

# WORKING WITH AN ETHIC OF CARE IN THE UK

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# POSITIONALITY

- Social scientists: empirical and theoretical.
- Applied social science: projects include: lay care givers; sibling carers; older people and well-being; collective action amongst service users; deliberative policy making.
- Daughters, sisters, friends, colleagues as well as social scientists.

# WE ARE FOCUSING ON....

- Ethic of care as a basis for critical analysis of policy, normative policy evaluation, and implications for social practices.
- A framework within which to understand the significance of care in everyday life.
- Researching with care: participatory research, epistemology and care.
- Deliberating with care – care full policy making
- So - ethic of care as an important contribution to engaged social science.

# SOME UK CONTEXT.....

- Dominance of neo-liberalism within social welfare: choice, autonomy, responsabilisation etc.
- Individualistic models of welfare.
- Abandonment of care from policy discourse. Uneasy alliance between disability rights claims and government agendas.
- ‘Nothing about us without us’
- Growth of participatory and deliberative democratic practices, and of participatory research.

# ETHIC OF CARE APPLICATIONS

- Family policy and ‘doing family.’
- Ageing and critical gerontology: policy constructions and responses, learning to ‘be well’ in older age.
- Deliberative policy making.
- Researching with care.

# CAVA – CARE VALUES AND THE FUTURE OF WELFARE

- “Rather than assuming that the lessening of influence of morality ‘from above’ has resulted in moral abandonment, we need to know *what does matter and seem proper* to those parents who find themselves in situations such as divorce, or cohabitation, for which there appears to be no clear script to guide their actions. What kind of commitments are important in the circumstances they find themselves? What matters to parents who attempt to combine work and care? What is the image that people have of their relationships and what do they actually do? And how does all this relate to the normative family that is constructed through policy and law?” Fiona Williams

# PROJECTS.....

- How mothers decide about taking up paid employment.
- Kin relationships after divorce.
- How people without a co-resident partner give and receive care.
- Claims made by groups and organisations about care.
- Values, care and commitments amongst parents of primary school children.

# CONCLUSIONS

- “Moral reasoning based on *care* informs the way people attempt to balance their own sense of self and the needs of others. What it means to be a good mother, father, grandparent, partner, ex-partner, lover, son, daughter or friend is crucial to the way people negotiate the proper thing to do. In working through their dilemmas, certain practical ethics emerge for adults and children, which enable resilience, facilitate commitment and lie at the heart of people’s interdependency .” (Williams, 2004, p. 74)



# POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Social policies need to recognise practical ethics.
- Work ethic needs to be balanced with care ethic.
- Need for policies to be much more explicit about visions and values.
- Evaluation, evidence based policy or ‘tracing normative frameworks’ and renewing from an ethic of care (Sevenhuijsen).

# OLD AGE: POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Critiques of responses to population ageing and increased life expectancy:
  - Promotion of ‘active ageing’
  - Containment of care costs
- Prioritization of ‘independence’, ‘choice’ and responsibility of ‘consumer-citizens’
- ‘Personalisation’ of social care – implications for older people:

# CARE IN OLD AGE

- Active ageing – discourse of obligation and burden
- ‘From the perspective of the ethic of care, the discourse of burdensomeness is a way of marginalising older people and also disassociating the young, fit and able-bodied from their own vulnerability and their future old age.’ (Lloyd, 2012 p135)
- Interdependency and relational autonomy through care relationships

# RESEARCHING WITH CARE WITH OLDER PEOPLE

- Attending to differences, support needs, practical details.
- Balancing responsibility to ‘get the job done’ with acting on attentiveness to needs.
- Ensuring competent organisation to meet the aim of involvement and of research.
- Inviting feedback from older researchers, being aware of impact of involvement.
- Recognising different powers, creating safe environment.



# OLD AGE: LIVED EXPERIENCE

- Emotional labour of old age.
- Learning to give and receive care
- Learning how to care for one's self.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

Recognition needed of:

- Embodied experiences of ageing
- Decisions about care not based only on information-driven 'choices'
- Older people as major providers of care for others
- Care needs at end of life in old age
- Recognition of older people as co-producers of knowledge.

# DELIBERATING WITH CARE

- Talk about care embodying emotions associated with care.
- ‘Showing’ as well as ‘arguing.’
- Evaluative criteria and acceptable behaviours.
- Emotional morality.

# ETHIC OF CARE PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO DELIBERATION:

Attentiveness:

A preparedness to listen and to hear what is being said, even if it is said in 'difficult' ways.



Responsibility:

Attending to different voices  
can encourage a preparedness  
to take responsibility for action.  
What should be done to  
produce positive outcomes in  
particular situations?

Competence:

Intending to enable people to take part in policy making, even taking responsibility to set up opportunities to make this happen, but failing to do this in a way that enables people to feel their contributions are recognised and valued, means the purpose of participation is not fulfilled.

Responsiveness:

Direct testimony calls attention to the importance of understanding others' experiences, rather than assuming we can 'put ourselves in their place'.

Trust:

Reciprocal trust  
enhanced through  
engagement. A  
condition for and  
outcome of care full  
deliberation.

# TO CONCLUDE

- Not a comprehensive overview of an ethic of care in the UK.
- Engaged social science: critical perspectives on social and public policy.
- Engaging with the lived lives of those for whom care is an everyday necessity and challenge.
- A framework and language for moral and political strategies for change.

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