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CARE AND GENDER: A TIME WORN NARRATIVE? PERCEPTIONS OF CAREWORK IN THE SCOTTISH OUT OF SCHOOL CARE WORKFORCE.

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Abstract

This is a small-scale temporal study that highlights the lived experiences of five women practitioners employed in the Scottish Out of School Care (OSC) workforce, also known internationally as school-aged childcare (SAC). The five practitioners entered the childcare profession without a relevant professional qualification. Whilst play and learning are central themes of school-aged childcare both nationally and internationally, the focus of this study examines the temporal nature of care experiences in relation to gender, seats of power and constructions of *the good enough mother*. It focuses on the care experiences, careers, and aspirations of the women over their life course: past, present, and beyond. The five practitioners were initially interviewed through the aid of a temporal tool, the biographical life grid, which was employed to assist reflexive biographical narrative interviews. The biographical life grid is a visual method frequently used to capture past and present memories of life events, and as such often offers a further window into the perceptions surrounding those memories. The life grid was substituted reflexively for two simple 24-hour clocks to map both chronological and felt-time reflections as the study progressed. This study aims to capture a time element, relating not only to professional aspirations but also to the constructions of the women's developing sense of a caring self. A feminist Foucauldian, poststructural lens is applied to interpret the biographical narratives in what is arguably a gendered profession. The analysis of the narratives considers how constructions on caring both in private and professional lives may be influenced over time through engagement with family, society, professional requirements and discourse in policy. Foucauldian discourse analysis is employed to interpret how seats of power, particularly emanating from the self, may affect the practitioner's decision making in relation to career choices. Interpretations arising from the discourse analysis on the findings subsequently considers any resulting relevance for the future of recruitment, retention, and career resilience not only for the Scottish Out of School Care (OSC) workforce but also potentially for all professional caring employment.

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I also need to shout out to all those friends and work colleagues in the Out of School Care (OSC) profession. I hope this thesis encourages others to venture into research or go beyond the BA Childhood Practice. It is also my hope that this study goes some way to demonstrating the skills and knowledge within the OSC profession and more importantly the sacrifices made to ensure all children have the best outcomes in life possible.

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Authors Declaration

I certify that this thesis is my original work and that all references to, and quotations from, the work of others contained herein have been clearly identified and fully attributed.

Signature:

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Abbreviations

ACE:	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ASD:	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
CPL:	Continuous Professional Learning
ELC:	Early Learning and Childcare
FDA:	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
GIRFEC:	Getting It Right for Every Child
NHS:	National Health Service
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS:	Office for National Statistics
OSC:	Out of School Care
SAC:	School-Aged Childcare
SHANARRI:	Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Responsible, Respected, Included
SOSCN:	Scottish Out of School Care Network
SSSC:	Scottish Social Services Council
SQA:	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVQ:	Scottish Vocational Qualification
UK:	United Kingdom (Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today.

Let us begin.

(Attributed to Mother Theresa: 1910-1997)

Chapter One: The Problem

1.1 Introduction

Over the course of 28 years of working in childcare, I have progressively been concerned not only about the lack of gender diversity in the profession but also the ongoing difficulties in employing people for careers in Out of School Care (OSC), also known internationally as school-aged childcare (SAC). It appears that not only is it difficult to recruit people who are perceived to have the *right skills* towards caring for children, for what is arguably a gendered profession, but also to retain them once qualified.

In 2019, the care workforce gap in Scotland continued to widen at an unprecedented pace. By October 2021 statistics suggest that the pressure on professions, predominantly staffed by women, as a result of the pandemic, is threatening all key caring professions (Abid, 2021:4), and these impacts could continue into the foreseeable future. The demands on recruitment and retention in professions associated with caring have continued in differing formats through the years, but in effect have remained a constant challenge. Caring professions include social care, health, nursing, teaching, early learning, and childcare (ELC) (Hugman, 2005) and the sector, which is the focus of this study, Out of School Care (OSC). In Scotland, all professional childcare positions are considered part of the social care workforce (SSSC, online a).

The crisis for the social care workforce is not just a Scottish problem, with challenges to recruitment and retention echoed in all other UK regions. Research highlighted that in 2017, 90,000 vacancies existed for social care posts in England alone, with a further 15,000 posts requiring to be filled in the NHS (Slawson, 2017). The deficit continues to grow. Recruitment is not the only problem, research also highlights that in addition to initially finding the right people, elevated levels of staff are also leaving professional care jobs, for employment in other sectors every day (The Health Foundation, 2017:5). In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic the labour market has changed indefinitely, with many over 50's choosing to leave employment for early retirement (ONS, 2022). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought the crisis in care recruitment, not only to the forefront of media and government focus (Age UK, online), but has also drawn public attention to the

emotional demands and physical toll experienced by those working in the care sector. Whilst in Scotland, many thousands volunteered to fill social care shortages, as a response to the pandemic (Scottish Government, 2020a), it is yet to be evidenced how these will translate into permanent care employment post-pandemic. With many care staff paid mainly on minimum wage thresholds, and already under intense workload pressures, the mental health of social care and childcare practitioners. placed on the front lines, continues to be severely tested (IRISS, 2020).

Retention is also an ongoing issue post-pandemic, in addition to the complexities of finding the *right* people to satisfy an ever-growing and maturing population. Early indications in the United States of America suggest that in the wake of the pandemic, people migrated from city centres to the safety of the suburbs. This placed an unexpected critical increase for childcare places in rural areas, with a lack of available recruits to meet that demand (Haspel, 2021). Childcare practitioners, who opted to remain in the city during the pandemic, began to seek employment opportunities in other sectors such as hospitality, where wages have been increasing and jobs more readily available (Haspel, 2021). In the UK, it is reported that with the loss of crucial income from enforced closures during the pandemic, many childcare providers now lack the financial reserves to remain solvent, resulting in practitioners seeking more financially secure employment in other sectors (Blanden *et al.*, 2020). It is also unknown what the future impacts of Brexit on employment shortages in the care sector will be, as previously both care and other low-paid sectors, such as hospitality, relied on immigration to fill posts. Care is constantly undervalued, framed within government documentation as a low-skilled occupation, and as such does not appear on the essential and desired skills list that allows migratory employment to Scotland (Scottish Government, 2020b).

In summary, I will argue that the dilemmas associated with attracting and retaining people for a gendered childcare profession, underpin the questions for this research study. I aim to gain a better understanding of practitioners' views on childcare, and caring responsibilities. to anticipate a way forward for both recruitment, and retention. At a first glance the recruitment crisis within the profession appears to be associated with perceptions of what attracts or prevents both men and women from entering childcare in the first place.

For instance, are there particular dominant sets of ideas, or discourses about the reasons behind people entering childcare professions, and do these change to wider discourses over time, influencing choices of careers? Secondly, what factors, if any, promote resilience that

can help retain care professionals? I contextualise these further into specific research questions once I have outlined the rationale for this study.

1.2 Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study is based on the continuing deficits discourses challenging recruitment and retention in childcare professions, which I argue are based on a *wicked problem* that requires exploring and extrapolating. Rittel and Weber (1973) highlight that *wicked problems* exist where social issues, or values are contested, gaining momentum over time whilst appearing improbable to solve. I will argue that whilst solutions to childcare staff shortages on the surface appear time-constrained, in that they require immediate results, in essence, there are deeper issues that are more challenging to solve. This is due to ongoing temporal changes in the sector which require constant reappraising rather than impulsive decision-making that does not provide any long-lasting solutions. Wicked problems are therefore not only subjective but also socially constructed at any given time. This means the discourses underpinning the continuing childcare and care recruitment crisis needs deconstructing first before contemplating any possible solutions or proposals for potential change.

Historically, feminists, have demonstrated that there exists a gender-divide in care provision within most Western societies. Care has primarily been associated with women and socially constructed as occurring within the private sphere of life. This is constructed as conflicting with the socially constructed domain of men, who dominate the public sphere (Kaufman and Williams, 2013). Further, Shouse (2014) suggests, there is also a social injustice that women's issues, and therefore rights, have had to sit on the periphery of history, while men take centre stage, with public life valued as more important than happenings within private life.

Firstly, I will argue that solutions to understanding the continuing problem affecting recruitment and retention within childcare professions lie within feminist arguments that are critical of traditional framings of gendered care vocations. Rather than being solely connected to the private sphere, feminists argue that care should be inextricably linked between the public and private spheres of life. The discourses that surround women and care also extend temporally to generational caring responsibilities for children, elderly parents, and for some, care for grandchildren (see Stratham, 2011; International Longevity Centre UK {ILCUK}, 2017). Secondly, I will argue, that understandings of care are steeped in power relationships, which I endeavour to make visible. I will argue, that both

discursively constructed expectations of being *the good enough mother*, in addition to fulfilling performativity obligations as registered childcare practitioners exert individual pressures, which I suggest, may ultimately affect career resilience. These pressures build over time, and where there is an expectation to perform as *good enough* within caring responsibilities, that are arguably perceived as akin to mothering skills, these can ultimately manifest themselves in feelings of guilt with the potential for harm (Sutherland, 2010). Significantly, the pressures from differing expectations placed on those that care, exert powers that I argue, not only affect how we care for others but also how we also are able to care for ourselves.

Research concerning OSC practitioners' perceptions of caring responsibilities and their profession, both in Scotland and the UK, is scant. In general, the focus is primarily on either children, and the environments that children play in (see for example, Thomson and Philo, 2010; Gill, 2014) or the economic and educational value of OSC for communities, families and current government policy, and practice (see for example, Audain, 2016; Scottish Government, 2019a). In this study, I move away from the well-documented child-centred research, to concentrate on a wider understanding of the OSC practitioners themselves. By reflecting on the practitioners' narratives, I wish to analyse factors that have a significant influence on how the practitioners construct their private and professional caring selves. Following Simons *et al.* (2004), I agree that by unravelling the powers that appear to regulate and influence how we behave, we can address problems and reimagine future-orientated actions. In this case, the ensuing learning from this study can be used to create future understandings of the influencing discourses affecting recruitment, retention, and career resilience in specifically the Scottish Out of School Care (OSC) profession, which consequently could be applied to other allied caring professions.

1.3 Out of school care (OSC) contexts and care staff shortages.

Before outlining my research questions and the chapter summaries, I first discuss some of the policy contexts around OSC, and other allied areas, because in the last five years, recruitment challenges have been reported in all sectors of the caring professions. At the beginning of the 2018 summer term in Scotland, 200 teaching positions were still vacant (The Scotsman, 2018). The early learning and childcare (ELC) sector had been unsuccessful in recruiting the number of staff required to meet the growth envisaged by the ELC policy of the Scottish Government, that would increase provision for three-to-four-year-olds to 1140 hours per week (Nursery World, 2018). Whilst there was an initial 0.7%

rise in employment in the ELC sector during a focused recruitment campaign (SSSC, 2018a:9), this was still well below the targeted jobs required by the Scottish Government to achieve their vision (Skills Development Scotland, 2018:2).

In Scotland, all regulated social care, health, and education professions involved in care child support activities, follow a shared government policy that aims to reduce poverty, increase attainment, and enhance children's wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2014). Out of school care (OSC) is one of the regulated social care professions, amongst others such as early years care and learning (ELC), tasked with meeting government aims to provide best outcomes for children (Scottish Government, 2014). All practitioners in these professions are legally required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), and the settings they work in are also regulated by an inspecting body, The Care Inspectorate (Scottish Government, online a). These registrations and regulations requirements were established by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (Scottish Government, online a). The Care Inspectorate was established to measure quality and improvement, against a set of standards, through regulation, inspection, and self-assessment (Care Inspectorate, 2022). OSC is viewed as non-statutory provision, and as such, is a private rather than public responsibility (Gallagher, 2014), unlike ELC which is statutory provision and provided through government funding. The changes to legislation were driven by a consultation document in 2006 reviewing the ELC workforce, which at this point included OSC (Scottish Government, 2006). By 2007 the necessity for lead practitioners, or managers, within services to upskill and be qualified to degree level standards was created, along with a post-registration continuous professional learning (CPL) requirement, including compulsory child protection training hours (SSSC, 2015). Included in this directive was a set of registration standards and codes of work practice, focusing on required leadership and reflective practice skills for ELC and OSC practitioners, designed to mediate the 'blurring of boundaries between the remits care, education, health, and social welfare play in a changing society' (SSSC, 2015:7). In Scotland, both the registration and upskilling of social care and childcare workers was seen as an opportunity to promote professionalism and improve standards for those deemed in need of care through a self-critical appraisal process (SSSC, online b). Within the standards, a culture of 'fitness to practice' and 'protection' is firmly embedded and monitored both from within the profession itself, and through public notifications (SSSC, online d). The SSSC state that registration and qualification achievement must take place within a set period, or registrations will be revoked (SSSC, 2016a). I suggest this requirement to achieve the qualification within a time limit is problematic due to the

gendered nature of the profession, because practitioners, who are predominantly women, require flexibility to meet ever-changing personal caring responsibilities.

A further Scottish workforce review in 2015, highlighted that the registration qualifications introduced in previous years were still not entirely 'fit for purpose' and needed to be more creative to meet the diverse needs of the sector (Siraj, 2015:17). Further only those qualifications that are endorsed by the SSSC, reflecting their registration standards, are recognised as 'fit-for-purpose' (SSSC, 2015). Davis *et al.* (2014) reviewed the success of the initial Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Childhood Practice degree qualification to consider whether there were any noticeable improvements to practice, and whether the confidence of lead practitioners working in ELC and OSC had been raised. The review (Davis *et al.*, 2014) noted that whilst the uptake and reception to upskilling had been positive in the ELC sector, it had not been as successful with those employed in OSC.

The crisis of recruiting suitable people for OSC, a highly regulated and qualified workforce, is no less than those found in other social care professions in Scotland. The Care Inspectorate (Care Inspectorate, 2020:33) noted during 2018, there were staff vacancies in 38% of all care positions in Scotland, amounting to around a 2647 deficit in staff, and that this number had remained consistent in the previous two years. The draft consultation on OSC in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2019a), stated that specific challenges to recruitment, are located within rural areas with lower populations, and overall due to the part-time nature of this form of childcare (i.e., outside normal school hours, usually breakfast clubs and after school provision). The median hours worked in OSC are 17.5 hours per week and account for 92% of staff employed in the sector (SSSC, 2018b:8). Ultimately, the recruitment needs of OSC are problematic because the demand for school-aged childcare is increasing. This is in line with working parents' expectations that their childcare needs will continue to be met similarly to the increased government provision for ELC hours (Scottish Government, 2019a).

Significantly, with heavy competition already existing to fill vacant full-time positions in other social care professions including ELC, OSC as a part-time occupation could be perceived as the *Cinderella* of all the care sector professions (Howard, 2015). As such, it is generally overlooked as a career option. In specifically addressing employment within the ELC sector, the government's promise to expand access to more flexible early learning and childcare to meet parents' working demands has focused a capital expansion programme on providing a well-trained workforce (Scottish Government, 2017:6). High profile

campaigns in all media formats emphasise the fun and inspirational aspects of childcare to encourage both men and women into qualifications through modern apprenticeships (Scottish Government, 2017b). There has, however, been less focus and openness on the level of academic skills that are necessary to fulfil SSSC registrations as careers progress. It is notable that the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC), whose role is to regulate carework such as OSC and ELC, has suggested there has been a downward trend, not only in the number of registered care workers entering the profession, but also a general decline in those holding a recognised care qualification (SSSC, 2016a:11).

Other countries, such as those in Scandinavia, have also expanded ELC and childcare provision, in addition to introducing enhanced qualifications to recognise the professionalism of the sector. This drive is not only to enhance quality outcomes for children, but also to increase gender equality. In order to elevate the professional standing of ELC workers, many Nordic countries have developed a pedagogue occupation in various forms, which is on a par with other professional educators and social workers, not only in terms of financial reward, but also to promote women's status in the labour market (Edström, 2014; Garvis, 2018).

I have now laid out the grounds for this research study through presenting background contexts to OSC and the recruitment crisis facing registered care professions in general. As a professional in childcare for 28 years, who entered the profession with no relevant qualifications, this research study presents my own experiences of care, learned first as a mother, then practitioner and now grandmother. These reflections include how the *good enough mother* discourse is constructed, and how systems that levy power may shape our career decisions over time. The narratives and reflections of five other women practitioners employed in the Scottish Out of School Care (OSC) profession provide the heart to this study.

1.4 The study: Introduction

This is a temporal study based on practitioners' reflections of caring, narrated through memories of the past and present. It draws on feminist Foucauldian and poststructuralist philosophies, analysed through the narratives of five women practitioners who entered the OSC profession with no relevant professional qualification. The study explores how temporal relationships may be attached to differing values and placed on caring selves, at any given time. Whilst values may fluctuate through time, subsequently they may also influence decision-making actions during life-course trajectories. In line with poststructural

philosophy, I consider how knowledge derived from concepts of lived time, past, present, or even future-orientated are socially constructed. Staley (2007) suggests that the experiences of each person are subjective to a persons' own interpretation on matters that affect them, and that no individual will recreate the past in the same way (although there may be commonalities between shared pasts). The temporal meanings assigned by the practitioners are crucial to this study. Temporal powers are always present in the everyday pressures we experience as we negotiate our existence (Halford and Leonard, 2006). I suggest women must negotiate time to perform all their perceived responsibilities, in any chronological 24-hour day, sometimes working 'against the clock' to balance life's demands.

1.5 The research questions and aims of the study.

Whilst I presented the basis for the research questions in my introduction; I now specifically discuss and outline each in turn.

Research Question One: How do OSC practitioners observe and construct a sense of professional identity over time? Do these observations have any temporal effect on professional career resilience?

Research Question Two: What regimes of power or governances, if any, are highlighted as dominant in professional childcare settings and do they exert any temporal influence over OSC practitioners' careers or decision-making?

Research Question Three: How do OSC practitioners distinguish any gendered discourses attached to performing care? What importance, if any, is placed on the notion of the *right skills* or 'being' a good carer?

Research Question Four: What relevance do the OSC practitioners' constructions of care hold for the future of recruitment, retention, and career resilience planning in OSC and allied care professions?

My first question considers whether the OSC practitioners' experiences and values over time have influenced any decisions on careers and their care identities. Sullivan (2018:1) argues that time-biases exist, which can determine where values or attachments follow along a 'temporal sequence' in order to plan for life, with preferred action taking place at times that appear most conducive to personal choices. The OSC practitioners' narratives and personal constructions of caring may help determine whether there are optimum times

for recruitment or planning actions that can be taken to support career retention or resilience.

My second question relates to regimes of power, or governances that may exist in childcare settings. Regimes are considered forms of cultural or social 'norms' found within discourses, that are controlled by governments or institutions acting, as a power influencing how we behave or act (Foucault, 1977). If these regimes do exist, how do they play a part in influencing, shaping, or affecting professional ways of behaving? I apply a feminist Foucauldian lens to analyse if there are imposed regulations and artefacts that are generally employed in what is known as a confessing society; confession being enacted through reflective activities (Fejes and Dahlstedt, 2013). I also consider if any understandings of power change through the research process as the OSC practitioners narrate their experiences. This question considers if power regimes have any impact not only on recruitment, but also on retention and career resilience factors in caring professions.

My third question is crucial to any understandings of care as a feminised profession and to consider what perceptions the OSC practitioners have in relation to both gender and the *right skills* for caring identities. Following Osgood (2012), I will argue that within childcare professions, hegemonic discourses exist that lead to a consistent undervaluing of the skills and knowledge required to perform childcare because they are performed traditionally by women. In addition, personal values on what constitutes *good mothering* may conflict with professional caring practices, instilled through government discourses on standardised performativity and the *right skills*. Responses to this question may help establish the qualities and skills that practitioners' value when constructing their ideal of *good childcare* and could be beneficial to the future planning of recruitment strategies for childcare professions.

In the conclusion to this study, addressing research question four, I finally discuss the findings, implications and potential future contributions to policy and practice relating to the OSC workforce, and potentially, other allied caring professions. With limited Scottish research in the field of OSC, the aim of this study is important to policy makers, care regulators and associated agencies as well as care professionals themselves. The aim is to present an alternative way forward to ameliorate the growing concerns and stresses on childcare recruitment, retention and career resilience.

1.6 Chapter summaries

During 28 years as an OSC practitioner, I have experienced many changes to both policy and practice. These experiences and ongoing reflections have opened new avenues of thinking and knowledge and have ultimately affected the theoretical principles that guide this research study. In chapter two, I introduce my emerging research identity, arguing that the theoretical principles presented are best suited to my personal and professional experiences of care and study. I first outline constructions on poststructural theory as an appropriate research perspective and specifically Foucault and his later works (Foucault, 2010, 2011, 2019), where he focuses on truth, confession, and states of self-care. I then highlight gender and significant feminist theorists such as Butler (1988, 1990, 1993, 1999, 2004) and Connell (2005a, 2005b, 2011, 2021), exploring dominant discourses of care in gendered professions and performances of caring, where care is constructed as more natural for women to perform. Feminists consider that due to the numerical predominance of women within what are known as feminised professions, real issues regarding gender are often made invisible or dismissed (Moreau, 2019). This lack of acknowledgement on issues, such as, devalued pay and lower status, contributes to a constructed gender-divide (Rea, 2011; Moreau, 2019). I then review the nature of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and debate if emotional labour is similarly performed between the private and public spaces of life. This includes the framing of masculinities and performances of care (Doucet, 2006) and how women may perceive masculinities in relation to the *right skills*. I also highlight Ward and McMurray (2016), and the negative aspects of emotional labour, which they state can produce consequences that damage the self, creating long lasting effects. Lastly in chapter two, I consider constructions of time, both in the sense of the chronological passing of time and concepts of felt-time. Wittman (2017) argues that time is a social construct and is experienced differently by individuals in what he terms 'felt-time'. Sociological theorists, such as, Elias (1992) and Adam (2004), argue that time is a site of power where work and life are constrained around *clock-time*, which feminists view as a patriarchal construct (Milojević, 2008). Hochschild (2001) believes that women are 'time-othered' because they must perform multiple tasks, often with pressures to act 'against the clock'. As such, women are often penalised in traditionally perceived masculine industries where time required to manage caring responsibilities is often viewed as time *stolen* from work commitments. I argue that constructions of time are significant to this study because they may hold the key to any restorative action that could be employed at critical pressure points before and during career lifecycles.

In chapter three, literature and empirical research that are relevant to this study are analysed. Due to the paucity of research material on OSC, I highlight comparable research and literature from other closely related, and arguably similarly, gendered caring professions that intersect with OSC, for example, early learning and childcare (ELC) (see Osgood, 2005, 2006, 2012; Carroll *et al.*, 2009; Payler and Locke, 2013; Webb and McQuaid, 2020; Brody *et al.*, 2021), social care (Nickson *et al.*, 2008, Social Mobility Commission, 2020) and teaching (Gilles, 2006, 2008; O'Connor *et al.*, 2014; Moreau, 2019). In addition, I also considered research that highlights temporal issues that contribute to career resilience, which is the ability to adapt to the pressure in changing work environments (Han *et al.*, 2019) and personal resilience in the form of managing career and life changes (Maher, 2013).

In chapter four, I outline the process of the study in more detail, including my selection of appropriate methods and methodology used throughout the study, and which are in keeping with feminist poststructural philosophy. This chapter highlights the use of the biographical grid as a tool to support recollections on events, (which had to be revised during the study), and my rationale for reflexively introducing 24-hour clocks to distinguish chronological and felt-time concepts. I also discuss Foucauldian discourse analysis as a method to analyse the data. The final four chapters of this study present the findings and analysis of discourses narrated by the practitioners. In chapter five, I reflect in depth on the practitioners' narratives on the gendered nature of care and any impacts that may present for future recruitment and decision-making in caring careers. In chapter six I consider power in relation to Foucauldian perspectives on 'truth' and confession (Foucault, 1988) indicating how these may impact on a personal and/or professional sense of self. In chapter seven, I focus on chronological constructions of time, constructed as a patriarchal structure. I also consider how felt-time is constructed by the practitioners and how an 'otherness' of time is experienced by women. Finally in chapter eight, conclusions based on the research questions, my own professional learning, and any future recommendations from this study, are presented with potential for a way forward.

Gender… is an identity tenuously constituted in time.

(Judith Butler, 1998: 519)

Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundations of the Study

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical concepts that underpin and guide this research study. Through the research process, I began to realise that no one theory represented the complexities of what it means to be human in everyday contexts, as this can be broken up into many spheres of subjective meaning. This is also reflected by feminists, such as, Childer *et al.* (2013:508), who highlight the messiness in how we construct our research around appropriate feminist methodology as we encounter the diversity of issues surrounding us. This study analyses how time affects our everyday thinking, what it is to work in a gendered profession and how we adapt our behaviours to 'fit in'. Questions like these guide the theoretical principles in the study hereafter. I consider that the theoretical concepts that best resonate with my own feminist philosophical beliefs are poststructuralism, constructs of gender, and constructs of time, which are interwoven throughout to present a more cohesive study.

In this chapter, I will discuss each of these theoretical concepts in turn, highlighting their significance to this study, beginning with poststructural perspectives, leading into Foucauldian aspects of power and care of the self. I then move on to discuss gender, in relation to performing normalised gendered subjectivities, such as, centred on discourses of mothering and those constructed through dominant discourses of masculinity. Finally, I highlight temporal aspects governing everyday life.

As a newcomer to academic writing, I am continually reflecting on the diversity of theory and research knowledge available to construct who I might be as a researcher. Halford and Leonard (2006), suggest that identities are forged in the relationships between the worlds we occupy in any given time and place. This is because our identities or as poststructuralist would state, subjectivities, are fluid, continually shaped by the experiences of everyday life.

2.2 Poststructural perspectives.

Poststructuralists agree that understandings of the self are influenced by sets of ideas or discourses that govern ways of being (Foucault, 1982b). These discourses generate norms and expectations on ways to behave and act, powers that a person is subject to. We are

subject to disciplinary powers that control how we construct our ‘sense of self‘ in a process known as subjectivity (Foucault, 1982b).

Lee (1992) argues for the benefits of poststructuralism in educational research, as it is grounded in acquiring knowledge through the humanity in everyday discourses. Biographical accounts are often used to illustrate discourses that are imbued with reflections of the past, but also with anticipation for the future, where we gain knowledge and understanding on the individual’s discursive construction of their world (Carr, 2003). Gannon and Davies (2007), argue that by pursuing critical reflection on everyday experience, poststructuralists seek to challenge normalised truths or knowledge on binary positions or values; deconstructing what we think we know and how we think we know it, through a critical analysis. By taking responsibility for understanding the power structures that are in play during everyday life activities, St Pierre (2019) argues that we can ‘examine our own complicity in the maintenance of social injustice’.

Poststructuralism developed as a philosophical theory out of the position that people are not governed by one set of objective truths, nor is there a single logical or rational perspective on life (McNay, 1992). Poststructural research evolved from a postmodern perspective that the world is in constant transformation, and dominant assumptions and viewpoints that have been developed and promoted previously, may no longer hold true for either today or the future (Marcus, 1994). This position is important to a temporal study where time is already considered to be in a constant state of flux. Within her poststructural rationale McNay (1992) elaborates that in order to ascertain the truth for individuals, it is first necessary to deconstruct the everyday ‘artefacts’ that dominate both thought and word, sets of ideas, known as discourses. Further, McNay (1992) states that these discourses are mainly located in the political and public arenas of life, because policy and hierarchies within society tend to construct the dominant understandings of peoples’ beliefs, actions and ways of being. The knowledge we draw on to establish truths or our subjective beliefs, can be often found by deconstructing language, power relationships, everyday debates or conversations (Blaise, 2005). The deconstruction, and from that resistance, comes from questioning what we think we know and why or how we have come to believe in that knowledge (Canella, 1997). Canella (1997) further highlights, that we tend to suppress what we feel or believe about the dominant discursively constructed norms that exist in our lives, in order to ‘fit in’ to the desired expectations of our cultural, class, gender or racial normalised subjectivities. Feminist poststructuralists have taken this

to mean that our subjectivities are constantly being redefined as we continue to make sense of the world around us (Osgood, 2012), hence we are in a constant process of subjectification (Foucault, 1988). In considering where, or even when subjective knowledge is created, Skeggs (1997) suggests that in realising characteristics that we feel are representative of an individual subjectivity that we subscribe to, we can construct new understandings of the self. Weedon (1987) also argues that notions of identity are not objective, as individuals construct a reality which is representative of their understanding of the world around them, constructed by discourse, and their place within it. Within these discursive constructions, we may ascribe ourselves as individuals or align with groups of like-minded or similarly ascribed individuals giving a sense of being or belonging (Weedon, 1987).

Poststructural theory can be used to bridge the myriad pressures we feel or experience in everyday life, which are mainly driven through policy and social practices grounded in the social, economic, cultural, or historical roots which influence how we live or behave (Skeggs,1997). Weedon (1987) also argues that, unlike many other research theories, poststructuralism lays claim to certain assumptions, which are based in subjectivity, and that one truth cannot exist that is equitable for everyone. Through a poststructural application, the researcher becomes a 'producer' of knowledge (Lee, 1992:1). This entails drawing on a variety of theoretical principles to construct meaning, through an analysis of the discourse within the subject matter under scrutiny. Further, the concept of subjectivity also applies to how knowledge or discourse is produced and how that can be used to gain control over certain groups more than others. For Weedon (1987) conflict is contained within subjectivity, as groups vie to elevate their own interpretations as the central or normalised position perceived as most dominant over others.

Although I have separated the concepts and theories that are relevant to this study into different associated headings: Poststructural Principles and Regimes of Power, Feminism and Gendered Studies, and Time and Temporality, in many cases it was impossible not to overlap theories as they are central to my own subjectivity, and way of applying knowledge to everyday care situations. Many social science researchers draw on Foucauldian theory to highlight power in everyday structures that underpin beliefs of our place, and purpose in society (Frank and Jones, 2003). They further indicate that these structures are often not of our making but are a 'self-knowing' way of being, based on systems of power, dominant in society, that we either react to or interact with (Frank and Jones, 2003:180). Foucault (1988) terms these interactions as 'technologies of the self';

where we enter our own ‘truth games’, regulating our ways of being, to conform to our perceptions of life. Foucault drew on historical literature from both antiquity and the Renaissance to explore how a person becomes a subject through their responses to power and dominant discourses (Foucault, 1988). Foucault (1988) as discussed previously, suggests that a person relinquishes the self, an individual entity, and becomes a subject when they are not free or in control of powers that determine their way of behaving in a process of subjectification. These responses to power can be passively accepted without realising but can also be a struggle against internally and externally driven controls in efforts to submit or ‘fit in’ to dominant groups (Foucault, 1988). Further, the idea of subjectivity is contained within the truths that we hold as part of our belief system through knowledge gained in lived experiences, and because they are specific to the individual, are open to interpretation (Foucault, 2011). His works on subjectivity concerning self-care, confessional, or reflective practice, which is framed as being compelled to discuss faults through continual self-evaluation (Foucault, 2003, 2011, 2021), are central to the theoretical principles of this study.

2.3 Foucault and power

Whilst Foucault did not write specifically about care and women, his ideas on power are grounded in constructs of temporality. Modes of knowledge and truth change over time and are dependent on what matters to society or policymakers as the dominant discourse for that specific time (Foucault, 1987). However, some feminist scholars consider that Foucault’s work normalises a gender-binary divide by only drawing on the dominant concepts from patriarchal modes of life and ways of being (McLaren, 1997). Significantly, his work fails to recognise situations of power oppressing women, such as, acts of domestic abuse, or self-harm as a form of violence, rendering those experiences invisible (Fisher, 1998). Despite this critique his work can be used more broadly, as a basis to redefine experiences with feminist values and constructions of power and knowledge (Cain, 1998). This is in line with feminist philosophies on social justice and gender equity, as it gives opportunities to critique and redefine what is either not said, silenced or left out of discourse entirely (i.e., that which is ‘extra-discursive’, Cain, 1998:74). In contemporary society care matters, due to an aging population, and Scottish government policy to increase affordable childcare to support families. The resulting impacts of the recent 2020/21 pandemic have heightened awareness on the tensions in the care sector surrounding equity including devalued pay and status. This study therefore aims to

deconstruct power relationships and highlight gendered barriers in order to facilitate planning for the future of childcare professions.

Foucault regarded his own work as evolutionary and not theoretical, offering his writings as a 'toolbox' for others to contemplate, and contribute their own interpretations (Bourke *et al.*, 2015:85). Initially Foucault's earlier works examined power relationships, as subjectively controlling identity through mechanisms external to the self (Foucault, 1977, 1980). Foucault wrote that power emanates through three distinct historical structures, sovereignty, pastoral power, and discipline (Foucault, 1980). These three archetypes of power have a genealogy or progression from historical understandings to contemporary thought, and each are discussed individually below. Latterly Foucault's work evolved into notions on biopolitics and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 2014), where he concerned himself with the nature of individual subjectivity being governed by powers internally driven over ways of life and used as an affirmation on ways of being (Revel, 2009). Foucault often adopted a scientific meta-language when discussing his concepts on technologies, which are aspects of human behaviours (Gerrie, 2003). The notion of technologies of the self, explores concepts such as self-care, which Foucault (1984) states is essential for one to be proficient in before beginning to care for others. Further, Foucault suggests people should use knowledge from learned and significant others to understand their own natures in order to transform and free themselves from powers that subject them (Foucault, 2011). From this knowledge applied to the self, people can better guide and lead others. Further, Foucault's concept of biopolitics explores the exercising of power over human needs and welfare which he terms biopower (Cruickshanks, 1999). In childcare it could be argued that the education or the upskilling of the professional childcare workforce to provide 'best outcomes for children' is a governmental biopower discourse, as it affects the development of both child and care-worker (Stuart, 2012). Stuart (2012) also asserts that mothers, in trying to attain the ideal image represented in *good mothering* discourses, are also subjects of biopower. In addition, Cruickshanks (1999) states that emotional welfare in the form of self-esteem and values, which are attached to desired personal aspirations make you the subject of your own interventions. You become your own specialist or professional helper and through this method people become 'self-governable' (Cruickshanks, 1999:330). In this way, aspirational goals are emotionally manipulated or controlled not only by governments, but also the self, to ameliorate and comply with ideals normalised by society (Foucault, 2020). In professional childcare, both technologies of the self and biopower appear in texts such as the guiding principles contained within the codes

of conduct laid out by the SSSC (2016b), whose idealised subject is framed as a reflective practitioner.

As highlighted previously, in Foucault's early works (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1980), there is a focus on the genealogy of traditions and practices of governments, the state and religious bodies exerting power, controlling the behaviours of society. First, I discuss, sovereign power which was historically based on power levied through the monarchy, exercised through laws and taxations on its subjects (Milchman and Rosenberg, 2009). Foucault argues that archaeologies or histories of where knowledge/discourse is produced and applied, can only be contextualised regionally, although the same discourses may occur in different sectors of society, and in different times throughout the world (Foucault, 2002). Foucault (2002:83), tries to make visible the way temporal discourses affect our understandings of power and knowledge, which he states is challenging because the 'past is always shifting' and discursive formations of rules and ways of being can therefore never remain the same. Singer and Weir (2006) argue that in the West, although monarchies exist, sovereign power has been replaced by governments levying political power through legislation and taxation. Foucault (1980) states governments are networks of power rather than being held by individuals, as typical in sovereignties. Sovereign power is exercised by governments judicially, through privileged access to expert knowledge which the public do not have authorisation to view. For instance, during the 2020/21 pandemic UK governments were awarded additional devolved powers to create laws to protect society based on expert scientific advice (Institute for Government, online). These laws and advice enacted by the Scottish government were highly contested, with tension between different scientific experts, and accusations of secrecy (Matchett, 2020).

Secondly, I explore disciplinary power, which Foucault (1977) wrote is controlled by three distinct branches: hierarchical observation (panoptical power), normalisation, and examination. The first aspect of disciplinary power is performed through observation, which can be both externally and internally regulated. Foucault illustrated this through an allegory of Bentham's Panopticon (Foucault, 1977). The Panopticon was originally a penitentiary structure designed to watch over those within institutions such as, prisons to gain compliance from its detainees, but the principles could equally be adapted to other institutions such as hospitals and schools (Bentham, 2008). Bentham's structure required minimal guards as the circular construction made it permissible for those in power to watch over those beneath from all viewpoints. However, those beneath its gaze in the institutions were unable to view their guards. The resulting effect from an ever-present screening is a

form of self-regulation, whereby those being watched modify their behaviour through fear of being disciplined, not knowing if they are under scrutiny or not. This aspect has intensified with the development of social media platforms and internet access including the surveillance of online performance within education, rendering personal thoughts visible (Waycott *et al.*, 2017).

The second aspect of Foucault's conception on discipline relates to the normalisation of behaviours that ensure compliance and are absorbed into everyday practice without question (Bourke *et al.*, 2015). Power is normalised through self-regulation and manifests itself by people performing to standards or regulations that reflect expected behaviours to avoid sanctions (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). To give an example of how self-regulating behaviour relates to contexts of care, registered members of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) work within the parameters of a set of rules guiding conduct whilst in the working environment, the public sphere where professional identity is displayed. However, non-compliant conduct behaviours which can be publicly observed in non-working spaces can be anonymously reported to the SSSC by members of the public (SSSC, online d). Freshwater *et al.* (2015:3), highlight this point in relation to nursing, a similarly regulated profession, where they state that 'the yardstick for measuring *good practice* has often become more closely aligned with compliance'. Bartky (1990) argues that in modern governments, discipline is exercised through regulations and practices that control our ways of being. Conversely, self-regulation can also be seen as a motivator towards the formation of a 'future-preferable' subjectivity (Hamman *et al.*, 2013). For instance, in childcare, self-regulation might not necessarily be in response to the threat of discipline as a result of non-compliance instead, self-regulation may be performed through the practice of critical reflection and a desire to achieve subjective personal and moral goals. Hodgson (2005:52) terms this motivation, 'professional conscience'. Discipline comes from codes of practice and standards actioned through performativity, registration, and regulation (Freshwater *et al.*, 2015). However, Butler argues targets within standards are reflected in how individuals fulfil actions as part of a performance of professional identity, rather than necessarily identifying with those required standards as a personal preference (Butler, 1993). Foucault's later works on self-care, highlight that negotiation in relationships of identity can be both rewarding and harmful (O'Grady, 2004). Self-care is a concept that will be explored in more detail later in this chapter and is relevant to the findings which consider resilience within the childcare sector.

The third part of Foucault's definition of disciplinary power is administered through examination (Foucault, 1977). Foucault states that this is 'the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement' (Foucault, 1977:184). In childcare, hierarchy is led by regulators, who are charged with inspection, normalising judgements through ensuring codes of practice and standards are adhered to and observing and approving the appropriate competencies and knowledge for the assigned job. I will argue that knowledge on caring competencies frames perceptions of the *right skills* for childcare, which I will discuss later in this study. Further Foucault (1977) suggests that education, in all its manifestations, becomes the tool for disciplinary power. This is legitimised through government-set curricula that include standards and qualification requirements for entering and remaining in professional practice. Feminists, such as Paechter (1998), argue that not only are these curricula gendered but also 'other' those from working-class backgrounds, streaming those deemed academic into a more valued subset. Yet, McDonald *et al.* (2018) highlight that all the work undertaken in professional care is both skilled and required for economic growth, as authenticated through policy documentation (see Scottish Government, 2014, 2017a; Siraj, 2015). Whilst there is a contested view of what determines a skill, in modernity this has come to represent personal qualities generally known under the acronym P.E.S. (Green, 2013). P.E.S. is an acronym for Productive (as the skills elicit value for the economy), Expandable (as with further training to a set of standards they can be developed further), and lastly Social (as they are temporally constructed dependent on society's needs at that time) (Green, 2013).

Poststructuralists, such as Foucault, consider that hegemonic assumptions on truths are drawn from systems or regimes designed to perpetuate power. They are buried in language discourse such as directives found in policies and expected practices which often go unchallenged and accepted as legitimate truth (Richardson, 1996). Ball (2017:2) suggests Foucault's notions of power, subjectivity and truth are to be found in education as a system of 'power relations concerned with the manufacture and management of individuals and the population'. I will argue that governmental powers maintain a gender-divide in who performs childcare through state education and within dominant careers discourses that manages school leavers into gender-appropriate vocations. Sociologists in principle agree that "skilled work is to fulfil a fundamental need' (Green, 2013:3) and that in general, a skilled worker is someone who can attend to 'complex skills' 'autonomously'. This aspect is legitimised by the SSSC who through qualifications and regulation envisage the social service care workforce as leaders with professional autonomy (Scottish Social Services

Council, online d). However, I will argue that the innocuous term *care,* belies the complex skills required to perform it, whether in private or in professional contexts, because it is performed predominantly by women. Significantly, Green (2013:13) describes skills which involve emotion, as 'tacit and latent', implying they reside in the individual, and are not necessarily achievable by all, either through taught educational programmes or professional examination.

2.4 Foucault, biopolitics and caring.

Foucault (1984) wrote that the body is passive in actions that govern them or what he termed a 'docile body', in that the body can be 'subjected, used, transformed, and improved' (Foucault, 1977:136). Foucault (1977) illustrates this as individuals on the route to mastering their profession, (using a specifically gendered term- see below). These individuals follow codes and rules, like those established by the SSSC (2016b) for childcare professions. The rules are followed to such an extent that the body reacts to instructions as second nature, and without question (Foucault, 1977). Pylypa (1998) states that Foucault's concept of biopower can be applied to everyday situations such as caring responsibilities. Using this concept, caring responsibilities can be seen as a form of social control, which endeavours to make social relationships appear scientific, to allow for public scrutiny. Foucault (2020:144) states that biopower, is a power over life, which 'needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms' to regulate people and society. Historically, the evolution of social services was formed to protect the poor and needy with an aim of ameliorating society's ills through formalised care organisations. The organisations established required people to perform the necessary welfare duties to meet society's needs, in effect making those people in receipt of welfare, 'docile bodies'. Funiciello (1993:286), terms this 'the professionalisation of being human'. Hugman (2014) suggests many welfare services and their staff, must be licensed, regulated, or certified to become legitimate professions and are occupations often performed by women. As previously discussed, Foucault's notions of biopower requires governments to legislate actions and policies that reflect their own conception of what is in the 'best interests' of the people it governs (Cruickshanks, 1999).

Contemporary biopower, in general, is exercised by corporate bodies such as charities or those whose central aim is to provide care for our human needs (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). In professional carework, the registration body, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), is recognised as a corporate parent for care-experienced children (SSSC,

2021a). In its impact statement for children who have experienced care, it recognises that the term corporate parenting, in effect, dehumanises the children in its care (SSSC, 2021:5). Instead, it offers a substitute term which children are entitled to: 'good parenting' (SSSC, 2021a:6). As the SSSC themselves do not provide direct care, they can only provide *good parenting* through registered practitioners and to uphold that entitlement, they will ensure that registered staff will be qualified and *fit to practice* (SSSC, 2021a). However, they also suggest what children deserve from registered practitioners are 'loving, supportive and nurturing relationships' (SSSC, 2021a:9). Not all practitioner qualifications framed as *fit for purpose* by the SSSC, examine love or nurture, nor do they explicitly state that practitioners should perform as 'good parents', although they do suggest that practitioners will have the *right skills* and knowledge (SSSC, 2021a:13). I have already argued that the concept of skill is a conflicted term and often resides in personal attributes and tacit skills rather than through a measurable qualification. In many instances biopower, in this case in the form of legislated professional care registrations, has been aligned by feminists (Bartky, 1990, O'Grady, 2004) with forms of violence or even harm to the self, enacted on the body, with the harm residing within compliance, inequity and power over the self against personal will or free agency.

2.5 Foucault, technologies of confession and truth as self-care

In the preceding section, I firstly discussed that sovereignty has been replaced by government or state power and secondly how disciplinary power manifests itself in childcare professions through self-regulation, qualification, and compliance. In this next section I turn to pastoral power, and its evolution into practices of confession and truth-telling. Truth as a genealogy in the early stages of Foucault's work (1980) was attached to both the church and scientific deliberations that institutions used to convey dominant discourse. Initially Foucault argued that there was a hierarchy of knowledge between academics or intellectuals on one side and everyday people engaged in manual labour, on the other (Foucault, 1980). He further claimed that this was not only unjust, but inequitable, because in order to deliberate and uncover truths, socially valued knowledge can only be attained from scientific consensus and academic study, rather than from the knowledge of working-class people learned over the course of their everyday lives (Foucault, 2001). In Foucault's (1982b) discussions on church power, he notes that Christian institutions serve the people to offer salvation through atoning for sins and transgressions. Pastorally the church therefore occupied a significant place in original

disclosure through verbal confession on actions perceived as faults, with penitence as punishment for those actions. In learning a discovered truth about yourself through self-examination and verbalisation, or confessing, you relinquish the old self, discursively transformed through your new knowledge (Foucault, 1988). Confession within research does not sit comfortably with feminists, who frame it as a form of disciplinary power (Rodriguez and Kuntz, 2021).

Ball (2017:9) considers that pastoral power is represented in education as a form of 'spiritual discipline'. He relates this to perceptions attached to church conventions, where the shepherd or teacher, leads those he has responsibility over. In doing so is tasked with guarding and caring for them. It is, however, a form of surveillance, as the leader ensures his flock follows habits or practice that conform with expected norms. In keeping with the patriarchal dominance of church governance, I have used the pronouns he/his, as discussed by Ball (2017), rather than replace this with a gender-neutral term. Golder (2007:164) suggests that Foucault's work is conflicting at times, because in tending to the *flock*, you are also charged with a responsibility to tend pastorally to individuals. This means at some point an individual's needs may require to be sacrificed in order to tend for the needs of the whole, in what he terms the 'shepherding paradox'. Ball (2017) also suggests that knowledge learned within pedagogical practice is in keeping with the Foucauldian concepts of hierarchies of truth and power. The teacher's knowledge or pedagogy is imparted in truths to students because the teacher is deemed the expert or master in the relationship. As noted above, this mastery discourse is also discussed in masculine terms which Maxwell (2018) argues is typical of the gendered nature of Foucauldian forms of truth-telling. Further, in relation to women and mothering skills, Walden (2018:215) argues that 'rather than promoting experience as evidence of mastery, maternal experience was characterized as a threat to mastery'. This perpetuates a cycle of patriarchal normalisation in education that continues to govern policy and practice and which feminists seek to challenge. In addition, Butler (2004:161) also argues that in Foucauldian terms pastoral power is delivered by 'a certain class of people', generally working-class, who progress to fulfil the welfare needs of a population, but also who exist as a conscience of others, directing them with their knowledge. Foucault (2014:51) uses a scientific term derived from antiquity, 'tekhné' or technique, to describe how applications of knowledge are incorporated into ways of being. A technique is knowledge gained from a rational and technical manner of applying rules or truths to conducts and behaviours and then exercised by individuals who have incorporated the acquired knowledge into ways of being or performing (Foucault, 1988). In this way knowledge from a Foucauldian perspective is

always a social construction as we create our sense of self, based on inherent practices and regulations that govern us. Furthermore, as these are often historical in context, knowledge is continually legitimised through an educational lens (Ball, 2017).

Ball (2017) states examination is a tool to test which truths have been absorbed into younger generations as acts of governance, ensuring norms of knowledge are being reproduced. Osgood (2012:124) terms this an 'audit culture', where accountability to government agendas is tested and continually negotiated by practitioners as part of a counter-discourse to the constraining governances of regulated practice. Ball (2017) challenges education and its place in maintaining disciplinary power and argues that deconstructing the processes that produce seats of learning can lead us to rise above the truths contained within performativity. One of those examination methods is collaborative practice. This practice in education and other allied caring professions, other than to 'raise' standards, can also act as a space for self-care, through sharing best practice on pedagogy and knowledge. Ball (2017) suggests this is because they appear safer spaces, populated by peers and colleagues and can also be sites of resistance where normative structures are critiqued. Knowledge is seen as the key to power because those that hold knowledge can normalise their conceptions as the dominant truth (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014).

In his 1988 interviews Foucault discusses his work on truth. This work developed as he became more interested in how the self was transformed by either introspective thoughts or in conjunction with significant others (Foucault, 1988). He suggests this transformation occurs through opening yourself up to the truths that may initially be hidden, and which you discover through self-reflection or a 'discourse of self-disclosure' (Foucault, 2021:2). This discourse is framed as a form of self-administered pastoral power to reach a better self which Foucault describes as a form of self-care (Foucault, 2021:4). Fejes and Dahlstedt (2013) assert that technologies of power are often connected to technologies of the self and a confessing self is a subject that governs and shapes its behaviours as a power over the self.

Foucault (1982a, 2001, 2003), argues self-care is a resistance to enforced power or what he terms servitude, and an opportunity to gain freedom, attained through uncovering truths or knowledge on the powers that shape us. Self-care that results in the person regaining control of powers over the self, has been argued by some researchers as a form of de-subjectivation (Maxwell, 2018). Frank and Jones (2003) issue a reminder that to achieve becoming a self that fits into dominant discourse, we sometimes must lose something dear

to our original being. In achieving a state of self-care, Foucault (1982a, 2003) questions what price are we ultimately prepared to pay in order to resist dominant discourses, and to adhere to our own values and principles? Foucault (2001:272) also states that people should not sacrifice themselves whilst caring for others, because this would remove hard-earned liberties, and that we should 'stop demanding too much of ourselves'. In fact, it could be argued, to forgo caring responsibilities in pursuit of individual happiness might lead to a greater conflict and lessen the ability to self-care, even verging on self-harm if it contests deeply held personal and moral values to care for others above all. Foucault (2001) suggests before caring for someone close, you must adopt a detached persona to be effectual and place your own self-care first, as a priority. He gives an example of self-care, which feminists argue substantiates the influence of patriarchal discourses in Foucault's' writings (Maxwell, 2018). The example was written whilst Foucault was living in France, where he describes a gender-normative father, enacting self-care through emotionally detaching himself from the situation at hand (Foucault, 2001). Here he indicates that men do not want to become embroiled in the demands of caring for sick children because if they become too emotionally involved, they cannot care for either themselves or the child and it is then preferable to walk away from the situation completely to prioritise self-care (Foucault, 2001).

Confession as verbalisation on and with the self, within caring professions, has become a normalised practice perpetuated within reflective practitioner discourse, presented as critical self-evaluation (Fejes, 2011). Reflective practice is a method of recalling critical or significant events to learn for future outcomes to better the self (SSSC, online d). However, when used in professional circumstances, practitioners seldom reflect on events that convey positive impacts and are conditioned to examining negatives through a self-disciplining aspect using knowledge to admit to flaws (Foucault, 2001). In addition, this form of formal confession can take its toll, because when expressed against perceived norms, the person confessing runs the risk of becoming the subject that requires reformation (Fejes, 2011). However, there are benefits to reflective practice in informal environments, confession can sometimes be cathartic and act as a form of self-care whilst gauging the opinion of others in a trusted environment (Foucault, 1988). The social aspect of working and sharing with colleagues can also be a determinant factor in professional retention, because establishing trusted networks makes it harder to consider leaving those relationships behind (McDonald *et al.*, 2018).

In regulated professions, 'becoming the self' through confession is dominated by a vulnerability that personal thoughts may be misconstrued by significant others, and this can therefore deter personal agency (Day *et al.*, 2006). Peregrym and Wollf, (2013) highlight the contemporary facets of value-based leadership, where professionals find it necessary to adjust or critique their own values against their own community's needs. In addition, Peregrym and Wollf (2013) note that values change over lifespans as they are constantly reassessed in the wake of experience. As a result, stress can form when personal values come into conflict with standardised expectations set by others and where the balance of power is redirected away from personal goals. This is the struggle and sacrifice towards self-care that Foucault (1988) appears to construct.

In summary in this section, I have discussed the relationship of poststructural principles and in particularly Foucault's works on discourses of power, truth, and confession in relation to the construction of subjectivities within regulated professions through the medium of reflective practice. I have also argued that whilst Foucault does not specifically mention issues that relate to either women or feminist principles, in general his work on knowledge, truth and subjectivity can be used in feminist studies to challenge or even refute patriarchal discourses that renders gendered issues invisible. In the next section, I highlight discourses of gender and their articulation in both the private and public spaces of care. I discuss discursive constructions of mothering and masculinity as part of the underlying theoretical discourses for this study.

2.6 Feminism and gender: Introduction

Gender is defined by Butler (1993) as a social construction, whereby experiences and freedoms are influenced, defined, and constricted by normalised or taken for granted assumptions. When considering care assumptions, views are often divided between a gender-binary of understandings, which are constructed in the main on perceived biological differences between men and women (Paechter, 1998, 2007). Feminist poststructuralists consider that definitions of what constitutes female, or male are subjective, based on the many diverse understandings of how we view ourselves and how we acquire knowledge to define how we should behave (Paechter, 2007). Butler's theories on the gendered ways we behave, which she considers a form of performativity, are an extension of Foucauldian ideas on power, governmentality, and the self (Hodgson, 2005) as discussed in the previous section. Butler (2004:218) argues that the normalised constructions of gender are made visible by an outward performativity, where 'the reality

of gender is itself produced as an effect of the performance', and exists during that performance, which is temporal. Butler discusses that her own views on performativity changed and developed due to the influences and thoughts of other theorists and researchers on gender (Butler, 1999). In general, she highlighted that we act out or perform our own discursive constructions of gender through gestures, dress, or behaving in specific ways, through knowledge that is passed on in rituals to be found in traditional or cultural practices (Butler, 1999). In this manner professional performativity within caring and the legitimacy of professional status is constructed through repeated ways of 'doing' the role, which is influenced through the acquisition of expert knowledge. A heavy reliance is placed on the value of accreditation through higher-level qualifications (Hodgson, 2005). Expert knowledge is in turn represented and legitimised through academic qualifications within the professions which are historically male dominated, such as law, medicine, and corporate industries such as banking (Foucault, 1980). Hodgson (2005) argues it is only by achieving professional status and understanding the mechanisms that maintain its traditions, can you then begin to contemplate resistance.

Whilst Foucault himself does not investigate the relationship between gender and factors that affect self-care (O'Grady, 2004), feminists such as Bartky (1990) suggest that women themselves are aware of factors that affect them because of their gender. Bartky (1990) describes these factors as attached to unequal divisions of domestic labour, low paid employment, and a lack of opportunities in traditional workplaces that enable women to work similarly to male counterparts, whilst balancing family responsibilities. Further, because professions such as childcare, health care, social care and teaching are staffed by women, the work that they do is both undervalued and conflated with 'labours of love' (Gaiman, 2012). Skeggs (1997) and Osgood (2012) state that not only are these factors gendered, but they are also classed, affecting women perceived as working-class to a greater extent than those perceived as middle-or-upper-class. In general, Holgersson (2017) suggests working-class women are constructed as having unequal access to social, academic, and economic advantages compared to women from other classes. Moreau (2019) also argues that there is an assumption that similar professions will share the same dominant gendered and classed demographics, without consideration for the multiplicity of identities that require to be performed within those professions, including high-level executive and managerial responsibilities.

McLaren (2004) argues that feminists are often critical of Foucault because he does not offer a 'normative framework' in which to challenge the oppression or resistance to the

subjectivity of women from either a gendered or class perspective. This is because much of Foucault's earlier work (1977) discusses the normalisation and degeneration of behaviours linked to professions perceived as patriarchal, such as, medicine, and the law and presents no discussion on any profession that might be perceived as feminine or even matriarchal in nature.

Many researchers agree that feminism has many facets and as such, viewpoints are ever-changing based on contemporary socio-political landscapes (see Mills and Mullany, 2011; Guest, 2016). Feminist theory has been characterised as progressing through what are known as waves of feminism, with each of the waves reflecting the agency or resistance expressed by feminists of that period. The first wave was centred around women's suffrage and the right to vote, mainly in the United States and Europe (Malinowska, 2020). The second wave made visible the struggles that women experienced through activism and protests to achieve more favourable and equal terms within the spaces that they occupy, such as the workplace, and moves into academia (Malinowska, 2020). By the third wave of feminism, women were not as aggressively pursuing activism and relied on making visible a non-judgemental stance on people's narratives and lived experiences, embracing the diversity and intersectionality of women (Synder, 2008). Munro (2013) argues for a fourth wave of feminism to be recognised, asserting that this wave encompasses a modern perspective played out by tech-and-media-savvy feminists, where digital platforms can unite global communities and the furthest marginalised groups, to strengthen understandings related to intersectionality. I now discuss intersectionality in more depth.

2.7 Gender and intersectionality

As discussed previously, gender cannot be discussed without also considering other factors that disadvantage individuals or groups that are either in the minority in a particular context, and/or experience social inequality (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality can be defined as the crossover of different characteristics that make up the self (Osgood and Robinson, 2019a). Feminists such as hooks (2000), state that feminism goes beyond women's arguments on gender equity based on interpretations of sex. An intersectional approach encompasses feminist arguments on equity for all marginalised people, as formations of the self are not based on gender alone, but also facets such as age, race, class, and disability (Osgood and Robinson, 2019a).

Hill Collins and Bilge (2016:25) consider that there are at least six aspects to an intersectional approach to illuminate how people's lives might be disadvantaged; 'social

inequality', 'power', 'relationality', 'social context', 'complexity' and 'social injustice'. They argue that these categories cannot be viewed in isolation because individual subjectivities are generally not made up of one single characteristic. For instance, age, class, gender, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity, and disability often intertwine to advantage or disadvantage either individual people or groups (Hills Collins and Bilge, 2016). Power may present as structural, as in the action of governments, state and institutional activities and policies, whereas categories that feature social and cultural inequalities, favour and reward certain groups and can often be historically based.

In Scottish OSC the demographics of many practitioners are white women with a median age of 33, with lead practitioners having a median age of 45.5. (SOSCN, 2018), and this illustrates are least three known intersectional categories that the data represents. Research on people who traditionally enter childcare professions indicates they are generally from a working-class socio-economic background (Osgood, 2012). However, that should be unpicked because that aspect is invisible in the OSC demographic data. Butler *et al.*, (2019:1) argue that ELC settings are sites of Westernised 'cultural transmission and social reproduction'. Following this, the demographics of the ELC workforce are likely to reflect the characteristics of middle-class white women who can purchase childcare labour. Furthermore, the childcare play activities on offer will reflect an imbalance of world cultures. This is a colour blind-discourse (Butler *et al.*, 2019), similarly to the gender-blind discourse that Moreau (2019) suggests is evident in single gender-dominated professions. Here criticality is avoided, or denied rather than acknowledging the bias that exists. 'Blind spots', like these, are factors that should be highlighted in the analysis of narratives in feminist studies. Such narratives should not omit or reject discourses articulated by marginalised groups but instead strive to make bias more visible (Ilmonen, 2020). Gaiman (2012:22) and Moreau (2019) state that white women will be funnelled into feminised professions by institutions and society because they are 'valued identities', framed within a 'moral career'. Gaiman (2012:22) suggests that the pay and status of female-dominated professions such as childcare, teaching, and health-care are downgraded because it is assumed women enter these professions to gain 'spiritual satisfaction'. This assumption maintains the discursive rhetoric framing feminised professions that enables inequalities to exist. England *et al.* (2002:459) state that poor wage remuneration is framed as 'wages of virtue'. This diminishes the reality that women face a gendered penalty in carework, where wages are lowered because they are associated with 'intrinsic motivations', and the closeness of the skills required to those skills raising children in the family home. They

argue that this rhetoric lacks credibility because most jobs are intrinsically rewarding, otherwise people would not seek any preferred employment (England *et al.*, 2002:459).

Contemporary transmission or the framing of intersectionality in society is often played out through media discourses. For instance, Skeggs (2005) highlights that white single mothers are often typified as being from working-class backgrounds. Moreover, they are often characterised as reckless and requiring remedial action because their moral codes break traditional societal standards. This classed bias is historically based, and founded on middle-class patriarchal values, but is still, nevertheless, often used by governments as a measure for current policy to ameliorate society's ills. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter Three when highlighting policy surrounding OSC (Scottish Government, 1998, 2003) which highlights government targets to upskill classed women in childcare, parenting and child development skills. Allen and Osgood (2009) argue that working-class women tend to view raising children, particularly at a young age, as a valued goal and reject the discursive rhetoric attached to having children as a non-ambitious alternative to work and careers.

As a researcher new to feminist theory, I value the diversity of material that challenges perspectives, including my own, and agree with hooks (2000), that equity must seek to understand and lay bare discourses that marginalise any perspective.

2.8 Gender: Somewhere in-between private and public spaces of care

There is a plethora of research and literature on the ethics of care and philosophical arguments on the nature of care (see for example Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1996; Kittay, 1999). This study focuses primarily on areas that contest the gendered nature of care, constructed in the public and private spheres of care, arguing that in life they often blend or coincide. Following Green (2012:1), I argue that care is gendered within 'socially diverse patterns of understanding and behaving in the world'. This idea is echoed in the works of Judith Butler. Butler (1999:4-5) questions who 'counts' and is valued by society across the globe, as presumptions are often based on patriarchal structures and Western perspectives. Traditionally and historically care provision has been located within familial relationships; known as *the private sphere* of life as opposed to institutionalised or commercialised spaces; *the public sphere* (Ward-Griffin and Marshall, 2003), and this dichotomy does not sit well within poststructural research. The relationships between familial care and professional care are as complex as the people that perform caregiving. Care relationships are often shaped by factors out with our power to control, and include as discussed,

intersectional issues related to gender, age, class, and race. Barnes (2012) believes that the diversity of understandings on caring relationships have created an over-usage of terms about what constitutes care or caring and, as such, this has led to devaluing both the skills, and qualities necessary to perform it. Barnes (2012) further argues for more generalised terminology, that acknowledges or recognises the fulfilment of dependencies based on the needs and wants of others, because values on care are attached to how people feel about their moral responsibilities and what they feel obligated to perform (Barnes, 2012).

Barnes (2012) highlights that the need for care can never remain solely in the private sector due to its pervasive need in society throughout life spans. Most care in the UK, which includes Scotland, is performed through a mixed economy perspective (Milligan, 2009). This means family, informal carers, the welfare state and private companies share caring duties in accordance with both availability and financial resources. We are however, moving towards a service economy where the needs of the population are increasingly being met outside of the private sphere of the family (Payne, 2009). The commercialisation of care, and the emotional labour that goes with it, is seen as productive power, where caring rather than just care, is produced as a paid-for service (Monrad, 2017). Regev-Messalem (2022:1165) states that the measurement of carework is not representative of the market value for the services performed due to what is termed a 'non-market value'. In this framework, the soft skills and emotional labour provided in caring, attract in essence, an unpaid value.

Wood and Skeggs (2020) argue that the commodification of caring services and the needs of society were highlighted throughout the pandemic. In the main, private caring was responsible for most of the critical social care, and the value, dedication and skill of that care is yet to be financially rewarded in real terms (Woods and Skeggs, 2020). Further, whilst carework is considered a professional service it does not have an elevated status commensurate with the skilled, essential workforce that it has evolved into. In addition, the government patronises the workforce at best, because amidst the lengthy orations and hand-clapping, no real promise of proper recognition or remuneration has been forthcoming (Wood and Skeggs, 2020). Skeggs (1997) argues this is due to the classed and gendered nature of care, likened to occupations such as domestic services provided historically to middle- and upper-class families. Skeggs (1997:1) notes that 'respectability is one of the ubiquitous signifiers of class'. Class has also been relegated to a status of 'without value' (Skeggs, 1997:74), and many women seek to raise themselves to levels of (what they see as) rewarded respectability through training and career advancements.

Skeggs (2005) notes this is the working-class journey towards a moral subjectivity, which is grounded in the individual and has become personal. Even when women try to advance their circumstances, they can potentially experience the professional jealousy of others, because they may appear to 'class-hop' through undertaking career advancement or entrepreneurial endeavours. Skeggs (2005) suggests this stepping out, breaks from class norms. Bourne and Calás (2013) agree that women who are successful in business, break assumed gender and class identities because not only is business framed as a white middle-and-upper-class patriarchal stronghold, but entrepreneurship is also seen as *othered* for women. In addition, I suggest because the business is childcare there may be deep held assumptions that this is not 'real work', also contesting constructions described by Gaiman (2012) that childcare should be a 'moral job', accruing only 'spiritual rewards'.

In this section I have argued that definitions of care and gender are often contested concepts and are constructed somewhere between the private and public spheres of life (Green, 2012). I have also highlighted how the classed and gendered nature of care has implications for both remuneration and status. Next in this study I consider care from a practical application perspective that relates to how care is performed and by whom.

2.9 Performing gender.

Whilst there are many feminist theorists, Judith Butler is, however, considered the foremost theorist on poststructural feminism (Connell and Pearse, 2015). On encountering philosophy for the first time Butler considered that 'a constant and persistent being responds to reflections of itself in emotional ways', particularly in how these minimise or augment possibilities for quality in life (Butler, 2004:235).

Butler (1990) considers that concepts of gender cannot remain in stasis but are always reinventing themselves at any given point in time. Paechter (2003), highlighting Butler's works on gender performativity, indicates that whilst we may internally feel and move in ways which constitute our preferred gender, externally we reproduce gender as a set of expectations and performances as a temporal phenomenon. These she believes are influenced 'by the form of the body but not tied to it' (Paechter, 2003:69), and we externally perform masculine or feminine associated characterisations that are situation dependent. Paechter (2003) characterises the way we perform certain gendered characteristics as being part of a *community of practice*, whereby knowledge and performances of masculinities or femininities are learned and legitimised through

membership and observation within that community. Communities of practice are vital to leadership, as framed in the professionalisation discourse as outlined registration requirements for practitioner positions as set out in SSSC standards and codes of practice (SSSC, online c). The intention of a community of practice is the sharing of knowledge with liked-minded individuals to enhance professional practice (Wenger, 2010). Following Paechter (2003) they are also seats of legitimised knowledge about the performance of professional care in Scotland because they produce specific care identities. Foucault (1980) suggests communities of practice are also seats of power because they normalise a 'political view of learning' (Wenger, 2010:190). According to Wenger-Traynor and Wenger-Traynor (2015), we sit on the periphery of a community of practice as we learn a shared practice, only achieving full membership once we conform to the hegemonic rules of that community. They further state that 'connection, engagement, status, and legitimacy in the community are all part of what makes someone a trustworthy practitioner' (Wenger-Traynor and Wenger-Traynor, 2015:14). The knowledge formed within these communities, therefore, cannot be underestimated as it creates a powerful discourse on gender formed from the earliest childhood memories (Paechter, 2003). Foucauldian theorists state that power is tied to everyday life, trapping individuals into performing in certain ways where there is a status or authority over our actions and how they are perceived by others (Butler, 2004; Mills and Mullany, 2011). Efthim *et al.* (2001) argue there are expectations set in performing to normalised gender constructions. If we are unable or are withdrawn from being able to perform as expected, this can bring harm to the self, revealed as feelings of stress, shame, or guilt.

2.10 Feminist constructions of gender and care

It would be reasonable to assume that people who enter caring professions do so because they want to care, and the choice to care is an assumed personal preference. Many feminists also consider that the act of caring is a reciprocal arrangement that can be self-fulfilling and mutually inclusive for both the carer and the recipient of care (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). This aspect, known as reciprocity, is a key part of feminist methodology which I will highlight later in chapter four. In this chapter, reciprocity is described as a caring motivation, assumed as a social norm of natural caring (Adams and Sharp, 2013). However, in some cases reciprocity is not automatic, and requires careful nurturing. If the appreciation of caregiving declines or is taken for granted, even as paid employment, then this can lead to a lack of motivation and even a distaste for caregiving (Adams and Sharp, 2013). The negative aspects of caring reciprocity are therefore, juxtaposed within a hidden

or counter-discourse of self-fulfilling care; here the overwhelming emotions of responsibility, intimidation and the threat of potential physical and verbal abuse are rendered invisible (Ward and McMurray, 2016). Payne (2009:350) states that meeting the needs of communities through emotional labour is a highly skilled activity, involving a 'complex combination of facial expression, body language, spoken words, and tone of voice'. Taggart (2012) states that these emotional contexts contribute to the rhetoric of gendered care dispositions, which are virtuous, altruistic, and constructed as feminine, placing them in the perceived domain of women.

In Hochschild's (1983) notable work on emotional labour, she recounts how employees, specifically women, in the airline industry, use emotion as a tool to foster relationships with clients to project a good organisational image. This type of presenting emotion at will, to ensure a set of socially constructed rules are followed, does not necessarily represent 'true' feelings about caring. Indeed, it may heighten feelings of stress and ultimately disengage employees from their job role. This is because there may be tensions that conflict with personal beliefs against professional requirements. Hochschild (1983) discusses that emotional labour is to be found in the public arena of professional practice. She asserts that women are more able to manage this *face* of an organisation better than men, because it requires the employee to visibly demonstrate a caring attitude regardless of personal feelings.

Hochschild (1983) constructs the differences between public and private arenas by describing commodified caring, and the use of emotion in public as *labour* and conversely caring and displaying emotion in a private context she describes as *work*. Emotional labour is in some ways congruent with Butler's (1988) concepts of performativity, with the person performing the emotional labour often acting out a (discursively constructed) role. Yoo and Jeong (2017) characterise role-playing within these performances as either 'surface-acting' or 'deep-acting', with surface-acting being perceived as fake emotions or even the withholding of certain emotions to conform or comply and can result in stress at work. Butler (1999) also highlights that performance can be seen as part 'fabrication', with no truths being displayed during the performance. We only perform our discursively constructed role, which cannot be considered the same as our 'true' nature. Indeed, in Butler's (2004) theory there is no unchanging 'true' authentic inner-self.

In Hochschild's (2001) later studies on family life and work, she discusses that often women prefer to work in the public domain, because they receive recognition of

professional competence from others. Conversely, achievements often go unacknowledged by family in private spaces. Hochschild (2001) also found that whilst family-friendly policies were in place to offer work/life balances, women seldom took these up. These policies extend equally to men in the workplace, with men also not availing themselves of legislated paternity leave (Cox, 2021). However, McKie *et al.* (2002) have evidenced considerable work on the pressure's women feel to shift between caring responsibilities and work commitments. They suggest that competing government policies not only legitimise the caring divide, but place an emphasis on women's care responsibilities, which conflicts with policies that encourage women back into employment to support the economy (McKie *et al.*, 2002). Doucet (2006:6) states that whilst mothers now also have a prime role within the workforce, they remain the 'primary caregiver'.

2.11 Feminist constructions of the 'mothering' discourse.

Feminists have long contested the association of mothering with the domestic sphere of life, considering it a form of oppression associated with patriarchal power (Silva, 1996). This is built on a historical concept regarding the division of family labour in performing childcare tasks. Mothering and motherhood are often used interchangeably; however, motherhood is often framed through binary discourses of biological sex differences between men and women, especially connected to the ability to bear children. Whilst there is a strong connection between motherhood and mothering, this is also based on biological assumptions that there is a stronger physical connection between a mother and her child, than between a father or any other prime carer and the child (Cowdery and Knudson–Martin, 2005). Chodorow (1978) contends however, that motherhood is not a natural activity for all women. Mothering is not only attached to perceptions of the reproductive body and childbearing but also intensive emotional work and physical duties, such as home management responsibilities. Further, during the first part of the Covid-19 pandemic, mothering, also encompassed a new role, that of peripatetic teacher (Mazumdar *et al.*, 2022). With continually diverse and unexpected socio-economic situations occurring at any given time, a child's needs are in constant fluidity, and the skills of those that are involved in 'mothering' must also be flexible to continue to meet those needs.

Both Connell (2005) and Doucet (2006) argue that men also have gendered patterns of behaviour that can create barriers to undertaking childcaring, and the conflict is based on historical and economic demands of the state and expectations of society. Doucet (2006) further argues, that the idea of men 'mothering' is also viewed as incompatible with gender

expectations and could even be perceived as an anti-feminist concept. Women primarily perform childcaring, and whilst I accept that some men also perform 'mothering' activities, I do not substitute a gender-neutral term such as parenting, recognising the pervasive normalising gender discourses associated with the childcaring role.

Whilst previously I argued that emotional labour could be reproduced by women to perform to a set of expected standards in work situations (Hochschild, 1983), mothering is not a natural skill for all women, as argued by Chodorow (1978) and there are different socially constructed expectations of what *good mothering* should look like based on intersectional factors such as class, culture and even age. Colley (2006) argues that in early years learning and childcare (ELC) settings, standards reflect the values of a middle-class home-like environment. As a result, standardisation and performativity expectations might only reproduce mothering skills indicative of those found in middle-class mothers. Walden (2018) suggests that professional women seeking to distance themselves from traditional terms associated with motherhood such as caring, nurturing and emotion work, choose to highlight the management of household finances, intellectual work, and people management skills instead.

Chodorow (1978) considers in motherhood, a degree of nurturing is required to establish a relationship for a child to thrive and having a purely biological connection to a child is not sufficient to determine how 'mothering' is performed. In addition, 'mothering' is also perceived as a set of learned skills necessary to perform the role (Gillies, 2008:96). In this way *to mother* or provide *mothering* is not necessarily a gendered term, but a performance. This performance revolves around a person providing the necessary protective factors that contribute to a child's development, but also to the exclusion of personal needs (Brydon, 2009). Lawler (2000) explains that mothers are often unable to reconcile their own wants with their child's needs and when they do put their own needs first then this is construed as *bad parenting* - a set of ideas that can be defined in Foucauldian terms as a discourse.

In contemporary Western society, women have key earning responsibilities, in addition to being the main primary child carer. Therefore, I argue there must be other factors apart from work commitments that limit men from undertaking primary care-giving with children. Walden (2018) argues that the labours performed by women, whilst caring for children, are often misconstrued as domestic and as such are undervalued. Walden (2018: 205) asserts that due to the time intensity and knowledge required to perform it, mothering is 'in fact a profession'. How *good mothering* is performed is of course very subjective,

being discursively constructed and ever changing. In some cases, this discourse can have detrimental effects, to the point that mothers are looking for an impossible perfectionism in both themselves, and in outcomes for their children, continually pressuring themselves, which can take its toll (Henderson *et al.*, 2010). Henderson *et al.* (2010) also contest that women blame themselves if they cannot live up to their own expectations and cannot display the 'perfect parent image' that is reflected in the *good mother* discourse, discursively articulated through the media and social encounters. Mackenzie and Zhao (2021) suggest that online mothering sites act as sources of peer expert knowledge, particularly for first-time or new mothers, as they combine experiential knowledge with a form of *hand me down* advice from their own experiences with health professionals. These sites create tension as they can add, what the authors argue to be, 'authenticity' to subjective or dominant discourses of *good mothering.* Alternatively, the sites can be agentic and facilitate challenges to seats of power (Mackenzie and Zhao, 2021).

Sutherland (2010) suggests that striving to be viewed as a *good mother*; invokes not only contested feelings in private, but also within the workplace. She suggests in order to fulfil labour demands, women often experience guilt leaving their children in non-maternal care arrangements (Sutherland, 2010). However, if women do not feel that same guilt at leaving their children because they value and enjoy their time within the workplace, they ironically open themselves to criticism on their mothering abilities (Sutherland, 2010). With so many conflicted pressures it appears women are in a 'no win' situation. They are expected to perform within the expectations of the *good mother* discourse regardless of competing responsibilities in private or the workplace, because they feel constantly under scrutiny to maintain standards.

To balance work and childcare situations, some women have engaged in childcare start-up organisations, which are encompassed in the term *mumpreneur*. In some cases, these businesses are generating multi-millions, yet they are rendered invisible by the contexts of the labour performed (Hamilton, 2014). Nel *et al.* (2010:16) claim that barriers to women in entrepreneurial endeavours are part of 'a cultural contradiction to motherhood', with resistance to support their ventures mainly emanating from within the family. This implies that an underlying gendered assumption exists, that male partners are not supportive and are resistant to women returning to the workplace instead of childrearing. Wood (2021) notes that the commitment required in entrepreneurial endeavours (because they require long hours in order to succeed), is equated to perceived masculine aspects of business. This time commitment might be misinterpreted by men as 'time away' from expected household

and family duties rather than to balance them. Generally, women in the workplace have encountered barriers to career advancement from within the workplace itself, termed a *glass ceiling*, which denotes an invisible barrier, that requires to be breached, to maintain equity with men because women bear the responsibility of childbearing and childcare (Human Resource Management International Digest, 2017). However, Fuchs-Epstein *et al.* (2011:14) consider that when women choose to have families they often 'impose' the glass ceiling themselves, prioritising family over work pressures. Moreau (2019:108) considers women have no option but to self-impose a 'glass ceiling', because they are subjected to pressures related to their caring responsibilities that their 'male counterparts' do not, which reinforces the inequality between genders.

Romero (2001), highlights initiatives such as take-your-child-to-work day. This is something I have done myself, unaware of the social reproduction learning that occurs during these exchanges, instead considering that this was evidence of my *good mothering* skills. Allen and Osgood's (2009) discussions on working-class women and motherhood state young women often construct their subjectivities based on their mothers' experiences in life, and therefore choose career opportunities that can better their mothers' circumstances. The tension for women increases as they negotiate expectations on them to be *perfect mothers* whilst striving to succeed with 'multiple identities' (Dunbar and Roberts, 2006) or subjectivities. Women childcare professionals have added demands whilst performing a maternal/professional subjectivity, because they must also take on the subjectivity of student, and often feel the need to justify their choices as they struggle to find balance between career and family life, whereas male parents are not subjected to the same scrutiny (Gilbert and Wallemenich, 2014).

2.12 Men, masculinities and childcare

Constructions of the gendered nature of care should also consider the role of men as *othered* in caring responsibilities and relationships. Raewyn Connell is regarded as a leading feminist authority on theories of masculinity. Her perspectives on masculinities are important to *othered* points of view on constructions of gender, whilst performing care. This 'otherness' is significant to arguments on the division of childcare responsibilities in private and the lack of men in professional childcare (Connell, 2011). However, Hunter *et al.* (2017) argue that some men are prime carers and involved in the raising of children, describing this as a modern caring masculinity, with men demonstrating feminine-ascribed ways of doing/being, such as caring and nurturing. This aspect breaks from childcare

discourses traditionally influencing constructions of men and fathering in the West, such as the discourse of the disciplining parent or emotionally-detached parent, who is distant from family responsibilities (Hunter *et al.*, 2017). However, as childcare is predominantly performed by women, Warin (2006) questions socially constructed discourses of masculinities, which she suggests may create barriers for men entering childcare professions. I will argue that the focus on the emotional context of care is tied to *right skills* discourses, which 'others' men who perform hegemonic masculinities and continues to promote childcare as predominantly women's work.

Halberstam (2004) highlights the challenges in defining masculinity and in many instances discourses on 'dominant masculinities' legitimise societies expectations for men, marrying it to power drawing on associations of white, middle-class privilege. Lee and Lee (2018) highlight that some men resist the discursive characteristics linked to traditional forms of hegemonic masculinity, where dominance and aggression are viewed as positive facets, particularly in the business world. Men's movements, such as Fathers-4-Justice, enact agency through campaigning for gender equality for separated fathers, to allow them equal caring access to foster relationships with their children (Fathers-4-Justice, online). Critics of father's movements suggest that they display a 'hypermasculinity' in aggressively defending their rights for their children whilst constructing themselves as the passive victims of their child's mothers bad parenting (Jordan, 2019). It can only be surmised that this adds to the discourses of 'bad parenting', which women often feel heavily influenced by, when determining the right decisions to make for their child's needs (Sutherland, 2010). Connell (1997) argues that aggressive masculinities are always framed as subordinating women, and whilst there are men who try to disassociate themselves from hegemonic masculinities in relation to their children, in effect they still demonstrate support by their interactions with other men, and involvement in institutional everyday activities. However, Connell (2011) also reminds that equality is complex and whilst men are seen to be reaping patriarchal benefits, these are not equally distributed to all men and many are disadvantaged by class, race and (dis)ability, similarly to women. Connell (2005a) argues that the gender equality debate is at the heart of relationships between men and women, and this requires change not only at policy level but at the profound differences we experience in everyday life and our very ways of being.

Connell (2005b) further argues, that although women may seek equity through closing the gender-divide in caring labour, women also risk losing cultural characteristics that they may strongly identify with, because they have historically been associated with traditional

notions of ‘mothering’ and by association, womanhood. For those women who do not advocate the idea of a gender-neutral care role, because of how they construct their gendered subjectivities (Morgenroth *et al.*, 2021), there is arguably a likelihood that they will continue to perpetuate discourses that influence children into constructing heteronormative emotional subjectivities. This, in essence, can act as a barrier to men performing care. Men themselves discuss that women expect a gender differentiation in tasks such as the ability to use their bodies for manual labour or being skilled in technology (Sullivan *et al.*, 2021). Although gender-neutral policies for play settings such as |OSC, are a feature of Scottish Government legislation and policy, Xu *et al.*, (2022) note that ‘gender classification and distribution of power’ replicate the biological gender-divide pervasive in wider society. In some cases, not being allowed to perform certain tasks is cited as a protection for men, for example, not being asked to provide intimate care for young children (Sullivan *et al.*, 2021). However, in effect this excludes men by positioning such atypical gender-work as in some way ‘deviant’, or not heteronormative. Eidevald *et al.*, (2018:408) highlight that suspicion is often a rationale for men leaving childcare professions, because they constantly need to negotiate boundaries of ‘safe’ intimacy and contact during physical care as substitute fathers, which is traditionally discursively framed as natural to mothering. Tembo (2021) argues from an intersectional standpoint that a white, able-bodied heterosexual male representative of privileged backgrounds, might face less prejudice and limitations than those men who are from diverse backgrounds such as LGBT+, cultural minorities, working-classes, and those from disability communities. He suggests they experience more discrimination and invisible barriers to employment in childcare professions (Tembo, 2021), yet they are equally representative of fatherhoods for all children and their wellbeing.

As highlighted previously, Hunter *et al.* (2017) notes the subtle changes towards understandings of caring masculinities, which is not a rejection of hegemonic masculinity but rather an extension of it, as a result of institutional changes, such as extended paid paternity leave for fathers. Whilst traditional feminine performances of *good mothering*, centre around caring, emotional attachments and a ‘feelings’ discourse, good fathering is expressed in terms of involvement, attentiveness and being expressive in relationships with their children (Hunter *et al.*, 2017). Warin (2019) does not look for gender stereotypical matching or a balance of gender recruits during recruitment opportunities, but rather argues for gender flexibility, as she believes that discourses on gender-balance promote the duality of biological gender norms. Halberstam (2004) similarly to Warin (2019) on gender

flexibility, defines wider understandings of masculinity beyond male sex bodily characteristics. Halberstam (2004) gives the example of women who go through 'tomboy' stages which he/she describes as female masculinity, noting that gender conformity can be a pressure for both men and women equally.

There are other factors that may preclude men from taking up childcare employment. Cullen and Perez-Truglia (2019) highlight that men in business environments significantly benefit from being able to work what is known as *the old boy's network*, employing advantages through male bonding in social relationships that foster higher equity and more promotions than for women. The reason for this they suggest, is that men can take professional chat out of the workplace and into social spaces, whilst women are penalised through having to return home to fulfil their family obligations (Cullen and Perez-Truglia, 2019).

However, men may be disadvantaged by an expectation to take up full-time employment to provide for families (Schiebling, 2020) and may have to sacrifice time with their children. This can be seen as fitting with Foucault's (1982, 2003) notion of the potential sacrifice or compromise required by those who exercise pastoral power 'for the good of the flock'. Schiebling (2020:6) highlights that meeting financial responsibilities for the family is framed as a masculine step towards manhood and proof of manliness, gaining financial rewards for activities in the workplace as proof of attainment.

In summary, in the last three sections of this chapter, I have considered theoretical concepts surrounding gender, gender performance and the pressures for women within the workplace stemming from discursive constructions of being a *good mother*. I have also raised how constructions of men and masculinities are creating barriers. With more carers required in childcare professions, discourses that influence perceptions that 'men do not care' must be challenged, as a way forward to increase the workforce.

Discourses of gender, particularly associated with social reproduction, are also prominent when looking at people's expectations from life in chronological terms. In the next section I highlight the importance of different constructions of time and temporal spaces within lived experiences.

2.13 Temporal perspectives: Introduction

In this section I discuss concepts of time, and how these may have some bearing on constructions of knowledge and ways of being. Time is an elusive concept and contested in

both its understanding and application. We sometimes draw attention to this through time idioms or clichés such as *living on borrowed time*; *time flies, making up for lost time*. We also assume a natural order of time in life cycles, which are often illustrated in linear format, taking us through birth, infancy, adulthood to end of life. A linear trajectory can be problematic for feminists as it can lead us to conceive that certain things in our lives should occur at certain points, and which can 'better' our lives, for example, education in infant to teenage years, work and marriage through our 20's to mid-life years and retirement through our older years. Arguably these are discursively constructed 'ideal' trajectories that are more conducive to men's order of life events and careers (Warin *et al.*, 2021). We are influenced by discourses of the chronological order of life, in turn, planning our lives around these milestones (Skrbis *et al.*, 2012). However, Cartensen (2006) reasons that within life-cycles, individuals feel the chronological impending flight of time subjectively.

As the phenomenon of time is beyond human control, knowledge offers a step towards gaining more certainty about times to come (Adams and Groves, 2007). To mitigate some of that uncertainty, we make plans as part of everyday decisions, some of which are spontaneous, and in the moment, whilst others are constructed through historical rituals and traditions, and some are also future-orientated (Adams and Groves, 2007). Significantly for this study, time is a discursively constructed concept. Through the influence of particular discourses of time, we review and interpret not only our own experiences but also how these are contextual to other events or behaviours taking place around us that may have been normalised (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017). Each person has a different temporal perception of their experiences; some are even misperceived when we sequence experiences and passages of time as we recall them from our memories (Phillips, 2014). Wittman (2017) terms this phenomenon 'felt time', and as we grow older, we have more memories to relate to and our attachments to memories that are significant can disturb the recollection of chronological timelines. We feel the passing of time differently when we are more connected to it, but also when we aware of how it controls the shaping our lives (Wittman, 2017).

2.14 Time as a scientific structure

Adam and Groves (2007) and Staley (2010) assert that concepts of linear time emerged in the West through the industrialisation of work and technological advancements. This inspired more imaginative thoughts about what the future may look like ,including science-fiction literature on space and time-travel, but always as a moving forward process (Staley,

2010). This paradigmatic shift towards science and the ability to control nature, applied knowledge into a more predictive format which produced tangible research evidence. Prediction, however, requires an understanding that this is the only option, a 'scientific truth' (Staley, 2010:65). Science also relies on 'causal chains' (Adam and Groves, 2007:27) based on known facts rather than drawing subjective inferences from the past and present.

Chronological time regulation has been reproduced and perpetuated within state institutions, from our formative years to control optimum learning opportunities (Compton-Lilly, 2015). This entails how school life revolves around timetabled conformity, including school admission age, and free time, such as the playground and lunch times (Bryson, 2007) Foucault (1977) states time is a form of disciplinary power, used by authorities and institutions, with clock time used to both regulate desired activities and reform, with infractions subject to punishment. As time is used as a form of economic control, it therefore follows that time is political in nature (Martineau, 2016).

2.15 Time as a social construct and lived experience.

Alfred Schütz (1899-1959) contributes a significant body of theory on the relationships between lived experiences and time. His approach on lived experiences places meaning on the temporality of consciousness, and how we feel about something at any given time in our life (Muzzetto, 2006). In this way our thinking can represent many untold possibilities, using knowledge from past and present to construct our individual understandings or interactions with the social world around us. Schütz terms this the 'durée', where the flow of our action in real time is based on retention of memories in its current format (Muzzetto, 2006:7). Each day however adds a new temporal memory, which is a perpetual reconstruction, with thoughts within the durée acting as an unplanned stream of action where we are not able to differentiate our experiences to assign any concise meanings (Schütz, 1969). It is not until we deliberately move ourselves out of the flow of the durée and add 'reflective attention', that meanings are added to action (Schütz, 1969:51). However, even the temporal aspect of memory means that there is a lapse of time between what we anticipate as action and the performed action itself and they are therefore often not the same (Muzzetto, 2006). Muzzetto (2006) also argues that constant reflection on the past could deny a meaningful perception of feelings in the here and now.

The temporality of feelings or emotions is highlighted by Hine (2004) who argues they are used to both reconcile and negotiate understandings of significant events that have

occurred in the past, to mobilise the mind into future actions. Whilst Schütz (1969) has relevance to studies on time and motivation for possible future-orientated action, there are some anomalies when using these ideas in care situations. Care professions are built on the premise of being a reflective practitioner (SSSC, online d). This is embedded in the standards and qualifications demanded to manage OSC and other childcare services. where reflection is a required skill (SSSC, 2015). Here both the process of reflecting-on-action and reflecting-in-action, are necessary components for competent leadership (SSSC, online d). Reflecting-on-action is seen as a conscious and retrospective process (Schön, 1983). However, it is far from the passive or indecisive process that Schütz (1969) describes as the durée. Reflection-on-action is intended to provide the means to contextualise past experiences and actively consider change for the future (Schön, 1983). Reflecting-in-action is seen as the ability to react 'instinctively' to a situation as it occurs without stopping to process where the knowledge is drawn from (Thompson and Pascal, 2012). As such, it does not appear to be temporal in nature. Schön's theory has been criticised as always reactive, whereas arguably temporality is an aspect of proactive 'anticipatory reflection' (Conway, 2001). This aligns more closely with Mead's (2002) time theory of the present, where past theory and understandings from experience are tied in the present to possible futures. The determination of this is whether we are performing the action 'because of', the meaning we draw from the past or 'in order to' assign meaning for the future (Muzzetto, 2006:15). Whilst being a reflective practitioner is generally viewed in a positive light to bring a conception of truth and meaning to action, Fejes and Dahlstedt (2013) contend that because it is embedded in practice as a hegemonic discourses, reasons for performing reflection are rarely questioned. In addition, Vince and Saleem (2004) highlight that reflection can become a stressful event because it is often used to apportion blame to past events that have been unsuccessful.

2.16 Time, care and gender

In this study, the intent is to reflect on past experiences and their influence on the present and beyond, to offer an understanding of practitioners' discursive constructions of care, and how they may be located within spaces of temporality. How people use or view time has been significant in gender studies including the framing of daily activities and responsibilities (Doucet, 2022). Tammelin (2012) highlights that time is a gendered temporal space that requires deconstruction, because it is mainly framed by hegemonic power assumptions on patriarchal societal and institutional privileges, which affect how both men and women are expected to fill their time. Doucet (2022) suggests that in

feminist studies, chronological time perceptions are limiting because of omissions on relational aspects of time. Further Doucet (2006) states gendered assumptions are often based on the differences between *clock-time,* which exists in the traditional male-dominated business world, and *naturally occurring time,* which exists as part of maternal discourses linked to nurturing and development. Adam (1990) describes clock-time as rational and objective, whilst the naturally-occurring time or 'felt-time' as socially constructed and subjective. Adam (1990) argues there is a noticeable conflict between chronological time and felt-time, for example, the emotions felt when someone attempts to achieve all responsibilities they feel must be accomplished in a twenty-four-hour period. Whilst women appear to have more independence financially through choice of employment because of the growth in care markets, this has reduced the time they can spend with children and family (Craig, 2016). Hochschild (2001) states working women who also provide unpaid caring duties, may then experience time as 'othered'. Hochschild (2001:1) highlights that whilst trying to balance work with life responsibilities women sometimes feel that children have been cheated of time, and that a 'time-debt' is owed. These time-debts are usually satisfied before or after working hours, and competition for time is often pressured from many competing avenues. With over 50% of women in Scotland moving towards full-time employment (Scottish Government, online b) it might be increasingly difficult to satisfy the accumulation of time-debts. Women often feel that policies that provide for flexible working time, in order to satisfy childcare and motherhood expectations. hinder advancement for their careers (Hochschild, 2001). As a result, women may feel unable to meet expectations set on them to be either a *good parent* or a committed career professional. Sullivan (2019) claims working women experience time as 'rushed' and are under intensive demand to satisfy commitments to each of their expected duties in both their private lives and their professional work. Further, it would appear women have little or no time to pursue leisure activities or simply to have self-time. Sullivan (2019) also states that in comparison men have greater choices and control over how they spend time after work, either through time spent with children or undertaking their own leisure interests. Studies indicate that feeling valued and competent in your private family relationships can also impact esteem and relationships within your public professional subjectivity (Gaunt and Scott, 2014). Further Gaunt and Scott, (2014) state that as both require significant time commitments and skill to balance the multitude of management tasks, women particularly benefit more than men because they have an increased responsibility between the two spheres.

2.17 Time and spaces

It is important to note how time can affect relational spaces of care, and how these may take on various meanings and provoke differing emotions at any given point in time (Halford and Leonard, 2006). The actual landscape of the working environment, which includes culture and climate, can both limit and support our responses to our care responsibilities (Halford and Leonard, 2006). The spatial relationship in caring landscapes can therefore be interpreted, not only as the physical proximity or distance to the actual recipient of care, but also the ability to maintain a social and emotional connection to the care receiver in our physical absence (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Further, they suggest that with the advancement of technology and contacts through social media platforms, caring spaces in the present time, are more fluid than in the past (Milligan and Wiles, 2010). It is now possible to maintain and act out a caring relationship over a physical distance whilst maintaining an emotional link without being in close proximity. An example is, the caring telephone conversations or online face-to-face chats which enhanced professional engagement with children and families during the Covid-19 pandemic, engagement that was reframed as 'teletherapy' (Bate and Malberg, 2020). Caring and therapeutic interventions for mental health wellbeing are now required to take place wherever the person is located, in what is a temporal necessity to ensure safe modes of delivery through pandemic conditions. Bate and Malberg (2020) show how the caring parameters of the clinic have been widened into the home where the actual therapy takes place with the same consistent clinical approach as if the child was present. Milligan and Wiles (2010) consider that this type of caring, even though online, is still embodied as physical proximity. The online environment draws the caring responsibility into its physical range as if the recipient were present. In some circumstances a carer's confidence to provide emotional care can be extended to a third party, who could be paid or unpaid, to enact physical care on the carer's behalf. However, third-party care is a site of inequity due to an affordability range and may limit the viable options available to those caring. Spatial awareness is not limited to just proximity or even to an environment where we can feel connected, it can also be extended into negative or hostile awareness of workspaces and feelings, that in effect create spatial distance. For instance, Halford and Leonard (2006) discuss how certain spaces can maintain an unequal equilibrium through maintaining 'traditional hierarchies'. In general, within workplaces the balance of favour is assumed to be predisposed to patriarchal hierarchies. However, within caring spaces, because they have historically been inhabited predominantly by women, who have the most access to the environment, it could be argued

women hold the balance and therefore, the power within these spaces. This aspect is relevant to understanding recruitment within gendered professions as workplace spaces where men may feel 'othered' and may have to negotiate a more equitable space in which to feel connected.

2.18 Elias and time perceptions of the self.

Elias Norbert (1897-1990) was a German sociologist with significant works on time in relation to power, behaviours, and emotions (Elias, 1992). Whilst Elias was not a poststructuralist, I consider the relevance to this study of his thoughts on time. Of relevance is his focus on the blending of distinctions between work and social time, and the constituting of them as constructs of personal time (Tabboni, 2001). Further Elias also described that the many relationships of humans, in societies, generate knowledge (Atkinson, 2012). This is consistent with Foucault's (1977, 1988) concepts of mastery and learning from significant others. For Elias (1992), time moves from a continuous flow of events to a singular concept which synthesises past, present, and future. This is because we compare time through the relationships that connect memories to form our own personal timeline. These memories, or the actual events can act as catalysts for personal meaning-making discoveries as we acquire knowledge changing what we thought we knew. Elias (1992:69) termed this 'reality-congruence'. Time is therefore in a constant flux as our biological, social, and personal experiences shape time to something unique to each person. Portschy (2020:393) also considers the value of time not only for social scientists such as Elias but also for poststructuralists such as Foucault, because of the 'discursive and relational nature' of time when analysing those that are marginalised or oppressed, and time often acts as a tool for self-regulating behaviours to conform to temporal expectations.

In some respects, we draw comfort from the chronological nature of time that is rooted in sequential happenings such as the seasons and organisational life represented as a beating passage of time, which brings with it reciprocal understandings. These understandings are fostered on 'normal' expectations of people and behaviours in certain time and spaces such as within professionalised workspaces. Tabboni (2001:9) states that these calculated expectations can play on the soul as they 'deny spontaneity and satisfaction of one's instincts'. Both Foucault and Elias concern themselves with power and its impact on human relationships, and how knowledge originates from the past (Spierenburg, 2004). For Elias power over our ways of being derives from how our lives are organised (Spierenburg, 2004) and that we enact a form of 'internalised constraint' when conforming to norms

which may eventually induce harm to the self, which we do through periods of 'sacrifice' and 'self-mortification' (Tabboni, 2001:10). As I have already discussed, childcare professions, as regulated services, adhere to codes of conduct that dictate ways to perform. This includes reflective practice as a discursive form of self-critical confession. If these conducts make childcare professionals act against their personal values, through having to perform self-restraint, then they also restrict any counter-discourse to normative values and regulate the degree of people's agency. We almost 'risk assess' each moment against its normalised appropriateness.

In summary, this sociological view on time demonstrates how personal meaning-making involving emotions and behaviours, may go through temporal processes that can impact on how we view our professional caring self. Both Foucault and Elias discuss time in relation to power and how we control the self. Foucault's (1984) intention is to 'free' the self from power held within state structures towards more individualised powers which we control as a form of self-care. Where there is power there is also resistance and Foucault states that resistance is found in how we rewrite or reconstruct normalised discourses (Foucault, 1981). For Elias this same power is contained within self-regulation acting on the body and particularly our personal thoughts. This self-regulation emerges as a form of self-restraint (Dunning and Hughes, 2013), an emotional response engaged to buffer harm. In time this reaction is internalised to such an extent that personal self-control has become the normal behaviour that is expected in 'civilised' relationships (Tabboni, 2001). It is, however, a temporal norm because civilisations evolve, and as such, societies' expectations also change in time. For researchers looking to add their own perspective to debates and philosophies it is encouraging that both Elias (Dunning and Hughes, 2013) and Foucault (Bourke *et al.*, 2014) viewed their own contributions to changing societies as a legacy that future generations could adapt, critique, and scaffold as circumstances within the world change.

In this chapter, I have outlined theoretical concepts that I consider have the most significance for this study. This has included concepts on the gendered nature of caring and aspects of power that may inform temporal decision-making through life courses. The next chapter highlights previous research in the same fields of study through a literature review on related perspectives.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

The self is not something one finds; it is something one creates.

(Thomas Szasz, 1973:49)

3.1 Introduction

This study considers how powers that govern our behaviours, and discourses on care as a gendered profession, can illuminate any factors affecting recruitment, retention, and career resilience in Out of School Care (OSC) professions. The study considers not only the gendered nature of care, but also how personal and professional subjectivities are constructed through engagement with various professionalisation agendas and policy documents. As already highlighted, empirical small-scale studies that focus on OSC practitioners' temporal perceptions of their caring experiences are scarce. The studies that I highlight in this chapter, reflect those professions that are most closely allied to OSC such as teaching, early years learning and childcare (ELC), health services and other registered social care services, to capture the broadest spread of issues raised within my study. The empirical studies are lastly supplemented with *grey literature* to highlight how knowledge is framed in this area of study. *Grey literature* is generally the term used to indicate non-commercial work such as government publications and reports, media blogs or unpublished academic works (Paez, 2017).

3.2 Recruitment, retention and career resilience in allied professions

In this first section, I focus on studies from other allied registered social care professions such as ELC, teaching, and health, because they are also similarly gender-dominated professions, where practitioners must also be qualified and registered to perform their role.

A study by Webb and McQuaid (2020) found three significant factors in relation to recruitment and retention in the ELC workforce. First, they suggest there is a skills mismatch between the needs of the workforce and the 'organisational culture' required to perform the childcare role (Webb and McQuaid, 2020:1). This mismatch is framed as the differing values of practitioners and their employers, not only on workplace expectations and appropriate behaviours, but also in appreciating which skills are deemed the *right fit* for the profession. Secondly, they discuss how the practitioner, once employed, develops a latent understanding of how the profession is undervalued, demonstrated through low pay rewards against expected training requirements and a lack of career incentives, which

eventually contribute to poorer retention outcomes. Lastly, they argue that long-term planning within organisations, from the initial recruitment marketing onwards, fails to consider a career plan which reflects recruits' personal ambitions, and which ultimately affects career resilience. I will consider these three points, and how they might be related to dominant discourses of care, throughout the literature review, because they are significant to creating greater understandings of the childcare workforce.

The findings on recruitment and retention reported by Webb and McQuaid (2020) are based on research with key agents in the Scottish childcare profession, but not specifically with practitioners working in the field. Within the Webb and McQuaid (2020) paper are discursive assumptions about gender, which I contest. For instance, whilst undeniably the profession is gendered, it does not however, follow that the women employed in childcare are predominantly low-qualified as the authors put forward. I will highlight this aspect later within section 3.8: 'women, qualifications and part-time occupations'. Webb and McQuaid (2020) also found, from the employers' perspective, that retaining staff appeared dependent on a combination of factors, including higher pay incentives which might attract men to childcare employment, status within professional titles ascribed to the position undertaken, and achieving a qualification commensurate with a professional status.

In a previous study, Carroll *et al.*, (2009) also highlighted issues on the recruitment and retention of childcare workers. Even though this study was more than ten years before Webb and McQuaid (2020), it highlighted similar findings. Interviews with ELC services in England highlighted the difficulties in retention, citing low pay issues, low status and in addition competing family responsibilities with few opportunities for career progression (Carroll *et al.*, 2009). Carroll and colleagues (2009), considered that the loss of senior staff, seeking better rewards elsewhere, led to services developing significant skills gaps. Practitioner interviews found that younger staff also became disengaged because the type of work did not match their pre-employment expectations of the childcare role that had been marketed to them (Carroll *et al.*, 2009). Conversely, managers discussed that young people 'lacked the necessary qualities' or 'right personalities' with a 'lack of ability to fit in' which resulted in conflict (Carroll *et al.*, 2009:7). This mismatch between applicants and cultural compliance has some support from Webb and McQuaid's study (2020), who noted that finding people with the necessary skills to match the organisational culture was one of the recruitment challenges for both employers and key agencies. However, practitioners in Carroll *et al.* (2009) stated they had become disenfranchised with the role due to the sectors low pay and lack of status, and they did not believe that they lacked

skills or the right attitude towards childcare work. Fitting in with childcare professional expectations and requirements against a culture of low status, feeling undervalued and remuneration are consistent findings in both the studies and require further exploration considering the current recruitment crisis.

A significant finding by Carroll and colleagues (2009), cited by participants, was that their caring responsibilities, and necessity for financial stability, had led them to consider moving to childminding roles, to balance their own childcare needs and maintain their work in a related childcare field. Following Hamilton (2014), I highlighted in chapter 2.11, the rise in mothers undertaking entrepreneurial opportunities to enable them to balance financial and caring responsibilities. This was an opportunity I engaged in myself. I needed flexibility whilst raising a son with a disability, who required numerous medical appointments and I felt other options were not open to me.

In summary, both studies focus on aspects of care professions which are systemic in gendered professions, namely the problems attributed to low remuneration and status. I argue, following Moreau (2019), that neither study makes visible the historical gendering of professions, based on the normalisation, and assumed dualistic nature of caring labours based on biological sex, that devalues female dominated professions.

3.3 Emotional labour and retention in caring professions

Carroll *et al.* (2009) highlights the emotionally labour-intensive nature of duties associated with caring, which are aligned with normative 'female' characteristics such as presenting as emotionally receptive, nurturing and being able to cope with caring pressures. Practitioners also highlighted these same traits were a factor in retention because they perceived the use of emotions as crucial to performing care, and that these led to a 'higher degree of satisfaction' (Carroll *et al*., 2006:4). Comparably, nurses discussed a similar job satisfaction whilst providing intimate care duties, but also reported an often-unspoken viewpoint, that in giving emotional support, there was often a rebound on the practitioner's own emotional state (Henderson, 2001). Henderson (2001) concluded that there was an overall invisible or even unrecognised lack of understanding and an under-appreciation about the skills required whilst performing the emotional labour necessary in caring.

Ward and McMurray (2016) raise further points about the detrimental side of emotional labour, which they also state is often masked from mainstream narratives on caring, in favour of normative discourses on the altruistic benefits of working in caring professions.

For instance, intimate care may be a necessary part of the caring role, and whilst this may be an accepted norm when working with infants and toddlers, if intimate care is still required into adulthood, this aspect may not specifically be anticipated in the job role. For some carers this can either be upsetting or elicit feelings of repulsion or guilt, experienced due to being unable or even unwilling to perform that part of the care role (Ward and McMurray, 2016). In some cases, the inability to emotionally detach from a situation or people that require intensive caring can lead to 'burnout' or sometimes the inability to 'bounce back', which is seen as an essential part of resilience (Skovolt and Trotter Mathison, 2016). Ward and McMurray (2016) concluded that those responsible for recruitment may deliberately leave out some of the more unpleasant aspects of caring, in advertisements or job descriptions which might discourage prospective applicants. Once the full extent of the job role becomes apparent this can elicit negative feelings of guilt or shame, even hostility to the employer for a lack of openness, and which can ultimately affect the person's trust in relation to future employment. Ward and McMurray (2016) call for a care ethic for carers which encompasses the expectations of each practitioner in issues that matter to them throughout their career as job remits evolve. This was also raised by Webb and McQuaid (2020) who consider an understanding of a life-course trajectory is an important dynamic to fostering resilience within care careers. The studies highlighted considered the more negative factors that may impact on both retention and attrition within care sector professions as a counterpoint, rather than a focus on the dominant discourses of caring as a positive experience.

3.4 Structural barriers to childcare recruitment

Structural barriers, such as dictates within government policy, can affect equality and justice in professions (Osgood, 2005). In this section, I highlight where government policy has contributed to issues in relation to recruitment into childcare professions.

In Scotland, ELC and childcare companies are founded on different business management models, divided between the public sector, the private sector, the voluntary sector (sometimes known as the third sector or not-for-profit), and through various charitable models (Scottish Government, 2019a). A study by Nickson and colleagues (2008) researched attitudes towards employment in the Scottish social care voluntary sector and with it the recruitment challenges for the sector. They found that that government policy prioritises a delivery of quality outcomes, reliant on qualified and skilled staff to meet statutory social requirements to satisfy government funding criteria (Nickson *et al.*, 2008).

Yet media reports showed, that even when funding criteria are met, the voluntary and non-statutory sector cannot compete with publicly funded settings due to local authority councils distributing government funds unequally between the two types of provision (Alderman, 2022). This is an example of sovereign power (Foucault, 2002), where government policy conflicts with needs of the differing communities, and where practices could potentially threaten livelihoods, as funding can only be bestowed by those in a position of power.

There is a possible future for OSC in Scotland, where Scottish Government (2019a) aim to provide partially-funded wraparound school-aged childcare to stimulate the economy and encourage parents into work. OSC is mainly operated by the private and/or voluntary sector in Scotland, and it is likely the same bestowal of government funds will require significant proof of quality, stability, and growth. This assumption is based on the expectations of private nurseries during the introduction of the EYC extension (Nursery World, 2018), arguably with similarly contentious funding opportunities and lack of appropriate recruitment planning for a sector that is already under threat. England has gone through a similar capacity growth in EYC, with challenges to recruitment affecting the sustainability of the sector, and a research report by the Social Mobility Commission (2020) provides data that could arguably be applied to growth in the same ELC sector in Scotland.

A secondary barrier that exists for childcare professions is the registration and security checks that are required for childcare staff. These regulatory processes impact during recruitment because, as I recall from experience, they can affect recruits taking-up posts. The childcare profession is highly regulated and requires specific security checks under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) legislation, which can be a lengthy, frustrating, process (Hutcheon, 2019). With third-party input out-with the control of the employing organisation, potential recruits do not even commence employment and instead take up opportunities in sectors that can employ and provide financial stability immediately (Nickson *et al.*, 2008).

3.5 Career resilience in childcare professions.

Resilience is an important aspect in the longevity of career cycles. To highlight the composition of practitioners within Scotland, recent statistics (SSSC, 2018b) on the age distribution of those employed in childcare professions, registered under the auspices of

the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), shows the age distribution for OSC practitioners and ELC practitioners under the category Day Care of Children.

Subsector	**Public**	**Private**	**Voluntary**	**All**
Adoption Services	49	_	50	**49**
Childcare agencies	33	29.5	37	**33**
Childminding	-	46	-	**46**
Day Care of Children	43	28	36	**36**
Fostering Services	48	-	46	**47**
Residential childcare	48	38	41	**42**
School care accommodation	51	-	47	**48**
All	**48**	**41**	**44**	**44**

Table 3.1 Adapted median age of the care workforce in Scotland 2017 (SSSC, 2018b:28)

A similar table of data from the same year looks specifically at the OSC workforce (SOSCN, 2018). The support worker is the entry level into the field of practice, the practitioner has some supervisory or leadership responsibilities and the Lead Practitioner is generally the manager or head of service for the setting. The median age of women, specifically in the Scottish OSC workforce, is between 33 and 45.5 (SOSCN, 2018). This is higher than the median age of the combined OSC and EYC practitioners in the previous table (3.1), which is between 28 and 36. In the same Scottish report 92% of those employed in OSC were part-time as opposed to 40% employed in ELC and 96% were female (Scottish Government, 2018 b). The SOSCN table also considers the median years served within the OSC profession.

Level of Employment	**Median Age**	**Median Years Served**
Lead Practitioner	45.5	**13**
Practitioner	33	**4**
Support Worker	33	**2.5**

Table 3. 2 Median age and years served of the school-aged childcare workforce 2017 (SOSCN, 2018)

This would appear to support claims such as those in Nickson *et al.* (2008) that the age demographics of childcare staff reflect women mid-life, usually after having had children. What Nickson *et al.* (2008) do not consider, is any in depth analysis on motives for leaving childcare careers or why carework suits applicants at that time of their career. For instance, Bridges *et al.* (2021) indicate that women are leaving male-occupied professions because they face discrimination and inequity, not only in career profession and

remuneration as discussed previously, but also due to normative masculine attributes such as assertive work ethics. Experiences of exclusion due to male camaraderie also makes it difficult for women to adapt to masculine working cultures. In contrast, Duncombe and Marsden (1993) found that women value the friendships that they had formed within their professional communities, which provided a necessary support system that is often lacking at home. Hochschild (2001) echoes this point, as she suggests that whilst family-friendly policies offer women a chance to break the pressures that impinge on a work-life balance, women are reluctant to step away from places where they feel most valued. Further Hochschild (2001:247) states women often 'adopt(ing) a male model of work' in order to 'fit in', despite the social consequences of what I have framed as *bad mothering* discourse, in relation to their perceived neglect of mothering responsibilities.

Resilience is deeply personal in nature, as it is associated with the self; the subjectivity we have constructed for ourselves through engagement with both our life experiences in professional and personal worlds and our ability to cope with changing situations that affect our life satisfaction (Hartung and Cadaret, 2017). However, whilst the concept of resilience is often currently understood through a dominant discourse demonstrating 'best practice' in 'adaptability', in effect it may be an appearance of coping, and only a performance, manufactured to hide a perceived weakness in business (Mahdiani and Ungar, 2021). I will argue that resilience is necessary to alleviate pressures that may arise from conflicts in performing to professional discourses that contests our hopes, aspirations or even realised perceptions of the professional role we originally thought we had signed up for.

In summary, in the first section of this literature review, I considered research studies that focus on some aspects of recruitment, retention and resilience in childcare or an allied caring profession. The studies reviewed (Nickson *et al.*, 2008; Carroll *et al.*, 2009; Webb and McQuaid, 2020) propose some valuable considerations for the future of recruitment such as attending to the disconnect between socially dominant discourses of childcare, against the lived reality of the performed role by practitioners. The studies also present an emphasis on low remuneration and value, together with a misconception about the specialised skills that are required in caring professions.

In the next section of this chapter, I argue that that the skills mismatch perception between employees and their employers (Webb and McQuaid, 2020) can create an internal battle, which contributes to discourses of childcare, that lead to the profession being undervalued.

3.6 Skills matching: the power of knowledge

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of childcare environments. As a result, new skills gaps have emerged, and childcare organisations now need to comply with the expectations of regulating bodies for an immediate response to the need for digital skills, infection prevention and control, trauma informed practice and quality improvement (SSSC 2021c). Moreau (2019) argues that the feminisation of professions normalises discourses that conflate the skills required for caring professions, with those of mothering. This, she states disempowers and ignores the real skills involved in professions that are predominantly staffed by women and have aspects of caring responsibilities assigned to the job (Moreau, 2019). The new skills gap is only one example of the specialised skills required, over and above a recognised qualification, to ameliorate impacts in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. It demonstrates the ever-changing landscape required of care professions because they often reflect wider socioeconomic constraints. Further Andrew *et al.*, (2020) report that during the Covid-19 pandemic, women were more likely to be employed in keyworker positions than men, care being one of the essential skills required throughout the pandemic.

I argue there are two main areas relating to how skills are matched to caring professions. First, how discursively constructed gendered assumptions define the necessary skills and characteristics for the childcare workforce, affecting diversity, which in turn, limits the available recruitment pool. The second area is the way care positions are marketed, including the valuing of 'soft skills', and emotional labour drawing on discourses of care as 'women's work' (Elliott, 2017).

Definitions of what constitutes a skills match are contested, but in many cases, they are considered as a balance between what employers want in order to meet the needs of the organisation, and also what will ensure employee satisfaction leading to increased feelings of value (Green, 2013). Skills mismatches can occur either when there is a 'skills shortage', a 'skills gap', skills under-utilisation' or 'training barriers' (Green, 2013:31). Green (2013) also states the type of skills mismatch presented only becomes evident when supply and demand are misaligned and stakeholders' expectations conflict.

The Social Mobility Commission (2020) researched the stability of the ELC workforce in England and conclusions from the report included key themes that were similar to Green's (2013) findings. Conflict between employers and employees was evident, including low pay, lack of appropriate training, unrealistic work demands, and negative organisational

climates (Social Mobility Commission, 2020:5). The same findings appear regularly in childcare research, which demonstrate despite the high skill of the profession, ELC and OSC practitioners are among the lowest paid employment sectors. Practitioners felt entry requirements were set too low for the necessary academic demands of the role and appropriate upskilling was not always funded, resulting in new staff being underprepared for the real demands of the job (Social Mobility Commission, 2020:14). Managers and employers were also blamed for safeguarding staff retention through not offering training opportunities, which limits practitioners' marketability. Practitioners stated that managers asked them to undertake responsibilities that were not in line with the financial compensation they received, and that the demands of the role were higher than marketed. Highlighting staff disaffection, one case study within the research noted a practitioner's view of the field after twenty-five years providing early years care. The practitioner noted that positions were filled predominantly by mothers returning to work or by young women for whom motherhood was aspirational. She raised questions about why women would want to enter or continue in a profession where the pay remuneration did not reflect value or skills of the work undertaken. '*It is with sadness knowing you could earn more money working at ALDI'* (Social Mobility Commission, 2020:16). Her greatest fear was that as people retired, crucial knowledge and skills could not be replaced. Practitioners themselves noted that professional care is reliant on normative discourses of the 'caring nature' of the workforce. This discursive construction of the workforce expects practitioners to give selflessly of their time, for the children and families. The practitioner in the study demonstrated agency, demanding a cohesive strategy to support the 'functional skills' that are inherent in the nature of the profession (Social Mobility Commission, 2020). Wingrave and McMahon, (2016) also argue that practitioners are resisting upskilling for positions that they already feel qualified to perform, implying tacit and vocational knowledge, along with valued experience are being sacrificed in exchange for achieving enforced higher academic skills.

With many women entering childcare professions after raising families, Barnes. (2012:155) admits that in attempting to democratise processes of regulation, bodies 'open up expert knowledge to lay scrutiny'. With the upskilling of the workforce, De Vos (2017:24) claims that by 'inducing the layperson into perspectives of academia' means that 'many everyday (inter) subjective practices are closely tied to educational procedures'. This is also one of the arguments on the commodification of care with caregiving elevated from a place where social reproduction took place in the home, to one where expert

knowledge can now be measured by all. Moreover, in some cases good care is not always paid-for-care (Richardson, 2022). It could be argued that in recognising the experience and knowledge of those in the private sphere, those skills are elevated above the qualifications that are necessary in the public sphere. In the same document that the SSSC laud unpaid carers as a necessary part of the workforce, their fitness to practice is not called into question, because they provide 'a vital contribution in the delivery of care through their knowledge, expertise and the quality of care they provide' (SSSC, 2016c:48). This is a paradox because unpaid domestic carers are often the same experts who later come forward for paid employment in the public sphere. Somewhere the narrative changed, and whilst Barnes (2012) acknowledges that carers are valued, their care skills are considered secondary to professional care. I argue this could imply the quality of unpaid care does not necessarily need to be 'good' but is valued, only because it takes pressure off the state. Ward-Griffin and Marshall (2003) also agree that the state abnegates responsibility to such an extent that family members are often taught complex care skills to perform unpaid care duties for their relations at home. It could be also argued that unpaid health caring not only saves the welfare state financially, but also normalises the discourse that care belongs in the private sphere and why unpaid carers should arguably be regarded as highly skilled. Ball (2017:43) questions this 'coupling of knowledge and power' as it creates levels of worth based on the *truths* of those in power dictating their norms. In determining worth, Vincent and Ball (2006) suggest that professional carers themselves who argue that caring behaviours resides in people as a natural ability, both devalue and demean the professional role of care itself.

3.7 The marketing of skills in recruitment for caring professions

I now argue how supply and demand mismatches may be created through the gendered marketing of care employment during recruitment processes.

Osgood (2005) highlights a government web page using recruitment incentives for the EYC sector which did not support her own findings, because the web page gave the false impression that the workforce was staffed equally by men and women. As is the nature of a gendered profession, the sector is dominated by women and reflects society's perception of the historical caring divide in the private sphere (Vandenbroek and Peeters, 2008). In addition, as argued previously, Butler *et al.* (2019) and Moreau (2019) state that it is mainly white working-class women who are employed in professional care in the West. Vandenbroek and Peeters (2008) highlight that in general, government agencies and the

professions themselves state they would like to see more men in childcare to provide 'gender-balance' for children. This is because childhood is positively impacted through having relatable gender role-models in children's lives (Care Inspectorate, 2018), and there have been government drives to specifically recruit more men (Scottish Government, 2017a). The official discourse underpinning the recruitment of men into childcare is arguably not driven by a concern of a lack of diversity in the workforce but is arguably framed by a desire to minimise the impact of *toxic masculinity* that presents a dominant discourse of violence towards women, as perpetrated solely by men Lombard, 2011). In addition, there is a concern on the political labelling of toxic *masculinity*, because it appears to indiscriminately label all men's negative behaviour rather than describe aggressive behaviours found only in a small section of men (Harrington, 2021).

Vandeweyer (2016) suggests that there has been a growth of occupations that require noncognitive skills to meet skills gaps. These skills are deemed emotionally intelligent and because they are difficult to measure with hard standards are termed soft skills (Calanca *et al.*, 2019). Emotional intelligence is viewed as an essential skill in business and leadership, critical to controlling emotional impulses during problem-solving, conflict-management and decision-making (Drigas and Papoutsi, 2018). Calanca *et al.*, (2019) state that soft skills do not require acquired knowledge as they are inherent in characteristics and personality types, which I argue are akin to normative discursively constructed assumptions held about caring skills and by implication, women. There is an occupational demand for soft skills, valued because they require a professional attitude and behaviours with the ability to both self-reflect and self-regulate in occupational environments (Vandeweyer, 2016): discourses promoted by the SSSC in ELC professions (SSSC, 2016). Vandeweyer (2016) reports that taught soft skills have recently been incorporated into school curricula, evident in social and emotional teaching on moral and civic education. However, as mentioned soft skills are difficult to measure, and it is recognised that there are attitudinal differences on their value between employers and young people wishing to enter the jobs market. A report from the OECD (2020) discusses the value of social and emotional skills in relation to overall wellbeing as they direct the future actions we take later in life, allowing us to self-regulate our emotional state and behaviours in appropriate contexts. Studies indicate that boys attach differing associations to social and emotional skills than girls and are ultimately disadvantaged in career choices that promote soft skills (Tan *et al.*, 2018; Calanca *et al.*, 2019). These different associations on emotional literacy are carried into career choices, with gendered discourses about suitability established

during formative years by both girls and boys (Mclean, 2003). Care careers are minimally discussed as non-traditional areas of work for men, yet there is arguably an inequitable proactive effort to encourage women into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) through school curricula and government funding, arguing it will close the gender-divide through enabling women better access to perceived masculine professions such as STEM (Scottish Government, online c). I argue that closing the gender-divide appears one-sided, placing a higher value on traditional male-dominated professions than providing an equal emphasis through curriculum planning for female-dominated professions. There were also interesting correlations presented by Tan and colleagues (2018) between values placed on skill sets for prospective careers. These appeared to unequally prioritise academic ability, as an indicator for determining successful career opportunities, over those young people who exhibit higher predispositions to soft skills regardless of academic ability (Tan *et al.*, 2018).

Social and emotional skills promoted in school-based curricula include, 'openness to experience, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion (engaging with others), and agreeableness' (OECD, 2018:5). In careers guidance, soft skills are presented as both employability skills and transferable skills (National Careers Service, online). The service lists a number of areas that employers value during recruitment including 'communication skills, leadership skills, positivity skills, flexibility skills, and problem-solving skills'. The demand for soft skills is congruent with Webb and McQuaid (2020) who concluded employers felt that they were lacking in childcare applicants. It would be fair to assume these were predominantly women, which conflicts with overall discourses on women's connectedness to soft skills (see for example Tan *et al.*, 2018; Calanca *et al.*, 2019). Not all soft skills are valued equally, with higher values equated with male-dominated occupations such as competitiveness or leadership skills in corporate professions (Calanca *et al.*, 2019).

Calanca *et al.* (2019) demonstrates how soft skills adopted as everyday discourse appear to be marketed through gendered wording in advertisements for social workers and teachers, professions both which are female dominated as seen in the below table.

Social work	Teaching
Team player.	Enthusiastic
Ability to work with children.	Creative
Positive	Positive
Flexible	Leadership
Leadership	Confident
Patience	Hard working
People Skills.	Innovative

Table 3.3 Keywords in advertisements for caring professions (Calanca *et al.*, 2009:4)

The emphasis in the advertisements reflects the importance placed on 'essential' skills such as 'people' skills, for example, team playing along with patience and creativity. These are characteristic to caring professions and marketed as soft skills aimed to attract certain demographics of the population into gendered professions. Using the job search-engine *Indeed*, a glance through various advertisements for the soft skills perceived as essential requirements for childcare professions included:

Childcare
Passion for working with children and young people.
Ability to work in a challenging environment.
Ability to adapt to change.
Display creativity and imagination
Enthusiastic and can-do attitude
Motivated and committed.
Caring approach

Table 3.4 'Indeed' Recruitment Advertisements October 2021

The soft skills highlighted for childcare positions are still in keeping with other arguably gendered professions such as social work and teaching. However, it is surprising that nearly all the childcare job advertisements contained terms on compliance rather than focussing on soft skills or normative personal characteristics perceived necessary in professional childcare. On scanning the multitude of childcare advertisements, I noted performativity discourses drawn from standardisation and desired criteria such as an understanding of GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2014), personal planning, ability to meet

pandemic health and safety requirements, and satisfy registration criteria as laid down by the SSSC registration body. Best recruitment practices for childcare as set by the SSSC (2017) do not mention compliance skills, rather they lay down a set of expected behaviours and values that potential employees must exhibit which include 'respect, collaboration, participation and dignity and empowerment' (SSSC, 2017:2). This highlights a tension between expectations on which soft skills meet best practice criteria as set in attitudinal and personal traits, against the more measurable skills desired by employers to satisfy registration and compliance requirements.

It is notable that Gospel and Lewis (2011) state the government commitment to upskilling is based on perceived deficiencies, whilst Lloyd and Payne (2016:1) argue that we are in an 'age of over-qualification'. I argue the possibility or likelihood of being able to upskill qualities that are non-measurable such as care, nurture and the aspiration to make a difference in children's lives cannot be framed as deficiencies either. There are still questions in relation to recruitment and retention, for instance, determining who believes it is necessary to upskill and for what reasons? Which skills are really being upskilled? And when do practitioners believe that they are over-qualified for their positions and what should they do next? The studies from the literature reviewed demonstrate these are the conflicted and subjective questions that exist between employers, recruits and practitioners already employed in the field, about the best skills, qualifications or traits required to perform professional childcare. This conflict is reflected within job adverts that appear to recruit for soft skills but really require the workforce to be specialist, with a necessary degree of academic ability to complete both weighty administration tasks, quality assurance, and trauma-informed practice. Whilst there are key issues on skills-matching and how gendered positions are marketed, Osgood (2006) points to studies from the Equality Commission on post-education choices and the way young people are directed towards gendered careers within the job market or college, indicating that future ambitions and opportunities in some cases were misaligned with preferred identities. For instance, in the Equality Commission study, boys were less likely to choose options that were non-stereotypical for their gender than girls. This supports Osgood's (2006) own findings on how soft skills link to both gender and class assumptions.

Roberts (2019) argues that soft skills related to emotional attachments should be encouraged in order to widen opportunities for young men. Roberts (2019:58) highlights that some male teachers are committed to changing emotional school curricula for boys in an attempt to lessen the impacts of 'macho masculinity'. However, he also states that

whilst engaging on discussions about feelings with male students, the teachers do not do 'Oprah-Style tearful confessions'. This arguably genders emotions and legitimises discourses of masculinity that construct the conceptions that men hold back from engaging in conversations that might elicit strong emotional responses. Further, it could be argued, that this disassociation from emotive situations is akin to Foucault's (2001, see page 34) concept on self-care, where he advised men, specifically fathers, to detach from emotion, in order to perform self-care. I argue that dominant gendered discourses on emotions are so pervasive, that even where men want to facilitate change in emotional literacy and soft skills, they continue to use words and phrases that espouse a gender-divide, even unknowingly, because these discourses are so strongly woven into people's subjectivities. Haase (2008:597) argues that male primary teachers continue to 'reproduce patriarchal gender power differentials' because they follow political ideologies which present a normalised view of traditional masculinities. Francis (2002) argues that with the loss of traditional industrial manual labour jobs young men are being disadvantaged. This is because they are not equipped for the developing service sector professions requiring soft skills and leads to men becoming despondent about their employment futures. This suggests that curricula must be adapted further to address discursively constructed gender expectations constrain people's agency when choosing careers.

In summary, in this section I have argued that there are conflicting discourses at play in relation to the professional 'skills sets' and 'soft skills' that are required for the childcare sector. This has been demonstrated through gendered marketing for the profession itself and through selection processes in schools and careers services for caring employment.

3.8 Women, qualifications and part-time occupations

There is evidence to suggest the main reason why women enter professional care is not because they are unskilled, but because it allows them flexibility to provide some protective care for their children or undertake other caring responsibilities (Gillies, 2007). It is also argued that many women who chose part-time work, often 'down-skill' to achieve a family/work balance (Grant *et al.*, 2005). Grant *et al.* (2005) researched reasons why women take part-time low skilled employment, when their qualifications would allow them to take up higher paid and skilled posts. They also highlighted that part-time working is typical of life cycles and suits some women at moments in time. Their study (2005:41) found that 'of those interviewed, over half (51%) defined themselves as working below their potential in these terms', equating to '3.6 million part-time workers in Britain', who

believed that they have skills over and above those that they require for their current role. In addition, it emerged that employers were not aware of the qualifications and skill set that the employees held, as they were not particularly relevant to the role they now occupied. The responses were from women between the ages of 16- 54 and were broken down into 16-24 and 25-54, presumably to coincide with life chronologies and times where women are more likely to have caring responsibilities (Grant *et al.,* 2005). Hakim (2000) suggests there are also groups of women who have a 'home-centred' attitude to part-time work, where the nature of competitiveness associated with male-dominated full-time professions hold no interest, and personal aspirations and actions are more aligned with children and family life. Interestingly, Grant and colleagues (2005) found that 64% were neither looking to change their job from part time employment nor wanting to upskill through further qualifications. This figure was higher for part-time workers over the age of 25 and may account for the mature median age in OSC practitioners (SOSCN, 2018). Hakim (2004) points out, the invisibility of part-time workers because most are employed within traditional female-dominated professions, which in general are perceived as unskilled or low skilled. Further Hakim (2004) suggests that part-time workers who suffer from what she describes as a lack of identity more than their full-time equivalents, accepting the dominant discourses stressing the gender-appropriateness of professions constructed as female and arguably thus accepting a lower status.

Grant *et al.* (2004) argues there are other factors to explain why women may be drawn to less skilled part-time work. These, they suggest, include a lost confidence after exiting the workforce for maternity leave or to balance caring responsibilities; costs of childcare in order to return to full-time work; or an absence of higher-skilled work available for part-time hours. In some cases, there were misconceptions that women in part-time work do not contribute to household finances but are working to satisfy personal aspirations (Grant *et al.*, 2005). However, to dispel that assumption it should be noted that in families with typical caring responsibilities, 38% of children in Scotland are from single-parent families and 23% of those with a person with disability within the household are near or below the poverty breadline (Poverty and Inequality Commission, online).

Employers had different concerns in recruiting part-time employees. One manager in the study expressed some employer concerns on recruiting part-time workers suggesting 'We're not going to get such a good field of candidates if we advertise for part-time' (Grant *et al.*, 2005:35). From my own personal experience of twenty-eight years in a childcare recruitment capacity, I have found that this is often the case. Pre-interviews have

been required to ensure candidates are best suited for the upskilling discourse that is required in OSC and to ensure candidates are aware of what is on offer, including pay terms and reduced availability of workable hours. Upskilling has been associated with the professionalisation of non-traditional occupations to raise quality and to fuel economic growth, but with professionalisation, skilled workers also have expectations on incentivised 'pay premiums' (Green, 2013). In addition, discourses that promote the gender-appropriateness of occupations, and the lesser value of 'female professions' supports a gendered pay inequity. This creates an alienation towards care labour that may be exacerbated through a continued professionalisation agenda (Cooke and Lawton, 2008). There is an obvious conflict in competitive markets between ensuring care applicants have the academic acumen necessary for a skilled workforce, but also are in acceptance of the low pay and status associated with caring professions. Leuze and Strauß (2016) suggest gendered part-time employment, automatically has a direct impact on lowering pay potential, known as the 'motherhood penalty'. Mother's earnings are lower than their male counterparts, and they are also expected to interrupt their careers to take on responsibility for their children, resulting in working practices that discriminate when returning mothers try to resume their careers (Budig *et al.*, 2012).

This section of the chapter has focussed on literature highlighting the mismatch between employers' understandings on the rationales for women entering childcare professions. As a result, employers may dismiss previous academic experience or employment, implying these may not be the desired right skills anticipated for their new childcare profession. I now move on to discuss how the right skills for childcare professions or arguably, *the good mother* are discursively constructed.

3.9 Framing the *right skills: The good mother discourse.*

The conflicting opinions on which gender is the most suitable or has the right skills to perform good caring are more far reaching than arguments based on purely the biological sex of a person. Therefore, this study considers constructions that blend or obfuscate the caring divide between private and public spaces. Xu (2020:26) argues that children perceive 'women's and men's social identities are closely bonded with their gendered bodies' and further that children in Scotland are socialised to believe that raising children is women's work.

In addition to how childcare labour is divided, perceptions also exist on what constitutes 'good parenting', discourses that are perpetuated through social reproduction practices

passed down over many generations (Paechter, 1998). This knowledge dwells in informal settings, such as, the home as well as institutionally through school, and beyond into professional practice. McDowell (2008) argues that contemporary constructions of the *good mother,* in poststructuralist terms *the good mother discourse*, place expectations on not only balancing work and financial responsibilities, but also ensuring appropriate childcare is in place. McDowell (2008) also highlights that a moral duty to provide financially for the family, in addition to ensuring appropriate care for children, are framed as prerequisites of good mothering, regardless of family background. She suggests that single mothers from working-class backgrounds, experience this pressure more than any other demographic. Working-class single mothers are thus more likely than others to be forced into low paid, part-time work to minimally satisfy both demands (McDowell, 2008).

Silva (1996) argues for a temporal relationship to social constructions of caring, often built on the perceived type of caring that women are required to provide as society changes. An example would be, the contemporary concept of 'sandwich carers', carers who are predominantly women, and who are required to split their time caring for both children and elderly parents or disabled relatives sandwiched around working hours (Carers UK, 2012). Lewis and Simpson (2007) consider that the caring role, no matter the type, falls to women because of the assumed 'emotional' nature of women. This in turn legitimises the discourse that the right skills for caring are considered to be feminine and not masculine 'traits'. Masculine 'traits' are generally constructed to be rational and logic skills. However, this assumes that all women are empathetic or caring and are all men rational and logical in all cases. In contrast, Lewis and Simpson (2007) state that with the emergence of 'emotional intelligence' in leadership discourses, emotions are being masculinised and adopted into successful performance and accountability behaviours in people management skills within organisations. This gendered perspective on the reconstruction of emotion appears to widen the discursively constructed dichotomy of biological sex rather than normalise emotion as non-gendered skill. Lewis and Simpson (2007) also suggest that the stigma of emotions in feminised professions, has been subsumed by a masculine persona, reflected in changes to care regulations, which now place an emphasis on compliance, standards, and performance.

There are other contexts that also frame the *right skills,* intersected with the discourse of *the good mother*. Discourses of what constitutes *good parenting* are complex and as Osgood (2005) notes are both classed and gendered. I will argue that age factors and intergenerational relationships should be included when considering how discourses of

good parenting are constructed. *Good parenting*, which is often implicitly conflated with *good mothering*, is often used as an opportunity to prescribe treatments, or subjugate women. An example would be parenting classes that are designed to ensure that childrearing practices, that do not satisfy expected norms, are discouraged, minimised, or reversed. Jensen (2018) concludes that some mothering practices are viewed and legitimised above others, and expectations of normalised parenting cannot be underestimated as they contribute to both feelings of self-worth and value when recognised and acknowledged by others. Further, practices that are legitimised often offer a Western perspective on caring and do not reflect the discourses of *good mothering* most common within minority families (Souto-Manning and Rabadi-Raol, 2018). Jensen (2008) reports that the process of re-educating parents to be *good*, starts early in child's life from maternal care through to the work of early years practitioners, but it is likely this education is highly Westernised. The pressure is on childcare practitioners to be childhood practice experts, but when they are also parents themselves, conflicts are manifold. They are expected to balance professional childcare employment with parenting and home responsibilities. and in addition must satisfy SSSC registration demands to become students (Osgood, 2012).

Gillies (2006) asked women from working-class backgrounds about their perceptions on the division of domestic labour. Fathers in the study were also interviewed, but they highlighted that childcare was the mother's domain, in line with dominant gendered discourses on mothering responsibilities. The working-class mothers expressed their own self-worth was met through providing their children with strong emotional values and stability, which would stand them in good stead for future challenges (Gillies, 2006). Class is a social construction and based on several intertwining complex factors involving professional status, qualifications, and lifestyles (Vincent and Ball, 2006). Further Vincent and Ball (2006) suggest that the concept of class is often likened to a sliding scale, with occupational access to professions at one end, being extended downwards to occupations such as childcare, that are historically framed as not requiring a higher education. Lifestyles are changing and those that strive to be upwardly-mobile have realigned parental aspirations for children and the future, which can conflict with their own working-class upbringing and values (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Mothers, in Gillies' (2006) study, stated a belief that their children's poor school performances were judged as a reflection of their own parenting skills, seeing it as their responsibility to ensure their children succeed. Gilles (2006) also stated this was because the working-class women in the study felt detached from education based on their own past

experiences. Taking on the onus to educate their failing children is deemed protective care, known as gatekeeping, to safeguard their children from their own perceptions and experiences of an inequitable state system. Further, this protection extends to gatekeeping over children's relationships with fathers (Gillies, 2006). Doucet (2006) notes maternal gatekeeping includes three possible behaviours in which mothers' can inhibit or limit a father's ability to be comprehensively included in their child's care. These gatekeeping activities are described as including setting a set of standards that fathers appear unable to meet. Secondly mothers' discussions or texts such as those found in parenting magazines or social media platforms, narrate dominant discourses on mothering subjectivities that precludes fathers. Lastly, gender differentiation which includes aspects of emotions and nurturing discourses, are based on perceived biological sex differences (Doucet, 2006). Gaunt (2008) suggests maternal gatekeeping is instilled by values learned over time and are not intentional, because they are patterns of behaviour that have been embedded through historically gender-assigned responsibilities. These patterns form a resistance, because women have been granted power within the home, and by denying men the opportunity to take childcare responsibilities in private, they retain that power (Gaunt, 2008).

Gillies' further work (2008) suggests that working-class mothers are more likely to undertake learning support in the home to nurture their children outside of the public gaze. In this way, the benefits and amount of work they do with their children is concealed. This type of support is often discursively conceptualised as behaviour requiring government intervention. Usually, mothers are constructed as requiring additional training in parenting skills to provide better outcomes for their children (Gillies, 2008). Jensen (2018) terms this the parent-blame culture which stigmatises parents, predominantly lone-parent women, for children's poorer outcomes in life.

Although career aspirations might lead to higher pay and more favourable personal circumstances, they are dependent on practitioners obtaining a higher academic qualification in childhood practice (SSSC, 2015). Feminists, such as Moreau (2019) and Tsouroufli (2020), argue that academia is gendered and favours men, as there is an expectation that students have the time to commit to studies without other distractions. She suggests that this is where the 'superwoman' myth arises from; women who seem to be able to juggle everything, putting other struggling mothers to shame. Tsouroufli's (2020) study discussed barriers to career advancement which included how balancing gendered

expectations in women's personal lives had conflicted with their desires and aspirations in their professional lives.

Feelings of lack of self-worth, lack of value and self-recrimination are not only limited to parents. O'Grady (2004) suggests that women often take an apologetic stance or even remain silenced when they cannot meet the demands set by society, or even from their own families to manage expected caring responsibilities. I have experienced this myself, as a grandparent, and there are similar 'confessions' on social media platforms such as Gransnet (Higgs, 2012) of grandparents struggling to meet expectations put on them to continue with childcaring responsibilities. I know many friends who also care for grandchildren to enable their adult children to work, and some experience guilt that they cannot do more. I also work full-time in a care profession, and I am an adult carer to one of my children, often feeling the strain of that 'sandwiched' responsibility (Carers UK, 2012). Bartky (1990) notes that I am not alone in these feelings, as guilt and shame are gender-related rather than gender-specific. Shame can manifest itself in feelings of inadequacy and a sense of a diminished self, particularly when they contest a person's deeply held values and sense of moral conscience (Bartky, 1990). Ultimately this influences both physical wellbeing and mental health, especially on those in their later years, trying to meet caring at all ends of the spectrum (Centre for Policy on Aging [CPA], 2015).

Research on the caring experiences of grandparents is often limited to census data or other government statistics. British Social Attitudes surveys (Bryson *et al*., 2012) estimated that around two-thirds of grandparents were involved in some aspects of their grandchild's care, which ranged from less than five hours per week to up to 35 hours per week, around the same hours as is expected in full-time employment. A survey of 209 grandparents in Australia (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020) states grandmothers believe they have moral obligations to provide care for their grandchildren, often as the secondary primary carer rather than fathers, when someone is required to support childcare responsibilities in the family (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020). Further they argue that grandmothers support their adult children as part of passed-down knowledge and family truths, navigating the complexities and feelings of guilt that emerge from trying to balance mothering experiences with their own workplace demands (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020). As grandmothers offer a level of care that is similar to the parent, this is described as 'extended maternal care' (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020:1654). The study found the rationales for mothers choosing grandparents for care were mainly practical reasons such as financial burdens of childcare or grandparents wishing to spend more time with their

grandchildren. Follow-up focus groups with grandparents helped to extrapolate some of the data further, indicating that grandparents in the study believed that continued support to their adult children was an example of *good parenting* skills. Hamilton and Suthersan (2020) highlight that grandparent's views on their caring activities were based on 'normative judgements about the appropriate role of parents and grandparents' and 'notions of good and appropriate care for grandchildren' rather than paid-for-care (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020:1660). The study highlighted the conflict between family histories of traditional involvement in generational care against the changing socio-economic status of grandparents today in having to work longer for pension entitlements. Whilst there were discussions on the demanding nature of child-rearing today, grandparents felt it was easier for them to work variable patterns of employment to accommodate childcare needs, sacrificing their own needs for their child's and this also factored in early retirement decisions. There was an awareness from grandparents that taking up the childcare responsibilities, compromised them at work and affected both their commitment and attitude to employment creating circles of guilt. In some cases, grandmothers reported being left exhausted between balancing work and childcare responsibilities (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020).

In summary, in this last section, I have reviewed literature that considers knowledge and expected skills for care and the discursively constructed ideal of the *good parent* which extends intergenerationally. The discursive construction of *right skills* is framed within a wider discourse on *good parenting* with such knowledge shared and perpetuated between generations, influencing conceptions that care is a mother's responsibility, and by extension, a grandmothers. Both Osgood (2005) and Gillies (2007) argue there is a dominant assumption that key recruits to care employment are predominantly women from working-class backgrounds. Subsequently, there is a framed route to professional childcare, which is normalised based on both gender and lower academic ability (determined through standardised testing at school) (Osgood, 2006). Post-education this route is framed through constraints to child-rearing and expectations for employability based on part-time needs. It is also assumed that women have the *right skills* for caring often discursively framed as soft skills such as empathy, a passion for working with children and being creative (see Calanca *et al.*, 2009). Webb and McQuaid (2020), however, found employers felt that care recruits did not display the appropriate soft skills such as social and emotional skills, expected from those seeking to enter care professions. The *right skills* also extended into generational care and the pressures on grandparents both

within their own working environments and in feelings of guilt in relation to supporting care responsibilities for grandchildren (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2020).

In the next part of chapter three, I consider literature that present men's recruitment into childcare and gendered constructions associated with masculinity.

3.10 Recruitment: Men, masculinities and caring professions

As highlighted previously in chapter 2.12, men are *othered* in childcare settings due to under-representation in the workforce. Whilst there is political rhetoric in increasing the numbers of men in childcare (Rohrmann and Brody, 2015), the reasons why men may be marginalized in professional childcare are manifold. Gendered discourses on childcare constructs women as *natural carers*, and by implication, men as *unnatural.* This societal attitude has led to suspicions as to why men may want to enter the childcare field (Eidevald *et al.*, 2018), with Tennhoff *et al.* (2015) suggesting there is a discourse that 'men represent danger'. Research in Sweden by Hedlin and colleagues (2019:95) argues that whilst there are drives to recruit more men into the profession, the dominant gendered rhetoric presents a tension for men already in the profession, who are often seen as either the 'fun guy' or having the potential to be a 'perpetrator' of abuse. Men interviewed by Hedlin *et al.* (2019), expressed their own concerns, where caution had to be exercised with some of the necessary professional duties such as intimate care or physical contact. In another set of interviews, male practitioners in Eidevald *et al.* (2018) felt that withholding from these caring duties, both questioned and limited their professionalism because they were not able to perform all that was equally expected from female practitioners.

Men also felt that they had to perform according to dominant or hegemonic masculinities, feeling they were expected to behave like 'real men' (Hedlin *et al.*, 2019:97). Warin (2019) argues that the discourse for men to behave in traditional ways maintains the gender-binary divide. In Nickson *et al.*, (2008) female practitioners reflected the discourse on *real work* suitable for men was based on normative professions that exhibit manly or masculine qualities such as those requiring physical or business prowess. In addition, their participants believed that men's work should have financial rewards that would allow them to be the main provider for their families. Life history research with male ELC practitioners working in England (Jones and Aubrey, 2019) found that men considered that there was a 'hegemonic femininity' in early childhood settings, which acted as a gender-barrier for men, because they only offered opportunities to perform gender stereotypical activities. These masculine stereotypical activities are desired in childhood settings as part

of a dominant ‘male role model’ discourse, framing a rhetoric on absent fathers and boys who require a supportive male in their lives to guide them (Robb, 2019).

Hedlin *et al.* (2019) and Rohrmann *et al.*, (2021) both suggest that the discourses of men as potential paedophile threats lead to a mistrust in men, constructed through an accumulation of associations based on normative gendered performances, and that working in childcare runs contrary to masculine ways of being. The ‘fun guy’ image comes from a masculine position based on men liking outdoor pursuits, technology and sport (Hedlin *et al.*, 2019). However, men enacting fun interactions with children such as sports and physical contact play such as tig games, may also be associated by women practitioners with the gendered conception of *rough-and-tumble* play, which leads to perceptions of *boisterous* play being aggressive (Storli and Sandseter, 2017). This *fun* image also runs contrary to dominant discourses of masculinity, which are often associated in fatherhood with disciplinary practices (Xu *et al.*, 2022). However, Storli and Sandseter (2017) also noted in their study that some women practitioners changed their perceptions of rough-and-tumble play through collaborative practice with male practitioners in their setting, viewing it as a method to channel aggressive behaviours more appropriately.

In addition to the discursive framing of men as a potential threat, there was a further tension in research about whether men possessed the essential competence or *right skills for* professional childcare (Sczesny *et al.*, 2022). Sczesny and colleagues (2022) stated from their own research, men often face discrimination when their skills for the profession are evaluated, with competency being constructed through normative mothering characterisations such as being emotional responsive and nurturing towards children. In discussing the ‘right skills’ discourse in 3.9, I highlighted this was aligned to good parenting and that raising children was in the main framed as women’s work. Men in Childcare is an organisation which actively recruits and trains men for childcare employment. On the home page of their website (MIC, online) is a newspaper article citing the Scottish education secretary promoting childcare careers for men, stating the government want a ‘wider group of people with the *right skills’*. By posting the advertisement so prominently on their page suggests men in the profession do believe that they have the *right skills*

3.11 Power, conflict, performativity and outcomes

Dynamics of power pervade both private and public spaces of life, sometimes in either uncontested or unanticipated ways. Raising a family or child, often brings parents into

contact with other parents, in shared spaces such as the school front gate. This is often an opportunity for social networking, but also a prime site where the parenting of others can be observed and critiqued (Ekinsmyth, 2013). Parents may unthinkingly compare themselves to a set of discursively constructed parental standards and expectations that are often self-regulating (Henderson *et al.*, 2010). This surveillance has now arguably transposed to social media platforms such as 'Netmums' where parents can critique both themselves and others. Aarsand (2015) argues there is almost an acceptance of *deviancy*, behaviours that do not conform, on these sites, and what appears next are requests for help to modify perceived substandard parenting skills into line with discursive norms. This is the power of performativity and is a means to judge, compare and self-discipline ways of being that differ from perceived norms (Ball, 2003). I argue that these observations on modifying behaviour also transfer over care barriers from private to professional and public spaces. This is because, although parenting practices vary from culture to culture, normalised views of parenting are often legitimised through education and state polices (Millum, 2018). However, this does not necessarily mean that all parenting practices legitimised by the state or parents themselves are equitable. Parents are under constant pressure to meet performative standards with their children to ensure they display good parenting skills and to demonstrate responsibility for their child's future potential (Vincent and Maxwell, 2016).

Parenting programmes in Scotland were established to provide parents with examples of 'good enough parenting' and how to develop future 'parent capacity', with behavioural strategies aimed at developing positive attachments (Furnivall *et al.*, 2012:60). 'Good enough parenting' is reflected in the normalisation of standards where parents are only perceived as experts if or when their child reaches government set targets or milestones (Lawler, 2000). However, expectations on parents are inequitable for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly single mothers, and those from working-class backgrounds (Lawler, 2000). Vincent (2012) indicates that working-class lone parents are the main targets of government policy as a way to address perceived deficits in parenting ability. However, trends affecting targets for parenting practices, which are often inspired by academic or institutional research, can foster inequality, and set precedents for dominant discourses on what *good parenting* should look like. For instance, an *avoidance parenting approach* has been recognised as a trend prevalent in recent years, but particularly in households where abusive behaviours are to be found (Sinclair and Baillie, 2018). This avoidance approach has negative outcomes for children because parents miss

caring cues that their infants need in order to develop attachments that promote resilience in later life (Sinclair and Baillie, 2018). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) is a set of markers used to determine whether adults are more likely to experience attachment difficulties, in addition to physical and mental health conditions in later life from experiences within the home (Furnivall *et al.*, 2012). I argue this study is relevant to employment in the childcare profession because ACE experiences are being used as indicators to predict 'care giver characteristics' (Furnivall *et al.*, 2012:14). This is concerning because many caregivers often come into professional childcare through experience of negative as well as positive life outcomes and there is the potential that they could be discriminated against as future professional care workers. A recent study with ELC practitioners (Hubel e*t al.*, 2020) indicated that 73% of the sample group self-reported that they had experienced ACEs in their home lives, in fact the number represented a greater average than the general population. The study found that those who had experienced ACE's may also be susceptible to greater levels of stress, although the circumstances were not related to the overall ACE score, but the nature of the experience that had occurred in the past (Hubel *et al.*, 2020).

Recent policies which underpin childcare standards, indicate that parents are not currently perceived to have exactly the *right skills* required to ensure the best outcomes for their children (Scottish Government, 2012). In fact, it would appear parents are required to learn strategies from competent others 'to build the knowledge and skills they need to care for their child' (Scottish Government, 2012:25). Due to these concerns on child wellbeing in the earliest years of development, the Scottish Government aims to ensure that children have access to ELC centres, to ameliorate some of the effects of parenting deficits. In doing so they have been accused of running the risk of making Scotland a 'nanny state' (Sinclair and Baillie, 2018:176). These plans include, as noted previously, the expansion and funding of ELC centres and the recruitment of thousands of staff to meet the increase in places (Scottish Government, 2017a). There are questions over how the right people with the *right skills* will be found for the childcare workforce, as it likely they are the very parents that are being targeted as part of the subjectification of parenting and care.

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2016) is another early intervention approach to support families at times of difficulty. It is primarily aimed at protecting children deemed most at risk, yet every child has a GIRFEC plan to support them regardless of actual or potential risk. This suggests that governments require a trained body of professionals to act as a surveillance army, as every child is potentially at risk and

may at any time require measures to support them. From 28 years' experience in the childcare profession, I have found that when supporting parents, in the care of their children, there is sometimes a perceived fear of authorities and intervention in their child's life. I have also experienced how working parents view the recording and measuring of every detail of a child's life under the guise of securing their holistic wellbeing, as nothing but an intrusion on their private lives. Freshwater *et al.* (2015:3) highlight that 'the yardstick for measuring *good practice* has often become more closely aligned with compliance', which encompasses that recording and measuring.

Osgood undertook studies in the English ELC sector, between 2003 and 2008, aimed at deconstructing perceptions of professional practice, specifically in the ELC sector (see Osgood, 2005, 2006, 2012). These studies consider the views of ELC practitioners in relation to the professionalisation of care, continuous professional development, and the requirement to engage in reflective practice (Osgood, 2005, 2006). Cole (2011) argues that reflection, whilst a form of confessional practice, can also be considered a form of self-care due to resulting personal and professional growth. Ball (2003) and Osgood (2012) however view reflective practice as located in powers of performativity, rationality, and accountability. It is a surveillance imposed by state regulations but monitored by the self, which they believe can lead to lasting emotional damage. Osgood (2006) reports on both the pressure and injustice experienced by practitioners who must constantly comply with government discourses, which are ever-changing. In my own setting, practitioners reported that workloads attached to performativity had increased dramatically since the start of what is known as a professionalisation agenda. The practitioners interviewed by Osgood (2006), reported that additional administration included direct child evaluations, surveys, and other recording devices in order to evidence quality performance. The practitioners were aware that inspections only recorded a snapshot of actual childcare activity, and that in some cases practitioners created a performance of quality that supported government initiatives for that period to create positive grades (Osgood, 2006). Practitioners also discussed feelings of disempowerment: minimised voices against government set objectives. Osgood (2006) concluded that expected standards and performance were based on evidence of practitioner rationality and accountability, perceived patriarchal symbols of professionalism. There did not seem to be a place for best practice derived from 'affectivity, altruism, self-sacrifice, and conscientiousness' (Osgood, 2006:126), skills that the practitioners believed were key to effective performance. Osgood (2010a:121) argues that professionalism is a social construct embedded within government discourses; these

she states ‘silence alternative debates’ of what constitutes professionalism in childcare services. Practitioners follow these set directives without question through a coercive state power, based on quality and performativity (Osgood, 2010). I argue from experience, that grades from regulating officials against standards in competitive markets can mean the difference between survival and security of employment. The individual subjectivity of inspectors on interpretations of both the standards and the *right skills* on display, can be perceived as both a disciplinary and threatening power. Many have argued that the commercialisation of childcare markets, and particularly industries that rely on women’s labour, has had the biggest impact on legitimising the skills and performances necessary to providing quality care (Osgood, 2012). Payler and Locke (2013) also found that practitioners believed that an increase in qualifications was a direct result of the professionalisation of the sector, and implied that despite many years practicing in the field, they were now viewed as inadequate, and lacked the ability to provide quality care without upskilling. The experienced practitioners also spoke about a disconnect they felt from newly qualified practitioners, who on attaining a degree in a totally unrelated subject, were only required to complete a postgraduate qualification over the course of one year (Payler and Locke, 2013). This meant there was no real ‘mastery’ of childcare experience gained from working their time on the floor in a practical environment. They also believed that skills attained through academic study were not considered a substitute for practical experience (Payler and Locke, 2013). The way the practitioners had historically constructed their own professional subjectivities included being proficient in both practical skills and knowledge before achieving academic competency. This also might explain the Webb and McQuaid (2020) findings where there was a perceived skills mismatch between what employers wanted from their practitioners, which included academic aspects of leadership and business skills, in place of the practical skills practitioners valued in offering compassion, care and empathy.

In this section, I have outlined dynamics of power in both observations on parenting and performativity and the perceptions of *right skills* which are now grounded in achieving qualifications. Discourses on performativity have been argued as a disciplining power and a State means to revise parental deficits, in particularly deficits perceived to be held by working-class, single mothers. I now highlight policies or *grey literature*, which offers a further perspective on normalised discourses of the gendering of care and the *right skills* to perform it.

3.12 Grey Literature: Policy and discourses on practice

Following Tronto (1996), Osgood (2010a) and Bacchi (2017) many feminists consider that government policies normalise biases towards what constitutes *the right skill* for childcaring. From a Foucauldian perspective, governments declare a right to intervene with measures they deem appropriate to address the essential needs that the body requires to exist as a human, termed Biopower (Cruickshanks, 1999). This analysis of grey literature - policies, government directives and reviews on OSC - aims to deconstruct where normalised language contributes to the gendering of childcare (see Scottish Government, 2003; Scottish Government, 2014; Siraj, 2015).

Recently, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) published a report (SSSC 2021a) on the government promise to ensure a better future for 'looked after children'; children brought up outside the family home. The documents stated three specific outcomes to meet this promise, one of which was to ensure that regulated staff were 'fit to practice' and were maintaining high standards. Where registered workers were not adhering to standards, the SSSC would initiate investigations and hearings (SSSC, 2021a:8), which could result in loss of employment. It could be perceived that there is an implied threat contained within the discourse of the report (SSSC, 2021a) to ensure you are 'fit for practice' or face disciplinary action. Further, Ball (2017) citing Butler (2005), argues that ensuring compliance and performativity can act as a form of violence to the self, in fear of not meeting set standards.

The earliest review of OSC in Scotland (Scottish Government, 1998) presented a draft framework with cohesive guidance to support work and family responsibilities as part of a long-term strategy to professionalise OSC. The 1998 document acknowledged that childcare support was aimed at women with childcare responsibilities who would use services, in addition to being a potential recruitment pool. This recognised the burden, primarily on women, to balance work and child commitments. By mentioning that the policy was specifically aimed at women, the document normalises the gender-divide responsibilities in balancing children with work. At this point in time, it was noted that many of the childcare settings were neither regulated nor were its workers qualified, and there was a discursive emphasis on 'competent' childcare workers with the 'right calibre' (Scottish Government, 1998:12). These were subtle directions to what constituted appropriate childcare, not only aimed at prospective childcare professionals but also parents, for instance, OSC settings should have 'quiet places for homework - as parents

themselves want to offer at home' (Scottish Government, 1998:14), blurring the boundaries between private and public spaces. Recruits were noted as best selected from parents who already have acquired skills through raising children (Scottish Government, 1998:17). Interestingly the only specification for the 'right calibre' is that recruits can satisfy police checks (Scottish Government, 1998:17) framed by discourses on protection. The document, having proposed that parents are a suitable recruitment pool for childcare work also mobilised surveillance discourses, stating 'there is scope to assess their experience of parenting' (Scottish Government, 1998:18). This is arguably state power in Foucault's terms (1977) and an example of state disciplinary practice, because if you are unsuccessful at obtaining a qualification in childcare there is an underlying challenge to your parenting skills, which would require remedial action.

Comparing discourses between the first review (Scottish Government, 1998) and last review on the ELC workforce which includes OSC, which took place in 2015 (Siraj, 2015), the language does not overtly highlight the *right skills*, instead they are framed as 'suitable requirements', constructed through discourses of both standardisation and performativity. The 2015 document clearly states that the profession should move away from a reliance on 'commonsense and mothers' (Siraj, 2015:29), a complete change in direction. Whilst a recognition is noted around soft skills as a form of emotional intelligence, which are required to increase interactions and create positive relationships with stakeholders, with the discourses in the 2015 document move towards the valorisation of 'measurable skills' and a focus on upskilling, qualifications and regulations (Siraj, 2015). The updated discourses arguably only legitimise *good enough care* through professional assessment by experts trained to government assigned standards. This implies that those already recruited who may have entered the profession with skills derived through child-rearing are now in need of upskilling, because mothering practices no longer suffice in a professionalisation discourse. As the demographics of childcare professions are predominantly white, working-class women (Osgood, 2012, 2019), it could then also be argued these women are the ones who lack the relevant *right skills* to bridge poverty gaps that they might themselves have experienced. Siraj (2015) does however, challenge the perception that childcare is unskilled and highlights the lack of careers advice for young people in choosing qualifications that will reflect both the academic knowledge required for childcare and the complexity of skills to providing quality within regulated professions.

The latest government documents on recruitment and practice guidelines (SSSC, 2017) promote not only the desired behaviours for working in social-care regulated professions, but also the values both employers and practitioners should hold. Behaviours are a recent inclusion into *right skills* discourses that promote soft skills, and which are harder to evaluate in recruitment processes such as teamworking, honesty, and integrity. There is, however, a notable focus on how behaviours should reflect self-awareness and identifying self- development (SSSC, 2017). Not only do the guidelines list desirable behaviours, but also frames behaviours that do not meet expected standards within regulated codes of conduct. It advises employers of behaviours that should be sanctioned (SSSC, 2017). Through framing both desirable and undesirable behaviours, it clearly advertises the r*ight skills* implicit for the profession. It does not however, offer an opportunity to learn from mistakes as in reflective practice rhetoric, rather it already assumes the mistakes will be in recruiting people who do not have the right skills from the outset.

I agree with Tronto (1996) and Osgood (2010a, 2019), that framed within these government documents, of which there are many more, are dominant discourses that normalise the gendered nature of caring in regulated services. There is also a discursively constructed hidden motivation to improve parenting skills to be *good enough*. These discourses are often unchallenged and are followed implicitly to prove that services offer quality provision within powers of performativity. Whilst on one hand the documents may inspire practitioners to challenge their own limits and boundaries, they also can act as a barrier to recruitment and retention. The values within government documents, do not arguably reflect the emotional and human aspects that draw people into childcare, the satisfaction gained from wanting to make a difference in children's lives.

The last section of chapter three reviewed grey literature, government documents pertinent to areas that may illuminate the problems surrounding recruitment, retention, and career resilience within childcare professions. These reveal discourses on the *right skills* which perpetuate and legitimise the gendering of childcare professions, not only though government documents, policy, and regulations but also by the profession itself. The literature reviewed how class, gendered expectations, family responsibilities and educational opportunities constrain or conflict with the way we perform.

I have now reviewed literature that has supported a better understanding of discourses surrounding factors that may have a bearing on recruitment, retention and career resilience in childcare and other regulated services providing care. In the next chapter I discuss the

methods that I believe best suited to my own philosophical and research beliefs that I have presented in chapters two and three.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

'You get an 'ology, you're a scientist'.

(Beattie, British Telecom (BT) plc, online.

4.1 Introduction

In the late 1980's a British Telecom advert (B.T. plc, online) used a fictional grandparent boasting of her grandchild's academic achievements. Her grandchild had attained pottery and sociology and, in her view, any subject ending in 'ology' had an inflated career potential value. Whilst the advert was humorous it also highlighted past arguments on what was perceived to be legitimate sciences and what was considered a valuable future career aspiration. The words ontology and epistemology are used to consider the way in which a researcher conveys of 'truths', and the nature of the word, and the way the researcher conveys knowledge production respectively (Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002). The use of such 'ology' words can convey a perception that such research is 'scientific'. However, feminists such as Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) and Wigginton and LaFrance (2019) strongly advocate that feminist research should consider all methodological perspectives that bring clarity and agency to everyday life experiences in all their diversity- including approaches that are not considered sufficiently scientific (see below). Consequently, feminists such as Fuentes and Cookson (2020:881) criticise contemporary governments who favour research that is 'evidence-based', an association with the collation of objective evidence in the natural sciences. They argue that this creates a 'gender-data gap'. The use of statistics and data to prove economic outcomes is indicative of quantitative research that is perceived to be 'objective' and associated with studies that are more usually focused on 'male interests' – an approach known as 'malestreaming' (Oakley, 1998:707). Qualitative research has been considered less 'authentic' due to its subjective interpretative nature and in contrast, tends to sit more comfortably with feminist research (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002) for reasons I will outline below. Qualitative research allows the researcher to think and write about experiences outside the data-sets and is not limited to the boundaries required in quantitative research (Bennett, 2021). For many feminists including myself, authenticity is in the interpretation of 'lived lives' which provides deeper understandings on how to challenge dominant discourses that endeavour to make people's experiences appear universal (De Nooijer, and Cueva, 2022).

In the qualitative study that is the focus of this dissertation, five practitioners from the OSC profession took part, all of whom self-identified as women. The practitioners responded to requests to take part in the study through advertisements on my own social and professional networks and through SOSCN, a lobbying organisation supporting OSC. The practitioners were chosen by 'convenience sampling' (Leavy and Harris, 2019), those situated in a proximity to my location, due to disruptive winter weather. This approach was taken because OSC workers are in some ways a hard-to-reach group. A non-statutory body, they are not usually associated into a large group representation as may be found with organisations that work in more formalised structures such as in the public sector, and therefore streamlined effort may be needed in the recruitment process to reach this group.

In brief, the study used a narrative approach through reflexive interviews with a visual biographical tool, which would then be analysed through Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). The focus of the FDA was to explore discourses of gender and care drawn on by the practitioners as they discussed their experiences of care in both private and public spaces of life.

Narratives are subjective, recording in this case the thoughts and experiences of childcare practitioners through their own words (Goodson, 2009). Whilst some events may appear universal, each person's own experiences are unique to them, and when placing any interpretation for research it is important to value what information been disclosed through the narration process (Mitchell and Irvine, 2008).

As the researcher, I interpreted how those narrations were presented in this study, and I also have an ethical responsibility to ensure integrity of the details divulged to me whilst I apply my interpretation of the events being recalled. This is because on a more intimate level this study can be likened to the confessional, with the researcher hearing the confession (Fejes and Dahlstedt, 2013) on as much or as little that the practitioners wish to reveal. Practitioner research can make the researcher appear relatable to the participants, but whilst experiences may align, values may not be congruent with the researchers' own beliefs, and as a result the researcher may experience conflict (Arber, 2006; Mitchell and Irvine, 2008). Disclosure through confession or reflections is both personal and potentially emotional for both researcher and participant (Mitchell and Irvine, 2008) and I argue researchers also run the risk of becoming the subject that requires intervention, as there is a potential for harm.

4.2 Framing philosophical approaches to research.

I personally found defining the research study the hardest aspect to navigate, as it represents in my mind that 'ology' mentioned in the epigraph to this chapter, and as such represented scientific notions that invoked memories of the struggle I had with science as a secondary student. Even in adulthood, as a practitioner, I am better at verbalising my practice or more importantly demonstrating my knowledge through actions which others can follow. In my opinion, government documents always seem versed in statistics, tables and proving data that to me, often makes them incomprehensible. Initially I considered that talking to people and then offering their views and my interpretations seemed less academic and perhaps fuelled the 'imposter syndrome' that has troubled me through this study. Long *et al.* (2000) state these feelings for working-class women like me, engaged in academic research are not unusual, as discourses present low expectations of higher education that disempower from the outset.

In contemplating the methodological part of the study, the research onion framework (Saunders *et al.*, 2016) acted as a visual cue to enable me to deconstruct each layer into a research strategy. The subjectivist ontology for this study suggests research does not produce a single truth but multitudes, as is the case adopting a poststructural approach. Significant to my methodology and following Lather (2009), feminist research on methods steeped in empathy inspired my choices, as emotional contexts resonate with both my own care background and that of my participants. I now present the methodology that is in keeping with this study.

In general, researchers are asked to consider two main methodological approaches, quantitative and qualitative (Grant and Giddings, 2002). A quantitative methodological approach is usually underpinned by a philosophy of knowledge - or epistemology – connected to positivism, a philosophy that states that knowledge can be created objectively, and is measurable (Largan and Morris, 2019). Positivists argue that if conducted correctly, research will be 'value-free' and 'independent of human influence' (2019:61). In contrast, qualitative research is often associated with an underlying epistemological philosophy of interpretivism. Interpretivism is a philosophical perspective that considers it impossible to uncover objective knowledge, as all knowledge is subjective, derived from the various interpretations that individual people draw on to make meaning in their lives (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

These differing perspectives have often been viewed as distinct, separable research 'paradigms'. However, from a poststructural perspective this traditional notion of paradigms does not sit comfortably with studies that challenges all knowledge and truths (St. Pierre, 2019). I therefore position my poststructural study very loosely within a broad interpretivist approach, noting the caveat as above.

Interpretive inquiry can use a variety of methodologies depending on the guiding philosophies or truths of the researcher at any given time. There must be a fluidity of approach because the researcher may change their position, over time, as to the most suitable inquiry method that upholds their own underlying philosophy (St, Pierre, 2019). The interpretative stance within a feminist poststructural inquiry can still inspire a call to action as 'real-time' research because it positions the views of personal experiences in the context to the world at the time and connects to surrounding issues on how gender is positioned in discourses (Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002).

As well as an epistemological positioning, the researcher's position on the nature of 'truth', or ontology plays an important part in the framing of research questions (Krauss, 2005). In quantitative research, the aim is generally to provide a series of objective results that can be replicated in a detached, objective manner for the results to be free from contamination (Krauss, 2005). This lies in contrast to a social constructionist ontological approach to data, which is that all data is subjective and free to various interpretations. Poststructuralists are concerned with uncovering truths in their multiplicities, deconstructing how truths are known or assimilated. Poststructural research methods will therefore reflect those that question or illuminates truths which are subjective, and as such qualitative approaches lend themselves to authenticating this type of research (Mazzei and Jackson, 2009). Narratives on 'insider' perspectives are in keeping with feminist studies that seek to understand issues that 'other' women within the spaces they occupy (Leavy and Harris, 2019). This perspective also drives the way data will be collected. The data exhibits subjective truths at any given point in time. This is due to the nature of emotions which might emerge and change through research collection periods as participants engage with the data and respond to it accordingly (Darra, 2008).

4.3 Feminist methodologies and methods

Feminist methodologies may appear to have similar core values, but there is no one method that defines it, because there are many differing feminist assumptions on life and its diversity (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002; Hogan, 2012). In general, feminist

methodologies look to counter or make visible dominant discourses on gendered ways of being and the powers that shape it (Dupuis *et al.*, 2022). The methods used in feminist research often seek to make the experiences and the views of marginalised people more widely known, including gendered and intersectional positions (Harding and Norberg, 2005). Interpretative methods are employed to explore how knowledge is validated and reproduced through the reflections of lived stories (Landman, 2006). Leavy and Harris (2019) and other feminists argue that reciprocity is an important element of feminist research. They state that building rapport in interviews plays a factor on the depth of material that may emerge during interviews, particularly with insider research where the researcher will have some commonalities with the participants. However, some feminists also critique the performances that are required in building rapport in what may be a one-off interview (Twaites, 2017). Twaites (2017) suggests that it may be necessary for a researcher to hide a self that does not agree with a participant's views, to maintain a relationship that ultimately acquires the necessary data for the study. In agreement with Dieterle (2021) as a researcher I struggled with the choices of how to present the best selection of data to support my study, particularly where beliefs did not reflect my own, and without breaching some of the confidentiality of what had been narrated to me. Reciprocity in research considers that whilst the aim is to provide a space for the participants to narrate their lived experiences, it is countered with researchers wanting to present the best account of what has been narrated. As such there are aspects of unequal power that should be acknowledged. Leavy and Harris (2019:152) suggest researchers must aim for 'good enough reciprocity' through providing a platform for the participants to voice their concerns, whilst presenting their best version of data in the study, whilst not setting expectations of what will or will not be presented.

4.4 Biography, life history and narrative approaches

Whilst undertaking a master's degree, my supervisor once told me that she thought my writing reflected the style of a storyteller. On reflection, conversation and dialogue are part of my everyday work-life. A main part of my practitioner role involved leading others using relevant techniques to gain the best outcomes for the staff I supervised. I often adopt a leadership style called dialogic leadership which helps share values through conversations to build ethical organisational cultures (Neilson, 1990). It was important to my own philosophies that this study be as accessible as possible, even conversational, at times and following Nazaruk (2011:80) I have consciously endeavoured not to 'adopt a scientific meta-language'. I argue that the presentation of data in numerical or scientific

format minimises the emotional attachment to the subject matter under discussion (Carr, 2003). Mulvihill and Swaminathan (2017:1) argue 'qualitative researchers are storytellers'. Biographical, storied lives, autobiography and narrative inquiry approaches to research are described as 'relational research methodolog(ies)' (Caine *et al.*, 2013:578). Narrative approaches lend significance to the meaning of lives and experience, where the notion of multiple truths helps to try and represent people who are often marginalised in normative discourses (Osgood, 2010b). However, in verbalising our lived experiences to others, we become an object that can be 'calculated, assessed (and) scrutinised' (Fejes and Dahlstedt, 2013:6), as our confessions or inner most truths can be tallied against hegemonic assumptions and a positive or negative value placed on what may be our deepest and sometimes unguarded thoughts. Osgood (2010b) also reminds, in keeping with feminist methodology, that claims to participant equality in research must be treated cautiously. Reflections of the past, when re-storied can be distorted or misremembered, because we may blend varying memories together. They are, therefore, not necessarily a chronological recounting of exact experiences (Freeman, 2019). Caine *et al.* (2013:579) call this 'narrative coherence', where the story is pulled into a semblance of order to make the story flow. This coherence is subject to the researcher's interpretation as they endeavour to render meanings more visible (Mulvihill and Swaminathan, 2017). Freeman (2019:29) suggests that all 'knowledge is provisional' as various truths are uncovered through interpretations, a perspective that resonates with a poststructuralist temporal study. Stories, whether biographical or autobiographical are temporal in nature, because detail and significance emerge as memories progress from past to present time (Spreng and Levine, 2006). In some cases, perspectives change as we unveil some of the thoughts that lie hidden, which are only contemplated as we engage with others. Clough (2010) describes this type of dialogic communication as an opportunity to create knowledge, which we can use for a reimagined future, as we gain a better understanding of the ways in which we are part of a wider world, and our influence on those within it. Whilst in the flow of a conversation that is relaxed and engaging, many participants may not have the time to reflect-in-action (Schön, 2003) or consider the order or content of the interview. This is the durée moment where we are in an unconscious stream of action (Schütz, 1969) and more likely caught up in the moment, revealing aspects that were not necessarily intended to be discussed.

In this first part of chapter four, I have outlined in general the research process, including my chosen philosophical approach and methods best suited for engaging with the

participants. I will now discuss each part of the study in more detail, starting with the selection process of the participants and how the interviews were conducted. I have included short pen-portraits of each of the practitioners who took part in the study within the appendices with a short rationale for the information I selected to present their backgrounds, (appendix four).

4.5 The participants: Selection, sampling, and anonymity

An invitation to take part in the study was sent out through the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) to its membership. The SOSCN is the only Scottish organisation representing solely OSC settings. As I result, I considered there were also practitioners in the field that may not have SOSCN membership but were, however, part of my own professional networks. Therefore, they also received invitations through social media platforms to widen participation. A short guide of the study and its aims (appendix one) and specific selection criteria was included with the invitation. I had included the selection criteria because I was interested in those practitioners who had either achieved a graduate qualification or were contemplating it as part of their registration requirements. I also wanted practitioners who had entered the profession with no previous qualification in order that they could reflect the impacts from the professionalisation of OSC.

The study took place in a particularly bad winter season, where snow made travelling far from my own location impossible. Due to the inclement weather, I had to apply a 'convenience sampling method' (Leavy and Harris, 2019) and consequently the research took place with five female white participants who were living in the West of Scotland. The sample does not reflect the diversity of either the communities or the geographical locations to be found in Scotland. The social and economic backgrounds in each of the different parts of the country may have produced differing life stories but following Moreau (2019) it was also likely that the demographics are indicative of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity to be found across childcare professions in Scotland. No potential male candidates came forward and this is also reflected in the number of men currently to be found in childcare professions. I chose the first five responses that lived within closest proximity to my location, and who fulfilled the necessary selection criteria. In preferable weather circumstances I would have selected from a wider pool, and I would have considered aspects of unconscious bias, which is often a factor that influences choices without us realising when we make decisions on choosing suitable candidates (Oberai and Anand, 2018). In research with a smaller sample, as in this research, it is possible that

chosen candidates may resonate closely with my own characteristics or share certain criteria such social, academic, gender, racial or age backgrounds. These are conscious or even affinity biases; the 'like me' aspects which might reproduce the answers we already believe we will find in our research studies (Oberai and Anand, 2018:15).

Working in the care sector is about connectivity; the personal dimension of communicating and linking with other people (Reinders, 2010) which can sometimes forge close networks in local communities. Because of this, the participants were given the option of choosing a fictitious name within the participation information guidelines to ensure anonymity (appendix one). The practitioners in the study, either waived that option or elected that I select a name. In keeping with an ethos of narrative and connectivity, I have therefore chosen names of women with significance to my life to represent my practitioner participants. The names of the women I have chosen, resonate with me as strong carers from a working-class background. My grandmother Betty was the eldest of eleven and cared for her younger siblings and other family members from an early age. They were from strong mining stock in the South of Wales, a traditional working-class profession. Each of the practitioners has been renamed for anonymity after my grandmother's five sisters, Iris, Delia, Glenys, Maisie, and Mary-Annie.

I chose not to interview over a technological video format, which might have ensured I had participants from more diverse locations, because an important part of my methodology was to build a rapport during the interview, and I lacked the necessary experience to confidently facilitate this type of presentation. Following McLafferty (2004) not all age groups are comfortable with technology and there was also a possibility that the participants might be embarrassed with this format which renders people visible. The criteria for selection (appendix one) were initially confirmed with the potential participants during telephone conversations before the interviews began. I had to decline several interested recruits as they did not fit the selection criteria, because they already possessed a relevant qualification before entering the profession. I then sent a participation information statement to each of the potential recruits with a consent form. This outlined the intention of the study and the way the information would be collated and disseminated once the study was complete. Several consent forms were not returned by some who had expressed an interest, and this also reduced the number of available participants. The number of participants did meet the minimum requirements for the study as agreed with the University, that being five practitioners. The smaller number of participants ensured two aspects. The first being the safety of the participants, due to the particularly dangerous

roads caused by the weather conditions. The second rationale for the smaller group was in keeping with Ashton *et al*., (2021) who highlight, that transcripts generate so much data that there is a danger of saturation rather than a richness from depth in engaging with a smaller cross-section. In addition, they state, that within feminist poststructural studies small samples are acceptable because they are not meant to generalisable of the dominant demographics of the research scope. Rather the in-depth analysis in small-scale studies, supplements the findings from other similar studies on personal experiences', aiming to increase overall knowledge in the field (Ashton *et al*., 2021). The backgrounds of the practitioners highlighted the normative demographics to be found in childcare professions (Osgood, 2012) which includes the Scottish OSC workforce, indicating they identified themselves as mothers, from working-class families and localities. A short biography or pen-portrait of each of the practitioners was drawn from initial discussions whilst using the biographical grid at the start of the interview (see appendix four).

As already highlighted, the interviews took place in environments that were agreed in advance with the participants. Two took place in an office space I had suggested. The other interviews took place in areas that the participants themselves had requested; one in the participants own office space, one in a local museum café open to the public and one in the home of the participant. The privacy and feeling of connection were different in each of the settings, particularly the museum café which had several people milling around and made the transcription process lengthy as I required to listen more intently to screen out background noises such as continuous chair scrapings. I was aware of confidentiality and ensured that we were in the furthest part of the café and no people were sitting in tables immediately surrounding us, minimising the chance that others may overhear our conversations. In retrospect the openness of this environment should have been negotiated further considering the data I was collecting. However, as the venue was selected by the participant as she had suggested an informal neutral area, and so at the time, I had considered I was placing respect in the participants choice. The participant took two breaks for coffee during the interview, and I was able to check she was still at ease to continue during these informal breaks. As Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) suggest this aspect could have been considered more thoroughly as part of the design planning in the early stages of the study, particularly because the choice of venue could have been perceived as misplaced power considering I was aware of the discourses that would be under discussion. The home setting was at first disconcerting for me; however, it appeared that the participant was at ease and perhaps this is why this led to the most confessional discussions

of the five participants. The shortest interview was the one that took place in the museum setting and was just over one hour. The longest was the pilot interview of nearly two hours but this included amending the data collection tool reflexively throughout this interview. In my participant information sheet (appendix one) I had allowed for a follow-up interview with the participants but by the time I had eventually transcribed the narratives, I felt that the time between collection and transcription was too lengthy. In view that the write-up of the study occurred during the lockdown period of the Covid-19 pandemic, I personally did not feel comfortable with placing additional pressure on the practitioners. On reflection, I now realise that was an insecurity I held regarding my-self and the research process, and a follow-up would have given opportunity to clarify some of the perceptions that remained ambiguous or that may have added further depth to the study.

4.6 The biographical life grid and the pilot interview

Narrative inquiry approaches reflect the researcher's own ontology, and this perspective often emerges in the methods that are selected to collect, analyse, and present the data (Caine *et al.*, 2013). As previously highlighted, time is at the heart of this study, and I initially wished to use a collection tool that reflected the temporal nature of the research. The biographical time grid, also known as a biographical life grid or life course grid (Nico, 2016), on the face of it, seemed the ideal tool to highlight how the practitioners in the study perceived care over time. The grid itself requires a complementary format, such as, oral interviews either to initiate dialogue or to sustain it. The grid focussed on chronological events that had occurred through the lifecycle including dates of birth through to current careers, but contexts were limited as these were primarily recording life events such as births, marriages, and deaths (Wilson *et al.*, 2007). Biographical time/life grids have been successfully used, mainly in quantitative studies, to collect retrospective data on scientific and medical topics (Parry *et al.*, 1999). Nico (2016) argues that the grids were more prevalent in quantitative studies because of significance in demonstrating linear or event history chronologies. For this study however, descriptions and relationships to events that are recalled in memories can be emotive and often require an additional interpretative approach because recollections do not always emerge in chronological order (Nico. 2016). Nico (2016:2110) also suggests that the preoccupation with quantitative data and its ordered approach to the truth often creates what is known as the 'biographical illusion'. This is where data is collected, then presented in what is assumed to be a natural chronological order to narratives, rather than the order in which the data occurred.

However, Nico (2016) states that presenting data in this manner can lead to gaps in analysis as researchers strive for typified results which is more indicative of a positivist approach to research. Biographical time grids in qualitative studies have been used sparsely as a visual tool to stimulate recollections and promote discussions during interview (Wilson *et al.,* 2007). Some researchers have used the biographical time/life grid as a temporal tool to condense research time, to minimise the amount of time engaged in transcribing large volumes of biographical interview data (Abbas *et al.,* 2013). However, in minimising narrative there is also the likelihood it could diminish the researcher's full engagement with the data because discourses may be omitted from the grid (Abbas et al., 2013). In general, grids are often 'tailored' to match criteria that is being studied, although they may follow a relatively standard format (Nico, 2016:2109). In previous studies (Berney, 2003; Wilson *et al.*, 2007; Abbas *et al.*, 2013), certain columns are often pre-set with key dates and events to enhance recollections on more personal information. I trialled the biographical time/life grid which I adapted to match a portion of my own lifespan with events taking place within a 5-year period, the dates not being exact within that period as the diagram below illustrates.

Dates	Events	Family Info	Work Info	Education Info
1995-1999	Death Diana Princess of Wales	All living at home. Son ASD diagnosis	Start of OSC career	Playwork SVQ achieved
2000-2004	9/11 Attacks in USA	First child flies the nest	First guidance on OSC	SQA Assessor qualification
2005-2009	July Terrorist Bombings UK			
2010-2014	Prince William and Kate marriage		Degree Training requirements for managers	Graduated with degree (BACP)

Diagram 4.1: Adapted biographical time/life grid (Berney, 2003)

It was apparent when I constructed my own personal biographical time grid, that this type of data collection tool was too inflexible for this study, because the grid is mainly used to 'reduce recall bias', which eliminates the chances of memories being recalled out of sequence (Berney, 2003). This in effect both created and maintained a biographical illusion (Nico, 2016). I felt forced into locating and articulating events that matched the grid, rather

than allow memories to form naturally. It could be argued, following Adam (2004), that in this case it reproduced a form of Foucauldian coercive clock-time.

As a result of undertaking my own grid, I decided to do a pilot interview to trial this data tool with one of the participants who had no knowledge of this research method. With the pilot interview, I found that the biographical life grid affected this interview in the same manner as my own, in that it stilted natural flowing conversations and was not able to capture the full emotional contexts of the events described, and at times felt intrusive. Whilst research has been undertaken with studies whose focus is either qualitative or mixed methods, I personally found that the biographical life grid does favour studies with a positivist or quantitative approach.

I then tried to adapt the grid design to capture where memories of chronological events had the greatest impact in time on recollections but moving away from specific date recollections into wider time periods. The new grid was adapted from previous research studies (see Wilson *et al.*, 2007, Abbas *et al*., 2013) and I tried to substitute fixed events columns such as relationships, schooling, or work experience to columns that I thought would be more flexible, representing temporal spaces such as those that had occurred in the past present or in aspirations for the future as illustrated in the diagram below.

	Age/ Year	Af/Al/ N	Past	Present	Future
Personal Experiences					
External Events					
Professional Experiences					
Temporal Experiences					
Social Experiences Of care					

Diagram 4.2: Template of temporal biographical time grid

I had underestimated the impact of using a chronological tool whilst I was preparing appropriate methods to collect data. I found that discourses of time are imbued with

perceptions of hegemonic clock-time and whilst I tried to adapt the format, the grid still typically represented the chronology of life, with age or year appearing in order whilst considering biographical accounts (Parry *et al.,* 1999). In deciding to undertake the initial pilot interview, I was able to reflexively consider another temporal collection format, this being 24-hour clocks, which I discuss further later in this chapter.

As an early career researcher, I acknowledge that the initial process of researching was intimidating. The pilot interview gave me the opportunity to interrogate my own interviewing skills and to trial methods which were new to my academic repertoire. I chose one of the five practitioners who had agreed to participate in a pilot because she was part of my own professional network, and I trusted her opinion as a critical friend. Feminist critical friends do not just act as sounding boards, they are important because they can also be vested in the subject matter. With a similar desire to support equity for marginalized groups they can, in a sense, hold you to those moral values (Chappell and Mackay 2021). This gave me the opportunity to fine-tune the research study, in keeping with the parameters that I had agreed to as part of my ethics application.

On reflection, I came to realise that the biographical conversations that occurred alongside the initial life grid creations were a vital part of the study, not only because they provided some of the rich data that I required for the study, but also because they allowed me to build some rapport with the practitioners. As discussed previously in section 4.3, rapport in one-off interviews can establish a performance of trust, as part of the research relationship, and it did open conversations to gain some knowledge of the participants' caring backgrounds. However, at this point I was unaware of the way I adapted questions as part of a performance of 'cultural sensitivity' (Leavy and Harris, 2019:114), to ensure rich data conversations. This cultural sensitivity acknowledges that I may have been anticipating personal variances between myself and the practitioners such as difference in class, age or education (Leavey and Harris, 2019). The biographical interviews were vital to the study because eventually the practitioners stopped writing on the grids when they realised themselves that this interrupted the flow of the conversations as their stories unfurled. I did, however, revert to using them myself to keep conversations on track when I felt pressured to maintain the time scheduled for the interviews. I realise now that this time pressure is in keeping with Foucault (1977) and the power of clock-time which controls not only industry, but also personal time.

In previous studies, Wilson *et al.* (2007) note that biographical life grids are used predominantly in research where sensitive or emotive topics are under review, suggesting data in a written format could distance the narrator from emotional memories experienced in the past. This study is concerned with discourses on caring experiences and as such reflects on aspects of life that might have been stressful or provoke strong emotions. The data collection therefore required a reflexive approach as the narratives were being presented. In some cases, the practitioner asked to stop the conversations themselves, needing a short time-out period, particularly when discussing difficult or emotive recollections. This may have been to consider which aspects of their lives that they wanted to discuss with me, and were therefore carefully selecting data to share, particularly when conversations ran contrary to dominant discourses. Written formats present a concrete memory, and it may be that in some cases the participant may have been resisting a collection format that they could be called upon to explain later. It is possible more information is disclosed than intended due to a rapid relationship developing between the researcher and participant as personal information is discussed, and which may also have taken place within a relaxed or even familiar setting (Berney, 2003). It would be reasonable to assume that elements of confession were products of both the relationship and the venue that I had not anticipated during the conceptual phase of the study. In fact, as I have mentioned above (page 99), due to the public area that one interview took place in, the revealing of personal information may have restricted an in-depth narrative occurring. In retrospect, I could have offered a follow-up telephone interview, where the participant would have had more privacy, and then ascertain if the participant had wanted to elaborate on any of her narrative. At points, I felt that the practitioners assigned me an aspect of pastoral power as I was perceived as the holder of knowledge through studying for a doctorate (Foucault, 1975). I felt there was an anticipation that I would offer an opinion on some of the narratives and views held by the practitioners. This became apparent to me due to the type of questions the practitioners posed to me on the content of the study and the rationale behind undertaking it. The questions included seeking whether I viewed the sector as professional and asking about my beliefs on the fairness of the gender-labour divide. However, I was also aware that my responses could be open to interpretation as a form of disciplinary power if they were not aligned to the practitioners' values and beliefs (Freshwater *et al.*, 2015).

4.7 Biographical life stories and reflexive interviews

Biographical accounts of life as part of a narrative inquiry can take on many formats. They encompass oral, and/or written biographical, or autobiographical narratives and are led by discursively constructed values and beliefs of the participants; therefore, they are subjective views of events that bring meaning to the person's life (Shamir *et al.*, 2005). Other research highlighted in the literature review, for instance, Osgood (2012) and Jones and Aubrey (2019), also employed versions of biographical narratives within their studies. Osgood (2012:148) drew on life history methods with her participants to socially construct their own 'personal identity' through autobiographical narratives, which were then used as a basis for discussion during researcher-led interviews. She highlights how assumptions generated through discourses on power shape ways of being, and these were revealed through the discussions which were counterpoint to policy documents and practices that the practitioners used in their professional activities (Osgood, 2012). Jones and Aubrey (2019) also used life histories to collect a prospective account of male practitioners' experiences in professional early years settings. These participants discussed their family backgrounds and their relation to their own future career plans. Both research studies had similar elements of biographical narrative as my own study. However, there was a difference in that I had not collected the biography or life story prospectively, but as an initial opening to the narrative biographical interviews with the practitioners to open conversation at the time of the study. The biographical grid used as a tool to collect a life history, as discussed previously, stilted the conversation, and forced the life history into a chronological construct. In contrast, Osgood's (2012) and Jones and Aubrey's (2019) use of the prospective life history allowed the biographical account to come forward in a less constrained way. Narrative biographical interviews also aim to construct identities through a discourse analysis and are fluid, as the researcher and participant construct new knowledge through reflections on key events within the narrative (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). In some instances, meaning-making is revealed because the participant has opportunities to articulate their narratives with an interested other. However, Taylor and Littleton (2006) also suggest that there are hegemonic discourses in biographies, which are constructed against normative life events such as marriages and births of children which *other* single, childless narrators.

As part of the research process, in addition to the biographical grid as a data collection tool, I had prepared a list of possible questions in advance of the study (appendix two), to use reflexively in the narrative biographical interviews. Reflexivity in research is a contested term, but in general it is a way to gauge intuitively where the relationship

between the researcher and the participant builds to a point where the researcher's participation can influence the responses within the narratives (Goldstein 2017). Posing questions in this way requires the researcher to be emotionally intelligent and have an acute degree of self-awareness (Riessman, 2019). As stated, I found on occasion that I was returning to the biographical grid to get the practitioner back on track, rather than allow the flow of a narrated life story which sometimes went off at a tangent. This demonstrated my own agenda to keep the narrative as close to the research questions as possible.

The biographical grid did have some advantages when discussing key events that provoked strong emotions. In one case, a practitioner drew my eye to the biographical grid and started to discuss how the event should be recorded on the grid placement, rather than talk about the event itself. In this case the biographical tool arguably acted as a form of defence, where the practitioner appeared reluctant to discuss something that may have been less comfortable. On reflection, the grid could be utilised in qualitative research as a secondary collection tool rather than a primary one, because it did allow for the reflective process to develop for the participant at difficult moments. Topics could perhaps be emotionally 'parked' on the timeline and explored later if trust developed between the researcher and the participant. Recounting past events, whilst undeniably adding significance to the study, detracted from the naturally occurring narratives that I had envisaged. Moreover, it placed the practitioners in a position where they may have revealed information that they were not necessarily emotionally prepared for. Dates attached to events are finite whilst the emotional memories that were presented through the interviews are not (Abbas *et al.*, 2013). Moving away from the grids to a more informal biographical interview, supported more spontaneous conversations to emerge, which allowed for the practitioners to have a greater degree of agency whilst presenting their stories. One of the skills of a caring practitioner is to be an active listener (Calanca *et al.*, 2019) and it was hard at times to separate my role as researcher from my caring leadership role and the codes of practice I follow. I had to seek advice from my supervisor for reassurance on how to behave in these unanticipated research circumstances. Miller (2017) acknowledges that these types of emotionally charged narrative conversations are challenging. Feminists are not in agreement as to whether or how far confessions or disclosures can be potentially coercive or purely based on good interviewing techniques that are encouraging the participant to disclose experiences that have affected them.

An important part of research is to demonstrate a reflexive approach to the process as it occurs. For this reason, I had to abandon the use of the biographical life grid as the

principal collection tool after the pilot interview and realised I would have to rely on the narrative biographical interviews for research data. However, during the pilot interview I also noted a lack of congruence between how the practitioners accounted for their time and the responsibilities they need to undertake throughout the day. It seemed impossible that they were trying to manage all their key care responsibilities within the confines and pressures of a 24-hour day. These include both professional and home caring responsibilities, and how to include time for self-care. As a visual person, which is my preferable learning style, I drew two simple 24-hour clocks reflexively to try and capture what the practitioners were telling me about their daily temporal events. They appeared themselves to be measuring their day in normative chronological time or clock-time as indicated below.

Diagram 4.3: Normative 24-hour chronological day

The intention within the first drawn clock was to record what the participants stated they did in a typical 24-hour day, which Foucault (1977) views as a disciplinary power controlling expected norms of using our time. In the illustration above I have used the breakdown of my own day using a 24-hour chronological clock. However, I already knew from the biographical accounts that this representation was a ‘coerced’ day, to fit normalised constructions of chronological days, normalised through contracted working hours. Culshaw (2019) states the challenges when discussing time as an experience and that a symbolic visual method can help interpret feelings that invoke time.

The legend for the clocks considers caring contexts as explained in Hochschild’s (1983) study on emotional labour. In this, yellow denotes work: commodified caring for which

we generally have a working contract laying out the defined hours to be paid for. Green denotes the unpaid caring work we do at home; this includes domestic duties and other duties undertaken for the household. This type of emotional labour usually fills some of the hours between paid work and going to bed. I included a space for self-care, denoted in brown, which Foucault (1988) describes as care without the burden of doing something for others. Lastly, in orange is the time we allocate ourselves to sleep. I added this space as some of the participants highlighted that they had caring responsibilities through the night as they had children or relatives with additional care needs.

Even when trialling my own clocks, it became apparent to me that a chronological clock did not represent the 'true' passing of time, admitting that it did not cover all I do. When I drew over the first 24-hour clock, reconstructing it as the time I felt more closely represented a typical caring day it was nothing like the first chronological clock. As indicated by Culshaw (2019) I do not the use the traditional clock face, in its discursive linear form but rather the clock acts as a visual tool, to highlight in pictorial form, differences experienced in time.

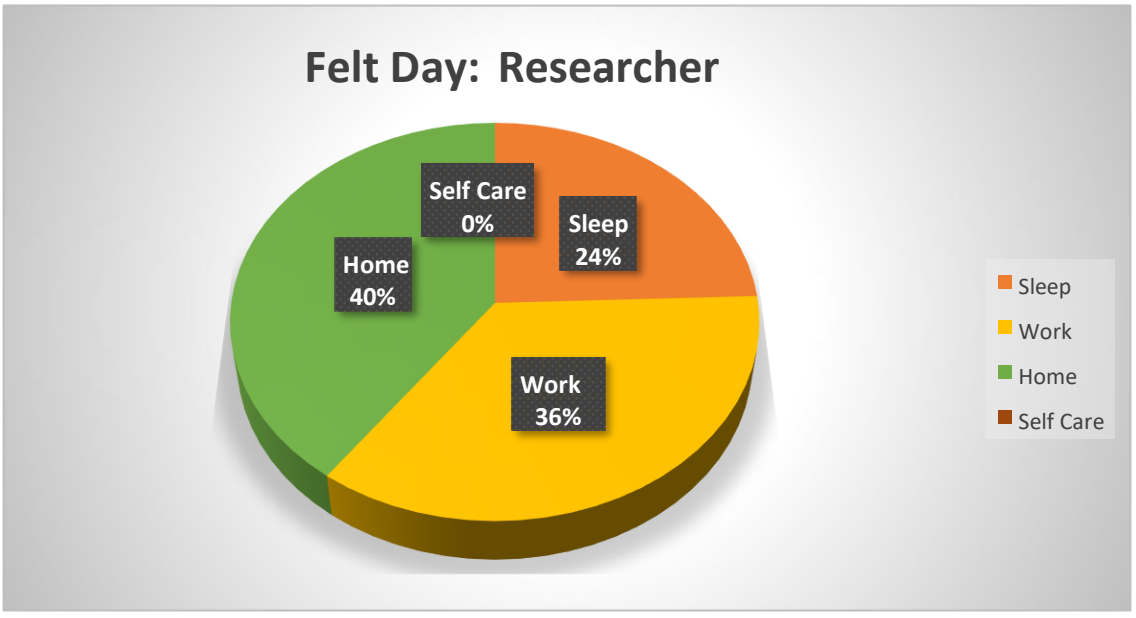

Diagram 4.4: Felt-time 24-hour day.

I have labelled this felt-time, because it is a subjective impression of time when tasks seem challenging to manage. Work is a finite section of the day as this is contractual. The remainder of the day is where the obvious changes are observed. On reflection, this is how it really feels when there are differing caring responsibilities competing on my time continually, although the times highlighted may not be able to record any actual reality. It could be argued that the unwillingness to account for how much of my time was spent on

caring responsibilities and how well I managed my time is akin to the guilt mentioned by Sutherland (2010) in the discursive expectations of how we manage our roles according to the *good mother* discourse.

The use of diverse narrative methods offers researchers opportunities to gain a richer perspective when viewing the complexity of life stories (Keats, 2009). Time can be viewed from a linear format as the biographical life grid conveys, but also as a reflection on how time is uniquely felt by the person experiencing it. In some cases that felt-time experienced by the practitioners only became apparent to them through the interactions and reflections during the interviews and the differences illustrated between the two time-clocks. It revealed to the practitioners the actual amount of time spent in caring over a 24-hour period that they undervalued themselves, because it represented unpaid care time.

4.8 Audio-recording and transcription of the interviews

All interviews were audio-recorded, which is a valuable tool in collecting narrative data because the interviews can be listened to repeatedly during different stages of the study. Kelly and Bosse (2022) state that audio-recording as a research tool is in keeping with feminist studies because they also capture emotions which are missing from written texts. I replayed parts of the audio with the practitioners when asked to give time to clarify something before discussing it further on the recording. However, I did not offer to replay the full interview after it was completed due to time constraints. Audio-recording has embraced the media age and can often be undertaken with ease by phones or through social media platforms with a recording facility. I used a traditional personal recorder for the audio-recordings in this study and I was able to halt the recordings at points that participants did not want *on the record.* This was to ensure care was taken when the participants needed a break from some of the memories that produced strong emotions or to clarify details that they wished to be officially recorded.

Data is considered anything that leaves an impression that we can draw knowledge from, and in feminist studies particularly knowledge that examines relationships on ‘shifting power dynamics’ (Hamilton, 2020:519). Some data is explicit and drawn from external sources, whilst other data is only inferred and left to subjective interpretation by the researcher, where we can apply our own assumptions during sense-making. The process of transcription aims to replicate the spoken word into written text. However, both Halcomb and Davidson (2006) and Collins *et al.* (2019) outline the challenges to transcription

because narratives can be more than the spoken word. They are also laden with contextual meanings conveyed within nuances and non-verbal body language.

In using a narrative approach to address sources of power and equity, I believe there is a responsibility to ensure my methods do not unknowingly silence a participants' story. Researchers argue over the inclusion of non-verbal gestures or cues as part of verbatim transcriptions (Collins *et al.*, 2019) but these can convey deeper meaning than those described by spoken words. If body language and nuances are omitted, it could be construed as silencing if there is significance to the story and not recognised appropriately. They can also demonstrate an emotional state and readiness to discuss recollections that might be emotive or that transpire unexpectedly through a confessional experience. We may not knowingly be aware that when listening to people narrating their stories, we also observe the non-verbal cues as part of a caring reflective practice. Researchers may become aware of whether the participant is engaged by the conversations unfolding, or whether they are uncomfortable with the information they are disclosing. With this knowledge I was able to reflexively, change topic or offer reassurance and breaks when it appeared to be required. Mitchell and Irvine (2008:31) state this awareness to the emotions involved during interviews is important to feminist studies, because researchers can leave 'a 'researchers footprint', and reacting reflexively is a way to support the participants wellbeing. In effect researchers can become attuned to the participant and in some cases if not careful, they may interrupt or influence the flow of the narrative through their reactions. In care professions this situation might arise if the participant is discussing information that appears to contest the expected behaviours as outlined in professional codes of conduct. There were occasions when the participant's body language illustrated what I interpreted as reverse signals to what was being verbally discussed, betraying an opposing internal thought. Transcribed emotional responses included in data elicited during narrative interviewing have been historically questioned over their validity but are now gaining momentum and legitimacy in social subject research (Blackman, 2007).

4.9 Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA)

Initially I felt overwhelmed by the volume of data that was generated from the narratives. The transcriptions took longer than I had anticipated and ran to many pages depending on both the speed of how the practitioner talked and how much they had to say. It takes not only focus but some element of restraint and self-discipline to resist jumping in and presenting the findings straightaway, rather than contemplate them from several angles. In

general, the philosophies important to this study, namely time, gender and Foucauldian concepts of power contained within the practitioners' narratives, automatically guide some of the discourses that I anticipated would dominate the findings. However, people do not make sense of their own stories in ways that fit into neatly assigned groupings. In keeping with my own philosophies and following poststructural theory, my interpretations of the narratives flowed freely between headings and subheadings, overlapping, or interweaving wherever, in my opinion, there was a best fit. Although, as humans, we are all time-bound from our birth to our finite end, what we do or feel about our time is subjective. We sometimes act through choice, sometimes through luck and sometimes against the most trialling of circumstances. All these views are subject to our own perceptions and expectations of life. I hope that my analysis of the findings shed some light on those aspects of life the practitioners were willing to discuss to me.

I considered that a combination of Critical and Foucauldian discourse analysis would be the best tool to reflect on how the practitioners discussed the knowledge of their everyday lives and how that knowledge affects the way they behave. With this study using both a poststructural and feminist lens, some of the aspects of knowledge are already pre-determined, such as power and its many facets, within an arguably feminised profession. As my philosophical stance guides my approach to the research study, the emotional contexts of the study are important to my analysis and interpretation of the narratives as expressed by the participants.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an analytical approach, used predominantly in qualitative research to make visible social inequalities and how they might be located in the normal constructs of daily life (Mullet, 2018). In keeping with the poststructural methodology of this study, there are several applicable strands of CDA that might have relevance to the practitioners' narratives which can be used to unravel the power dynamics involved in relation to their experiences of caring subjectivities.

In general, discourses consist of both text and spoken words which can be found in a multitude of formats including policy texts, curricula, standards, registrations and codes of conducts, or narratives between senior staff and staff, all places where knowledge is disseminated (Mullet, 2018). Within discourses that greatly influence the narratives within the public sphere, Fairclough (2013) considers that regulative practice is one way where discourse frames a way of being for those who operate under regulations. These discourses combine in the public sphere through social groups or organisations who 'textualise practice' into legitimised regulatory processes (Fairclough, 2013:398). This practice can be

legitimised and embedded by individuals, groups, and society as discourses are conceptualised into ways of being. For instance, because childcare is a highly regulated profession, I analyse where regulatory knowledge is derived from and how that affects the practitioners in their everyday lives. In practice I had to go between the transcriptions and the discourse analysis on many occasions. By revisiting each of the practitioners' transcriptions, I found that sometimes the same constructs were revealed. This was not overt, however, because the wording was not specific and required some interpretative analysis of the meanings that were being drawn as the interviews evolved (Khan and MacEachen, 2021). The truths may have emerged in discussions on the present, but these reflections had also been anchored to events that took place historically in the past.

My analytical approach was also influenced by Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) Whilst there is no strong guidance for FDA, this approach analyses language and/or artifacts to establish the discourses that have influenced their construction (Fadyl *et al.*, 2013). It also looks at how power operates within these discourses (Villasden, 2020). Through FDA, data may emerge where the participant has revealed to themselves when or even how they became a subject of the conditions that they are working under and where constraint is evident (Villadsen, 2020). Villasden (2020) also suggests that constructions of power arising from the analysis may demonstrate whether these are shared understandings affecting professional groupings as a whole or whether they are individualised. Khan and MacEachen (2021) believe that resistance to powers that may be institutionalised, for instance through regulations and codes of practice, are often localised and this may appear as self-regulated ways of being.

Lastly within the context of a poststructural lens under a feminist perspective, Fadyl *et al.* (2013) argues that researchers who use Foucauldian concepts within data analysis can be too prescriptive on words or texts as traditional discourses rather than capturing other the subtleties within the formation and expression of the wider discourse itself. For this reason, I have also included as part of the analysis when I observed body language and non-verbal cues within the interviews that I have interpreted as discourses affecting ways of being. This is in keeping with feminist discourse analysis which rises above neutral or even scientific methods of collecting data considered more masculine, to those which offer reflexivity and an emotional connectedness to the research (Lazar, 2007).

4.10 Ethical perspectives

Researching with subjects can bring challenges due to the emotional connection between the researcher and participant. In research there are generally two types of ethics that relate to university-initiated studies. First those that are researcher-led, because in life story studies, conversations may be deeply personal and in some cases the participant may divulge more than is necessary for the study. I found that rapport can develop from the first telephone conversation to recruitment, right through to the last moment of the interview. This meant that I was privy to some personal details that were disclosed at various points throughout the telling of the practitioners' stories. The researcher has the option in choosing which material to *sanitise* to preserve confidentiality, and to maintain trust that has been established through the narrative process (Yassour-Borochowitz, 2004). I found that this aspect was more than just an ethical responsibility to ensure no harm and protect confidentiality because of my dual role as both researcher and registered care practitioner. With a professional registration that upholds individuals' rights and dignities, taking an ethical approach to the life story data was more than a prime consideration for me personally, and I am aware that this is a Foucauldian form of self-regulation I impose on myself. Although as Yassour-Borochowitz, (2004) suggests, the researcher can sanitise data that is more relevant to the research study, there were aspects that I felt I could not ignore with some of the information that appeared as confessional disclosures. If there was evidence of harm disclosed either to the participant or others, then I would be obligated to break confidentiality (see appendix one). The conversations with the participants did give me opportunities to discuss what aspects they felt were private dialogue and on two occasions I asked if the practitioner wished me to stop recording when conversations appeared to be more of a personal confessional experience.

Secondly as this study is part of a doctoral dissertation, I was obliged to complete a university ethics application and to subscribe to a set of conditions on the way I would undertake the study. The guidance (University of Glasgow online) issued is for research which involves human subjects, and a research application is reviewed by a panel to ensure that protocols are in place to ensure ethical practices are maintained and that the people involved are the prime concern and not the research data. This includes ensuring that participant's read the participant information sheet and then through obtaining informed consent, confirm they understand the rationale for the study and their opportunity to withdraw or complain if they so choose.

In this chapter I have presented the research philosophy I subscribe to, and which shaped the study itself and the methods best used to gain a greater perspective on my research

questions. I have outlined how each step of the research process was undertaken including noting perspectives that I found more challenging.

In the next part of this study, I present the findings from the data to highlight the discourses shaping the participant's narratives, in particular those relating to the three concepts relevant to my study: gender, power and time within professional childcare subjectivities and experience.

Chapter Five: Discourses on Gender and Caring

If you don't think childcare is work, you haven't done it yet!
(Raewyn Connell, 2021)

5.1 Introduction

As discussed previously in chapter four, the data findings have been broken down into three separate chapters based on the philosophical concepts I consider important to this study. In each of these three findings chapters I present the data drawn from the transcriptions, deconstructing what is known from the discourses, within narratives guided by these concepts. First, in chapter five, I consider the background of the practitioners and the ways in which their experiences may be influenced by discourses on the gendered nature of care or influences over career choices. Then, in chapter six, I consider Foucauldian constructs of power and whether there are internal or external pressures that hold sway over how the practitioners perform caregiving or performances of professional identity. In the last findings chapter, chapter seven, I consider whether discourses related to temporal experiences have any bearing on agency regarding self-care or to build resilience in either a personal or professional capacity.

I will first discuss the practitioners' backgrounds in relation to normalised discourses on the staffing of caring professions (see chapter 2.7) to contextualise care experiences. The five practitioners who took part in the study were white women with ages ranging from late twenties to late fifties, therefore their experiences of care are from differing points in the historical development of OSC as a childcare profession. The median age of the five practitioners is 48.8, which is only slightly higher than the median age indicated by SOSCN (2018) for lead practitioners who are employed in the field of OSC at 45.5 years old. The practitioners highlighted that they were from working-class backgrounds. All but one, at the point of interview, held a degree or degree equivalent qualification which is the required standard for registration as a lead practitioner in the day-care of children settings in Scotland (SSSC, online d). The degree qualification was obtained after several years of hands-on practitioner experience, working with children in OSC settings, which led to responsibilities in either supervising staff or managing the setting. The practitioner who did not hold a degree qualification had worked for many years in childcare and was qualified for registration at practitioner level (SSSC, online d) but was not registered to manage a setting, although she had previous experience in that professional role.

As highlighted by Paechter (2003: see chapter 2.3), the number of years in the sector had given them opportunities to build 'communities of practice', where they had formed professional relationships with colleagues who shared similar values of wanting the best outcomes for children. As communities of practice can produce stereotypical performances, learned, and legitimised through membership in these same communities of practice, I will highlight discourses of shared assumptions on both gender and professionalism in the practitioners' narratives, which may be derived from knowledge learned through working in similar professional contexts.

All five practitioners work in Council areas with mixed economies, in that they worked in areas where both poverty and deprivation exist alongside appearances of affluence. All five also work in privately funded settings, where parents pay fees as part of a market economy that reflects the growing commercialisation of childcare (Payne, 2009).

The demographics of the practitioners highlighted by Osgood (2005, 2006) and Payler and Locke (2013) were slightly different to my study, as their studies took place with practitioners in the ELC sector of the childcare profession. ELC looks predominantly after the welfare of children who are preschool age, whilst OSC cares for children attending school, generally between the ages of four and twelve. In addition, the practitioners in both Osgood (2005, 2006) and Payler and Locke (2013) were subject to regulations for practice and qualification status in England. There are differences in the median ages of staff working in ELC and OSC in Scotland, with ELC being around 36 years old and OSC around 45.5 (see tables 3.2 and 3.3). It could be argued that as many practitioners entered the sector later in their careers, that their experiences may offer differing perspectives on motivations and feelings towards childcare. Studies mentioned within the literature review do, however, highlight how a body of knowledge is learned and shared between practitioners in the childcare profession over a period, whilst serving what might be termed an *apprenticeship.*

Having established the demographic profile for the practitioners in the interviews, together with a brief biographical background (see appendix four), I now present the data analysis findings in relation to the literature review and my conceptual framework. I begin with discourses reflecting the practitioner's experiences and constructs of care, along with any motivations for entering childcare professions.

The reflections from the practitioners will not always be narrated in chronological order and I have drawn comments together which are discursively similar. I am aware, that by

doing this, I am employing a biographical illusion (Nico, 2016) (see chapter 4.6) to present the backgrounds in a more chronological format because it is important to setting the scene.

5.2 Intersectional discourses of care and career choices

In chapter 2.7, I highlighted that white women were often channelled into childcare careers because they were viewed as 'moral' and 'valued' careers for women (Gaiman, 2012). In addition, women who choose to work in childcare are constructed as either doing the work for altruistic reasons (Taggart, 2012) or because they have a lower academic ability (Osgood, 2006, see 3.9). I will discuss discourses relating to care as a gendered and intersectional space through the practitioners' life course narratives.

I found that whilst all five practitioners did identify as white working-class women, they were not stereotypical of the assumptions framing childcare professions, which are presumed to be staffed by low-skilled women who lack a formalised educational background (Osgood, 2012). Of the five practitioners interviewed, three already held degrees in other subject matter and two had other industry qualifications which were graded higher than school qualifications (see appendix four). Instead, in keeping with Hochschild (2001), the practitioners discussed their childcare professional choices related to work opportunities in part-time family-friendly environments that offered them flexibility. This finding was also congruent with Grant *et al.* (2005, see 3.8) who indicated women often down-skill because of family responsibilities.

Each of the practitioners described what had interested them in OSC employment.

> Delia: *I started working in the nursery, I loved that job. I liked that idea that my kids could hang around me whilst I was working. I realised there was a niche in the market (out of school care).*
>
> Maisie: *Childcare was needed to allow me to work. I saw an advertisement in the newspaper, anyone interested in setting up an out of school care in the neighbourhood.*

Delia's and Maisie's narratives demonstrate the entrepreneurial agency of 'mumpreneurs' who were targeted by Scottish Government funding (1998, see 3.2) to establish childcare centres, run by parents for parents. As such, mumpreneurs are connected to developing employment environments entwined with motherhood discourses. Nel *et al.* (2010:6, see page 47) state this 'gives (not only) a sense of achievement' but also 'gain(ing) respect in order to equalize gender imbalance'. However, entrepreneurialism as explored by Wood

(2021, see page 47) considers that ‘these conventional masculine behaviours include working long hours and an ongoing dedicated commitment to the success of a business’.

Iris also discussed her own mother’s entrepreneurial experiences.

> Iris: *My mum set up after school so she could work around us, and she could have us at work with her’. So back then I was older I was working sessional, I was at school and then I applied to uni.*

Iris illustrates an intergenerational aspect of entrepreneurialism which is linked to social reproduction. She was working from an early age to assist her mum, a single mother in the running and upkeep of that business, including the times when she was studying for an unrelated degree.

As discussed in chapter 3.8, these initiatives were aimed predominantly at unemployed women who had brought up children to support the economic requirements of the time (Scottish Government, 1998). However, following Skeggs (2005) there was an indication, indeed a discourse within the policy, that constructed single-parent mothers from the working-class as a problem. Moreover, whilst childcare qualifications were not a prerequisite for employment, at this point childcare workers were only required to demonstrate competence with children which relied on being able to pass police checks on character (Scottish Government, 1998). This indicates a child-protective classed discourse stemming from the constructions of single-parent mothers Skeggs (2005) targeted as potential recruits to childcare professions.

Four of the practitioners I interviewed, had entered the childcare profession at a later stage in their life, already knowing that childcare positions are marketed as poorly paid, in addition to requiring lower academic skills than those they had already attained. However, Delia lays bare the underlying value on care discourses of mothers providing services for other mothers. She states bluntly.

> Delia: *for me the way I see it, it’s something that suits the Council to have these because they don’t need to pay professionals to do what I do.*

This implies that Delia herself does not recognise, or even undervaluing the skills she is using to provide her service, because she associates the notion of the professional with being paid a professional remuneration. What these policies did not either consider, acknowledge, or have minimised, is the business acumen and skills that are required to not only market childcare businesses, but also to run them as going concerns. This supports

Wood's (2021) view, who indicates that masculine discourses on values of business are favoured over enterprises by women. Moreau (2019, see chapter 3.6) argues that the lower salaries are normalised in childcare professions due to the high proportion of women who are employed in the sector and is undervalued because it is assumed any type of care can be provided in private lives for free. I also argue that lower salaries are a material consequence of the discursive rhetoric that drives constructions of carework as altruistic. Mary-Annie had previously worked in the civil service, a male dominated profession which attracted a higher salary than those achievable in childcare, but states on low pay.

> Mary-Annie: *Do I care about it? Do I think about it? Nah. If it was me and I thought that was a big issue for me then I probably wouldn't have left the civil service*.

I return to this, and further constructions of altruism in childcare in 5.3, when discussing the findings on gendered caring responsibilities and constructions of the *good mother*.

My own introduction to care careers is similar to Maisie, Mary-Annie and Iris' mother. I already held professional qualifications from working in the airline industry, which is highly competitive with unsocial hours. My circumstances changed when I had children, one of whom had additional needs. I started my own childcare business with a friend around the time of the first Scottish Government Strategy (1998) with a view to returning to work full-time. I now realise that at the time I minimised the professionalism of childcare, because I was looking to return to a *proper job*. On reflection I was constructing a childcare subjectivity via discourses that undervalued childcare as feminised employment, in contrast to what I perceived as a higher value career which is based on masculinised skills associated with 'proper' business roles.

Maisie also discusses her past life experiences since leaving school when she had started a university degree which had not worked out for her in the way she anticipated:

> Maisie: *I was computer literate because I had done computer programming and word processing. Those things were at an early stage then. Excel so I could do accounting. The childcare was needed to allow me to work. I didn't need a qualification, but they certainly needed staff.*

Similarly, to Maisie, I saw an opportunity to establish childcare provision to allow me *real choices* to return to full-time work, not even considering that the childcare profession would offer me a career choice in which I have been employed for nearly three decades. There are few studies available that delve into prior professional experiences or academic

qualifications already held by OSC workers before childcare employment, and this factor is rendered invisible in the data of many government documents. An interpretative approach is required to understanding these contexts and in line with feminists such as Oakley (1998, see page 89) this indicates the 'malestreaming' of discourses within government documents.

Class was mentioned by one practitioner in relation to financial reward.

> Marie-Annie*: people who are middle-class come in for pin money whereas chances are if you working-class it's a profession. I think we really don't get paid as much as when I worked in the bank, and I think working where I am just now it should be about the impact and the outcomes and the differences you can make in a child's life and that dictates that you should be paid more. I think early years should probably get more than teachers because that's the most formative part of a child's life and I think that's when you can make such a big difference. I don't see why we should be paid less, why it should be seen as any less than teachers or social workers. I don't think that we are any less.*

Here, Mary-Annie associates altruistic caring discourses with middle class women, who she assumes do not require to work for financial reward. There are hegemonic assumptions on the classed demographics of childcare professions (see Osgood, 2006, 21012) and Mary-Annie aligns her childcare role with other 'moral careers' suitable for women such as teaching (Gaiman, 2012). In addition, she discusses the higher value of banking, which is constructed as a male-dominated career (see chapter 2.6). Whilst Mary-Annie does not reflect how she came to her assumption on class and altruism, she later discusses her own family and how her daughter - who is perceived as a non-academic student -, was only offered career destinations which included childcare:

> Mary-Annie: *They were positively pushed down these two roles (hairdressing and childcare). I suppose as a parent I had a conversation about my child who has dyslexia and isn't particularly academically minded was told she couldn't go back to school for another year because there were no courses for her. There was nothing for her that the school could do because she wasn't performing at a particular level.*

There appears to be an element of resentment that careers advisors consider childcare a profession only for those deemed less academic. This resentment may be constructed thorough temporal knowledge after working in the sector for more than 18 years, Mary-Annie is aware of both the skills and capacities required in professional childcare.

Delia's experiences with school's careers guidance were similar. She indicated she wasn't sure where her focus lay, and she had addressed this with her careers officer.

> Delia: *I thought about maybe being an air hostess, but that was just like a waitress in the sky, so don't do it. I so wanted to do it, but he put me right off, the guidance teacher at school. When I went back a while later, I said I'll maybe look at doing additional needs, he was like yeah that's great'.*

Delia's tone changed to what I interpreted as the career's advisor being dismissive towards her, with a lack of interest on her future career focus. It could also however be interpreted that the careers advisor had made a classed judgment of Delia and the choice was not unexpected for her background. Delia described her home life as fun but chaotic:

> Delia: *Yeah, wasn't the sharpest but yeah, I focused, I tried to do the best I could. I guess none of my parents had high qualifications; my dad was sharp to be fair because he had travelled all over the world, he would bring home different phrases from another country, but I don't remember him being savvy*.

Delia described her academic struggles at school, yet she had the business acumen to become a 'mumpreneur', whilst raising children. The lack of support from her advisor reflects the discursive assumptions surrounding women from working-class backgrounds and how appropriate careers are already pre-assigned without considering the overall personal resilience that is necessary to succeed in a career (Mahler, 2013).

In this section, I have explored the gendered and classed discourses underlying women entering childcare professions. This included perceptions that women entering childcare professions lack academic acumen and that as working-class women they had not considered other professional career options, instead looking for careers that might support their need to balance work with caring responsibilities. The median age of OSC practitioners is between 33 and 45.4 (SOSCN, 2018) depending on the role. These practitioners are therefore around halfway through their life course, and the median time served in OSC positions is at most 13 years (SOSCN, 2018). There is both a lack of knowledge and value placed on the early part of the practitioners' life experiences. There is also perhaps a dismissal or minimisation of the relevance of such experience to their present occupations. This may be due to discourses on the gendered and classed nature of caring.

In the next section I reflect on how the practitioners' construct their caring responsibilities in relation to mothering and values placed on childcare.

5.3 Discourses on gendered caring responsibilities and *the good mother*

Monrad (2017, see page 40) notes that there is a complex understanding of care and its place for society as a support mechanism, which places different expectations and values between unpaid private and paid-for public caring spaces. As mentioned above, Foucault did not discuss the nature of women and the burden of caring responsibilities (see chapter 2.3). Nevertheless, Pylypa (1998) highlights that power from daily occurrences can be viewed as a Foucauldian concept of biopower, because it is a form of social control, regulating how we conform to expected practices or ways of being (see chapter 2.4). In this section I analyse discourses on the practitioners' experiences of the care/labour divide and how they construct their own ways of being.

All five practitioners interviewed in this study were parents, in addition, three were also grandparents. All equally stated they felt that practical childcare experience from raising children had increased their knowledge on factors which had both negative and positive impacts on children. This discourse is framed in Government documentation (Scottish Government, 1998) (see chapter 3.12) as the *righ*t knowledge for caring residing in parental experience, and arguably by association with mothers. There is also however, a sub-text that negates parental experience framed within the policy:

> *'When parents work towards SVQ qualifications, there is scope to assess their experience of parenting and related skills towards the accreditation of their competence'. (Scottish government (1998:2.34).*

In chapter 5.2, I highlighted that both Delia and Maisie came into childcare through engaging in entrepreneurial activities to balance their own financial needs with childcaring responsibilities. Glenys however, stated she was not looking for a career other than motherhood.

> Glenys: *early on I knew I wanted to be a mum, so I didn't aspire to be much more really. My mum was 19 when she had me. Sometimes I think I want to be something different. But what would I be? I think that maybe I put too much into my children but that's the way I am. Everything I done was around my family. I helped out at school and one of the teachers said 'why don't you do something like even at a playgroup': She said I would be a natural, but I had no confidence.*

Glenys had a firm plan for her future post-school, marrying at 19 and having children in quick succession. When her marriage failed, she believed childcare was the only route open to her because of her experiences as a parent. This aspect was congruent with Grant *et al.*, (2005, see chapter 3.8) who found working-class women, having brought up children, lacked confidence to re-enter employment, even though they held more marketable skills than they gave themselves credit for. It is obvious Glenys undervalues her skills as a parent, as she did not view it as ambitious, hoping for something more, (articulated clearly as '*something different')*. She is fulfilling the role that she watched her mother perform in a process of social reproduction (Paechter, 1998; see chapter 3.9), but is beginning to question other choices that might have been open to her as indicated by Allen and Osgood (2009) on their studies describing ambitions and wanting a different future than their mothers.

All the practitioners described their own role in raising children as being an essential link to their professional careers, highlighting the expectations placed on them as women, to fulfil family care obligations.

> Delia: *(it) was something my partner was really strong on. For a wee while, I resented… I felt bad (about feeling that way)*. *I needed to get a job for my own personal self. I felt my identity was getting lost indoors and being secluded and I had to think my identity again. At this stage I was just plodding along in life. I started working in the nursery, I loved that job, partly to have my daughter around me. I loved working to be fair.*

Henderson *et al.* (2010, see chapter 2.11) indicates this feeling is typical of the blame culture that women exposed to because it opposes traditional discourse relating to the *good mother*. In articulating her resentment on the limitations placed on to her through the power embedded in the *good mother* discourse and expressing a desire to work to meet her own needs, Delia arguably articulates a Foucauldian resistance, mobilising herself towards self-care (Foucault, 1984, see chapter 2.3). Delia needed time to self-regulate, refocussing the resentment she felt by having to stay home for her children. Self-regulation is interpreted as working towards rewriting the discourse that has power over you (Foucault, 1981), a preferred future identity when the present one does not conform to self-set expectations (Hamman *et al*., 2013, see chapter 2.3).

Whilst Delia felt guilt in discussing her own needs in relation to her caring responsibilities, Mary-Annie and Iris felt there was no question about them being the person responsible for their children.

> Mary-Annie: *I wouldn't have left that to my partner'. I was happy that I had condensed my hours so I could look after her more. I was offered a full-time post, but I wouldn't take it because I needed part time hours to suit. I realised that I wanted to do something if I was leaving my kid, I wanted it to be for something other than pushing paper. So, I took a part time job in the nursery. So, on one hand you have your kids, and you are thinking what's best for them and then you are thinking what's best for me because the reality is I need to have a life.*

Mary-Annie's narrative is arguably constructed through the discourse on gendered sacrifice. This is not only reflected in conflicts between balancing work and family responsibilities, but also the expectations placed on women via the broader discourse of the *good mother* (Tsouroufli, 2020) and other maternal discourses that subjugate women on becoming mothers (Osgood, 2012). There is also an understanding that temporality affects career decision-making, as indicated in the findings observed by Webb and McQuaid (2020, see chapter 3.2). These highlight the resulting effect if organisations do not consider their employee's career needs and care obligations over a life-course. Warin *et al.*, (2021 see chapter 2.13) note that the term career trajectory implies options that are freely chosen, as a way in which to improve your circumstances, and alludes to an ordered sequence of events as employees climb the ranks. This is more conducive to men's patterns of employment than women. For women with caring responsibilities, they often must sacrifice promotions as they balance competing life priorities, and some must even exit careers where there are not flexible working conditions.

Iris presents a strong account of her caring responsibilities:

> Iris *it's my role and it's made that way, isn't it*?'. *My eldest is halfway through primary two and I have never yet not taken him to school or picked him up. My boys, I am still like they are mine; they are precious, and I am not ready to ease up on that yet because the crazy thing is I need to, totally irrational, I know.*

The questioning tone by Iris signifies how she has constructed her gender positioning within the family, and I interpreted her tone as a dare to challenge me on this. For feminists, it also demonstrates the normalised discursive power that can be drawn on that

legitimises women's role in the gendered-labour divide. From a Foucauldian perspective it could also be argued that Iris, in her defence of her family position, has reached a state of self-care (Foucault, 1984; see chapter 2.3). Not only has she accepted her gendered situation, but she is not wanting to share the role, perhaps due to its association with a form of pastoral power in caring for her flock (Ball, 2017; see chapter 2.5). But there are further discourses contained within how Iris discusses irrational behaviours in wanting to care for your children. This concept implies, that she could either be doing something else with her time or even that she is aware of the gender-divide and that she appears to be maintaining it, even though she is a strong independent woman. I argue that her feelings are not only congruent with Sutherland (2010, see chapter 2.12) but support arguments on the shame and guilt felt in mothering experiences as previously highlighted in Delia's narrative. In Iris's narrative she perceives herself as being unable to manage her time as part of the discursive expectations of the *good mother*. This can emerge as part of a discursively constructed subjectivity, connected to guilt, where women shoulder the emotional pressures, often feeling that they cannot commit fully to either responsibility without some type of sacrifice (Henderson *et al.*, 2010, see chapter 2.11).

Iris also discussed work as a space for her own time, which she was not prepared to sacrifice. Iris chose to work in the same childcare setting that her mother had set up when she was a child after leaving university.

> Iris: *So, before it was, it would be women who look after the home. Now it's women who look after the home and the job and bring the money in and look after the kids. I don't think personally I would like to come away from work because I think you need head space not in the house and the same four walls solely with your children'.*

Iris, in wanting to make time for her children as indicated before, aligns with Hochschild's views on time-debts (2001, see chapter 2.16). Time-debts imply a negative equity, where a person is always on 'catch up', (also reflected in discursive constructions of the *good mother)*. Over time these accumulations of time-debts, for women, may continue to lower a person's self-esteem, contribute to poorer mental health, and affect their ability to build resilience going forward. This is because at some point, sacrifices between private and public spaces will need to be met and for some the pressure is insurmountable.

Future caring actions are not limited to thinking of one's immediate children. In addition to establishing childcare settings to work closer to their children, Maisie and Delia also discussed using the childcare settings that they had established as a future aspiration for

their grandchildren, where they appear to negotiate career cycles in relation to future expected care obligations. They are also arguably extending what I am calling a *maternal proximity*, a space which they had originally negotiated in the past for their own children and work, and which now encompasses a future for their grandchildren. This appears to indicate that the obligations of care do not stop once children are grown and as such is a pastoral power that controls not only our present but our future behaviours. This supports the reports from Carers UK (2012, see chapter 3.9) on the changing care dynamics of families. In these dynamics, temporal caring occurs and reoccurs taking women through generations of caring, from childrearing, into end of life caring for elderly family members.

In summary, in this section of chapter five, I have presented some of the rationales given by the practitioners for choosing professional carework, and I suggest they have two things at their common core. First, temporal caring responsibilities require employment that enables them to balance the commitments to their children in their private lives whilst providing financially for their families. The discourses on women and caring have not changed in any profound way over time. Sullivan (2018, see chapter 1.5) believes we have subjective time preferences that provide rationales or platforms for our next steps. Whilst ensuing actions are temporal, they bring our values or belief systems into alignment and because they are subjective to feelings in the moment, they can change at any given time. However, there is an underlying discursive subtext on whether these choices are freely undertaken. The options for women in working environments are limited if they have caring responsibilities, often requiring them to down-skill or take up employment in low-paid sectors (see Grant *et al.*, 2005, see chapter 3.8), not only to balance responsibilities but also to minimise feelings of guilt that they are providing *good enough mothering* for their children (Sutherland, 2010, see chapter 1.2).

Secondly, a discourse on the need for closer spatial-proximity between child and mother was outlined by the practitioners, and as I will argue later, is part of a protective factor noted in both discourses of *good mothering* and maternal gatekeeping (Doucet, 2006 and Gaunt, 2008; see chapter 3.9). This spatial-proximity is a perceived optimum space for caring to take place, where social and emotional connections to mothering responsibilities can be maintained (Milligan and Wiles, 2010; see chapter 2.10). This discourse can then influence the choices of women who are considering employment endeavours where they can satisfy those connections.

Whilst highlighting some of the gendered beliefs and assumptions the practitioners held on their own caring experiences as women, another conversation arose about men and their relationship to caring responsibilities. This aspect is now further discussed in relation to the discourses practitioners drew in relation to masculinity, and how some of these discursive constructions influence their interpretations of men in professional childcare contexts.

5.4 Discourses of men in care and performances of masculinity

Hedlin *et al.* (2019, see chapter 3.10) argues that men in professional childcare jobs are often framed as either a 'potential threat' to children or lacking the necessary skills and temperament for childcare. Conversely, Robb (2019, see chapter 3.10) argues that men are being actively recruited into childcare settings to act as alternative father-figures connected to the 'deficit male parent', and further their presence is expected to ameliorate problematic behaviours in young men. Robb (2019) further argues that the desire to recruit men into professional childcare can minimise the influence that mothers have in raising boys, who also provide positive social subjectivities. Examples of these include women who are employed in leadership roles in masculine perceived industries and also should not exclude considering the stability women can provide in raising children whilst contributing to family finances.

I now turn to the narratives in this study and how the practitioners discuss expectations and normalised assumptions of women's and men's subjectivities in relation to caring responsibilities. These are highlighted in terms of discourses on femininity and mothering and the role of emotions relating to the gendering of childcare labour, and how or by who it should be performed. Significantly, specific constructions of masculinities were articulated by the practitioners that drew on dominant discourses relating to gendered childcaring, which may highlight some of the barriers for men entering childcare professions as indicated by Eidevald *et al.* (2018, see chapter 3.10).

The practitioners shared their experiences of men and caring in response to pre-set questions, constructing their different understandings of masculinity. The fact that I anticipated some of the responses from the practitioners also suggests the acquired knowledge I hold as legitimised, as is indicated by the pre-set questions.

First, dominant discourses of masculinity appeared to create an 'otherness' to the stereotypical framing of women in the childcare workforce by the practitioners. The first

example of this was an expected response to rationales on why men may not be prevalent in professional childcare. These initial responses are arguably constructed via a discourse of an 'unnaturalness' of men undertaking paid childcare work, alongside a discourse of the 'male as family breadwinner'.

Mary-Annie*: the pressure for men is completely different. It's a society thing. I think people's perceptions of it is that's it's a women's job because it fits women's hours because its part time and they don't think it's acceptable for men to work part time. Men should be on full time wages because they are the ones you know that are meant to support the family. My experience of having male staff whose family have thought this wasn't a career path, they wanted them to have what is classed as a proper job.*

This discursive construction of masculinity was also found in the study by Nickerson *et al.* (2008, see chapter 3.10), where women practitioners frame 'real work' as socially traditional roles for men, which maximise benefits for the family in industries that represent presumed masculine physical traits.

> Maisie agreed: *Men need higher salary, hours, actually I think it's not the salary but the hours. In general, I think they want full time. I think it is quite sexist, but I think it's a reality. Yeah, because women stay at home mostly with the children until they are ready to go to school or nursery, before they return to work. It is still the women that do that whereas men keep the full-time jobs.*

Both Mary-Annie and Maisie, who are single breadwinners, focused on monetary aspects of employment barriers that men may experience. The discursive gendered positioning of family responsibilities implies that it is socially acceptable for single-women to manage on part-time remuneration as breadwinners. This contrasts with men, where 'financial provision is one of the most enduring signifiers of manhood and fatherhood' (Schiebling, 2020:6).

The second discourse framed on care subjectivities relates to perceived personal attributes. Caring is often described as a profession that is built on emotional labour. Butler (1993; see chapter 2.6) argues that this dominant conception is constructed via discourses on biological sex differences, but this purported difference alone, does not dictate the behaviours of all men or women. She argues that there are different ways in which masculinities and femininities are performed and these are not constrained by sex assigned at birth, but rather are performances of gender, which are socially constructed.

The practitioners highlighted the importance of 'soft' emotional skills, and abilities to build relationships and nurture as key requisites for care, skills which are arguably discursively constructed as feminine (Taggart, 2012; see chapter 2.10). Mary-Annie explained that she had entered the OSC profession after working in the civil service, a male-dominated profession, where valued traits conflicted with her own beliefs on ideal skills and attributes for professions:

> Mary-Annie: *When we talk about male-orientated work then I would have had to become like that, ruthless and ambitious and not care as much about people. We had conversations about moving up, but I didn't really want to play the game.*

Mary-Annie is here articulating dominant discourses on 'hegemonic masculinity'. Delia presents another socially dominant discourse of masculinity as connected to 'macho behaviour', which is in turn connected to a lack of self-reflexivity about emotion. This is implicitly contrasted in binary-oppositional terms, with the greater emotional literacy of women (Hochschild, 1983)

> Delia: *we bring up boys in the West of Scotland up to be macho. I would like to see us encouraging them to understand their emotions better.*

Delia indicates that men do not have the same emotional connections due in part to a culturally learned behaviour in West of Scotland, and whilst she has employed men in her setting, she indicates that the children see them *'as a man, doing man things'*. She thus indicates she perceives men as 'other' to the norm of women practitioners presumably undertaking 'feminine' activities in childcare settings.

Glenys also articulated the same gendered discourses of appropriateness and expected behaviours of practitioners. Glenys mentions changing nappies and bottle feeding as necessary childcare tasks, which she assumes men are unlikely to want to do. She appears to dismiss the idea that feeding could equally be undertaken by men to create bonding opportunities, as suggested by Hunter and colleagues (2017; see chapter 2.12) in a performance as an alternative 'caring masculinity'. This could indicate that Glenys may be associating bottle feeding as a sexed extension of breast-feeding, and therefore feels it is not part of male's prerogative to provide this duty. It appears that some of the arguments relating to men providing childcare stem from the binary discourse on sex and they are unable to separate distinct biological aspects of sexed bodies as argued by Butler (1993; see chapter 2.6), from understandings of mothering responsibilities, which could in fact be

provided regardless of perceived gendered physical embodiments. Glenys's views point to the strength of social stigma associated with 'stepping out' of the appropriateness of expected gendered behaviours, which prevents men from demonstrating their professionalism, supporting the findings of Eidevald *et al.* (2018).

The last discourses discussed in this section relate to Paechter's (2003; see 2.9) discussions on communities of practices as seats of power and how social practices are seen to be transferred between people through observations and replication of behaviours.

Iris illustrated how her observations had made her reflect on what she saw as the differences between women and men caring. In her opinion, the level of emotional connection in men as an alternative 'caring masculinity', is more profound than discursive rhetoric on emotional labour that is attached to female dispositions rather than males, supporting the findings of Hunter and colleagues (2017).

> Iris: *Sometimes I think they (emotions) are mainly in women; however, I watch in particular children with men, its completely different and it makes me think about care differently. The older kids get on so much better with the males, and I see in them what I had with the males in my life that showed me the care. And I think when men genuinely do care it is sometimes better or stronger than a lot the females that we have.*

Maisie also described the differences she has observed in the behaviours between genders when working in childcare settings.

> Maisie: *They (men) were more hands on. The women will maybe guide the children more, show them how to do something and then stand back. The male workers interact more with the children, whereas women socialise more (with each other)'.*

This conception is directly connected to the lack of gender diversity within the workforce teams themselves, and I argue contributes to barriers that men need to overcome in working as part of a team. This supports the findings of both Hedlin *et al.*, (2019) and Sczesny *et al.*, (2022); see chapter 3.10, who found that men find it difficult to navigate caring behaviours expected from them whilst performing the same duties that women childcare practitioners are expected to perform as hands-on duties with children.

Maisie also appeared to confirm the importance to her of socialising beyond performing childcare duties, as she does not require the same career intensity that she had in her earlier years. Instead, she is looking for an environment where she can 'e*njoy the staff and have a*

wider social circle'. This factor is maybe important to a certain age group of care worker who extend their career lifecycles to maintain social relationships, because it does not support the findings of Cullen and Perez-Truglia (2019; see page 50) for women of child-bearing age. However, these are the communities of practice discussed previously by both Duncombe and Marsden (1993; see chapter 3.5) and Paechter (2003; see chapter 2.9). Such communities of practice are considered valuable to women as they extend their networks and social circles. They are also places, where discourses on appropriate ways of being and doing in the profession are learned and legitimised and from which men may either be excluded or may exclude themselves.

In summary, in this section I have highlighted there are many facets to perceptions on gender and care, including emotions within labour and socialisation practices. Some practitioners draw on dominant discourses of masculinity including gendered assumptions on what men may, or may not, want to do in relation to caring, and gendered socio-economic discourses such as the 'male breadwinners'. In some instances, there was also an indication of what women 'allow' men to do, in assigning caring responsibilities. I argue from the interviews in this study, that the practitioners are aware of gendered discourses on caring for children and the disparity between men and women's performances, based on historical discourses on perceptions of mothering responsibilities and skills. The practitioners' constructions of masculinity did support some of the findings by Hedlin *et al.* (2019) and Robb (2019) (see chapter 3.10) in that they believed there were normalised traits and activities that appear to position men as 'othered' from caring. These included how traditional employment for men is framed by society but are also attached to gendered inequities such as disparities in financial reward.

The women in my study did not explicitly discuss another gendered discourse prevalent in discussion of the childcare workforce, that of men as a 'threat or potential abuser of children'. This is a discourse that male practitioners often mention in terms of fears that it will be applied to themselves as found in the studies by Eidevald *et al.* (2018) and Rohrmann *et al.* (2021). Rohrmann and colleagues (2021:30) state that 'the fear of paedophilia is perceived as a major obstacle to men'. This discourse did however appear in my findings with the women practitioners and will be covered later in a discussion on governances and regimes of power that frame caring professions in chapter 6.3, as well as in the next section on the perceived 'right' skills for caring.

5.5 Discourses on the 'right skills' in caring professions.

In this part of the analysis, I consider how the practitioners construct their understandings of the *right skills*, specifically for childcare, considering the characteristics and skills that the practitioners perceive as *best fit* for childcare practitioners. I look at where these might align with broader discourses of good parenting, which is arguably most often gendered as characteristic of the *good mother (*Walden, 2018; see chapter 2.11). Walden (2018:214) further argues that discourses on mothering skills are institutionalised allowing for them to be continually evaluated:

> *'To be a professional, one must recognize her subordinate status, even in her own home. To reinforce the need for professional motherhood, women were often identified by what they were not or what they did not want to be: a bad mother'.*

During the interviews I did not ask specific questions that related to what makes a 'good parent' or mothering skills within childrearing, As discussed by Paechter (1998; see chapter 3.9), the practitioners often appeared to revert to past experiences of mothering to judge both themselves and others on good parenting skills.

Mary-Annie has a responsibility for recruitment in her setting and stated her rationale about why recruits apply for professional childcare jobs. '*They recognise care as something that they are really good at. It could be that they are just like me, and they have got to that place in life'.* I argue, in agreement with Paechter (2003; see chapter 2.9), that this identification and resonance between likeminded applicants, for care positions, is significant. It is a perpetuation of traditional discourses relating to gender and the division of childcare labour within families in private, now transferring into professional public life, legitimising care as a female domain.

Several of the practitioners in my study highlighted the necessity of emotional skills in caring which are generally viewed as one of the 'soft skills', in that they are non-measurable and are perceived to reside within individuals as personal characteristics (Calanca *et al.*, 2019; see chapter 3.7). Whilst I have indicated that soft skills are difficult to measure, the practitioners have used benchmarking to construct what they believe are deemed 'right skills', which I will argue extend gendered expectations valued within the private arenas of mothering into professional contexts.

Maisie and Glenys both highlighted other soft skills which they believe are necessary for professional childcare, again relating to maternal subjectivities in private life.

Maisie: *Empathy is an important, 'thinking about you as a child, or your own children, and how you would feel if it was your own child.*

Glenys: Caring and compassionate, you are the parent for that short time, you know what I mean, you are fulfilling that'.

Glenys' use of the word parent is in the professional context of the corporate parenting responsibilities assigned as part of a work ethic (SSSC, 2021a; see chapter 2.4), or as often stated acting *in loco parentis*. However, despite the gender-neutrality of the word parent, Glenys is implicitly referring to *women* practitioners acting as alternative *mothers.* The practitioners appear to valorise tacit, or soft skills acquired through raising children, not only constructing what they believe to be the *right skills* as professional skills, but also reflecting the mothering skills that they also valued, indicating these represent the *good mother*. There appears to be a blurred separation between private and professional values on soft care skills.

Mothering is a subjective concept (see pages 44-45) and the practitioners, who have risen through the ranks within their careers have opportunities to valorise their desired mothering skills in applicants during the recruitment process. Over time these practitioners have developed professional knowledge, but arguably have also retained a discursive construction of the *good mother*, used as a benchmark for desirable childcare subjectivities. During the interviews, I asked the practitioners what they look for in potential care practitioners.

Iris: (I) *like the advantage of taking an older person who is mature, who has a sensible head on them'. I call it the 'mummy effect', you know the ones that are mums. Men, I find, even though kids gravitate to them, they can quite easily shut the door and leave, whereas I'll go home and stew on everything.*

Iris thus explicitly gendered her conception of the ideal childcare worker through her use of the term 'mum' and 'mummy effect'. Iris also reflected on a time when she became aware of her own role in relation to her mothering responsibilities: '*I thought I was good at my job until I became a mum*' and what she believes are the differences for men in childcare. Iris described an *'attachment*' to her caring role; in that she equally feels at home or in the workplace and believes that men can switch off attachments between work and home. Arguably Iris could be articulating the gendered Foucauldian conception of men and self-care, where detachment is seen as necessary to protect oneself above all else, as 'a

continuous concern throughout life' (Foucault, 2001). It is the perpetuation and valorising of traditional gendered discourses of mothering as care, that contributes to dynamics of maternal gatekeeping in professional childcare, which in turn can act as a potential barrier for men performing childcaring both in private and in professional contexts (Doucet, 2006; Gaunt, 2008; see chapter 3.9).

I now explore how those protective boundaries which are perceived as part of maternal gatekeeping (Doucet, 2006), are constructed through discourses on the r*ight skills*, legitimised over the course of time in the practitioners' private lives and may now in turn influence their behaviours in professional settings during the recruitment process.

The practitioners viewed choosing the 'right people' for care jobs as a protective responsibility to children and indicated it is not a role that they take lightly. Iris noted that she feels it a 24/7 job, from which you cannot disassociate yourself, and that she perceives that as the difference between mothers and male carers.

> Iris: '*That responsibility doesn't go away; you learn that as a mum'. For the women it's all one, it's that circle, it's your whole life, they can say this is my football time, this is my time to go out with the boys and go to the pub, and nothing else, I would be sitting in the pub going oh my god, sometimes it's like this blessing that they can close it off. They can shut that door for a period of time and say that's not my life right now.*

I argue that an invisible maternal gatekeeping dynamic can sometimes be enacted in the recruitment process, that draws on discourses of the *good mother*. The following table (Table 5.1) indicates the most frequently mentioned *right skills* desirable in applicants for childcare as discussed in the practitioners' narratives (These were not described as answers to a pre-set question but were interspersed throughout the interviews).

Essential skills and qualities for childcare as described by the practitioners in this study.
Passion for working with children and young people.
Caring approach and able to nurture children: Welfare and child development.
Ability to actively listen and use body language such as tone, position, communication.
Empathy: How does a child feel and what do they need as individuals
Cognitive skills: Attention to detail, processing change quickly.
Being professional: reflective practice, meeting codes of conduct and qualifications

Table 5.1 Practitioners' conceptions of the right caring skills

In comparing the practitioners' list of desirable skills and qualities to those in recruitment advertisements for teaching and social work professions, as highlighted in Calanca *et al.* (2009; see chapter 3.7), there were several similarities. These were particularly in perceived soft skills, such as having a caring approach, empathy, or ability to nurture, which are often viewed as emotionally intelligent skills. However, Vanderweyer (2016; see chapter 3.7) states these soft skills are not measurable, and are the subjective qualities valued by those recruiting, which in the case of childcaring professions are most likely to be women.

An interesting point is that the other desirable skills, mentioned by the practitioners within the whole study, have changed from the initial valorisation of mothering to a new discourse, more associated with professionalisation and compliance, as found by Osgood (2006; see chapter 3.11). Walden (2018:215) argues this is how mothering discourses can disempower and negate skills that are bound in tacit experience.

> *'For mothers, then, expertise was a paradox. A mother was threatened either by her experience or by her training, leaving her no avenue by which to achieve the status of expert'.*

The practitioners have included essential skills for applicants which are consistent with discourses embedded in standardisation and registration policies by regulating bodies, which would arguably have been unknown to the practitioners before they took part in their own upskilling for registration. These descriptions of essential skills reflect the language within standardised documents as used by The Care Inspectorate (2022) during self-evaluations and inspections and in codes of conduct as set out by the SSSC (2016b).

Maisie reflected on the beginning of her career, pre-degree, and the skills she had originally brought to the setting:

> Maisie: *we did the things we thought children needed and at the time the depths of thinking wasn't really there, and the depths of knowledge about how children really learn. So, I think (you need) some skills like the reflective practice for instance, consideration, communication and being unselfish in a team, thinking more about the needs of others.*
>
> Mary-Annie: *I still think you have to have the ability to learn. I think you have to be able to develop as a person and you have to want to develop: You are informing*

children in the most formative part of their lives; this is such a real issue. So, a passion for children's welfare and development

My analysis shows that whilst the practitioners' discussions are consistent with dominant discourses on leadership and upskilling within caring professions (Osgood, 2006; see chapter 3.11), there also appears to be some conflict with the mothering values that the practitioners hold dear as the *right skills* for entering the childcare profession in the first place (as discussed at the beginning of this chapter). This perception might provide a possible answer to Webb and McQuaid's (2020; see chapter 3.2) findings on the mismatch of skills as viewed by employers and employees. This may also illustrate that the practitioners are beginning to distance themselves from being seen as only *good mothers*, which also reflects the differences in language between the Government workplace reviews between 1998 (Scottish Government, 1998 and 2015 (Siraj, 2015, as discussed in chapter three). It also raises a question about the practitioner's own employability. Would they still employ themselves as women entering care professions if they had not demonstrated their newly perceived *right skills* during recruitment?

The indication of discourses on leadership and professionalism is at odds with the 'maternal gatekeeping' discourse which I previously discussed in this chapter. I will return to this in chapter six with a rationale for the differences. I have argued in this section that the practitioners placed value on mothering skills from knowledge of their own private care experiences, which I have labelled the discourse of the *good mother*, but which also demonstrate a value on skills attained through an upskilled professional knowledge using language that I have labelled a discourse of 'professionalism'. I have also considered that there are opportunities through recruitment processes for lead childcare practitioners, (predominantly women), to legitimise and perpetuate the dominance of discourses that they draw on in relation to the 'right skills' for professional childcare.

In summary within this chapter, I have argued that because it is women who are predominantly employed within both career and teaching fields, and because women are more likely to hold the key to recruitment strategies in childcare settings, it is the recruitment process which currently helps to perpetuate and legitimise discourses on *right skill*s needed for the profession. These discourses are highly gendered. Most of the practitioners appeared to want male role-models for children. However, once men were recruited in their settings, their expectations on how they should perform care were misaligned. This perhaps highlights the mismatch of skills expected from recruitment

interviews through to practice situations. I have also argued that in valorising the soft skills that are perceived as mothering or residing in mothers such as the ‘mummy effect’, the women practitioners could arguably be unknowingly perpetuating a dynamic of ‘maternal gatekeeping’. Maternal gatekeeping can arguably be perceived as a form of gendered power and is considered in more depth in the next chapter of this study, which discusses power relationships and the way discourses on power may have influenced the practitioners’ behaviours in performances of care.

Chapter Six: Discourses of Power in Childcare Professions

6.1 Introduction

As highlighted previously, power as described by Foucault (1980, 1988; see chapter 2.3) resides and is exercised mainly through various regimes; institutions including government (state power) and the church (pastoral power) that play a part in the way we are conditioned to behave. Foucault (1980:162) questions if people are aware of the 'constraining, subjecting, unbearable character' that living under constant 'surveillance' exposes us. In this manner any change to our behaviour is, in Foucault's opinion, connected to discourses of disciplinary power, imposed either externally through policies and practice or from within as self-regulation (Foucault, 1977:187):

> '*Disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility'*. '*It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection*'.

In the first part of this chapter, I reflect on the practitioners' perceptions on discourses of power that exercise discipline, whether invisible or visible and whether they exert any influence on the practitioners' performances of childcare and/or their formations of 'professional identity'.

6.2 Discourses of state power: performativity and professionalisation

In chapter one, I highlighted that my experience was drawn from the 28 years that I have been employed in OSC and during that time the profession has undergone a multitude of changes which have influenced the way practitioners are expected to behave. These changes are mainly driven by legislation and policy infused with discourses of performativity in relation to 'best possible outcomes' for children (Siraj, 2015). Through, these legislations and policies, state power is enacted as disciplinary governance, on the professionals responsible for the changes. As such, the profession has been upskilled, regulated, and prescribed for using standards, codes of practice, and inspecting criteria, impacting on childcare practitioners' beliefs and ways of being (Scottish Government, 1998. 2003, 2006; Siraj, 2015; see chapter 3.12). Here I discuss some of the practitioners' thoughts on disciplinary discourses of power and how those powers may be enacted on practitioners, producing 'docile bodies', who comply to profession guidelines (Foucault, 1984; see chapter 2.4). These compliances include discourses of professionalisation

through upskilling knowledge, with requirements for qualifications and continuous professional development (CPD), and to perform and maintain standards as laid out in codes of work practice (SSSC, 2016b). Osgood (2006:5; see chapter 3.11) describes these conditions as part of a 'surveillant gaze' and levy increasing pressure on practitioners, as 'sites of power'. The childcare profession has a remit to provide 'best outcomes' for children, and the required qualifications legitimise discourses on what the government believes are in the 'best interest' for children (Cruickshanks, 1999), not whether the profession themselves believes that they are fit for that purpose.

The pre-set interview questions were designed to promote discussion with the practitioners in order to unpick the discourses they draw on when employed in OSC and how they believed they may be evident in policy and practice. The practitioners did not however, confine themselves to discussions on their professional experiences, but how discourses on professionalisation and performativity were also attached to emotional responses from past life experiences affecting the present.

Delia spoke about her feelings on past school attendance, and the implications the enforced return to education to upskill, had on both her own morale and self-regard:

> Delia: *Think about school and if you are a grade D student? I was the D grade student going to uni. It knocked my self-esteem. As to look way back then I didn't have the qualifications, but I guess that I had the fact that I was passionate, and I was good at hanging around with them (children) so for me that was enough back then. I think that I am probably stronger now in myself and I think the qualification did that, the degree did that for me. Like I value myself more.*

Delia had strong feelings about the compliance that was expected in her working environment after the introduction of the degree qualification that she needed to retain her professional position. It is possible to read her statement as showing that on entry to university, she felt disadvantaged by her working-class background and her lack of qualifications. More, that she was concerned that university would diminish the esteem she had built as a lead practitioner after leaving school. It not only felt like an unequal opportunity for Delia as suggested by Osgood (2010; see chapter 3.11) but is also arguably, an example of performativity discourses as coercive. The emotions that Delia discussed, supports Ball (2003, page 82) on the power of discourses of performativity to negatively influence a person's self-judgement. These effects are long-lasting, and I suggest could negatively affect career resilience. However, her later reflections on the

benefits of the degree could indicate how as a working-class woman she is raising her status, constructing a form of self that Skeggs (2005, see page 41) describes towards as a highly classed moral subjectivity. Skeggs (2005:965) states that governments 'rarely name' the classes that are subject to their governance and the coercive nature of upskilling to maintain employment is one such artifact that is constructed through these discourses. The way learning is enforced also troubles Foucault's assumption on self-care being achieved through gaining knowledge and learning truths from significant others (Foucault, 1988; see chapter 2.5).

When the degree qualification was introduced, many practitioners were not as positive as the Government on its aim to demonstrate a professional workforce through academic achievement. Iris, as part of her networking, supports various OSC professional forums representing many practitioners in an area of Glasgow:

> Iris: *There must have been about 100 on it and only 3 of us were interested in any qualification. The rest had the attitude that I was too old, or I can't be bothered, why should I?'*

This general resistance from the OSC profession to the upskilling requirement was indicated within the initial reviews of the qualification (Davis *et al.*, 2014:24). However, it was stated that they (practitioners in OSC) appeared to be 'resisting' not only the qualification but the 'process' in general. In many cases finance to support an already underpaid and underfunded profession was not forthcoming from government sources. Maisie discusses some of the barriers to upskilling, drawing on government discourses that promote performativity. This is an example of what Foucault (1982b) highlights as the invisible discursive powers that display tangible consequences, but which are seldom discussed:

> Maisie: *You know we are looking for someone to stay and do a qualification and if you leave then we will be looking for some of the money back. People just wanted the job so they would say yes anyway. But it didn't happen, some people would gain the qualification and move onto a full-time job. But with people's circumstances you can't really put it on them, and if they are low-income earners, anyway, how could you ask for all that money back?*

The process included not only funding the qualification, but also the '*paperwor*k' and '*the evaluations*' which became onerous and displaced direct childcare duties. Maisie highlighted the demographics of those working in childcare professions, drawing on

classed discourses expressed in terms of low-income employment as stated by both Skeggs (2005), and Osgood (2006, 2012). Iris agreed with the reasons for attrition stating that '*we lost very good caring people'* who were intimidated by the new upskilled qualifications (as also found in Osgood, 2006). Osgood (2006:9) attributes this to the denigration and devaluing of previous skills which relied on emotional labour and soft skills to provide best outcomes for children. The discursive rhetoric of professionalisation, introduced by the Scottish Government, has been framed as raising quality (as highlighted in chapter one). However, it is discussed by the practitioners from a conflicting perspective, not only in relation to the practitioners' identities, but also to the financial stability of the organisations themselves. The practitioners are arguably demonstrating resistance to the constrained circumstances that are being levied on them through professionalisation discourses. The practitioners also query which part of their degree qualification was 'fit for purpose' for professional childcare, as they do not believe they reflect their caring skills that they themselves deem necessary for effective performance.

Whilst Mary-Annie enjoyed the experience of university she stated that '*I don't think it changes how you care or maybe it does but at what level?'.* Iris also stated: *'I definitely benefitted from it, in that it challenged my mind, it didn't change a thing on the floor.* Maisie however highlights*: 'I remember being asked to write why you were there and I wrote because I was told I had to be there'.*

It could be argued following Butler (1999) that the attendance at university was only part of a performance to comply with professionalisation. Practitioners still valued more highly, (and were influenced more strongly), discourses of the *good mother,* which rely on soft skills and experience bringing up children. These discussions are reflective of the studies by Wingrave and McMahon (2016; see chapter 3.6) who were concerned that an emphasis placed on academic skills could result in the minimisation of practical skills equally necessary to providing good childcare outcomes, and an undervaluing of those skills. From a Foucauldian perspective as argued previously (see page 27), these outcomes to improve the wellbeing of children are a form of governmental biopower. I argue that the practitioners are also demonstrating resistance to State measurable goals as found within the degree through not legitimising its worth in real practice (Foucault, 1988). This attitude is congruent with Hodgson (2005; see chapter 2.6) who argues that in order to know what you are resisting you must first obtain it, i.e., the qualification in this case.

Delia suggests that the performativity of professionalism expectations, is more for the benefit of the consumer. as suggested by Ball (2003). That is, it could be argued that parents, as the purchaser of childcare services, expect value for money:

> Delia: *the parents are sharp and finding one's, settings with no bad grades, that matters to them, I check. If I didn't have grades, how would I measure myself? I don't know, I think passion, truly doing what's right, having those kids at the centre of everything that they do. You are in this bad relationship with someone who has power over you'*.

Delia articulated conflicted views here, because she still indicated that her own benchmark for performativity is to be found within the skills that all the practitioners highlighted as a central requirement for childcare within table 5.1. This suggests she is also drawing on discourses of the *good mother* to justify good performance and therefore outcomes.

OSC as a market for commodified labour, and discourses of the classed nature of childcare (Skeggs, 2005 and Osgood, 2012), as well as the expected standards from others were discussed by Glenys:

> Glenys: *Now all these kids can buy and sell you, their parents are all very well off, I did find a lot of them couldn't say thank you for things, they didn't appreciate things please and thank you, It's about common courtesy. A child didn't want what we had, He said 'my mum and dad pay hundreds of pounds', he knew exactly and that what parents think well we have paid for that. It's like somebody paying for cleaner to come into their house and they probably think just the same.*

Glenys' feelings on her treatment by children supports the findings of Butler *et al.*, (2019:1 see page 38) who argues that childcare settings are sites of 'cultural transmission and social reproduction' and that those that can purchase labour in the West are likely to be white, middle-class women. Glenys likening domestic cleaners to childcare, supports Skeggs's (1997) argument that lower-classed professions are perceived as without value and arguably this perpetuates the dominant discourses that maintain the undervaluing and underpayment on childcare within society, keeping it linked to the private spaces of life.

The arguable move away from *good mother* discourses, which were child-led (with traditional caring practices perceived as feminine), appears to produce something more contrived and stifling in the performativity and professionalisation discourses. Osgood (2006; see chapter 3.11) argues that practitioners do feel the burden created by an

overbearing surveillance, where the emotional pressures of working under a strict government-set regime to ameliorate educational and poverty gaps, has a negative impact on morale. This pressure to perform to standards resembles panoptical power (Foucault, 1977; see chapter 2.3) where a fear of the new standards has exaggerated practice even when inspectors were not present and there is an implied disciplinary threat:

> Maisie: *It was really, really hard. Not the qualification but the practice, the change, looking at the standards and matching. I think some people had been doing it for so long that they knew everything. Why did they have to meet someone else's standards*.
>
> Glenys*: It is so structured, you sit there and don't move, the door stays open so they can see you. There are too many rules. Paperwork in there its horrendous, you plan an activity every day, you had to make sure you did your activity, the one you were on, maybe two a week you had to write up and the sheets took you an hour and a half to fill in, for an after school. Why would you need that? I can understand in a nursery. But an after school. A lot of people didn't have the qualifications to fill one in. And I had a big booklet, and everything was all coded. I was like you are having a laugh, really!*
>
> Iris: *Yes, so define quality? Is it quality that the children feel safe and secure, and they are stimulated, and they know that there is someone there to nurture them or is quality in the paper because we done something good? For parents it's because they are happy and want to come in every day. I remember when it was me as a parent putting my son somewhere and we opted for when you walk into the building and the feeling that you got. And that's created by the people that work there and not what the Care Inspectorate has said on a report that I didn't even read.*

I have argued there is a conflict stemming from discourses of power constructed by government documentation which have changed over time. For instance, previously I highlighted that State power is the part governments play in determining what is promoted as dominant discourses, laying out expectations through policies on what must be followed as practice (Foucault, 1984). I have argued that the women the government reached out to expand OSC to meet the economic needs of the country (Scottish Government, 1998), are the same women, now in need of remediation according to the very same discourses that promotes them as parental experts. Where mothering skills were once valorised, these traditional arguably gendered attributes have been replaced and devalued, framed as now insufficiently competent to meet children needs in a professional capacity.

One area which the practitioners did however agree on, was that qualifications and standards had brought about changes in their reflective practice which appear to draw on perceptions from the professionalisation discourses which are normalised by the practitioners and then self-regulated in practice. Delia saw reflective practice as a form of emotional intelligence where you could continually review your behaviours, '*reflecting on what reactions you get*', as staff 'need to '*adapt and not react'*. Interestingly Iris saw this as '*fluffy*' and that reflection was a buzz word. For Iris, what '*matters to people on paper is that you can reflect, and you can see what you are doing*'. It is unclear who Iris refers to as 'the people' but assumedly as Care Inspectors are generally the only people who inspect paper evaluations in settings, this arguably means people in power. This type of reflective practice is viewable by external inspectors to show productivity and quality in settings. However, this was a concept learned during upskilling and all the practitioner's discussed reflection as a method of improving practice. Mary-Annie stated that '*the qualification benefitted me, it started my reflective…it opened me up to being more reflective'*. However, I argue that this mode of thinking is an example of the symbolic panopticon (Foucault, 1977) with self-regulating behaviours in response to a perceived set of standards and accountabilities. As a result of valuing reflective practice to evaluate and improve, the practitioners did not appear aware that this type of self-modification had been normalised into their practice. I would also argue that those who undertook the qualification, appeared to verbally resist the necessity of obtaining the degree, whilst also demonstrating a conscious performance of compliance (Foucault, 1988). Completion of the degree was only to ensure they could fulfil registration obligations to retain their jobs. This is an example of 'conforming to dominant constructions of professionalism' as a Foucauldian 'disciplinary technology of the self' (Osgood, 2006:7.

I have argued in this first section how State power in many cases is visible because it is often demonstrated through discourses of standardisation, regulation, and performativity ensuring a prescribed way of doing things. I have also argued that the practitioners demonstrated an awareness and performed resistance to powers that constrain the practitioners valued ways of being. I have however found that there are times when the practitioners conform to powers levied as dominant discourses of professionalism, which in Elias' terms would not only be to 'buffer harm', and to combat underlying feelings that disempower, but also to enact a form of resilience (Tabboni, 2001).

I have analysed where the practitioners are drawing on disciplinary discourses perpetuated within state power in the first section of this chapter. In the second section of this chapter, I now turn to discourses of pastoral power that are contained within discursive policies and practices in childcare professions. Pastoral responsibilities are a key feature in all caring professions. As Ball (2017) highlights the practice and knowledge that underpins care is learned as leaders, who must shepherd staff to a consensus through reflective practice discourses. This is symbolic of the church confessional, generally performed through reflecting-on discretions and faults, to effect personal change (Foucault, 1988).

6.3 Discourses on pastoral power: Truth, confessions and self-care

I highlighted in chapter two, that discourses of pastoral power are historically associated with church practices rather than state powers of the sovereign. I also highlighted that Foucault (1982b) indicates the purpose of the Christian church was to save souls or shepherd people to salvation in the next life. However, Foucault (1982b:783) also indicates how pastoral power and its genealogy goes beyond church practices and in contemporary society is:

> *'no longer a question of leading people to their salvation in the next world but rather ensuring it in this world. And in this context, the word "salvation" takes on different meanings: health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents'.*

In this respect, pastoral power applies to OSC practitioners as the shepherds of contemporary salvation through wellbeing, as found in discourses of both professionalisation and the *good mother*. It is predominantly women who are charged with the protection of children, and undertaking duties that best meet the needs, welfare, and care of those they are responsible for (Gilles, 2006, see page 78). I label these as discourses of wellbeing, which Foucault (1984, see page 31) terms biopower because welfare is subjected on what is perceived as the needs of the body. Foucault (1988b: 783) also states that pastoral power *'is a form of power which does not look after just the whole community but each individual in particular, during his entire life'*. However, as Golder (2007, see page 32) argues, this is one of the tensions in Foucault's works on pastoral power, because it is not always possible to administer individual wellbeing, without sometimes sacrificing the needs of others. I will return to these concepts of pastoral power later.

First, I consider another aspect of pastoral power, levied through disciplinary discourses, which lie within symbolic church practices of confession of sins or reflecting on faults (Ball, 2017). As discussed previously, in childcare settings, reflective practice is discursively presented by regulating bodies to fulfil codes of conduct and professional standards (SSSC, 2016b). Foucault (2019) states this power is subjected on the person through compulsory professionalisation practices and therefore controls perfunctory ways of being. However, Foucault (2021:53) suggests that on speaking the truths about oneself, or what care practitioners know as reflective practice, is not only a constant fight, but also a means for therapeutic intervention.

I found this part of the study the most challenging because it illuminated not only truths that underpin the practitioners' beliefs, but it appeared to reveal an internal conflict, about professionally expected behaviours, which contested some of the practitioners' own deeply held personal values. In some cases, the practitioners were demonstrating what I am labelling *shadowverse*; where thoughts on caring responsibilities are not in line with dominant discourses, and in some cases run contrary to them, disclosing what I am interpreting to be underlying tensions. Whilst there are similarities to counter-discourse, as described by Osgood (2012, 2019), illustrating thoughts outside 'hegemonic framings on professionalism', I consider that shadowverse is more veiled and not an overt challenge to discourses on professionalism. Nevertheless, the discussions articulated fears instilled by drawing on discourses of panoptical disciplinary power. This reflects a historical version of pastoral power that was attached to the church, where confession was generally associated with sinning. I argue shadowverse is a similar concept to Ward and McMurray's notion (2016; see chapter 3.3) on the darker side of emotional labour, which often goes unacknowledged and where revelations of fears and fragility are suppressed to present a more controlled persona, which is more in keeping with the expected performance of the profession.

Whilst I do concur with Osgood (2010b), that the participant/researcher relationship is an artificial construction and issues of inequality and power must be acknowledged, I also consider that a degree of trust, in what could be considered 'good enough reciprocity', may evolve (Leavy and Harris, 2019:152, see chapter 4.3). *Shadowverse* was spoken particularly in relation to feelings that were troubled by panoptical power, almost whispered in case the confessions could be overheard (Fejes, 2011). It revealed a tangible fear of being found out, with the potential for being disciplined for making overtly critical

views that are contrary to dominant discourses, and feelings cogent with the oppressing panoptical power that is discussed by Foucault (1977) as an all-seeing presence.

> Glenys whispered '*I think you have to be very careful. If someone tells me to do something though I don't think is right, I won't do it. I could lose my job; I could be stripped of everything.*

The experiences discussed by some practitioners, I interpreted as emotionally charged, as they were interspersed with sighs and other verbal cues such, as raised eyes/eyebrows. I argue this concept of reflective practice is *shadowver*se, manifested as an expression of conflict and associated with guilt as indicated by Sutherland (2010, see page 46):

> *Iris: Now you are expected to do all that (housework, qualifications) and hold down a fulltime job and do well at that job (waving hands around). Somewhere in there I can't allow myself to say (with my life) no wonder. You beat yourself up: As a parent on the outside, it seems important, we have our s**t together, why*?

Some of the practitioners' narratives indicate how pressures from professional responsibilities blur the emotions carried into home life and vice versa. Whilst some of the practitioners confessed to feelings of being overwhelmed by workloads and balancing life, they appeared to be blaming themselves for their inability to juggle the challenges thrown at them. Sutherland (2010) states that this typifies discourses on the gendered expectations on women. Iris' views support Osgood's findings (2012) on the personal investment required to become or even stay professional.

Some practitioners drew on discourses of the gendering of care and its association with altruism and discursive virtuous caring, but also seemed to counter Gaiman's (2012) presentations of 'moral careers', which does not discuss the dilemmas for working-class women gaining leadership responsibilities. For instance, Glenys highlighted her voluntary demotion and subsequent decision to leave the profession:

> Glenys: *I never really saw myself (as a manager) when I was in the after-school care. My manager left to get married, but I had got the assistants post and I ran it for about a year, and it was horrendous. I couldn't sleep at night for worrying over it. It was all on your shoulders. It's quite sad to see, just feeling downtrodden, with life and just don't enjoy it anymore. I think if you don't enjoy it then you are in the wrong job.*

Foucault (2021) argues that confession or verbalisation should be cathartic or a means in which to ameliorate the truths that you uncover about yourself. However, I argue that Glenys appears to highlight alternative feelings which indicate a feeling of sadness, leaving her demoralised. As a result, she has agentically resigned as a form of self-care which Foucault (1988, see page34) discusses as gaining freedom. This is in keeping with Osgood (2012:131, see chapters 2.3 and 3.11), who suggests in her later findings that the 'professional self' is continually subjected to moral and internal disputes that are encountered and reconciled during and within practice.

In the introduction, I indicated pastoral power may be attached to several discourses and it is framed historically by Foucault (1982b, 1988), as related to symbolic church practices. The first discourses I have discussed represents the church as confessor for personal discretions, in articulating personal truths as discourses of self-discipline. The second aspect I consider that is associated with historical church practices is that of the shepherd, or the protector (Ball, 2017). I indicated that it is predominantly women who have a protection role to play in the welfare of children. This is apparent through discursive professionalisation requirements in government childcare policies including child protection and wellbeing outcomes for better futures for children (SSSC, 2021). Alternatively, Foucault (1982b) suggests the salvation within pastoral power is demonstrated in contemporary caring, through providing for the wellbeing of society:

> *Mary-Annie: I think you have to (sigh)…maybe it's a practical thing of what needs to be done and put aside how much that may cause you, I don't know anxiety or pain or whatever. Whether that's professional or just practical (shrug of shoulders.) On one hand you are thinking what's best for them and then you are thinking what's best for me because the reality is I need to have a life.*

Mary-Annie appears to suggest that care responsibilities are professionalised to such an extent that there is no time allowed to experience emotions as an individual. In chapter two, the findings of both Ward-Griffin and Marshall (2003) and Monrad (2017) consider that the commercialisation of care has created an ability to disconnect from emotional labour which is transferable between work and home situations. This is also a form of governmentality where daily decisions are becoming depersonalised (Foucault, 1988).

However, this runs contrary to the findings of Carroll *et al.*, 2006, (see page 60) who found the emotional nature of caring was a factor in career resilience, I argue this detachment, that Mary-Annie describes, could happen when carers feel overburdened with some of the

responsibilities, they hold themselves accountable for. Further, mothering duties and responsibilities are in the main attached to intensive emotional work (Mazumdar *et al.*, 2022) and this depersonalisation troubles the dominant discourses of the *good mother* and caring. This may also indicate that new 'truths' are being constructed on carework, drawn from discourses on traditional professional behaviours more commonly associated with men. This reframing follows Sutherland (2010), who suggests that women are considering ways in which to negotiate and resist feelings of shame and guilt that accompany the *good mother*, rejecting perceived failures to meet their societies' expectations.

Both Maisie and Iris highlight that some of the newer recruits to childcare professions seem to display a counter-discourse to assumptions that women perform care as altruistic, or have the innate skills and behaviours for caring (Doucet, 2006, Taggart, 2012):

> Maisie: *Sometimes people behave in a way that makes you feel like they are empathetic but really, they are just robotic about it. I think sometimes it draws people who think that they can't do anything else so it's the easiest job for them. So really empathetic people are not always those that work in care. I think it does matter why you are in the job, even if you do a good job, you are always going to slip up if you don't have the right attitude.*
>
> Iris: *The younger ones don't buy into the professionalisation thing, while the older ones who have been in the job for a long time and have their heart and souls invested in it, they do. The younger ones have that mentality of its only looking after the weans, they think others view us as unskilled, unprofessional. I think they are just passing through regardless, unfortunately. They need to come with the value set to start with.*

These narratives support the disconnect that Webb and McQuaid (2020; see chapter 3.6) found in their studies. This disconnect refers to differing values of new staff and staff who have been in the job for several years, and what professional care might be to a new generation of childcare practitioners. Maisie describes above what can be seen as discursively constructed performances.

In summary in this section of the chapter, I argue that it appears new practitioners are resisting discourses of pastoral care that draw on being the *saviour and protector* to fulfil government aims for the best outcomes for children. Instead, it is implied caring is no longer a vocation aligned with altruistic or innate traits, but a stepping-stone in pursuit of careers with higher values in society and to protect self-interest. I argue this demonstrates a change in thinking on the nature of professional care, from discourses aligned with the

good mother, to the dominant discursive rhetoric on neoliberal performativity and standardisation. This is more in keeping with patriarchal structures of business fuelled, as Osgood (2012) suggests by discourses on the professionalisation of childcare and childcare as a commodity.

Lastly in this section, I return to pastoral power symbolised as the protector. As previously indicated, the practitioners in this study are lead professionals, with an added responsibility for the recruitment of a new generation of practitioners. I now analyse the counter-discourses some of the practitioners discussed in relation to expectations of the *right skills* for professional practice. The practitioners appear to be aware that there is a mismatch between themselves and newer generations of childcare professionals in perceived values and emotional attachments to carework. However, they appeared unaware of the influence of gendered discourses within recruitment that frame men as a potential threat to children, as suggested by Hedlin *et al.* (2019; see chapter 3.10) in their findings with male practitioners.

Here, I argue that maternal gatekeeping is a protective pastoral power. Whilst often noble in intention, it can act as a barrier to men in childcare professions from recruitment to performance. Recruiters may base their 'performance expectations' on gendered discourses of what caring should look like and who will best reproduce it. I argue providing protective or nurturing services is an expectation within discourses of the *good mother* and there is a lack of awareness of power dynamics behind the behaviours lead practitioners use in upholding their remit. If lead practitioners, including myself, follow discursively constructed guidelines from government and regulatory policies, then I argue we can unknowingly perpetuate and maintain the gendering discourses of care, through the protective aspects of pastoral power.

Iris says of herself as a mother quoting something she read that resonated with her:

> *'I am the keeper', and its generally mums, so 'I am the keeper of the appointments, the doctors ones, the school ones, the washing, the ironing, the cleaning, but I am also the keeper of being one step ahead of you, knowing that you are going to go into a meltdown, that you are so hungry this is going to turn your world upside down'. You are the keeper of all the knowledge.*

I argue that 'keeping' is a protective factor, defending children from risks in the world, safeguarding their being. This protection extends both in and between the private spaces of mothering to the public spaces of professional childcare as an invisible power.

When questioned about men in childcare, all the practitioners stated that men play a vital role in the profession to reflect diversity and to offer children a 'male' perspective on life. The women practitioners appear to support the findings of Hedlin *et al.* (2009), that as women they draw on specific discourses and constructions of masculinities such as the 'substitute father' or 'alternative father figure'.

> *Maisie: With one of the staff, he liked computers and games so he would be in their doing it with the children. Whereas the women will maybe guide the children, show them how to do something but stand back a bit. The men that we have had looked to be doing and playing with the children we don't have many very many male role models, we are excited to have these men around.*

> *Glenys: I think it brings another balance to it. Kids are growing up in households, you have your mum and your dad, well that's what you hope. And there will be ones that maybe don't have a dad, it's nice to have that figure there. I think it's a good thing.*

There was an expectation that men would perform hegemonic masculinities within childcare practice and are primarily recruited to perform a specific father-type figure (see Robb, 2019; chapter 3.10), rather than allowing men access to the same role expectations as women practitioners:

> Mary-Annie: *If you are in an environment where there are hardly any boys then having a male member of staff might not make any difference, I don't know I am just floating it*

However, one practitioner indicated that a male practitioner is only required if boys are present in the setting and assumes girls therefore do not require the same male leaders, as boys. I argue this contributes to the perpetuation of discourses that gender childcare as stated by Paechter (2003). with female children observing practice by only women performing childcare for children.

Iris states clearly her perspective on men caring for children, in which she appears to suggest that childcare skills do not appear in men without intense coaching. This implies that the skill is not innate, and therefore unnatural for men: *Iris: 9 out of 10 times they say to you outright (men that is) I don't know how to do this so yes (we) absolutely spoon feed (them.*

I have also to confess being keen to recruit men into the profession, I realise that I may have over-explained recruitment questions in interviews, possibly anticipating that I might have to change questions in relation to 'soft skills', in order not to disadvantage men. I am

now questioning myself on my actions, as I have offered additional details or rephrased questions, during the recruitment process predominantly with male applicants rather than women. I argue that this is how maternal gatekeeping is made visible, where perceptions required for professional practice appear conflated with values influenced by discourses of 'protection' and being a *good mother*.

In summary this chapter discussed how pastoral power in the form of reflection and confession appears to shape the practitioners' responses to discourses outlined within performativity and regulation documentation. The practitioners draw on normative practice on reflection learned from engaging in higher education that influences their responses within the research interview. The confessing or reflective nature of their responses illustrates how discipline within pastoral power operates in childcare practice and that it has been normalised into everyday experiences. Reflection should capture ways in which to evaluate practice for the better, but instead the narratives reflect a critical, almost castigating approach to the self. Reflection should also celebrate and evaluate the best of practice, in order that it can be replicated for best outcomes, and I argue in line with Osgood (2012) that reflection has become a tool representing panoptical self-discipline. Further the connections between reflection and performativity are creating a 'burned-out' profession where the joy of caring has been sacrificed in lieu of meeting government targets. I have also considered how self-care is perhaps unattainable in the Foucauldian sense, which directly conflicts with values on being the *good mother*. Secondly, I argue that pastoral power was also evident in the form of maternal gatekeeping as a protective force which is unknowingly performed and may be driven by underlying maternal discourses that 'other' masculinities and maintains the framing of care as a female traditional role.

Chapter Seven: Discourses of Time in Everyday Lives

'I am remembering the memory'.

(Paul Anderson, date: the recent past)

7.1 Introduction

I next analyse impacts of time or temporality as discussed within the practitioners' narratives. Researchers rarely discuss time aspects in other small-scale studies featuring recruitment in caring professions, because time implies longer periods of research, such as in longitudinal studies. In the epigraph to this chapter, I highlight my son's recollection of an event, where he said, '*I am remembering the memory'*. Schütz (1969; see chapter 2.15) terms this recollection the 'durėe', where our memories from the past have significance to us in the present. The rationale for drawing memories from the past to the present is 'in order' to change things for the future (Muzzetto, 2006; see chapter 2.15). In this chapter, I argue philosophical understandings of both chronological time and perceived time as a felt experience, emerge as a power that has temporal influences over our choices in both private and professional spaces. New truths on caring professions as discussed in the last chapter (6.3), could be argued as a time-specific era, a future anticipation. This is a significant concept in the work of Foucault, who indicated that power within discourses, continues to evolve throughout time. He termed this 'the phenomena of temporal succession and sequence' (Foucault, 2002:183, see page28). I argue from this, that time and temporality are reflected in how we negotiate or resist powers at different points of our life and are also dependent on the meanings attached to that power from knowledge gained through the life course.

7.2 Discourses on time as chronological and linear

Time has different meanings for everyone and the way we measure it depends on the discourses we draw from, and that seem to have the most value and significance to specific times in our lives. Foucault (1977:150) argues time is a disciplinary power that:

> *'Assure(s) the quality of the time used: constant supervision, the pressures of supervisors, the elimination of anything that might disturb or distract; it is a question of constituting a totally useful time'.*

For women in particular, time is often a negotiated phenomenon, where we must reconcile various commitments, with time often being accrued, as an account to be reckoned with in the future; a 'time-debt' (Hochschild, 1997:84; see 2.16).

In this first section I analyse discourses of power, emanating from the practitioners' discussions framing chronological time and how time is ordered. Time exerts pressures as our life passes and our desires to accomplish certain goals or ambitions before it inevitably runs out:

> Maisie: *I haven't taken an early year's worker job because I know the pressure they are under, and I don't want that pressure. I just want a wee job where I can earn a bit of extra money, topped up my salary. I look forward to being able to cut my hours. I was quite glad to hand it over to someone else once I did start full time, but I had found it exhausting. I wasn't earning any money that way, so I took on other part time work.*

The reflections that Maisie has on managing her time and health, as her career has progressed, are arguably significant to the planning of careers as discussed in Webb and McQuaid (2020). Adams and Groves (2007; see chapter 2.13) suggests that we plan future-orientated actions based on the assumed order of life cycles, and as I have argued, for many women these include finding time for the pressures of caring responsibilities. Maisie indicates that her preferred time-bias (Sullivan, 2018; see chapter 1.5) is future-orientated. This future time-bias was the same as the time-bias she discussed at the beginning of her interview, where she discussed her mumpreneur endeavours to further her own career ambitions. Towards the end of her interview, she was still discussing a future time-bias of what she planned to do next, in the latter stages of her childcare career. Her resistance, whilst future-orientated is grounded in the present. The pressures hidden within the discourses of professionalisation in Scotland, with expectations to undertake training to upskill and increases in administration all against lower remuneration, are similar to the findings in England by Osgood (2012).

> Maisie: *I am somebody who likes to keep busy, thinking to the future and what skills I might need. The childcare was needed to allow me to work. I still look to the future. (The OSC) it's still a good resource for the community and I thought maybe my grandchildren will use it and that has happened.*

In addition, I argue that those practitioners' who have a future time-bias preference might support a better understanding of Davis *et al.'s* (2014; see chapter 1.3) findings on why the uptake of the degree was not well received by OSC practitioners. My analysis is based on

the age demographics of OSC staff, which are higher than other childcare professions. The findings indicate practitioners' future aspirations, may have already been planned. However, the inspirations do not include the increasing pressures through undertaking the number of hours the qualification requires:

> Glenys: *I admire people who can do it. How on earth do you find the time to do it. I wouldn't want to go back and work full-time now; part-time is enough. I have four grandkids I like spending time with.*

Glenys was the practitioner who had resisted the degree qualification required to comply for the registration with the SSSC as a lead practitioner. She had requested a demotion, and at the point of interview, was considering early retirement in the future to enable her to spend more time caring for her grandchildren. In line with Hochschild (2001), I argue that women feel the pressure of professional performativity to do all they must within normalised clock-time. Practitioners can unknowingly minimise or self-regulate the discussions of the perceived time-pressures they experience whilst performing care expectations. This is because they may fear appearing as less than the 'good mother'. The 'good mother' should be able to manage their time and all that is expected from them. This analysis draws from discourses on disciplinary power where there may be penalties for the insufficient use of time (Portschy, 2020, see page 56) mainly levied on the self through discursive reflective practices.

In chapter three, I discussed research (Bryson *et al.*, 2012 and Hamilton and Suthersan, 2021) highlighting that grandmothers, in particular, still feel tied to mothering responsibilities as an extension of caring for their own children. As such, they may feel guilt, if they are not available to support their grandchildren when required (Southerland, 2010). I felt this pressure myself, after my daughter had her son and was a single parent, struggling to balance her own work and caring responsibilities. Time is often viewed as linear, and I felt because I was reaching the end of my career, it therefore seemed more logical for me to sacrifice my own desires for retirement to support her in work. As I have argued, this reaction is based on discourses of the *good parent* and what is perceived as discursive expectations placed on grandparents, and in particular grandmothers (Hamilton and Suthersan, 2021). However, the Stratham Report (2011, see page13) illustrates that whilst many grandparents sacrifice time for their children, they are not financially recompensated for the losses, which in turn affects the quality of their retirement plans:

> *Mary-Annie: If there is a concern at work in relation to children then it bites into private time as you can't really concentrate properly, and you can't let it go.* D*uring the day I can be 'Mary Poppins' but when I go home, I sometimes turn into 'Cruella De Ville'.*

However, Marie-Annie highlights how there are consequences for trying to keep up the performance of the 'caring' subject throughout the life course. This includes how stress may manifest itself between private and professional spaces, particularly where the practitioner has a significant emotional attachment to caring during working hours (Yoo and Jeong, 2017, see page 24). A gendered performance of care can frame women as carers, regardless of the location where their caring takes place. One particular caring subjectivity can be temporally constructed and performed in 'work hours' and once out of work a different caring subjectivity may be performed (Butler, 2004).

Another focus of my study are discourses of gender arising through constructions of generational employment, perpetuating and maintaining historical traditions, and skills for caring. These can be replicated through generations, and arguably, particularly from mother to daughter. However, I found in this study, that the devolving of responsibility to a younger generation of carers may be changing. The practitioners' raised both questions, and concerns on 'who will care in the same way I do in the future?' This is how Schütz (1969; see chapter 2.15) describes the 'durée', where our lived experiences are given a temporal significance in the moment. In this case engaging in the research study has brought future concerns about caring to the forefront for some participants. Memories from the past can impact on our current thinking, and as such, are continually reconstructed as time progresses.

> Glenys: *Well, my daughter she liked school and didn't know what to do and because I had done it, I said why don't you try it and absolutely hated it. I thought because I liked it, my daughter would. But you do think that a women will be more maternal because you have got feeding the baby and changing the nappies and its old-fashioned views isn't it really, but it isn't like that anymore.*

Glenys is describing a memory from the past, where she thought, her daughter might like to follow her into childcare, because Glenys had enjoyed this career herself. However, whilst she is talking, she herself is realising that things have changed and perhaps her views are more based on how things happened in the past. I interpreted through the tone she used that she might be disappointed that things have now changed.

Iris is also worried about the future of family caring responsibilities.

> Iris: *I am actually worried that he doesn't (want to care), that he doesn't care enough, that he is not my successor. The younger ones don't buy into the whole professionalisation thing, while the older ones who have been in the job a long time and their hearts and soul are invested in it.*

Iris articulates the same mismatch that employers noted in Webb and McQuaid (2020) study. Some of the other practitioners from my study also discussed the different values on care that they perceived are shown by new recruits. They discussed how care is now just part of a plan to meet linear career goals, rather than the perceived vocation that draws some to caring professions. It is also a temporal interruption to normalised discourses of generational caring, and I argue that younger generations may now be resisting how childcare careers are promoted through government discourses. This suggests that discourses of professionalisation such as upskilling through academia are not being successful in attracting younger recruits with the right skills to sustain the profession.

> Mary-Annie: '*I think there are some people (within the profession) that don't value us. I think that they see it as another route into doing social work or teaching'.*

Significantly the narratives highlighted how OSC practitioners themselves may becoming disillusioned with the profession. Webb and McQuaid (2020) argues that the disillusionment from the sector is being generated from a perceived mismatch between what employers want or even need, and what the childcare practitioners themselves, want through working in the profession. Mary-Annie has articulated one of those perceived mismatches, which is the continually low value and status attached to the OSC profession, no matter how many qualifications she undertakes. The disillusionment stems from how professional care identities are perceived in other allied professions and the gendered discourses on care. These discourses have long temporal endurance, and as feminists such as, Osgood, argue this is because childcare is embedded in the discourses of mothering and the private arena of life (see 2.11). This includes not only the low value placed on childcare but also the lack of appropriate remuneration and recognition, for what are indeed, enhanced skill sets. Maisie echoes this last point.

> Maisie: *People think anybody can care: If my mother cared, so why can't I? If anyone can do it, why do you need training? I think sometimes it draws people who think they can't do anything else so it's the easiest job for them'.*

In summary, in this section, I have argued that there is a temporal resistance emerging affecting discourses of care as generational employment. Women feel constrained by expectations placed on them, which are attached to a normalised sequence of life events such as birth, marriage, children, death. The expectations to continue caring throughout women's lives, limit opportunities for a work/life balance. In some cases, I argue that pressures to meet future caring responsibilities indicate that there may be a lack of flexible options to entice women to remain in caring professions. There are also concerns over the future of recruitment for childcare professions, where values on the nature of the work are unaffected by time. The perceived altruistic motivations that draw people to work in childcare. 'Spiritual' reward is insufficient for the qualified status and time commitment required for professional childcare, which in addition comes at a personal sacrifice.

7.3 Discourse on felt-time beyond the 24hr clock.

Foucault's (1977) concept of 'time well-used' resonates, in my opinion, with some of the conflicts in felt-time. In felt-time conflicts are generated, because it is time to be negotiated, appropriate to everyone's needs and wants. As highlighted previously, during the practitioners' narratives, I realised that there appeared to be a conflict between how the practitioners constructed their sense of their own chronological time, which ran contrary to actual time needed to perform their responsibilities. In order to visually depict how time was being allocated, I introduced two simple circles to represent the 24-hour clock. This was to help me analyse, in the first instance, what powers might be influencing the practitioners' narratives on their normal everyday activities and secondly to encourage the practitioners to personally gain a visual knowledge of their own time narratives. Whilst I am aware of the discourses surrounding power within chronological time as discussed previously (Milojević, 2008; see page 20), the clocks supported responsive answers and seemed to generate a different articulation of knowledge, from the practitioners, on their own truths. Accordingly, the practitioners drew on discourses of time and the pressures surrounding care expectations, which afforded them limited or no time for self-care. I argue that the clocks, whilst chronological in appearance, are illustrating felt-time as socially constructed by the practitioners (Wittman, 2017; see page 20). The clocks in effect also create a biographical illusion (Nico, 2016; see chapter 4.6) because they are not

constrained by sequential chronological time in the same manner, whilst appearing linear initially to the eye. This I argue is different from the power I felt dominated the use of the biographical grids as a data collection tool.

Initially in the first clock drawn, all the practitioners described their day, drawing on normalised discourses of time, such as contracted hours for work, times at home and patterns of sleep time. Hochschild (2001) suggests that to balance life demands, women give the appearance of adopting traditional masculine perceived working styles. This seemed to be reflected initially in the participants' narratives, through breaking their day into activities that demonstrate the power of chronological time discourses. In chronological time, space on the first 24-hour clock was allocated for self-care. This gives the perception that the practitioners were performing well, managing all their responsibilities within set periods, self-regulating their narratives to ensure time-effective compliance (Portschy, 2020, see page 56).

Initially, Mary-Annie had been clear about not letting her private life intrude into her work or public life (as she described professional practice):

> Mary-Annie: *Obviously, you have to separate your personal life from work and leave what's happening at the door. I should have been at work but to be fair I was on flexi time, so I lost flexi-time. But what it meant, that if I was good, I could start my work at 8 and work until about 1 or 2 and then that would be for the rest of the day.*

In Mary-Annie's first chronological 24-hour clock, an allowance of two hours was set aside for self-care and six hours of unpaid caring that she felt responsible for within her private life.

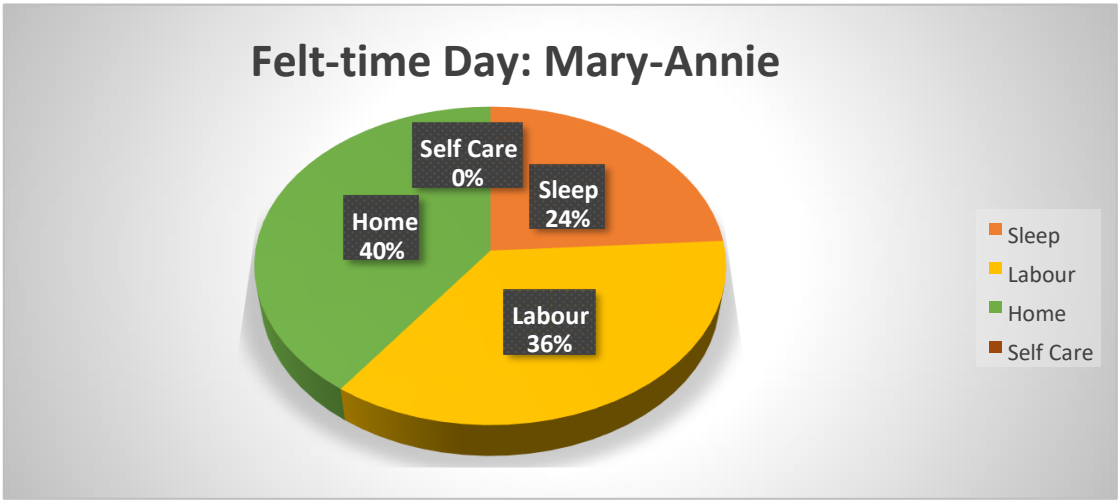

Diagram 7.1 24-hour clock Felt-Time Day in the life of Mary-Annie.

However, when drawing the second clock which represented the felt-time day (diagram, 7.1), she questioned herself, on where she found time to do all the care jobs required for her family and household and began to realise that she was trying to accommodate everyone's needs except her own. She had previously used flexi-time in the banking profession as a *good* justification for being efficient in managing her working day alongside her private responsibilities. However, this also could be perceived as a self-disciplining behaviour, imbued with discourses of performativity. The flexi-time, however, has been lost from her allocated self-care time, supporting Hochschild's (2001) discussions on women and time-debts. Mary-Annie appears to have accepted that it is her responsibility to manage her time, even if it means sacrificing her own self-care time (which runs contrary to Foucault's perceptions of self-care, Foucault, 1984, see page 27). Budig *et al.* (2012, see 3.8) argues that this acceptance of discourses normalising the 'work-penalty', that women incur in masculine associated professions, is a gendered inequity because it is expected of women rather than men.

Delia appeared not to be able to distinguish times between her care responsibilities in private and her professional care work. The only difference between her first and second clock was the time allocated to self-care, which was slightly less in the second felt-time day. Delia, as a lead practitioner and entrepreneur, has responsibility not only over the children in her care but for the employment of staff and the running of her own business.

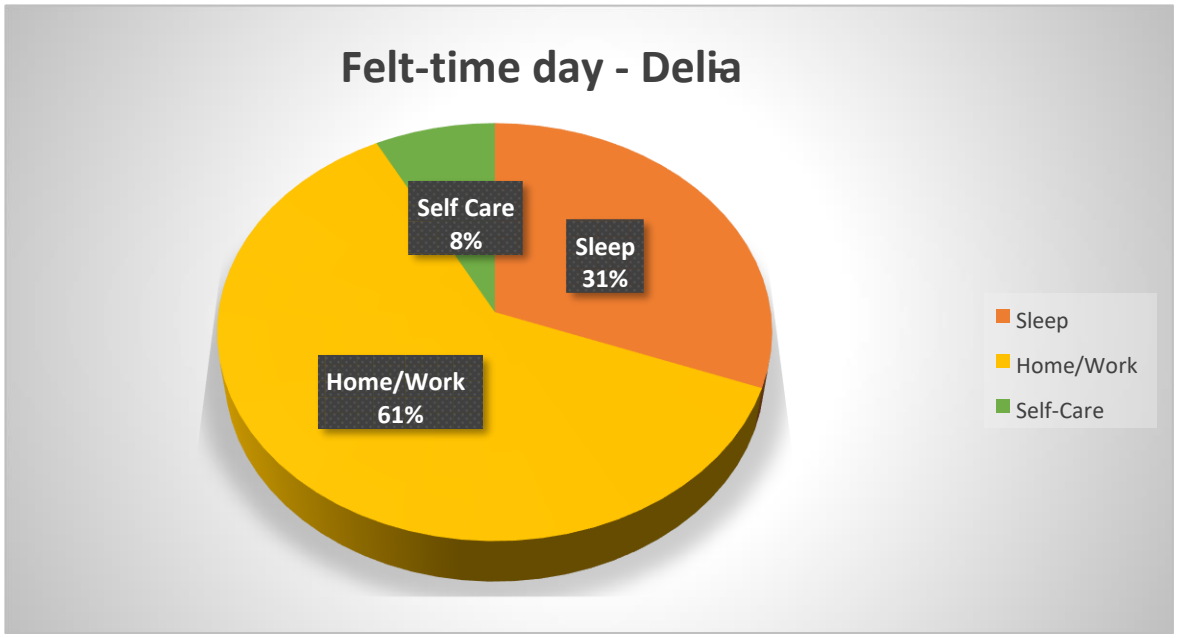

Figure 7.2 24-hour clock: Felt-time day in the life of Delia

In her narratives, Delia justifies her rationale for the number of hours she believes she has responsibility for caring:

> **Delia**: *I did it partly to have my daughter around me and my son while I was working. Partly yeah because I wanted to be my own boss. Don't know why now though? It's a hard shift yeah? Yeah, it was to give my daughter and son a better life.*

The inability to separate time between home and work may be indicative of the working practices women adopt as mumpreneurs to satisfy the guilt experienced whilst trying to accommodate meeting the financial needs of the family, whilst still offering attentive time to raising children (Sutherland, 2010, see chapter 2.12). This also runs counter to the argument by Fuchs-Epstein *et al.* (2011; see chapter 2.11) that women impose a 'glass-ceiling' on themselves to raise children. However, Delia's articulations on the expectations she places on herself as a mumpreneur, support Moreau's (2019), argument that women do not have the same choices open to them as men when accommodating work and care needs (see chapter 2.11). Women are therefore, arguably subjected to inventing options that can provide some balance, as a form of self-care, aiming to lessen some of the guilt they experience in trying to comply with discourses of the *good mother*.

> Maisie: *I would find it hard to retire but on the other hand it's something to look forward to, the pressure because I always have something to do, I take a lot of work home. It takes over, it's taken over my life. It is my life a lot of the time. Even when I go on holiday, I have had calls on holiday. I don't get any rest. Now I can leave the worries of the childcare at the door, I couldn't always. I think it's because I am more skilled at my job*.

Maisie, although she doesn't run her own business, is still responsible for the management of the setting. She articulates the pervasive nature of care when there is no separation between private and professional spaces. Maisie has indicated she wishes to cut hours and appears to draw on the professionalisation discourses through upskilling as a rationale for being to protect some of her own time. I argue that this information might be key to understanding career resilience as compensatory factor for burn-out, as highlighted in Skovolt and Trotter Mathison, (2016: see Pg 62).

Glenys was the only practitioner who had the same times allocated for aspects of her day in both clocks, clearly marked through chronological times, which are often associated with masculine work patterns (Milojević, 2008; see chapter 1.6). She only worked her

contracted hours and ensured there were times for herself or leisure. This form of self-care is more congruent with Foucault's (1984) concepts of caring for the self.

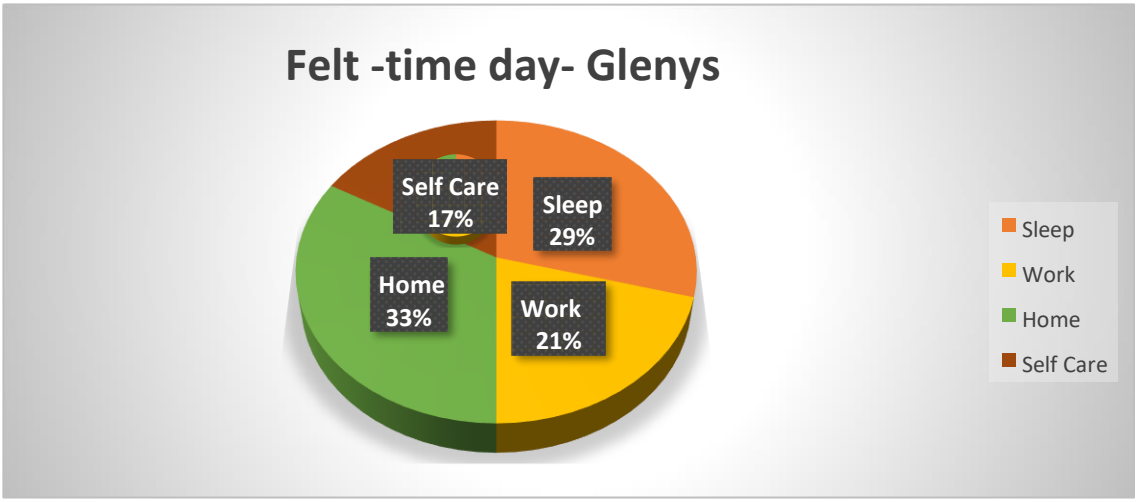

Figure 7.3 24-hour clock: Felt-time day in the life of Glenys.

I argue that this maintaining of set time patterns, may be significant. Of the five practitioners interviewed; Glenys was the only one who had different aspirations for her professional life at the point in time of her interview and was resigning. Her ability to maintain a regulated chronological clock, could suggest that her intention to leave the profession is reflected in a timed detachment from work in favour of her personal circumstances. It appears Glenys has moved beyond the 'time-rush' that Sullivan (2019, see chapter 2.16) argues affects working women, and it could be argued that she is now accounting for her time-debts, as indicated by Hochschild (2001). This includes time to look after her four grandchildren as an extension of her own care responsibilities, which are as I have argued previously, is a generational extension of mothering responsibilities (Higgs, 2012). This lack of difference might also be indicative of reaching a point of self-regulation, described in Elias' (1992) terms as a reality-congruence (see chapter 2.18). Life events that hold meaning for Glenys have become the focus of how she chooses to spend her time. Elias (1992) suggests that this state can be reached when reciprocal understandings between time and our desires, shapes the decisions that are the best-chosen compromise in our life course.

In this last section of the chapter, I analyse through a visual format a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the *good mother* discourse and care careers. There appears to be a paradox between 'doing' the *good mother,* which arguably brings women closer to care careers, and living up to the discursive expectations of continually 'being'

the good mother, particularly at critical life pressure points that influence practitioner's decisions once employed in the profession.

Diagram 7.4 The mothering paradox

The paradox diagram above (diagram 7.4), has been drawn from practitioners' discussions on striving to reconcile a life balance which allowed for ongoing commitments to caring and financial responsibilities, and the powers that affected their choices whilst building professional careers. The facets of the diagram consist of:

a. **Valorisation of the mothering self**: Initially, caring skills that aligned with personal values appear valorised by the practitioners. This analysis draws on discourses of the *good mother*. Here, the mastery of caring skills (Walden, 2018) are perpetuated through watching family members (Paechter, 2003) or from raising children themselves. The development and valuing of these skills, had then led to careers in professional childcare. Two practitioners stated that others recognised their skills with children, which I argue is still a valorisation of mothering through third party recognition. Childcare careers offered opportunities where the practitioners could both work and balance the needs of their families and potentially lesson feelings of guilt (Sutherland, 2010). Gendered discourses construct such choices, however, maintaining care as a feminised profession that contributes to both devalued pay and social status (Leuze and Strauß, 2016; Moreau, 2019).
b. **Self-care and Careers**: Foucault (2020) argues that biopower is used by governments to manipulate aspirations through self-intervention. As some of the practitioners

moved into professional spaces, they used government policies to initiate *mumpreneurial* opportunities; founding childcare businesses to have agency in relation to their home life and financial needs. Although aspirational, this is arguably, a time of self-care, where the women agentically mediating some of their accrued time-debts (Hochschild, 1997), in an attempt to balance child-time with work-time and to present outwardly as *good mothers*. For some practitioners there was also a need to work, to be fulfilling for themselves and to be valued as something more than 'just' a mother (Nel *et al.*, 2010).

c. **Loss of work/life balance**: As careers advanced, pressures are experienced from the influences of discourses on both performativity and professionalisation, such as upskilling to meet regulations for registration and meeting excessive administrative compliances (Osgood, 2012). This placed a strain on their desired work life-balances as they try to reconcile being a *good mother* whilst also providing best outcomes for all the children in their care settings. Providing wellbeing through pastoral power for the whole (Foucault, 1982b), has come at a sacrifice and time-debts (Hochschild, 1997) are once again accruing.
d. **Self-harm and burnout**: In some cases, practitioners highlighted how the amount of caring they felt responsible for, both professionally and personally, had taken over their lives. Professional and private boundaries became blurred, creating an imbalance in being able to meet their own needs and well as their families. This had an emotional effect in which at least two of the practitioners had required either counselling or medical support. As Skovolt and Trotter Mathison (2016) suggest, the resulting 'burnout' can make career resilience difficult. Further, Foucault (2001) argues for self-care as a protection from the potential of self-harm which requires a detachment from the situation creating the harm.
e. **Attrition, reduction or resilience**: As the pressures on the practitioners to balance the demands of the job had increased through discursive linear career cycles, such as promotion and increased work responsibilities, conversely life events are often not freely chosen (Warin *et al.*, 2020). With ongoing caring commitments also competing for time, retrieving a work/life balance leaves few options for women. The practitioners must consider either reducing employment hours further or look for opportunities in sectors that are able to accommodate their work-life balance needs with more flexible employment. This would again allow for time to fulfil the discursive *good mother* expectations.

f. **Rebalance and care of the self**: The balancing of 'private' formations of identity with public professional employment supports the findings of Vanderbroek and Peeters (2008, see 3.7), where mature carers looked for employment which enabled them to vary their working hours to accommodate caring responsibilities. This may also explain the higher median age for childcare workers in the UK, as evidenced in social care employment data in chapter one (SSSC, 2018b).

Whilst I have described the 'Mothering Paradox' in a cyclical format, life very rarely follows such a logical sequence. There are points within the practitioners' narratives where various stages are omitted or bounce between one or two points without reaching the completion of the cycle. This could be due to circumstances such as pressures from the family (Nel *et al*, 2010) to contribute to financial needs or even to contend with emerging health needs.

In this final chapter, I have looked at the ways time and temporality influence practitioners' narratives. I have also linked these temporal dynamics to the ongoing recruitment crisis not only the OSC profession, but which is also faced by other allied caring professions.

Chapter Eight: Discussions and Recommendations

8.1 Summary

The aim of this study was to analyse the discourses of caring within gendered professions as presented through the narratives of five women practitioners, employed in the Scottish OSC sector.

Initially, I imagined the time-worn concept of care, as a metaphor for the traditions and routines that we draw on from the past, wearing caring responsibilities as a constant companion. As the study progressed, this opinion changed. I began to realise that while receiving care can be a comfort, and for some caregiving can offer a moral security in doing the 'right thing', another metaphor emerged. This metaphor resonated with time as an eroding force, wearing out something old and which is now in need of replacing.

Most of the practitioners discussed career motivations as described by Sullivan (2018) with a temporal plan: either to provide a better life for their children (i.e. thinking temporally in relation to the future), or because they wanted to balance their time in the present, to play an active part in their child's upbringing, whilst holding down workplace responsibilities. I argued in chapter five, that for the practitioners, including myself, upholding care responsibilities seemed to be part of our very being, as a deeply felt aspect of our subjectivities. Sometimes we protect those responsibilities at all costs, trying to live up to expectations that draw on discourses of the *good mother*. This includes how discursively constructed protective responsibilities and values that form our subjectivities, can transfer from the practice of 'mothering' into workplace situations. Balancing life and work expectations can come at a sacrifice trying to meet those responsibilities, which I have argued are an example of Foucauldian pastoral power. In addition, as we move up in our careers, sometimes we fail to see when caring responsibilities can become an overbearing weight. Indeed, they can be wearing us out. Women often strive to live up to their own and others' expectations, as constructed through discourses of the *good mother*. This discourse does not only influence our 'day-to-day' performance of care at home. We are also influenced by continued discourses of mothering, when performing as 'good', OSC professionals. Care for women is not only an historically enduring gendered responsibility. For many, it is deeply embedded in intergenerational relationships. We wear a mantle of responsibility through generations of caring not only at home, but often for society itself. Government discourses promote the value of soft skills as social and emotional literacies in school curricula as part of a discourse on professionalism and employability for the future

workforce. This changes the language, but not the overall effect of discourses associated with women, and caring. Dominant rhetoric legitimising gendered discourses in relation to caring identities remains the same, demonstrated through a lack of appropriate compensation and status. Discourses that minimise caring and in turn professional caring identities have now become worn out and systematic change must be addressed.

In this last chapter of the study, I return to each of the research questions I posed in chapter one, answering them in turn, based on my discursive analysis of practitioners' narratives.

8.2 Research question one: Professional identities

Research Question One: How do OSC practitioners observe and construct a sense of professional identity over time? Do these observations have any temporal effect on professional career resilience?

- The practitioners' constructed and performed a multiplicity of selves and subjectivities, in both private and public spaces. For those in caring professions these spaces intertwine, because they are bound in discourses of regulation, neoliberal performativity, and the need to be *good enough*. These shape not only how we are able to care for ourselves, but also how that is reflected whilst we care for others.
- The practitioners' discussed a sense of a 'private' subjectivity, constructed through expectations of traditional mothering discourses and socially normalised over generations. These demonstrate how the practitioner's value the skills and personal characteristics that they perceive as *good mothering* and that they pass down to their children.
- A professional subjectivity was also arguably constructed, through the discourses of *the good mother*, influenced by practitioner expectations of protective responsibilities. This was conflated with professionalisation, and performativity discourses, constructed through engagement with higher qualifications, regulations, and codes of conduct. Meeting the expectations framed in professionalisation discourses has been particularly challenging for OSC subjectivities. The practitioner's articulated concerns about the number of staff who were being lost to the profession, due to requirements of upskilling the workforce.
- The practitioners' professional subjectivities appear to be less dominant in relation to maternal subjectivities they constructed in private spaces. Mothers were more intent in striving to maintain discursively constructed expectations of the 'good

mother' above all. This analysis is based on the practitioners' decision-making on careers that supported the necessity for part-time employment in order to manage both time-debts as indicated by Hochschild (2001) and to appease discursively influenced feelings of maternal guilt (Sutherland, 2010).

- Some practitioners believed career choices are predetermined from early on in life. This was articulated in the narratives as beliefs drawn from assumptions not only on the gendered demographics of childcare workers but also based on their own experiences from levels of success at school and classed post-education career options.
- Professional resilience seemed to be influenced and shaped not by their own tacit knowledge, but by discourses on professionalisation, through gaining knowledge by 'upskilling' and building a professional 'repertoire'.
- There was an overall sense that the practitioners' views of their caring subjectivities appeared conflicted. This was reflected in the discursively framed terms they used to describe the skills and characteristics for caring, that they valued at both home and work. In private spaces, soft skills terms dominated the practitioner's narratives, and language was used to discursively reproduce some of the skills they desired professionally. The practitioners spent time in upskilling and gaining professional experience, engaging with government professionalisation discourses to comply to *fit to practice* standards, including required performance and conduct behaviours. In doing this a new discourse emerged in their narratives, based on business, quality and cognitive skills, traits arguably, more associated with the masculine-business world.
- Professional resilience appeared attached to compliance with what is arguably state-actioned disciplinary power.
- Personal resilience was demonstrated through the practitioners' narratives in how they discussed adaptability to pressures from both work and caring responsibilities. In some cases, the practitioners had no option but to seek employment that provided a level of financial support, albeit part-time, which ultimately enabled them to satisfy some of the accumulated time-debts for which they felt accountable (Hochschild, 2001).

8.3 Research question two: Regimes of powers that govern decision-making in childcare settings.

Research Question Two: What regimes of power or governances, if any, are highlighted as dominant in professional childcare settings and do they exert any temporal influence over OSC practitioners' careers or decision-making?

- Within the practitioners' narratives, regimes of power seemed to be constructed, and perpetuated through discourses on the professionalisation of care and the ongoing gendering of caring professions. Their perceptions about the professionalisation of care, had developed over time as the practitioners had progressed further in their careers.
- Discourses of disciplinary power associated with the professionalisation of OSC appeared visible to all the practitioners. This was highlighted by their articulation of the competing pressures of performing to quality standards, not only to prove their own competencies, but also to complete requirements contained in government-set agendas. Some practitioners highlighted their awareness of how infringements to regulations, such as, meeting qualification requirements, set by professional bodies, acted as a potential threat to the viability of their employment. Significantly the practitioners did not believe that the qualifications would alter their undervalued status, nor would it affect performances of care.
- Following Foucault (1977) there were also discourses on power seemingly invisible to the practitioners, that governed their ways of being. This was articulated in relation to the ways, the majority of, the practitioners undertook recruitment initiatives. These arguably reproduce and perpetuate the perceived desirable childrearing skills that all the practitioners valued as mothers in private spaces. I have argued that this is pastoral power, influenced by the protective discourses of men as a perceived 'threat' to children. Whilst the practitioners did not discuss this openly, they are arguably unaware of a gender-blind discourse as described by Moreau, 2019) in not acknowledging discourses which construct men as a 'perceived threat'.
- Attaining knowledge is power (Foucault, 1980), but it does not necessarily follow that all knowledge is good for you. Power asserted on the self as a form of biopower (Foucault, 2020), seemingly self-generated, can be detrimental to our being, particularly if it contests other long-held, yet also discursively constructed,

values. Whilst the practitioners discussed that the gaining of knowledge did not affect how they performed care, it did appear to open-up self-doubting questions through reflective discourses on what makes a *good parent*. Mothering discourses were perpetuated and maintained by an idealised perspective of the *good mother* who demonstrates the *right skills* for caring. This was articulated in the ways, in which some of the practitioners, judged themselves through observing others, to ensure that they were following social norms, and expectations on them as parents.

8.4 Research question three: Gendered caring: the right skills, the right time?

Research Question Three: How do OSC practitioners distinguish any gendered discourses attached to performing care? What importance, if any, is placed on the notion of the right skills of 'being' a good carer?

- As discussed above, pastoral power as enacted through discourses of the protective expectations of *the good mother*, emerged through behaviours such as maternal gatekeeping. This valorised a gendered performance or identity formation, including perceptions of how dominant masculine and feminine ways of being are constructed, then reproduced in everyday actions (Doucet, 2006). This included learning how the practitioners reproduced a sameness in behaviours, and performance expectations, on the way that care should be performed professionally, as the *right skills*. This can also demonstrate professional resilience, as highlighted by Han *et al.* (2019), where positive aspects valued in life can be translated into personal wellbeing as a protection against workplace stresses.
- Some of the discourses the practitioners articulated as valued, were in keeping with soft skills discursively constructed as a feminine style of working, such as the use of empathy and nurture, which all the practitioners considered essential for a good carer.
- The practitioners also drew on professional discourses such as professionalism, meeting codes of conduct and cognitive skills, which would have been expected in professions influenced by patriarchal structures such as the law and medicine. These terms are likely to have crept into the practitioners' articulations from the influence of discourses on professionalisation, which perpetuates and maintains an *otherness* for men in professional care from the outset. I argue this was articulated in how care skills are marketed, and within recruitment processes, and performance expectations.

- Temporal discourses had influenced the practitioners' understandings and values attached to care. However, those perceptions went beyond understandings of chronological/linear time and perceived or felt-time. The practitioners appeared to construct time perceptions in relation to the discursive notions of both chronological ages and expectations for life at that stage; described by some of the practitioners as *the right time*.
- The practitioners indicated that they were initially able to balance caring subjectivities by undertaking work in the childcare sector. They were however, disadvantaged, indeed penalised, by lower pay and reduced status in contrast to the time before they had children. There was an assumption that caring professions should exhibit caring qualities to mothers as altruistic support. However, the childcare profession still has workloads to be completed, regardless of how caring the employer is.
- Elias (Tabboni, 2001) and Foucault (1982, 2001, 2003) both suggest that in self-regulating, something is often compromised or even sacrificed. The practitioners' demonstrated that they were willing to sacrifice the pay and lesser status of the role, in order to maintain some sense of agentic control over their lives. This however could be viewed as a gendered temporal solution due to the fluctuation in family needs and responsibilities which change over time. As the professional responsibilities of the practitioners changed and working patterns began to dominate private time, the pressures of performing the *good mother* subjectivity, became more apparent. With competing pressures on their time, all but one of the practitioners were arguably experiencing their own crisis in what Hochschild (2001), describes as a 'time debt' to their families.
- The expectations for men to perform care in the same way as women, is countered by the practitioners' statements on wanting to break down the barriers for men in order to challenge social perceptions of men and *toxic masculinities*. The desire for men to demonstrate 'caring masculinities' needs to be reflected in marketing discourses that promote the *right skills* for the best outcomes for children. Instead, there is arguably too much focus on skills that reside in perceived gendered traits and characteristics. In addition, language within professional discourses such as recruitment marketing campaigns and within documents promoting the *right skills* for childcare, do not allow for gender flexibility (see Halberstam, 2004; Warin,

2019), which perpetuates and maintains the consistent gendering of childcare professions.

- Some of the practitioners were aware that difficulties in developing supportive social relationships, between men, within the workplace presented as a barrier. Nevertheless, there was no discussion on how they could themselves mitigate the situation as leaders. Most people spend a great deal of their working life with others, and it is suggested men in traditionally perceived male occupations, are able to take advantage more fully of these workplace relations to foster advantages such as faster promotions which continue to perpetuate the gender pay gap (Cullen and Perez-Truglia, 2019). It may be that maternal gatekeeping extends from women protecting children in private spaces to women implicitly and unknowingly protecting women's opportunities in professions where women are in the numerical majority.
- OSC practitioners appeared to perpetuate discourses that gender care. They did not negatively judge carework, for example, in the articulation of classed and gendered conceptions that care is one of the only occupations that unqualified working-class women can do. However, they did articulate gendered discourses of care in order to balance their need to work, contribute to financial obligations, and articulate what they perceived as social expectations within discourses of the *good parent*.
- Some of the practitioners also recognised that men are also constrained by the gendered expectations in divisions of labour and assumptions of hegemonic masculinity, which can act as a barrier to them performing care for their children. These barriers perpetuate the maintenance of childcare as only appropriate for wom.

8.5 Research question four: Recommendations and the way forward

Research Question Four: What relevance do the OSC practitioners' constructions of care hold for the future of recruitment, retention, and career resilience planning in OSC and allied care professions?

As a result of the findings, I put forward the following recommendations.

- To attract more men into professional care, a networking system should be developed for male carers to encourage social relationships and communities of

practice, in order to share views on their caring subjectivities, that they may feel more comfortable with men, without fear of judgement. A focus on caring masculinities needs to be reflected in not only marketing discourses that promote the *right skills* for best children's outcomes, but also with educational curricula. Currently there is only a focus on skills that reside in perceived feminine gendered traits and characteristics.

- A thorough review of policies should be undertaken that considers a gender-neutral tone centred on children's outcomes rather than discursively constructed texts that gender who provides care. The *right skills* should also be reflected in the 'right pay and appropriate status with other allied professions. Remuneration should be a government-led objective rather than the current focus on neoliberal, commercialised, market economies.
- Those with responsibilities for the human resource development of staff, should have regular career planning discussions and where possible offer flexible working to alleviate work pressures on practitioners through the full range of times in their life that they are expected to have caring commitments. This may increase the potential for retaining practitioners' services because flexibility is a key factor in supporting career resilience.
- Further research is required about personal decisions on wellbeing, because these are also essential factors of career resilience. It should not be assumed that the practitioner may have good self-regulating abilities because they exhibit a well-developed career resilience. Factors that indicate a potential for 'burnout', was evidenced in some practitioners developing an emotional detachment from the competing pressures and demands required in regulated and standardised setting and may indicate a staff member is considering leaving in the immediate future, in order to enact self-care.
- We need to nurture the future of care as a profession that supports the economic backbone of the community as an equal profession to any of the other caring professions. Early education in schools and careers guidance is required in order to ensure the sustainability of numbers required in an ever-growing sector. Those same young people who might also display academic potential that we fast track for university may also display the necessary values and skills to work in care. Care should not be positioned as an alternative to academic achievement but another route to a valued professional degree qualified status. The Childhood Practice

degree is only open to students with practitioner status rather than being available directly to school leavers. This is a condition applied by the SSSC, who need to make changes to widen access to all interested potential students. However, this runs a risk of placing the degree in a vocational category, automatically downgrading its value.

- Marketing strategies should aim to target mature men and women looking for a change in career or returning to work after caring responsibilities, in addition to younger recruits already being targeted, at the apprenticeship stage in their careers.
- One-stop advertisement do not cover the diversity of temporal attachments to either caring or part-time work opportunities and should reflect the diversity of potential recruits. This last point is something I consider valuable knowledge to recruitment marketing within my own areas of responsibility.
- In a scoping of advertisements, I found that words used for childcare positions included caring words that were more feminised. I suggest that wording for childcare advertisements, should be carefully considered, and not reproduce the hegemonic discourse that is attached to the *right skills*. Words that might apply to any gender for childcare professions, and that arguably relate to children's best outcomes rather than overtly gendered characteristics include: relatable, responsive, approachable, committed. respecting, inclusive and adaptable.

8.6 Professional learning

On reflection there were many key learning areas for me. These ranged from the conception of a research study and choice of research tools, through to philosophical understandings and my own place within them. I had originally thought that a biographical timeline would be an appropriate tool for what would be biographical narratives. I found instead these were too stilted and that more traditional means of collecting data were actually more suited to my research. I also found throughout the study that I was learning more about the philosophical concepts underlying each research study I reviewed. This entailed a lot of rewriting, and I should have adapted my proposed research timeline, in conjunction with learning this new knowledge. The last thing I would change about the conceptual stage of the study was to consider where the interviews would take place in relation to the confidential data I was collecting.

At the beginning of this study, I noted St Pierre's (2000) advice, that we should 'examine our own complicity in the maintenance of social injustice'. I did not realise its significance

until after I had reviewed the transcripts over several occasions and the theme of maternal gatekeeping became more pronounced. I felt that I had also been guilty of contributing to the discourse that perpetuates gendered barriers for men in childcare, even to the extent that I also used maternal gatekeeping through recruitment processes. In effect, I now realise that I was complicit in constructing knowledge on regulated professions based on my own perceived 'truths' from the outset (Foucault, 1988).

I hoped from the start, that my research once completed would be of interest to people within the field. Even before completing the study some of the findings interested those in both government and other care professions. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, government policy on recruitment and retention to increase diversity within the profession and secondly the impacts of the pandemic have both created a wider understanding of the emotional pressures on caring professions affecting retention due to *burnout*. I have already been able to incorporate my findings into research by the Scottish Government on the way forward for childcare and also to present my findings as part of a planned event on childhood practice. I hope to extend these conversations in a future research paper. I would also like to explore further the concept I labelled *shadowverse* that appeared to be associated with Foucauldian concepts of panoptical power and also discourses that influence maternal gatekeeping.

One final thought, new research has indicated that women predominantly took on an additional role of education provider in addition to their caring responsibilities for their children whilst in lockdown (Andrew *et al.*, 2020). The pandemic has brought significant changes to the way we live and work. It is time to use that momentum to include men more in childrearing responsibilities. The experience of diverse femininities and masculinities will help children learn a more inclusive understanding of what it means to care. I believe that 'mothering' should be framed as a gender-neutral term, because it is associated with the necessary skills to care, and these skills also reside in men as gender is a discursively constructed categorisation. We also need a care sector that does not see men's involvement as only tokenistic or that perpetuates the discourse of men as a perceived 'threat'. This requires systemic change in both government policy and educational curricula. This is because a reliance on generational traditions perpetuating caring subjectivities can no longer be taken for granted.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

A time to care? Temporality and its relationship to values of care as viewed through the lived experiences of women in the Scottish school-aged childcare workforce.

Penny Anderson: Researcher Email: p.anderson.1@research.gla.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with myself if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

The main purpose of this doctoral study is to consider how your thoughts about the professional role you do in care may have changed over time. I am interested in listening to how your experiences with caring roles may have influenced both your life today and any hopes you have for your own future career. The study also asks about your memories of care in the past, how you came into your care role and thoughts you may have on where social experiences may have affected how you continue to feel about your care role. Your memories are audio recorded in order that I can transcribe them more fully at a later date. Your memories and thoughts are also written down on sheets called biographical life grids, which highlight areas in the past, the present and the future. They are written with you before we start the main interview in order that we can refer to them as we talk during a biographical interview. The on-going conversation is to gain a fuller insight into your experiences and aspirations for the future. The interview will take around three hours and will be in a public area such as an office during daylight hours. If there are questions that are left unanswered during the interview that come to light once I have transcribed your memories, I would like to approach you for a further follow up interview which would last around one hour.

You have been chosen as you have been working in an Out of School Care facility in Scotland for a number of years and did not have a relevant professional qualification before you began this role. By taking part in the study may help you to gain a better understanding of how time has affected the way in which you view your professional role.

It is the intention that this study may give insight into recruitment and retention policies based on appropriate timings, not only for the Out of School Care profession but care roles in general.

You do not need to take part as the participation in this study is entirely voluntarily. You may also withdraw from the study by request at any point.

You may wish to choose a pseudonym to use that will be used in all aspects of this study. This is to ensure any information that you disclose is treated with dignity and an understanding of your privacy.

The information that will appear in the study will not mention any individual by name. All information will be kept confidential and only be breached if there is evidence of harm or intent harm to yourself or others. In this case I have an obligation to disclose the information to the relevant authorities. The data from this study will be stored on a password protected personal lapto : Data will be transferred from the audio recording device to the laptop and will be secured in a locked drawer. The data will be shredded or deleted after the study but will be retained for at least ten years as per university protocols.

The results of this study will be submitted to Glasgow University as part of my study for the Doctor of Education Programme. The findings may be stored in the library of the University of Glasgow and could be accessed by others through later journal submissions.

My supervisors at Glasgow University, Dr Barbara Read and Professor Nicki Hedge will review the information contained within this study. They can be contacted at Barbara.read@glasgow.ac.uk or Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk .

You may also request further information from the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Indicative Interview Questions

It is important for the interviewees in this study to have a voice therefore dialogue will be reflexive and led by responding to memories of their own experiences. The themes illustrated are an aid to conversations if the interviewee has difficulty focusing on specific areas that I would like them to reflect on in the study. There will be some initial discussion to set the scene and establish background.

These discussions will also outline the participants right to change their mind about taking part in the study and checking consent for the audio recording of the narratives.

Background Questions

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Why did you come into the care profession?

What feelings did you have about care roles at that time?

How would you describe your background or class roots?

Temporal Questions

What advice or information were you given about care roles in the past e.g. at school?

What do you believe women's responsibilities to care are today? Do you think these were different in the past? How do you see that changing for the future?

How do you balance your time? (paid work, unpaid work, free time, caring)

This question will be marked out on a pie chart to create a visual tool to enable further discussion. The chart is not used as numeric tool but to aid understanding of how time features in normal everyday experiences.

What type of professional role do you see yourself doing in the near future?

Value Questions

How do you think the children value the work that you do? (how much does this matter to you?)

How do you think the parents' value the work that you do? (How much does this matter to you?)

What type of things make you feel more closer to your caring role?

What type of things makes you feel more distant to your care role?

How did experiences of your qualification make you feel about your professional role?

How important that people who undertake care roles are registered with governing bodies?

What type of people do you think are drawn to care roles?

Why do you think they are drawn to care roles?

Is the professional role you are doing what you expected?

Appendix 3: Example of the Biographical Life Grid with indicative questions

	Age/ Year	Af/Al/ N	Past	Present	Future
Personal Experiences					
External Events					
Professional Experiences					
Temporal Experiences					
Social Experiences Of care					

Questions for the Biographical Life Grid

Can we begin by marking on the grid past and present events that are important to you?

Are there less important events you can remember and would like to record on the grid?

Can you mark on the grid important tasks that you feel you have yet to achieve?

Appendix 4: Practitioners' Pen Portraits

The pen portraits were constructed through discussions with the practitioners whilst they were writing their biographical grids. I have selected material that I believe gives an indicative background of each practitioner, whilst maintaining a degree of confidentiality on some of the data revealed.

Profile One: This interview took place in a neutral office space over 2 hours.

Delia: From the information within the biographical grid, Delia is around 55 years old and is a white, female from a working-class background.

Childcare Qualification: BA Childhood Practice and currently undertaking M.Ed. Childhood Practice

Delia has a partner with whom she has two children, one girl and one boy. Delia is also a grandmother, helping her daughter with unpaid childcare.

She describes herself as working-class, describing her parents as from a tough East End area of Glasgow. Her parents and five siblings lived in a two-bedroom flat. Her mother had health care issues and had died when Delia was younger. Her father had returned from the Navy and was often in and out of work. Delia also had a stepfather and he had been an encouraging role-model in her life. Delia was homeless at one part of her life, having moved into a unit with her young daughter. She has a partner who she describes as supportive of all her endeavours.

Delia describes her childhood as happy. She enjoyed school but felt the teachers were good to her because of her socio-economic status. They often provided clothes for her and disciplined her when she got school property dirty. Although she felt she was average at school, her carers advisor pointed her to traditional careers for girls typical for her classed background.

Before entering OSC employment Delia worked in hairdressing. She helped in her daughter's nursery and moved into childcare at the suggestion of friends because she was good with children.

Delia became a mumpreneur starting her own private OSC provision in her late 20's. It has a focus on forest school provision which Delia feels is reminiscent of the wild camping she enjoyed with her father when on holidays. She has worked in the OSC sector for more than 20 years. She describes OSC as a means to have her children close to her whilst she worked. Her daughter, now an adult, also works in the same establishment but is considering other career options.

Delia undertook the BA degree in Childhood Practice to comply with her SSSC registration requirements to lead her own setting. She undertook the M.Ed. Childhood Practice as a personal ambition as the first person in her family to get to that level of education.

Profile Two: The interview took place over one and a half hours in the participant's home. (It provided the most personal information).

Glenys: From the information given during the biographical grid Glenys is around 53 years old and a white female from a working-class background.

Childcare Qualification: SVQ Level 3 in Playwork

Glenys has one daughter and two sons from a previous marriage. She is remarried and spends a lot of her spare time caring for four grandchildren. She first married early in her teens and expressed that this was something she had always wanted, a family straight after school, and had made no plans for a career. Her three children were born each within a year of each other.

Glenys describes herself as working-class having lived the same area of South Lanarkshire all her life, as had her siblings, often living only doors apart to spend time with each other. Her father also lived close; her parents having moved to East Kilbride from a working-class part in the North of Glasgow when Glenys was a baby. Glenys has a much younger sibling that she helped raise after her mum had died, when her brother was in his early teens. She also helps look after her father's home. Her father had taken early redundancy from the retail trade and had then been employed as a school janitor. Her mother worked a few evenings a week in a local shop.

She spent most of her early marriage looking after the children whilst her husband worked full-time. She did however volunteer in her children's nurseries and then schools. Six months after her first marriage ended, one of the teachers had suggested she was good at working with children. She decided to undertake some government-paid training at night school to prepare for a career in childcare as she felt she had no confidence in the world of work. She expressed that this was all she felt trained to do. However later in her biographical grid Glenys revealed she had set up her own cleaning business with a friend, whilst she was raising children but had not elaborated on it as she did not feel it was relevant.

She has worked in the childcare sector for 15 years moving from nursery to OSC, and recently had resigned her post. Glenys had been given the opportunities to manage settings however, she did not want to train any further citing that she was disillusioned with all the controlling paperwork. She worked in what she called a 'nice area' where people had money and felt that neither the parents nor the children appreciated or valued her work. She was leaving the profession because she now wanted more time to devote to her grandchildren. She did indicate that she might look for a job more suitable later, perhaps shop work part-time.

Profile Three: This interview took place in the participants own office over 2 hours.

Iris: From the data in her biographical grid, she is 28years old, married with two children, one a primary school and one at nursery.

Educational Qualification: BSc in Psychology

Childcare Qualification: M.Ed. in Childhood Practice.

Iris was brought up by a single mother and has one sibling with additional support needs. Iris has shared the responsibility of her sibling's care, a role she has played from an early age.

Iris describes herself as working-class from the Northwest of Glasgow. Her mother started an OSC setting in which she hoped her son could attend. However, ultimately this had not been suitable, and Iris took care for her sibling after school until her mother returned from work. Iris had attended a school in another local authority area whilst her sibling attended a specific school closer to home. Iris' school placement was an attempt to move her away from an area with high poverty. School had been challenging but a male teacher had provided her guidance and eventually she had attended university, with an aim to undertake a career in some aspect of education.

Iris had worked on and off in the same OSC setting as her mother but at times had undertaken other work abroad to provide some respite from her responsibilities at home. She had also worked in the OSC part-time, whilst at university to support her financial obligations. After university she took on a full-time role in the OSC and has worked in the sector for 12 years. She now holds a lead practitioner responsibility over both the nursery and OSC in a family centre. The centre gave her the option to work in the same setting where both her children attend. Iris undertook the master's degree to qualify for the lead practitioner role but is also undertaking a doctorate for her own career aspirations, once her children are older. She prefers the autonomy she holds in a private setting rather than the formality of the education profession. The position she holds also affords her some flexibility to continue to provide care provision for her sibling and to offer her some time with her children.

Iris also volunteers as an administrator for other local OSC organisations. This has enabled her to develop a community of practice outside of her own setting.

Profile Four: This interview took place in a local museum café over one and a quarter hours (it provided the least personal information).

Maisie: From her biographical grid she is around 59 years old with one son from a previous relationship. She lives with her second partner and helps care for her grandchildren.

Childcare Qualifications: PDA level 9 (degree equivalent) in Childhood Practice.

She is the eldest of five children and grew up in South Lanarkshire. She left school to attend university but did not complete the course and moved abroad for several years. She returned to South Lanarkshire when her child was pre-school and enrolled in college to undertake practical office skills to prepare for future employment. Maisie provides childcare in the same area that she works, describing it and herself as working-class.

The setting she is working in was already established but failing. She worked with community enterprises to re-establish it as a going-concern, to support people, predominantly single parents, back into work. The business had previously been running with volunteers and Maisie believed this was one of the initial reasons it was failing. The initial contact with the business was to provide her with childcare so that she could return to the business sector. She realised that her skills could best service the development, then management of the OSC setting. She has now worked in OSC for over 25years.

Maisie also works part time in a non-supervisory role in a local nursery to both supplement income and because she enjoys the social relationships it allows her access to. She wishes to retire soon.

Profile Five: The (pilot) interview took place in the participants own office over two hours.

Mary-Annie: She describes herself a divorced mother of two and she is around 49 years old. She states she is from a working-class background as were her parents.

She holds professional qualifications earned whilst in the civil service.

Childcare qualification: BA Childhood Practice.

Mary-Annie has two children, one of whom has additional support needs.

Whilst her daughter attended nursery, Marie-Annie was working in the civil service. This employment allowed for flexi-time working and Mary-Annie used it to spend time within the nursery. She was offered redundancy when the organisation was down-sizing and took up part-time employment in a nursery. She then moved to OSC where she has worked through various promotions over 20 years to her current lead practitioner role in a private OSC organisation.

She preferred part-time employment to allow her to attend to various medical appointments for her child. She always assumed she would end up in a care role after helping her mother with caring for relatives and then eventually for her mother and lastly father.

Mary-Annie had run a cheer leading group in her youth which she felt prepared her for the responsibilities of both leadership and protection for children who attended non-registered activities.

She felt bringing up children was her responsibility and did not trust caring tasks to her then husband. She thinks that their different attitudes towards responsibility led to challenges within the marriage.

Mary-Annie describes her rationale for leaving her employment within the civil service as not compatible with her own values on what an organisation should provide for their staff. Career options were limited due to her requiring flexibility to meet her child's needs. The childcare provision accommodated those needs, and her children attended the service whilst she worked.

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