

Thinking Gender in Transnational Times

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Gender theories have always been important, but no more so than now, when gender is increasingly acknowledged as an essential focus for economics, policy, law and development as well as being central to a range of fields in the humanities and social sciences such as cultural studies, literary criticism, queer studies, ethnic and racial studies, psychoanalytic studies and of course feminist studies. Yet while the growth areas for the field are those that seek to combine interdisciplinary theoretical approaches with transnational arenas of inquiry, or integrate theory and practice, there is currently no book series that foregrounds these exciting set of developments. The series 'Thinking Gender in Transnational Times' aims to redress this balance and to showcase the most innovative new work in this arena. We will be focusing on soliciting manuscripts or edited collections that foreground the following: Interdisciplinary work that pushes at the boundaries of existing knowledge and generates innovative contributions to the field. Transnational perspectives that highlight the relevance of gender theories to the analysis of global flows and practices. Integrative approaches that are attentive to the ways in which gender is linked to other areas of analysis such as 'race', ethnicity, religion, sexuality, violence, or age. The relationship between theory and practice in ways that assume both are important for sustainable transformation. The impact of power relations as felt by individuals and communities, and related concerns, such as those of structure and agency, or ontology and epistemology. In particular, we are interested in publishing original work that pushes at the boundaries of existing theories, extends our gendered understanding of global formations, and takes intellectual risks at the level of form or content. We welcome single or multiple-authored work, work from senior and junior scholars, or collections that provide a range of perspectives on a single theme.

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Nina Sahraoui

Racialised Workers and European Older- Age Care

From Care Labour to Care Ethics

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To Emilia and Bouchta

Foreword

There is now hardly a major city in any high-income country that doesn't depend on migrant workers from low- and middle-income countries to do its domestic and care work. These workers are mainly, but not entirely, women, and this care labour force also includes first- and subsequent-generation minority ethnic workers. They find themselves caught at the intersection of some of the most significant social, economic, political changes and crises of our time. First is the crisis of care itself. In developed countries this emerges from the combination of the rise of women as wage-earners combined with lower fertility, the increased ageing of society and the effects of social expenditure cuts and austerity. In poorer countries this crisis is no less intense. The growing reliance on a female wage caused by the effects of structural adjustment policies, environmental damage, wars, poverty, unemployment and illness impels adults' migration to seek employment.

By 2016 half of the world's 232 million migrants were women, many of them going into domestic and care work. In doing so, they enter a further crisis—of migration. This is not a crisis of migration per se but of the political responses to it. These have created political discourses in which the economic costs and benefits of migration predominate over rights and citizenship, and have shaped migration policies which are becoming more restrictive not only towards 'unskilled' workers (into which category care workers fall) but also in limiting migrant eligibility

to basic welfare provision. It's here that the precariousness of the care work they are drawn into is intensified by the existential precariousness of their lives as migrants and as racialised workers. For, while this is a story of big changes, it's also a story of continuities where the ongoing devaluation of care labour as women's unskilled work combines with a persistent racialised servitude in which minority ethnic women have traditionally been recruited into domestic and care work in homes and residential institutions.

Much of the research into this phenomenon over the past two decades has focused on care and domestic work undertaken in people's own homes. Nina Sahraoui's wonderfully illuminating, analytically profound and sensitive study is based on interviews with migrant and minority ethnic care workers in (mainly) residential homes and institutions for older people in London, Madrid and Paris (conducted by the author in three languages). It provides a hugely significant and original contribution to our understanding of the personal, political and policy dynamics of gendered and racialised care work in postcolonial and neo-liberalised Europe.

The book starts and ends with a quotation from an interview with Fouzia, an Algerian old-age care worker in Paris, who says: 'France is a country with rights. So give me my rights. A little bit of rights, because in a way I'm doing something for France. (...) Who will do it? (...) it's the miserable care assistants. What I do, it's not little, it's really something' (p. 1). The paradoxes in this statement are at the centre of the analysis developed in the book: the way in which care work is devalued and its workers rendered invisible while at the same time being absolutely essential to the well-being of, in this case, frail older people, and a fundamental part of the care infrastructure of these countries. It explores how this devaluation is experienced by those at the sharp end of precarious employment, care privatisation, institutionalised racism and restrictive migration rules. And how, in the face of this, the very acts of caring for older, vulnerable people provide the workers with an expression for their own dignity, affection, generosity and pride.

These contradictions are explored through a synthesis of two conceptual frameworks: the gendered political economy of care and the feminist ethics of care. The first of these enables the author to situate and compare

the racialisation, gendering and commodification of care work in each of the three countries within the intersection of their care, migration and employment regimes. The second—care ethics—informs an analysis of the daily practices of care work as well as a critical evaluation of how care work is understood and managed in the care homes in particular and in society in general. In pursuing these two dynamics, each chapter develops new and critical insights.

For example, the author examines the processes of labour market segmentation in the old-age care sector in which workers find different ‘routes’ into this work. These routes are shaped by the different ways the care and migration regimes operate and intersect in the three countries, and how they are both enabling and constraining. For example, in all countries there are workers who are overqualified for the work they do, a situation which often results from the obstacles (time and cost) related to achieving recognition for care work qualifications achieved in (non-EU) countries of origin. In many cases, employers benefit from qualified workers who are able to take on more complex nursing roles without being paid the rate for such work, while those workers face the difficulty of appreciating being given more fulfilling tasks in the knowledge of the exploitation that this represents. However, this was particularly marked in London, where 80% of workers interviewed were overqualified and this was due to the particularly restrictive point-based system which favours skilled over unskilled and in which care work is designated as unskilled. By contrast, in Spain, it was more likely that migrants were ‘channelled’ into care work as it gave them an employment foothold (and if they were working in a private home, a place to stay) whilst awaiting legal recognition. In further contrast, the old-age care sector in France invests more in on-the-job training and possibilities for professional training which permitted some of the workers interviewed in Paris, especially the minority ethnic workers, to aspire to their work as a stepping stone into more professional care work. Yet while these differences exist, overall there is a clear disconnect between ‘utilitarian’ migration rules in which rights are related to the value of labour on the one side and the needs of old-age care sector which is dependent on these workers’ labour, on the other. Caught in the middle of this, workers find they are deskilled and often trapped in low-paid work from which there is little escape.

The book offers an excellent illustration of theory refinement grounded in the workers' own experiences. For example, the analysis unfolds the ways in which the workers experience the working conditions in which they find themselves. Sahraoui observes that while old-age care work carries all the objective indicators of precarious employment—temporary, part-time, low waged and lacking collective organisation—it is in the *subjective* experience of that work that precariousness should also be understood. Contemporary employment precariousness is a consequence of the ways care has been commodified. In a situation of reducing public expenditure costs through marketing care provision, care home owners and employers end up transferring the social and economic costs of the insecurities of care as an underfunded or for-profit business on to their workers. However, just as significant is the workers' own subjective existential precarity. In order to analyse the physical and emotional demands of their work, Sahraoui turns to the ethics of care to explain that: 'Precariousness is substantial to life itself, it is thus a condition shared by all, albeit differently. Bodies that are racialised—as are migrant and minority ethnic care workers—are exposed to specific social, economic and political forms of precariousness' (p. 133). She documents the physical toll of work that requires long hours of lifting, turning, carrying (men are often employed to do this). Then there are the needs to be attentive, responsible and responsive (all attributes of the ethics of care) to the frail older people in their care. This is often performed with inadequate or poor quality equipment where managers, for example, cut the costs of meeting incontinence needs. Understanding the complex relational requirements of this work means more than what is conventionally termed 'emotional labour', Sahraoui argues; it involves communication, forms of reciprocity as well as the challenges of residents who can be aggressive or even violent. Yet, being able to meet such relational needs was for the workers a source of pride in their work.

These attributes of the work are set against the lack of collective voice to resist their exploitation and against the conceptions of the professionalisation of care work which was task oriented rather than person oriented. That lack of collective voice is particularly critical in Sahraoui's analysis of the personal, collegial and institutionalised racism that the workers endure. She points out that even where clear anti-discrimination

laws exist (in France and the UK), these are insufficient to deal with these forms of everyday racism. In the knowledge that certain overt terms or actions can be constituted as racist, discrimination by colleagues takes more covert forms and is difficult to prove or complain about. In relation to residents' direct racism, this was often not taken seriously; indeed managers saw it as something that workers just have to learn to put up with as part of the job. Sahraoui concludes that a rights framework, while important, is just not enough to deal with the multiple forms of subordination experienced by the workers. Rather, she says, we need to apply the ethics of care that give the workers (both men and women) their pride and dignity to social justice. In other words, a society which values care economically by paying a proper wage, socially by enhancing the value of care and politically by giving a collective voice to those involved in care work as either provider or service user would be one which would begin to remove the invisible injustices with which these workers live and work.

This book offers us an excellent grounded understanding of the diverse effects of the crisis of care and its continued devaluation in postcolonial and neoliberal Europe. The gendered political economy of care now stretches globally and includes the big international business of care provision and agencies working with states to both recruit and send migrant workers. Over the past decade a political space has also opened up where transnational networks of care and domestic work grassroots activists combined forces to push for the International Labour Organization's Convention passed in 2011 on *Decent Work for Domestic Workers*. This sets standards—to be ratified and implemented by its member states—for rights to decent working conditions and collective organisation. It has been a major step forward in enabling local and national mobilisation for decent working conditions. But it is also the case, as this book evidences, that dealing with the crisis of care and its racialised, gendered and geopolitical inequalities, as well as those of age and disability, calls for a longer-term perspective in which care is central to global social justice. In the political discourses of national and global social policy actors, care work is often hidden, subsumed under the duty of paid work for individuals and economic competitiveness for nation states. Ethically, politically and practically, care constitutes the social reproduction activities that sustain society, as much as labour, local, national and migrant, sustains the

economy and ecological justice sustains the planet. It is within this framing of justice, sustainability and interdependence that it becomes possible to understand the complexities of the politics of migrant and racialised care work and the struggles around it. This book helps us enormously to think through this transformation.

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Fiona Williams

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Note on Previous Publications

Subsections from Chap. 6 build on parts of Chap. 1 in the volume *Gender, Work and Migration: Agency in Gendered Labour Settings* (2018), which I co-edited with Dr Megha Amrith.

An earlier version of a selection of subsections from Chap. 7 is part of a chapter to be published within the edited volume *Politics of Dis-integration*

edited by Michael Collyer, Sophie Hinger and Reinhard Schweitzer in Springer Imiscoe Series under a Creative Commons licence (forthcoming). I thank the editors and other contributors to this volume for the inspiring conversations around 'dis-integration'.

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List of Abbreviations

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CQC	Care Quality Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
EU	European Union
HALDE	High Authority for the Fight Against Discrimination and for Equality (<i>Haute Autorité de lutte contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité</i>)
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILO	International Labour Organization
NHS	National Health Service
NMDS-SC	National Minimum Data Set for Social Care
NMW	National Minimum Wage
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAAD	System of Autonomy and Dependency Care (<i>Sistema de Autonomía y Atención a la Dependencia</i>)
SOVA	Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UK	United Kingdom

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