

11502019 Global Carework Summit - **Continuing global conversations about care**

Louise Oldridge, louise.oldridge@ntu.ac.uk Nottingham Trent University, UK

The Carework Network is an international organisation of scholars, policymakers and advocates, focusing on the caring work of individuals, families, communities, paid caregivers, social service agencies and state bureaucracies, from interdisciplinary perspectives. Following the success of the first Global Carework Summit in 2017 (held in Lowell, Massachusetts, USA), the second Global Carework Summit was held at the University of Toronto 9 – 11 June 2019 and attended by 220 delegates from 16 countries and six continents. This essay summarises the activities at the conference, including major themes that were discussed, key papers that were presented, and policy interventions that were proposed to address inequality in care.

Organised by the Carework Network Steering Committee, which includes members in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and US, the conference provided a forum in which to continue global conversations about paid and unpaid care. Themes reflected the network's mission to address critical issues related to care work, including the intersectionality and inequality of care work and workers; changes in the labour market; how caring work is recognised and compensated; working conditions in care; organising care workers; how identities influence care work; whether and to what extent citizens have a right to receive, and a right and/or duty to provide, care; state welfare policy and neoliberalism; informal care as 'work'; the role of technology; caring as emotional work; care ethics; and extending the boundaries of care.

The opening reception included a keynote panel which discussed the International Labour Organization's (ILO) (2018) report *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. ILO Policy Specialist and lead author Laura Addati spoke first, summarising the ILO report and highlighting the 'unpaid care work-paid work-paid care work circle' (ILO, 2018: 11). The report recognises that while unpaid care work constitutes the main barrier to women's participation in the labour market, paid care work is a significant source of employment globally, particularly for women. The ILO report calls for more equal distribution of unpaid care work; the promotion of public investment in quality care provision; decent work and policies for care workers; supporting unpaid care workers seeking to return to paid employment; and the revaluing and formalisation of paid care work.

As part of the panel responding to the ILO report, Professor Eleonor Faur (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín, Argentina) then made links to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, supporting the call for transformative care policies in the ILO report (2018). Faur focused on the political opportunities afforded by the report's publication to debate the 'future of work,' framed by calls for equal rights for women, alongside the operation of neoliberal policies in many countries in a multifaceted international context. Professor Susan Himmelweit (Open University, UK and a founding chair of the Women's Budget Group there) followed, commenting that 'the care economy is the core economy,' as it both underlies the economy as a social infrastructure and creates jobs. Himmelweit noted that paid care work equates to 10% of total employment worldwide and estimated that just 1% of GDP investment in the care

economy would create more employment opportunities overall, particularly for women, and would generate a wide range of other economic benefits, that would be further strengthened if employment in care became ‘decent work.’ Finally, Professor Sonya Michel’s (University of Maryland, USA) presentation called for more attention on the wellbeing of care workers, particularly migrant workers, and reflected on the psychological and physical challenges they and their families left behind faced.

A theme that emerged throughout the conference was inequity in who performs care work and how gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and socio-economic class shape the provision of both paid and unpaid care work. In ‘Why are some workers more likely to “care” than others? Examining the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity in the “risk” for care employment among low-and middle-skill workers,’ Melissa Hodges (Villanova University, USA) showed that in the US, Black workers and Latino men are significantly more likely to be employed in care work than their white counterparts. Hodges highlighted how labour market discrimination channels marginalised workers into lower paid roles in care. In a different approach, Melody Waring (University of Wisconsin, USA), in ‘Is there an education gradient in women’s time transfers to aging parents?’, showed (using a US sample) that while many women care for their parents, it is women with lower education levels, with fewer hours available for non-care work activities, who are more likely to do this.

Other dimensions of care explored included immigration, transnational and intergenerational exchanges of care in the context of increasing global mobility. Joan Tronto (University of Minnesota, USA) spoke on ‘Decolonizing Global Care Chains,’ exploring the significance of care ethics and exchanges of labour globally. Tronto posited that the postcolonial realities of global care chains mean patterns of care work are complex and cannot be simply divided into the global North and South. An effect of nations shedding colonies has been the loss of responsibility for previous colonial ties, which nonetheless persist in ongoing patterns of inequality and unfair distribution of carework. This sees different states standing-in through privatised carework, such as the use of migrant domestic workers, ultimately shifting the structures of colonialism. Furthermore, as the nature of injustice is that the burden of change always falls most heavily on those already burdened, responsibility must be reallocated to ‘decolonise’ practices.

Several sessions included a focus on paid care work in which tensions between quality of care and safety considerations for those working in the homes of others were considered. For example, Kim England and Caitlin Alcorn (University of Washington, USA) discussed in ‘Home care workers, precarity and the US Fair Labor Standards Act,’ the diversion of public goods to private services at the expense of care workers and care recipients. The importance of ‘decent work’, working conditions and organising efforts to mitigate against precarity were another major focus. Fiona Macdonald (RMIT University, Australia) spoke about ‘Emerging risks in paid carework: Individualisation, insecurity and the gig economy’ in Australia, particularly outside existing forms of regulation, and using platforms making all workers self-employed.

Further discussions of policy emphasised the impact of neoliberalism on care and growing reliance on informal care to meet needs, putting pressure not only on family and friends, but also on volunteers in paid care settings. This was considered by Eleanor Johnson and Ailsa Cameron (University of Bristol, UK) in ‘Exploring the role of volunteers in care settings for

older people,' which discussed tensions between the boundaries of paid care worker and volunteer activities in England. Some volunteers augmented paid care services and filled gaps in provision; others provided additional companionship, devaluing emotional labour, which was not always seen as part of the paid care worker's role.

The Summit also provided an opportunity to explore and expand the boundaries of the concepts of care and caring. This included a paper by Catherine Weiss (RMIT University, Australia) inviting critical discussion of 'The analysis of prostitution as a form of care: An intellectual history.' Brittany Campbell (Brock University, Canada) sought to extend notions of caring to incorporate 'Strengthening the bond: understanding interspecies care work among veterinarians, low-income individuals, and their companion animals.' Campbell examined reciprocal care work between individuals and their pets, in acts of interspecies solidarity. Adam Rosenblatt (Duke University, USA), in 'Reclaiming cemeteries: Carework for the marginalized dead' posed interesting questions around a form of care work rarely discussed, exploring care of neglected cemeteries by volunteers.

The conference also hosted two book panels. Adia Harvey Wingfield (Washington University, USA) discussed her new book *Flatlining: Race, work, and health care in the new economy* (2019), which is about the experiences of black healthcare professionals facing discrimination and racism within health care organisations. The book describes how employing health care organisations use 'racial outsourcing' and depend on black health care workers to do 'equity work.' This additional, unrecognised labour makes health care organisations and services more accessible to communities of colour, but health care workers of colour do not receive additional resources for this additional labour and are often penalized. A second book panel discussed *Disability politics and care: The challenge of direct funding* (2016) by Christine Kelly, about a provincial direct-funding scheme and its implications for individuals with disabilities and their autonomy over their own care. Kelly's work examines responses to this scheme from those involved, the challenges in understanding and defining care and when it is required. Consideration is given to the social and political consequences of the scheme, including the tensions of transferring the responsibility of care to the individual.

The second day of the conference concluded with a keynote address by Professor Pat Armstrong (York University, Canada) on the feminisation of the care labour force. Armstrong examined welfare states' failure to respond to growing care needs and their reliance on informal carers, devaluing the skills of carers and making labour precarious. Referring to the ILO (2018) report, Armstrong called for publicly funded health and social care and education, with access based on needs, not an ability to pay.

Finally, Dr. Juliana Martínez Franzoni (University of Costa Rica) gave the closing keynote address, entitled 'Imploding and redrawing care regimes: Opportunities and challenges.' Martínez Franzoni called for collective and political action to challenge existing care regimes, focusing on recent positive developments around care and carework in Uruguay. Conversations on the challenges of care work in Latin America and more widely will continue, as Martínez Franzoni closed by announcing that the Global Carework Summit 2021 will be held at the University of Costa Rica 9 – 11 June.

The Carework Network maintains a listserv, Facebook group and Twitter account, where researchers share resources and connect; information on joining the Network is at: <https://www.uml.edu/research/cww/carework/carework-network/>.

References

International Labour Organization (2018) *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf.

Kelly, C. (2016) *Disability politics and care: The challenge of direct funding*, Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

Wingfield, A. H. (2019) *Flatlining: Race, work and health care in the new economy*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.