

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Valuing Care Work: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Cecilia Benoit and Helga Hallgrimsdóttir, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 292 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4426-1092-7.

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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d'activités en montrant simplement mais efficacement le caractère multiforme de ces démarches à travers quatre catégories-types. Cet ouvrage pourra tout aussi bien être une référence utile pour les universitaires que pour les partenaires sociaux intéressés à documenter leurs réflexions sur les compétences situées et les thématiques connexes aux démarches compétences : transfert, instrumentalisation, reconnaissance et évaluation.

Pour conclure, cet ouvrage mérite qu'on s'y intéresse, d'abord pour situer nos propres compétences par rapport à des cas vécus, mais aussi pour rendre compte du sens que l'on donne aux compétences, à la place grandissante de leur instrumentalisation et de la formalisation par rapport aux situations rapportées, vécues et documentées qui montrent, en fait, l'importance des dimensions non formelles et informelles.

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### **Valuing Care Work: Comparative Perspectives**

edited by Cecilia Benoit and Helga Hallgrímsdóttir, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 292 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4426-1092-7.

Care work is a broad concept that covers all tasks that involve care activities undertaken in the service of others whether this is done for pay or without remuneration. In recent years this work has become a topic that has attracted a growing body of academic analysis and the editors and 25 contributors to this work are to be applauded for adding to this effort. *Valuing Care Work* is a readable text which spans a broad range of topics related to both paid and unpaid caring. Benoit and Hallgrímsdóttir bring together a body of contributors from Canada, Finland and Iceland to examine care work which they present in a text that offers insightful commentary that on occasion is truly excellent. The range of topics

addressed is impressive and in the case of this reader certainly aroused interest. Topics explored include comparative analysis across social and spatial contexts, paid care work in formal organizations and in intimate and community settings, unpaid care work in intimate settings and economic organizations, and policy implications with all contributions being situated in an environment conditioned by neo-liberalism. The highlight of the text is Phillips, Casey and Leischner's chapter that discusses workers who are employed in non-profit organizations that care for the needs of sex workers. This contribution is a stand-out for the way in which it clarifies the stressors and concerns of the workers studied and recognizes that these workers can and do provide important care but remain human beings who are torn and compromised by the situation in which they work.

The overarching argument and purpose of the editors is to show that "the more welfare states base their social policies on the principle of caring, the closer they come to championing gender equality in all sectors of society, one where men's involvement in caring work is championed, where there is equal balance between paid and unpaid work for both women and men, with both sharing opportunities and responsibilities" (p. 10). This is an objective that is to be applauded and the text makes a contribution that may encourage some readers to make greater effort to carry this goal forward. But while the text is successful in challenging the assumption that care work is straightforward sadly the value of the contribution made by the work is somewhat undermined by a failure to adequately specify what care work entails and by a perspective that values women's care work but, devalues the caring labour undertaken by men.

When explaining what constitutes care work the editors suggest that most of the activities embraced by this notion "are in some way or other connected with the

social reproduction of human beings on a daily and generational basis" (p. 3). The contributors all appear to share this broad understanding but unfortunately this concept is not developed in a manner that accords it the specificity required to explain why the populace and indeed the contributors themselves appear to accept that child care workers and nurses are care workers but university teachers and surgeons are not. This would be a crucial area of further research as there is a growing suggestion that approaches to work like child care is impacting on care workers themselves and increasing gender discrimination in the workforce generally. This text, that seeks to value care work missed an added opportunity here. In brief, by assuming that high status occupations that help people to develop their capabilities is not care work a chance is missed to enhance the value of caring work in popular imagination.

The volume would also have been enriched had Benoit and Hallgrimsdóttir provided more discussion to theories that situate care work in the market. This would have assisted in giving added coherence to often excellent discussion as their contributors came to grips with these theories. Reviewing the relevant literature, England has highlighted five major perspectives that have been advanced to explain how the market addresses care work these being; devaluation theory, public good theory, prisoner of love theory, commodification of emotion theory, and "love and money" theory. This body of literature deserves a pronounced place in any text that seeks to understand how care work is valued but unfortunately this has not been done in this text.

Finally, and possibly reflecting that I may have a vested interest because I am a father, I would have liked the text to accord more attention to the need to value the care work of men. This is done by very few of the contributions. This omission is not made explicit in the titles of the chapters but becomes immediately apparent

within individual chapters. An example is the chapter titled "Spinning the Family Web: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Canada." This title suggests grandmothers and grandfathers' contribution will be discussed but in fact grandparent is equated with grandmother. This is a feminized, not a feminist reading, and becomes seriously unacceptable when the chapter on Aboriginal carers all but ignores race and depicts these workers as essentially women.

Some of these criticisms may appear unwarranted but this is such an important area of research and still only coming into proper recognition that it is important to respect and acknowledge the complexities that historically surround the position of carer and in the current world these have become increasingly difficult. I enjoyed reading this book, commend it to others who are interested in care work and feel it makes an important contribution to any discussion about this topic.

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### **L'activité des clients : un travail ?**

coordonné par Sophie Bernard, Marie-Anne Dujarier et Guillaume Tiffon, collection *Sciences de la société*, n° 82, Toulouse : Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2011, 210 p., ISBN : 978-2-8107-0203-9.

Ce numéro thématique de la revue *Sciences de la société* porte sur l'activité réalisée par les clients à différents moments de la production des biens et des services. L'originalité de ces contributions est d'interroger l'hypothèse voulant que les fournisseurs instaurent une division des tâches dans laquelle les clients sont mis au travail. Hypothèse relativement originale dans ce domaine d'études mais assez reconnue dans le champ des études du marketing, où la notion du client comme quasi employé et surveillant est discutée depuis plusieurs années. Ce phénomène émergent constituerait, selon les coordonnateurs du numéro, une caractéristique du capitalisme contemporain ou,