

Book Review

Combining Paid Work and Family Care: Policies and Experiences in International Perspective

Teppo Kroger and Sue Yeandle (eds)
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In late 2015, the charity Carers UK estimated that unwaged carers save the state £132 billion every year. The struggle of combining wage earning with caring responsibilities and the role of the state in providing (or not) financial recognition of caring work is an enduring issue for social policy. *Combining Paid Work and Family Care* is an excellent and wide-ranging addition to the existing social policy literature on caring. Teppo Kroger and Sue Yeandle have carefully curated contributions to this edited collection from over twenty researchers. The book is the outcome of a four-year international research project based in Finland that examined the ways in which carers combined paid work with unpaid caring labour. The collection is exceptional in its range, comparing social policy in three different welfare systems: (1) the public sector-centred Nordic welfare model; (2) the private sector-dominated liberal democracies; and (3) the family-centred East Asian states. This ambitious geographical reach means the collection will be of interest to academics, historians and policymakers working in many different areas and eras. The collection plots the changes in societal arrangements for the delivery of care to frail, sick or disabled parents, children or partners. Exploring not only the changing patterns of care but also the political context of such developments allows this book to reflect on the role of the state as regulator, provider or enabler of care *and* its relationship with citizens.

We know that conceptually the so-called 'private' sphere of home and family has long been considered as separate from the 'public' realm of politics and commerce. Yet, from the nineteenth century onwards, the private sphere has been progressively opened up for state and philanthropic intervention in a range of issues such as child health and female employment. As the editors point out in their Introduction, this has given rise to a range of policy approaches to enable and support the reconciliation of work and family life.

Family policy in comparative perspective is the focus of the book. The volume is divided into three key sections that address the work done in each of the three political contexts in caring for the elderly, disabled children and partners. Each thematic section is structured around data collected in six countries: Finland, Sweden, Australia, England, Japan and Taiwan. The research indicates that care services were established early in liberal democratic states, whereas they are relatively new in East Asian states

where the familial ethic of care is very strong. Worryingly, researchers found the belief that citizens should rely on the state for care only *in extremis* remains pervasive in liberal democracies. Each case study provides analysis of the financial support and other services that carers can access and includes discussion of employment law and the position of the carer vis-à-vis their employer.

This book is a timely review of the work/family equation in the context of significant changes in population structures nationally and globally. By 2050, a quarter of the world's population will be over the age of sixty-five. Falling birth rates mean the elderly are surpassing children in their need for care. Those who are ill or disabled, especially in old age, are also growing in number. The book argues persuasively that care needs are set to increase. Yet, much academic social policy research continues to focus on the reconciliation of work and caring responsibilities in families with young children. Consequently, Kroger and Yeandle identify a gap in the social policy literature to explore how delayed retirement age alongside the longer life expectancy of older family members mean that caring responsibilities are now at their most demanding for 45-65 year olds. Furthermore, one of the main strengths of this edited collection is its exploration of caring *across* different stages of the life course.

Combining Paid Work and Family Care makes another key contribution in its redefinition of the concept of 'care'. So often understood as gendered and largely reproductive labour, the concept of care is reworked and broadened by Kroger and Yeandle and their contributors to focus on three key areas: elderly care; care of disabled children; and partner care. In addition, this collection firmly establishes the relevance of the labour market to caring work. Carers are often women, and furthermore, largely perceived to be outside the labour market. Yet, rising levels of female employment have led to the marbling of the public and private spheres in the figure of the working carer. The growing reliance on both women and older workers in the workplace in an era when ever more care is needed is one of social policy's greatest challenges.

With one eye firmly on impact beyond academia and on enhancing professional knowledge in particular, the book draws attention to the big questions that remain for policy makers and the challenges posed by an ageing population. The book concludes with a series of policy suggestions tailored to each of the three welfare contexts, as well as signposts for future research. This final chapter does an excellent job of drawing together the book's findings, providing an exemplary overview of the similarities and differences of caring in the different political contexts.

Combining Paid Work and Family Care boasts an impressive collection of statistics and factual material for the reader. It is therefore an excellent reference volume for researchers and students alike. The clear, readable presentation of the large volume of data should win it a place on reading lists for undergraduate and graduate courses on social policy, citizenship and politics. Yet the focus on empirical details means there is little space for in-depth discussion of research design and research methods, nor are the ethical questions raised by researching this topic addressed. Nevertheless, the book's readability and clear synthesis of a vast array of data from three different political contexts means that it is an invaluable resource for those working in social policy and related fields.

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