete substitute for face to face interaction.

There is more to observe and absorb in a live classroom. I would be more motivated and inspired by a live classroom.

I have not taken or received on-line classes as a student or instructor. That said, I would not be interested in taking or teaching such courses. When this subject is brought up, the reasons not to meet face to face seem to win out. I still prefer the face to face meeting.

That it be part of and not replace, face-to-face training...like it best when it complements and adds to, not replaces.

I prefer learning face to face.

My biggest concerns would be not getting to interact with others in person- I enjoy that opportunity.

I am visual learner and I need the direct communication of others to provide my best skills.

*Too impersonal, boring

*I am unlikely to participate in on-line training in most field instructor issues of interest to me due to the lack of face-face contact with other human beings. don't market call me, send me the form in the mail if all we need to do is paperwork.

I prefer meeting with others for this type of training.

Maybe offering a face to face course to learn all these technological things would be advantageous for those of us who are not as computer literate as others.

Face-to-face conversation with experienced field instructors and professional staff is hard to replace.

I prefer interaction with other field instructors and university staff. Maybe online training as well as training at the university should be an option.

*It concerns me that "online" courses for students and now, interaction for field instructors is such a trend. What are we modeling for our students? Real human connection cannot occur online. Articles and forms can be accessed on the university/department website. Online training is not needed to make them accessible.

Social work is a relational profession. Interaction among peers is critical to the process, I believe.

Part of what I enjoy is the face to face interaction with faculty and field instructors. This is an opportunity to personally network that would be lost.

I would greatly miss the interaction between the faculty and colleagues and the synthesis that happens in a live setting.

I think that it would be very beneficial to be able to speak with other field instructors and get their feedback if it is needed.
I like people more than computers
I like the idea, but would hope that universities would consider offering "nuts and bolts" training online, but save the more content-based training for f2f meetings. I am very unlikely to use message boards or chat rooms, as I find them tedious, and frankly they give some of our more verbose or expressive colleagues too little structure or facilitation.

I enjoy going to campus and interacting with faculty. On line would be a good option if I were unable to attend a scheduled, on campus training.

Computers are too much of my work already--If I want to go to a training, I'd much rather be away from my work setting and be allowed to learn and think creatively about situations away from the work setting.

Nice to have a break away from the office to have training.

Demands on field instructors have continued to increase in terms of paperwork and bureaucracy...concerns this would increase the workload which is already too demanding for a volunteer position

*I do not feel with the amount of responsibilities I currently have that this would be able to be accomplished whole at work.

I have taught on-line so am very comfortable with the technology. However, I don't have time to do much more. Not very interested in anything time intensive.

I think this is a good idea as long as other job responsibilities are taken into consideration when establishing a time commitment.

Lack of motivation—online instruction strings out over a longer period of time and gets pushed aside when competing with other more pressing priorities

Taking too much time.

Regarding the chat room idea, I would hate to tie up my time for a certain period of time to chat about a topic. I would prefer the discussion board which could be ongoing and allow brief interactions. Most of my problems are regarding time.

Interruptions of the trainings at the work site as most of us are responsive to crisis (& non-crisis) situations.

I would hate to spend more time on the computer than I already do!! I already spend way too much time on the computer.

I'd rather get the interaction personally with others and get out of this setting for a while. The reason I would probably not participate in many of these on-line features is because of my lack of time. I typically travel 3-5 days a week and I have enough trouble keeping up with me email

I would hope that on-line training would lighten my load, not increase it. I don't see a strong need for me to be trained in being a field instructor.

Concern that this would encourage more working from home and increase the hours already worked.

Difficult to do anything non-work related unless outside of the office. Likely would not get to on-line field instruction until after work is done as opposed to scheduling a meeting outside of the office. Likely a lot of interruptions (phone calls, e-mails, co-workers, supervisor)

First, since I only have internet access through work, I wonder if you would be able to work out my having access at work to a discussion board or chat room. Secondly, I think have to do too much to do as it is on the computer for my job.
Because I am an attorney and not a social worker, this training does not seem applicable to me.

See it as a useful auxiliary tool vs. a primary mode of training.

I think that this would be helpful. It should not be the only option (i.e.- there should still be a "live" person we could contact in the event of problems).

Training will only be attended if it pertinent and useful. university staff are sometimes too "academic" and fail to keep up with the reality of day to day work in the field. If that is the basis from which a training is developed, I would not choose to participate probably.

Would it be a secure site? Would information be forward-able? How to maintain confidentiality?

Confidentiality of student performance issues
Totally comfortable but don't keyboard as well.
It probably would be fine, but I have never used these systems so there is a certain of concern due to the unknown of how to use them.

The setup would need a very user friendly tutorial for those of us who have basic skills, but little chat/board experience.

I am more concerned with the relevance of the content of the training than I am with the form of the training.

You would want to be clear about the purpose of the training - to transmit information, or to train in skills and critical thinking. That would help to dictate how to design the training.

It would have to be applicable to the actual field to feel useful.

While I have attended an orientation with each of the Universities going every year seems redundant and time consuming - it's nice to visit, the coffee's great, but I really don't have the time

I am not at all interested in on-line training. I dislike reading articles on my computer screen, I am concerned about eye strain, I am not interested in doing training of this sort after the end of my normal work hours (I generally work 10 hours/day anyway), and I don't like to charge extra printing costs to the field agency.

I want to clarify that my organization uses one contact as the "official" field instructor (one of our supervisors) even though those of us working in the remote locations are in fact the supervisor of the student. Because of this, we do not get any formal training from the university. I like the idea that on-line training would allow us to be included.

Less gas money for everyone! An on-site activity can be a "thank you" lunch for field instructors. GVSU does this annually.

The more we can do to limit travel and reduce pollution and risks in traffic to our safety the better. telecommuting is responsible and should be used more often.

This would be an amazing help, because I wouldn't be worried about what I'm missing because I can't make it to the "land-based" trainings

I have a very busy schedule and driving to Ann Arbor or even MSU disrupts my schedule. I enjoy working with students, but any time I can get the training on line is a bonus.

I think it sounds like a very efficient way to provide training.
I think on-line training would be very helpful. This court has little manpower and travel time is difficult.
The only reason I have not had training is because every time training is scheduled, I already have meetings scheduled during that time. Knowing a training date at least two months in advance would allow me to schedule training in a timely manner.

Generally a good idea. I've been an instructor long enough that I don't feel I need a lot of training

Good idea.

Good idea but it would need to be structured with feedback.

sounds like a great idea!

Have used Blackboard and it is fabulous.

Would like to see this option pursued.

GREAT idea!

I think it's a great idea

Great idea

Would love to participate in a pilot

Overall, I think this is a practical approach.

Good idea

This would be a very new experience for me.

Interesting

It would be beneficial and motivating if the training offered would meet LMSW continuing education requirements.

This could be beneficial if CEU's were offered for social workers.

Question 27: In closing, if such on-line training for field instructors was created, what topics, information, or materials do you think it should include?

Forms that field instructors need to fill out with or for the students (with directions on how to complete). Expectations that the university has for the field instructor.

Expectations for the students in their field placements. Chain of command when dealing with concerns with a student, possible form to complete to inform university about concern.

Clear expectations of student and field instructor.

Revising the current contract GVSU uses for its MSW interns. This could all be done online and graded monthly rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

Ethics (as required by MI); supervision

Ethics, confidentiality, co-occurring disorders, record keeping, clinical supervision, evaluation, performance improvement

Social work education has changed in the post modern era. There appears to be a renewed interest in social work paradigms such as person-in-situation and social functioning. However, from the several students for whom I have been a field instructor there doesn't appear to be as much depth in the curriculum as I would like to see. The on-line "training" of faculty through the input of field instructors who have considerable experience should be promoted.

There appears to be a shortage of structured explanatory theory in the curriculum. From
what students have told me there is too much emphasis on diversity and not enough emphasis on skills and techniques that increase adaptation and social functioning.

Forms
Forms, timetables, ability to send messages/communicate with the Field Liaison
Supervisory techniques, guidelines for orienting students
I oversee just one intern per year and have never had a problem. I am not sure I need training to do the little bit I do. Thanks!
Information pertinent to field instruction/supervision, specific areas such as substance abuse, mental health, etc.
Consistent evaluation techniques
Dealing with student weaknesses without destroying their esteem, supervisory techniques that are evidence based.
Pacing involvement with a new intern, getting agency support for supporting your intern, etc.
Teaching or reinforcing social work ethics
Guidelines around human-subject research, technical assistance for other anyalyses (e.g. numerical/statistical analysis), info on newer or current practice theory models, information on remedial writing skills training for students
Fostering the student/mentor relationship.
Role of SWK as mandated reporter-various settings and students' understanding of their role.
SWK in special-ed settings; student exposure and experience.
Increasing opportunities and sometime student's desire for a variety of SWK practicum experiences during field placement.
SWK as member of multidisciplinary team; experiences for the student.
Report writing: students' standards for excellence.
Support student efforts in securing employment following internship[s].
Ethics, Cultural Competence, Boundaries with clients.
Tips for new field instructors (field practice 101)
Making the most of supervision time (best practice)
Everything related to what techniques are beneficial to an instructor growing an intern
Continuing ed lists and trainings. Access to student contract and evaluation forms and/or other documents for field instructors.
Current sw topics, licensing issues, school topics
Information specific to the role of a school social worker and in regard to effectively providing supervision to MSW students.
I would love to see the syllabuses for classes that my students take. I would like to keep current on the latest research and lilterature in the field.
It would also be helpful to know the names of professors and a little about their experience and employment.
I also would like more feedback from students about what they find helpful, not helpful, frustrations, concerns etc. I would nice if they had an anonymous way to express themselves to field instructors.
Updates on curriculum changes/expectations. cohort trends, problem placement resolution
How to develop and utilize a learning contract; what specifically to focus on in field instruction (the macro areas vs the micro material); how to structure adult experiential learning; the similarities and differences between employees and interns; termination and how to structure this in the practicum experience.

Articles/activities that interns could use with residents on their specific projects. Background articles that are simple and to the point, practical for the specific content needed.

Thanks
Student learning contract, hours required, student time sheets, field class syllabus, emails for liaisons.
Ethics, different pedagogical approaches to instruction
Supervision boundaries—role of self disclosure for both supervisor and supervisee, record keeping for supervisory sessions,
How to pace experiential learning with curriculum material. How to help students write more professionally.
Supervisory/management techniques/skills
Hands-on projects for interns in practical setting.
Recent updates on clinical documentation formats and appropriate use of abbreviations in note keeping.
Updates articles relative to the setting in which the intern is working. (i.e. we specialize in residential substance abuse with adolescents). Many out of school practitioners get limited access to current research/academic libraries.
All of the above, plus relevant articles to type of placement; e.g. community organization, gerontology
Substance abuse, working with difficult patients, group therapy elements.
Not sure at this time.
Expectations for field instructors; timetables for semester events and due dates;
Supervision issues. Ethical issues. Designing projects that meet student and curriculum needs.
No comment
Recent Research, Evidence based practices, working with concerns about student issues,
Beginning work with an intern. Dealing with paperwork concerns. Evaluating intern’s clinical skills.
Setting goals for students, expectations for field placement
Topic: clinical focus - mental health
I am not sure
Anything that offers CEUs in Social Work
Supervision issues
Supervision
Work with difficult students
Supervision in times of organization difficulty
Diversity issues
Integrating class work with field instruction
Latest info on supervising graduate interns: effective methods, etc.
Integrating social justice into supervision
Multicultural supervision
Addressing concerns with an intern
How to access information being discussed in class and how to apply it to the field placement, points to cover in supervision

See above comments (#24). I would not like to see important topics such as ethics, cultural competence, or other content-driven material move to an online setting. Although I generally like the ideas of webinars, I have rarely found a well-trained facilitator. I would be particularly interested in seeing some trainings about facilitating trainings/workshops/multi-disciplinary meetings/collaborative community efforts.

No further comments

Difficult Interns or interns with less competence than had shown in interview.
Dealing with students whose personal problems get in the way of their commitment to the placement.

Forms, university policies and procedures, and ethics
I'm open to topics related to supervision. Would want things to be of a practical nature.
Student & Instructor self-assessment tools
Curriculum being given to students, training on time-management, ethics, protocols, evidence-based treatmenets per the university's stand.

1. Dealing with troubled students
2. Specific policy for the university that is being served
3. Contact numbers for emergency, staff, and such
4. Ethical considerations in student interactions
5. Form completion specific to different universities.

Trends in social work education
General topics on supervision
Helping adult learners, setting appropriate expectations for students
Absolutely have the forms on-line!
Helping students with learning contracts
Assisting students with limited previous contact how to engage.
The same topics offered at the University.
It should include how to counsel students regarding issues of death and dying, information on volunteer management (how to do it, how paid staff and volunteers interact), help for the students to balance all the demands on their time without stressing out too badly.

Inter-cultural supervision
Power issues
Professionalism in appearance and writing
Info. that the school thinks is critical for the student to learn in the specified field.
Not interested.
Ethics, paperwork, treatment modalities
Basic requirements and forms, especially evaluation of students in PP&A.
Information on paperwork, student expectations, idea sharing, articles of interest, University expectations
School's expectations re: educational agreements, evaluations; information about the school's curriculum; University expectation of students.
Expectations of students at the Bachelor vs. Masters level.
An update on new or amended evaluation expectations (such as the new evaluation form which was unfamiliar to me).
Guidelines for field work experiences
Strategies to ensure alignment with classroom work
Ideas/templates/ to help students document skills learned
Reflective supervision, the nature of the supervisory relationship and parallel process
No sure at this time.
The effect of computers/distance learning on personal/professional/supervisory relationships and communities; what is gained/lost by leaving direct human connection (in body) out of learning experiences
Mostly I love hearing best practices and worst practices from intern sites. Some specific content on what the university wants to have accomplished with the internship. Making sure interns come in with clear goals for the internship.
Unsure
Forms, calendars, and other materials which I could reference would be appealing to me. I think availability of forms and if discussion boards/chat rooms increases response vs. email. However, this would just be another place we'd have to check for information.
Children and grieving, living with a terminal illness
Ethical issues and case management issues in a host setting such as the education system.
Schedule, requirements, paperwork
Tips for creating challenging and interesting assignments for students
Specifics to what is needed by the school and when; forms for use with students; I might read an occasional article about supervision—if I had time. I would definitely want face to face contact to supplement the on line training.
Not sure.
Relevant topics such as elder care- practical and legal implications; Documentation- what is absolutely necessary?; Practical interventions in marital therapy; Practical interventions in family therapy, etc. etc.