University of Winchester

Resistance, Double Burnout and Disguised Compliance: A critical exploration of academic resistance to service user involvement in social work education.

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Doctor of Education

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Abstract

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Abstract

This thesis explores academic resistance to service user involvement in social work education in three universities in the UK. The research employed qualitative interviews to investigate the perceptions of ten academic staff, registered with Social Work England and currently working as social work educators on qualifying programmes. From the starting position that negative opinions counter the majority positive narrative (from regulation, policy and much academic discourse), the interviews incorporated a range of techniques from counselling and systemic therapy to promote feelings of safety and congruent expression in the interview space. This enabled participants to share both positive and negative viewpoints. Theoretical insights were drawn upon to frame the analysis including critical pedagogy and a range of psychosocial considerations that help explain and contextualise academic thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

The research uncovered that user involvement is susceptible to similar challenges that mirror those found in social work practice. Participants expressed ambiguity regarding the purpose of user involvement, unease regarding lack of resources for involvement, and repeated concern regarding previous, current and future burnout for themselves and their students. In light of increasing inequality in the UK, participants questioned the value and ethics of service user involvement when it is presented as 'really making a difference'. Furthermore, participants reported purposefully keeping these viewpoints hidden from others, believing that they contradict the social work value base and hence their professionalism. Instead of open discussions and the sharing of perspectives, the actions of academic staff appear consistent with tokenism, emotional labour and disguised compliance. This research recommends that in the short-term social work programmes consider reflective practice groups or models of supervision that will permit these issues to be discussed openly, that service users be given transparency prior to consent to involvement and that service user involvement be revisited through problem-based learning activities in partnership with service users. In light of the apparent disconnect between the worsening quality of life for vulnerable groups, and the positive narratives underpinning user involvement this research raises questions as to whether user involvement might be reconsidered on ethical grounds.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Justification for Study

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (International Federation of Social Work, 2014).

This globally recognised definition of social work is helpful in that it encapsulates the complexity for social workers operating across organisational, cultural, and structural boundaries to empower service users and carers and effect positive change at individual, community and societal level. In its simplest form and generally speaking, social work interacts with individuals who by the nature of their need for a service are often vulnerable and for a significant majority are victims of circumstances originating from disadvantage present at birth. This could be individuals with a disability, or individuals who have experienced childhood trauma, challenges with the parenting task, mental health difficulties, or individuals trapped in abusive relationships, cycles of addiction, or offending behaviours that harm them and others around them. The complexity of individual circumstances coupled with service user vulnerability require social workers to possess a range of advanced knowledge and skills, and core values rooted in human rights and social justice.

In the UK 'social worker' is a protected job title and a graduate profession, which means in order to qualify as a social worker, students must complete a BA, BSc or postgraduate degree in Social Work to gain employment. A welcome addition to these routes of qualification has been the introduction of the degree apprenticeship in 2019 allowing candidates with substantial experience in social care to qualify whilst maintaining employment. All education of social work is governed by the professional regulator Social Work England (SWE) who prescribes the Standards for Education and Training (SETs) that providers must adhere to as well as the professional standards for qualifying social workers (HCPC, 2014b). In recognition of the structural disadvantage faced by many service users and groups there is a commitment to the inclusion and involvement of service users in all qualifying programmes.

This thesis is part of a Doctorate in Education (EdD) that is focused on applying research to education to solve practical problems, often conducted by students such as me who are usually employed as educators. Having enjoyed a challenging yet successful career in social work, working with many service user groups (children at risk of harm, Looked After Children (LAC), children in the criminal justice system, adults with mental health difficulties and/or substance misuse), I made the transition to Higher Education (HE) initially as a social work lecturer and more recently in the realm of academic development, facilitating teaching and learning practices that promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). In contrast to PhD students who undertake research, analyse data and make original contributions to academia within their field of study, an EdD student may focus on formulating solutions to complex issues that steer towards enhancements of professional practice in education (Aiken & Gerstl-Pepin, 2013). In this research the enhancements are targeted towards a key element of social work education, that being the involvement of service users and carers. As a social worker, social work academic and doctoral student, it is the extent to which the benefits of service involvement are actualised in educational practice that are of interest to me throughout this study.

This chapter will start by identifying my journey as a student researcher that led me towards this topic, before locating the reader in the professional and academic context of service users and carers' involvement in Universities in the UK.

Reflecting on my pathway to researcher and the process before, during and after, is essential for rigorous qualitative research (Teh & Lek, 2018) and I am able to identify that the opportunity to apply for a Lecturer post in HE arose at a time in my life where I was experiencing significant stress in my then current role as Independent Reviewing Officer and Child Protection Conference Chair. The emotional and physical fatigue of social work caused by continued exposure to long working hours and the assessment of child abuse and neglect, coupled with challenging relationships and encounters with involuntary service users, meant my resilience levels were low. Social work is recognised as a profession with higher levels of stress related ill health than other occupational groups (Health and Safety Executive, 2004) and I was feeling that stress. Arguably, I was at a crossroads - disillusioned with the profession I had chosen, rarely experiencing anything that resembled the pleasure of altruism or a positive outcome for vulnerable children, and I was frustrated generally. At this point I was alerted by a colleague in HE to a vacancy for a Lecturer in Social Work. I felt I had

reached saturation point in my role as Child Protection Conference Chair and hoped my experiences could help to shape the resilience of new practitioners entering the profession and make a valuable contribution to HE. I wanted to forget about service users (for a short while anyway), distance myself and my less secure social identity from service users in a way consistent with 'otherness' (Zevallos, 2011; Beresford 2013) and concentrate on my passion for teaching and learning. I hoped my already partial completion of a Doctorate in Social Work would evidence my passion for learning and my role as Practice Educator as evidence of my motivation to teach. I was delighted to be offered a position as Senior Lecturer in Social Work where I remained for 5 years teaching across three programmes (the BSc in Social Work, MA Social Work and PG Dip: Step Up to Social work) and equally becoming the Programme Leader for the BSc. It was approximately 6 months into my career in HE that I was tasked with evaluating the way the social work programmes integrated service user involvement into the programmes. This unpublished evaluation which involved interviewing academic staff and service users, uncovered broad positive agreement that service users and carers' involvement was necessary, valued and beneficial for both service users and carers' wellbeing, and student education. A conference held to share the results attracted a large audience of both internal and external practitioners, students, service users and carers was used to celebrate the effective involvement taking place, and together a strategy was forged for enhancing involvement moving forward. Such was the positive reception from colleagues during this study that questions arose for me as to whether or not this could possibly be the only perspective and if there were perspectives, lesser heard, that were being overlooked. In light of some of my informal workplace observations, my knowledge of critical pedagogy, and the social work discourse, I made a decision to exit the professional doctorate in Social Work, and enrol on the Doctorate of Education and explore these phenomena further.

Recognising power underpins my social work, teaching and leadership practice in HE and, in the language of critical pedagogy, I am a critical person empowered to seek justice (Fahim & Masouleh, 2012). In addition to my social work disciplinary knowledge, I use critical pedagogies - for example Marx and the separation of students from the locus of power (Bryson & Hand, 2007), and anti-capitalist education that critiques all the forms of inequality in capitalist society – class inequality, sexism, racism, discrimination against gay and lesbian people, against disabled people, ageism and differential treatment of other social groups'. (Gibson & Rikowski, 2004, p. 251 in Rikowski 2004, p. 567), Foucault and disciplinary power (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014) and considerations of emancipation and oppression (Freire, 1996)

with the aim of identifying alienating forces and instilling in myself, the students and my colleagues in the development of a shared critical consciousness that motivates us all to action, aimed at promoting equality and reducing power differentials.

Because of this critical pedagogy I arrive at this topic of user involvement in education already somewhat critical of modernity, the organisation of social work, and what I perceive to be tokenistic user involvement that does not adequately attend to the complexity of a variety of relationships and power struggles, or acknowledge the identified competing tensions. The task for me was designing a study to capture the multitude of academic perspectives using methods that permitted the participants to speak freely about any positive and negative perceptions of user involvement safely, paying close attention to myself and my influence as a researcher.

Moving on from this introduction the remainder of the chapter will introduce user involvement, differentiate it from public patient involvement in healthcare, and highlight why it is a necessary area of study. It will provide a summary of the literature review (Chapter Two), make explicit my journey to the project aims and research questions and outline the structure of the Thesis.

Service user and carer involvement in Social Work Education

Arguably, service user and carers' involvement in social work education is an extension of progressive and anti-oppressive social work in that it seeks to use relationships, education and the sharing of power as the mechanism through which to enhance wellbeing and promote positive outcomes for those on the margins of society. Service user and carers' involvement in education has developed as a logical extension of involvement in health and social care delivery and its research. Governments in UK, USA, Canada and Australia support the need for effective involvement that utilises partnerships with service users built on the ethical imperative of autonomy, involvement and choice (Towle et al. 2016). It seems prerequisite that to develop greater consumer involvement in the health and social care systems, professionals need to be adept at proactively responding to service users and carers' needs, preferences (Wood & Wilson-Barnet 1999; Forrest et al. 2000) and experiences from the outset, and for professionals to benefit from this expertise, service users, advocates and their organisations need on-going opportunities for direct involvement in social work theorising in education (Beresford, 2001). Hence, the development of compulsory standards

for involvement in the delivery and development of professional education programmes (SETs) (HCPC, 2014b).

Service users and carers' involvement in social work education has been a requirement in all aspects of qualifying programmes since 2002 (Department of Health, 2002), and all Post Qualifying Programmes since 2005 (General Social Care Council, 2005), which makes this requirement of high importance when evaluating or conducting research into social work education. The standards for social work programme validation (SETs) HCPC (2014) indicate service users and carers must be involved in all aspects of the programme although 'service user' and 'carer' involvement does not always have to be separated (HCPC 2014). Involvement includes opportunities for service users and carers to share their experiences with students, involvement in teaching and learning activities such as group work or marking assignments, involvement in the design and management of programmes through participation in quality assurance processes, and input into learning activities and programme structure. Within SETs (HCPC, 2014), models of participation are not prescribed, however, they state that Social Work England need to be satisfied that education providers have considered and can justify the service user and carer groups they have chosen as the most appropriate and relevant to the programme, and that they are clear about the objectives of the involvement. Service user and carer involvement exists on a continuum and arguably, when using SETs as the necessary benchmark for participation standards, it is important to be mindful that good enough involvement to secure programme validation does not necessarily equal best practice innovation and creativity. Whilst robust, SETs afford considerable scope for variation resulting in service users and carers' involvement operating on a continuum with potential for disparity between baseline level/tokenistic involvement and that of aspirational best practice, i.e., the co-construction of professional education (Hatton, 2018; SCIE, 2015). It is necessary for academic staff to attend to the academic literature for a significant amount of guidance and examples of how to do it well and is of great interest to researchers and research students such as myself who might be keen to understand the process in praxis.

To help clarify the parameters of this research it is important from the outset to differentiate between service user involvement and Public Patient Involvement (PPI) in Health Care. PPI is a process where members of the public and patients are given the chance to influence their health care or treatment, have a say in the way services are planned and run, and invited to

help improve service delivery (British Medical Association, 2015). Whilst similar in their approach and intentions, there are subtle yet significant differences in the drivers behind these policy initiatives that reflect the disciplines from which they emerge (Spicker, 2011). PPI is supported by government policy as a way to improve clinical outcomes for patients, promote transparency and accountability, and play a role in encouraging healthier communities. PPI initiatives are driven predominantly by the Department of Health (DoH) who recognise that involving patients as partners in their own health care is key to providing an NHS that is responsive to the needs of patients using health services (Department of Health, 2005). Similar to social work, guidance for General Practitioners (GPs) (BMA, 2015) recognises the importance of inclusivity during PPI to include where possible older patients, refugees, patients with disability or mental health difficulties and ethnic minority groups, rooted in the understanding that health inequalities are unfair, and unjust differences in health status between groups, populations, or individuals that arise from social, environment and economic inequalities (Woodard & Kawachi 2000). However, it is recognised that the NHS is universal provision for the population of the UK and that being a patient of NHS services is a universal experience and does not necessarily bring with it the same experiences of stigma as being a voluntary or involuntary user of many social care services (Spicker, 2011). Furthermore, within organisations, policy and professional practice it is recognised that hierarchies exist conceptualising superior and subordinate professions, professionals and services that rank health above social care, and can be felt and experienced within multidisciplinary teams (Braithwaite, et al. 2016). In terms of disciplinary understandings of health and wellbeing it is further suggested that historically there has been a supremacy of the medical model that has had dominance over social understandings of phenomena such as mental health and disability (Ferrel, 2017). These hierarchies appear within policy and resource allocation and it is recognised that even when social care services are jointly delivered with Health Services (for example mental health services) there has been lacking a parity in funding, despite excess mortality and a significant burden of disease measures that would usually secure it (The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2015).

Justification for Study: Why Involve Service Users?

In order to reassert why resistance to user involvement deserves attention and exploration it is necessary to understand the uniqueness of service users as opposed to patients in public health. It is argued that this inequality between health and social care as well as judgements and stigma, result in prejudice and discrimination that affect service users disproportionately

in comparison to patients accessing universal health services (Pescosolido & Martin, 2015; Cocker & Hafford-Letchfield, 2014; Dovidio, 2010). For example, the stigma associated with substance use, or statutory child safeguarding interventions versus treatment for broken bones, or genetic illness. In addition to this are a range of social factors that impact users of care services that require attention in order to fully understand the underpinning values of service users and carers' involvement and to highlight why service users warrant specific attention in social work research and practice literature. In doing so, raises awareness of the social inequalities that impact service users - those that the profession of social work seeks to challenge and reduce, through work with individuals, groups and communities.

There is wide recognition that social work is socially constructed and varies across the globe (Beresford & Croft, 2001; Weinberg, 2010; Witkin, 2011) and that social work and service user involvement can vary significantly depending upon the country. This research is taking place in the UK and despite the UK having the 29th highest level of disposable income globally, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that people in Britain are more constrained by the background they are born into than in any comparable country (OECD, 2010). This is significant as being born into a minority group and/or poverty is recognised as a barrier to lifelong quality of life, and poverty, nearly always characterises the experience of being a service user, and is correlated with the problems that people present to social work departments (Parrott, 2014). In relation to child protection for example, there is widespread recognition of a correlation between poverty and child maltreatment (Parton, 2014; Bywaters et al. 2017; Gupta & Blumhardt, 2017) and that it is the poorest communities that are most heavily policed by safeguarding services, have the most surveillance and nationally experience the greatest impact from reduction in government expenditure during times of austerity (Cummins, 2018). Hence a large proportion of social work is supporting individuals, groups and communities impacted by circumstances associated with systemic poverty.

However, inequality and the gap between the rich and poor is increasing globally (Hardoon, Fuentes-Nieva & Ayele, 2016) and it is not just the day to day experience of poverty that impacts wellbeing; it is argued that in addition to these systemic disadvantages, human beings have deep-seated psychological responses to inequality and social hierarchy with a tendency to equate outward wealth with inner worth. It is recognised that social perceptions are shaped by poverty and that inequality in society invokes feelings of superiority and

inferiority, dominance and subordination, and infiltrates the way we perceive each other and relate to each other (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In other words, poorer people in society are held in lower regard and this perception permeates interactions, attitudes and responses at every level resulting in discrimination and oppression, lower self-esteem, lower aspirations and ultimately a reduction in both real and perceived power and control over individual lives. Arguably, with a social work value base of social justice, user involvement in social work education, should be one mechanism that strives towards a reduction in these attitudes and beliefs (Barnard, Horner & Wild, 2008).

Much of social work (and of course user involvement in education) is with minority groups (defined as groups with less power, wealth, influence, or control than members of a dominant, mainstream or majority group) (Brynin & Longhi, 2015). Minority groups encompass a range of characteristics including race, class, sexuality, disability, age and religion and as a result are at greater risk of poverty (Mexuk, et al. 2010). Despite social, political and legislative changes in the UK, inequality is growing (Hardoon, Fuentes-Nieva & Ayele, 2016) and discrimination and oppression continues to affect individuals with minority characteristics or those belonging to minority groups. In this regard, to a large extent economic inequality is racialised and gendered (Krumo-Nevo, 2017). Furthermore, it is argued that understandings of the relationship between economic and community hardship and resultant social problems have not translated into effective policy (Bywater et al. 2017) and austerity continues to disproportionately affect those already marginalised. Minority groups face greater levels of poverty, and throughout the UK, people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups are much more likely to be in poverty (i.e. an income of less than 60 per cent of the median household income) than white British people (Institute of Race Relations, 2016). In addition to this people of colour are disproportionately represented in terms of contact with a range of involuntary social services such as inpatients in mental health services, custodial sentences after contact with criminal justice service, and higher rates of homelessness (Race Equality Foundation, 2015). It is suggested that through elite discourse racism is reproduced at a national level through the media, governments and other influential figures that equally shapes public perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, fuelling prejudice and ethnically related negative associations (van Dajk, 1990). For example, bias and racialised reporting in the press sanction widely held negative views about asylum seekers and fuel stereotypes regarding racial groups (Givens et al. 2016).

In addition to poverty and race, individuals with disability who may be reliant on a variety of social care services, face a broad range of disadvantage. For example, people with disabilities are less likely to be in employment that non-disabled people with 46.3% of working-age disabled people in employment compared to 76.4% of working-age non-disabled people. They are significantly less likely to participate in cultural, leisure and sporting activities, significantly more likely to be victims of crime than non-disabled people, and around 3 times as likely not to hold any qualifications compared to non-disabled people (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014). Hence being born with a disability in UK significantly affects individual life chances and overall quality of life. Furthermore, 'Intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 2017; Collins, 2020) is offered as a qualitative conceptual framework that identifies how systems of power linked to these social identities can have cumulative effect on those often already marginalised. For example, the multiple challenges faced by somebody who has a disability and is a person of colour and is female. Social work recognises the barriers linked to social identities and also that socioeconomic status impacts overall human functioning including physical and mental health, and fuels marginalisation (Mexuk et al. 2010). Consequently, user involvement is offered as one mechanism to challenge stereotypes and reduce marginalisation.

In addition to this, there is wide recognition that adverse childhood experiences (WHO, 2021) can significantly shape adult outcomes and that despite the tendency for society and policy to blame individuals for their circumstances, it is often childhood adversity that contributes to re-victimisation and/or intergenerational transmission, physical health problems, mental health problems, eating disorders and obesity, difficulties with alcohol and substance use, aggression, violence and criminal behaviour, homelessness, and high risk sexual behaviour (Afifi et al. 2009; Gilbert et al. 2009; Simpson & Miller, 2002). In summary social work interacts with individuals who by nature of their need for a service are vulnerable, who are likely to have been impacted by birth disadvantage, compounded by structural barriers and societal attitudes that are often outside of their control.

It is perhaps not surprising that within social work - a profession that champions social justice - there is a commitment enshrined in the professional value base to empower service users and carers, promote equality, protect Human Rights, promote self-determination, autonomy and choice, that reduces professional authority and power, and that practitioners are required to engage in practice that is reflective, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive.

Thus, for social work, an important part of translating these values into practice is providing opportunities for service users and carers to be meaningfully involved in the education of the professionals they may engage with: termed service user and carer Involvement. Given the significance of user involvement to a profession (social work) that seeks to reduce inequality, empower individuals and promote social justice, research into this phenomenon is of high value and fundamental to achieving our professional aims.

Key Messages from Existing Literature

This thesis pulls together many pieces of information to provide a literature review in Chapter Two that provides a broad overview of themes within the user involvement knowledge base. This review uncovers widespread agreement regarding the necessity and benefits of involvement (Towle et al. 2016; Askheim, Beresford & Heule, 2017; Goossen & Austin, 2017) with detailed discussion regarding the benefits to individuals, organisational cultures, professional practice and society as well as education specific objectives being benefits to service users and carers, the enhancement of learning, and skills acquisition for students, and longer term cultural and attitudinal shifts that promote the prominence of the user expertise, produce informed effective social workers, who deliver high quality social work services that reflect better the self-identified interests of current and future users. Furthermore, the review outlines a range of barriers and facilitators (Chambers and Hickey, 2006), including diversity of representation, the sharing of training and expertise, the notion of involvement as meaningful, financial, organisational, and practical constraints that must be overcome, and could be conceptualised as competing tensions that academic staff must navigate and balance. In addition to this, is a discussion of the fluctuating explicit and implicit power relations between all stake holders in the education environment. The review suggests that within the contemporary organisation, and delivery, of H.E. that academic staff, themselves, to varying degrees, are disempowered by the necessity to transfer power in the classroom to students, and to service users without associated accountability, in the aim of making and maintaining true partnerships, all the while operating under the scrutiny of the ever-increasing and rapidly encroaching effects of externally-imposed metrics for measuring success in H.E. The empowerment and disempowerment of social work educators is complex so remains the possibility that within Universities, exists hidden hesitation and reluctance from Academic staff in relation to User involvement. The review uncovers observations from scholars that argue that currently the research originates from the most enthusiastic institutions leaving the voices of those struggle, or who are resistant, unheard and that best

practice user involvement for all institutions can be further informed by additional research that affords a broader pool of academic staff the opportunity to speak freely and congruently about the realities of service user involvement, and experiences of empowerment and oppression within the contemporary organisational and political climate of Higher Education.

Finally, the review attends to research, and commentary of a critical nature, that suggests user involvement be understood as a sophisticated illusion that advances neo-liberal ideals of welfare reform whilst simultaneously increasing the burden of complex social problems on families - and often disproportionately women (Roper, et al. 2014). In a similar vein Carey (2009) assesses the consequences and impact of seemingly widespread, constructive and altruistic service user and carer participation within social work with questions regarding the regular and prominent claims made about its benefits, and doubts regarding the overall philosophy and its apparent achievements.

Arrival at Research Questions

My beliefs have shaped this research from the outset and ultimately the research questions. I am someone who passionately strives for higher education to be a mechanism for social justice and recognition that without the skills of critical analysis, analytical rigour and understanding of bias that are acquired and developed in HE communities are vulnerable to media hegemony and dominant ideologies (Carragee, 1993) that can be argued as often divisive (Scherling, 2019).

After such a positive service user conference prior to this research and upon discovering the complexities within the literature review, I began to question whether the full extent of views regarding user involvement were being presented and debated within the knowledge base. This was compounded by my own informal observations of variations in motivation for user involvement among colleagues.

With a passion for social justice and critical pedagogy I considered whether there might be perceptions of user involvement that had not been heard and perhaps even hesitation or resistance from those grappling with the complexity and reality of facilitating it. My own frustrations at growing inequality, coupled with the strong positive narratives in the

literature caused me to pause and consider whether individuals who were less optimistic would feel safe to share their views. Might an academic who felt that Service User involvement was not actualising the aspirational claims be able to speak freely, and would its positioning as a regulatory requirement and the strong positive academic narratives limit any negative expression? As a researcher I drew upon my own experiences of expressing or supressing my own beliefs in a working environment whether that was hiding my scepticism from a service user in order to be hope inducing or concealing my discontent to my manager in relation to policy change or workload allocations, or concealing my sadness and despair when confronted with a child experiencing abuse. These reflections led to consider an iceberg analogy as helpful in this thesis.

Multiple disciplines have used an iceberg analogy to visually represent skills, behaviours, considerations, and processes that are above the surface i.e., visible to others, and also below the surface, perhaps hidden from others, within an organisation, not public facing or intrapersonal. These include but are not limited to representations of culture, (Hall, 1976) Levels of Consciousness (Freud, 1894) change processes (McCarthy, 2013), child behaviour (Armstrong et al. 2015), emotional knowledge (Bratianu & Orzea, 2014) as examples.
As a result of these ponderings and reflexivity upon my own concealment of expression, the following research aims were born.

Project Aims

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of user involvement of academic staff in a way that facilitates the expression of both positive and negative views. Attention will be paid to the possibility that resistance from academic staff exists with regards to involvement of service users and carers within HEIs, and to theorise as to the cause of resistance or absence of resistance. The intention is to make a positive original contribution to the knowledge base that might eventually enhance outcomes for service users.

Research Questions

- What is the general perception of user involvement among academic staff?
- Is there resistance to service user and carer involvement from academic staff on social work programmes, spoken or otherwise?
- Does the social work value base impact upon the view of user involvement and/or the extent to which academics speak of this?
- Are there factors not documented within the current knowledge base that impact academic staff and their willingness/ motivation to involve service users?

Structure of this Thesis

This thesis is presented in nine Chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature regarding service user involvement in social work education, locating the reader into the professional field more deeply and exploring the benefits, challenges and inherent complexity of it. Chapter Three sets out the theoretical perspectives underpinning this study. Chapter Four attends to the methodological principles shaping this thesis and outlines the method of data collection and analysis. Chapter Five presents the findings. Chapter Six discusses, interprets and analyses the findings in relation to the research questions. Chapter Seven offers recommendations for future practice and research. Chapter Eight provides an evaluation of the research against the criteria for trustworthiness, outlining limitations and attending to researcher reflexivity. Finally, in Chapter Nine I offer some conclusions to the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This narrative literature review, also known as a narrative review (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006), presents a comprehensive, critical exploration of the research available into service users and carers' involvement in social work education. The search strategy did not follow any predetermined or systematic protocol (such as systematic review) but followed broadly the steps outlined by Demris, Parker-Oliver and Washington (2019) in that the university library was used to search a range of academic peer review data bases including Social Science Citation Index, Scopus, Web of Science, Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), PsycINFO, and also Google Scholar, using the key concepts 'service user involvement in social work education', 'benefits', challenges', 'strengths', 'complexity'. Keywords from the research obtained were used to guide further searches such as 'co-construction' 'power' and 'partnerships'. This process was repeated online via a range of service user organisation websites including but not limited too; Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), British Association of Social Work (BASW), National Survivor User Network, Involve, Carers UK, Shaping Our Lives, Independent Lives, Mind, Together, UK Advocacy Network and Rethink, and equally across government, NHS, Regulatory and University Websites.

Because of the vast amount of literature available exploring user involvement (for example there are more than 300 service user organisations promoting advocacy and wellbeing in mental health in England alone (Wallcroft & Bryant, 2003), the study included literature that pertained to service user involvement in education and or training of social workers and other health professionals and included charities and organisations that operate nationally - as opposed to locally in the UK. Whilst the very early history of user involvement was useful in terms of familiarising myself with the knowledge base, studies for inclusion in this research were limited to the time frame of January 1970 and January 2021. This narrative review of literature does not claim to include every study ever written but rather pulls together many pieces of information to provide a broad overview of themes within the literature. This review uncovered many elements of service user and carer involvement where there was consensus among authors as well as multiple areas of contest and debate. Findings were integrated into the narrative review as they were found and deemed appropriate for this study. Because of the duration of the research, this process was undertaken in an on-going iterative process to keep up to date with contemporary writings and capture any new research before the study was over.

The following sections are an examination of literature pertinent to service user and carer involvement that identifies a range of benefits from user involvement initiatives, as well as challenges for academic staff resulting from competing, sometimes contradictory priorities. These include fundamental debates about notions of 'meaningful' involvement, whether attempts to measure success of involvement should be targeted at the process or outcome, and how issues such as training, diversity of representation and resources place sometimes irreconcilable tensions into the process. The context of service user involvement is considered in relation to the changing landscape of HE and how this impacts upon power relations between students, academic staff and service users. Accordingly, the literature review has been divided into the following sections:

- **The benefits of service user involvement for service users and carers, and other stakeholders.**

- **Challenges and competing tensions with service users and carers' involvement.**

- **Power relations within the changing landscape of HE.**

- **Critical Perspectives.**

These are now covered in turn before concluding with a summary of the literature that identifies the direction of this study, the overall research aims and subsequent research questions.

The Benefits of User Involvement for Service Users and Students.

This review uncovers widespread agreement regarding the necessity and benefits of involvement (Towle et al. 2016; Askheim, Beresford & Heule, 2017; Goossen & Austin, 2017). A systematic review of evaluations of involvement (Robinson & Webber, 2013) emphasises the actual process of involvement for service users as a beneficial experience and one measure of success being that it is meaningful to all stakeholders. Criteria for meaningfulness include the development of professional relationships with service users and carers built on

equality and trust (Gupta & Blewett, 2008) and the forming of partnerships rooted in social work values of respect, self-determination, and anti-discriminatory practice (Croft & Beresford, 1990). Widely documented are the benefits of involvement for service users themselves and the term 'meaningful' is attributed to service users reporting increased confidence and self-esteem (Taylor, 2006); having had the opportunity to develop new skills (Simpson et al., 2008), and observations that service users and carers can benefit from a sense of altruism, by giving back to a profession they may have received support from (Brown & Macintosh, (2006) in Chambers & Hickey, 2012, p. 15). One might reasonably assume that these short-term benefits alone for service users and carers, from meaningful involvement, are enough to motivate academic staff responsible for service users and carers' involvement. In addition to this, a more holistic interpretation can be extrapolated focused on possible outcomes of involvement (that may or may not lend themselves to measurement) suggesting that most meaningful and beneficial are involvement activities which result in structural benefits to service users and carers, from improvement to services they receive (including improvements to the organisational and professional cultures delivering them), and improvements in social work practice that are tangible (Fitzhenry, 2008).

Recognition of the broader social constructs of citizenship, marginalisation and oppression that underpin social work practice supports many arguments that service user involvement is beneficial and offers explanation as to why the process of participation might be meaningful to service users and carers. It has been identified that many service users have felt like, and been treated as, third class citizens with comparatively less rights and freedoms than perhaps their tax paying, less vulnerable counterparts (Ixer, 2006). Equally, circumstances and characteristics that result in the need for support services, including poverty (Parrott, 2014), disability, health challenges, and reliance on welfare, are seen to devalue individual status as citizens (Ixer, 2006). It is proposed that the rights to citizenship are bestowed in return for the fulfilment of individual duties of employment, tax contributions, democratic involvement, and pro-social, law abiding behaviour with little recognition of the structural factors that can manifest at the level of the individual (Parton, 2014). The fulfilling of these duties allows individuals to claim a reciprocal 'legitimate' right to healthcare, education, protection, and inclusion.

Furthermore, these broader concepts of social citizenship (Ixer, 2006 cites Marshall, 1992) which outline social rights of inclusion, equity in standards of living and full enjoyment of all dimensions of civilisation, highlight the extent of disadvantage experienced by service users who face marginalisation, inequality and whose status and vulnerability can result in the experience of abuse of power from others, and prejudice. Evidence suggests (Towle et al. 2016) that involvement in professional education can increase forms of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1995), and arguably enables some service users to spend less time in spaces that symbolically degrade inhabitants such as housing estates and impoverished communities (Bourdieu et al. 1999, p. 56). Further, that the devolution of power via greater service user ownership over participation arrangements precipitates a more sustainable and dynamic process between service users and the state (Hayes, 2011). Understanding the status of service users as devalued and often oppressed citizens in society helps us to reaffirm the significant potential for the reduction in power differentials resultant from the opportunity to contribute to and shape the education that produces the agents of the services (often state) upon which they rely. In addition to this participation opportunities may afford the prospect of employment, societal contributions, pro-social participation, community development and democratic involvement that their citizenship status as a service user might have previously denied.

However, it is not just service users who can benefit from involvement in social work education, as in addition there is a range of benefits to social work students and their developing professional education. Much research reports that service users and carers' involvement support students (earlier than might otherwise be possible) to understand the user perspective and challenge stereotypes (Felton & Stickley, 2004). This is particularly so in the research outlining the positive benefits of service users and carers' involvement when they are involved at the earliest stage of social work education; the recruitment and selection process of students applying to degree programmes (Rhodes & Nyawata, 2011) and at key thresholds in education such as readiness to practice (Engelbertink et al, 2021). Furthermore, there is an abundance of qualitative data suggesting that the experience of service users and carers' involvement helps to challenge students' assumptions and stereotyping (Schneebeli et al. 2010); bridges the gap between theory and practice making service users 'real' and their circumstances normalised, helps students appreciate diversity (Dogra, 2008; Goossen & Austein, 2017), improves the development of professional communication skills and empathy, and builds upon, or mitigates the limits of practice placements (Dogra, 2008).

So far, we have heard an abundance of evidence that service users and carers' involvement can be meaningful for service users and carers as an experience, and for students in terms of their development, and that benefits can be derived from improvements in the practice of qualifying social workers. If one were to accept that service user and carer involvement is necessary and beneficial the literature raises further questions regarding how one might measure a positive impact. Within the literature, approaches to service user and carer participation have been evaluated primarily on either the value of the *process* of involvement for service users and carers and students, or the *outcome* of the involvement (Service User Involvement, 2014) with a range of authors who suggest a disproportionate focus on either, at the expense of the other (Tritter & McCallum, 2006; Chambers & Hickey, 2012). Many authors (Robinson & Webber, 2013; Fitzhenry, 2008; Branfield, 2009) wrestle with the intended purpose(s) of service user and carer involvement weighing up benefits previously identified i.e., the experience of involvement for service users and carers, with the students' learning gain and the future benefits to organisations and societal attitudes as a result of better-informed social workers and social work organisations. Questions emerge such as whether involvement can be considered successful if both service users and students enjoy the experience, or whether there must be tangible, measurable outputs that result from it (Irvine, Molyneux & Gillman, 2015).

In order to answer these questions, it is imperative that robust evaluations are conducted to establish the quality of involvement and the benefits to all stakeholders in the short, medium and long term. However, evaluating involvement effort itself brings many challenges. From a systematic review of research into user involvement in social work programmes in the UK, Chambers and Hickey (2012) identify that the majority of research into service user and carer involvement in education are small scale studies, with qualitative methodology, often based within one institution that does not allow for pre and post comparison research data. So it is impossible to measure any longer term impact from involvement upon the service users and or the students leaving significant questions as to whether service users and carers involvement contributes to the desired structural and societal change for marginalised groups. Equally, they note research tends to emerge out of those HE Institutions (HEIs) who are most motivated to incorporate service users and to reduce tokenism, limiting the breadth and diversity of critical data available and opening up the potential for self-promotion bias from those that publish.

Whilst there is an abundance of documented benefits to service users and students in the short term, the lack of long term studies means there is limited evidence about the effect of service user and carer involvement longer term more generally, on students (SCIE, 2009; Robinson & Webber, 2013), and similar unknowns regarding long term improvements to practice in nursing and social work (Morgan & Jones, 2009); as well as limitations regarding the ability to properly monitor and evaluate it (SCIE, 2004; Burgess & Carpenter, 2008). Fitzhenry (2008) highlights the uncertainty around longer-term positive outcomes of involvement such as improvement to services, organisational and professional cultures, and improvements in practice that are tangible. This raises important considerations for academics involved in social work education aiming to instil an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and values so students emerge competent, critically analytical and ready to function as expected, for their assessed and supported first year in employment (ASYE) (DfE, 2015). It is possible that meaningful evaluations of student gain will arise from follow up, longitudinal or comparative studies, however until such time there remains uncertainty regarding long-term gains, and a risk that service users and carers' involvement efforts are in vain, or that tokenism, and/or low impact involvement, continues undiscovered.

We are then faced with a reality that without effective rigorous evaluations of user involvement, we cannot know whether initiatives really are contributing to better outcomes, and what these outcomes are (Carpenter, 2011; McLaughlin, Duffy, McKeever & Sadd, 2019). This review of literature identified observations that generally user involvement is fragmented and not embedded in the educational institution and lacks appropriate infrastructure and sustained leadership and resources (Towle et al. 2016). Service providers and researchers have begun to ask what evidence there is that it improves services and/or the lived experience of those who use them (McCusker, Macintyre, Stewart, & Jackson, 2012; Tanner, Littlechild, Duffy & Hayes, 2017). Equally, prior to the introduction of SETs, service users and their organisations had raised the issue of what they are able to achieve by their involvement and begun to question the usefulness of becoming involved (Branfield & Beresford, 2006). Worryingly, in medical training many studies demonstrate an erosion of person centred empathy (Neumann et al. 2012) from students, which may be echoed in other Health and Social Care training. Multiple authors report that whilst there is widespread support for involvement initiatives and consensus that the process can be meaningful, there is little empirical evidence that it improves outcomes for students in terms

of competencies (Robinson & Webber, 2013). This is supported by Branfield (2009) who agrees there is limited evidence about the effect of service user involvement longer term more generally, and also Morgan and Jones (2009), who note similar gaps in literature regarding improvements to clinical practice in nursing as a result of service users and carers participation. In a review of 29 qualitative evaluations, Robinson and Webber (2013) found widespread support for service user/carer involvement but little in the way of empirical evidence that it improves outcomes for students. This does not mean participation initiatives in education and policy are not contributing to the improvement of services for the people who use them, but perhaps more likely changes are hard to properly monitor and evaluate (Carr, 2004). Arguably without a dual approach to the evaluation of models of service users and carers participation i.e. shorter term: individual benefits to service user/carer participants, and students, then equally longer term: systemic benefits to professional practice, our understandings are limited to whether involvement is meaningful for stakeholders in the present day. It should be born in mind that HEIs who have found service users and carers participation challenging or problematic in terms of outcomes may be reticent in publishing their experiences due to concerns regarding HCPC accreditation and the positioning of themselves as perhaps juxtapose with the social work value base. Therefore, most studies might arise out of those universities who are most motivated to avoid tokenism, reducing reliability and opening potential for self-promotion bias from those that publish their research.

To date the literature has identified broad agreement regarding the benefits of user involvement to service users/carers and students but as a result of the complex nature of evaluation approaches, a distinct lack of evidence to confirm tangible positive outcomes to practice. It is in this context that the literature review will move on to examine further challenges and competing tensions within this discourse.

Challenges and Competing Tensions Within User Involvement.

Intertwined within the debates regarding measuring the process or outcomes and any associated benefits, there appears to exist a range of opposing tensions, where some actions or considerations to promote effective meaningful involvement can be seen to compromise or impact others that are promoted as equally important. Arguably, it becomes the task of academic staff to navigate these tensions and unpick the complexity in order to avoid the reverse of meaningful participation, i.e. that which would be identified as tokenistic

(Beresford & Croft, 2001) and merely the insincere fulfilling of obligatory policies (Molyneaux & Irvine, 2004). This section explores these.

Starting with diversity of representation, McAndrew and Samociuk (2003) suggest that meaningful involvement occurs from the prolonged, repeated use of specific service users and carers to allow for the formation of positive more connected working relationships between themselves, staff and students. However, for others this must be balanced with service user representation and the importance of ensuring the diversity of service users and carers' characteristics, as research indicates minority characteristics are lacking in predominantly white, culturally heterosexual, user participation initiatives (Author Unknown, 2014). Attention should be paid to Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), as there are also difficulties for black and minority ethnic people, and lesbian and gay people with disabilities, who because of these characteristics face multiple oppressions. Some question the validity of the notion of 'representation' steering the focus to equal opportunity and inclusion rather than representation (McLaughlin 2009 cites Prostle & Beresford 2007). The National Survivor User Network (Author Unknown, 2014) are clear that over-reliance on the same few people to be the 'user voice' does not constitute effective involvement, so we begin to see tension between repetition with a small group of service users and carers for meaningful relationship building versus a broad group to meet the necessity of 'diversity of representation' and inclusion. Cowden and Singh (2007) locate diversity challenges within issues of power transfer in participation initiatives (discussed further from page 28) arguing that in the context of user involvement managers and academics ultimately retain power by defining which users are suitable and compliant. Furthermore, involvement aimed to promote power sharing such as programme governance and committees is described as often tokenistic and aimed only at legitimising stakeholders' plans (Brighton University Trust, 2001) so it is not inconceivable that professionals will consciously or unconsciously select service users and carers who somehow fit into their structures (Stickley, 2004 cites Bramwell & Williams 1993). Representativeness is perceived by some as excuses so that service user 'involvement' remains at a tokenistic level (Crepaz-Keay, Binns & Wilson, 1997). This further disempowers service users and carers whilst the institutions remain powerful (Barnes & Bowl, 2001) and it is argued from the outset that categorising individuals based on service characteristics is limiting (McLaughlin, 2009) and disempowers service users and carers who become labelled and potentially become passive recipients of expertise or are included in education under strict conditions by the powerful academic institution (Felton & Stickley, 2004; Lowes &

Hulatt, 2013). This leaving some to question whether user involvement is an example of manipulation or control (Allain, et al, 2006). Here we can see that academic staff facilitating involvement must consider carefully and navigate a number of tensions from the outset including diversity, representation, and relationship building (Redcar & Cleaveland, 2004; Stickley et al. 2011) and that academic staff must consciously and critically reflect upon these issues and the transfer of power in order to strike an appropriate balance of service user involvement per involvement activity.

In addition to diversity of representation contradictions regarding the issue of training are prominent (Matka et al. 2010; Robinson & Webber, 2013) as it is reported by service users that in order for involvement to be meaningful to them, training and on-going support is required (NIMHE, 2004). From one perspective, within the literature training is proposed as beneficial to service users and carers and a variety of education and training is offered as a way to strengthen service user knowledge and their views and reduce marginalisation (Beresford, 2007). Masters et al. (2002) identify good practice as training in educational systems and curriculum development, with others recommending training in the skills of teaching and interacting with students (Stickley et al. 2011; Barnes, Carpenter & Dickinson, 2006; Skilton, 2011). Tritter and McCullum (2006) suggest that capacity building initiatives can support the development of skills and authority, which is advantageous for user involvement. The literature contains a plethora of suggestions for best practice including the pairing of individuals with experienced staff (Barnes, Carpenter & Dickinson, 2006), robust briefing, debriefing and mentoring initiatives (Higgens et al. 2011). However, training service users is another way in which academics could retain and reinforce power, by developing service users and carers who are initiated into the institution regime and are trained to uncritically reinforce the position of those with power (Felton & Stickley, 2004). In response to this, the development of user led peer support groups such as Shaping Our Lives is proposed as an alternative key route to strengthening service users and carers' knowledge and increasing its credibility among organisations (Beresford, 2007), and is highlighted as a route that promotes greater independence from the state, (Department of Health, 1989), a vehicle for user empowerment and the demystification of professionalism (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2013). Peer support may be cost effective, however similar to social work practice there remains simultaneous caution that the privatisation agenda has adopted peer support as a low-cost solution to complex social problems that actually increase the burden on families, communities and those on the margins (Cowden & Singh, 2007). Critics identify that

humanistic individualism that overlooks macro-socioeconomic forces shaping individuals (Pearson & Podeschi, 1999) seems remarkably compatible with neoliberal individualism and the shifting of responsibility on to individuals, families and communities, under Strength Based models that better reflect government fiscal tightening (Gray, 2011). Furthermore, whilst peer support may offer individual solutions, in the short term it is unlikely to impact the social structures leading to marginalisation unless it is part of a substantial social/political movement that challenges the existing power. Peer support in HE user initiatives may serve as a positive element of involvement but classroom dynamics, curriculum design, content and delivery and regulatory bodies all pose challenges that are likely to be unfamiliar. Furthermore, for service users, sustained experiences of oppression can make it difficult for individuals to identify and understand their own circumstances, and the dispositions that incline the dominated to complicity are also the effect of their domination embodied (Torres, 2009). For example, without the availability of training, might a long-term user of mental health services recognise internalised oppression, tokenistic involvement - or the nuances of communication and intonation that indicate (or not) genuine respect and transparency from staff and students? Pilgrim and Waldron (1998) suggest for some, service users and carers' expertise reflects the interpretation of themselves through the knowledge base they have absorbed, belonging to those with power (Felton & Stickley, 2004). From a social work perspective empowerment is central and it is argued that failure to delegate power to service users and carers alongside a proportion of the responsibility and accountability, renders the delegation of power as limited, even tokenistic (Chanan, 2003). Furthermore, reflecting upon the writings of Freire (1996) one might reframe any attempt from the oppressors (academic staff) to transfer power to the oppressed (service users) as an example of false generosity and that power transfer will only really be achieved when the oppressed become aware of the struggle and advocate for themselves. The issue of oppression is central to social work and user involvement and underpins the majority of discussion regarding involvement relationships, where traditionally professionals are able to use their knowledge and authority to assert power (Hugman, 1991; Szasz, 1970; Williams & Lindley, 1996).

It is argued that in social work education, existing research fails to fully address power transfer sufficiently (Lowes & Hulatt, 2013) offering scant challenge to existing power structures, resulting in service users and carers being involved predominantly on stakeholders' terms. Critical perspectives regarding the training of service users recognise that current user discourse has contradictory manifestations resulting in the emergence of

groupings of 'professional users' (Cowden & Singh, 2007), whose training creates distance between themselves and their experiences, and provide students with a distorted perception that all service users are articulate and educated (NIHR CRN, 2014). These competing perceptions have left unanswered questions regarding the most appropriate training to provide that responds to the needs of service users operating in a formal institution, the needs and preferences of students as consumers of an education, and perhaps that offers benefit to the service users in terms of capacity building and personal development. Academic staff are required to produce a model balancing competing priorities that makes efficient use of a limited budget, recognises the user expertise, identifies appropriate support mechanisms and challenges the power structures within HE.

Regardless of whether training is or is not provided to service users as part of user involvement, there is agreement that service users should be paid fairly for their expertise (Gupta & Blewett, 2008; Higgens et al.; 2011, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006), reimbursed of any expenses, and that sufficient infrastructure be in place to ensure payments are timely, that individuals without bank accounts can be paid and payment does not impact negatively upon the receipt of benefits (SCIE, 2007, 2009, Dogra et al. 2008). This raises further questions for example; does the very fact that service users might be paid by the institution (similar to employer/employee relations) create empowerment, or promote an employment hierarchy? Equally the government allocated figure of £7500 per annum per UK undergraduate Social work programme, to cover a broad range of involvement opportunities, limits the number and frequency of service users and carers available. Despite an arguably low budget, and echoing the desire for social justice, the literature expands the debate to consider the rate of payment comparable to other 'experts' (Fleischman, 2010).

The discussions around financial considerations also consider the possibility that service users are unintentionally exploited during the involvement process (Gregor & Smith, 2009), and that attempts to soften the power of the 'oppressors' without consideration to the weakness of the 'oppressed' could be reframed or interpreted as 'false generosity' (Freire, 1996). (See theoretical insights, Chapter 3). For example, just because a service user agrees the financial reimbursement is sufficient, does not necessarily mean that it is, or on the contrary if a service user wished to participate on a voluntary basis when all other service users are being paid, could they assert their preference to work for free and experience the benefits of altruism?; Particularly in the light of research outlining a range of non-financial

incentives such as the experience of involvement and relationships that are often meaningful (Gupta & Blewett, 2008).

Academic staff are tasked with unpicking the complexity of empowerment and payments at the same time as having user involvement requirements largely prescribed to them, within the constraints of a finite annual budget. HEIs driven by recruitment targets may advocate the use of service users and carers during admissions and selection, limiting the finances available for involvement during teaching and learning activities and more creative co-construction. The issue of budgets and finances crosses over into considerations of diversity of representation as demand for resources must be considered in relation to users with complex needs such as the provision of interpreters, support staff, and travel where more able service users and carers may be cheaper. The extent to which academic staff can utilise a limited budget, achieve best practice, facilitate meaningful user involvement, and respond to contemporary pedagogies is a significant task. One which can be further complicated by a range of practical barriers including access to the venue, heavy fire doors, inappropriate seating and complex security systems that threaten partnerships (Branfield, 2007) and can consume part of the budget. The challenges for academic staff are sourcing accessible venues if their own are not appropriate and hoping that university centralised timetabling systems that they do not control can accommodate involvement opportunities that are flexible to promote inclusion. Otherwise, invitations for involvement are practically led by the time and place that meets the needs of the HEI.

So far, a review of literature has identified a range of benefits to both service users/carers and students from involvement opportunities as well as multiple challenges for academic staff resulting from competing, sometimes contradictory priorities. These include the provision of training without resultant professionalisation of service users and carers, maintaining diversity of representation, whilst simultaneously utilising smaller groups of service users and carers repeatedly to support the development of meaningful relationships, and ensuring payments are sufficient to recognise expertise of service users and carers, without exploitation, or negatively impacting service users and carers income from other sources. What is emerging is the recognition that academic staff do not always have the answers for such complexity nor the authority or ability to manage the involvement process in its entirety. This recognition lends itself to an examination of the context in which service users and carers' involvement is facilitated; that being the changing landscape of HE.

Power Relations Within the Changing Landscape of Higher Education

Running through the tensions is the recurring recognition of the impact of power, including the powerful University and the disempowered service user, and the necessity for academic staff to transfer power to service users to prevent tokenism, exploitation or anything deemed less than 'meaningful' involvement. It is possible that without critical attention to power, a situation can emerge where academics retain power to select service users and carers that fit their own professional agenda and make the logistical challenges of involvement as easy as possible for them to overcome. In contrast to this one might argue that academic staff mandated to facilitate involvement and tasked with navigating the organisational, financial and theoretical components of user involvement are themselves significantly disempowered in relation to the powerful, overarching HE institution and professional regulator. Whilst it is recognised that this is within a more privileged and powerful position than many service users and carers it is nevertheless from a position that lacks sufficient authority to achieve the transformative potential of effective involvement.

Within the literature we can observe parallels between the socio-political consumerism of user involvement with changes within the structure and delivery of HE (Lowes & Hulatt, 2013). Increasingly, educators are responding to the growing power of the student body, and an additional consideration is that when considering the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) definition of service user, students could now be considered users of an educational service. This extends the consideration of effective service users and carers' involvement to become a multi-faceted deliberation where partnerships are formed with service users *and* students in the construction of education and the consumption of a product. Furthermore, as students are increasingly positioned as consumers of an educational service - paying to receive the training offered by the university, they become priority customers of educational activities (Marzo-Navarro et al. 2005), in glonacal markets (Chan, 2018) and possibly competing stakeholders alongside service users and carers all of whom require and benefit from the delegation of power by academic staff to enable partnerships and the co construction of the education process (Healy, Flint & Harrington, 2014).

Furthermore, there is the simultaneous consideration for academics regarding the balancing of student learning gain with perceived student satisfaction, especially when the most impactful teaching and learning might not always be the most enjoyable or meet with

student expectation. For example, when empowerment, and self-directed autonomous learning approaches are met with expectations from students who wish to be taught in a traditional fashion (to 'receive expertise') and bring their own perceptions of what is value for money. It has been argued that the student evaluation has outgrown its remit, and become a less helpful tool that steers educational activity towards student satisfaction and away from quality learning outcomes (Johnson, 2000). Arguably performance measures could serve to thwart the intention to offer best practice academic response to the profession's and students' learning needs, the same needs which must be aligned with meaningful service user involvement. Yet the power to resist the temptation to prioritise student satisfaction over perhaps, learning that may feel difficult but yield better learning gains, is difficult and limited in that student satisfaction has a relationship with current and future income, so ultimately job security. Furthermore, this positioning of students as consumers within the range of quality assurance mechanisms means that service users and carers bring with them 'risks' to staff, as a result of managerial scrutiny - and often student expectations differ greatly from University intention (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013).

This risk must be attended to whilst meeting the expectations of employers wanting students ready with the skills to embrace practice learning, the values to promote partnership, and the boundaries and authority to operate professionally. All these 'partnerships' can experience fluctuations as they are forged within the workforce of HE, an organisation with fluid characteristics and internal tensions relating to the period in which it exists (Chan, 2018). Despite this environment it is the task of the academics to find an equilibrium that affords students an appropriate amount of professional knowledge, user expertise, theoretical debate and practice experience. It is clear that these considerations involve the complex deliberation of competing needs, agendas and priorities, set within an environment that is impacted by politics, policy and organisational changes.

To actualise the benefits of service user and carer involvement to students and service users and carers, academic staff are required to transfer some control over programme structures and content to service users and carers in a way that empowers them as partners within it, and enhances the learning experience/gain for students. However, the extent to which academic staff feel able to transfer power over elements of teaching, on a validated programme with professional and academic requirements, when they themselves retain a substantial amount of the responsibility for its success, is arguably limited. This process

requires social work educators to possess talent in the management and negotiation of multiple classroom power dynamics, from empowering service users and carers during involvement, as well as empowering students to become autonomous adult learners, who upon qualifying become autonomous professionals capable of empowering others.

The learning environment is regulated by multiple professional standards and requirements from the Higher Educational Academy (HEA), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and competition and recognition fuelled by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and National Student Survey (NSS), as well as the fluid grey area of continuing political and theoretical debates concerning the profession of social work, and the standards, organisation and delivery of its education (Department for Education, 2014). From a teaching perspective it is argued that an authentic student-centred approach is best achieved through the transfer of power to students enabling them to take the lead (Campbell, 2015). Just as service users and carers are required to contribute to education so too are students, as the traditional education paradigms, relying on objective knowledge and expert power, are replaced with contemporary learning environments that emphasise autonomous learning, the co-construction of knowledge, learning partnerships, flipped classrooms and the student voice (Healy, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Esland, 1971). Socio-politically led consumerism has contributed to a new power imbalance with institutions attempting to meet consumer demands as opposed to offering purely what they consider most appropriate in terms of best professional interests, reducing authority and equalising the power balance (Lowes & Hulatt, 2013). Service user power increases with demand and students can 'shop elsewhere', and prolonged student dissatisfaction can result in course or institution transfer.

It would appear from the literature that any attempt to understand the complexity of user involvement must give attention to the complexity of power relations and recognise that service users and carers' involvement does not operate in a vacuum. Western social work education is influenced by politics, policies and money and delivered through a HE system that is influenced by the same. Within this organisation are teaching environments with fluctuating power dynamics, responding to - and shaping the contemporary landscape. This is more so significant in education as power is perceived as a key element of the culture of pedagogy (Freire 1996), and the maintenance of power is of importance for teachers and has implications for the involvement of service users and carers in terms of the threat they may

represent to teachers' power and professional identity (Felton & Stickley 2004; O'Flynn & Britten, 2006). Traditionally in HE it is the norms and values of the dominant group (Academics and Professionals) that define the curriculum, gate keep the intake and influence the learning gain, which suggests that the transfer of power to service users and students poses threat to the structure and the standing of the professionals within it. In contemporary HE these issues of authority, autonomy and empowerment are increasingly relevant from multiple perspectives, in light of the range of emerging tensions at play in the 'academic, service user, student' power triad.

Arguably, the HE climate is one than affords academic staff less power than previously whilst maintaining expectations that any power they have is shared. Student satisfaction, and the power this yields, becomes a key consideration within user involvement initiatives despite argument that there is little empirical evidence that student satisfaction equates to learning gain, or reliable measures to suggest service users and carers' involvement improves long-term outcomes for students in terms of competencies (Felton & Stickley, 2004; Robinson & Webber, 2013).

In terms of service user involvement, the task for academic staff becomes one of empowering and forming partnerships with two groups (service users and carers, and students), whilst maintaining and facilitating relationships and appropriate power relations between them both. With backgrounds in professional social work this may pose challenges for some academics as observations in professional education across a range of helping professions suggest that nurses are unable to empower others, as they themselves as a profession are disempowered (Gott & O'Brien, 1991; Felton & Stickley, 2004; Hanson & Mitchell, 2001) and social workers do not use authority sufficiently or effectively and have often transferred from practice where they are micro-managed and constrained by bureaucratic systems (Friedson, 2001). Furthermore, additional characteristics of helping professions such as gender can lead to oppression (Dominelli, 2002). The notion of educators being disempowered has faced rejection (Skeleton, 1994) with responses that such debate is a device to reinforce the professionals' position. Yet arguably it seems essential that any attempts to offer best practice partnerships with service users and carers in social work education requires further inquiry into the real-life experiences of power exchange between students, institutions, services users and academic staff.

Less attention is paid to the impact of user involvement in education upon professional power in social work than comparable professions, an example of which being mental health nursing (Felton & Stickley, 2004). Given the privileged position held by academics and the concept of empowering service users as central to the professional value base, it is appropriate that the focus is on enhancing service users and carers' power. It is accepted that a range of factors such as language differential and professional status, make academics more powerful and maintain distance between themselves and users of services (Towle et al. 2016) yet equally the power held by academics makes them appropriately placed to facilitate involvement. However, it seems logical that insufficient attention to power from all stakeholder perspectives runs the risk of enabling tokenism or paying lip service to the service user involvement process, without sufficient fore or after-thought (Ocloo & Matthews, 2016). One might argue that the more complex power fluctuations within contemporary HE, and the positioning of user involvement as a requirement of programme validation no longer enable those less motivated to opt out. The enforcement means those who do not identify with or embody the power of the academic role, and who might seek to opt out of the complexity of contradictory discourse, relying on placements as the opportunity to learn from and with service users, can no longer do so. This perhaps leading to service user and carer involvement initiatives 'good enough' to meet validation requirements, as opposed to true partnership opportunities. It is further suggested that Academic staff may require training to boost their own confidence, deal with these challenges and facilitate involvement in a non-tokenistic way (Anghel & Ramon, 2009; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006). All of this placing further resource demands upon finite budgets.

This review of literature has uncovered a complex picture of user involvement in social work education. One that relies upon agreed benefits of involvement for service users and carers and students in the short term but with little in the way of evidence that the benefits extend beyond this to impact service provision or the structures in society that disenfranchise. The literature recognises real challenges in measuring outputs or outcomes and simultaneously grapples with a range of competing priorities and tensions within the process itself. Furthermore, an evaluation of the changing nature of HE delivery, with an examination of the complexity of power differentials and necessity to empower students and service users, might lead one to expect an abundance of literature adopting a critical perspective. However,

despite the inherent challenges in user involvement there is very little research that adopts a critical stance or illuminates the voices of academic staff that have negative views.

Critical Perspectives

In relation to this review of literature the very small number of critical writings that were identified were critiques focused on the underpinning political discourse. Cowden and Singh (2007) utilise a critical historical analysis of the development of the user involvement discourse to examine whether service user involvement is best understood as friend, foe or fetish. They argue that New Labour through a sophisticated sleight of hand seized upon the progressive critiques of welfare from individuals on the margins of society and used these as a basis for advancing neoliberal ideals of welfare reform, promoting independence from the state, 'user knows best' narratives, empowerment and of course, choice. It is noted that user involvement and expertise, empowerment and choice emerge from an era where a mixed economy of welfare offers opportunities to change that are acceptable to public opinion (George & Wilding, 1994) whilst simultaneously increasing the burden of complex social problems on families - and often disproportionately women (Roper, et al. 2014). The discussion extends to consider definitions of users' involvement and their limitations in relation to power, (questioning whether for example a mental health patient could actually make a choice regarding electroconvulsive therapy, or whether or not a child choose if they are placed into care) describing the notions of 'user voice' as a fetish that sits uncomfortably alongside the reality that social workers will 'impose their professional understandings and power when the time is right to do so' (Cowden & Singh, 2007, p. 15).

In a similar vein Carey (2009) assesses the consequences and impact of seemingly widespread, constructive and altruistic service user and carer participation within social work with questions regarding the regular and prominent claims made about its benefits, and doubts regarding the overall philosophy and its apparent achievements. Underpinning this critique is an examination of the way hegemony, the process by which governing powers win consent to rule from those it subjugates (Gramci, 1971), can take a variety of seductive and appealingly interactive forms to encourage empathy and even partially unite with counter-hegemonic forces as a mirage that conceals very different agendas. It is argued that service user and carer involvement fits this model as on the surface it delivers participation, engagement, choice and control though the adoption of 'bottom up' language whilst concealing an arguably 'top down' moral underclass discourse, where disenfranchised are

offered redemption though reintegration with the capitalist free-market or by participating in training, research, or user involvement. Underpinning personalisation is the emphasis on lack of reliance on the state and a failure to acknowledge structural causes of inequality on clients. A number of ethical concerns are incorporated into the service user and carer involvement hegemony including the supremacy of market models of welfare and their ideological role in the appropriation of participation, the structural and cultural obstacles that result in superficial forms of participation, the lack of tangible support to enable implementation of the extensive participation rhetoric, the tendency of professionals to impose their own interests and use language that extends personal autonomy and power at a time where there is a reduction in both, and the organisation constraints in terms of resources and staff that make sincere participation almost unworkable. Furthermore, it is argued that in recent years, neoliberalism has become a contested term across a range of academic disciplines (Dunn, 2017) that is perhaps incompatible with the social work profession, that is charged with promoting the 'empowerment and liberation of people', with the principle of 'social justice' being foregrounded (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). Such is the impact of neoliberalism it is argued that as a 'hegemonic project, neoliberalism is finished; it may retain its capacity to dominate, but it has lost its ability to persuade' (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 222).

What we are seeing here is critical perspectives of user involvement that arise from the context within which it takes place, i.e. contemporary UK. If we take the same approach and consider a report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur, we discover that 14 million people in the UK (a fifth of the population) live in poverty. Four million of these are more than 50% below the poverty line; between 1 and 1.5 million are destitute, unable to afford essentials. When thinking about the standard of living for many vulnerable members of society (potential or actual service users), the Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts a 7% rise in child poverty between 2015 and 2022, and various sources predict child poverty rates of as high as 40%. For almost one in every two children to be poor in twenty-first century Britain is 'not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one' (Alston, 2018, p. 1). For many these figures are a direct consequence of political and economic choices governed by neoliberal rationality (Marthinsen et al. 2019) that embed 'the reconfiguration of the state in order to better serve the interests of capital; new patterns of income and wealth distribution to benefit the rich and super-rich; insecurity and

precariousness; the rise in mass incarceration; a strategic pragmatism' (Garrett, 2018, p. 185).

Carey (2009) poses some interesting questions that those involved in facilitating service users and carers' involvement should be asking if service users and carers' involvement is actually counterproductive due to its serving of the quasi-market of social work, whether participation does at all confront and change inequitable social structures, and even whether practitioners should stop to consider if service user and carer involvement is in fact an institutionalised hegemony that should be treated with scepticism - or rejected on moral grounds. Whilst it is internationally accepted on philosophical and practical grounds that service user involvement is beneficial in all aspects of care (Beckett, Maynard & Jordan, 2017, Doel & Shardlow, 2017) and hence in the development of educative processes in social work programmes; echoing with my own desire to look below the surface of how service user involvement is regarded and discussed by academics, McLaughlin (2010) affirms the need for 'honest' service user research, and discusses the need for service user involvement to retain its honesty, both avoiding tokenism or being seen as a panacea. He further discusses that if service user research is to be effective, then a critical and sceptical attitude is required to ensure service user involvement remains honest and continues to develop.

Conclusion

This literature review has uncovered an abundance of literature in support of the benefits of user involvement. Within this emerges a range of competing priorities and opposing tensions that academic staff are required to navigate within changing complex HE environments.
It is also suggested that there is an absence of reliable methods for measuring the impact of user involvement in the short and long term as well as debate regarding what it is that should be measured. Furthermore, most research into user involvement is originates from single institutions who are perhaps most enthusiastic (Chambers & Hickey, 2012) implying a gap in the perspective available. To a lesser extent, but more relevant to this study there is critical commentary regarding the political ideology of neoliberalism and underpinning theory that supports, promotes and mandates user involvement. In light of all this, it is argued that what

is missing are the voices of academic staff that are actively involved in facilitating service users and carers' involvement. Furthermore, the observed imbalance of critical voices might offer a valuable avenue of exploration. This thesis theorises that thoughts and reflections upon service user and carer involvement from academic staff remain generally supportive despite recognition of the challenges and lack of evidence to support it and is interested to evaluate further whether the accepted privilege of the professional position limits the extent to which we hear critical commentary. Equally one could assume that the social work value base and empathy with and for service users limits the extent to which academic staff speak freely of these challenges or even question the inherent worth of this activity in light of its aspirations resulting in conduct consistent with the aforementioned iceberg analogy i.e. public professional expression may differ from hidden personal expression.

It is this, the possibility of resistance to user involvement and/or negative perceptions of its value, which are of interest to this study. The following chapter outlines the theoretical insights drawn upon to inform this study aimed at uncovering lesser-heard academic perspectives in HE.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter is intended to make clear to the reader the rationale for the theoretical insights that inform this study, these being Freire's (1972) Pedagogy of the Oppressed and a range of psychosocial considerations including the interview context (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008) emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012), and defence mechanisms (Klein in Hollway and Jefferson, 2013) that can help inform the research methods. I will further relate these to my position as researcher and to the topic. The theoretical insights selected reflect both the role of social work education in advancing the values of social work and the potential challenges that academic staff might encounter when being asked to share views about involvement that counter the professional value base. Noticing how my attention was drawn to issues of power evolving from the literature review and thinking about service user involvement as a mechanism for social change within HE (that may or may not reinforce oppression in society) led me to consider critical pedagogy as a lens through which to frame this research. As a lecturer initially in social work and later in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion more broadly, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA), I have for much of my career in HE drawn upon critical pedagogy to inform my practice and engage in teaching, learning and assessment practices that attempt to empower learners, raise awareness of issues of social justice and promote equality of opportunity across the student body. As an educator that might adopt a Marxist lens, my practice already aligns to a set of values and discusses 'the free self-determination of the individual, an equitable society, the end of exploitation, and deepening possibilities for public participation in shaping collective choices' (Horton, 2017, p. 2026). Therefore, as the primary instrument of this research (Snow et al. 2006), it feels congruent to engage in this Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) utilising critical and emancipatory perspectives.

I also arrived at this research as a social worker aware of the often-complex interplay between socially constructed and psychological responses that shape individual beliefs, emotions and behaviours. In addition to critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972), psychosocial thinking (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; Hochschild, 2012) can inform the understanding of the potential range of interpersonal processes that impact the candidates' expressions when asked to share both positive and negative views about something that is 'predominantly accepted' as positive. Hence this dual lens perhaps also resonating with the eclectic mix of theoretical viewpoints that underpin perspectives in education and social work.

This research interrogates academics' perceptions of service user and carer involvement within the social work education environment that embraces, and cannot be separated from, the intrinsic values of social work that put service users and carers at the heart of professional activity. One aim and desired outcome of user involvement is to support the development of better-informed professionals who are able to practice the values of social justice and promote better outcomes for service users and carers. This prompts questions about not only what and how teaching and learning occurs, but also acknowledges the values and philosophies underpinning HE itself. The work of Paulo Freire (1921-1997) maintains that for pedagogy to be truly liberating (hence reflecting social work values), it cannot remain distant from the oppressed (in this instance, service users and carers for example) by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors (academics, professionals etc.). Importantly, that they have a part to play in their own processes and 'must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption'. (Freire, 1972, p. 39). It is not the intention to investigate Freire's work in its entirety but instead consider his views and discussions within his seminal work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1972) as a useful framework for analysis. Freire was an educator, philosopher and political activist born in 1921 in one of the poorest regions of Brazil. His writings are pertinent and appropriate in that my research includes a discussion regarding a section of society that are potentially disempowered, for many different reasons and in many different ways, within a landscape where the social work system seeks to empower service users and carers either through practice that is empowering or through opportunities to shape the education of future social workers. Freire's writing reflects his concerns regarding the impact of poverty and his attempts to understand the silence of working classes that condemned them to passivity, with an internalised dehumanised identity under the oppression of a dominant minority (Ledwith, 2016). Below is an outline of Freire's key ideas.

Dehumanisation Model

Freire's (1972) ideas initially offer the notion of the central problem of humankind, that being: in the search for affirmation of our identities we are interrupted by systems of oppression that exploit and do violence to oppressed people. He argues that a key way in which people without power are marginalised is through a process in which oppressors pathologise their behaviour and their human nature is constructed in a distorted way through what he describes as processes of indoctrination, manipulation and 'dominated

consciousness' (Hatton, 2018). Fundamental to Freire's ideas is that people become dehumanised when their consciousness is submerged by an oppressive reality. An example of this might be class structures - citizenship based on economic contributions (Ixer, 2006) or being labelled as 'disabled', a 'Service User' or 'deviant' from a society that has constructed these labels and is then unable to accommodate those outside of what it considers normative, able or mainstream.

Oppressor/Oppressed Model

Freire (1972) divides humankind into binary categories: the oppressors and the oppressed and outlines how this system of inequality impacts the consciousness of both with oppressors dehumanising others to objects of possession, and the oppressed becoming divided, separated and alienated from each other in order to eventually view their oppressors as good. This is of great interest to me as a student whose first profession was social work as I brought to the study my own observations and awareness of the evidence that service users and carers continued to be disempowered and/or oppressed as a result of structural inequalities in society and I had empathy for the critiques that despite devolved power from the state, social workers too cannot always embody or transfer that power to effectively empower themselves or others (Friedson, 2001; Dominelli, 2002).

The Banking Model

Freire critiques traditional education systems that he termed the 'banking model' (1972, p. 52) where he suggests that a traditional hierarchical relationship between teacher and student allows teachers to deposit information into the mind of students for memorisation and recall that teaches them to adapt to and prepare for an oppressive world rather than to critically evaluate it and fight for liberation. Using this lens, one might question whether preparing social work students to embody and implement dramatic political policy shifts in social work rather than empowering them to campaign against them (Parton, 2014) is an example of the banking model. This premise sets the context for his work which is the proposal of a humanising education system or 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' that offers liberation through 'dialogue' (Freire, 1972, p. 69) and 'Conscientization' (Freire, 1972, p. 18).

Conscientization Model

"Conscientization" translated as "critical consciousness" to Freire is the process through which people (individually or collectively) learn about the social and political contradictions of their life and are empowered, by constructing and using their own understanding of reality, to engage in praxis (transferring thought to action) to transform it (Reason & Torbet, 2001; Wallestein & Duran, 2008). Academics' perceptions of service user and carer involvement is a clear area where Freire's philosophy is important - on a basic level of trying to understand the perceptions of academic staff when they approach the process of involving service users and carers in their teaching, which again will be affected not only by their experiences in the classroom, and their views, and the extent to which they are aware of their own oppression and experience of critical consciousness.

Further rationale for considering Freire within this research is that philosophical groundwork is an important and essential prerequisite for research coherence and integrity (Sanders, 2020). Freire's perspectives are aligned to a constructivist research paradigm such as this (see Chapter Four: Methodology) as his pedagogy emphasises that educators should account for their students' own perceptions of reality, as people who can perceive history for themselves, in conjunction with their current perceptions of reality and as people, who are distinct from animals, who can imagine and shape the future. For Freire, the freedom to critically change the world requires all people to understand how reality is shaped, particularly in relation to history, as history is shaped by dominant values and themes that are presented within an education system - a system that presents history as factual and static. Thus it is appropriate to think about how HE academics approach teaching tasks such as service user and carer involvement and whether this is through dialogue that promotes the co construction of knowledge and critical consciousness.

Furthermore, Freire's attention to naming the world and recognising history as fluid is of great interest to critical scholars (Taylor, 1993; Torres, 1993; Smith, 2002) and resonates with individuals such as me who approach this research with recognition that much of UK history has been distorted through colonial curriculums that eradicate a range of alternative perspectives and indigenous knowledges and arguably overlook generations of oppression, exploitation, genocide and suffering (Tyson, 2015; Finley & Cooper, 2020; Kester, 2020). The current efforts to correct our distorted curriculums, the 'Decolonising' movement, adds

further weight to the fundamental concept of mobilising the voices of peoples' own life experiences, people who have been marginalised, to effect change in Social Work.

Collective Empowerment Model

Freire's critical pedagogy centres around a collective empowering process, that frees both the oppressors and the oppressed, through 'problem posing' learning that enables teachers and students to step back and question everyday life, identify structures within society that disempower, discriminate and disadvantage, and develop new knowledge as equals that help recreate a history that is fluid and can inform future changes and action. Empowerment practices and working alongside people are important educational activities as only through critical consciousness can people achieve liberation. The concept of empowerment cannot hence be removed from the dialogue regarding the complexities of involving service users and carers in their modules. Freire asserts that collective empowerment is achieved through shared dialogue, dialogue he regards as an act of love, humility and faith in humanity. Importantly in relation to this study it is only when both the educatees and the educators are problematised that social change can occur. This raises questions as to the extent to which service users involved in education gain critical consciousness.

False/True Generosity Model

False generosity for me is a vital concept when thinking about user involvement as my research directly interrogates not only academics' perceptions but raises questions regarding the purpose and propriety of the activity. Freire argues that institutions and oppressive structures can never create real lasting change, but individuals within them can become 'radical' i.e. recognise their own contribution to oppressive structures and commit to working alongside the oppressed in order to change them. Fundamental to Freire's views is that oppressed people can obtain freedom from their oppression as they become aware that they are human beings who can not only discern their reality but transcend it, both in the theoretical context and, eventually, in the practical context (Harris, 2011). However, this is only if the struggle for liberation is led by them. Freire (1996) distinguishes between what he terms 'False generosity' and 'True generosity' (p.26); false generosity being charity that targets the symptoms of an unjust society (to relieve the guilt of the oppressors) which whilst may help relieve suffering from those who receive it, does nothing to change the underlying causes.

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the cause, which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands-whether of individual or entire peoples- need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world (Freire, 1996, p. 27).

False generosity might be a lens through which to view service user involvement initiatives that claim to improve services for people on the margins of society without any evidence that systemic societal barriers are lessened. Examples of false generosity might be aid work in underdeveloped nations which relieves hunger and disease but does not tackle the country's domination/exploitation or perhaps knowing that psychological therapies or drug rehabilitation services are not available to help parents resolve their existing challenges (challenges rooted in childhood trauma and birth disadvantage) yet nonetheless feeling a sense of altruism having been able to obtain white goods on their behalf from a local charity.

This concept then seems to me to be directly linked with the thinking that underpins the research questions. The work of Freire also feels relevant to me as reflecting upon my own professional experiences I can identify my own role as an oppressor whose desire to fit within professional and organisational structures led me to unknowingly contribute to an oppressive system that has labelled and marginalised service users and led to my undertaking in false generosity. This personal experience provides insight perhaps into how I might view the data gleaned from the research task and perhaps to some extent this research represents my own critical consciousness in relation to user involvement. For example, arguably service users and carers continue to be dehumanised in Freireian terms which raises questions regarding the possibility that user involvement itself is 'false generosity' and whether it is in fact a system which mirrors the practice realities and offers short term relief with addressing the causes of oppression.

Freire condemns the way oppressors attempt to maintain an oppressive system through anti-'dialogical action' (1972, p. 69) often using 'divide and rule' (1972, p. 122) to keep divisions and rifts among oppressed people to stop them from organising together. Equally government actions such as small community projects continue to serve the separation of one area from another preventing people from seeing how their problems are connected more broadly. If through critical consciousness and dialogue oppressed people understand their conditions and demand change, Freire points to forms of 'manipulation' (p. 128) that give an illusion of change and power exchange. One of these manipulation efforts he terms

'pacts' (1972, p. 128), formal agreements which can mislead the oppressed into believing that both groups are co-operating for social change. One might view the formal requirement of service user and carer involvement in social work education as a response to decades of service user campaigns, as a pact that gives an illusion of the commitment of social change with little evidence to date that individuals lives are improving.

Most importantly, considering Freire's concepts helps illuminate the power inherent in education, and offers insight into how hegemony is created and oppression maintained (Gibbons, 2016). Many contemporary writings concern the debate regarding the contribution of HE in the context of increasing social inequalities in the western world (Kromydas, 2017) and Freire's work continues to inform emancipatory education and community development across the globe (Sanders, 2020). However, it is not without critique and limitation. The work of Freire has received criticism for his oversimplification and binary views that one is either with the oppressed or against them (Simpson & McMillan, 2008), and Foucault (2020) reminds us that power operates in a complex way and that we need to interrogate our understanding of power at macro and micro levels. He argues that the problems that need addressing in terms of power take decades of 'grass roots' level work that introduce modifications that at least afford the right to speech, and political imaginings. This resonates with me as an experienced lecturer, and in the review of literature it is recognised that academic staff, and universities as institutions are themselves being impacted by the larger local, national and global structural forces that have changed the shape of HE. It is further argued that whilst Freire's initial points of educational focus might be non-formal, the educational encounters he explores and critiques remain formal (Torres, 1993), and despite claims of liberatory educational practices, his model remains vulnerable to the banking system as Freireian education can involve the integration of multiple ideas and values under the guise of problem solving (Smith, 2002).

It was during the groundwork for this research and as I developed my thinking around the relationship that the research might have with Freireian concepts that questions arose regarding the process of "critical consciousness" and whether his view of human nature foregrounded in cognitive rationality (Sanders, 2020) offered sufficient a lens through which to view the actions and perceptions of individuals. Freire recognises that internalised oppression can shape the identity of individuals and communities i.e. the oppressed, with some of his subjects believing they are dependent on their oppressors (1972, p. 44), similar in

worth to that of animal kind and furthermore that despite dialogue and critical consciousness the oppressed can fear change and freedom because it requires them to reject internalised ideals and behaviours (1972, p. 47). Freire introduces the lens of psychoanalysis as a way to view the false charity as a mechanism in which to reduce oppressors' guilt and this was of great interest to this research, that focuses on the thoughts and feelings of academic staff. As a student counsellor, social worker and trained Mediator I have been introduced to a multitude of theories rooted in psychology that give me insight into a range of understandings as to why the spoken word, or act may differ from congruent expression, and the range of underlying motivations, conscious or otherwise that impact expression.

Psychosocial perspectives

Building upon this and guided by Freire's notion of false generosity as a mechanism though which to relieve feelings of guilt, and the recognition within this research that structural forces that can shape perceptions and identities of members of society in ways that can advance or reduce autonomy, my attention was drawn to a range of complimentary research that explores the impact of psychology of emotions and expression, that are unique to each individual (Beck, 1963). Consistent with similar research frameworks such as phenomenology, I recognised that human nature dictates that we can arrive at any particular event complete with all of our own individual (unconscious processes underpinning our) fears, beliefs, ideas, biases etc. In effect individuals view each situation through a set of filters that underpin and shape our perception of that situation and hence importantly - any response we might offer in exchange (Spinelli, 2005).

Mishler's extensive consideration of interviewing in research concluded that respondents' meanings need to be understood in relation to circumstances (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p. 297). The authors Hollway and Jefferson (2013) further identify that decontextualisation of the interview results in respondents' answers being disconnected from essential socio-cultural grounds of meaning. This raises the possibility of participants being influenced to answer in ways consistent with their profession rather than themselves. For example, in HE settings, perhaps a desire to be seen to be 'on board' with the value base and be 'politically correct' may lead to consciously or unconsciously censoring their answers when questioned. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) shed further light on the challenges of participant responses, drawn from qualitative research with adults in relation to fear of crime and the disproportionate growth of fear compared to the actual recorded crime rate. They start from

the position that the idea that qualitative research interviews really can 'tell it like it is' (p.9) is flawed and takes for granted that theories of communication stress and language do not play a part in mediating the responses; the meaning of the research is interpreted and understood joint by both researcher and participant, and the participant is knowledgeable about their own experiences and can capture them verbally, etc. Relative to qualitative research generally is the assumption that participants frame their responses with models of social knowledge, which in the case of this research is the professional and political agenda regarding user involvement.

In addition is the inherent defining principle in psychotherapy, the existence of a separate and discreet mental processing system, the 'unconscious' (Freud, 1915) as well as a range of important defence mechanisms that operate to mitigate individual experiences of anxiety (Freud, 1894; 1896; Freud, 1937). Klein also proposes that 'the most primitive defences against anxiety are intersubjective, that is, they come into play in relations between people' (in Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p. 297). Hence potential for being unconsciously defended is a fundamental position in psychoanalytic theory: that whilst humans perceive threats to self, and experience anxiety, unconscious defences against such anxiety can be mobilised and these unconscious processes are seen as a significant influence on people's actions, lives and relations. Further, it means that 'if memories of events provoke anxiety, they may be either forgotten or recalled in a modified, more acceptable fashion' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008, p. 299).

Alternatively, defensive processes may be completely conscious, and the subject chooses to adapt their answer due to having a particular emotional and cognitive response to being asked a particular question. Examples of this might be a vulnerable service user who relies on user involvement activities for social contact being asked to comment on their involvement in a project, adjusting their response for fear that if critical, they may be uninvited to participate again. Or a lecturer who struggles to make service user and carer involvement meaningful but wants to remain 'politically correct' so provides a disproportionately positive response in relation to the experience and its perceived value. Equally, social work and social work research can be emotive and there is shared understanding that emotions explain many defence mechanisms in intercommunications (Freud, 1894; Spinelli, 2005; Plutchik, Kellerman & Conte, 1979). Many anthropological, social and clinical research studies' research into expressive behaviour and interpersonal communications has focused on

emotion (Leventhal & Leventhal, 1980). In addition to this, the researcher is aware that the participants in this study (social workers and academic staff) may be well versed in the practice of 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 2012) either through work with service users or with students.

Emotional labour is defined as the effort involved in work that entails face-to-face contact with the public, where the worker is required to produce an emotional state in another and at the same time regulate their own emotions, in accordance with the 'feelings rules' of the employing organisation (Zhao et al. 2020). Hochschild coined 'emotional labour' in her (1983) book, 'The Managed Heart' describing emotional labour as having to 'induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others'. This may entail the suppression of emotions within a professional that are deemed undesirable, for example frustration, anger, sadness, and inducing those that are expected or demanded such as calmness and acceptance (Leeson, 2010).

Hence in addition to the considerations of power in relation to this study, perhaps fear of negative reprisal for sharing resistance to user involvement might influence subjects' responses or prompt a response consistent with emotional labour where personal feelings or emotions are suppressed. Furthermore, a helpful starting point is recognition that social workers may experience a variety of emotions during everyday practice that are managed and filtered through a variety of organisational, professional and personal processes (Walker et al. 2019). In this study this feels of paramount importance as a range of authors argue that without thinking about participant congruence during the design of the research, that the trustworthiness of the data is compromised (Selvini Palazzoli et al. 1980a; Hollway & Jefferson, 2008).

This chapter has presented the rationale for utilising critical pedagogy as a lens through which to frame this research exploring the role of HE, specifically social work education, in unintentionally reinforcing oppression in societies through HE. It considers the way in which service user and carer involvement could be interpreted as a 'pact' in light of Freire's ideas and its potential to operate as a process of 'true generosity' (Freire, 1972), and whether to some extent it mirrors the practice realities of social work in that attempts can often be tokenistic with little evidence of long term structural change. Of further interest are the psychosocial perspectives that offer cause to consider if candidates' responses might be

impacted by conscious and unconscious defence mechanisms due to the environment within which the research occurs and the inherent power imbalance when asked to share both positive and negative views about something that is 'predominantly accepted' as positive and aligned to their professional identify and values. This resulting in the aforementioned iceberg analogy of above and below surface behaviours and expression.

For me as a researcher the challenge became one of freeing the participant from pre-existing influence without imposing my own alternative one. In other words, ensuring that participants feel safe enough to be congruent without forcing expressions of resistance that might not otherwise be felt by the participant. In order to promote a research environment that promoted congruent free expression, it was again necessary to draw upon a range of social work, counselling, mediation, and education professional skills that might create safety, reduce unconscious defences and emotional labour and allow for congruent free expression. The following chapter outlines how this was approached in the methodology for this research.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This research adopts an insider approach as I am conducting research within a group of academic staff on social work programmes of which I am a member (Mercer, 2007). This chapter introduces the context of education and social work research and provides the rationale for the choice of methodology and research methods. This chapter explores the social construction of social work, and defends the constructivist epistemology and ontology, before justifying and outlining the qualitative methods. The chapter makes clear the rationale for the unstructured interviews with academic staff, the rationale behind the selected interview techniques that promote free expression and offers explicit description of the sampling strategy and data analysis before attending to the ethical considerations.

Research Context

Initially, it is simple to view this research in the category of social work education as it is being conducted as part of a Doctorate in Education and concerns the perception of a process within an education system designed to improve the education of social workers. However, the reality is that this research spans both the practice of education and the practice of social work, as research participants are both educators and social workers and have a dual focus of delivering high quality education that simultaneously meets the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements for the social work profession. The professions of both social work and education between them span a multitude of disciplines, and incorporate into their functions multiple aims, perspectives and intended outcomes both to individuals, communities, and society. It is accepted that professional social work values are not limited to the actions of social work and must extend to include education, research and evaluation (Shannon, 2013). It is suggested that social workers are often characterised as ambivalent about the necessity of conducting research (Shannon, 2013) perhaps because of the complex multi-disciplinary knowledge base underpinning social work, making it difficult to situate (Cooper, 2001).

There have been decades of questioning and critiquing of the traditional research approaches (Depoy, Hartman & Haslett, 1999) to find methods best aligned with social work as a profession that 'promotes social justice and social change, with, and on behalf of clients' (NASW, 2008, p. 1). Previously it has been argued that attempts for social work to establish approaches to inquiry that are rooted in the values of the profession and respond to the

realities of practice have failed (Johnson, 1995) with agreement that social work must get better at establishing value-focused models of knowledge development that purposefully address power, people, and praxis (Finn, 1994; Shannon, 2013). Hence the link between research and practice are strengthened as emphasis is placed upon evidence informed practice (EIP) as a model that incorporates best available research evidence, service users' needs and preferences and theory into clinical decision-making and professional education (Dodd & Savage, 2016).

Of equal relevance is education or pedagogic research which is concerned broadly with the theory and practice of education including student learning, teaching methods, teacher training, and classroom dynamics (Kincheloe, 2004). Similar to social workers, educators and educator researchers draw upon a broad range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy for their craft and research methods (Scott & Usher, 2002) and recognise that pedagogies can vary greatly as they reflect the cultural, social and political context from which they emerge (Li, 2012). Increasingly, theories of pedagogy identify the student as the agent of learning with the educator occupying the role of facilitator, and the necessity for educators to recognise and respond to diversity through differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014). Here we see parallels with social work practice where services users are recognised as experts of their own lives and there is the fundamental necessity for social workers to respond in practice to the diverse needs of individuals. In the same way social work is attempting to embed EIP, HE is paying close attention to the growing emphasis on research informed teaching and the evidence that suggests that positive interplay between teaching and research promotes excellence, and that treating students as co-researchers offers many benefits to students, staff and HEIs as a whole (Burgum & Stoakes, 2016).

Of importance to this research is that the requirement of user involvement in education of health and care professions was intended to reinforce the importance of service user and carer involvement and ensure that services and education programmes benefit from user expertise whilst services and professionals become better equipped to respond to the needs of the people they serve (Department of Health, 2002; General Social Care Council, 2005). Many of these developments are being mirrored within HEIs generally where students are increasingly partners in the co-construction of the learning environment (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felton, 2014) and Universities are required to prepare students with the knowledge, skills

and values ready to meet workforce demands and participate in global economy (Spellings Commission, 2006). However, as explored in the literature review, the parallels are not always positive as across both professions there are comparable concerns that HE has shifted from a public good, to a neoliberal corporate industry with economic goals and market orientated values (Chan, 2016), and that the organisation of social work is uncritically incorporating neoliberal values linked to social capital, individualism, consumerism and market choice (Gray, 2018). It is within the context of these social and educational institutions that the research is taking place, where the benefits of user involvement in education of social workers are claimed as a range of benefits to service users and carers, the enhancement of learning, and skills acquisition for students, and longer term cultural and attitudinal shifts that produce informed effective social workers (Chambers & Hickey, 2012).

Research Paradigm

Methodology can be understood as the research process in its entirety including the overall research aims, the underpinning philosophical and theoretical assumptions and the methods for data collection and analysis (Richardson, & St Pierre, 2005). The selection of the research methodology depends upon the paradigm that guides the research activity (Tuli, 2010), explained as a set of beliefs that frame the research and direct the way in which it is carried out. Specifically, these beliefs include the nature and reality of humanity (ontology), the theory of knowledge that informs research (epistemology), and how that knowledge can be gained (methodology).

This research utilises Constructivist Ontology and Epistemology, Qualitative Methodology and a Flexible, Naturalistic Design and will now discuss these in turn.

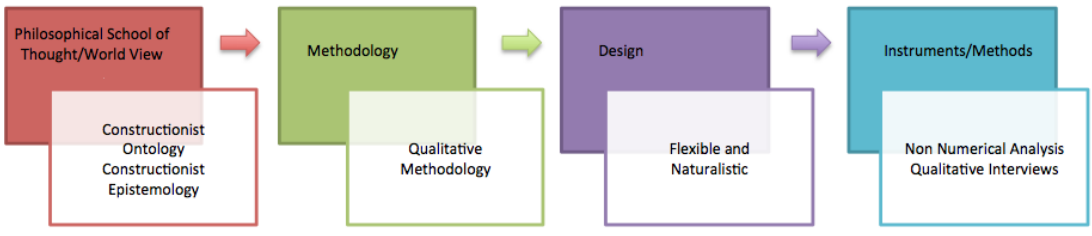

Figure 1: Research Methodology

The critical epistemological debate impacting the social sciences occurs between two main contrasting positivist and constructivist paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Epistemology poses questions including 'what counts as knowledge, how do we know what we know, and, what is the relationship between the knower and what is known'? (Tuli, 2010, p. 99). Positivists answer these with the view of knowledge as empirical facts that exist separately from the personal ideas and thoughts of the researcher that can be gleaned through precise empirical observations. This positivist framework maintains that reliable, predictable knowledge is the result of observation and manipulation through empirical and experimental means (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Within this paradigm is the goal of creating and using the most objective quantitative research methods available to test variable interactions, causal outcomes and statistical predications of natural phenomena (Neuman, 2003).

In contrast, constructivism, (the framework for much qualitative research) questions how one can objectively study society, when the subjects, the subject matter, and themselves are part of it (Benton & Craib, 2001). Many social philosophers suggest that objectivity is not possible or desirable and objectivity should not be used as a standard for judging the rigorousness of a research project (Lather, 2006). Constructivists see the world as constructed, interpreted and experienced by the interactions that people have with each other and the wider social systems (Tuli, 2010) and seek to understand rather than generalise the phenomena studied (Farzanfar, 2005). Researchers in this paradigm are referred to as naturalistic as they research natural occurring real world situations as they unfold, (in this study alongside academic staff that facilitate involvement), rather than test, control, or manipulate the research setting. Qualitative research methodology often relies on periods of time between the researcher and those individuals or groups being studied which in this study spanned approximately two years. The partnership or relationship between researcher and participant supports deep insights, rich data, and thus qualitative studies are more often inductive rather than deductive and have high validity rather than generalisability (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). It is helpful to establish and justify why this research into academic perspectives of service user involvement is suited to the constructivist paradigm.

The Social Construction of Social Work and Service Users

The professional values and practice reality of social work occur on the boundary between private life and public good that traditional objectivist, generalisable social science cannot provide an explanation for (Cooper, 2001). In addition to accepting subjectivity in social work

research (Marsh & Tersiliotis, 1996; Payne, 1997), there is an eclectic diversity within social work education of theoretical approaches spanning different paradigmatic and methodological positions (Shannon, 2013). For this research, the constructivism paradigm is believed to be appropriate for a number of reasons; the framework is compatible with the view of information as constructed, situated and emerging. It is particularly pertinent when considering the processes involved in categorising individuals as service users, defining what education is and how it is delivered, and understandings of power between individuals, professions, institutions, and the state. The constructivist paradigm allows for consideration of the complex personal, professional and social factors that may influence professional attitudes or engagement in service user involvement. The research does not seek to make any claims of truth in relation to social work educators and their attitudes to user involvement - rather it seeks to understand whether the complexity of user involvement at a practical, theoretical and interpersonal level manifest in resistance for some participants, that might not be recognised by all stakeholders.

Social work as a profession (or collection of professional activities) is arguably a social construction (Beresford & Croft, 2001; Weinberg, 2010; Witkin, 2011). Social work knowledge is derived from a range of disciplines and social sciences that recognises multiple perspectives, positions and truths of individuals, communities and societal groups. Social workers form a professional view about society and circumstance rooted in professional knowledge that they use to inform interventions with, and on behalf of individuals, groups and communities. However, these truths can often compete for credibility and require critical analysis, and debate. From a powerful position of professional, it might be recognised that there are often overriding or credible 'truths' or interpretations of social work knowledge that are used to inform practice and exercise a range of legal and policy functions and responses. However, it is also understood that this professional truth is not always recognised or accepted by those who engage with services either voluntarily or involuntarily. Because of this, practice that does not seek to draw upon service user perspective is not only limited but also contrary to the professions' own value base (Beresford & Croft, 2001).

This research is dealing with a socially constructed reality concerning the involvement of service users. The term service user is itself socially constructed and ascribed to identify an individual who uses or interacts with social care services, services that are also a production of a socially constructed society that organises itself in such a way as for the state, or other

provider, to offer them (Beresford and Croft, 2001). As a starting point at the most basic level the research into service user involvement occurs in a context where many users of services do not identify as service users, may prefer an alternative term of reference, and uphold other parts of self as their primary label/identity (McLaughlin, 2009). Equally, this definition is subject to change and dispute. In relation to disability for example, services can vary, as can thresholds for access to them and governments play a role in defining who is 'disabled' or 'disabled enough' to qualify for support. All of which can change over time in response to government agenda, emerging research or treatments that shape policy and treatments (Gaidhane et al. 2008). Furthermore, truths within the profession can vary between individual professional, allied professions, and organisations: for example what constitutes health and wellbeing, harm or abuse, risk and need, can vary substantially and these 'truths' can be shaped by politics, resources, research (Parton, 2014), and disciplinary education (Althaus, 2005).

In social work practice, there are observations that even the legal threshold of significant harm in child protection does not provide a rational certainty or clarity of truth and instead is subjective, fluid, and influenced by a range of policy and organisational factors that are mediated through individual workers in pressurised environments (Platt & Turney, 2014). Whilst practitioners may agree that harm has occurred, the severity of risk or harm that necessitates a child protection response from Local Authorities (LAs) during a period of austerity, may be more severe than the circumstances that necessitate one when more resources are available (Stevenson, 2015). Equally, globalisation has drawn attention to necessity and complexity of cultural competence (Harrison & Turner, 2011) as social work must respond to variations in judgements arising from race, geography, and culture. Child rearing practices that are identified as abusive and illegal in one culture may be accepted and desirable in other cultures (Raman & Hodes, 2012) as well as significant variations in what constitutes minimal accepted standards of living, poverty, parenting and disability globally.

Constructivist positions at their most radical, embrace the possibility of multiple versions of the world, each as valid as the other (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005, p. 23). This research believes that whilst aspects of the social are constructed (the concept of service users, standards for education and training, socially constructed perceptions and psychological processes being examples of these), there are physical realities that should not be argued. In the domain of services user involvement, individuals who use services are real.

However, how we talk about, label and conceptualise them is 'tempered by our position in time and space and the cultural mileu we inhabit' (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005, p. 20). In arguing for reconciliation between the two perspectives, Cupchik (2001) proposes an approach of 'constructivist realism', which focuses less on issues of social reality and more on processes to generate knowledge and attribute meaning. Critical or constructive realism can be regarded as having a subjectivist ontology and epistemology that embraces the notion of knowledge as socially constructed (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). The test of good research from this perspective is not data that can predict human behaviour or be generalised to wider audiences or in fact be proved, but rather the rigour, robustness and transparency of process, and that the data is relevant and useful in terms of future decision making (Smyth & Holian, 2008). This study is a rigorous research process that is transparent to the reader, with data regarding perceptions of user involvement, that adds a worthwhile contribution to the service users and carers' involvement debates. (See Chapter Eight: Trustworthiness)

Qualitative Research

As a result of the paradigm differences, qualitative research methods have been in tension with quantitative methods, and was defined, described and compared to quantitative research as an aid to understanding its underlying values and epistemologies (Thomas, 2003), and some suggest delegitimising qualitative ways of knowing (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). However, the historic sense of acrimony between paradigms is understood to have dissipated with recognition from researchers that types of research require different methods, and that each paradigm has different goals, and that research approaches serve different purposes (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Qualitative methods are appropriate for this research and this research values qualitative research as a field of inquiry in its own right (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) that cuts across disciplines and subject matter and utilises an interconnected set of terms, concepts and assumptions. This research relies upon the principles of qualitative research in that it 'attempts to understand individuals, groups, and phenomena in their natural settings in ways that are contextualised and reflect the meaning that people make out of their own experiences' (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 2).

Qualitative methods for this topic are most appropriate as the aim is to understand a phenomenon, if it exists, and not to analyse an entire population through statistical data (Kelle, Prein, & Bird, 1995). In keeping with qualitative research, the aim of this research is not to offer transferable generalisability - rather situational high validity (Ravitch & Carl,

2016) and importantly within this research acknowledges that words have multiple and sometimes complex meaning and are context specific (Schleiermacher, 1998). Based on the ontological assumption that there is no overriding or single truth or reality (Creswell, 2013), the goal of this qualitative research is to engage with and report multiple realities as they are experienced. Recognising this position is crucial in this research as the literature review, (as a foundation of the research) has already identified multiple themes, perspectives or 'truths' regarding service user involvement. This inquiry seeks to uncover a potential lesser-heard perspective to be heard in conjunction with these.

Data collection: Interviews.

In order to obtain rich data that qualitative research seeks, face-to-face interviews with social work academics were identified as the most appropriate method. Initially it was considered that interviews would be predominantly unstructured (Carruthers, 1990) to allow for free expression and in contrast to structured interviews would have no pre-set questions. This means that any open-ended questions could be flexible and adapted or devised in response to respondents' disclosures. This promotes trustworthiness in terms of achieving an in-depth sense of the respondent's situation and or feelings but can limit the quantifiable reliability of repeating the same fixed closed questions to every participant (Carruthers, 1990). It is pertinent to justify the use my unstructured interview approach versus a semi structured interview strategy given that semi-structured are more commonly used in qualitative research and are accepted as an effective method for promoting interviewer participant dialogue and collecting participants thoughts, feelings and belies about sometimes personal and sensitive topics (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2018).

Both structured and semi structured rely upon sound interview skills and have a relational focus, however in this research, my decision making centred around my intention to create an extraordinarily safe space that could contain sensitive material and emotive content. Furthermore, I brought to the decision making not only my wish to enable the participants to speak freely but my wish to minimise any power differential in the hope it might enable the participants to lead the direction of discussion and perform a function that was cathartic. As a constructivist researcher not seeking generalisability, I was struck by the notion that there could be no better way to ensure situational high validity than an interview that used techniques to build rapport and put participants at ease, and ultimately allowed participants to lead the content and direction. For me, if I lost anything in terms of structure and

coherence across the data transcripts this would be mitigated with the gain in the authenticity and free expression from participants. As a counsellor and Social worker I felt equipped to undertake interviews due to my practice experience and drawing on professional training it was decided that the interviews would follow some of the principles contained within Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance for Achieving Best Evidence (CPS, 2011) by utilising the TED model of question (Tell, Explain, Describe) as well as a range of techniques from the profession of counselling and social work (Rogers, 61; Brown, 1997). This model promotes a free narrative account from interviewees by using the prefixes 'Tell me, Explain to me, Describe to me' to elicit information. An example being "Tell me about your feelings regarding service user involvement?" or "explain to me some of the challenges academics might face?"

In preparation for the interviews participants were given a project information sheet (Appendix 1) and a 'research context' (Appendix 2) outlining the themes from the literature review and detailing some of the topics that the research was interested in exploring - such as co-construction of education, power dynamics in the classroom, or the personal feelings of the participants. Where possible, the conversation was allowed to flow naturally, with themes being covered in the order respondents introduced them. This is consistent with interviewing in the constructivist paradigm and contrasts with the use of structured, closed questionnaires in a 'positivist' approach, where questions must be asked in the same manner/order all the time. Due to the critical stance of the study in that it was attempting to uncover views that might contrast with the professional narrative - that service user and carer involvement is an exciting policy development - further consideration was given regarding the interviewing methods that might illicit alternative perspectives, or perspectives that participants might not be inclined to speak freely about. The challenge regarding the interview design was to create a safe space for participants to speak freely, using the TED model and open questions if necessary and consider complimentary interview techniques that might promote the necessary safe conditions. In effect, the challenge for the researcher becomes one of freeing the participant from pre-existing agendas without imposing their own alternative one. In other words, ensuring that participants feel safe enough to be congruent without forcing discussions of resistance that might not otherwise be felt by the participant.

It was again necessary to draw upon a range of social work and education professional skills that might create safety and reduce defences and as such employ techniques from person centred counselling such as empathy, a non-judgemental stance and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961) and from systemic family therapy - circular questioning, which aims to illicit free expression and alternative viewpoints that might not normally be freely expressed. Circular questioning can draw connections and identify distinctions between individuals operating within a larger system (Brown, 1997), with the premise that information comes from difference and that difference implies a relationship with the surrounding environment. This involves moving the topic of the conversation away from the participant (first person) to asking what the subject thought *other practitioners* (third person) would say if asked [the research question]. In circular questioning the goal of creating difference in the information is reached through subsequent questions. Difference can be created in multiple ways such as moving the interviewee to an observer prospective ("Who do you think finds it the easiest?"), the use of time ("can you think of a time this was better or worse?"), between parts of a person ("is there any part of you that might agree or disagree?"), and between situations ("do you think this applies more in the classroom or team meetings?"). In contrast to Lineal questions focused on problem definition and exploration (Tomm, 1988), and strategic questioning that can be received as leading and confrontational, circular questions are asserted to be less judgemental and having a liberating effect.

The assumption that meaning is created and negotiated between participants as a result of an encounter (Steinberg, 1997) raises ethical questions regarding the role of researcher when adopting this method. Becvar and Becvar (2013, p. 222) suggest 'one cannot, not, manipulate' in that in all relationships those involved find ways to control and define it, and that this remains true in apparently reciprocal complementary relationships where there are presenting styles of 'dominate and abdicate', as each party will manipulate and respond in order to get their needs met. Though not explicit in the writing one might assume that these relational positions are also not conscious. These notions of control are further understood by the founders of Systemic therapy; Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Patra (1980) who see manipulation, communication and the impossibility of not communicating, as central to understanding relational exchange. The inability to communicate identifies silence, withdrawal and retreat, as explicit - albeit passive - forms of behavioural communication. If we are to acknowledge that circular questioning is an interventive method in systemic therapy that intervenes at the point of disclosure to guide and investigate responses, one

must accept also that as a method for interviewing in research, the neutrality of a researcher using this method is compromised which is permitted and acknowledged in the constructivist perspective. Selvini Palazzoli et al. (1980) cite Bateson when considering neutrality by highlighting the benefits of investigating the 'triadic modality' by again asking a third person for his or her perceptions of another relationship. For example, "what might other academics most enjoy about working with service users?" This approach can be built upon with follow up reflexive questions that are arguably facilitative utilising a neutral observer perspective within a hypothetical future: "were the organisational context to remain the same what do you think might happen?".

In this research, the selection and use of these additional interviewing methods makes explicit that the researcher assumes participants may not be able to speak freely without intervention, and secondly that for the data retrieved to be most meaningful and reliable the researcher is adopting the baseline assumption that participants frame of reference will guide their responses, they may not have had the opportunity to explore why they experience or feel things in the way they do, are invested already in discourses of self-protection, and are motivated (largely unconsciously) to disguise meaning concerning some thoughts and actions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2001). It is recognised by some that this type of interceptive questioning is argued as inherently non-neutral (Tomm, 1985) and would not necessarily lend itself to a positivist research framework where neutrality is concerned with the separation of bias, assumptions and the researcher's perspective. However, for research within a constructivist framework it is these reflections on the researcher as an instrument of research that form a valuable part of the data itself (Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006). See Figure 2 for summary of interview method.

Figure 2: Summary of Interview Method

Summary of Interview Method
• Unstructured Qualitative interviews with Social Work Educators in UK Universities to explore positive and negative feelings and/or resistance to Service User involvement.

- Recognise that because of the strong professional value base, psychological defences might prohibit free expression such as the unconscious (Freud, 1894), protection motivation theory (Rogers, 1975), presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) and that fears, beliefs, ideas will shape any responses (Spinelli, 2005).

- Accept the arguments of Hollway and Jefferson, (2001) that participants are invested already in discourses of self-protection, and motivated, largely unconsciously, to disguise meaning concerning some thoughts and actions.

- Conduct unstructured interviews using only TED model (CPS, 2011), 'Tell, Explain, Describe' your experiences, feelings, or perceptions of user involvement.

- Facilitate core conditions (Rogers, 1975) to create safety in the interview space.

- Use back up techniques drawn from systemic therapy i.e. circular questioning, that might further create safety and reduce defences to elicit free expression (Selvini Palazzoli et al. 1980).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this section is to explain the process and method of data analysis that followed the generally accepted steps in Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within and across a data corpus. As a method that is essentially independent of theory and epistemology, thematic analysis provides a flexible and more accessible tool for early career researchers that can nonetheless provide rich, detailed yet complex accounts of data. As an insider researcher there is risk that I might use my knowledge and familiarity of the context and participants to make premature conclusions or be driven by my desire for social justice and interpret the data in a biased way (Fleming, 2018). To ensure that my analysis was sufficiently robust I visited the advice of Kvale (1996, p. 209) who suggests that two principal mechanisms can achieve 'control of analysis'. Firstly, multiple interpreters can analyse the same data; an option not available to me due to the nature of the doctorate, and the time and resources

available. Secondly, Kvale (1996, p. 209) suggests another approach for analytical verification which he terms 'explication of procedures', where the researcher 'lays their cards on the table' about their analytical procedures. This is supported by a range of authors who suggest that without transparency in relation to the assumptions that informed analysis and how the analysis was undertaken, it can be difficult to compare research, repeat similar studies or synthesise it into current other studies on the topic (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Wilkinson, 2003). This is what I aim to do throughout this thesis.

The Thematic Analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is presented as having 6 steps - and in the case of a theoretically based analysis, 7 - with the initial stage being engagement with literature prior to analysis.

1. Engagement with literature prior to analysis
2. Familiarising yourself with the data
3. Generating initial codes
4. Searching for themes
5. Reviewing themes
6. Defining and naming themes
7. Producing the report

I had completed my literature review prior to data collection and as such had completed stage 1. As part of stage 2 I chose to listen to all recordings following the interviews (with the help of time afforded on a lengthy commute to work) and note down any initial reflections which I found helpful in order to familiarise myself with the data and serve as a useful reminder when revisiting the literature. Transcribing the data is a 'key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology' (Bird, 2005, p. 227) however due to time constraints and the demands on my time from my day job this was not an option. Instead, I chose a reputable transcription company, to undertake verbatim transcription and I checked all the transcripts against the original audio recording prior to analysis for accuracy and in order to help with immersion in the data - which is regarded as fundamental groundwork (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The next phase involved the initial coding of the data with a semantic approach (Boyatizis, 1998), in that the initial codes were explicit in the surface meanings of the data and were

grouped to show patterns. For this I used Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVIVO Version 12. As a contextual starting point and prior to the main thematic analysis I ran some basic deductive analysis to understand the context in which the participants were working and to identify the types of user involvement that was taking place and the frequency. This served to reassure me that the topic under analysis could be evidenced as 'user Involvement' as understood in the literature. I conducted the initial stages of the analysis using NVivo software version 12, which became unavailable to me when I changed roles and institutions. My change in role meant I no longer had access to NVivo so at this point I switched to conducting the analysis manually. In effect I began the process again, which took time but had little impact on the quality of the data analysis as both methods are methodologically neutral and flexible.

Using manual analysis I began collating codes for different levels i.e overarching themes, sub themes within themes and looking for as many potential patterns/themes that related to the broad research questions. At this stage the codes were refined with some disregarded due to lack of data and other codes being broken down further; an example being 'resources' divided into time, money and emotional labour. Themes began to be identified when collections of codes appeared to relate to similar overarching subjects. For example, the codes of ethics/ exploitation/transparency/ and discrimination all related to the theme of 'Ethical Concerns'.

Collecting and analysing data concurrently forms a mutual interaction between what is known and what one needs to know (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and whilst in the early stage of my research conception, I intended to undertake a predominantly inductive or 'bottom up' approach (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) it proved challenging to fully disregard my preconceptions that developed during the course of the literature review. I resonate with Taylor and Ussher (2001) in that as a researcher I played an active role identifying patterns and themes and with Ely et al. (1997) in that if the themes reside anywhere, they reside in the head of the researcher.

This analysis saw the presence of both inductive and deductive coding, identifying codes that reflected the focus of the literature in the mind of the researcher such as power, and resistance as well as unanticipated inductive codes that emerged from the data including the notion of 'double burnout' for academic staff, disguised compliance, and ethical concerns.

The deductive coding was guided by the theoretical framework, in particular paying attention to the themes from the literature review, the research questions and associated gaps. Throughout the data analysis process, I became aware of my own increasing reservations regarding user involvement which motivated me further to search through the data in a particular way that might challenge this. It was necessary to keep in mind and identify extracts that spoke positively to user involvement and keep this in mind when making analytical interpretations through the continued process of reading and rereading and re-coding data sets of the entire corpus.

Without such reflection and transparency in relation to this and the research processes, research cannot be regarded as trustworthy as even with audit trails that may be kept as proof of the decisions made throughout the project, they do little to identify the quality of those decisions, or the rationale behind those decisions (Kvale, 1996). Furthermore, there is acceptance that qualitative research is both descriptive and analytical (Maxwell, 2013; Robson, 2011) as researchers are interested in describing and analysing the complex meanings people make of their experiences in deeply contextualised ways. These deeply contextual ways can often concern the nuanced way in which we use language (Welsh, 2002; Zamawe, 2015).

Brown et al. (1990) acknowledges the existence of multiple synonyms as a challenging factor in the analysis of qualitative data, suggesting it seems reasonable to expect to miss some data that is expressed in ways differing to how the researcher searches, this also perhaps having implications for research direction and outcome. This is where the value of reading the transcripts entirely can be seen as there were occasions where it was my own knowledge of the human language, colloquialisms, tone and intonation that enabled data to be categorised. For example, with a quote *"Don't even start me on do we pay them or not" (participant 2).* At first glance this may appear to be an instruction to the researcher to stay away from the subject of payment, however it is through personal knowledge of the subject, observations of their regular speech patterns, and shared understanding of sarcasm and irony as a human who shares a common language with the participant that this was identified and characterised as an idiom and an 'exclamation of weariness or despair regarding a topic that has just been introduced and about which the speaker has a negative opinion of' (Farlex Dictionary of Idioms, 2015). These types of interpretation of data ran through the coding process with further examples such as understanding that a participant

exclaiming *"How wrong is that?" (Participant 3)* is not actually a question posed to the researcher and is in fact rhetorical. Rhetorical questions were a common feature of the transcripts with further examples being *"there's no development, is there?" (Participant 4)* and *"Okay, what value is it?" (Participant 2).*

The coding frame was increasingly refined towards the production of the final version, which was then used as a basis for analysis and writing.

Sampling

To obtain research participants that might illuminate perspectives lesser heard within the knowledge base, required purposeful sampling (Palinkas et al. 2015) of social work academics and the hope of good informants supported by an interview method, designed to promote psychological safety and freedom to speak. In relation to sampling, many have previously commented that in qualitative research the assumptions and procedures in relation to sampling are inadequately described (Knafl & Howard 1984; Baker, West & Stern, 1992; Stern 1994). This research has attended to the importance of transparency when detailing sampling methods providing a log of invitations and acceptance (See Figure 3), and the email invitation (Appendix 3).

The sampling followed what is commonly described as purposeful (Palinkas et al. 2015) in that participants were selected in order that the data is "information rich" and most relevant to the purpose and aims of the study (Patton, 1990). In this way the sampling was guided by the end aims or results with a starting position that questions regarding the realities of service user involvement in social work education are best answered by those involved in facilitating it. Invitations to participate were sent to social work academics currently employed in the home or neighbouring institution of the researcher. Equally, the insider information known to the researcher in advance, that being that some participants may have strong views regarding user involvement, or that they are more involved in it than others, made them an ideal candidate for the study and most likely "information rich", and were approached first. The invite was then extended to include entire social work departments at neighbouring institutions. 'Snowballing', where existing participants recruit further participants through their current acquaintances was encouraged within the initial email inviting participation and/ or feeding forward the invite as it is suggested, that can result in social knowledge that is emergent, political and interactional (Noy, 2008).

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) state that selective sampling is often a necessity shaped by the time available for research, the research framework and starting and developing interests of the researcher. This includes time, location and also the people that might be selected according to age, role, gender, power, stated philosophy or ideology. Many elements of this description lend themselves to this study as time for completion was pre-defined by academic regulations of doctoral study and dates of exam boards, the participants to be interviewed are required to be of a specific time and location in that they are currently in the role of academic member of staff at a university teaching on higher education programmes leading to qualified social work status as validated by Social Work England in line with SETs. Equally, as a busy member of an academic team the time available to travel to interviews was limited. Furthermore, to some extent the philosophy or ideology of the participants is partially prescribed within the professional standards and the value base of the profession to which the participants automatically subscribe as members of the profession. See Figure 3 for record of Invitations.

Figure 3: Record of Invitations

Record of Invitations/Interviews			
16.10.18	Email to 11 Colleagues at University 1	1 reply	Interviewed on 16.10.18
15.11.18	Email to 2 Colleagues at University 8.	1 reply	Declined (potential conflict of interest)
15.11.18	Forwarded on my behalf	No reply	N/A
15.11.18	3 x Email to 8 members of the teaching team at University 2.	No reply	N/A
16.11.18	2 x Email to 2 colleagues at University 4.	No reply	N/A
16.11.18	2 x Email to 6 Colleagues University 5.	No Reply	N/A

16.11.18	Email to ex social work lecturer colleague at University 8.	Declined	N/A
08.09.19	Open Invitation at Social Work Education Conference (150 attendees)	No take up.	
20.11.19	Email received from an unknown academic in Wales.	Interview agreed.	No further contact.
18.12.18	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed 25.01.19
04.02.19	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed 13/03/19
19.02.19	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed 03.04.19
24.06.19	Telephone call to known academic associate.	Interview agreed date TBC.	Later declined due to schedule constraints
24.06.19	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed 20.08.19
24.06.19	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed
24.06.19	Conversation with a team colleague at University 1.	Interview agreed.	Interviewed
Feb 20	6 Emails to Colleague at University 2.	1 Interview agreed	Interviewed 02.20
Feb 20	1 Email to Colleague at University 2.	1 Interview agreed	Declined Covid (Reschedule *)
March 20	COVID 19		
May 20	Moved to employment at different Institution		
Aug 20	Email to Colleague at University 3.	Declined	Declined
Sept. 20	Email to Colleague at University 3.	Interview agreed	Interviewed 09/20

Sept. 20	Email to Colleague at University 3.	Interview agreed	Interviewed 09/20

Ten social work academics agreed to participate in the study. The respondents had experience of having worked or currently working in one of seven Universities with one participant currently teaching across two universities and one participant currently teaching across three. Universities were anonymised and numbered, as were participants, to give an overview of the contexts and experiences informing the study. There are some notable limitations with the final sample in terms of diversity of representation. These are discussed in Chapter Eight. See Figure 4 of participant experience.

Participant Number	**University**						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	X						X
2	X		X				
3	X		X				
4	X			X			
5	X						
6	X					X	
7	X	X		X			
8		X		X			
9				X			
10	X					X	

Figure 4: Participant Experience.

The following table, Figure 5, provides a 'thick description' (Guba, 1981) of the participants highlighting the age, gender expression, length of service in HE and ethnicity at the time of interview. The researcher bio data is included showing my age range across the duration of the research and equally the increasing duration of my time in HE.

	Age	Gender	Length of service	Ethnicity	Registered with Social Work England
Researcher	36-41	F	1-5	WB	Yes
Participant 1	42	F	6	WB	Yes
Participant 2	57	F	12	WB	Yes
Participant 3	59	F	12	WB	Yes
Participant 4	70	F	8	WB	Yes
Participant 5	63	F	13	WB	Yes
Participant 6	44	M	4	WI	Yes
Participant 7	45	M	6	WB	Yes
Participant 8	59	F	4	WB	Yes
Participant 9	45	F	2	WB	Yes
Participant 10	63	M	6	WB	Yes

Figure 5: Participant Bio Data

Interview Process

The entire interview process spanned 24-months. A lack of response to the invitations, and responders that declined to participate were common features of the process. Some participants expressed an interest in being interviewed but later did not respond to further communications. I could not help but question whether this was linked to lack of time generally for academic staff and/or indicative of where research and/or service users and carers involvement might sit generally among the list of academic priorities. After presenting a synopsis of my research at a Joint Universities Social Work Education Conference (JSWEC) I made an open invite to all participants - yet this too failed to yield any interest.

In addition, the interview process was interrupted due to a change of role when I took up a new post at a neighbouring university as a Principal Lecturer for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Furthermore, March 2020 saw the emergence of Covid-19 that initially, at least, distracted from conducting interviews. One arrangement was made for a remote interview during this time, however organisation pressures upon the participant meant that this was delayed until we could convene in person during the late summer of 2020. All Interviews were conducted at a time and place most suitable to the participant and suitable for the task at hand in terms of confidentiality, this being office space in both University settings. The interviews varied in time with the majority approximating an hour and one interview being only 12-minutes. The shortest interview was with a participant who was clear from the outset that their time was extremely limited but could give me ‘5 minutes of their time’.

When reviewing the transcripts informally from the first two interviews I noticed a large amount of information sharing regarding the processes of user involvement, and the participants' observations of the poor quality of current user involvement practices they had witnessed as well as their suggestions of many creative ideas moving forward. These interviews were helpful broadly although did not specifically touch on notions of academic resistance. As a result of this I chose to review the way I opened the interviews and began the remaining eight out of ten interviews with: "I'm interested in the possibility of academic resistance to user involvement in Social Work Education with some underlying assumptions I'm making, that, if there is resistance it might be challenging for social work academics to speak freely about it" and this led to five out of the ten participants responding immediately with broad agreement. At times the space for the participants felt as if it could be cathartic for them with participants dominating the conversation and requiring little questions or prompts.

Upon reflection much of the preparatory work in selecting a method of question that supported free expression was unnecessary as participants spoke freely about their perceptions of resistance, and I observed that the participants were greatly relieved to have space where they could speak freely and were keen to share their views. Upon reviewing the transcripts, I can identify where my social work skills were incorporated naturally into the dialogue; for example with the use of a type of question referred to as the 'miracle question' used by social workers, counsellors and in coaching relationships originating from Solution Focused Therapy (Bannink, 2007). The 'miracle' question is designed to facilitate a connection between future ideals and present difficulties to allow for goal setting. It often takes the form of "If whilst you were asleep a miracle happened, what would you see in the morning?" I used a variation called the magic wand:

Systemic	
Interviewer	I suppose [name], if you had a magic wand then, what would you like to see?
Participant	I'd like to see…

There is also evidence within the transcripts of the benefits of the Achieving Best Evidence (CPS, 2011) TED method Tell, Explain, Describe for example:

TED Method	
Participant	Actually, I wonder how successful it is. I certainly have witnessed and experienced resistance myself. I mean I can tell you a bit more about my thoughts if you like?
Interviewer	Yes, tell me. Tell me about where you have actually witnessed resistance from academics?

Furthermore, I used skills in counselling of mirroring which involves reflecting back, sometimes word for word what has been said, which helps to let the participant know they have been heard. Equally, I used the technique of paraphrasing where you express the meaning of what has been said to you, using different words, and can often achieve greater clarify (Rogers, 1957). For example:

Paraphrasing	
Participant	So yes, they can have a voice, and of course, they must have a voice, and how great they can have a voice, but how sure can we be that it's a true representation of what goes on because we're individuals? So, I could have a voice as a lecturer, but my colleagues might think I'm mad, you know and not agree with me at all.
Interviewer	Yes, so in the same way you're not representative of all lecturers, one service user can't possibly be representative, and you can't really homogenise a whole group of people in that way.

Although the interviews were unstructured in that no questions were planned beforehand, I used my knowledge of current discourse around user involvement to guide the topic of conversation. For example:

Directive	
Interviewer	I know there is a lot of talk around finances, and the payment of service users, and the limited budget and some complex arguments […] and counterarguments regarding over help, or overpayment and perhaps creating dependency. What are your thoughts about that?
Participant	My thoughts are…

The process of continually reviewing the transcripts in an iterative fashion was a generally helpful learning curve for me as a researcher, identifying occasions when I had interviewed or responded in ways that were unintended and did not fit with my interview strategy, for example with the use of closed questions. I was fortunate however that on these occasions' interviewees did not reply with a one-word answer.

Closed Question	
Interviewer	Do you think it is helpful that service user involvement is prescribed within the standards?
Participant	My thoughts are…

I am also aware of time where my own contextual knowledge of the topics, as a result of working in same institution, and my working relationships with some interviewees meant that interviews looked to me for confirmation or validation of their view, for example:

Researcher view	
Participant	Yes, I mean, the service users we have aren't really service users, are they?
Interviewer	No. Well, no, they're not active service users, are they? They're kind of previous service users who are high functioning in lots of other areas.
Participant	Yes, and professionals. Professional, educated people.

Insider Research

In this research, despite a methodologically sound sampling strategy targeting academic staff from multiple HE institutions, the majority of participants were concentrated within my own employing university making it necessary to consider the challenges and opportunities insider research can bring. Insider research is defined as research where the researcher shares characteristics with the population being studied (Mercer, 2007), and often even a member of the group being researched (Adler & Adler, 1994). it is argued that researchers cannot truly be objective and natural unless they are an 'outsider' (Simmel, 1950). This is countered with arguments that if a researcher is not related to the culture, group or topic area in some way he will find it difficult to truly understand his findings (Merton, 1972; Conant, 1968). However, it is recognised by many authors that the boundaries between insider-outsider are much more permeable than originally thought as features of the researcher's identity such as age, gender, culture, socio-economic status cut across boundaries and are evolving (Christensen & Dahl, 2009; Mullings, 1999; Mercer, 2007). Mercer (2007), in research within educational institutions describes a shift in the feelings of intimate insider when conducting interviews with senior colleagues, which she felt was not associated with their position within the professional hierarchy, but with the extent to which the colleague was known socially, or strength of pre-research relationships.

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identify three main benefits to insider research as: better understanding of the issue being researched, less disruption to the natural flow of interaction

for participants, and extraction of true data as a result of being able to relate better to them. This does however require researcher reflexivity - and reflexivity becomes all the more important when conducting insider research (Romain, 2015). Reflecting upon my own starting position made it clear to me that I was starting the research with an in-depth understanding of the topic being studied, and understanding of the procedural way in which user involvement occurs within the organisation I work. Further, that my presence as a researcher might be less disruptive to the flow of the organisation as I am already an accepted part of it, and one of many staff conducting research. Equally, membership of the profession and adherence to the professional values led to an understanding of the importance and challenges of user involvement and my understanding of the culture and political structure of both the profession and university, led to recognising the possibility that there are barriers to speaking freely about it. Consistent with qualitative research is the understanding that the researcher is considered the primary instrument of research (Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006) and I had already established working relationships with participants as a trusted colleague, which might have promoted free expression or greater disclosure. Whilst I do not believe that my relationships with the participants impacted upon their free expression as I have confidence in the interview methods selected, I believe that my relationship or familiarity with them may have persuaded the participants to take part. This evidenced by the data highlighting that most participants originate from my institution. Through reflection it is easy to identify how the identity (I am a social worker and lecturer utilising critical pedagogy), positionality (a programme leader within the organisation from which many participants arose), and subjectivity of the researcher (to some extent I had formed a preliminary view regarding academic resistance) can shape the research from its conception and can influence uptake of participants and ultimately shape the findings (Romain, 2015).

Ethics

As a piece of research involving human subjects this project required ethical approval from the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) committee within the student researchers institution. A preliminary questionnaire ascertaining the level of vulnerability of participants, any proposed deception, the possibility of physical harm or psychological distress, and any level of risk, determined the level of ethical scrutiny. For this research the scrutiny required was one of 'light touch' ethical approval meaning that the ethical application would be completed by the researcher, approved by my supervisory team and approved (or not) by the

Faculty Head of RKE. Ethical approval was applied for on 6th June 2018 and approval granted on the 11th June 2018. See Appendix Eight for ethics application. During the study participants were advised of the ethical implications of participating, any risks of taking part and who to contact if they have any problems or concerns within the consent form Appendix Four.

Throughout the design and implementation of this research I have been guided by my shared identities as a social worker, a lecturer and a student researcher. As a result, it has been necessary to conduct research practices that align to the values of social work and simultaneously comply with broad ethical research principles, of autonomy, beneficence and justice (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wyanaden, 2000), and specifically how these translate to the process of ensuring anonymity, respecting participants' rights, obtaining informed consent, and minimising participant harm. These considerations were necessary throughout all stages of research from design, data collection, interpretation of data and presentation of findings. As an 'insider' researcher I was also mindful of the professional relationship I had with my colleagues and this remained important for the duration of the study.

Embedded in qualitative research is the understanding of power between researcher and the participants (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wyanaden, 2000). A balanced researcher participant relationship will encourage trust and promote disclosure and ensure that participants are aware of the ethical issues involved in the study (Kvale, 1996). In addition to the project information, (Appendix 1) participants signed a consent form detailing anonymity (Appendix 4), and information regarding at what point in the study they could withdraw themselves and their data. This seemed ethically straightforward as the participants were professional academics able to give informed consent and likely to have no difficulty asserting their right to withdraw, after being informed of their right to do so. The participants were advised of how their right to withdraw might change overtime, for example, that it would not be possible to withdraw individual data sets after such time that they had been included, discussed or integrated into the main research thesis, or any paper that had been submitted for publication. Each participant was given (in addition to the project information sheet) a 700-word abstract (Appendix 2) of an unpublished paper, written by the researcher, that summarised the evidence leading to the hypothesised potential for academic resistance to service user Involvement and the possibility that research participants may be resistant to disclose these feelings.

The researcher informed participants that the interview would be conducted in a way that could support safe discussion of any resistance and that the researcher recognised that these conversations can be difficult to have openly, so the creation of a safe space is of utmost importance to the research. This level of transparency was chosen as Patton (1990) suggests partial explanations or subtle deception risks being unethical. As a researcher I felt confident there was no deception. There was no covert observation of academics at work or otherwise and data was collected only from the formal interview process with participants aware of the start and end point of the data collection via start and stop of the voice recorder. It is however acknowledged that informal ad hoc observations and conversations prior to the research, as well as my own observations and experiences had led to the researcher having an interest in the concept of academic resistance. Furthermore, the use of a reflective diary enhanced my reflexivity as a researcher (see Chapter Eight: Trustworthiness). These however were not formally recorded, documented or included in the research process.

Adhering to the principle of beneficence involves adhering to the moral obligation that participants maintain anonymity (Forrest et al. 2000). To speak freely about implicit or explicit resistance to involving service users in the education of social work students, something which promotes social justice, the participants needed to be sure their contribution was anonymous and that they were not identifiable personally or by institution. Participant anonymity was protected, as participants and universities were numbered within the thesis and data processed and handled according to the legal responsibilities on me as a data controller under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (Health Research Authority, 2018). Prior to the data being included in the thesis interviews were transcribed, and anonymised so that individuals were identifiable only by number to the researcher with no links to institution, and kept on a secure crypto memory stick with military level encryption such as (https://www.mymemory.co.uk/integral-16gb-crypto-fips-197-aes-256-bit-hardware-encrypted-usb-flash-drive.html). Paper documents were limited only to signed consent forms and were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet on university campus or the home safe of the researcher, transported in a secure bag when travelling only by car. The home safe is fire retardant, secured to the floor with metal bolts and requires electronic pass code and physical key to enter.

Taking beneficence to mean 'doing no harm and promoting good for others' focuses the researcher on issues of confidentiality and harm. As a researcher I was aware that in all research, confidentiality cannot be promised as professionals and researchers have statutory obligations to report serious criminality and safeguarding concerns. It was not anticipated that these concerns would arise given the research population, but it would however be necessary to consider the impact of harm to the participants and any tensions between research and the professional social work value base which makes social workers obligated to challenge discrimination (HCPC, 2018). In relation to harm, it was not anticipated that the research interviews would uncover any distressing material, trigger any painful experiences, or identify any unlawful activity, however the methodology does seek to elicit information that may be guarded or defended by participants and this brings the possibility that revealing this information could be unpleasant for the participant - and in doing so raises the question of whether this constitutes harm. This might lead to an ethical dilemma for the researcher in that offering challenge could impact the researcher/participant relationship and would require the consideration of an ethical tension in terms of what should take primacy; research data that has potential to benefit service users broadly in the longer term versus the obligation to challenge discrimination at an individual level in the moment, which could compromise the researcher/ participant relationship. Therefore, in preparation for the interviews it was necessary to calibrate my threshold for what might constitute sensitive data, participant harm, and/or data that might warrant challenge or professional action, for example extreme nationalist or discriminatory views. I considered the notion that research in social work has moved beyond traditional concepts and can be conceptualised as an intervention in itself (Pennel & Ristock, 1999) meaning that challenge or education may well be a legitimate part of the research. However, keeping in mind the overall research aims I decided that an approach might be to allow the interview space to be cathartic (Hutchinson, Wilson & Wilson, 1994). This would promote participant/researcher relationships without minimising data collection or extending the interview towards a meeting of supervision or professional development. In order to facilitate this, it was crucial to promote the principles of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961) and use the space to hold a mirror to the participant using skills of reflection, paraphrasing, mirroring (known to promote dialogue), as a way to promote self-awareness for participants without in anyway impacting the data collecting.

Ethical issues in research can be subtle and nuanced and ethical codes and guidelines generally are there to be interpreted and as such open to a range of interpretation (Weinberg, 2010), so I am also aware that allowing free expression of racism, for example, by an academic and to allow this to go unchallenged would be professionally unethical. This however did not happen. In the event that a participant became distressed during an interview the researcher was aware of the responsibility to refer the participant for counselling or support services available and to seek on-going consent to continue. Equally this did not occur.

It was also necessary during the research to consider the potential for conflict of interest, where a primary interest, in this case the research is unduly influenced by a secondary interest (Romain, 2015). This occurred when an invitation to participate was declined by staff at a University for whom I occupy an external role. In addition to this was consideration of a financial interest in that the host University was also the researcher's employer who had facilitated hours within a workload model to conduct the research as part of a doctoral qualification and approved an associated fee waiver for the qualification. This was addressed by ensuring anonymity of institution for all research participants, and to ensure that the primary interest of producing research that adheres to the long terms aims of promoting effective, meaningful user involvement.

Service User Involvement in the Research

Despite confidence that this research is ethically sound in terms of overall general methodology and method it is appropriate at this stage to acknowledge the absence of service users as co-constructors and or participants in this research. In social work there is no agreed method when conducting research but recognition that it should take the form of structured inquiry that utilises appropriate methodology to solve human problems (Grinnel & Unrau, 2011), and that approaches should remain consistent to the professional mission and values of social justice and empowerment. It is argued that social workers that conduct research have an obligation to do so in a way that demonstrates a commitment to marginalised and oppressed individuals and to promote social justice, and equally, that HE educators involved in research have an obligation to do so in a way that supports a reduction of the divide between teaching and research to improve outcomes for both student and service users (Healy, Flint & Harrington, 2014). Many ethical arguments are made advocating for the direct involvement of service users in social work research (Cosser & Neil, 2013).

Whilst there is the underpinning theme of social justice in this research, it is proposed that a key mechanism to manifest justice in social work research is democratic, collaborative research with explicit political and ethical aims that listens to the voices of minority or vulnerable groups (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wyanaden, 2000) and uses these voices to shape the research process (Wallcraft, 2009) and promote social change. Thus, this might appear to contravene not only the recommendations for social work research generally but especially for research whose primary focus is the involvement of service users in education.

Hanley et al. (2003), derived from Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, distinguish three levels of user involvement: 'consultation', asking for service user views but without a commitment to act upon them; 'collaboration', i.e. collaborating throughout research with the sharing of power; and 'control', where services users direct the research, predominantly shape its direction and have responsibility for decision making. Sweeney and Morgan, (2009) propose a fourth level: 'contribution', to sit between that of consultation and collaboration, that they believe reflect existing practices where service users actively shape research but without decision making powers.

This research was born out of prior evaluation completed by the researcher that was designed and implemented in partnership with service users and culminated in an internal conference that was co- facilitated with service users and collaboratively devised an institutional strategy for user involvement moving forward. This earlier project had clear elements of contribution and collaboration. This caused me as a researcher to give significant thought to the co-production of this research with service users. However, as the exploration of the literature progressed and the research aims became clearer, these being to hear the voices of under-represented academics within the knowledge base, I became increasingly focused on the evidence outlining the limitations and complexity of involvement and the regularity with which involvement can be tokenistic. Focusing on my own transparency, and in an effort to be congruent, I began to consider an alternative perspective that on occasion, if the outcome of the research is focused towards social justice for service users, it might be legitimately argued that it is ethical to have research that does not involve service users rather than to have involvement in research that can be considered a form of tokenism or consultation.

Prior to this reflective process, as evident in the ethics application, my intention at the outset was to involve service users and carers throughout this research. As a researcher I grappled

with the inclusion or omission of service users throughout each stage of the research and can identify also how my position as an insider research contributed towards my final decision. As a member of the institution where a large proportion of the participants were employed, I have familiarity and strong working relationships with the six service users and carers employed by the organisation. Having previously worked together to co facilitate the celebratory conference that shared the results of the internal evaluation my attention was drawn to the impact upon them from the emerging data. I questioned the impact upon them when being presented with the raw data, from the academic staff that they work with regularly which contained elements which might be described as damming in relation to user involvement and shared strong perspectives that questioned it benefits. My personal knowledge of these individuals and the strength of relationships between them and academic team triggered what can only be described as a protective instinct. Whilst the sharing of knowledge is an important element of empowerment and my own values leave me feeling certain that service users need to hear these perspectives, I made the decision that for these individuals, the benefits of transparency and empowerment would be mitigated by the negative impact of the raw data which has the potential to destabilise solid working relationships.

Eventually, I have chosen to remain firm in the position that no involvement in some circumstances can be preferable to tokenism. This does not however preclude a recommendation that colleagues involved in social work education explore and discuss the results of this research with service users to inform future involvement (see recommendations page 142). It is hoped that the evidence of social responsibility (Halej, 2017) underpinning the aims of the research and the potential for the research to contribute to improvements in meaningful user involvement offsets the choice to undertake research that does not involve service users directly.

Outcomes of this Research

The review of literature uncovers observations from scholars that argue that currently the research concerning service user involvement originates from the most enthusiastic institutions perhaps leaving gaps in the knowledge base for lesser heard critical perspectives. Equally, from a systematic review of research into user involvement in social work programmes in the UK, Chambers and Hickey (2012) identify that most of the research into service user and carer involvement in education are small scale studies, with qualitative methodology, often based within one institution that does not allow for pre and post

comparison research data. Furthermore, we have encountered fundamental debates within the literature regarding what constitutes successful involvement, debate surrounding the notions of 'meaningful' involvement, and whether attempts to measure success of involvement should be targeted at the process or experience of involvement for all involved or the outcomes in terms of student development and society change. It is possible to offer methodological strength in qualitative work evidenced by the qualitative studies Chambers and Hickey (2012) relied upon to inform a range of health and social care policy and the Social Work SETs (HCPC, 2014). However, as is evident within the knowledge base the scarcity of experimental, outcome focussed research within social sciences, is due to the inability to breakdown complex social interaction to units, factors, events, variables and items needed for outcome criteria (Patton, 2002).

This of course draws attention to the possible outcomes of this Qualitative research and any contribution it might make towards resolving these tensions and ambiguity. The aims of this research are to acquire rich data of high situational validity that enables others to understand the participants perceptions of user involvement, whether they feel or exhibit resistance to involvement and possible reasons for this. This research will not resolve the ambiguity surrounding the purpose of involvement, nor will it offer a mechanism through which involvement can be evaluated, however it aims to offer some perspectives lesser heard with the literature which might provide a foundation for further research, evaluation or change processes.

This chapter has outlined the methodology of this research exploring academic resistance to user involvement in social work education. Namely that it is research from a constructivist epistemology and ontology, utilising an insider approach (Mercer, 2007), and employing qualitative research methods. The chapter has outlined the qualitative methods of unstructured interviews with academic staff, utilising techniques common to social work and systemic therapy that promote free expression (Rogers, 1975; Selvini Palazzoli et al. 1980; CPS, 2011) and has made explicit the sampling strategy and Thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, this chapter attended to the ethical considerations and made transparent the rationale for the omission of service user involvement in this research before addressing possible outcomes.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents the findings. These are grouped around the main themes to arise from the process of data analysis described in the previous chapter. These themes align to the overall purpose of the study being an exploration into academic resistance to service user/carer involvement in social work education. Initially this chapter provides an overview of the results of the analysis.

Results of Data Analysis

The entire corpus of ten interviews were analysed, resulting in 559 extracts coded across six key categories.

- Perception of user involvement | 342 extracts
- Reason for user involvement | 110 extracts
- Type of user involvement | 40 extracts
- Professional opinion | 38 extracts
- Choosing user involvement | 18 extracts
- Frequency of user involvement | 11 extracts

An early screen of the data was conducted to establish types of involvement and frequency. Type of user involvement was important in the early analysis to confirm that participants were discussing the user involvement activities prescribed by the Standards for Education and Training (SETs). The predominant type of involvement reported are listed below:

- Sharing lived experiences and storytelling
- Panel member for selection interviews
- Service user feedback on group work
- Film production for repeated use
- Q and A workshops
- Co-facilitating lectures

The frequency of service user involvement was included to provide context in terms of the participants' activities with service users. The majority of participants (seven out of ten) were actively involved in user involvement activities. This gave a clear understanding that the participants are involved in the types of user involvement documented in the literature in the way prescribed by SETs. My deductive analysis process then followed broadly my research

questions as I applied those questions to the data in turn, revisiting the entire data set or smaller combined sets as follows. (See Coding Process Appendix 5).

In total I coded 342 data extracts into initial themes linked broadly to the research question 'what is the perception of Service User Involvement?' and within those, meaningful groups of coded extracts were clustered together (Tucker, 2004). (See Coding Frame Appendix 6). Overall five themes each containing sub-themes were identified that attempt to capture the essence of the data. Accepting that coding and re-coding can go on ad infinitum, one test of whether themes need further refinement is the researcher's ability to describe the content and scope of each theme in a couple of sentences. Here is my description of the themes.

Lack of Resources:

This theme attempts to capture the relationship between resources and user involvement and their multifaceted nature including financial, time and interpersonal considerations. Of significance in this theme is the introduction of the notion of burnout of academic staff and its relationship to user involvement.

Value:

This theme captures the perceived and often contradictory value that academics assign to user involvement when evaluating it from a variety of perspectives including service user, academic staff, the university and the profession's commitment to social justice. Underpinning this theme is ambiguity in terms of what the purpose of user involvement actually is.

Ethics:

This theme illustrates the range of experienced ethical challenges (implicit and explicit) in relation to procedural involvement arrangements, and the actualising of its rhetorical claims as a progressive function in society. Inherent in this theme are examples where user involvement can again mirror the inequality in society more broadly.

Power:

This theme illuminates the expressed vulnerabilities and disempowerment experienced by academic staff in terms of managing competing demands and tensions, including regulatory requirements, organisational challenges, and a range of quality assurance mechanisms.

Resistance:

This theme brings together expressions from academic staff that denote resistance to user involvement from themselves or others. Prominent within this theme is the extent to which this resistance is talked about, hidden and disguised in practice.

Presenting the findings is a distinctive form of discursive activity that both constructs and expresses knowledge (Hammersley, 2008) and incorporates a multitude of choices and assumptions in its framing, emphasis, content, and delivery. Findings often include a range of interpretations, ideologies and values of the person presenting the knowledge as well as evidence of what is excluded, minimised and overlooked. In qualitative work significance is given to what is said and how it is interpreted rather than the frequency with which it is confirmed or repeated (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Writing the findings was experienced as a reflective process as I became aware that my presentation of the participants' experiences can help to convey the social significance (Clandinin & Caine, 2008) as well as methodological rigour, and that ultimately, unlike physical presentations in teaching activities, I could not use my physical being (speech, tone, mannerisms, use of space) to engage the reader and support my delivery (Bekker & Clark, 2018).

Writing this section was also experienced as a powerful tool for analysis and required that I apply my understanding of participant intended meanings, my interpretations and my understanding of the knowledge base to the themes and sub-themes I had discovered, and present them in a way that offers a 'concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story that the data tells' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). This part of the analysis was experienced as a highly emergent process as it was the process of beginning to structure my writing that led to unanticipated links between themes and new perspectives that at times necessitated further checking with the data, and the development of arguments that had not previously been foreseen. For example, the notion of burnout being significant to user involvement and the possibility that user involvement itself may have elements that are perceived as unethical. Despite an interview method that was designed to be non-directive, this research resulted in a data corpus that was predominantly reporting negative perceptions of user involvement. Almost all coded extracts across the data corpus were coded as a negative perception of some element of user involvement, whether that was the academic experience of it, barriers to implementing it, or of its perceived value.

What follows is an analysis of the findings aligned to the five overarching themes: Lack of Resources, Value, Ethics, Power and Resistance.

Lack of Resources

The theme 'lack of resources' is the combination of multiple categories of sub-themes that present a variety of negative perceptions of user involvement linked in some way to the resources necessary to facilitate it. The sub-themes categorised that describe the lacking resources are either financial in terms of funding, time constraints in terms of workload responsibilities, the emotional effort of involvement including levels of motivation and energy, which are reported as not available due to burnout and the physical resources that are required such as adequate spaces and teaching materials. Across the entire corpus more than half of the extracts coded negatively were references to resources. Whilst the resources theme was constructed from the sub-themes above a large number of participants linked several of these themes during interview. Analysis of this data set enabled links to be made within the theme - for example the lack of resources (time) contributing to the lack of resources (emotional) and across the data to other themes in terms of its value in light of resource constraints.

Financial resources

The financial sub-theme mainly referenced the lack of funding for involvement activities or the perceived inadequacy of the allocated government budget:

"…actually the resources aren't there, the funding's not there." (Participant 4)

For many participants this linked to the theme of power in terms of how academic staff are expected to allocate proportions of the budget, often cited as needing to prioritise the applicant selection processes.

"We've got a budget, we've got an amount of money, and because the university now expect us to put on more and more selection days, we pretty rapidly run out of money. There's that argument, so resistance might be partially to do with that". (Participant 2)

"…all the budget's going on the interviews … So there's nothing left." (Participant 9)

Time

Perhaps more nuanced than a finite budget and instructions on how to allocate it was the notion of time. The time sub-theme reported predominately the pressure of increasing

workloads allocated to academic staff and the resultant lack of time they experience in their daily role and how this pressure impacts on the motivation of staff to embrace involvement opportunities. Inherent in these statements was an indication that perhaps user involvement is seen as a supplementary activity that is deprioritised when under pressure rather than integrated as core business.

"The more and more we're squeezed with everything else, especially at the moment, we're all feeling on our knees with it. The consequences will be individual academics who might have gone the extra mile won't have anything left to go the extra mile with." (Participant 3)

Emotional resources

It appeared from the data that the current experience of emotional and work pressure resulted in many links being made back to social work practice. Of interest in the analysis was not only the reported pressures on academic staff but the reported pressures that were recognised as impacting their social work colleagues with multiple comparisons made between themselves and social workers in practice and much concern for the wellbeing of colleagues in the profession.

"We know about burnout and compassion fatigue and all of the reasons why social workers don't stay in their roles. We see social workers exploited sometimes as much the vulnerable adults, by organisations who are overworked and who are pushing social workers to breakdown. It's difficult really. It's difficult." (Participant 9)

Participants felt that workload and lack of time contributed to their own poor emotional wellbeing and negative emotional experience at work and many participants highlighted the impact upon their health similar to their social work colleagues.

"Social workers go off sick and they get short-staffed, and they have too large a caseload." (Participant 9)

Burnout emerged as an unanticipated theme from the data with multiple references to practitioner burnout, the possibility of burnout prior to entering HE, and as a possible outcome for both academic staff and qualifying students.

"A lot of professionals/academics obviously in social work they've been social workers. They've been working all those hours with the too large caseloads and getting disappointed with the outcomes for their service users, and become disillusioned and, of course, burnout, they burn out." (Participant 7)

This appeared to link with the simultaneous concerns for their own experiences of work pressures highlighted in the resources section. Furthermore, within the data the participants made links regarding the possibility that previous experiences of burnout might impact academic staff and their attitudes to involvement.

"I'm not saying they come into academia because they are burnt out but they have probably experienced burnout, so I wonder what that does to us when we're faced with a service user with a poignant story." (Participant 9)

As well as this, one participant when discussing the parallels of resource constraints between HE and social work practice extended the notion of burnout into the future to question whether the realities of future practice conditions limit any benefits of user involvement in education.

"Are we really making long-term changes to our practitioners who are going to enter organisations that are drowning from having no money, that are drowning from cultures that sometimes are harmful or discriminatory?" (Participant 8)

Physical resources

The physical resource category consisted of two comments that referred to the use of physical resources, materials and space, to support service users. Whilst infrequent, these comments highlighted the difficulty of obtaining such resources.

Whilst finances were a prominent theme throughout the interviews in terms of budgets, workloads and money for involvement, many interviewees made direct reference to frustrations surrounding the allocation of resources or remuneration of service users. These frustrations mirrored the literature available and were reported to impact the service users and carers, the academic staff and other professionals within the Universities.

"Don't even start me on do we pay them or not? I mean that's so difficult because that changes the whole dynamic." (Participant 2)

This sub-theme identified the widely documented difficulties including if - and what level of remuneration would be appropriate, and what involvement justifies remuneration. Whilst there emerged very little in the way of clarity regarding the amount of payment deemed appropriate, for example:

"it's just about what we're asking them to do and what's a reasonable reflection in terms of their time and task that we've asked them to complete." (Participant 3)

There was broad agreement that making any payments was organisationally challenging.

"… there was some very practical issues because it was all about payment and it took many, many months battling with finance to come up with a system that everybody was happy with." (Participant 1)

"To make sure that finance understood the nature of involvement which they didn't, and they grappled with and they felt very uneasy and uncomfortable with." (Participant 1)

The overarching theme of resources indicates that the academics interviewed feel impacted by a lack of resources. These resources are not limited to money, although money for involvement is reported as insufficient, but include the time available for user involvement in light of other work pressures, the interpersonal resources including resilience, motivation and levels of stress impacting upon them, and the physical resources required for activities. For many participants these resource challenges mirror that of social work practice.

Value of Involvement

This theme relates to the perceived value of service user involvement and what that value might be. An important aspect of this research was ensuring that the participants were able to speak freely about user involvement in order to obtain both positive and negative views.

Positive Value

Whilst positive views constituted only a small proportion of the data, nine of the ten items of data (Interviews) expressed within them some positive perceptions of user involvement resulting in extracts expressing general agreement about its value or the potential worth of involvement:

"I know I could speak for myself and my colleagues, that service user involvement in theory, is something we would champion." (Participant 8)

And the necessity for user involvement in some areas of education delivery:

"I think it's also true to say that there were some core areas where service users were inherently needed to be involved and were involved." (Participant 2)

And, how empowerment of service users and the promotion of the user voice is central to the professional value base of social work.

"A significant part of the social work value base is sharing information with service users to empower them in relation to the structural inequalities that harm them or marginalise them. So involving them and hearing their voice and sharing power in the education of social workers, is something that, on paper, we all stand behind." (Participant 8)

Equally, participants were observed to reminisce upon times when they felt involvement practices were better, which by definition suggests a positive association.

"Going back to working in [University 3], there were sessions when there was more money available and I had more time, I would meet with people beforehand, they would have training. I would always meet the service users after a session, and I'm not just talking about critical reflection for them giving feedback; I'm talking about asking them, are they okay?" (Participant 3)

A consistent sub-theme within the value data set was that of user involvement providing opportunities for development, itself being of three categories: student development, service user development and programme development. This sub-theme contained competing viewpoints regarding why involvement was valued, i.e. the primary purpose of user involvement and what types of development opportunities could be considered an appropriate measure of the success of involvement. Within this sub-theme we see disagreement regarding the purpose of user involvement despite the overall agreement that it is positive. There is no consensus regarding the primary beneficiary of user involvement or intended outcome of involvement whether that is the development of the programme curriculums, benefits to the students themselves or the service users and within this data are examples where members of staff facilitating it do not know the purpose of involvement. The views expressed with the most certainty however was from academic staff clear that the primary purpose of user involvement is to provide a better education for students.

"I recognise what a huge contribution service user can make to enhance students' learning and insight… [Who would you say was the priority beneficiary?] Absolutely the student, no question!" (Participant 2)

"That's always the position that I've taken and as a consequence of that position, we are absolutely not here to be creating opportunities for service users… I'm very clear that given, as I've just said, the primary task is it to enhance student experience." (Participant 3)

In contrast to this some participants felt that the benefits to service users were an important element as service users are able to develop their skills and personal recovery through involvement opportunities:

"He wants to gain as much skills and experience so that he can develop a career for himself…. So coming into the university and getting some positive feedback, having some training, would be really beneficial to him, but also to us, because he'd develop his skills." (Participant 4)

For another participant this remained true even within a generally negative viewpoint of user involvement overall:

"Is it a case of we need to accept that actually, it isn't really this wonderful thing that does good? It's just good for a small number of people, with some short-term benefits, that make a very small number of service users feel better, because they've got some meaning in their life." (Participant 8)

One participant, hypothesising as to the purpose of user involvement reflected user involvement can be beneficial to service users:

"If the requirement is to give them a role, give them value, socialise them with other people from similar background or circumstances, then I would say it is working." (Participant 9)

These responses overlapped with the data extracts referencing the installation of a sense of status and value upon service users, who might otherwise be disenfranchised.

"the SUIG group have people with learning disabilities, people with severe physical disabilities who will quite openly say that this is what keeps them going, is having that kind of role as a member of the SUIG group and they kind of wear it as a badge of honour almost." (Participant 7)

Given the multi-faceted nature of user involvement one might expect a multitude of reasons to do it however what is apparent from the data is that in contrast to the views regarding social integration and/or status are examples where academic staff strongly oppose the notion that user involvement is designed to enhance the lives of the active service users involved.

"I do worry about service users being involved as a means of promoting their own well-being and I'd be really suspicious of that, I'll be honest." (Participant 6)

"How wrong is that, oh, come on, let's make a few opportunities for you; for what? For what purpose? Just to fill people's time. How patronising?" (Participant 3)

"I am not sure the function is to plug a gap in the lives of a small number of people." (Participant 7)

This data set with the theme of value, suggests that among academic staff there can be confusion and/or disagreement regarding the purpose of involvement in relation to the service users themselves and even what can be considered a positive outcome. In this data, positive experience for service users could be perceived as a positive unintended by-product of the process rather than a primary aim. But ultimately as one participant questioned:

"If you don't know what the remit is, then how do you know it is working?" (Participant 7)

Further coding of the data around this appears to confirm the observation of ambiguity of purpose.

"It needs to change fundamentally to be meaningful, I think. There are so many questions marks over it." (Participant 9)

"I don't know whether they actually understand the reason why they're there." (Participant 7)

"There should be a clear rationale." (Participant 3)

There did however, appear to be clarity among respondents when thinking about user involvement in terms of the benefits for students.

"To say they need to experience seeing service users, and having them involved in their education, in their courses, is a great idea and they need to do it." (Participant 1)

With reports that students appreciate user involvement and that should be the primary aim:

"I think the students, from feedback we've had on all kinds of module evaluations, they recognise the value of working with service users, and that's got to be what it's all about." (Participant 2)

And that service user benefits should be secondary to student development:

"We have got a dual responsibility so that if we're asking service users to come in then it should be a positive experience for them too, but that should be secondary". (Participant 8)

Further extracts were coded as programme development where participants made reference to overall development of curriculums, programme and eventually social work practice.

"it's about hearing the service user's voice and allowing them to inform practice in the ideal platinum standard situation, because that's why you ask for service user feedback in observations and whatever". (Participant 7)

At this stage in the analysis of findings the data indicates differing perceptions regarding the value of user involvement, its potential in terms of developmental opportunities but disagreement and /or ambiguity as to where the benefits of these opportunities lie. Despite this disagreement and the strong narratives emerging regarding lack of resources, the majority of respondents agreed that user involvement should happen.

Negative Perceptions

Despite the positive perceptions of user involvement, the analysis continued to explore the data for negative perceptions of user involvement. Whilst the research adopted a critical focus, the extent of negative perceptions came as a surprise. Repeatedly across the entire corpus were references to user involvement lacking value on a larger scale. The data in this theme had many links to other nodes such as resources, training, professional hierarchy, and mirrored much of the literature concerning the debates regarding what constitutes meaningful involvement.

"How can you make the service user involvement really meaningful? I think you'd have to throw a lot more time, effort, and resources at it to get it exactly right, and don't ask me what right is because I don't know". (Participant 2)

Many participants suggest that the barriers to involvement, the quality of their current involvement practices, and the practice realities of social work outweigh the value of the involvement process:

"I find it hard to believe [] that bringing service users into my classroom, to share their lived experiences, or having service users sit in on selection, really is making a difference". (Participant 8)

"For most people, just hearing somebody's story is not a benefit usually".
(Participant 5)

One participant spoke to user involvement in terms of the overall aims of the profession of social work in terms of the broader societal impact of user involvement, social justice and structural inequality.

'It is hard for me to think [] in the world we we're living in today, with the suffering, growing inequality, the child hunger, the exploitation, what value is this having?" (Participant 9)

This linked across to a data set coding extracts that linked views of user involvement to politics, the political alignment of the social work profession and the political positions of colleagues. Within this were extracts making reference to the merging of personal and professional values within the discipline, and opinions on governmental decision-making that impacts social work and education in practice. In this sense it examined the value of social work in terms of the contemporary political climate.

"I mean I find it very difficult to get in to political debates with some of my former social work colleagues that I think how on earth can you be a social worker but then think that about politics?". (Participant 9)

"looking around at the state of our country and austerity, and we're seeing the harm that happens to service users, the increase in homelessness, the high thresholds in child protection". (Participant 8)
One participant suggested alternative use of the involvement budget towards political campaigning or government lobbying:

"I'd rather use the £7000 to campaign outside of government to say 'look at what you are doing to society". (Participant 8)

As part of the overall theme of value, one participant answered their own rhetorical question as to whether the process really made a difference:

"Much as the people have a worthwhile contribution to make, actually, would it really make any difference to the interview process if they weren't there? No".
(Participant 4)

Another, whether or not the barriers to effective involvement diminished its worth as a justifiable activity:

"I would say we're probably in the worst of all worlds, because we do it, but we don't really do it well enough to justify doing it". (Participant 5)

Arguably, the data so far is telling us that these practitioners believe that the lack of resources available to them is impacting their own wellbeing and limiting involvement enthusiasm and practices. In addition to this, the data suggests that participants feel unclear about the purpose of involvement, or disagree as to the overall purposes, and even have questions regarding the overall value it brings. A logical step is perhaps to attempt to understand the reasons academic staff put forward in relation to what motivates them to do it. Perhaps unsurprisingly the majority of respondents reported regulatory or university requirements as the driving force behind their activity and introduced the notion that service user and carer involvement as a requirement has resulted in it becoming more of a bureaucratic tick-box exercise, and tokenistic. These views arose from six of the ten interviews that were at times critical of current practices and critical in terms of the impact that having user involvement prescribed within the SET's (HCPC, 2017) has had on the way it is interpreted.

"We tick the box we have to tick, that's good enough isn't it". (Participant 1)

*"I think that we've become institutionalised into doing something that's very cosy, comfortable and ticks box. I think, I would say, I can't agree with that because that was never the intention… I think it's tokenistic and the worst of all worlds". (*Participant 5)

"I think it's right that institutions are made to do it, but again, it's about how we interpret that and how we do that in a meaningful way…in the same way that the way that we work here I'd like to think is about developing partnerships with everybody that we're working with, whether it's employers or placement or colleagues or whatever, then it fits into that".
(Participant 3)

More positively, many respondents however felt that collaboration and partnerships with service users and students were a positive motivational factor. Whether this is the necessity of forming effective partnerships with students, service users and carers, organisations and other universities or just recognition of the value of collaboration more generally.

"I feel really strongly that we should be always going back to service users to hear what they've got to say and genuinely treat them as the experts". (Participant 1)

"I would say, if you're unable to do it with students, to have a collaborative collegiate approach, why would you be doing it with service users, because I think it reflects everything.

If you want a collaborative collegiate co-production, you're going to have to work in a very different way. I haven't seen any examples of where we do that either". (Participant 5)

The data gives examples of where academic staff support service user and carer involvement in theory, want to form effective partnerships with service users, but perhaps not in the way the current requirements prescribe and in the way that their circumstances enable:

"It's not that I don't believe that people that use services have a really important part to play, but I'm not sure that it's the part that we have ended up with". (Participant 5)

"I think it has become absolutely meaningless". (Participant 5)

Overall, the theme of value has highlighted that the academics interviewed had conflicting views about the value of user involvement. Fundamentally it seems that in theory it is something that is supported, with support for practice that involves collaboration, empowerment and quite often agreement that user involvement is beneficial for student development. However, within this theme we see some strong opposition in relation to the ideas that service users are beneficiaries of user involvement and links being made to the impact (or lack of impact) that user involvement has on structural inequalities. Many respondents reported current practices as tokenistic and linked this back to resources.

Ethics of Involvement

This theme emerged initially as participants made direct references in their interviews to issues that they considered to be ethical in nature, for example ethical concerns, or what they considered exploitation and risks to service user wellbeing inherent in involvement processes. These perceptions were shared within the general negative perception of user involvement and occurred in nine out of ten interviews and were predominantly examples where participants had raised questions as to the ethics of allowing service users to be vulnerable in the classroom by sharing personal stories of adversity that might be distressing for them. At this point I returned to the data to undertake further analysis of extracts that reported or implied broader ethical implications of user involvement, relying upon my own interpretation as researcher, rather than participant reports (Benton & Craig, 2001). Given the importance of the ethical framework underpinning social work I kept in mind the BASW ethical principles and centred my analysis around identifying anything that it could reasonably be expected to sit within or contravenes the core values of the profession

including human rights, social justice and professional integrity. These ethical principles were used as a framework to guide my data analysis and what emerged were three sub-themes: Threats to service user wellbeing/risk of exploitation; Issues related to the ethics of social work practice; diversity and representation.

Threat to service users and carers wellbeing/issues of exploitation.

This sub-theme contains expressions of concern from academic staff regarding the wellbeing of service users and carers and concerns that user involvement in some ways can be exploitative.

"They're placing themselves in a vulnerable situation again". (Participant 10)

"The risks around inviting people in is that obviously often we're asking service users to draw upon difficult aspects of their life experience" (Participant 3).

Equally, this theme reflected on the implications of service user involvement in terms of overall service user well being, their dignity and whether or not any potential negative impact was considered, evaluated or managed prior to involvement.

"It makes me think about the ethical conundrum that brings really, you know, how do we filter out the ones that might be harmed by it all, or not?" (Participant 4)

"… and so if, as an academic, I'm not confident that they are in a position to be able to do that in an informed way without causing further distress, and given that we haven't currently got the resources to be meeting with them". (Participant 1)

There were also some references to how lack of remuneration can contribute to additional forms of exploitation and expression that if service user involvement does not result in tangible societal change it can be argued as unethical. One participant suggested 'deeper' ethical issues by questioning whether these disclosures lead to any meaningful change from adversity:

"There's a deeper exploitation there, that someone's witness to themselves and you then don't allow that to come to fruition. To proper change". (Participant 6)

Ethical Practice

Given that exploitation would be an unintended consequence of user involvement that would contravene all ethical codes of the profession, it is helpful to examine the data through this lens.

If we apply a lens of the professional ethical framework (BASW, 2014) we perhaps find further evidence for the frustration of academic staff with many extracts where the current processes described do not necessarily feel ethical. For example, instead of 'promote participation' it appears as if opportunities for participation are being limited:

"I don't think there are any [service users] from really marginalised groups". (Participant 3)

"You're not following the remit that the whole service users and carers involvement was supposed to fill [] unless you're in the narrow band in the middle your voice will not be heard in University". (Participant 10)

Or demonstrating respect for the right to self-determination:

"We create a framework which allows them [service users and carers] to be involved but actually they're not really involved" (Participant 5)

Or even recognise the systemic influence or systemic barriers to accessing involvement opportunities:

"There are some people I haven't asked to come back to do interviews because they need so much support it doesn't benefit us". (Participant 3)

Equally, using this lens when thinking about social justice (BASW, 2014) and the necessity for social workers to challenge discrimination and unjust policy and practices:

"There was a lot of prejudice, I think we are social workers, but we are also human beings and we have our own prejudices, bias and sometimes we feel uncomfortable". (Participant 1)

"So there was an awful lot of prejudice I think actually from within the university". (Participant 1)

And to work in solidarity with service users:

" I think we like to have distance [] between ourselves and service users". (Participant 1)

Or to distribute resources in the face of austerity:

" I feel frightened when I look around and see austerity and the impact [] I find it hard then, to believe that [service user involvement] really is making a difference". (Participant 8)

Finally, in relation to professional integrity in terms of upholding the professional values and to being trustworthy one participant said academic staff are:

"… So pressured that I'm not sure their view is anti-discriminatory". (Participant 7)

And multiple participants referenced trust and honesty in relation to the way user involvement is framed:

"Is it [involvement] giving a false sense of reassurance that everything's OK".
(Participant 10)

"There is an exploitation that can occur when it is sold as really making a difference".
(Participant 10)

Furthermore, the ethical standard of making considered judgements whilst being professionally accountable arose in numerous extracts concerned with diversity and representation:

"How can we justify using the same service users all the time?" (Participant 5)

Representation

Finally, the notion of being able to justify which service users become involved in university initiatives overlaps with a data set exploring views regarding service user make up, in terms of overuse and representation. This data set combined smaller sets where participants discussed the overuse of service users, i.e., where participants expressed that small numbers of service users and carers are used too often, and also poor representation where participants raised questions regarding whether the service users and carers they used in their teaching and learning were sufficiently representative, and lastly whether the notion of representation itself was problematic.

The ‘overuse of users’ category highlighted the issue of repeatedly using the same service users in educational development practices and concerns largely focused on the impact of repeated involvement of service users, including the ‘domestication’ of service users and the value of their contribution.

“Once you start to employ effectively service users, then yes, you could say, in a way they're not service users anymore”. (Participant 1)

“Does that desensitise them? Is it good that they are exposed to their story so that it's no longer so impactful, or does it lose meaning for them? Does it desensitise them to some of the things that they've experienced?” (Participant 3)

“Once the voice they speak from more changes to one of an expert within the group, I think that dilutes the power it has, and the impact, and almost become another professional”. (Participant 6)

This was combined with poor representation data, which predominantly covered the lack of diversity and representation within service user involvement.

“I don't think there's any people of ethnic minority background. I think they're all white. Different disabilities or different levels of ability within that group but certainly not from the really marginalised groups”. (Participant 7)

Combined also were extracts that reflected on whether any service user could be representative of a wider group of service users due to the specificities of their situations.

“I guess representation is the other issue. It's always the problem, so who is this particular service user representing, or are they just a voice of their own experience? I think it becomes a bit more difficult when service users are involved as being representative of whole communities”. (Participant 6)

At this stage in the presentation of findings, the data is painting a picture of service user involvement as something that is perhaps difficult to contend with in terms of the range of ethical considerations and as a result of circumstances within the workplace that impact upon staff motivation.

The next theme: power, focuses on the extent to which academic staff have power to effect the changes they deem necessary.

Power

Power was a significant theme across all the data with references to hierarchy and power within service user involvement, occurring within eight of the ten interviews. The analysis concerned both the autonomy and power of service users and equally the academic staff themselves. Accounts reflected upon the University hierarchy and how academic authority over service users limits the ability of service users and carers to make decisions about processes, particularly in relation to student selection, and the extent to which this lack of power negated the value of service user involvement.

Participants highlighted that academic expertise requires them to take accountability and responsibility for decision making regarding student selection, and that occasionally service users may make recommendations based on their lived experience that could not be upheld by the academic team. This was also referenced with the reality that service users do not retain any responsibility or accountability for the decisions made at selection and thus the value of that process was compromised.

"We can't hand power over to service users, because there's a knowledge base that social work has that the service users don't have. So you can't hand over full power to service users for their care". (Participant 8).

"We sit in selection with service users on the panel, and a service user might say, 'I don't like this person, I don't want them to come on. I wouldn't like them at my front door.' If the academic staff or the practitioners saw potential in that student and their application was good, we wouldn't attribute any weight to that view", (Participant 8)

"Someone ultimately has to take control of a decision where there's a split. If it wasn't us, it might be the programme leader that we would refer to, but ultimately it would be somebody, and it certainly wouldn't be the service user", (Participant 2)

"Let's not fool ourselves that what we're really doing is transferring power to services users [] that's nonsense". (Participant 9)

Participants also expressed academic powerlessness in that Universities and regulatory bodies require academic staff to prioritise selection processes, which consumes the service users and carers annual budget, removing the professional autonomy of academic staff to target service user involvement elsewhere to activities deemed more beneficial.

"So all they are seeing from service user involvement is the interview process and I'm not sure that everybody thinks that that's great", (Participant 4)

"All the budget's going on the interviews… So there's nothing left.", (Participant 5)

One participant suggested that university organisational processes were so influential that they impacted the language that academic staff could use.

"We weren't allowed to use the word payment for their time" (Participant 1)

One participant suggested it was 'absolutely true' that academics experienced feelings of powerlessness due to the perceived power students have, with another participant suggesting that academics worry about their actions in relation to the university and the student body.

"Absolutely true [] students have more power and could make a complaint" (Participant 4)

"They were worried about the university response; they were worried about the student response" (Participant 1)

Although these comments primarily referred to a professional and organisational hierarchy between service users, professionals, and academics, one participant also commented on the self-imposed or perceived hierarchy between service users themselves - perhaps related to social hierarchies generally (physical disability opposed to learning disability), and how this created power differentials between them.

"There was two service users, man and wife, both I think paralysed from the neck down []... It was almost like they were up there in the hierarchy and they had more to say than some of the other ones who maybe had learning disabilities or whatever and so when they spoke everyone was like, 'Oh, yeah', you know, and were listening and hanging on their every word" (Participant 7)

One participant described the constraints as a result of a centralised timetabling system they could not control.

"The restraints of our timetabling [] in terms of our regulator on the programme, it's very difficult" (Participant 9)

So far the data suggests that academic staff report that user involvement is something that in theory they support but in practice are perhaps much more ambivalent about. Academics

report being significantly limited by lack of resources, and the power to make involvement meaningful. Within this is ambiguity and disagreement regarding the purpose of user involvement and a substantial amount of data suggesting that in practice it is of little value. What is of interest are the parallels academic staff are making to social work practice in terms of resilience, emotional labour and resources and whether this in fact leads to academic resistance, which is the final theme.

Academic Resistance

The overarching theme of power was a focal point of this study and included academic resistance to user involvement that eventually became a theme in its own right. Participants expressed resistance from themselves and shared examples of incidents when they have observed resistance in others, both explicit in their words and implicit in their behaviour, confirming that in their opinion resistance is a phenomenon that exists.

"I think there are practical issues and I think there are financial issues, there are issues about access, but I think the most problematic ones are the ones about people. About people's view about the whole topic, about people's willingness to really embrace it, because it means an awful lot of work and it means doing things differently. I think there is something about academic arrogance sometimes, I don't know if that's the right word", (Participant 1)

"Academic resistance is something that I've experienced and observed and thought about. Equally, I would say it's something that's never ever talked about, because it's controversial," (Participant 8)

As a result of interviews being set up in a constructive manner in order to permit academic staff to speak freely regarding academic resistance, the data was abundant. However, of particular interest: the notion of hidden academic resistance or evidence that participants may express different opinions of service user involvement in different settings, or that their internal personal view may differ from the view they express professionally outwardly (similar to the concept of emotional labour in social work practice) (Winter et al. 2019). The search included observations of free expression, references to inhibited expression and equally any reported feelings or anxiety as a result of the opinions being shared with the researcher. This too produced a wealth of data highlighting that some academic staff disguise their true feelings in relation to the professional setting they are in and/or company they are keeping – again similar to concepts of emotional labour in social work practice (Hochschild, 1983). For example:

"It's Ok to have these views as long as you acknowledge them, but not acknowledge them in public" (Participant 7)

"I can talk about myself [] It doesn't feel particularly an environment where you can be really… I can say what I think, and I do say, but people don't want to say" (Participant 5)

One participant made specific reference to concealing these views from the regulator:

"If it came to, for example, a validation event, we wouldn't be sitting there saying to the external people that were validating us 'Oh, well, we do work with service users, but we're finding it a great struggle, actually, and it takes a lot of time'"
(Participant 2)

Some participants felt that these discussions were necessary and didn't happen enough:

"We never acknowledge that [prejudice and feeling uncomfortable] … we never speak about that, it's always just 'like yer its fine" (Participant 4)

It's complicated and we should have the conversations about how complicated it is"
(Participant 5)

Or that these conversations did happen but only within the safety of team and not in front of other professionals:

"Among ourselves [talk about it] quite freely, but outwardly facing I don't think we necessarily do" (Participant 2)

"We wouldn't be doing that [speaking openly to other professionals]". (Participant 2)

One participant made direct reference to the impact of the social work value base:

"It would be hard to speak publicly because of our values" (Participant 8)

One participant requested that their opinion was not shared with a colleague (known to be involved in user involvement).
"Please don't tell [colleague] I said that" (Participant 4)

One participant expressed, what appeared to be concern regarding the perception from others if their view was aired openly:

"This sounds awful doesn't it [] if I'm brutally honest it's not my favourite part of the schedule" (Participant 10)

To some extent this can be likened to the notion of disguised compliance in practice where usually service users are assessed as making superficial or surface changes that give the illusion of change to ward off social work intervention (Brandon, 2008).

Another participant had concern regarding the extent to which they were balanced, and mirrored the views of their colleagues:

"I'm not sure whether I sound balanced or whether my colleagues have said the same kind of thing". (Participant 8)

Of significance however was the frequency with which participants expressed experiencing a negative emotion, or assigned themselves a negative characteristic, as a result of verbalising their or others resistance. This suggests that perhaps the internalising of the social work values means that this resistance did not feel comfortable and raises questions as to whether silence regarding negative views could be understood as an ego defence such as avoidance or suppression:

"I feel disloyal saying this" (Participant 2)

[Choosing the right service user] *"That sounds awful doesn't it"* (Participant 5)

"I can tell you sometimes I think 'Oh, no' [] I feel bad saying this" (Participant 10)

This leads to an examination of how these feelings and hidden perceptions manifest in resistance to involvement and what this looks like in practice. From the data, what we observe is that, perhaps due to the inability to openly express negativity, we see instead more passive avoidance. When talking about the challenges of service users who might be difficult to manage one participant suggested that responses might be:

"It's a question of, I don't have time for this, I'm very busy" (Participant 6)

Another participant reporting:

"I haven't really seen academics saying 'No, I'm not doing it' [] What I do see is [] academics shying away". (Participant 2)

Similar to the previous themes that perhaps mirror elements of social work practice such as burnout and lack of resources, this theme adds to these parallels with the notion of disguised compliance and emotional labour reinforcing the notion that many elements of working with service users in education settings replicate those found in social work practice.

Summary of Findings

At this stage in the study, it becomes clear that despite a clear stance of the profession being that user involvement is essential in order to meet the standards for education and training (SETs,) that the majority of the participants interviewed expressed positive regard directly only to the principle, concept or ideals of involvement. The participants recognised some value of involving service users, for both students and the service users themselves, but what emerged was an ambiguity and lack of agreement in relation to what the benefits were, if they were indeed a benefit at all and whom the primary beneficiaries should be. In contrast much of the data evidences negative perceptions of service user involvement in its current manifestations as well the lack of resources available in order to make it meaningful. The issue of resources was considered by the participants in a broad way, initially in terms of the resources available for involvement but more broadly to express concern for themselves with little control over their workloads, concern for students entering the profession who face possible burnout and concern for service users living in a society where services are being impacted by austerity. These factors combined appear to result in academic resistance to user involvement among the participants interviewed but in a way that is hidden from view of the employer, regulator, students and other professionals. Of particular interest is the extent to which elements of user involvement appear to mirror many documented challenges of social work practice including stress and burnout, disguised compliance, and emotional labour.

The following chapter will discuss these findings further. It returns to the research questions which were as follows:

Question One: What is the general perception of user involvement among academic staff?

Question Two: Is there resistance to service user and carer involvement from academic staff on social work programmes, spoken or otherwise?

Question Three: Does the social work value base impact upon the view of user involvement and/or the extent to which academics speak of this?
Question Four: Are there factors not documented within the current knowledge base that impact academic staff and their willingness/motivation to involve service users?

The chapter considers them in light of the findings of the existing literature and the theoretical insights identified in chapter three.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings in light of the overall purpose of the study: to explore academic resistance to service user and carer involvement in social work education. This chapter revisits the research questions interpreting the findings with reference to the findings from the wider academic literature. Furthermore, as an educator concerned with social justice, links are made throughout this discussion to the theoretical insights from Chapter Three to illuminate how these insights shaped the research and the approach to analysis.

Question 1: What is the general perception of user involvement among academic staff?

It is evident from the findings that the majority of participants in this research reported negative perceptions of user involvement. Many comments confirmed elements of the literature review; that resources whether that is time, money, or emotional labour required for involvement are often scarce in high-pressure university environments. However, of interest was that many participants made links between the lack of practical resources and the associated emotional impact to the notion of 'burnout', which has not previously appeared in the user involvement discourse. As an insider researcher who had experienced what might be described as burnout in social work practice and experienced the same organisational pressures as many of the participants it was important to pay attention to reflexivity and refrain from imposing my own experiences onto the participant accounts (Fleming, 2018). What emerged from the analysis, this study suggests, for the first time, is that academics may experience the phenomenon of 'double burnout', first in practice and then in academia, and that this has detrimental effects for engagement with service user involvement.

The concept of burnout was introduced into academic literature in the early 1970s by Herbert Freudenberger after observations that his colleagues appeared exhausted and were displaying a lack of motivation in the work environment. He coined the term 'burnout' to describe a set of psychological symptoms that can result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and feelings of decreased accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2005), and identified this as a result of the experience of being worn out by excessively trying to fulfil

unrealistic expectations, the depletion of physical and mental resources, and the resultant fatigue (Freudenberger, 1974). This could be interpreted as the lack of physical resources making role expectations unrealistic resulting in psychological and emotional burnout.

Many participants in this study highlighted burnout as a possible outcome for both academic staff in HE and for social workers in practice, and furthermore expressed concern regarding a realistic probability of burnout for their newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) entering the profession. This prediction of a 'burnt out' future for some participants appeared to limit the value of user involvement in the short term. Multiple references were made about the experience of burnout in social work practice despite none of the participants reporting that they continue to practice social work. This makes the relevance of burnout for social work educators in HE worthy of exploration. There is much available social work literature concerning social work practice and burnout that identifies reported organisational challenges, lack of resources and the emotional complexity of the work, resulting in social workers experiencing higher levels of stress and burnout than many comparable professions (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015; Wilson, 2016). The suggestion is that symptoms of burnout arise mainly from the impact of chronic stress, emotional exhaustion and psychological overwhelm (Caughey, 1996; Collings & Murray, 1996). Arguably, this recognition of burnout suggests that service user involvement might bring challenges for some academic staff due to the pressure associated with lack of resources in HE; pressure that can be compounded by the earlier professional experiences that social workers have brought with them into the academic role. Furthermore, parallels can be drawn between the experience of burnout and that of dehumanisation (Freire, 1996) when consciousness is submerged by an oppressive reality.

In addition to resources, the required professional relationship between social workers and service users and carers can be a contributory factor as it is complex one, fraught with relational challenges, challenging conversations and power differentials that need to be managed. An early qualitative study by Maslach et al. (1996) concluded that a key symptom of burnout is an inability for social workers to give themselves to clients at a psychological level and observations that practitioners developed cynical or negative attitudes towards them and patterns of perception similar to that of othering (Beresfords, 2013). Similarly, Acker, (1999) found a relationship between involvement with psychiatric patients and emotional exhaustion and concluded that social workers are impacted negatively by working

with clients with severe mental illness. This has also been found in user involvement literature among student mental health nurses reporting the challenges of service user presentations (Felton & Stickley, 2004). Furthermore, there is an abundance of literature highlighting the high risk of threats to harm and assaults towards social workers across both adult and children's social care settings (McGregor, 2010; Cookson & Buckley, 2012). Threats to social workers have been found to vary across service user group (Daynes, 2011), occur more often when social workers are younger (Brockman & McLean, 2000) and impact workers across both residential and non-residential provision (Harris & Leather, 2011). Whilst some trends suggest that there has been a recent decline in reported incidents of violence to social care staff (Cookson & Buckley, 2012) however this is countered with observations that incidents of violence are known to be under-reported by staff and employers (Skills for Care, 2013). Furthermore, Littlechild's (2005) study of social worker stress arising from violence suggests recoding of incidents can be misleading and does not capture the impact and effect upon working relationships. Academic staff on university social work programmes in the UK may have left or may still be involved in social work practice where the threat of violence and/or psychological distress in one form or another is a real and present danger (Harris & Leather, 2011), impacting both their own levels of resilience and their ability and willingness to engage with service users.

However, reference to burnout and concerns that resources were lacking and workloads too high were not limited to social work practice, with three participants referencing the working environment in HE. The notion of burnout in higher education staff has been studied for decades where it is argued that academic instructors who are burdened with administrative responsibilities, overwhelming workloads and a lack of skills to manage administrative and leadership roles are prime candidates for burnout (Crosby, 1982). Numerous studies confirmed these observations and reported the impact and effect of burnout among academic staff including substandard teaching, reduced interest in research and other job duties, less concern for students and student issues, a decline in classroom management abilities, a decrease in flexibility and ability to stay current with issues in the professional world of the subject being taught (Cherniss, 1980; Crosby, 1982; Farber, 1991; Gonzalez, 2003; Maslach, 2003). One could suggest that 'other job duties' might include service users and carers' involvement and this is reflected in the participants who actually expressed feeling overwhelmed.

Maslach et al. (2001) proposed that burnout occurs in jobs where there are high levels of interpersonal contact and where the demands of others are placed before oneself, leading to emotional exhaustion and secondary traumatic stress (Wagaman et al, 2015). It is argued that educators who have used up a great deal of their energy dealing with emotionally charged situations over a long period will eventually suffer from anxiety, undefined fears and nervous tension (Kahn, 2012). Contemporary studies suggest that, regardless of career stage, academics self-report high levels of stress with more than 70% of HE staff reporting high or very high levels of stress (Kinman, & Wray, 2013), and more than 25% of university staff too reporting experiencing burnout often or very often (Padilla & Thompson, 2016). It is further argued that Government cutbacks in funding have led to decreases in enrolment, increased class sizes and fewer educators (Brendtro & Hegge, 2000; Leon & Zareski, 1998) and that academic workload, lack of a sense of community, and a lack of resources and time may contribute to burnout (Prowell, 2019).

Another factor to consider is that burnout may be more common among people with higher education than lower education making academic staff by the very nature of their levels of education, higher risk (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). The hypothesis is that more educated individuals may have higher expectations with regard to their career accomplishment than those with less education. One could argue that this risk factor is compounded further for social work academics who may have already experienced disillusionment in social work practice and may have already experienced stress and/or burn out in the social work role. They are then at further risk due to the HE working conditions and as a result of their levels of education. Of note in the literature review is the relevance of the changing landscape of contemporary HE (Chan, 2018) where a range of widening participation agendas are resulting in a student population with radically different needs, and thus, the expectations upon staff have increased in scope and equally radically changed. It is further argued that the use of technology in the classroom has also been a threat to the job security of faculty who are not technologically savvy (Jones, 2001; Sarker, Davis & Tiropanis, 2010) whilst at the same time being offered as design that motivates students and supports teachers (Engelbertink, Kelders, Woudt-Mittendorff & Westerhof, 2021). Stolzenberg (2002) suggests enormous pressure upon educators in order to meet the challenging needs of the diverse student body, to keep up with advancements in the discipline, and to with technological advancement, and that faculty members in USA community colleges across the nation have instituted faculty and staff development programs specifically to avoid burnout. Reports of these pressures are

echoed in research in the UK as academics respond to calls for the adoption of learner analytics, the adoption of blended learning and to respond to widening participation (El-Mowafy, Kuhn & Snow, 2013; Avella et al. 2016).

Leiter and Maslach (2016), when attempting to evaluate factors associated with burnout, suggest the focus should not be only on the employee, but also the harmonious relationship between the employee and his or her work environment, as burnout is a direct result of the interaction of these two variables. This resonates with this study as in addition to the lack of resources, there were frequent reports during the interviews of a feeling of a lack of support for user involvement from the university more generally that was linked to support to facilitate payments, or a general understanding of the delivery of social work education programmes in comparison to other non PSRB programmes.

Such is the prevalence of burnout that as of 2019 the World Health Organization embarked on the development of evidence-based guidelines to support mental well-being in the workplace (WHO, 2019). The findings from this study suggest that for some academic staff who have previously been social workers burnout is a phenomenon that may impact them and their physical and psychological well-being twice, as a result of careers in both social work and in HE. It might also be reasonable to consider that this 'double burnout' or lack of resources both practical and emotional, coupled with the emotional complexity of relationships with service users, may have a negative impact upon the ability of academic staff to attend to user involvement. At this point it is pertinent to revisit the notion of shared oppression highlighted in the literature review, or as Freire (1972) suggests the necessity to encourage people to see the commonality of their situation. Acknowledging the impact that external and/or organisational forces are having upon academic well-being we might ask legitimate questions as to what extent academics or social workers can advocate for or improve outcomes for service users and carers when they themselves experience conditions that do not promote their own well-being and autonomy? Furthermore, is this an example where academic staff are having their consciousness submerged by an oppressive reality (Hatton, 2018) to the point that illness or burnout is the result which is then pathologized.

The Value of User Involvement

Of further interest to the question 'what are the perceptions of user involvement?' and in contrast to discussions of burnout, was the participants' positive views of user involvement with approximately half of the positive references sharing agreement regarding the potential

worth of it as an activity. Of interest here was the expression that service user and carer involvement is something that is predominantly championed in theory or in principle, suggesting an element of disconnect between the ideal of user involvement and the realities of practice. Furthermore, in the interviews a rationale was not provided for the positive judgement except that it is aligned to the values of the profession of social work. This conflict or ambiguity is also noted within the (albeit small) sample when participants expressed what they felt was the purpose of user involvement. Here the reports appeared to mirror the debates within the literature that concern evaluating meaningful involvement by examining either the value of the process of involvement for service users and carers and students, or the outcome of the involvement (Service User Involvement, 2014) and a range of concerns that what is required is greater evidence of its value (Irvine, Molyneux, & Gillman, 2015; MacSporran, 2014). Despite the small sample we see a relatively even split between those academic staff who feel strongly that student experience is the priority within user involvement and those who believe the purpose is for the enhancement of service users. Some of these views were notably polarised.

None of the participants reported what is widely expressed within the literature, which is that perhaps the most fundamental purpose of service user and carer involvement is to value the knowledge of users and carers and to use this knowledge to shape the services and practitioners of tomorrow recognising that this is different but equal to professional and academic knowledge (SCIE, 2009). Alternatively, participants made references to the notion that in practice, service user and carer involvement is tokenistic or a tick box exercise that lacks meaning. Not in the sense that this is how user involvement should be, as we can see from the findings that it is championed in theory, but rather in the sense that this is how it currently is in practice. This again perhaps echoing views that current involvement fails to transfer authority to service users (McLaughlin, Duffy, McKeever & Sadds, 2019) and that there is little evidence that the benefits of involvement are transferred to practice (Tanner, Littlechild, Duffy & Hayes, 2017). Given the fundamental importance of service user and carer involvement this raises some ethical questions surrounding elements of involvement and the data sheds light on a range of ethical tensions. None of the participants gave accounts that might be consistent with oppressors dehumanising others (Freire, 1996); in contrast five participants shared a view regarding the ethics of service users and carers' vulnerability in the university setting, focused upon their experience when sharing personal, often upsetting experiences to groups of students. These concerns were focused on either the dignity,

privacy and vulnerability of the service user; the potential for these experiences to be harmful; the possibility that academic staff may not have the time or resources to respond appropriately to any upset; and for one participant, the ethics of bearing witness to someone, their pain and their circumstances whilst knowing practically it is having little impact in terms of change.

Freire (1972) argues that as a result of domination people lack the consciousness or understanding to decode their situations. One might make a comparison when we are considering the activity of sharing personal information in the learning space, and the variety of perspectives we hear concerning this. In these circumstances service users and carers are being given a message from those they perceive to be in power, that this activity is worthwhile and beneficial. As a researcher adopting a critical stance, I made an attempt to compare the activity of service users sharing their stories to groups of students to other activities in UK society more generally, focusing on service user confidentiality. What occurs to me first are the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) governing confidential information in the UK and how the principle of confidentiality is upheld as fundamental to a range of human services including health, social care, counselling, police records and equally that any organisations that handle personal data must comply with data privacy laws or face fines and/or prosecution (IT Governance, ND). Counsellors uphold the notion of confidentiality with such rigidity that only the likely possibility of harm to the client or another would warrant a breach of confidentiality and discussions with supervisors are anonymised (Rogers, 1975). Furthermore, the confidentiality in this research means that no one other than the researcher will ever be able to trace, with certainty, the identities of the participants unless of course they disclose this information themselves.

As a result of these reflections, one might question what motivates service users and carers to share intimate, often traumatic details of their lives more widely. We read much concern within the literature review that service users become desensitised to their own condition as a result of repeated exposure to their lived experience (Torres, 2009), repeated assessment processes in health and social care, and perhaps the adoption of an identity rooted in their own suffering and the perspectives of those in power (Felton & Stickley, 2004). One might again draw upon the theoretical insights underpinning this study and reasonably argue this being an example of dehumanisation (Freire, 1972) and the accepting of capitalist hierarchical divisions of labour that offer differential treatments and standards for different

social groups (Gibson & Rikowski, 2004). Whilst it is acknowledged from the literature review that service users and carers can benefit from a sense of altruism, by giving back to a profession they may have received support from (Brown & Macintosh, 2006), one might argue that this sense of self-sacrifice regarding privacy (and according to some participants in this research, dignity) is made based on the belief that the process is highly valued and does some good. It might be reasonable to pose the question that if the service users and carers involved were aware that academic staff believed the process to lack value, that the sense of achievement would diminish and that some might feel differently about involvement. Equally, could the academics in this study defend the belief that the service users are really making informed consent?

If prior to the session, we were to share the view from one participant academic with the service user *"For most people, just hearing somebody's story is not a benefit usually" (Participant 5)* would they still wish to do it? Alternatively, if service users were made aware that in the event of any disagreement between the service user and the professionals or academic staff regarding the potential of a student applicant, that their view would not normally be upheld, could you reasonably expect service users to continue to participate. This is not arguing that priority should be given unequivocally to the service user view, merely highlighting a lack of transparency which itself could be argued as unethical. In response to this, it could be suggested that it is for the reason of tokenism that academics are urged to shy away from a perhaps superficial commitment to inclusion towards a more meaningful partnership with service users and carers as co-producers and partners in the educational experience (Robinson & Webber, 2013; Hatton, 2018). To this, one might respond that with the evidence of burnout, lack of resources, and continued ambiguity regarding the purpose of user involvement, that the time and resources needed for co-construction make this difficult to achieve.

So far we have heard in relation to the question 'What is the perception of user involvement?' that lack of resources has a significant impact on the participants in this research and their ability to give user involvement the attention and motivation that it requires. The references to burnout may well be a response to previous experiences of burnout in social work practice, the realities of contemporary social work practice where burnout remains a feature, the organisational climate of HE and possibly the increased risk due to levels of education of academic staff. Furthermore, the expressed ambiguity regarding

the purpose of involvement results in perhaps a lack of focus in relation to the social work values and the participants' report their own concerns regarding service user dignity and exploitation.

Overall, the response from the participants interviewed presented a valuable yet somewhat narrow focus regarding some ethics of user involvement concerned only with notions of dignity, vulnerability and potential harm from exposure in the learning space. However, a broader analysis of the data in relation to the profession of social work code of ethics (BASW, 2014) identified a range of considerations, often linked lack of resources that arguably make elements of user involvement unethical. For example, consistent with the literature review were reports of under representation, and the repeated use of the same service users and carers. Multiple participants shared that representation of service users was poor with the voices being heard arising from the service users and carers that are the most able, require the least amount of support, are reliable, and can be accommodated into the university structure with ease. In some ways we can argue that these exclusion practices are discriminatory and that the rejection of a service user due to a protected characteristic such as disability is unlawful. We would hope that user involvement activities offered individuals from marginalised groups more opportunity, and more protection than UK society at large yet within user involvement itself are examples of exclusion that are probably prohibited by the Equality Act (2010). Furthermore, SCIE (2009) make it very clear that it is important that HEIs involve a diverse range of users and carers in their programmes and that often service users and carers will need resources, training and support in order to effectively perform all the tasks required.

Perhaps what we are also witnessing is a prioritising of the organisational processes and student experience over what is ethically sound when working with service users. One might further argue that this selection of the most able, or less demanding service users is not only unlawful but is counter to the ethical principle of social justice where social workers have a responsibility to challenge discrimination, promote participation, and distribute resources. As is the case in this study, from one perspective, well-intended academics might be able to rationalise these judgements and practices due to the constraints of resources, work pressures and the experiences of burnout and the urgency of programme delivery. However, observations suggest that in some cases, the pressures of organisational requirements, or submerging of an oppressive reality (Freire, 1996) coupled with ambiguity regarding the

purpose of user involvement, as well as the competing tensions identified within the literature review appear to have shaped practice, to that which may no longer be seen as ethical. A Marxist educator may well question and challenge the extent to which these practices are reproducing inequality and exploitation in capitalist education (Horton, 2017).

It is argued that the managerial shifts in social work resulting from fiscal and organisational strategies can be shown to contribute to alienation, the concept where work loses it meaning (Habermas, 1971) and disempowerment (Carnoil, 1992), where social workers lose sense of agency or control they once had over their work (Riffe, & Kondrat, 1997), and again in more recent studies evaluating practice during the covid-19 pandemic where social workers are experiencing great challenges in practicing ethically (Banks et al. 2020). Arguably, these examples evidence that the meaning of user involvement can be lost under the control of high-pressured work environments (oppressive reality) and pressures for efficiency, all of which can impact professional values. Here we are witness to the disempowerment of academic staff who are perhaps understood to be powerful, and perhaps its negative impact upon the empowerment of services users.

If we revisit Freire (1996) and the aforementioned argument that in any case, any attempt from the oppressors (academic staff) to transfer power to the oppressed (service users) is little more that false generosity, and that power transfer will only really be achieved when the oppressed rise up in struggle to claim it for themselves. We might question why the training of service users as part of preparation for meaningful involvement does not support critical awakening regarding not only the complexities of birth advantage and disadvantage, structural inequalities that perpetuate many of the disadvantages experienced by citizens on the margins of society, but equally a realistic introduction to the underpinnings of user involvement, its applications, limitations and lived experiences of academic staff attempting to facilitate it. In this way attempting to mitigate the assertions from Torres (2009) that for service users sustained experiences of oppression can make it difficult for individuals to identify and understand their own circumstances, and the dispositions that incline the dominated to complicity are also the effect of their domination embodied (Torres, 2009). Equally, embracing a pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1972) with the creating of a critical consciousness concerning all structures that disempower in the fight for liberation. Similarly, Marx expressed clarity regarding the future of anti-capitalist education in that it should ‘critique capitalist society, its forms of schooling and training, its markets, and so on’

including critique of all the forms of inequality in capitalist society – class inequality, sexism, racism, discrimination against gay and lesbian people, against disabled people, ageism and differential treatment of other social groups'. (Gibson & Rikowski, 2004, p. 251 in Rikowski 2004, p. 567)

This is equally important as one must not preclude the fact that some members of academic staff might have marginalised identities and, in the UK, today now more than ever, it is important to expand the diversity of both academics and service users during involvement opportunities. This is recognised by contemporary scholars who argue that in the struggle against neo liberalism it is not only the working class who act as agents of change as students and academics can respond to Marx's call to 'engage, join the struggle to protect the values we share' (Larson et al 2014; Horton, 2017 p. 2026; Neary & Saunders, 2016). Experts have suggested that a culture of extremism and intolerance has become more visible in UK political debate and that stigma, prejudice and discrimination appear to be on the rise with increases in hate crimes, racism and assault against migrants and religious and ethnic minorities (Bhui, 2016; Public Health England, 2019). This offering further opportunity for academic staff in partnership with service users and carers to identify the shared structures within society that disempower, discriminate, and disadvantage everyone, and develop new knowledge as equals that help recreate a history that is fluid, and inform future changes and action. This of course aligning with contemporary Marx scholars who see capitalist universities as a field of radical research to be reconstituted as a form of living knowledge (Roggero, 2011 cited in Neary & Saunders, 2016, p.3). However, we might turn to critiques of Marx (Cole, 2017a; 2017b) to consider the central tenet of Critical Race Theory that rather than the main form of oppression being linked to class, it is race. If we think about race and racism more broadly and its manifestations in HE, current scholarship consistently identifies the pervasiveness of structural institutional racism in universities, despite the presence of a range of policies (aimed to tackle this) and the Equality Act (2010). Racism is seen in all areas including the under representation of BAME staff, the reduced likelihood for BAME staff to occupy senior positions, reported experiences of overt and covert racism on campus from both staff and students, and racially correlated differences in academic awards (Chesler & Young, 2015). Given that HE serves as a gateway to employment, critical political awakenings (Sue et al, 2019) and social mobility we see an emergence of a powerful

discourse demanding necessary change with a call for racial equality and the need to decolonise our curriculums.

Critical Race scholars (Tyson, 2015; Finley& Cooper, 2020; Kester, 2020) and much research (Bhui, 2016; Arao & Clemens, 2013; Verduzco-Baker, 2018) outlines that in order to effect institutional change in terms of equality we need opportunities to talk about race, racial inequality, and social justice. One might argue that with this recognition (that racial equality needs attention across all disciplines within universities, even disciplines that are not traditionally rooted in social justice), which means that for Social Work programmes to omit racial equality across involvement opportunities is a significant breach of social work values.

SCIE (2009) are clear that:

"It is vital that HEIs engage with local user and carer groups as these can provide help with assembling a wider pool of users and carers and can ensure that the activity is truly user and carer led, […] and that specific and proactive strategies may need to be developed to ensure that for example young carers, members of black and minority ethnic groups and care experienced young people are fully involved in programmes".

Arguably what we are witnessing is a positive rhetoric but without the control afforded to academics on social work programmes in relation to workloads and role expectations, necessary to achieve it. Ultimately this is having a detrimental impact on the extent to which they can actualise their social work values and live up to the expectations of the profession. Without evidence of partnership working, empowerment and transparency the act of involvement has many ethical tensions. Of interest is whether this reported pressure can at times leave academic staff feeling disempowered in a situation condemned by Freire (1996) as the way oppressors attempt to maintain an oppressive system through anti-'dialogical action' (1996, p. 69) often using 'divide and rule' (1996, p. 122) to keep divisions and rifts. Arguably manifesting as a preoccupation with your own working conditions and wellbeing that leaves little energy for championing the rights of others. As established in the review of literature (Chapter 2), academic staff are operating within a range of frameworks and environments at the 'Macro, Meso, Micro' level (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) that govern the direction of HE, influence to varying degrees the shape of curriculums, validate the approved delivery/teaching and learning methods and shape the expectations of students. Whilst it is accepted that a range of factors such as language differential, levels of education and professional status make academics more powerful (Towle et al. 2016), it was theorised in this research, that nonetheless the broader context and lived experience might result in

some feelings of powerlessness or oppression. Earlier conjecture that academic staff may experience powerlessness has been met with responses that such debate is a device to reinforce the professionals' position (Skeleton, 1994). However, substantial time has passed, and in this literature review the critical paper (Carey, 2009) proposes that practitioners stop to consider whether service user and carer involvement be rejected on moral grounds because on the surface the agenda delivers participation, engagement, choice and control through the adoption of 'bottom up' language, whilst concealing an arguably 'top down' moral underclass discourse where the disenfranchised are offered redemption though reintegration with the capitalist free market. Certainly, in this study academic staff appear to have lost power to the market forces and expressed feelings of powerlessness in that it is the universities' operating as a business that dictate student numbers, staff workloads and staff to student ratios whilst the regulation of social work education dictates user involvement that is difficult to deliver. Perhaps we are witnessing education consistent with Marx (1847) conceptualisation of as ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) that fails to offer real education and instead spreads bourgeois moral principles (Marx, 1847, cited in Taylor, 1995, p19). Furthermore, that the social relations of education including the relationships between teachers, students, administrators, and the ranking and evaluation of work replicate hierarchical divisions of labour and preparing students for the work place.

In this research some validation requirements of user involvement (SETs) (HCPC, 2014) are interpreted as quite prescriptive direction from the regulatory body, and academic staff feel they are required to have service user representation during all student selection processes that are frequent, time consuming and consequently absorbs the majority of the annual user involvement budget. Furthermore, the governing body (transferred from the HCPC to SWE as of December 2019) prescribes in some detail the skills and attributes that must be demonstrated in order to be admitted on to a social work programme. Given the examples concerning selection that we have seen, these indicating that the service users and carers selected to participate can be those who are assessed as most able, coupled with the reality that the service user voice is attributed the least amount of weight during applicant admittance decisions, one might question the real value that arises from the use of the user involvement annual budget in this way. This research suggests that this level of prescription, or (if the participants have misunderstood) the ambiguity surrounding the directions is disempowering as it stifles creativity and limits the co-construction of other activities that are

less prescribed. Equally, academic staff in this research, neither have the autonomy to direct the budget towards teaching and learning activities that could yield better student learning gain, nor it seems the time to afford service users the opportunity for involvement in ways that are agreed by all as more meaningful. One might also question the overall benefit of service user and carer involvement during selection and whether this actually helps to select students or prepare students better for the realities of practice any more than not having the service users' participation.

One participant suggested that such is the control of the university institution that academic staff were not permitted to use the word 'payment' when describing the exchange of monies for involvement and further reference was made to organisational restrictions such as timetabling. In addition to this, two participants referred to the power of the student body and fear of student complaints and associated reprisal from the university. Perhaps most compelling is that when one participant was asked if it is possible that academics experienced feelings of powerlessness due to the perceived power students have they replied that they thought that was "*absolutely true" (Participant* 4).

A study of social workers that focused on professional disempowerment of social workers found that limiting factors such as an absence of supporting managers led to feelings of frustration and that having social workers in disempowered positions had serious consequences for social work clients (Arnfjord & Hounsguard, 2015). They argue for the development of a critical professional capacity where social workers are united at the student level by engaging with enhanced critical understandings of not only their clients but themselves. This resonates with critical consciousness (Freire, 1996) and also the psychoanalytic theoretical insights of developing awareness of their own unconscious processes that may affect their work and personal well-being and poses interesting questions regarding the extent to which students are given a realistic perception of the value of involvement on their future practice, and the realities of their experiences post qualifying.

It is argued in this study that as a profession we must not overlook any evidence that points to social work academics being disempowered or burning out because of our acceptance of their perceived more powerful position in relation to service users and carers. This aligns with assertions from many contemporary Marxists Scholars (Neary and Saunders, 2016;

Larsen et al, 2014) who expand the parameters of the revolutionary working class to include everyone who needs to work and produce value in the neo liberal mode of production.

Furthermore, in this study this inattention to the experiences of social work academics is arguably seen to be having an impact upon service user involvement and service users, in terms of the quality of the professional relationships and the extent to which staff can actualise their anti-oppressive values in practice. Further, there are multiple studies that indicate that empathy is hierarchically organised (Cliffordson, 2002; Luo & Li, 2015; Hudson, Cikara & Sidanius, 2019) which suggest a correlation between position within perceived social dominance organisation and reduced levels of empathy or empathetic concern for those who are subjugated. Taking this perspective into account one could suggest that if government, policy makers and regulators have not focused concern for their workforce at ground level, their simultaneous expression of genuine empathy and concern for those who are more marginalised and dominated (i.e. service users) may be even less sincere. One might argue that failing to properly fund user involvement initiatives renders involvement a form of manipulation by the government (Freire, 1996, p. 128) that gives only an illusion of change and power exchange.

In response to Question 1 this research has uncovered a range of reasons given to support a predominantly negative perception of user involvement in theory despite support for it in principle. These include lack of resources to facilitate involvement, past, present or future experiences of burnout, some ethical concerns surrounding vulnerability, dignity, representation and consent of service users, and the experiences of staff who feel disempowered by both universities and social work regulation. It is now important to interpret the findings to identify whether these subjective experiences result in some form of academic resistance.

Question 2: Is there resistance to service user and carer involvement from academic staff on social work programmes, spoken or otherwise?

From the shared experiences of the participants the answer to this question is ‘yes’. Amidst the negative perceptions of involvement, research participants made multiple references to support the early proposition in this study that academic resistance exists. The participants

confirmed that they have either felt resistant to user involvement themselves, had thoughts that it might be a phenomenon, or observed what they believe to be resistance in the behaviour of their colleagues. Generally, the participants linked the resistance of themselves or others predominately to issues of resources either within, or external to the university environment. These reports included concerns the resources are not there to support effective involvement, or that high pressurised workloads mean educators do not have the time to facilitate involvement that is meaningful, or that the reality of UK austerity (Ryan, 2019) undoes the benefits of involvement. Two participants also highlighted the role of political persuasion or policy decision making as relevant in their experiences of resistance to service user involvement suggesting that the budget might be better spent lobbying or campaigning to the current UK government. One participant shared a view that was interpreted as an expression of despair at the reality of social work as a result of austerity, the associated harm to service users and high thresholds for service provision.

Initially the attention to government funding of involvement is interesting as there are 80 universities offering undergraduate qualifying degree programmes in the UK making the total government investment to facilitate user involvement in HE an arguably conservative £560,000. If we were to revisit the identified historical drivers behind the professional standards for user involvement, we would see recognition of the emergence of the service user movement, increasing public distrust of professionals, a shift away from a medically dominated model of care towards a social model of disability (Oliver, 2013) and a more empowered approached where service users are involved in decision making; additionally a range of Government legislation, which encourages greater inclusion of service users SETS (HCPC, 2014). However, one could argue that if, at the stage of this progressive policy development service users, user led organisations, communities of practice and social work educators themselves were aware of the significant fiscal policies to follow, that the overwhelming positive reception might have been tempered. Since 2010, austerity - primarily in the form of deep spending cuts with comparatively small increases in tax (Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), 2013) – has been the UK government's dominant fiscal policy, with far fewer measures to stimulate the economy. Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, cuts to social security and public services (Health, Police, Social Care, falling incomes, and rising unemployment have combined to create a deeply damaging situation in which millions of UK citizens are struggling to enjoy satisfactory standards of living (OXFAM, 2013). One might argue that service user policy is evidence of what Freire (1996) might term a pact or formal

agreement that misleads the oppressed and gives only the illusion that both groups are cooperating for social change when it is argued that in reality we are observing worsening outcomes for gender equality, child poverty and public contempt for individuals with disabilities (Ryan, 2019). Equally, it is widely recognised that the current funding crisis that is worsening, is resulting in extremely challenging times for people who use care services, and their carers, who are already experiencing the devastating impact of benefit reforms (Beresford, 2020). Furthermore, this austerity is being compounded by, and worsening the impact of the current Covid-19 global pandemic which is disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable individuals and groups in the UK and across the globe (Siegel & Mallow, 2021).

Broadly speaking one might argue that it is over work in HE, the lack of funding for user involvement and perception that in light of the realities of society in the UK today, that contributes to user involvement lacking value and meaning. This is echoed by Strier and Bershtling (2016) who discuss the 'obscure' concept of social work professionals' resistance in the face of being 'increasingly confronted with regulations, programs, and policies that challenge their ability to carry out their professional mission in an ethical manner' (2016, p. 112), arguing little is written about their unconscious resistance. It is pertinent to consider how this resistance manifests, if at all, and whether the data gathered in this study indicates that participants keep these negative perceptions hidden during their everyday work encounters, interactions with the profession, and fulfilment of their professional roles. The data would suggest so, as not only did some participants report that either individually or as a team they would refrain from sharing their felt resistance publicly, some suggested they might talk about this within the team but never more widely, and one participant was clear that there were even members within the team that they would not want their views to be made known to. Whilst predominantly the interview space appeared to be embraced and used as one that was cathartic for the participants - providing them a rare confidential opportunity for free expression, some of the participants' responses indicated some anxiety around their disclosures and concern for any possible sharing of the information. This raises questions as to the everyday experience of individuals concealing perspectives in an environment where they are not able to have their congruent views acknowledged or validated.

The aforementioned iceberg analogy can be useful here (see Figure 6) as it enables an at a glance a view of the data regarding the behaviours, views, attitudes and commitments that are expressed outwardly by the participants as well as those that are repressed, minimised, denied and hidden. For example, the outward expressions of commitment to user involvement 'in theory' and the recognition that this is aligned to the professional standards for both practice (Standards of Proficiency (SOP's) (BASW,2017)), the standards for education (SETS) (HCPC, 2014) and the values and ethics of social work (BASW, 2014). The expressed commitment to want to work in partnership with service users and carers as well as support for the premise that wide reaching collaboration between service users and carers, students, professionals and academic staff is central to effective teaching and learning and practice, and the warmth, respect, concern and validation that is shown towards service users when speaking of their experiences, vulnerability and dignity. At first glance it might be easy to interpret this as false generosity on the part of academic staff (Freire, 1972) as user involvement does not appear to be fighting against structural inequality. However, in this research this false generosity is not accompanied by the feelings of altruism intended to relieve the feelings of guilt of the oppressor (perhaps because academic staff are themselves oppressed) thus this might be better understood through the lens of conscious and unconscious processes and the concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983).

In this data, hidden from general view are a range of feelings, experiences, attitudes and behaviours not shared outwardly including the feelings of burnout, and associated compassion fatigue, despair at the structural inequalities, disempowering organisations, discriminatory practices, shared oppression and discrimination. Houston (2016) raises the idea that academics' shame might contribute to resistance, and Ferguson (2016) suggests the psychological process of becoming defended interrupts professionals' ability to reflect on their practice when experiencing emotionally difficult, stressful situations or burnout. He discusses how the theory of reflective practice 'needs to be underpinned by a much more sophisticated theory of the (defended) self and how it is used', and suggests that this can be found in psychoanalysis. Indeed, Greenson (2016) confirms 'In the psychoanalytic situation, the defences manifest themselves as resistances' (P. 187). Whilst a critical theorist may argue that to focus on the human psyche distracts from the real forces that create human experience (Tyson, 2015) this arguably aligns with and reinforces Freire's (1972) assertion that what is necessary is the development of critical consciousness where individuals can make sense of their own oppression and dominated consciousness to engage

in praxis (Reason & Torbet, 2001; Wallestein & Duran, 2008). It is hoped this analogy in the context of these discussions illuminates perhaps the importance of recognising dominated consciousness (compliance, burn out resistance) and the correlation between oppressive structures and individual experiences. See Figure 6 Iceberg Analogy.

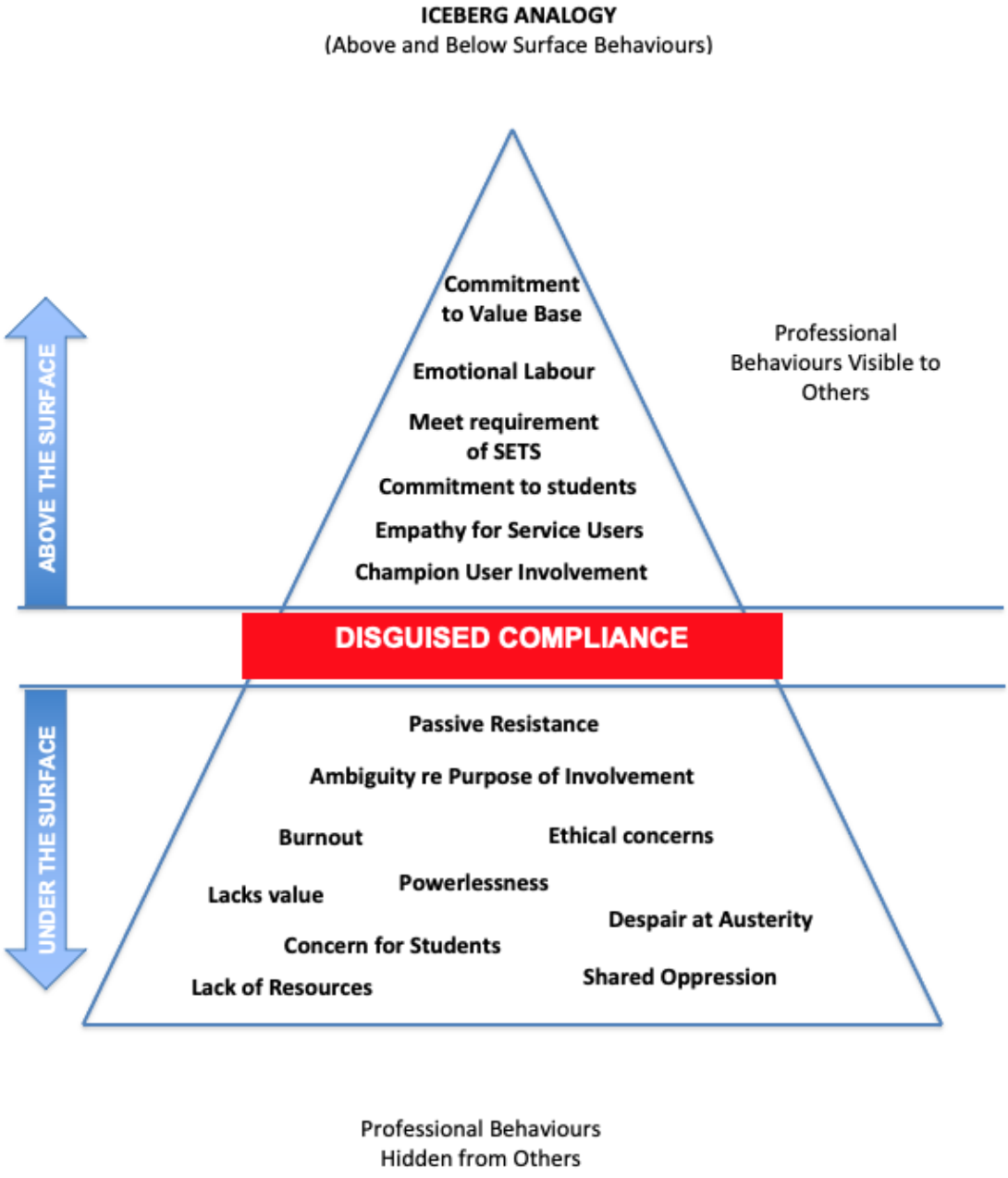

Figure 6: Iceberg Analogy

What is perhaps most unusual about this phenomenon is that social work is a profession that prides itself on practitioners having the ability to have challenging, compassionate and

constructive conservations with service users across many settings (Forrester, Westlake & Glynn 2012) often confronting the topics that other professions might find difficult. Coupled with this is the assertion that social workers need practice skills that support them to work with a range of dynamics including recognising structural barriers, and responding to interpersonal presentations such as resistance, denial and minimisation (Forrester, Westlake & Glynn 2012). One might argue that no profession is better equipped to engage in this meaningful discourse. Yet what has emerged is evidence that these practitioners are suppressing their own struggles, doubts and negative perceptions about a key element of their job role. This, when compared to the commitment to professional communication, honesty and transparency seems counter-intuitive. In practice for example, social workers are likely to encourage a parent who was having negative thoughts about their children to speak about these without fear of repercussion in order to examine, support, guide, and consider solutions. In the same way, encourage an individual who does not believe their care plan will work to share their fears, worries and frustrations so that we can examine limiting beliefs and consider alternative options. Equally, in criminal justice, social workers might rely on an individual with urges to offend to be able to share these in a safe professional space in order that supportive interventions can be offered, and together they and the professionals can manage associated risks. Arguably from the perspective of the interactions between social workers and service users the onus is on the social worker to use their professional skills to create an environment for service users that is safe and supportive and able to withstand challenge, differences and problem solve.

If we consider this further from the perspective of the interactions between social workers and their supervisors we can see a shared responsibility where, not only are social work practitioners required to seek out and use supervision to guide their practice (Hughes, 2010) but equally there is a responsibility for supervisors and managers to provide a safe, constructive and reflective space so that social workers have the necessary support to reflect upon their decisions and identify barriers to effective practice (Howe & Gray, 2012). Furthermore, If we relate these practices to teaching and learning in HE we see increasing calls for academic staff to develop the necessary skills to facilitate ‘Brave’ learning Spaces (Holley & Steiner, 2005; Arao & Clemens, 2013). These environments aim to be not only safe for exploration of structural discrimination, oppression and inequality across all disciplines, but to celebrate diversity in a way that promotes group solidarity (Norman, 1999) and uses principles of bravery to keep communication open so that differences can be aired, explored

and understood (Verdusco-Baker, 2018). Hence students can be supported to undertake safe reflective discovery (Loughran, 2013).

Arguably, the consistent factor here is that it is the responsibility of the person with authority i.e., listener/supervisor/manager/educator to create a space for those in usually (although not necessarily) subordinate positions to be able to share concerns, fears and resistance. This raises interesting questions regarding whom this function would fall to in the case of listening to and representing the unheard voices of social work academics that feel user involvement is not working. This is complicated as previously identified, that the remit of user involvement in social work education spans social work practice, leadership and education. However, we are aware that it is a function of the professional regulator, SWE, to gate keep and monitor the standards of social work education. Alternatively, might it fall to BASW (the largest professional membership organisation for social workers) as part of their commitment to improve working conditions and end austerity, or the chief social workers as part of their role to support and challenge the profession, provide independent expert advice to ministers, and challenge weak practice? (GOV.UK, N.D)

In relation to the question of whether academic resistance to user involvement exists we have heard from participants in this research reports that confirm the existence of resistance to user involvement from academic staff. Not in the form of refusal but in the more passive manifestation of shying away from involvement and/or engaging in involvement that might be considered tokenistic. In this way avoiding the risk of contradicting the value base and keeping safe from scrutiny by regulatory bodies. Underpinning this resistance is a concern regarding financial resources both within universities and externally in the UK as a result of austerity. This concern is supported by an examination of UK fiscal policy. Of further interest is that the views pertaining to resistance remain hidden in the workplace despite recognition that social workers and social work academics are perhaps most equipped to have these conversations, and that many participants report that they want to have them. What follows is an examination of what might prevent academic staff taking the initiative in these conversations and opening a dialogue that might ultimately champion their own rights and those of service users. This leads to addressing research question three.

Question 3: Does the social work value base impact upon the view of user involvement and/or the extent to which academics speak of this?

In relation to this question one participant gave a direct confirmative view that they would not be able to speak about resistance to user involvement because of their professional value base. Not because within the values base are instructions to remain silent but rather the perceived conflict between the position of feeling resistant and the celebrated intentions of user involvement in principle. In addition to this, as seen in the discussion of resistance, participants certainly expressed feeling guilt or disloyalty to the profession, perhaps indicating this view contradicts the value base and is not one that might be heard from social workers because it is controversial.

However, when we look at the narratives surrounding user involvement, we can perhaps identify compounding factors that might motivate academics to refrain from sharing any negative views publicly. An example being the abundance of strong supportive, public narratives from key social work organisations:

- ***The mandatory involvement of users and carers in social work education is a very exciting and powerful policy development. (SCIE, 2014).***

- ***Governments in UK, USA, Canada and Australia support the need for effective involvement that utilizes partnerships with service users built on the ethical imperative of autonomy, involvement and choice.*** **(Towle et al. 2016).**

- ***British Association of Social Work (BASW, 2018) is proud to have adopted what they believe is a robust and transparent framework for service user and carer involvement upon which to measure standards of good practice.***

Early critics (Smith and Jones, 1981) have described this as 'pressure for participation' caused by the power differential between the governing and the governed. Despite recognition that this introduction served to avoid confrontations between service user groups, their advocates and government, it is argued it has now become so entrenched within practice

that any attempt to criticise it has been treated with contempt (see Cooke & Kothari (2001) on 'political co-option').

Of significance to this study is a review conducted during 2018 by the HCPC Education and Training Committee of the service user and carer involvement standard as a requirement of programme validation over approximately 4 years (HCPC, 2018). This requirement was assessed for existing programmes during the annual monitoring process, and for new programmes as part of standard approval visits. The report also considered the learning points for the regulator in terms of future assessment of education standards. In evaluating the standard, education providers were asked to report who their service users and carers were, explain why they had been chosen, and demonstrate how they would be involved.

The HCPC concluded that the vast majority of education providers were able to meet the standard for involving service users and carers with relative ease, with no profession specific trends in relation to disciplines/programmes that experienced difficulties. They report that across the three years of programme delivery they found a steady decrease in programmes experiencing issues and that the issues encountered could be encapsulated across three themes: formal involvement or the extent to which user involvement was formalised and evidenced; support and training, or the extent to which the evidence demonstrated that service users and carers were given sufficient support and training; clarification of the types of involvement where providers were able to demonstrate that service users and carers were involved but not sufficiently clear of their role and the positive impact as a result.

Overall, the report highlights that by year three of implementation only 10% of new programmes struggled to meet this requirement at the stage of programme approval and less than 20% of programmes during annual monitoring. Across the first 2 years, out of 913 programmes that were approved via annual monitoring, there were only 3 programmes that required a visit as a result of being unable to make a judgement about the standard due to the quality of evidence supplied with.

One might imagine that if you were an academic member of staff with reservations regarding service users and carers' involvement that included your ability to facilitate it ethically, and had questions surrounding its value, a report from your professional regulator (outlining that the majority of programmes manage to do it with ease) might further limit your desire for

free expression. What seems important is that (in the absence of a Freedom of Information request), as an insider researcher (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002) and previous Programme Leader for a large BSc Programme for one of the institutions in this study, and subsequent to the disclosure of participants, it is confirmed that two of the universities in this study have experienced successful annual monitoring and approval.

This suggests that the narratives of resistance were hidden from the professional regulator at the time of approval and that annual monitoring of professional programmes relies upon the disclosures of staff to highlight challenges and does not provide a space to capture the concerns surrounding user involvement. The focus instead is on the ability of a programme to demonstrate that service users are involved. In relation to these behaviours from academic staff, Klein proposes that 'the most primitive defences against anxiety are intersubjective, that is, they come into play in relations between people' (in Hollway and Jefferson, 2008, p. 297) so perhaps what we are witnessing is anxiety defence mechanisms causing academic staff to hide their true perceptions or feelings, consistent with emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). The concealment perhaps being related to the feelings that emerge as a result of the realities of involvement (in comparison to the rhetoric), as Hollway and Jefferson (2008, p. 299) propose: 'that if memories of events provoke anxiety, they may be either forgotten or recalled in a modified, more acceptable fashion'. Here this study is hypothesising that feelings of anxiety triggered by the prospects of countering the professional narrative or indeed not meeting up to the professional expectations causes staff to conceal their experiences.

Equally, a reluctance to speak out has been noted in other areas of social work where even early studies have suggested that due to the non-judgemental stance of the social work profession, social workers may struggle to admit that personalities or attributes of clients make it difficult to give the optimum professional and service response (Rushton, 1987). Alternatively, one might argue that what we are observing in this sample is similar to that of disguised compliance, a phenomenon associated mostly with service user presentations in social work practice in child protection (Reder et al. 1993). The traditional view of disguised compliance is that it occurs when parents or carers of children seem to co-operate with social workers, or plans of intervention, superficially or on a short-term basis as a way to conceal the realities of the situation and to ensure that social work oversight disappears (Brandon et al. 2008). An example might be a parent attending a parenting class despite

continuing to believe that their parenting is fine or agreeing to deny access to the home to individuals deemed high risk but continuing to permit this access in secret, or perhaps appearing to make fundamental changes to lifestyle in the short term for the sake of reducing professional oversight longer term.

However, compassionate scholars point out that often where there is evidence of disguised compliance, one might usually find a parent or carer who is actually feeling overwhelmed and powerless with accompanying experiences of feeling inadequate or shamed (Ferguson, 2009; Lewis, 1971). It is recognised that this shame-motivated behaviour can result in increased hostility in some but equally the development of appeasing and pleasing behaviours in others as a way to mitigate the psychological distress of powerlessness (Tracy & Robins, 2007). Thus, in these circumstances the focus of motivation is on gaining social acceptance by pleasing the authoritative social worker rather than the desired prioritising of a child's needs. Similar experiences are observed across helping professions for example in therapeutic encounters where clients may conceal information from therapists as a way to protect themselves from feelings of failure or the debilitating effects of shame (Farber, 2003).

We could use these arguments to help interpret the user involvement data as we have witnessed within the interviews the expressions of previously hidden reluctance, observing elements of powerlessness in the ability of arguably overwhelmed academic staff to make changes to the circumstances they find themselves in. Equally the data suggested reports of superficial engagement with the user involvement processes that satisfy the powerful regulator but do not really satisfy the requirements to make user involvement a prioritised and fundamental part of the culture of social work education and instead, easing and appeasing messages being reported during interactions with the powerful regulator as a way to minimise oversight for another academic year. Within the data was a multitude of reports from the participants themselves that might be indicative of feelings of shame and guilt as a result of these disclosures, such as *"That sounds awful doesn't it" (Participant 5).*

Interestingly there is a proposed agreed recognition that any credible and rigorous academic discourse requires space for criticality (QAA, 2020; Office for Students (OfS), 2020). Furthermore, students who wish to obtain awards in the higher classifications must themselves demonstrate an ability to synthesise information from a range of perspectives: applying criticality, analysis and rigour (QAA, 2020). Yet one might argue that there is

evidence to suggest that some critical voices are missing from the debate and that mechanisms to establish the success of service user and carer involvement do not provide the opportunity during practice in real time to voice concerns. In terms of critical pedagogy and power one can again look to Freire (1972) for examination of any motive that minimises critical perspectives with his ideas of 'conscientisation', the notion that when the person becomes aware of the way their oppression is determined they develop the capacity to take action to change their situation (Freire, 1972). Furthermore, it is argued that these realities of user involvement lend themselves to problem-based pedagogy where students, service users and carers, together learn of the limitations of user involvement and co-construct solutions. Arguably, however, an easy way to maintain a neoliberal status quo and prevent conscientisation is to offer the illusion of power and choice to service users and minimise the voices of those who suggest that it is not working.

This section has addressed the question 'does the professional value base limit the extent to which academic staff speak freely about user involvement?' and in so doing has identified a range of factors that support this suggestion as well as other factors that impact the behaviours and disclosures of academic staff. Firstly, the awareness from academic staff that a negative view of involvement would, on the surface appear to contravene their professional value base, which is compounded by such large numbers of positive narratives within discourse that has been interpreted by some authors as 'pressure to participate' (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). This is perhaps further exacerbated by reports from the regulator that nearly all other universities are doing it to the required standard. Perhaps then we can turn to the theoretical insights to examine the impact of guilt or anxiety in relation to views that are deemed inappropriate or perceived failure in relation to the perceived reality of involvement in practice as a further mechanism that limits free expression. Instead, it appears that academics conceal their emotional state consistent with emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and operate in a way consistent with disguised compliance (Brandon et al., 2008), appearing to conform on the surface in a way that is sufficient to meet professional standards and ward off further oversight or scrutiny. At this stage in the discussion, we turn to the final research question to examine any other factors not documented within the knowledge base that impact upon academic staff.

Question 4: Are there factors not documented within the current knowledge base that impact academic staff and their willingness/ motivation to involve service users?

From the data already reviewed, many themes have emerged that are either given scant attention within the user involvement knowledge base or have been previously engaged with in a superficial way. This study has identified that in this sample, such are the lack of resources for service user involvement that some actions of well-intended academic staff could be deemed oppressive in that service user voices are overlooked or dismissed, and other actions, such as that of selecting service users for specific involvement opportunities, discriminatory. Furthermore, the ethics of involvement are not clear with suggestions of exploitation (due to presenting user involvement as really making a difference) and the lack of transparency in relation to the realistic challenges and limitations in its implementation. In this sense it could be argued that service users should be able to make informed consent about their participation in the same way one might be informed that a certain medication does not work for everyone and has the potential for a number of side effects before an individual makes a choice to take it. The reality is that service users might be agreeable to exposing their vulnerabilities on a large scale unaware that members of those in powerful positions believe it to be of little use, or in light of general privacy norms see this as compromising their dignity. This raising ethical questions regarding 'manipulation' (Allain et al, 2006) and the quality of the service user/ educator relationships (Askheim, Beresford and Heule, 2017). Equally we see empowerment opportunities where service users and carers may give their time to contribute to a decision-making forum unaware that in practice their contribution may be discredited or discarded after they leave. Whilst there is some agreement within the discourse that one cannot transfer the power to make decisions to service users without the accompanying accountability for them, it is the deception or false presentation of power that is worthy of further examination.

The lack of resources was also reported as having an impact on the well-being of academic staff themselves, to the extent that participants' enthusiasm or motivation for user involvement in many cases was absent. Many participants made reference to the possibility of 'Burnout' and linked this to well documented stress and burnout within social work practice. In light of the abundance of literature concerning burnout in both social work

practice and in HE, the concept of double burnout i.e. social work academics experience multiple or cumulative episodes of employment related distress, warrants further attention.

In contrast to an enormous and heavily supported policy agenda, resources and the observations of austerity at the macro level of society generally, as well as the impact of this on resources at the organisational level of social work practice led to some participants questioning the overall value of user involvement generally. Building on this, in contrast to the literature review where the ambiguity and debate concerns primarily what constitutes meaningful involvement (Robinson & Webber, 2013; MacSporran, 2014) and whether the focus of evaluations should be on the process of involvement or the outcome (Fitzhenry, 2008; Tanner, Littlechild, Duffy & Hayes, 1017), the responses from participants in this study report fundamental ambiguity in terms of the overall agreed primary purpose from the outset. With the lack of clarity of purpose and reported insufficient resources to facilitate user involvement, many participants identify user involvement as being a tick-box exercise that is undertaken to satisfy the regulator in the absence of passion, motivation and creativity.

The experiences in the sample in this study have led to consistent reports of academics feeling or observing resistance to the involvement activity, and acknowledgement that this resistance is either talked about only within the safe space of like-minded team colleagues, or not at all. Despite the skill set within the profession of social work being one of advanced communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving (Trevithick, 2009), it appears that transparent and/or difficult conversations surrounding user involvement do not appear to be happening. Whether that is sharing the realities of involvement, its benefits and limitations with service users themselves in a transparent and empowering manner, or between members of the academic staff and their professional regulator.

Instead, what we are observing is the manifestation of anxiety, emotional labour and disguised compliance (Reder et al. 1993). This being a set of behaviours recognised in practice with resistant service users and authoritative social workers that offers an interesting comparison between disempowered academic staff and their reported tokenistic actions and simultaneous expression that all is well. The argued lack of exploration regarding resistant voices within the service user discourse could be viewed as a manifestation of

hierarchical organised empathy, which has raised a further question regarding the true value of the expressed empathy at a policy level.

This chapter has brought together the research findings, the theoretical perspectives, and the academic literature, in order to answer the research questions. In light of this discussion Chapter Seven will make recommendations for social work educators for both the practice of user involvement in social work education and future research.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

In view of the study's findings this chapter will make recommendations for social work educators involved in service user and carer involvement in social work education. These recommendations are divided into those that apply to the practice of user involvement and those that concern future research.

The practice of service user and carer involvement in Social Work Education

1. Academic staff should give due consideration to the preparation and support that is offered to service users and carers and the extent to which this supports critical understandings of their circumstances and of service user involvement more generally.

If we accept that higher education has a role to play in enabling the development of a critical consciousness, then arguably this must apply to all actors within it. This study has demonstrated a discrepancy between the views of service user involvement verbalised from the academic staff and those that remain hidden. This research argues that one must not engage the support of service users and carers in the education of social workers if whilst doing this service users are unaware of the way in which higher education can reinforce inequality, and further that involvement processes themselves can continue to marginalise and exclude some people. From an ethical stance we might argue that service users and carers have a right to make an informed choice regarding their involvement and the impact it may or may not have on student development, and the lives of the people and communities that social work serve. Perhaps through the form of induction academic staff can support service users and carers to make sense of their own circumstances through a structural rather than personal lens, and the role that involvement can play in reinforcing or reducing structural barriers.

2. Social work programme leaders and department heads should consider whether elements of social work practice such as supervision or reflective practice groups can be incorporated into HE in order to promote honest discussions with academic staff that explore their experiences of user involvement.

This research has shown that participants do not feel able to express negative perceptions of user involvement freely, nor do they have a supportive space where they can verbalise concerns regarding the impact of work pressures. It is suggested that Safe Spaces are created within University Social Work Departments for congruent expression, reflection, critical analysis, problem solving and support.

3. Consideration be given to the potential of 'problem-based learning' in partnership with service users, to be used as a pedagogical approach targeted at raising critical awareness of the limitations of user involvement and designing solutions.

This research has drawn upon Freire's critical pedagogy that centres around a collective empowering process, that frees both the oppressors and the oppressed, through 'problem posing' learning that enables teachers and students to step back and question everyday life, identify structures within society that disempower, discriminate, and disadvantage, and develop new knowledge as equals that help recreate a history that is fluid and can inform future changes and action. With a strong body of evidence highlighting the benefits of problem-based learning as a powerful method for improving learning gain and solving complex problems that appear to have no easy solution, (Schwartz, 2013; Allen, Dinham & Bernhardt, 2011) this thesis advocates for the appropriateness of this instructional method when applied to the complexity of user involvement in HE. Moving away from a Banking model of education where we instruct students that service user involvement is positive and instead posing user involvement as a part of the problem of social work education, within institutions that reinforce inequality in an increasingly unequal society can aid students, service users and academic staff together to develop collaborative enhancements or solutions moving forward. Using partnerships, or learning groups, with all actors, that problematises user involvement offers a truly collaborative approach that can support with increasing the critical consciousness, of all.

Research into Service User and Carer Involvement in Social Work Education

4. It is recommended that this study should be expanded to include a larger sample size across more institutions for a larger representation of academic voices.

In light of the range of evidence that the benefits of involvement are difficult to measure and furthermore that benefits do not always result in tangible meaningful impact upon the lives of service users (Carpenter, 2011; Allain et al (2006; Askheim, Beresford & Heule, 2017) and the importance of critical race theory (Tyson, 2015; Arday, 2018; Liyanage, 2020) as a lens through which to understand oppression and discrimination, this study calls for further research that incorporates diversity. Given the limitation of the small sample size of this study and the reality that this study was undertaken with a sample geographically south in the UK it would benefit from expansion to include a diverse sample that represents Social Work England more broadly and includes as many participants as possible who may have an element of their identity that is minoritized or systemically disadvantaged.

5. On a larger scale a mixed methodology could be employed to perhaps survey all social work academics in relation to their experiences of burnout, the phenomena of double burnout, and their perceptions of the value and success of service users and carers involvement.

This thesis has uncovered a phenomena whereby academic staff in social work education may be at risk of experiencing the impact of high stress and professional burnout twice because of career progression from social work practice to academia. With burnout being so impactful on the wellbeing of those affected and the possible link between feeling burnt out and lack of enthusiasm for user involvement it is suggested that research is conducted to broaden our understanding. A mixed methodology of perhaps questionnaires with follow up interviews may offer a broad understanding of a larger proportion of the academic profession with some further rich data regarding participants lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges.

6. A study that allows service users to hear the concerns from academics regarding some less ethical elements of user involvement to elicit informed responses and opportunities to co-create future professional standards.

This study argues that without transparency with service users regarding the challenges and limitations of user involvement, service users and carers cannot provide informed consent for their involvement. Furthermore, without congruent discussion regarding the limitations of involvement service users and carers cannot effectively be involved in conceptualising the problems and constructing solutions. A response to this might be the formation of focus groups using the techniques employed in this research to create a safe space where the results from this study can be shared and used as talking points for exploration.

Having made these recommendations, and prior to concluding the research it is necessary to attend to the overall quality of this study, as identified through a range of criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of Qualitative Research. The following chapter does this.

Chapter Eight: Trustworthiness

This chapter attends to the concept of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) as a method for evaluating the quality of qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It guides the reader through the limitations and a range of criteria for trustworthiness demonstrating the actions taken before, during and after the research before devoting substantial attention to researcher reflexivity including my reflections on both the research process and myself as researcher.

Limitations

This study consisted of qualitative interviews of 10 academic staff, across 3 institutions in the UK. Despite the suggested limitations that often research into service user and carer involvement is small scale, qualitative in nature and limited to a single institution, so lacks generalisability (Chambers & Hickey, 2012), this qualitative research within the constructivist paradigm does not view this as a limitation nor seek generalisability as a research outcome. This research mirrors some of these characteristics as it is a small-scale qualitative study, yet it is through attention to rigour and trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) that as a qualitative researcher I can be confident that the results can make an original contribution to the knowledge base. Furthermore, as a researcher whose working life has been predominantly concerned with championing minority voices or perspectives less heard, the notion of generalisability is not important for me and my appreciation of the contribution to knowledge that often overlooked, indigenous or marginalised voices can make. Were this research to uncover a lone perspective of one person not previously heard, I would deem it to be nonetheless a valuable contribution to the debate.

However, a limitation within this sample is the lack of diversity of representation. Whilst this is a small sample it is perhaps reflective of another way in which higher education can reinforce inequality. Many critical race scholars highlight racial inequalities in higher education (Advance HE, 2021) whether this is in the student body regarding progression, retention, or outcome (UUK2019; UCU, 2016) or under representation of academic staff with minoritised ethnicity in academic positions, especially positions of higher levels of seniority. This is in addition to the varying racialized experiences of academics across disciplines (Rollock, 2019, Gabriel and Tate, 2017) and lack of representation in relation to curriculum and research (Arday, 2018; Liyanage, 2020) and systematic accounts of harassment, hate

crime and othering (EHRC, 2019; Johnson & Joseph-Salisbury 2018). Some argue that there is a stubborn refusal from academia itself to accept that it might be complicit in reinforcing racial injustice as opposed to being a passive commentator on it (Warmington, 2018). This of course highly relevant in a study such as this that is focused on the ways that higher education acts as a mechanism of social justice and acknowledges that issues of representation are prominent among the discussion surrounding user involvement, and equally the institutions within which it is facilitated. In this study we have seen recognition from participants that representation among service user involvement is inadequate yet equally the purposeful cherry picking of service users that can aid facilitation in a busy environment rather than a commitment to diversity. One might argue that the views from academic staff who themselves face systemic oppression or discrimination as a result of minoritised race or ethnicity may differ from the white voices mobilised in this study and that the absence of these voices is a significant limitation. For me as a researcher striving for justice and equality, I find yet again I am confronted with the knowledge that my well-intended socially just research has this limitation in terms of representation. In future consideration be given to alternative sampling such as quota sampling (Etikan and Bala, 2014) as a way to avoid this.

Bias, in the quantitative paradigm, is commonly understood as any influence that could distort the results of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014) and is recognised by some as being an incompatible term in relation to qualitative research (Thorne, Stephens & Truant, 2016). Instead, the use of the term 'rigour' and the proposal of a variety of verification strategies, for use during the research process, as well as evaluative actions post-research are offered, to demonstrate the overall 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research (Guba, 1981). Some of this concerns methodological coherence to ensure congruence between the research question and the components of the method, and much criteria for 'Trustworthiness' involves attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In terms of methodological coherence, this research concerned the perceptions of academic staff and thus adopted the research method of unstructured qualitative interviews as a methodologically appropriate means of eliciting and hearing these voices. This research was not seeking a universal truth - rather to uncover perspectives and individual experiences of those interviewed.

Credibility

Credibility is proposed as the equivalent of the internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with overall value or level of confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To achieve credibility, strategies of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and member check are offered as important techniques. In this research, I was present in the field (with the majority of the participants) for a prolonged period of time (2016-2020) and was familiar with the context of user involvement and the employment setting and had already built trusting collegial relationships with participants. I also had prolonged engagement with the data and literature, beginning the analysis during the interview process and revisiting the data and literature in an iterative manner throughout. This links to the technique of persistent observation of the data as the transcripts were read and re-read, with data being coded, categorised and revised until such time that the final themes offered depth of theoretical insight (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Triangulation is also offered as a quality indicator and involves using different data sources, multiple methods of collection and investigators. Whilst this study was conducted by a single researcher as a requirement of the EdD, the data and research process were shared with others throughout. For example, by presenting to the Post Graduate Research peer group on 2 occasions, presenting at the JSWEC annual conference, discussions with my peers on a week-long writing retreat, and by sharing the transcripts, ideas and concepts with my supervisory team on a monthly basis. As the final technique for credibility, member check is recommended where researchers' feedback the data and its analysis to the participants. In this research all participants received an audio copy of their interviews as well as a copy of their transcribed interview. This did not lead to any modifications, and post-research a decision will be made regarding how best to share the overall findings.

Transferability

Transferability concerns the ability of readers to be able to assess the applicability of your research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and the responsibility for this lies with the researcher providing sufficient information in order for readers to be able to make this 'transferability judgement'. To enable these judgements researchers need to provide 'thick description' where they not only provide sufficient data and a rich account of it, but sufficient context for the research, sample, sample size, demographic and a detailed description of research

methods. This research provides the readers with participant biodata (Stokes, Mumford, & Owens, 1984) including age, gender, length of service and an introductory chapter and literature review that provides an in-depth examination of the context for study, the underpinning rationale for user involvement, the regulatory requirements, and the contemporary context of HE. Furthermore, readers are given a detailed account of the iterative research process, and samples of data. It is believed that the information within this thesis would be sufficient for an academic member of staff anywhere in England to make a 'transferability judgement'. For example, we must not assume that Black and Minority Ethic (BME) academic staff, who were not represented within this sample would necessarily identify with the white voices heard.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability of research is described by Korstjens and Moser (2018) as all aspects of consistency. In this study that involves a consistent method of interviewing (i.e. unstructured) and consistently adhering to the guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006) for Thematic Analysis. A further indicator of dependability of research is through sampling adequacy, evidenced by saturation and replication (Morse, 1991). Whilst as a new researcher I had optimistic aspirations for a larger sample size, my knowledge of the pressures within the sector, as well as the perceived criticality of subject area, meant I ultimately maintained a realistic stance that my sample might be small. My concerns around the small sample size were compounded with the emergence of Covid-19 and the impact this had on individuals working in HE who with very little notice were required to transfer all teaching and learning on-line for synchronous and asynchronous delivery (Hrastinski, 2008). However, as part of the on-going verification strategies, the data was systematically checked against the focus of academic resistance, which helped guide whether or not the research should continue, stop or be modified in order to achieve reliability and validity and ensure rigor (Morse et al. 2002). It was thorough this continual checking process, that the minor changes were made to the opening of interviews, and that the level of consistency of responses across the institutions was noted. Themes not anticipated had emerged and I felt confident that I had reached saturation for research undertaken on this topic in these circumstances, and in my capacity as a single student researcher. In addition to this and as part of overall methodological coherence, attention is drawn to the sample in that it must be appropriate, consisting of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic, which in this study is the social work academic staff themselves. Prior to the study I had no confirmed

knowledge of social work academics that might feel resistant or negative towards service user and carer involvement and thus felt that my sampling was bias free. Invitations to participate were sent to whole social work departments or programme teams at neighbouring institutions and it could be argued, would have been received by academic staff with a range of differing views. It is noted that the focus of the study was clearly defined in the participant invitation and associated participant information and as this information was attached to the email invitation this may have been a factor in participant recruitment. For example, those academics feeling very positive about service users and carers' involvement possibly choosing to decline or vice versa. So overall I have confidence that the research is dependable.

Dependability and confirmability are linked as after being sure your research is dependable it is the responsibility of the researcher to be able to confirm this with an audit trail. In this research this is demonstrated with an audit trail of the sampling and invitations, interviews conducted, thematic analysis, supervision records, transcripts and a reflective journal. The reflective journal although not for inclusion in this thesis and at varying times fluctuating in quality, supported the overall attention to reflexivity.

Reflexivity

In terms of the final quality indicator for Qualitative Research, 'Reflexivity' has been suggested to be the gold standard for determining trustworthiness (Teh & Lek, 2018). As a social worker I arrived at this feeling somewhat equipped as a result of my professional background. In social work it is accepted that concrete experience or 'practice learning' is a necessary and significant part of the training. However, in order to benefit from this learning it is crucial that the stages of reflective observation, (reflecting on practice making links to theoretical frameworks and identifying issues), and abstract conceptualising, (utilising the existing social work knowledge base and identifying relevant ideas of discrimination or oppression and experimenting with knowledge of interventions) and reflecting upon your own intuition, emotion and professional wisdom (Bondi et al. 2011).

Thus, reflection in social work is common practice and it is through the process of reflection that learning during training in social work education is demonstrated against the competency framework and National Occupational standards (TOPSS, 2004). Equally, The Social Work Reform Board of 2010 paved the way for contemporary regulation with its

assertion that reflective practice is key to high quality social work and that organisations and practitioners should make a strong, unambiguous, commitment to a strong culture of reflective practice and adaptive learning (Social Work Reform Board, 2010).

It is also recognised that researchers need to understand the role of self in terms of creating knowledge (Berger, 2015) and during this research I have come to understand methodology as something that is situated chiefly around the researcher and research question and that it is myself who is the instrument of research. Thus, this research to a large extent is a reflection of me, someone who believes passionately that complex social problems manifest in the individual and that it is the job of societies, governance and institutions to address barriers structurally and promote social justice. Despite using reflection to enhance trustworthiness, Russell and Munby (1989) argue there have been no psychological elaborations of the psychological realities of reflecting in action, and ultimately that our reflections are a result of our own social world (Goffman, 1959), our processes, and limited by our language (Ixer, 1999). In this sense it is necessary to have framework around which to shape our reflections and it is suggested that solid reflexivity that increases the credibility of findings involves identifying and acknowledging the intersecting relationships between researcher and participants (Berger, 2015). This arose many times during my reflections, as I was aware that I was in the same professional role as the participants and for many of them, employed in the same institution. As a female I was the same gender as seven out of ten participants and the same ethnicity as them all and to a large extent had shared many similar experiences and I believe that these shared characteristics may have supported my interview strategies to promote free expression and build rapport. Equally, in some respect I felt this helped to reduce the power differential between me as researcher and the participants as we shared the same professional status and most likely at some point will all be on our Ed D journey as part of standard Lecturer continuing professional development (CPD). Interestingly I was younger than any participant I interviewed which again, I believe helped reduce power differential. Despite this being qualitative research where researcher bias is part of the process to be reflected upon and explored (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010), it is argued that attention to bias in qualitative research is being made with increasing regularity (Galdas, 2017) and there are a range of biases relevant to consider and some of those, linked to the participants, that can emerge during the data collection process (in this study the unstructured interviews).

It is suggested that participant bias or social desirability bias stems from the respondents or participants responding to the questions, based on what he or she believes to be the right answer or what answer would be the most socially acceptable, as opposed to a congruent expression of what they really think and feel (Gerhard, 2008). Because of my own emerging critical position, it remained necessary throughout to pay attention to all possibilities of bias and consider the likelihood of occurrence and strategies to reduce it. It is suggested that in this study that the steps taken to ensure the interview environment afforded the participants the experience of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1975) and the degree of anxiety shown by some participants when speaking freely about resistance to user involvement, as well as the topic being somewhat of a controversy from the outset, that this has been substantially mitigated against. Furthermore, the use of open questions afforded participants the opportunity to speak freely about their positive perceptions of user involvement, which was evident in the findings. Equally, attention was paid to identifying and coding positive experiences and perceptions of user involvement during the data analysis.

In addition to this I was aware throughout of the need to carefully self-monitor the impact of my biases, beliefs, and personal experiences and remind myself of the differences between myself, participants and the readers (Buetow, 2019). These differences were illuminated for me as a researcher when I shared with a nursing colleague during a writing retreat, the overall theme of my research and they replied with “oh dear” and shared some surprise that any practitioner or academic might ever be critical of user or public patient involvement. Equally, after presenting at the JSWEC conference I was approached by a member of academic staff who hypothesised that practitioners who felt resistant to user involvement were operating from a position of unresolved emotions as a result of their interactions with service users in practice. Parton, (2001) suggests that social work is a messy occupation that involves perceptions and feelings as well as material facts. As described by Howe (2008) the more emotionally significant an event the more likely it is to be remembered. I am able to relate to this statement as someone who has witnessed much emotive practice across a range of settings, some of which I can recall with clarity.

Reflecting upon my own emotions as a researcher was an important element of this research, for example retaining a curious yet interested stance during the interviews when practitioners discussed burnout, and again during discussions of the pressures within higher education. My own time pressures as a programme leader for a large BSc programme and

repeated staff shortages within my own institution meant that on occasion months would pass with little attention and minimal progress in relation to this research, the interviews and analysis, and it was necessary to interrupt my period of study on more than one occasion, for months at a time, to focus on my professional role. I can at times identify my own feelings of frustration that conducting my research was an expectation of my role, yet my ability to devote myself to it was compromised by work pressures. In addition to this, due to time constraints, it was necessary for me to continuing to work on my Thesis during a yearlong period of interruption. The experience of writing in isolation, compounded by Covid-19, drew my attention increasingly to the vulnerability of many service users with limited support networks which served to motivate me. This also led me to explore the abundance of literature regarding stress and burnout of students during PHD's (Aquino et al. 2018; Kusurkar, et al., 2020; Sorrel, Martinez-Huertas, & Arconda, 2020) and adopt a range of strategies towards self-compassion, organisational skills, and motivational techniques.

Similarly, an important part of my educational journey on the Doctorate in Education, involved a search for authenticity and a transition to my new post-doctoral identity (Bitzer & Van den Bergh, 2014). As part of this research, I have been exposed to fascinating ideas and scholars, and improved my technical research skills, which I hope will make me a better researcher and teacher, and consistently throughout have been on a search for congruence in my own expression. The undertaking of this research meant it was necessary to examine my own values and beliefs regularly. Teh and Lek (2018) construe reflexivity as 'an interactional process that creates changes over time, through repeated awareness, reflection and action in relation to our similarities and differences' (2018, p. 522).

This change was evident for me as a researcher who began the research focused only on the potential responses I might uncover, to one who was required to think about and answer multiple questions related to myself and my motives such as: 'what made me interested in negative perceptions of user involvement?' 'Do I have residual feelings towards service users as a result of years in social work with involuntary service users?' 'Have I lost touch with my value base and become cynical?' 'In the future how could I explain reluctance to user involvement to my colleagues and service users and still remain credible, compassionate and professional in their eyes?' 'Could I actually be a good lecturer if I didn't value user involvement?' And finally, 'how can I move from a place of a researcher to someone who takes action?'

Answering these questions enabled me to identify and reflect upon the times that I had been implicit in 'false generosity' (Freire, 1972) as well as times during the early stages of my career where I believe I was too risk averse or authoritative, perhaps adopting a narrow focus on child safety whilst paying insufficient attention to the structural barriers for families, often doing their best in the face of adversity. However, I believe that through sharing these reflections with my students (which I regularly do) I am able to not only make classrooms 'brave' for safe exploration and growth (Holley & Steiner, 2005: Arao & Clemens, 2013) but I can guide my students towards being newly qualified practitioners who may be more equipped than I was, and better able to embody the values of the profession. Ultimately, my discomfort at times during this Doctorate was interpreted by me as evidence that I am thinking both critically and reflectively and that I am well placed to take on the challenge of research in this area and do it justice. My reflections have led me to the conclusion that whilst on the surface a challenge to user involvement might be contrary to the value base, and indeed frowned upon by some readers, for me it is born out of my commitment to social justice and my desire to see better outcomes for service users. Furthermore, whilst this research is dominated by a white, western, middle class voices such as my own, my colleagues and much of the research, they are driven by a broader commitment to promote meaningful participation of less privileged identities - and we have a responsibility to use our voices for the progression of others with less privilege.

This chapter has enabled the reader to evaluate this research using a range of criteria for trustworthiness and demonstrated that this research has attended to rigour and as such can make an original contribution to the knowledge base that is user involvement in social work education. The following chapter will conclude this research by revisiting the key findings, identifying what these might mean in terms of new understandings of user involvement and how this research can contribute to practice decisions, research and debate moving forward.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This research has heard from 10 members of academic staff currently teaching across three universities on social work programmes in the UK. From the findings I have confidence that this study can verify academic resistance to user involvement exists and that this research has illuminated the voices of those with current experience of facilitating it, who confirm these feelings in themselves or perceive that they observe this in others. Despite a similar methodology to many studies into service user involvement, that being small scale and qualitative (Chambers & Hickey, 2012), it is argued that this study has responded to the earlier critiques, that most studies arise out of those universities who are most motivated to avoid tokenism, which reduces reliability of the research and opens up potential for self-promotion bias. As well as the need for 'honest' service user research, that avoids tokenism or frames involvement as a panacea and that retains a critical and sceptical attitude McLaughlin (2010). This research has made an original contribution and illuminated the voices of those possibly outside of the majority discourse, providing a safe space for academic staff on social work programmes to air their frustrations, negative experiences, ethical concerns and feelings of resistance.

Just as service user and carer involvement is considered to be an extension of effective social work practice (Towle et al. 2016), it would appear from the findings in this research that it is susceptible at times to similar challenges that mirror social work practice. Firstly, by hearing reports of lack of tangible resources to enable implementation of what is the extensive and high-profile participation rhetoric/requirement, and further that the organisational constraints can make sincere participation, co-construction and the embodiment of the professional social work values at times unworkable. These resources are reportedly having an impact upon the well-being of many participants that led many participants to air concerns regarding current, previous, and future burnout. The analysis drew attention to the possibility of double burnout for educators experiencing burnout in both social work and again as academic staff in HE.

Despite the sound intentions of the staff who in theory advocate for and champion user involvement initiatives as part of their commitment to their professional values, this research uncovered lack of clarity among the participants regarding the value and overall purpose of user involvement and whether it does in practice advance the values of the profession.

Accounts in this research suggest the realities of the processes can include unethical forms of discrimination when selecting who to participate, and concerns regarding the vulnerability of service users who disclose personal information, in the arguably false belief that this is making fundamental changes. Instead, we hear real concerns that in light of the realities of practice, it does not make much difference in the long term. This echoes the words of Carey (2009), that we are witness to use of language by government and regulation that champions personal autonomy and power at a time where their austerity has caused a reduction in both. This study concludes that whilst many might congratulate the advancements in service user involvement in social work, and equally the participants in this study agreed that it is a necessary requirement of SET's, we can also question whether the overarching regulation has shifted the power from a bottom-up struggle for liberation to one of again top-down regulation. We might also question whether the regulatory powers in social work are so focused on the practical and technical interests of involvement that they are forgetting to ask the emancipatory questions (Habermas, 1971). Or in the words of Freire, 'the moment the new regime hardens into a dominating bureaucracy the humanist dimension of the struggle is lost and is no longer able to speak of liberation' (1972, p. 39).

In light of the aforementioned impact of current UK austerity (Hardoon, Fuentes-Nieva & Ayele, 2016; DfE, 2016), and the reality that during this study Covid-19 has further worsened the living conditions of the most vulnerable members of society (Laborde, Martin, & Vos, 2020; Patel et al. 2020; Lancker & Parolin, 2020) this research raises questions as to whether user involvement is, in reality, a 'pact' (Freire, 1972); a form of manipulation that has misled the oppressed into believing that governments and marginalised groups are co-operating for social change when the reality is increasing devastating inequality between the rich and the poor.

Furthermore, perhaps as the result of HE policy shift and changes to the landscape of HE, we hear of the impact upon the well-being and motivation of academic staff that is manifesting in resistance either through passive resistance or disguised compliance (Brandon, et al. 2008) that gives the illusion of commitment whilst operating in a tokenistic way. The study uncovered a consensus that congruent discussions regarding the challenges of user involvement do not happen frequently and if they did, would not occur in the public domain or in the presence of senior colleagues or the regulator. Of further significance within this was the emotional response of the participants, many of whom expressed worry, feelings of

guilt, or reported other negative emotions as a result of the feelings they were experiencing and the opinions they were expressing. Also uncovered was the evidence of practitioners disguising their true emotional experience in order to execute a professional function mirroring the concept of emotional labour in the helping professions.

When thinking about how this knowledge might shape emerging understandings of user involvement this research argues that in many ways, we can observe the oppression of these academic staff, from powerful government policy and regulation that are limiting the extent to which the realities of user involvement are understood. Adherence to the professional values, and agreement with user involvement in principle, as well as a powerful professional narrative, appears to leave little space for criticality, and the necessary transparency to enable problem solving. In addition to this, in some circumstances this results in service users and students, through a banking model of education (Freire, 1972) being sold a 'version' of user involvement that is very different from the reality in terms of the actualised benefits and its potential for societal change. Arguably raising legitimate questions surrounding the ethics of user involvement and the exploitation of service users.

When revisiting Freire (1972) the need for problem-posing education stems directly from the nature of human beings as not only discerning beings but also transcending beings (Freire, 1972). In this sense we can take relief from user involvement being a problem that is unfinished, and worthy of solving and that if posed as a problem where both educators and educatees are problematized, can be transcended both in the theoretical context and, eventually, in the practical context. In the words of Freire, 'no one can present something to someone else as a problem and at the same time remain a mere spectator of the process' (1972, p. 38).

So, the task for me (the educator) is to present to the educatees (students, and service users and carers) as a problem, the content which mediates them; that being myself as a lecturer in the institution that is HE, and the realities of user involvement in contemporary society. This is a problem to be solved together and not to hand it over, as if it were a matter of something already finished.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Project Information Sheet

Information and Advice Sheet:

Research Title: Power, Partnerships and Pedagogy in Social Work Education

Invitation:
You are being invited to take part in a Research Project as part of Doctorate in Education. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is taking place and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this evaluation is to explore the thoughts and feelings of academic staff who are involved with the co construction of teaching of learning, with social work students on education programmes at UK Universities. The research is particularly interested in the sharing of Power in the classroom and notions of resistance. It is hoped that information gathered would offer ideas to ensure that Service User and Carer Involvement in Social Work Education is the best that it can be.

Why have I been chosen?

You are being asked to take part as you are a Lecturer within Social Work education who facilitates involvement.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You can continue to be involved in user involvement or the teaching on social work education programmes as you were before. You can ask for any views or information you have shared to be destroyed at any time up until the submission of the final thesis.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in an informal unstructured interview with Catherine Murgatroyd, a member of university academic staff, from the University of Winchester who is undertaking the study. The Interviews will be face to face at a time and venue that is convenient for you. The interview is suspected to last 1 hour but it can be shorter

if you would prefer. The interview will be recorded so that it can be analysed by the researcher.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to think about your experiences of involvement with the education of Social Work students and share your views.
You will be asked your perception of user involvement and invited to speak freely regarding your views.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will remain confidential that means that other people reading about the research will not be able to identify who shared their views, what they said, and what individuals or Universities took part.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You should not experience any disadvantage as a result of taking part in the evaluation and it is considered to be safe.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By sharing your views, you are giving Universities in the UK the best chance of ensuring that participation is the most meaningful it can be. You will be making a valuable contribution to some research and possibly the education of future social work students. In the long term good Service User and Carer involvement processes could result in better skilled Social Workers and positive changes to services and practice.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or complaints whilst taking part in the evaluation you could share them with Catherine Murgatroyd or if you would prefer you could share them with the lead supervisor Amanda Lees. Any concerns or complaints that you have will be taken very seriously and you can contact Catherine or Amanda using the details below.

Catherine.murgatroyd@winchester.ac.uk
Amanda.Lees@winchester.ac.uk

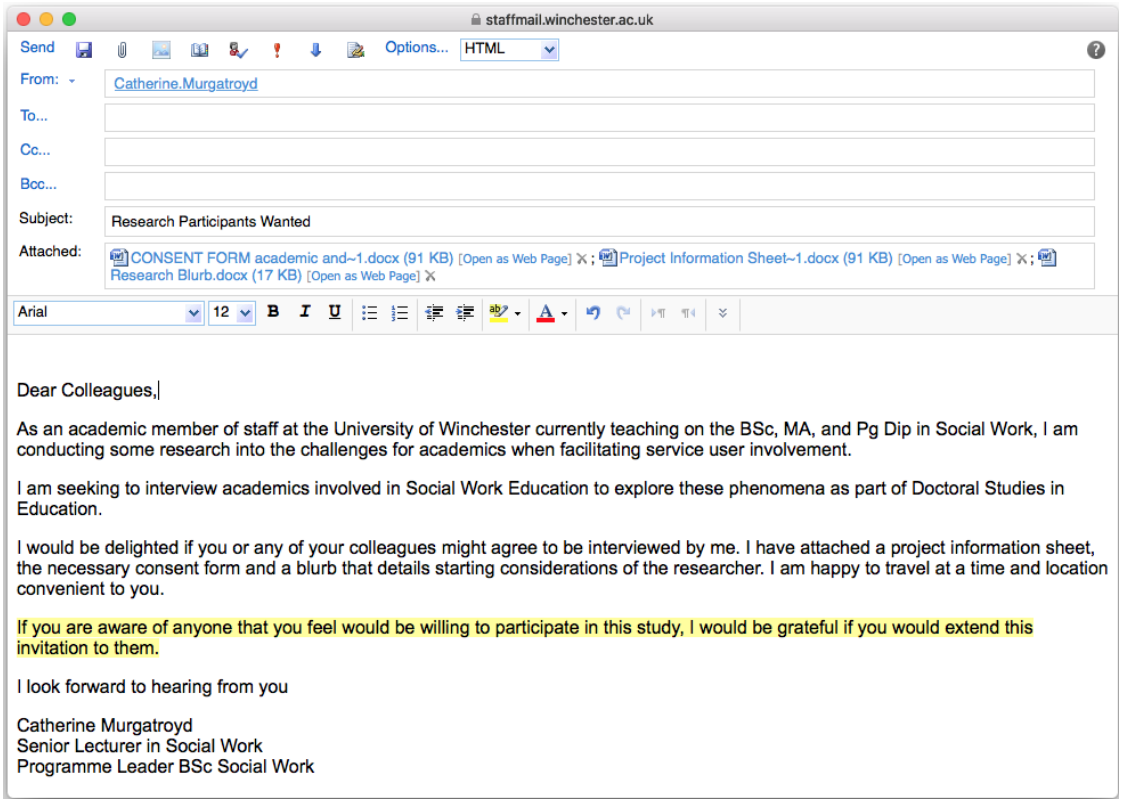
University of Winchester
Faculty of Education, Health and Social Care
Department of Interprofessional Studies
Sparkford Road
SO22 4NR

Appendix Two: Research Context

Fundamentally, Service User /Carer involvement in Social Work education, if implemented effectively, is an extension of progressive and effective Social Work in that it seeks to use relationships, education, and the sharing of power as the mechanism through which to empower individuals, enhance wellbeing, and promote positive outcomes for those on the margins of society. There is widespread agreement regarding the necessity and benefits of involvement (Towle et al. 2016) with detailed discussion regarding the benefits to individuals, organisational cultures, professional practice and society as well as education specific objectives being benefits to service users and carers, the enhancement of learning, and skills acquisition for students, and longer term cultural and attitudinal shifts that promote the prominence of the user expertise, produce informed effective Social Workers, who deliver high quality Social Work services that reflect better the self-identified interests of current and future users. The current literature on user involvement in Social Work outlines a range of barriers and facilitators (Chambers and Hickey, 2006), including diversity of representation, the sharing of training and expertise, the notion of involvement as meaningful, financial, organisational, and practical constraints that must be overcome, and could be conceptualised as competing tensions that academic staff must navigate and balance. In addition to this, though not explicit, is the impact and complexity of fluctuating power relations between all stake holders in the education environment. It is suggested that within the contemporary organisation, and delivery, of Higher Education that academic staff, themselves, to varying degrees, are disempowered by the necessity to transfer power in the classroom to students, and to service users without associated accountability, in the aim of making and maintaining true partnerships, all the while operating under the scrutiny of the ever-increasing and rapidly encroaching effects of externally-imposed metrics for measuring success in H.E. The empowerment and disempowerment of social Work Educators is complex so remains the possibility that within Universities, exists hidden hesitation and reluctance from Academic staff in relation to User involvement.

It is argued that currently the research originates from the most enthusiastic institutions leaving the voices of those struggle or who are resistant are unheard and that best practice user involvement for all institutions can be further informed by additional research that affords a broader pool of academic staff the opportunity to speak freely and congruently about the realities of Service User involvement, and experiences of empowerment and oppression within the contemporary organisational and political climate of Higher Education. This requires open discussion and further research in this area, as well as the use of advanced interviewing techniques to promote safe open discussions.

Appendix Three: Email Invitation



staffmail.winchester.ac.uk

Send | Options... | HTML

From: Catherine.Murgatroyd

To...

Cc...

Bcc...

Subject: Research Participants Wanted

Attached: CONSENT FORM academic and~1.docx (91 KB) [Open as Web Page]; Project Information Sheet~1.docx (91 KB) [Open as Web Page]; Research Blurb.docx (17 KB) [Open as Web Page]

Arial | 12 | B I U

Dear Colleagues,

As an academic member of staff at the University of Winchester currently teaching on the BSc, MA, and Pg Dip in Social Work, I am conducting some research into the challenges for academics when facilitating service user involvement.

I am seeking to interview academics involved in Social Work Education to explore these phenomena as part of Doctoral Studies in Education.

I would be delighted if you or any of your colleagues might agree to be interviewed by me. I have attached a project information sheet, the necessary consent form and a blurb that details starting considerations of the researcher. I am happy to travel at a time and location convenient to you.

If you are aware of anyone that you feel would be willing to participate in this study, I would be grateful if you would extend this invitation to them.

I look forward to hearing from you

Catherine Murgatroyd
Senior Lecturer in Social Work
Programme Leader BSc Social Work

Appendix Four: Consent Form

Title of Project: Power, Partnerships and Pedagogy in Social Work Education

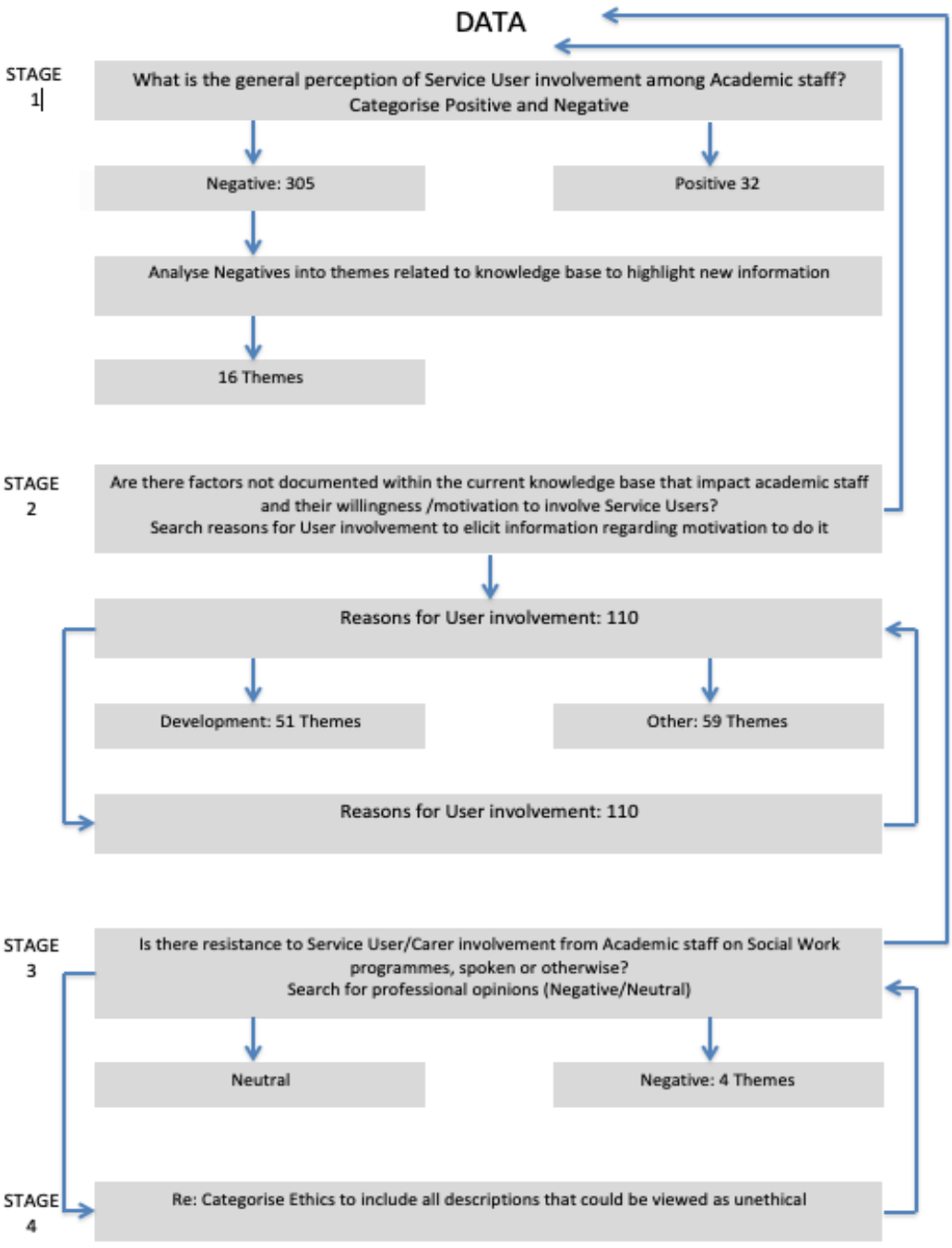
Names of Researcher: Catherine Murgatroyd

Name of Participant:	**Tick**
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	
I understand that my views will be recorded anonymously for the purpose of the evaluation and to inform the final study.	
I understand that I can ask for my views to be removed from the study and destroyed at any time prior to any publication.	
I give permission for my views to be used in this research and any future publications.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

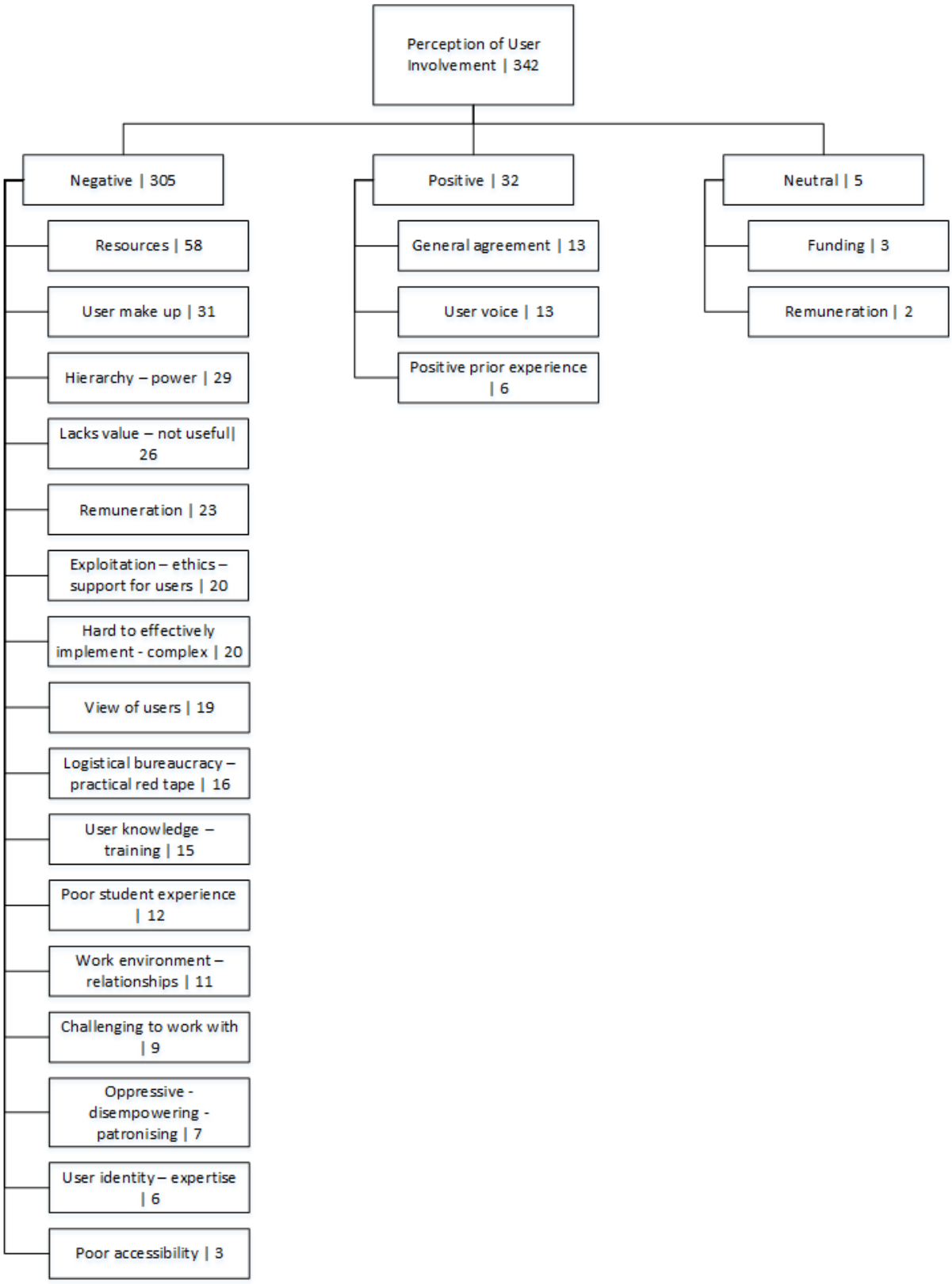
Name of Participant Date Signature

_____ /_____

Appendix Five: Coding Process



Appendix Six: Coding Frame



Appendix Seven: Example Transcript

Participant 8 SEPTEMBER 2020 ZS - DEPTH - 12 MINS
[FEMALE RESPONDENT]
[Other comments:]

Hi, thank you for talking with me. As you know, we're here to talk about academic resistance to user involvement in social work education. Before we get going, can you just confirm please, that you've had some information on the project and that you have a consent form that you've signed.

Yes, I have Catherine, thank you.

First of all, can you share your thoughts about service user involvement?

Yes, I mean I've got to say, when you contacted me and said that you were looking specifically into academic resistance, I was delighted because as a social work academic, who has been in universities now, I think six or seven years, and had lots of involvement in terms of involving service users in the programme, academic resistance is something that I've experienced and observed and thought about. Equally, I would say it's something that's never ever talked about, because it's controversial. I think we're all aware that we come into social work because we want to do good and support other people who might be in difficult circumstances, or less fortunate. That's certainly what the students tell us, when they come for their interviews.

A significant part of the social work value base is sharing information with service users to empower them in relation to the structural inequalities that harm them or marginalise them. So involving them and hearing their voice and sharing power in the education of social workers, is something that, on paper, we all stand behind. I know I could speak for myself and my colleagues, that service user involvement in theory, is something we would champion. Actually, I wonder how successful it is. I certainly have witnessed and experienced resistance myself. I mean I can tell you a bit more about my thoughts, if you'd like?

Yes, tell me. Tell me about where you have actually witnessed resistance from academics?

I haven't really seen academics saying, 'No, I'm not doing it.' What I do see is some academics that are much more forthright in wanting to do it, and other academics shying away. I've certainly had conversations with colleagues about tokenism. I think particularly in, I don't know, 2018, 2019, 2020, kind of looking around at the state of our country and austerity, and we're seeing the harm that happens to service users, the increase in homelessness, the high thresholds in child protection. When I left child protection, years ago, I felt then the thresholds for services were very high. The cases that students are reflecting upon and writing about now, the thresholds are so high that when I think about the vulnerable children in our city, I feel frightened. I look around and I see the austerity and the impact that's had on services for individuals grappling with addiction, or services for individuals who are struggling to raise their children, or services for individuals with mental health challenges. We know that lots of these challenges can be structural, but the impact of birth advantage and disadvantage. I find it hard then, to believe that bringing service users into my classroom, to share their lived experiences, or having service users sit in on selection, really is making a difference.

I see the benefit to students, when they appreciate the service user perspective and they talk about being emotionally touched. Having had the insight into what service users are saying and students saying, 'Thanks so much ****, for bringing them in. I just had no idea that life could be like this for adults with disabilities. This is the field I want to work in now.' Or, 'Gosh, I had no idea, I never really stopped to empathise what it must be like for a mother having their children removed.' Blah, blah, blah. Deep down, you wonder how long will that empathy and that knowledge and that value base last, when we're sending our students off out into organisations with very different cultures, where people are overworked, where there's stress, there's burnout and there's no money. We know that we live in a society that is getting increasingly more unequal.

I suppose **, if you had a magic wand then, what would you like to see?**

I think I'd like to see a fairer society. I'd like to see a change to capitalism. I'd like the government to stop saying that giving universities £7,000 a year to involve service users in social work education is all it's going to take to make society fairer, and for services to better reflect the needs of those that it serves, because it doesn't. Service users have preferences and needs that aren't met all of the time. That's justified under austerity. We can't hand power over to service users, because there's a knowledge base that social work has that the service users don't have. So you can't hand over full power to service users for their care. I don't know really. It would be hard for me to speak publicly and say service user involvement is a waste of time, particularly, like I say, because of our values. It also is really hard for me to think realistically, in the world we're living in today, with the suffering, the inequality, the child hunger, the exploitation, what value is this having?

I know that being involved in universities can bring meaning to individuals' lives, albeit a very small number of service users. I know that service user involvement can be meaningful for service users. I know that in the moment, students can appreciate user involvement and it can help to break down prejudice and discrimination or preconceived ideas that they might have. Like I've said, really are we making long-term changes to service users' lives, bringing them into university? Are we really making long-term changes to our practitioners who are going to enter organisations that are drowning from having no money, that are drowning from cultures that sometimes are harmful or discriminatory? We know about burnout and compassion fatigue and all of the reasons why social workers don't stay in their roles. We see social workers exploited sometimes as much the vulnerable adults, by organisations who are overworked and who are pushing social workers to breakdown. It's difficult really. It's difficult.

I don't know what a perfect solution to service user involvement would be. I've read some stuff and I've seen creative ways that you can empower service users and that you can give them elements of control over social work education. That is, in my opinion, tokenism. That is addressed in the literature, really as tokenism, because I'm sure I wouldn't be the first person to say that we sit in selection with service users on

the panel, and a service user might say, 'I don't like this person, I don't want them to come on. I wouldn't like them at my front door.' If the academic staff or the practitioners saw potential in that student and their application was good, we wouldn't attribute any weight to that view. We would consider that the service user was being fickle, or that they're being triggered by something. We certainly wouldn't disregard an applicant that we felt had potential. We're very limited in the activities that we can involve service users in, because there's so many complex arguments about payment and we don't have any money. I feel like I've ranted on, with a very strong view.

Thank you very much for your time.

Thank you. I'm not sure whether I sounded particular balanced, or whether…

Very balanced.

Whether my colleagues you've interviewed have kind have said the same thing.

I can't really discuss with you anybody else's. This is completely confidential and I would never be able to confirm or deny what anybody else has said. There have been some similar traits and themes that have run through the responses I've received.

I really think that when you look at the literature in service user involvement, it's all very positive, and whilst they might touch on the challenges of managing service users in the classroom and the difficulties for budgets and the difficulties for buildings being accessible, I think I've seen one paper that suggests that actually, it's kind of bit pointless. I think that was published four years ago. Now we're looking around at a society which is think is very sad for lots of people, and getting worse and worse, and service user involvement certainly isn't a way to break down inequality or improve structural inequality or include groups of people that are typically marginalised and reduce discrimination. So what is it for?

Would there be any benefit or gain from excluding them?

Well that's a really good question. That is a really good perspective. Who are we doing it for? Are we doing it so that our students learn better? Are we doing it so that they then go into organisations and be better and change society that way? You can't really give a wonderful service to a service user, if you've got a caseload of 60.

Could you think of any benefits from excluding service users and their involvement?

No, I can't think of any benefits excluding them. Is it a case of we need to accept that actually, it isn't really this wonderful thing that does good? It's just good for a small number of people, with some short-term benefits, that make a very small number of service users feel better, because they've got some meaning in their life. Actually, we're kickstarting our students off with a positive experience, before they get ground down by the realities of social work. If that really is the reality of service user involvement, then that in itself is good enough. That's good enough. We've made these dozen service users have some meaningful opportunities, perhaps one they might not before. We've helped our students to have an open mind. Let's not fool ourselves that what we're really doing is transferring the power to service users, so that they can shape the services of tomorrow, and the way they do that is by shaping the education of the professionals that they're going to come into contact with, because that's nonsense. I really appreciate you inviting me.

Thank you for coming. Very interesting perspective.

Yes, thanks very much, any time.

Appendix Eight: Ethics Application

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

RKE ETHICS PROFORMA – FAST TRACK REVIEW
Staff and Students

GUIDELINES

Before completing this proforma, please refer to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Policy which provides further information and clarifies the terms used.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Policy on the ethical conduct of research and knowledge exchange and any relevant academic or professional codes of practice and guidelines pertaining to your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. The checklists will identify whether ethics approval is required and at what level.

This Ethics Proforma should be completed for each research, study or knowledge exchange project involving human participants or data derived from directly identifiable individuals. This should be done before any potential participant is approached to take part in the research/study.

The questions in this proforma are intended to guide your reflection on the ethical implication of your research. Explanatory notes can be found at the end of this proforma. Additional notes can be seen by hovering over the asterisks (*).

If any aspect of the project changes during the course of the research, you must notify the Faculty RKE Committee or the University RKE Ethics Committee, whichever is relevant.

SECTION 1: DETERMINING WHETHER YOU REQUIRE ETHICAL APPROVAL

Hover the mouse over the asterisks (*) for guidance on how to proceed with this triage questionnaire.

1. **Is the proposed activity classified as Research or Audit/Service Evaluation?**
   - ☒ Research *
   - ☐ Audit/Service Evaluation *

   If the proposed activity is considered research, continue with question 2. If it is an Audit or a Service Evaluation, you do not need to seek ethical approval, unless otherwise required, e.g. by a relevant professional body.

2. **Does the research involve living human participants, samples or data derived from identifiable individuals?**
   - ☒ Yes *
   - ☐ No *

3. **Does your research require external ethics approval (e.g. NHS or another institution)?** *(See note 1)*
   - ☐ Yes *
   - ☒ No *

4. **Does the research involve the use of animals?**
   - ☐ Yes *
   - ☒ No *

5. **Does the research involve the use of documentary material not in the public domain?**
   - ☐ Yes *
   - ☒ No *

6. **Does the research involve environmental interventions?**
   - ☐ Yes *
   - ☒ No *

SECTION 2: DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF ETHICAL SCRUTINY

Please mark with an "X" as appropriate	YES	NO
Does the research involve individuals who are vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. vulnerable children, over-researched groups, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems, young offenders, people in care facilities, including prisons)	☐	☒
Does the research involve individuals in unequal relationships e.g. family, friends your own students? *If you intend to recruit widely across the University/Faculty (e.g. through a snowball sample, SONA, or a mailing shot) you do not need to consider these students as your own, even if some participants may be students you are directly involved with. Please tick "yes" if you are targeting "specifically" your own students.*	☐	☒
Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in public places, deception)? (see note 2)	☐	☒
Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? For example (but not limited to): sexual activity, illegal behaviour, experience of violence or abuse, drug use, etc.]. (Please refer to the RKE Research Ethics Policy).	☐	☒
Is there a risk that the highly sensitive nature of the research topic might lead to disclosures from the participant concerning their own involvement in illegal activities or other activities that represent a threat to themselves or others (e.g. sexual activity, drug	☐	☒

use, or professional misconduct]?		
Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?	☐	•☒
Will the anonymity of the participant be compromised at any time during or after the study?	☐	•☒
Is the study likely to induce severe physical harm or psychological distress?	☐	•☒
Does your research involve tissue samples covered by the Human Tissue Act?	☐	•☒
Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question (e.g. research in high risk locations or among high risk groups)?	☐	•☒
Does the research involve creating, downloading, storing or transmitting material that may be considered to be unlawful, indecent, offensive, defamatory, threatening, discriminatory or extremist?	☐	•☒

If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, THIS FORM IS NOT FOR YOU. Please complete the Full Review Application Form and submit it to the University RKE Ethics Committee (staff) or to the Departmental Ethics Committee (students).

If you have answered "no" to all of these questions CONTINUE WITH THIS FORM and submit it to your Faculty Head of RKE (staff) or to your supervisor (students). SECTION 3: YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1. Your name: Catherine Murgatroyd

1.2. Your Department: Interprofessional Studies

1.3. Your status:

☐ Undergraduate Student
•☒ Staff (Academic)
☐ Taught Master
☐ Staff (Professional Services)
•☐ Research Degree student
☐ Other (please specify):

1.4. Your Email address: catherine.murgatroyd@winchester.ac.uk

1.5. Your Telephone number: 07912376005

For students only:

1.6. Your degree programme: Ed D

1.7. Your supervisor's name: Amanda Lees

1.8. Your supervisor's department: Cross Faculty Health and Wellbeing Research Group

SECTION 4: YOUR RESEARCH

2.1. Project title: Power, Professionalism, and Pedagogy: An Examination of Academic Resistance to User/Carer Involvement in Social Work Education.

2.2. Project description: *Please provide a brief (no more than 800 words) overview, in non-technical language, of your proposed research. Please include information about: research aims, the scientific background of the research, method (including: participants, data collection, data analysis) and any identified ethical issues and how these will be dealt with. This summary should contain sufficient information to acquaint the Committee with the principal features of the proposal. A copy of the full proposal may be requested if further information is deemed necessary.*

Please append to your application any relevant consent forms, information sheets, questionnaires that may be relevant to your application. Please do this by copying and pasting from your original document.

Researchers from a variety of allied disciplines have reported academic resistance of an implicit nature to user involvement in professional education and training, (Tritter and McCallum, 2006., and Chambers and Hirkley (2012). Within the field of Social Work education there is very little written with this particular focus.

Of interest to the study is the reality that user involvement is a compulsory validation requirement, and the concept of empowerment underpinning user/involvement is positioned centrally within the social work value base. A robust literature review has prompted interest in the possibility that social work educators are disempowered during the process of involving service users in Social Work Education and are required to navigate a range of competing tensions regarding best practice, and University performance measures.

Given the array of literature highlighting the importance of positive relationships between User/Carers and staff, and the fundamental premise that Service Users must be empowered where possible, the notion of resistance from Social Work academics is worthy of investigation.

The research assumes that some resistance does exist but that professional identities, and the value base, make this phenomenon one of controversy and under researched.

The Thesis will examine the concept of academic disempowerment and resistance by analysing the relational experiences between service users/carers and academic staff during involvement in Social Work Education, utilising Erierre as a theoretical standpoint with which to consider issues of pedagogy and power.

The study will utilise unstructured interviews with academic staff on social work Education Programmes and service users who work with them, from multiple Higher Education Institutions to unpick and theorise as to the challenges inherent in user involvement from a pedagogical perspective.

For example, "Tell me about your experiences of Power when facilitating user involvement".

The use of circular questioning will be adopted to afford some psychological distance between subjects and their responses, allowing views to be shared from the perspective of a third person. The pilot study tested this method and elicited results that justify it as the main interviewing method.

For example, "Can you think of a time when it was different?"

The data will be analysed utilizing a thematic analysis.

I intend to email the Head of Social work at a range of Universities in close proximity to the researcher's base to ask that they disseminate the project information sheet to Social Work Academics and Services Users.

The interviews will be recorded and held on SSD Flash Card stored securely in the researchers home safe. These will then be transcribed, and the transcriptions stored in the same way.

Chambers, M., and Hickey, G., Service User Involvement in the design and Delivery of Education and Training Programmes Leading to Registration with the Health Professions Council. Retrieved on 30th November 2015 from http://www.socialworkeducation.org.uk/news/service-user-involvement-in-the-design-and-deliver

Freire P. (1996) The Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Penguin, London.

Tritter, J., and McCullum. (2006) The Snakes and Ladders of User Involvement: Moving Beyond Arnstein. Health Policy 76

2.3. Expected start date: June 2018

2.4. Expected completion date: June 2019

2.5. Expected location: Winchester

2.6. If outside the UK, state country: N/A

2.7. Has ethical approval been obtained at the host country? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.8. If not, why not?

2.9 If the research is taking place outside the UK, is it covered by the University's insurance, or has the researcher obtained an appropriate insurance (e.g. travel insurance)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2.10. Does the research include risks or other factors that might cause it to be excluded from coverage by the University insurers? (see note 5) ☐ Yes • ☒ No

2.11 Has funding been sought for this research? ☐ Yes • ☒ No

2.12. If so, where have you applied for funding?

2.13. Has the funding been granted? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Pending

2.14. Other collaborators *

2.15. Is Disclosure and Barring Service clearance required for your study? *(See note 4)* * ☐ Yes • ☒ No ☐ Pending

2.16. Is a risk assessment required? * ☐ Yes • ☒ No ☐ Pending

SECTION 5: ETHICS CHECKLIST

Please mark with an "X" as appropriate		YES	NO
1	Does the research involve members of the public in a research capacity (participant research)?	☐	☒
2	Is there a risk of over-disclosure that may put the participants at risk or cause them any anxiety?	☐	☒
3	Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?	☐	☒
4	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group?)	☐	☒
5	Is the right to withdraw from the study at any time withheld, or not made explicit?	☐	☒
6	Is there any reason that may make participants feel obliged to participate in the study against their will?	☐	☒
7	Are there any concerns regarding the design of the research project? For example: · where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience; · where the study is concerned with deviance or social control; · where the research deals with things that are sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned.	☐	☒
8	Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?	☐	☒
9	Will the research involve respondents to the internet, e.g. social media, or other visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?	☐	☒
10	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	☐	☒
11	Are there payments to researchers/participants that may have an impact on the objectivity of the research?	☐	☒
12	Is there any cause for uncertainty as to whether the research will fully comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998? (See Note 3)	☐	☒
13	Does any part of the project breach any codes of practice for ethics in place within the organisation in which the research is taking place?	☐	☒
14	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants. Note: for fast track review, it is expected that the study will not involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind	☐	☒
15	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	☐	☒
16	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	☐	☒

If you have answered "YES" TO ANY OF THE QUESTIONS ABOVE please use the space below to give further particulars including any ethical issues. Please make sure you indicate which question(s) you are addressing.

SECTION 6: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You may use this section to address any issues not covered in the previous sections.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

RKE ETHICS PROFORMA – FAST TRACK REVIEW
Staff and Students

GUIDELINES

Before completing this proforma, please refer to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Policy which provides further information and clarifies the terms used.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Policy on the ethical conduct of research and knowledge exchange and any relevant academic or professional codes of practice and guidelines pertaining to your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. The checklists will identify whether ethics approval is required and at what level.

This Ethics Proforma should be completed for each research, study or knowledge exchange project involving human participants or data derived from directly identifiable individuals. This should be done before any potential participant is approached to take part in the research/study.

The questions in this proforma are intended to guide your reflection on the ethical implication of your research. Explanatory notes can be found at the end of this proforma. Additional notes can be seen by hovering over the asterisks (*).

If any aspect of the project changes during the course of the research, you must notify the Faculty RKE Committee or the University RKE Ethics Committee, whichever is relevant.

DECLARATION

I understand my responsibilities as principal researcher as outlined in the University of Winchester Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Policy.
I declare that the answers above accurately describe the research as presently designed and that a new checklist will be submitted should the research design change in a way which would alter any of the above responses.

Researcher's signature: CMGTYD Date: 04.06.18

Supervisor's signature (for research students only): Date: 6/6/18

Head of RKE's name (or nominee): V. Tzibazi Date: 11/06/18

For taught students (undergraduates, masters)) only:

The student has the skills to carry out the proposed research. I undertake to monitor the student's adherence to the relevant research guidelines and codes of practice.

Supervisor's signature: Date: 6/6/18
Head of Department's signature (or nominee): Date:

Please remember to append to your application any relevant consent forms, information sheets, questionnaires that may be relevant to your application.