

'Who Cares?' Gender, Care and Secondary Schooling: 'Accidental findings' from a Seclusion Unit

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A breadth of research explores gendered professional identities, practices and spaces across a range of UK educational institutions (Barber, 2002, Murray, 2006, Ringrose, 2010, Warin, 2017). One focus has been on links between gender, care and education in early years settings and primary schools, although less attention has been given to caring within secondary schools (see Laurent, 2013, Gillies and Robinson, 2013 as important exceptions). Drawing upon qualitative research conducted in London within an in-school Seclusion Unit, this paper brings together a Lefebvrian conceptualisation of space with feminist theorisations of care to explore how the Unit (conceived as a space of control, discipline and punishment) also became an unlikely space of care. In doing so, the paper explores complex intersections between gender and care and how everyday caring practices in schools are inextricably linked to and embedded within broader institutional and spatial agendas and processes.

Keywords: Care, gender, secondary schools, Seclusion

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## **Introduction**

### **Fixed term exclusions from school, internal exclusion and Seclusion Units**

Within the English education system, 'fixed term exclusion' refers to student exclusion from school for a set period of time, up to a maximum of 45 days per academic year (DfE, 2018a). In 2016/7 there were 381,865 non-permanent fixed term school exclusions in England, involving 2.29% of students (DfE, 2018a). In order that exclusion does not function as a reward (Gilmore, 2012) and to ensure that excluded students receive education and supervision whilst excluded (attempting to avoid the negative outcomes associated with school exclusion, see Power and Taylor, 2018), a growing number of schools have developed school-based internal exclusion. Known by a variety of names, including Seclusion Units (the term used here), 'disciplinary inclusion rooms', 'remove rooms' and 'consequences rooms' (Power and Taylor, 2018, Merrick, 2018, Perraudian, 2018), these are one example of a broader range of preventative measures, such as Pupil Referral Units (hereafter PRUs, see Gillies and Robinson, 2013), other forms of learning support (Bailey and Thompson, 2008) and Inclusion services (see Hallam and Castle, 2001), to support those at risk of school and social exclusion (Hughes, 2017, IFF Research et al, 2018). However, Seclusion Units are controversial, and for some their highly regulated and punitive nature (often enforcing a maximum

number of toilet breaks, reducing external stimuli to a minimum and requiring silence all day, see Gilmore, 2012) can be seen to violate children's rights (Merrick, 2018, Perraudian, 2018).

Evidence of the impact of Seclusion is unclear and mixed (DfE, 2018a). Some suggest Seclusion can reduce further instances of fixed term exclusions (Gilmore, 2012), whilst others report impacts are short term and modest at best (Barker et al, 2010) or that no one single intervention is effective (Hallam and Castle, 2001, DfE, 2018a). Research on PRUs reports mixed impacts on student motivation (Solomon and Rogers, 2001, Capstick, 2005). Whilst the research presented here initially focused on evaluating the role of Seclusion in punishment and rehabilitation, this paper discusses 'accidental findings' (Shaper and Streatfield, 2012) which illustrated how Seclusion became an unlikely space of care, contributing to mapping the caring landscapes of secondary schools.

### **Conceptualising Care**

Although sometimes assumed to be 'natural' (Moss, 2014, Hughes, 2017), and often invisibilised or undervalued, care can be conceptualised in a range of ways (Rogers and Weller, 2013, Horton and Pyer, 2017). This paper draws upon two aspects of Noddings' highly influential conceptualisations of care. Firstly, Noddings draws attention to the relationality of care- that is viewing care as relationships, rather than solely tasks (Noddings, 1992, 2003, Laurent, 2013, Hughes, 2017, Alder, 2002, James, 2010). Involving interdependence and vulnerability (Hansen and Mulholland, 2005), a wide range of non-symmetrical and non-equal relational encounters (between those who care and those cared for) produce caring relations (Laurent, 2013, Alder, 2002, Hughes, 2017). Originating from the experiences, concerns, difficulties and needs of others, this relationality requires availability, attentiveness, observation, dialogue, responsibility and responsiveness amongst both carer and cared for (Noddings, 2003, Luff, 2013, Horton and Pyer, 2017, Laurent, 2013). Secondly, Noddings' work contributes to a broader retheorising around 'ethics of care' (see also Philips et al, 2013). Understanding care as both everyday social practice (caring '*for*' or '*taking*' care) and as ways of thinking (as an ethical ideal or caring '*about*') has been highly influential in helping to reposition and reconceptualise care as morally informed, human practice (Philip et al, 2013, Alder, 2002).

Care is controversial (McCuaig, 2012) and is often the subject of vociferous debate and conflict, within politics, institutions and families (Rogers and Weller, 2013). Care can be unwelcome or burdensome, damaging and oppressive, and can contribute to the reproduction of inequalities and exclusion (Moss, 2014, Bosworth, 1995, Milligan et al, 2007, Hughes, 2017). In response to Noddings' work (which has been critiqued for not exploring exploitation in caring relationships, see Laurent,

2013), a range of 'feminist theories of care' (Vogt, 2011, Philips et al, 2013, Hughes, 2017, Milligan et al, 2006, Horton and Pyer, 2017) argue for the development of moral, ethical and political theories which place care as a central, political issue and as a concern for equality and social justice (Philip et al, 2013). In doing so, this has critiqued the gendered and unequal distribution of care, acknowledging that care can mark out power, serve patriarchal interests and reinforce gender roles (McCuaig, 2012).

Care and education, are at least at face value, intrinsically linked, though the over-simplistic notions that education settings 'care for' students, that teaching is a 'caring profession' and that teachers have innate capacity, motivation, time and space to care, need to be more closely examined (James, 2010). To suggest that caring should be the foundation of teaching more so than pedagogical activities (see Noddings, 1992, 2003) is perhaps somewhat controversial and radical (Laurent, 2013, Robert, 2016). More accepted, perhaps, is that education professionals are brokers of care (Bosworth, 1995) and that care can help to secure students' connections to education and school (Pulsford, 2014, Hughes, 2017). Whilst Early Years settings (Pairman and Dilli, 2017, Warin and Wernersson, 2016, Brownhill, 2016, Warin, 2016, Grahn, 2016) and primary schools have been seen to have 'a culture of care' (Vogt, 2002, p252, see also Hansen and Mulholland, 2005, Pulsford, 2014), research exploring caring in secondary schools identifies a more complex landscape (see Bosworth, 1995, Alder, 2002 Barber, 2002). Caring in schools consists of a broad range of often informal and invisibilised activities, behaviours, concerns, attitudes, skills and relationships (Vogt, 2002, Bosworth, 1995), For example, citizenship education can create 'caring classrooms' (Wood and Taylor, 2017), caring extends beyond classrooms as school staff perform care during breaktimes, vacations and during non-contact hours (Robert, 2016, Vogt, 2002). Further, an increasing range of legislation, policies, strategies and activities promote care and support students (McCuaig, 2012), particularly those disengaged or vulnerable (Laurent, 2013). Moreover, students value teachers caring (Bosworth, 1995, Alder, 2002), and care for each other (Bosworth, 1995), and a significant young minority of school students are young carers (Eley, 2004).

However, whilst there are numerous caring moments in schools and many education professionals work tirelessly to care for their students (see Gillies and Robinson, 2013), rarely do broader frameworks prioritise care. New managerialist regimes, emphasising accountability, and prioritising strategies relating to league table, SATS targets and performance management, create an institutional environment (particularly in secondary schools, see Barber, 2002, Robert, 2016), which may generate more instrumental teaching practices, dissuade education professionals from caring

and create little 'space to care' (Gillies and Robinson, 2013, Murray, 2006, Bosworth, 1995). Furthermore, an increased emphasis on 'performativity', regulatory frameworks, accountability and competition between schools has qualitatively reconfigured how care is practised and experienced (Moss, 2014, Hughes, 2017), with a greater emphasis on highly regulated, measurable, instrumental and professional instances of caring (Murray, 2006), as opposed to caring as an organic, embedded and relational, everyday, pedagogical process (Laurent, 2013).

Further, teachers who focus on 'caring' (often seen in opposition to professionalism and distance, see Murray, 2006) often risk being stereotyped as 'mavericks', sidelined by other staff and can be more vulnerable to restructuring and redundancy (Pulsford, 2014). Recent work has theorised how institutional spaces, such as universities (Rogers, 2017) and secondary schools (Lithari and Rogers, 2017) are fundamentally (at least in a formal, institutional sense) 'care-less' spaces. In institutional spaces (despite the many earlier identified examples of caring), 'love and care are psycho-socially questioned' (Rogers, 2017, pp132). Generated from pedagogical models which repudiate emotionality in favour of rational learning, there is a history of 'carelessness' in classrooms (Gillies and Robinson, 2013), and although young people value care in schools (Nosworth, 1995, Alder, 2002) they can more readily identify instances of non-care (Hughes, 2017).

### **Care, gender and schools**

Gender is a key foundation of identity for education professionals (Pulsford, 2014, Vandebroek and Peeters, 2008), and the education sector includes complex horizontal and vertical gender-segregated patterns of employment. Between 96-98% of the UK EYEC workforce is female (Osgood et al, 2006), and 85% of qualified teachers (and 73% of headteachers) in state funded English primary schools, and 62% of qualified teachers (though only 38% of headteachers) of secondary schools are women (DfE, 2018b). More significantly there are pronounced gendered divisions of labour within schools, including highly gendered patterns of caring. A range of educational settings, including EYEC (Sumison, 2000, Warin and Wernersson, 2016), secondary schools (Alder, 2002, Bosworth, 1995) and higher education (Murray, 2006) are closely aligned with particular gendered constructions of caring and emotional work as maternal, nurturing, and feminised (Osgood et al, 2006, O'Brien, 2007, Hansen and Mulholland, 2005, Vogt, 2002). Women education professionals do more caring work- and more face to face caring work- than men (Robert, 2016, Eley, 2004). The powerful link between care and women re-enforces traditional gender roles and 'mothering ideologies', marginalises women educators' caring work in schools (Hansen and Mulhollan, 2005)

and represents 'the feminisation of behaviour management' (Dodman, 2016, p274). For O'Brien (2007), 'patriarchal gender ideology still powerfully masks the gender order of social life' (p168).

Research identifies a complex landscape in schools around men, masculinity and care. Many male education professionals undertake teaching roles, responsibilities and practices where care is downplayed or invisibilised (Brownhill, 2014). Male education professionals are stereotypically seen to possess other resources relating to discipline, technical competence, sport and coaching (Grahn, 2016, Vandebroek and Peeters, 2008). Male teachers' engagement with more feminine practices of care crosses gender boundaries, and is often treated with suspicion, scrutiny and surveillance (Brownhill, 2014). Thus caring in schools is complex, difficult, gendered and not without risk. Rogers (2017) thus calls for further consideration of undertaking care in otherwise 'care-less' spaces- in response, this paper discusses complex intersections of care and gender central to Seclusion.

### **Theoretical approach: Lefebvre and the 'spatial turn' in education**

Recently, the growing interest from a range of disciplines and subject areas in the relationship between education and space has led to the 'spatial turn' in education (Middleton, 2017, Alzeer, 2018, Holloway et al, 2010, Holloway and Jons, 2012). This approach recognises that space is neither neutral nor merely a container of social action (Ferguson and Seddon, 2009). Rather, space influences everyday life, (re)produces power and inequalities, and space has become a theoretical lens through which to understand educational experiences and settings (Thomson et al, 2010, (Rutanen, 2012). For example, Foucauldian theories have mapped the internal arrangement of space inside institutions and explore spatial practices within schools (Pike, 2008, Catling, 2005). Middleton (2017) argues that Lefebvre should be considered an educational thinker, since (as well as his Marxist analysis of universities, schools and pedagogy) his conceptualisation of space has been used as a 'spatial toolkit' (Thomson et al, 2010) to explore how educational spaces are produced and experienced. His 'trialectics of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) posits that space is produced through three related perspectives which interweave and combine together to produce space as it is experienced.

The first element in the triad, '*representations of space*', focuses on how space is *conceived*, referring to how it is planned, designed and documented by professional and powerful authorities, such as politicians, policy makers, planners, architects and property developers (see Lefebvre, 1991, Shields, 1999, Elden, 2004, Alzeer, 2018). The relevance to education is clear, since each of these authorities (and headteachers and school governors) exert powerful influence in shaping educational policy and provision. Often referred to as 'discourse *on* space', these professional and

privileged voices produce powerful and 'legitimate' claims to how spaces are designed and planned (Lefebvre, 2013).

The second element in the triad, representational spaces, refers to *lived space* (Rutanen, 2012). Beginning from an abstract notion of physical space as the medium for activity, this approach looks at everyday space from a non-specialist perspective (Peng, 2009), focusing on images, symbols and meanings generated by people and by culture to illustrate how space is experienced and lived (Elden, 2004) (Shields, 1999). Often referred to as 'discourse of space', it refers to how spaces (in the specific case of this paper, schools, see Pike, 2008, Catling, 2005) are lived, experienced and understood. Thirdly, the concept of *spatial practices* relates to how everyday spaces as they are *perceived*. This refers to everyday practices which produce and structure life in spaces, including daily rhythms (Lefebvre, 1991). Schools clearly are places which possess and are structured by daily spatio-temporal rhythms (Pike, 2008).

Whilst these three elements of Lefebvre's triad may work together to produce space (as simultaneously *conceived, perceived and lived*), an analysis cannot be reduced to one component of the trialectics- nor do the three perspectives always intersect collaboratively or productively (Pairman and Dilli, 2017, Middleton, 2017). Everyday practices in space can rewrite and reconfigure meanings and popular ideas about those spaces, and may contest and resist more formal attempts by powerful authorities to control space (Lefebvre, 2013, Shields, 1999). Lefebvre's work has been used to explore a diverse range of education spaces, for example Early Education centres (Pairman and Dalli, 2017), dispersed learning networks (Ferguson and Seddon, 2007), US Middle School ESL students (Peng, 2009), UK secondary schools (Thomson et al, 2010) and student experiences of Higher Education (Alzeer, 2018 on). Here, Lefebvre's work is used to analyse experiences within a UK secondary school Seclusion Unit.

## **Methods**

The research focuses upon New Academy, a secondary school located in outer London. Opened in 2004. In the last 15 years the school's turbulent existence includes having a succession of headteachers, failing a number of Ofsted inspections, long term status in 'special measures' and was relaunched as part of an Academy chain. The school serves a socially disadvantaged community over a relatively confined geographical area, mainly comprising of low rise public housing estates. Almost three quarters (72%) of school students were white British, and entitlement to free school meals and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was above average.

New Academy commissioned research to evaluate their Seclusion Unit, designed to cater for up to 5 internally excluded students each day, run by a support member of staff employed as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. The research gained University research ethics approval, and participant information sheets were distributed to ensure participants gave informed consent (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). Parental consent was also sought before inviting students to participate. Anonymity was assured- pseudonyms are used for participants and for the school. The research comprised 39 in-depth interviews (enabling the exploration of different perspectives, Tisdall et al, 2009), including the headteacher and other senior management team (hereafter SMT) members, teachers, the member of staff who ran Seclusion (identified by the pseudonym Nicky), and parents and students, including those who had- and had not- spent time in Seclusion. Most interviews were conducted on school premises, but not in the Seclusion Unit. Some students kindly gave up their breaktimes, whilst others were allowed out of lessons to participate. However, parents failed to turn up to a relatively large proportion of scheduled interviews. Whilst school staff interpreted this as 'typical' disinterested parental behaviour, it can also represent individuals exercising freedom to withdraw consent (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). That telephone interviews were often subsequently successfully arranged implied that inviting parents onto school premises linked the research with parents' preconceptions about the school and was not necessarily the most effective way to connect with families.

Additionally, over the year-long data collection process, a number of informal ethnographic observations were undertaken, experiencing the school as staff and children might (O'Reilly et al, 2013), walking around the school, sitting in classrooms and the Seclusion Unit, often in-between and waiting for scheduled research interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, data was analysed using a thematic approach (see Tisdall et al, 2009). This paper results on unanticipated themes which emerged through the data, generating what Shaper and Streatfield (2012) refer to as 'accidental findings', relating to care and caring, both within the Seclusion Unit and the broader school.

## **Results**

### **Conceived Space: Seclusion as a space of punishment**

SMT members described the intended purpose of the Seclusion Unit:

*'you're not getting a day off, you're not being sent home for the day, you're going into isolation, you're going to work hard all day and you're going to be coming in later and you're going to be going*

*home late as well to make up for all the time you've lost, so you don't get to see your friends on the way to school and you don't mix with friends on the way home... that is the draconian side of it'* SMT member.

*'we're strong on discipline [in the Unit]'* SMT member.

These comments reflect Lefebvre's notion of 'representations of space', that is how spaces are conceived and planned by legitimate authorities, in this case the school's SMT. This conceptualisation of Seclusion reflects broader, long standing trends towards discipline, control and punishment within educational spaces (Capstick, 2005, Gilmore, 2012, anonymised, 2010). The structure and organisation of schools sends clear symbolic messages about power and the geography of schools (Catling, 2005). The research presented here supports others (see Gilmore, 2012, Hallam and Castle, 2001) suggesting that Seclusion Units are typically designed and planned by institutions to focus on control and punishment more so than other types of alternative education strategies (such as PRUs) which offer rehabilitative and transformative practices and student-centred approaches to learning (McKeon, 2001, Solomon and Rogers, 2001). The physical space of the Seclusion Unit was designed in a specific way to reflect these notions of punishment:

*'we have a dedicated room, it's not used for anything else. It's a little spartan, on purpose. We have display boards used as dividers, they're painted black as well...so that the student actually sits in a cubicle and therefore can't communicate or see any other students...the teacher is behind them, they're away from the teacher, facing a wall with their desk. They literally have a cubicle to work in and that's it'* SMT member.

*'I think it's horrible, I mean I think the fact that's it's small and they're on their own and they've got a sign in front of them, "don't speak", it's not a pleasant place to be'* Female teacher.

These observations show how Seclusion is configured differently to other types of learning spaces, as purposefully uninviting and harsh (see also Gilmore, 2012). The physical layout of classrooms matter (Catling, 2005)- discipline is a *spatial* tactic, and punishment was 'designed into' the space itself to illustrate how schools are governed (Pike, 2008, anonymised, 2010). Configured as a space of punishment, Seclusion was designed as a 'care-less' space (Rogers, 2017), contrary to other alternative education spaces, such as PRUs, where informality, flexibility and care are often prioritised (Gillies and Robinson, 2013, Wood and Taylor, 2017).



### **Lived space: Seclusion as a space of care**

Lefebvre reminds us that space (as it is lived) is often experienced differently to how it is planned (Lefebvre, 1991), and the Seclusion Unit was no exception. Nicky (the dedicated staff member) summarised how she worked in the Unit:

*'(I aim to) just to have some empathy with them [Secluded students] really, and to speak in a calm voice with them, to explain that I'm here to help them get through the day, to show them the benefits that they will see at the end of the day, of how they can work and do things that they thought they couldn't do, and how they'll be stronger for it... Occasionally I have put on very, very low music – we've got relaxation music'* Nicky.

*'She's calm, quiet, (has) fantastic behaviour management skills, totally non-confrontational and there just isn't any trouble'* SMT member.

Whilst Nicky followed some of the SMT's intended rules (for example, using isolation booths and segregating students from the main school), she was not complicit in the production of a 'care-less space' (Rogers, 2017). Instead, her own sets of aspirations, qualities and motivational caring practices were flexibly interwoven into the Unit, sometimes circumventing rules (e.g. playing relaxation music). Reflecting Noddings' 'ethics of care' (1992), rather than reproducing institutional pedagogical agendas, Nicky's caring work is attentive, observant and responsive to her students' needs (see also Luft, 2013). Rather than being an authoritative expert, her practice encompassed more relational, sensitive interaction with those in need of care (Alder, 2002). This produced a complex, paradoxical lived space, imbued with empathy, calmness, encouragement and relaxation, somewhat at odds to that conceived by the SMT. Furthermore, Nicky's unsanctioned caring practices, contradicting institutional requirements, were used to encourage and generate successful engagement (Meo and Parker, 2004, Gilmore 2012), mirroring how PRUs use different educational, pedagogical and caring approaches compared to mainstream classes (Solomon and Rogers, 2001, Hallam and Castle 2001, Capstick 2005). Although not part of her remit, Nicky was in effect creating a space of care:

*'The pastoral stuff is the stuff that I really enjoy because a lot of those kids I just, you know, really feel for them'* Nicky.

*'She takes on so many roles, she asks them if they want to go the loo, have they had their food, what do they want? She takes on everything, she becomes their nurturer'* Female teacher.

*'She [Nicky] understands everyone there [in Seclusion], a lot of other teachers don't'* Female student.

Again, these examples show Nicky's practice, in distinction to more professionalised, distanced forms of caring often promoted in secondary schools, reflects an alternative approach (as suggested by Noddings, 1992) where caring, rather than pedagogy is the central starting point to teaching (Laurent, 2013). Hence, Seclusion was transformed by Nicky from a space of discipline, control and punishment into an unanticipated space of care. These findings add to a growing body of research illuminating the myriad of ways in which (sometimes whilst facing intense pressure from other institutional targets and priorities) education professionals find space and time to care (Bosworth, 1995, Barber, 2002), and how care is often embedded in unlikely school spaces (see also Shaper and Streatfield, 2012). Nicky explained that she expanded her role in response to a growing understanding of the learning needs, challenging behaviours and broader contexts (e.g. poverty, family vulnerability and instability) surrounding the lives of many students who attended Seclusion (see also Barber 2002):

*'I [hope] that they would really have people that cared a bit more about them at home. Yeah. I know they're cared about in different ways, but, you know... a lot of those don't have that level of care. Then that's what I would wish for them'* Nicky.

Hence school spaces are often not experienced as they are initially conceived and planned by powerful professionals- they are (re)shaped by children and others who inhabit them (Catling, 2005). Secluded students and their parents also talked about how they experienced Seclusion as caring:

*'(She is) better than the other teachers, she understands, she doesn't shout at you'* Female Secluded student.

*'she's nice, she helps as much as she can'* Male student.

*'If they need help, the lady's (Seclusion Unit staff member) there and she's ever so good and encourages him to do it on his own'* Parent of Secluded student.

Highlighting that students and parents also value care, these comments reflect Noddings' notion (1992) of a certain circularity to care- that care is only successful if those cared for recognise and value the act and its significance (see also Hughes, 2017). Therefore, the 'lived space' of the Seclusion Unit produces a particular (and distinct) geography of emotion within the school (Wood and Taylor, 2017), creating a space where care and caring labour is fundamental, recognised and valued by key actors (Moss, 2014, James, 2010). Caring and nurturing within the 'lived' space of the Seclusion Unit were linked with particular ideas about gender, with many describing Nicky as a 'Mum' or 'mother' figure (also found by Vogt, 2002, James, 2010):

*'[Secluded students] spend a day with (Seclusion Staff member), who is like a pseudo Mum, everything's great, that's fine'* Male teacher.

*'(Nicky) ran her a unit at her last school, it was a place of sanctuary, students would turn up and say 'Can I come and work with you, Miss?'...and she coped with all this, the staff used to put kids in there they didn't want, and she almost ran it like a family unit where kids went and didn't mind going'* SMT member.

Therefore, Seclusion was a gendered school landscape, involving gendered expectations about care, nurture and emotional labour (O'Brien, 2007, Pulsford, 2014). This is perhaps unsurprising, given gender is central to caring throughout the education sector (Milligan and Wiles 2010, James, 2010, Rogers and Weller, 2013). Powerful gendered dynamics and stereotypes around femininity and masculinity position and influence male and female education professionals to offer particular types of care (Vandenbroeck and Peeters, 2008), and those evidenced here in Seclusion are more commonly associated with traditional expectations of femininity, and caring as women's work (James, 2010, Barber, 2002). Significantly, whilst Nicky expressed a sense of job satisfaction, her account also shows how she interpreted her skills as routinised, naturalised and as intrinsic feminine 'caring':

*'It doesn't feel amazing to me. The academic stuff I've learnt from my five years as a learning assistant, being in all the different classes. So seeing the whole of the curriculum. And, as I said, having four teenage children who I've worked with on their subjects. So I've just gradually, over the years, got to know the curriculum'* Nicky.

Nicky's comments here focus less on her professional expertise but emphasise her life experience as a mum, combined with the implication that '*gradually... [getting] to know the curriculum*' is achieved through experience, rather than training. These comments reflect a broader feminisation of behaviour management in schools (Dodman 2016), the devaluation of women's caring work, and indeed women's own roles in reproducing this (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). As the next section explores, unproblematised assumptions around women's identities and status as caring education professionals also (re)produced exclusionary spatial practices and unequal patterns of caring throughout the school (Vogt, 2002).

### **Perceived space: Care and school-wide spatial practices**

Lefebvre's third element of his 'trialectics of space' enables an exploration of how the spatial practices of care within Seclusion, and more importantly, around the rest of the school (itself shaped by broader national education policy priorities) were perceived and valued. In turn, this also enables a mapping of the school's hierarchies and gendered division of labour. The emotional labour practiced within Seclusion was not recognised by the broader school staff:

*'No-one looks after her [the Seclusion Unit staff member]. No-one goes in and says "have you had a cup of coffee, are you alright?" And the reason no-one does that is because we're all fighting our own corner, but that has a direct impact upon that woman and upon her potential to do her own job'*  
Female teacher.

Nicky explained that, whilst she had daily contact with a SMT member (and had a walkie talkie for emergencies), sometimes liaised with teachers about Secluded students, and occasionally had teachers timetabled to accompany her, she herself had few opportunities to work outside of the Unit:

(interviewer): *'Do you get a chance to watch, to engage, to participate in the rest of what goes in the school?'*

*'Not now I don't... No. If I, very occasionally don't have anybody in here, which is probably about once every half term or something now, I go off to classes'* Nicky.

This suggests that Nicky was perhaps just as excluded from participation in the main school as the excluded students, confirming that caring can be individualised and isolating. Whilst Vogt (2000) discusses '*caring for students is something that is done within the confines of [teachers'] classrooms*

*between themselves as teachers and the individual children they teach: care that is, in essence, void of connection (with parents, families or communities)' (Vogt, 2003, p531), one might add void of connection other school staff. Whilst Noddings (2003) conceptualised care as relational (and earlier evidence presented shows how Nicky and students acknowledged and valued care), this relationality did not extend further across the school or with other school staff. Moreover, education professionals cannot care for their students if they themselves are not supported (James, 2010), as one teacher commented:*

*'it's dreadful. I mean (staff member), I don't know how she works in there all day and not...I mean, I personally wouldn't want to be in there'* Female teacher.

Using Lefebvre's notion of 'perceived space', exploring participants' broader perceptions identify turbulent spatial practices within the wider geography of the school. Other school spaces were often described as non-caring:

*'I think the ethos of the school is gone. I feel we are constantly fire-fighting, therefore the morale of the staff fails...'* SMT member.

*'you're talking about that maternal thing which is fundamentally missing (in the school), that's changed in the last three years. We are now headed by a maths man, a maths man second, a maths man third. They are all men. And they are not creative, imaginative roles. Students in this area come from backgrounds where there are often very scary men or no men at all. If you take out the maternal, then you have a problem within a community. In there (Seclusion), you have the maternal. The only place in the school you still have that...'* Female teacher.

Two important parallel processes can be seen to intersect here to produce the marginalisation and feminisation of behaviour management (Dodman, 2016). Firstly, as identified by others (see Bosworth, 1995, Shaper and Streatfield, 2012), caring is sidelined as the responsibility of low status support staff (rather than senior professionals), and care (and the staff generating care) is invisibilised and marginalised to peripheral school spaces, such as classrooms, dining rooms and libraries (Shaper and Streatfield, 2012, Pike, 2008), since it runs counter to other school priorities and agendas. Secondly, it was consistently female staff (with a range of roles and status) who identified and problematised the broader lack of care in the school, reflecting that whilst hierarchy and status were important, gender was also an important lens to identify issues around care.

Although drawing upon essentialist (and perhaps problematic) notions of the qualities men and women bring to the education profession (see McCuaig, 2012, Pulsford, 2014, Grahn, 2016), the comments here identify the highly significant broader gendering of roles within the school. Reflecting very traditional and hierarchical educational gendered divisions of labour (see Alder, 2002 Bosworth, 1995), the entirely male SMT enacted a particular school culture and ethos, undoubtedly masculinised and perhaps oppressive, shaped by wider pressures of FTEs, SATs, GCSE results etc. Teachers and students spoke in fear of what one participant referred to as *'the corridor police'*- members of the SMT patrolling classrooms and corridors (but interestingly not the Seclusion Unit) to ensure 'appropriate' models of 'learning' were taking place, reflecting broader stereotypes of male education professionals as being 'disciplinarians' (Brownhill, 2016). In such environments, it became difficult for teachers to care (or to undertake simple non-standard practices such as listening to music, for fear of repercussion from the SMT). Nicky herself was well aware of the myriad of broader pressures which prevented other education professionals from engaging in care:

*'Well I think maybe the teachers haven't got time to be... carers. I mean I hope that I'm teaching as well. But obviously they're just teaching and they've got all those children in the class and you wouldn't expect them to have the time that I've got with only a maximum of five to be able to give that level of caring.'* Nicky.

Therefore, in a broader geographical landscape where the rest of the school is perceived as turbulent, uncertain and 'care-less' (Rogers, 2017, Bosworth, 1995, Vogt, 2002), Seclusion becomes even more significant and paradoxically was perceived by some students as an attractive and safe space in the school:

*'I do have them (previous attenders) coming to the door and have to say to them "if you want to speak to me, do so after school'* Nicky.

*'In fact, it's almost too nice in there (Seclusion). Because she has such a calm way, and plays such a supportive role, particularly with the kids who have difficulty with their work... that some of them actually want to come back in'* SMT member.

*'she [Nicky] even said to me the last time I was in there, 'if you ever get annoyed, ask your teacher [if you can] come and see me, and I'll calm you down a bit''* Female student.

Whilst Nicky's practices can be seen as resisting dominant patriarchal notions of 'uncaring' schools (Ringrose, 2010), this marginalisation and feminisation of care comes with a cost (Vogt, 2002, James, 2010). Caring is 'dangerous' (McCuaig, 2012, Gillies and Robinson (2013) and can pathologise individual education professionals and students, serve patriarchal interests and reinforce traditional gender roles (McCuaig, 2012, Moss, 2014). Care can also disguise threats to social justice, (re)produce inequality and disadvantage and distract an organisation from considering broader change (Gilmore, 2012).

Moreover, rather seeing this care as resistance by lower status staff members, perhaps the marginalisation of care into Seclusion is a conscious spatial tactic employed by the SMT. Returning to Lefebvre's 'representations of space (how space is planned and designed by professional and privileged authorities), perhaps the powerful SMT tacitly 'tolerates' Seclusion as a space of caring since they (and as reported, other staff) recognise its value in certain cases. Allowing caring in one marginalised space re-enforces the 'discipline' focus within the rest of the school, and also shows the SMT are willing to put care 'to work' (when discipline fails) as a spatial tactic to help try to 'shape the consciousness of apprentice citizens' (McCruaig, 2012, p865) and mould 'unruly' individuals into particular kinds of students. Hence care, control and safety are not necessarily conflictual (Barber, 2002, Hanse and Mulholland, 2005)- in this analysis, discipline and care work together as complementary processes to 'guide' and shape vulnerable students into educational engagement (McCruaig, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

In looking at 'caring labour' (James, 2010), this paper has mapped some of the contours of care within a secondary school. It shows how Seclusion (an increasingly significant part of many English Secondary schools) can relocate and spatially concentrate practices of care. Highlighting the value of an educational reading of Lefebvre's trialectics of space, the paper shows how the Seclusion Unit was a paradoxical space with complex intersections between exclusion, inclusion, control, discipline, safety and, of most importance to this paper, care. The space was *perceived* and *lived* differently to how it was *conceived*. Although mismatches between institutional intention and student experience in school spaces are not new (Hughes, 2017), the research contributes to debates by illustrating how spaces of care can be formed through staff and students reshaping educational spaces and encounters in ways other than originally intended or designed.

Whilst EYEC and primary schools have well researched cultures of care (see Hansen and Mulholland, 2005, Osgood et al, 2006, Grahn, 2016) this paper contributes towards mapping the significance of caring in secondary schools. Whilst a Lefebvrian analysis offers insight into how educational spaces are produced through diverse processes and perspectives, it fails to explore broader critical concerns about how power and care operate within and through these spaces. Noddings' (1992, 2003) work on the 'ethics of care' helps to identify relations of care and non-care, and how support staff can place care at the centre of engagement with students. Combining elements of ideas from Lefebvre and feminist scholars highlights how caring is complex, challenging and marginalised within secondary school landscapes (James, 2010). Driven to the margins, caring is practiced and produced in certain (and maybe unlikely) school spaces, such as Seclusion or (see Shaper and Streatfield, 2012) school libraries. Undertaken by certain support staff, this illustrates a complex interplay between caring, hierarchy and gender. Powerful gender dynamics influence whether and how male and female education professionals recognise or offer particular types of care (Vandenbroeck and Peeters, 2008). Care is spatially marginalised into feminised spaces (such as Seclusion) run by 'unsupported' support staff, rather than being embraced by the whole school and the responsibility of all school staff (Moss, 2014). Instances of caring, whilst profound and powerful, can pathologise individual students as 'failing', and can serve patriarchal interests which reinforce traditional gender roles within education and can contribute to (re)producing inequality (McCuaig, 2012, Moss, 2014). Irrespective of whether care represents support staff attempting to carve out as resistance a space of care, or a SMT strategy to combine discipline and care, powerful intersections between gender and division of labour in schools mean it was women in lower status roles who undertook and carried the burden of caring.

Lastly, whilst this qualitative research is small scale and cannot be generalised from, it does highlight the value of an awareness of the potential for 'accidental findings'. Exploring the importance of care within one specific and unlikely school space of Seclusion raises much broader, complex and difficult questions about caring and other everyday practices within secondary schools (Solomon and Rogers, 2001). It is clear that care in educational settings is still very much under researched- more work is needed to map further how and where caring happens in secondary schools, and how caring contributes to wider goals in institutional settings.



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