UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Diane Simpson, Senior Lecturer in Social Work
Social Work Education and Carcerality

SRHE Conference Annual Research Conference
10 – 12 December 2014

The Research Project

- Doctoral study examining the experiences of social workers who became social work academics. Specific focus on:
  - Career pathways
  - Transition experiences
  - Engagement with academic identities
- Semi-structured interviews
- Note: participant quotes edited to increase readability – indicated by ellipses

Sample

- 21 social work academics from 5 English universities all of whom remain registered social workers

- 15 women, 6 men

- Most (n = 16) described themselves as White British

- Most (n = 10) were aged 51 - 55

Foucauldian theoretical framework

Disciplinary power (Foucault, 1991)

- **Hierarchical observation**
- **Normalising judgements**
- **Examination**
- Spatialisation (space)
- Isolation
- Disciplinary regimes
- Time
- Self-governance

Technologies of the Self (Foucault, 1988)

- Role of agency
- Resistance

Expanding Foucauldian theory

- Technologies of relationships
- Lack of gaze/hierarchical observation
- Creation of collegiate compensatory gaze
- Carcerality of incompetence

Hierarchical observation

- Initial experience of lack of gaze, particularly in contrast to regulated social work practice

- Risks for students, staff and university

- Serendipity

- Creation of a collegiate compensatory gaze

- Carcerality of incompetence

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Lack of Gaze

I would sit here and think 'right, what should I be doing?' I'm sure I should be doing something and things like marking

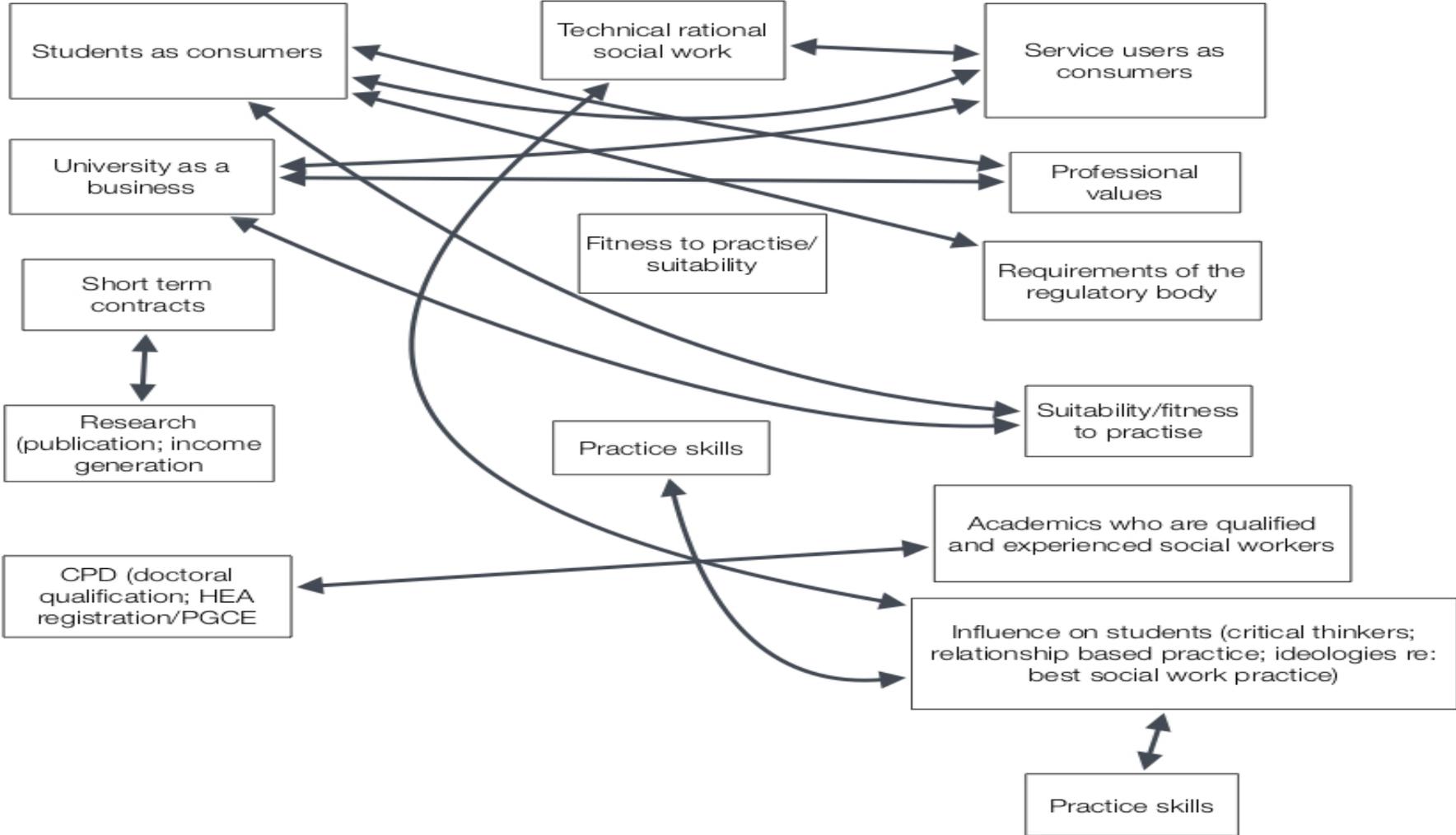...I kept thinking nobody's checking me, I could be doing anything

on occasions you need direction and there is no direction there to be had

...I remember that first day just a feeling bit like 'whoa' you know because I didn't even know my way round the building... it was quite a while after, I can't remember how long, that I realised it was this whole area of the building that I had no idea it was there...

Normalising Judgements

- The discourses of social work academics reflected normalising discourses of:
  - Of the neoliberal university
  - Neoliberal social work practice
  - Guardians of the profession
- Technologies of the self (agency) exercised – but choice of normalising judgements
- Competing discourses
- Social work discourses regarding suitability, fitness to practise and acting as guardians of the profession take priority

Normalising judgements of the neoliberal university	Normalising judgements of neoliberal social work	Normalising judgements - guardians of the profession

Students as consumers

Technical rational social work

Service users as consumers

University as a business

Professional values

Short term contracts

Fitness to practise/ suitability

Requirements of the regulatory body

Research (publication; income generation

Practice skills

Suitability/fitness to practise

CPD (doctoral qualification; HEA registration/PGCE

Academics who are qualified and experienced social workers

Influence on students (critical thinkers; relationship based practice; ideologies re: best social work practice)

Practice skills

Positions in relation to normalising judgements

DOCILE BODIES
- university as a business
- short term contracts
- student satisfaction
- fitness to practise/suitability
- practice skills
- CPD (doctoral qualification; teaching qualification)
- research discourses

SEDITIOUS ACADEMICS
- student as consumers
- student satisfaction
-student progression
- discourses about research
- technical-rational social work
-some pedagogical practices
-research discourses

ENFORCERS
- service users as consumers
- fitness to practise/suitability
- practice skills
- best social work practice e.g. values, theoretical approaches
- students as critical thinkers

Docile bodies

...we are a business so the focus is on...making money and income, so a lot of the activity, for example, recent activity, is the need to get people enrolled on the new modules for next year, so a lot of going out to local authorities, to be running sessions, getting sign ups. And that I suppose is the need, you know, we need, erm, the money to be coming in to be doing our jobs.

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Seditious academics

...I think that one thing we are all aware **is our duty to the service users that the people we train will work with, not to the people that we're training. Our duty is not to our students** and that does separate us out from most other academic roles.

...we have this sort of tug of war with the university really about...the way that we deal with students...well the expectations we have of them are very clear that they are social work students and therefore, you know, they have a responsibility to, to the profession. So, we lock horns now and again with the university...I think they find us challenging

Enforcers

*Erm, to HCPC…we can't and I won't…be led to the position where I'm only listening to the university because we've got, and should have, our feet in both camps. To have a responsibility to your employer is fair, but…I will always… have the professional integrity as the highest context marker and that is going to be something that if it has tension in it, that I, that I'll dig my heels in on, because that's the highest context marker and there's no way that that can be compromised. So that's, in an admissions role, that's really, that can be really challenging when people want student numbers in, **but I'm not signing my name against somebody I don't think should be on this course whether you want £9000 from them or not.***

The effects of competing normalising discourses

- A sense of vulnerability and "unbecoming" (Colley et al, 2007: 178 and Archer, 2008: 389) – individually and for the whole programme

- Contributes to the exclusion of some staff

- Social work academics enmeshed within conflicting discourses

- Social work academics may be located in a liminal position between the discourses of the university and social work practice

- Divided practices

- Reinforces carcerality of incompetence

Examination

- Of students (dual examination – academic and practical)
- Of academics by internal/external academic processes including the Research Excellence Framework
- Of social work programmes by regulatory bodies – The College of Social Work (TCSW) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)
- By social work agencies
- On employers by universities (less potent)
- Multi-directional but hierarchical examination was the most powerful

Disciplinary regimes

- Control of behaviour and time
- "control of activity" (Foucault, 1991: 149)
- Initial lack of understanding of regimes – extended the carcerality of incompetence
- Sense of being "driven" by the university
- Three areas:
  - Teaching and learning
  - Professional development
  - University systems and processes

Disciplinary regimes - time

- Rhythm of university life
- Accounting for time (TAS/TRAC)
- Depletion of time and risks to wellbeing (mirrors Anderson, 2006)
- Fast pace
- Longer academic year/teaching year
- Negative impact on engagement with research
- Time spent on research detracts from time for students

Time

And it literally broke down on me about a year ago because I had to work every single evening as well as every weekend I was working. I worked and worked and worked and worked and more came my way every day, every week, every whatever. To the point where there were no stress management strategies in place anymore. There was no sleep in place anymore, I developed severe, severe sleep disruption

Solitary confinement and spatialisation

- Academic practice conceived as isolated (confirms Aspinwall-Roberts, 2009 and Worsley, 2009)

- Solitary confinement from academic practice and spatialisation (office space)

- Impact of carceral practices about research (Harding and Taylor, 2001)

- Collaborative practice is impaired with consequences for research skills development

- Unequal access to supportive networks

Solitary confinement and spatialisation

Academics work very much in isolation...I mean look at me...I have my own office, I have my own module, I have my own teaching sessions, everything is very, in chunks, erm, and that's why I sometimes feel it's like being self-employed, you have your little bits to manage and that becomes your main focus then.

Technologies of relationships

- Alma mater
- Potent influence of relationships in applying for academic employment
- Exclusion
- Influence of perceived niches
- Reluctant to share/support re: research
- Whilst rare, some senior staff appropriated research ideas

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Alma mater

...I qualified, here actually, in this building, on this course in 1998

Appropriation

I also have to say, I'm fairly critical here, because I think and again, I, I certainly don't know if this is representative of the university, but I can only speak about my experience in the School that I teach in, but I think there is some real dishonesty, I'm certainly aware of some researchers who take the credit for the work of other people and, erm, I just find the integrity of it... I guess the strongest word I can use and I don't want to dilute this, I just think it's absolutely disgusting that people can work in such ways and I can't be...a party to that.

Exclusion

Because we are all credible practitioners, we value that experience, we're not really PhD/research oriented people, we should be, a lot more, we don't have time to do research, we don't really value research, we should value it more. So when someone comes in with a PhD and no rese(arch), no practical experience, they get rejected.

Technologies of self

- Agency in relation to normalising judgements – prioritise those relating to social work

- Subjectification in relation to norms

- "Taking care of self" (Foucault, 1988: 18)

- Askesis or meditation (Foucault, 1988)

- Initiative re: disciplinary regimes

Social work education and carcerality

- Aspects of disciplinary power combine and interact to limit and confine the practice of social work academics

- Agency is possible but there is evidence of self-governance and choosing between normalised practices

- Entrapment in a carcerality of incompetence

Social work education and carcerality

- Liminal experience, particularly relating to normalising judgements – reflects the experiences of other non traditional academics (Whitchurch, 2008; Williams, 2010)

- Risk of "divided practices" (Foucault 1982 cited in Chambon, 1999: 67)

- "Regimes of truth" (Foucault 1977 cited in O'Farrell, 2005: 65)

- Vulnerability

UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

The Carcerality of Social Work Education
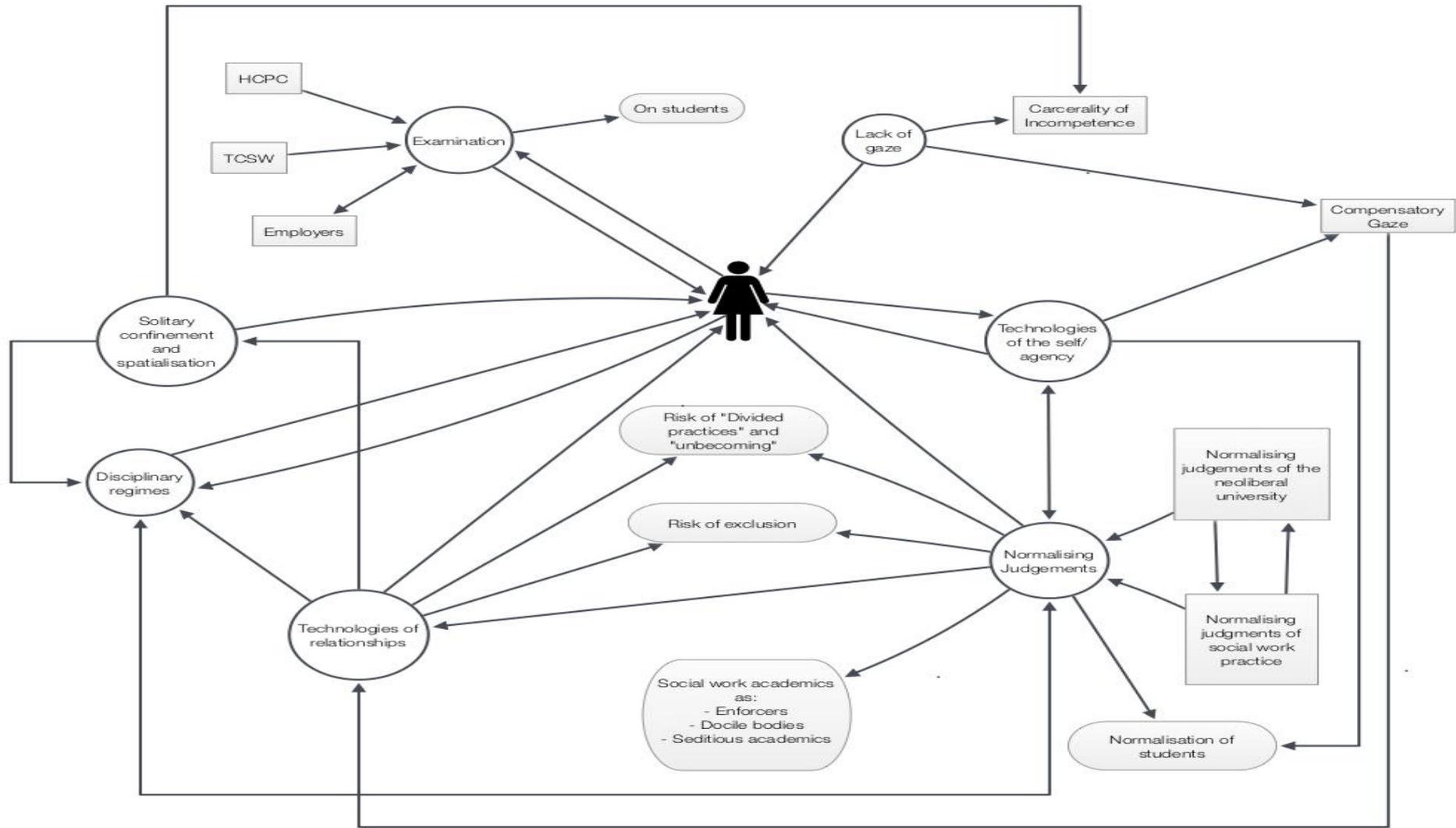
And finally…

- Questions and comments welcome

- Specific feedback is sought re: the term "carcerality of incompetence"

References

Anderson, G. (2006) Carving out time and space in the managerial university. *Journal of Organisational Change Management,* 19(5) 578 - 592.

Archer, L. (2008) 'Younger academics' constructions of 'authenticity,' 'success' and professional identity. *Studies in Higher Education,* 33(4) 385 - 403.

Aspinwall-Roberts, E. (2009) Stepping Into Academic Life from Practice. In: HEA/SWAP Newsletter (ed.) *In Focus 03: Supporting New Academic Staff - Learning from Experience.* Southampton: HEA/SWAP, 2 - 3. Available from http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/newsletters/infocus03_online.pdf [Accessed 1st October 2010].

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

References

Chambon, A.S. (1999) Foucault's Approach: Making the Familiar Visible. In: A. S. Chambon, A. Irving and L. Epstein (eds.) *Reading Foucault for Social Work.* New York: Columbia University Press, 51 - 81.

Colley, H., James, D. and Diment, K. (2007) Unbecoming teachers: Towards A more dynamic notion of professional participation. *Journal of Education Policy,* 22(2) 173 - 193.

Foucault, M. (1988) Technologies of the Self. In: L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (eds.) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault.* London: Tavistock Publishers, 16 - 49.

Foucault, M. (1991) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* London: Penguin.

Harding, G. and Taylor, K.M.G. (2001) Academic assessment in the carceral society. *Pharmacy Education,* 1 77 - 82.

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

References

O'Farrell, C. (2005) *Michel Foucault.* London: Sage.

Whitchurch, C. (2008) Shifting identities and blurring boundaries: The emergence of *third space* professionals in UK higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly,* 62(4) 377 - 396.

Williams, J. (2010) *Pride and Prejudice: The Socialisation of Nurse Educators*. PhD. Lancaster University.

Worsley, A. (2009) Things We Wished We'd Known and Strategies Adopted: The Professor. In: HEA/SWAP Newsletter (ed.) *In Focus 03: Supporting New Academic Staff - Learning from Experience'.* Southampton: HEA/SWAP, 9. Available from http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/newsletters/infocus03_online.pdf [Accessed 1st October 2010].

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN