

Chapter 1

Understanding Care and Thinking with Care

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CARE IN CONTEXT

People do not spring up from the soil like mushrooms. People produce people. People need to be cared for and nurtured throughout their lives by other people, at some times more urgently and more completely than at other times (Kittay 2005: 1).

What does ‘care’ mean in contemporary society? How are caring relationships practised in different contexts? How do conceptions and experiences of care continue to both inform and become shaped by wider societal, political and theoretical ideas and institutions? What resources do individuals and collectives draw upon in order to care *for*, care *with* and care *about* themselves and others?

Addressing such questions, this book takes a nuanced and context-sensitive approach to exploring caring relationships, identities and practices *within* and *across* a variety of cultural, familial, geographical and institutional arenas. It aims to explore care as both an analytical and theoretical resource, and to continue the debate over the value of expanding and deepening understandings of care in order to inform and reform policy contexts and political thinking (Bowlby *et al.* 2010, Lynch *et al.* 2009, Nussbaum 2006, Robinson 2011). Globally, care is high on current policy agendas, but only in a service or professionalised context or in response to demographic changes, such as an ageing population. Even then this is not sufficient. Care as an ethical position, applicable to

much broader and deeper questions of how lives might be lived in contemporary societies, remains absent from the political agenda. Critically there ought to be good public arrangements for all caregivers, as it is they who often are poorly paid, marginalised and socially restricted.

This collection represents attempts to develop thinking about and with 'care' in this more moral philosophical direction; to apply, test or explore the concepts of care and caring in a range of research settings, and to offer suggestions about the potential of 'care' for responding to pertinent current issues such as social justice, exclusion and connection. Ultimately being deprived of care or being unable to develop a supportive caring environment is 'a serious human deprivation for most people' (Lynch *et al.* 2009: 1).

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCERNS

The principal aim of the collection is to energise and contribute to key theoretical, policy and practice debates concerning '*who cares, how, why and when?*' Through a critical and reflexive approach, the book examines theoretical constructions of care and caring relations, providing empirically embedded ways of thinking about and understanding care in contemporary society. In different ways, many of the chapters engage imaginatively and critically with the feminist ethics of care in particular, as an important source of moral philosophical thinking about 'care'. Some of the chapters adopt care perspectives to provide new substantive insights, whilst others use the focus of their research to challenge and reframe conceptualisations of care. Various chapters present alternative perspectives regarding flows of care and power within families and communities, whilst some challenge assumptions about the contexts in which caring

practices take place, thus advancing discussions surrounding care beyond private and/or commercial domains.

In addition to the particular contributions of each chapter, the book also aims to highlight a number of common concerns and propose some broader arguments arising from the collection as a whole. Firstly, the book draws attention to the importance of defining and understanding care and caring, arguing for the cross-cultural significance, if not universality of human vulnerability, interdependence and the need for care, as ongoing, not just at the beginning and end of life. Equally, the book highlights the importance of cultural context and cultural differences, in relation to both conceptions of care and to lived caring relationships and practices. This recognition of both the more generalised and the particular aspects of care are important for its development as a broader ethical resource or position. In theoretical terms, the argument is also that care can do important conceptual work and contribute not only to theories of relationality or moral reasoning on a personal level, but also to theories of citizenship, justice and equality (Lynch *et al.* 2009, Nussbaum 2006, Sayer 2011).

Thirdly, at the level of specific societal analysis, this book highlights a number of constraints and tensions which are revealed through studying how care is operationalised in particular institutions. This examination of how policy ideals, organisational objectives, political rhetoric and professional practice intersect when care is institutionalised or commodified is highly relevant, and offers suggestions and directions beyond the particular settings illustrated here. Similarly, whilst each of the chapters points to policy implications in relation to their specific topics, including inclusion in education, holistic health care, foster carers and parenting after divorce or

separation, for example, there is also an overarching position, taken by the book as a whole. This is to highlight and advocate the significance and potential of care to policy debates at the broadest level; around social justice, exclusion, social cohesion, ethical or sustainable living (including production and consumption) and well-being.

A further common concern across this book is with the ongoing significance of gender in relation to the experience, social organisation and political understanding of care. All of the authors represented here share a critical interest in feminist theoretical and methodological perspectives, expressed in this book through the exploration of care. Continuing the trajectory of feminist work, this collection makes the general arguments that all human societies require the provision of love and care, that interdependency is the ‘condition’ of human beings, and that love and care cannot be understood without recognition of the “gendered order of caring” (Lynch *et al.* 2009: 219). In this way, the chapters in this book also highlight the need to expand understandings and recognition of care beyond the ‘private’, ‘domestic’ or personal arenas and insist on the “salience of care and love as goods of public significance” (Lynch *et al.* 2009: 2). One final articulation of this common interest in feminist approaches to ethics and to care, is through the methodological insights offered by a number of the chapters. Another important contribution made by this book is the exploration and application of feminist ethics to the process of research. There are reflexive discussions of caring relations, practices and dilemmas within research relationships that readers with a particular interest in qualitative or feminist research will find useful. The book therefore encourages questions of how to think and write about care, with care, and how to be attentive and responsive to research participants; to be competent and responsible as a researcher (Tronto and Fisher 1990).

As outlined above, this book includes important, and yet often neglected, international and cross-cultural perspectives. Research within the book has been undertaken in Canada, Iran, the Philippines and the UK. The chapters cover a wide range of multicultural settings, thereby encompassing the perspectives and experiences of those from different cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds. For example, chapters include work on: Filipino students (chapter 5), family and neighbourhoods in Tehran, Iran (chapter 9), sibling relationships of young people from different backgrounds (chapter 13) and an analysis of care amongst transnational families (chapter 14). Grounded in rich empirical work and illustrated with in-depth examples, the book presents the perspectives of a wide range of people including but not limited to: children, parents and grandparents; students and teachers; healthcare professionals and patients; consumers; and communities.

In doing so, we aim to contribute to the growth of interest in care and the way that people care *for*, *with* and *about* others. This is of importance not only because care shapes people's everyday lives and relationships, but also because caring relations and practices influence the economies and welfare systems of different societies. The collection also considers ways in which feminist conceptions of care can challenge persisting assumptions about human relationships, decision-making and the allocation of resources; including time, emotions, love and labour, in personal, social and institutional contexts. This is important in order to avoid limiting care as either a taken-for-granted idea or as a professionalised term to describe a commercial service. All the explorations of care, caring practices and relationships offered here, in different ways, use care as a lens to reveal insights about practical, moral, emotional and ethical aspects

of human relationships and to consider the centrality and complexity of our vital connections with others. Alongside other contemporary authors in this field, we aim to argue that, [T]he notion of care is a valuable political concept and that how we think about care is deeply implicated in existing structures of power and inequality' (Robinson 2011: 3).

THINKING ABOUT AND WITH CARE

Whilst each of the chapters engages extensively with literature covering many aspects of care, the book contributes particularly to debates surrounding a feminist ethics of care. Chapters either explicitly use work by key authors in this field to frame their empirical research, or nod towards them whilst using subject specific authors that directly engage with different critical literature and research. Given this focus we would like to map out the feminist ethics of care in more detail.

Feminist ethics of care

The body of literature which defines and defends a feminist ethics of care contributes important critiques of established ways of thinking about ethics, morality, citizenship and care. It also provides alternatives to them; operating at an epistemological and theoretical level but also at the level of practical application (Sevenhuijsen 2003). Spanning the last thirty years, this literature can loosely be divided into two waves, with Gilligan and Noddings as central figures in the early 1980s, and Tronto and Sevenhuijsen forming the core of a second wave from the early 1990s onwards (Williams 2004). In Northern Europe and the UK particularly, there has been a consistent empirical, sociological and feminist engagement with care and caring, with writers such as Ve (1989), Waerness (1989), Graham (1983) and Finch and Mason

(1993) being important early examples. This engagement has continued to develop across a number of disciplines, including Sociology, Geography, Psychosocial Studies and Social Policy and there has been particular interest from those studying family lives and relationships (Duncan and Edwards 1999, Smart and Neale 1999, Thomson and Holland 2002, Ribbens McCarthy, Edwards and Gillies 2003, Doucet 2006). Here a focus has been on revealing the moral and ethical aspects of family lives and extending the range of contexts in which caring relations and responsibilities are seen to exist and be struggled with. More recently still, the debate on care has been reinvigorated by those such as Marian, (2006), Bowlby *et al.* (2010), Lynch *et al.* (2009) and Robinson (2011) and who argue the relevance of care for political and policy responses to social and economic inequalities and opportunities.

Originally, many of the key thinkers, including Noddings (1984), Ruddick (1989) and Tronto (1987, 1993) included accounts of the particular relationship between women and the ethic of care. This often involved a consideration of the mother-child relationship as a specific and significant example of where ethics and everyday life are intertwined. Whilst the embodied aspects of motherhood are fully recognised, it is the gendering of the social roles of women, and indeed of morality which is emphasised, producing accounts of moral reasoning which are grounded in, but not limited to, women's experiences of care. From this care is understood and presented as a practice and as a way of thinking. The development of a feminist ethics of care then, sought to define care in more grounded terms, but also at a philosophical level, has aimed to reposition and argue the value of care as a basis for moral and political theory and also for social policy.

Noddings (1984) is significant in the conceptualisation of care and caring as a starting point for an alternative moral theory, and offers a detailed definition of care as a central, crucial and *human* practice. She presents, as do others (for example Ruddick 1989), care as a practice and therefore as learnt and importantly, as improvable, but also argues that experiences of being cared for are definitively human, or ‘universally accessible’ (Noddings 2003: 5). This point illustrates a significant theme in feminist ethics, which is to highlight the commonality of human vulnerability, not just at the beginning and end of life, but as a constant and fundamental condition. This conception forms the basis for the recognition and valuing of care and caring relations, and provides an important platform for the concepts of interdependence and a relational self (Ruddick 1989, Tronto 1993, Sevenhuijsen 1998).

Noddings presents a central relation between the ‘one-caring’ and the ‘cared-for’; arguing that while this relationship involves both parties, it is neither symmetrical nor equal. Understanding the relationship between those caring, and those cared for is seen to have important implications for developing a feminist moral theory which does not relegate or romanticise women’s experiences of care, and which does not reduce caring to a selfless or self-sacrificial act. Related to this, Noddings distinguishes between ‘natural caring’, which she sees as spontaneous and most evident within the mother-child relationship, and caring as an ‘ethical ideal’, which refers to the process by which we struggle to reason, act and relate to others in an ethical way. Noddings also makes a distinction between ‘caring for’, which she sees as involving caring activities and responsibilities experienced directly, and ‘caring about’ which involves a more indirect concern and potential for caring activity with those at greater distance.

Tronto and Fisher (1990: 40), also key authors in this field, offer a slightly different, broader definition of caring:

A species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our “world”, so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.

Tronto and Fisher (1990) set out what they describe as four aspects of care: caring about, taking care of, care giving and care receiving. Alongside these are corresponding ethical values: attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness, each of which also act as evaluative criteria, producing both the possibility to consider good enough caring, and to define moral or ethical failings such as ‘inattentiveness’ or ‘privileged irresponsibility’ (Tronto 2004). Tronto, and Tronto and Fisher, also define these ethical values from the premise of a connected, relational and socially situated self, and of care as a practice, with both cognitive and affective elements, rather than by constructing or drawing on notions of abstract and formal moral principles. This concern with developing a moral theory grounded in context and practice, and emphasising the process of moral deliberation and decision making, rather than detached conformity to absolute moral rules, is again, a central preoccupation of writers in this field. A number of recurring debates have emerged from the process of seeking to reposition and enrich understandings of care. Three of these: the value of care for moral and political theory, the relationship between care and gender, and between justice and care, are directly relevant to this book and will now be briefly outlined.

An ongoing central argument from feminist moral philosophy has been for the potential and value of care for moral and political theory. Sevenhuijsen (1998: 6) is a highly

significant figure here, and shares with Tronto an interest in ‘a search for an appropriate vocabulary for making care into a political issue from a feminist perspective’. The focus of Sevenhuijsen’s work, more specifically, has been to explore and argue the value of care in relation to citizenship; again seeking to critique traditional models of both the citizen and the nature of citizenship. For her, ethics and morality are intimately linked to citizenship as: ‘judging is a principle task of citizenship and thus of collective action in a democratic context’ (1998: 15). Sevenhuijsen also asserts the way in which a feminist ethics of care can offer not only new ways of thinking about citizenship as an aspect of ethical life, but also about morality itself and the process of ‘judging’. Sevenhuijsen continued to develop this relationship between an ethic of care and a political theory of citizenship in her later work, and like Tronto (2004) valued care as a political concept, arguing for it to be fully transferred to the public sphere.

The second key area of debate is that of the relationship between care and gender. Whilst Gilligan (1982) claimed not to be presenting an essentialist account of the ‘different voice’, she remains a focal point for the question of whether the different voice is definitively female. The development of a feminist ethics of care has provided opportunities for fruitful discussions of gender difference and alongside this, a critical consideration of the risks and implications of attempting to theorise difference in feminist terms. Significant contributions here come from Ruddick (1989) and Tronto (1993) who explicitly state that they use women’s caring experiences as mothers in order to both make visible their deeply ethical, deliberative and relational qualities and to demonstrate the value of such experiences as a model for ethical reasoning in other contexts. Alongside the re-valuing of women’s experiences of caring, there is also the aim of critiquing the gendered, unequal distribution of caring labour and seeking to

establish care as a central social and political issue. In this way then, the literature on a feminist ethics of care provides another example of a much wider and longstanding feminist concern with pursuing equality without equating this with sameness (Sevenhuijsen 2000: 28).

The third area of debate relevant to the contributions in this collection, concerns the relationship between care and justice. Since Gilligan's initial proposal of an *alternative* ethic of care, these two core ideas, of care and justice have been contrasted:

An ethic of justice focuses on questions of fairness, equality, individual rights, abstract principles, and the consistent application of them. An ethic of care focuses on attentiveness, trust, responsiveness to need, narrative nuance and cultivating caring relations (Held 2006: 3-4).

Much attention has been paid to questions over the nature and extent of differences between justice and care, and the implications of such differences in terms of the epistemological, cultural and practical value of each. If justice and care are seen as oppositional, then the ethic of care must either be convincingly presented as a preferable or superior alternative, or risk being relegated as secondary.

For writers such as Tronto, this risk is associated particularly with what she sees as 'feminine' accounts of an ethics of care: 'As long as women's morality is viewed as different and more particular than mainstream moral thought, it inevitably will be treated as a secondary form of moral thinking' (Tronto in Larrabee 1993: 246). If an ethic of care is seen as a replacement for an ethic of justice, then this could be detrimental to the pursuit of equality; a conception and language of 'rights' has long been a resource for those challenging prejudice and discrimination. An alternative

strategy is to see justice and care as, in some ways, and to some extent, compatible or integrated, and that both may be necessary for a systematic theory of morality and ethics. However, there are a number of significant issues involved in attempting to reconcile or combine care and justice care, such as the conception and evaluation of needs.

Part of exploring the extent to which care and justice perspectives may share common concerns or contain elements of one another, has been to consider the kinds of moral questions they ask, or the moral problems they raise. One such question, as identified by Tronto (1993) is how best to understand human ‘needs’ and how competing needs may be evaluated and met. She offers a critical consideration of the conception of need, to argue that a care perspective may offer a more appropriate means of understanding, and judging between, complex human needs. For example, she argues that a traditional model of justice among rights bearing individuals, tends to reduce or alienate those deemed ‘needy’, presenting a skewed and inaccurate picture of the characteristics of both people and needs themselves. Because the ethic of care foregrounds human vulnerability and the need for care, where care is seen as relating to material, emotional and psychological well-being, Tronto (1993) argues that it not only incorporates justice questions, but is equally, if not better placed to respond to them. This concern with asserting the relevance of care to issues of justice and equality is one that has continued in feminist care ethics, political philosophy and sociology over the past two decades. It has been articulated in terms of ‘affective inequality’ (Lynch *et al.* 2009), ‘interdependency and caringscapes’ (Bowlby *et al.* 2010), ‘species membership’ (Nussbaum 2006) and most recently ‘human survival and security’ (Robinson 2011).

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book brings together authors from a broad range of disciplines, theoretical perspectives and at different stages in their careers. Intended to highlight the complexity of care-giving/receiving over time and in different spaces it is divided into four themed sections: caring – ‘within educational institutions’, ‘amongst communities and networks’, ‘for and about families’ and ‘across the life course’ and in these they seek to explore ‘*who cares, how, why and when*’. In doing so, the sections examine the ways in which care and caring practices are conceived, articulated and manifest in different contexts. In line with our collective approach each themed section is preceded by a summary, written by the collective in that section, that synthesises key themes emerging from the chapters with the aim of providing a critical edge to contemporary conceptual, as well as, policy oriented debates on care.

In more detail then, the first section focuses on ‘caring within educational institutions’, drawing on examples from the Philippines and the UK the four chapters relocate discourses on care from dominant discussions surrounding the home to educational institutions thereby considering the, often neglected, caring practices and relations amongst students, and between students and teachers. The chapters examine formal and informal dimensions of ‘care’ from the standpoint of both teachers and students with respect to: the place of care in Early Childhood Education and Care (Paulette Luff); how adolescent students think about and experience ‘care’ in their lives at the intersection of home and school (Uthel Laurent); how individualised notions of care problematically infuse school curriculums and shape student-teacher relationships (Val Gillies and

Yvonne Robinson); and how university professors show care in lessons (Mabelle Victoria).

The second section then considers ‘caring amongst communities and networks’ and turns to care in a range of different ‘community-based’ contexts within the UK, Canada and Iran. Recognising the complexity of ‘community’ the four chapters focus particularly on the significance of culture, ethnicity/race, gender and religion in shaping perceptions and experiences of care. The contributions seek to challenge engrained assumptions about caring relationships, practices and resources in different geographical and cultural contexts, as well as conceptualisations of consumption and care including: alternative care relationships and the ways in which care can become a networked activity (Maxine Birch and Nina Nissen); Black men’s involvement in community care work and the ways in which intersections between race and gender produce particular forms of care experiences and provision for Black men and women (Tracey Reynolds); the explicit consumption discourses and practices on marketing parenthood (Natasha Mauthner and Andrea Doucet); and women’s responsibilities and attitudes towards child care, family, neighbourhoods and the State, within the highly gendered Islamic society of Iran (Linda Bell).

The third section builds on the group’s long-standing interest in ‘families’ and family relationships to emphasise caring relationships and practices within often neglected areas of family life, not least those where a range of problematic assumptions surrounding mothering, fathering and parenting more generally exist in particular in policy and practice debates. Drawing on UK-based empirical studies the three chapters examine: the experiences of foster carers (Linda Nutt); caring and emotional work for

mothers with intellectually disabled children (Chrissie Rogers); and the perceptions and lived experiences of fathers trying to adjust to and sustain relationships with children and mothers beyond the ending of a marriage or partnership (Georgia Philip).

Finally the fourth section explores examples of the dynamic nature of care in different life-course contexts. The three chapters focus on the perspectives of children, elders and bereaved families. In doing so, the section seeks to challenge preconceptions about flows of care *within* and *across* generations. Rather than replicate well-rehearsed discussions about hierarchical flows of care and power and more conventional caring relationships the chapters examine shifts in caring practice and relations over different dimensions of time including a focus on: caring practices within lateral sibling relationships (Susie Weller); inter-generational and transnational care dilemmas and the experiences of ageing Italian migrants (Elisabetta Zontini); and relationality with respect to bereaved families and the continuation of care after death (Jane Ribbens McCarthy).

COLLECTIVELY THINKING AND WRITING WITH CARE

Before we move into the substantive part of the book, we would like to talk a little about how we have worked in a collective way, and how we have developed this volume, outlining the origins and ethos of the research network to which we belong and the writing process itself. Established in 1987 the 'Women's Workshop on Qualitative Family and Household Research' (hereafter the group) originated as a small informal support group for five PhD students who met and discovered their shared interest in qualitative research on families and households at a British Sociological Association summer school (Ribbens and Edwards 1995, Edwards and Ribbens 1998). By the mid-

1990s the group had grown to almost 20 members, principally by word of mouth. Although not originally intended to be so over time the group developed into a valued women-only forum, united by an interest in feminist epistemologies and methods, and a concern for the peripheral position of women's experiences in academia (Edwards and Ribbens 1998, Birch *et al.* 2002, Gillies and Lucey 2007).

Whilst the structure of the group was formalised through the appointment of a coordinator it, to this day, endeavours to retain an informal, supportive and collaborative ethos that enables members to experiment with new ideas, discuss tentative thoughts, ask challenging questions, share current and on-going research, and provide constructive criticism on work-in-progress (Ribbens and Edwards 1995, Edwards and Ribbens 1998, Birch *et al.* 2002). The group currently comprises 43 members from doctoral students to research professors from over 20 institutions, primarily although not exclusively based in the UK. Members also reside in Canada, Denmark, France and Switzerland.

Reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of the group this volume contains chapters from those with backgrounds in Anthropology, Education, Geography, Psychology, Health and Social Care, Sociology and Social Policy. We meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss individual's work-in-progress (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, funding applications) and also to develop joint ventures. The group has a strong track record of collective work and authorship within the areas of family, intimacy and research methods producing a Special Issue of the *Women's Studies International Forum* (Ribbens and Edwards 1995), and edited collections on *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives* (Ribbens and Edwards 1998), *Ethics in Qualitative*

Research (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop and Miller 2002) and *Power, Knowledge and the Academy: The Institutional Is Political* (Gillies and Lucey 2007) along with many single and co-authored papers and books enhanced by the groups' discussions.

The emphasis on collaboration is set within an environment imbued with competition (Gillies and Lucey 2007). As Rosalind Edwards and Jane Ribbens (1998: 6) note 'Members have been drawn to the group by the need for a setting which recognises the significance of privately based everyday knowledge and ways of knowing instead of simply prioritising the drive towards institutional, public, academic output and credentials'. When reflecting on earlier manifestations of the group they suggest that members often research areas of great personal interest and, therefore, there is a sense in which they *care* deeply about their subject and participants. Care is also apparent in the ethos of the group; members *care for* and *about* the group and its members often sharing in both personal and professional elations and sadness. *Published 25 years after the establishment of the Women's Workshop* we feel the book is highly apt in its emphasis on re-visiting feminist ethics of care with respect to contemporary caring relations and practices across a wide variety of contexts.

The original concept for the book emerged, as many writing projects do, from a relatively casual conversation about how 'care' across a wide variety of contexts and manifestations traversed the interests of many group members. The idea followed a number of meetings in which individuals shared and sought feedback on papers relating to the subject. Fundamentally, these discussions instigated others to think about their work through a similar lens and in particular to consider areas where caring relations and practices had been overlooked. Members' interests proved to be multifarious with

some having a long-term interest in care as an explicit part of their research within the context of, for example, mothering and fathering, transnational networks and a feminist ethics of care. For others the subject formed an implicit or emerging part of their work, that was, as yet, under-explored. A number of members suggested that, as a collective, we would have a great deal to say about care in different contexts and, more specifically, that our work could re-energise debates surrounding the feminist ethics of care.

Collaboration forms a key part of the group's ethos and, as in the case of previous writing projects, discussion soon turned to the most appropriate and effective way of working together; a task Val Gillies and Helen Lucey (2007) suggest is challenging particularly given the differing statuses and experience of members. We do not wish to paint a harmonious picture of group decision-making, nor would we want and have expected it to be so. Rather, decision-making was constantly negotiated, generally lively and constructive, and based on majority consensus. The selection of editors, for instance, was not always without controversy. This volume has been no different in that way.

Whilst the ideal might be to write the entire book collectively the experience of established members suggested that nominated editors would be necessary to organise and drive forward the project ensuring it retained momentum and coherence. Members nominated themselves or others, with the decision-making process based on the advice of established members with experience of putting together previous collections. It was suggested that the editors ought to constitute slightly more established members familiar with group dynamics, those able to attend all meetings, and those who had

contributed to previous writing projects and were familiar with the group's working practices.

Chrissie and Susie were nominated, having 'served their apprenticeship' by contributing co-authored chapters to the previous book and had attended the majority of meetings for over 7 years. This 'unwritten' aspect of the apprenticeship has proved to be caring and supportive, as members join the group and see how status and commitment to the group is played out. Chrissie, for example, said that when she first arrived as a PhD student she saw and participated in working together in a safe, but nonetheless, critical environment. The space to critically engage with ideas and writing, away from the conference circuit and research seminar scene can be crucial in academic development. This apprenticeship meant that both Chrissie and Susie began by contributing verbally, then writing with other more senior group members, before moving to editorial roles. Via two books their experience and confidence grew, as they became 'more senior' group members. Neither had edited a book before but had edited working papers and journal Special Issues. For Chrissie and Susie, the passing of the mantle of co-editorship felt like a significant responsibility and almost a rite of passage. Not only did they feel accountable for the successful completion of the book, but also for the future longevity and well-being of the group and its growing reputation for collaborative authorship.

On the basis of group discussion and brainstorming sessions in 2008/09 we developed a basic rationale and structure for the volume and then requested abstracts from which we developed a book proposal. This was then circulated to the group for revisions. The selection of potential publishers was also subject to collective decision-making on basis

of a number of criteria including the willingness to publish in paperback and the likely international reach of the publication. Based on such criteria the Resources and Relationships book series published by Routledge proved most popular. Established member Rosalind Edwards is co-editor of the series, and several members had published books as part of the collection. After a lengthy wait we were delighted to receive a contract with only a few revisions to the original proposal requested. These amendments included the addition of further contributions on social care, to which we responded by inviting colleagues Paulette Luff and Linda Nutt to join the process and share their expertise. We also asked Georgia Philip to join us in writing this introduction. Georgia, a newer member to the group has significant expertise in the area of feminist ethics and had recently finished her PhD, and has now moved on to her ESRC postdoctoral fellowship, and we wanted to work with her on the introduction in a mutually advantageous relationship.

In previous edited collections developed by the group the emphasis has been on the co-authorship of chapters to foster collaboration (Birch *et al.* 2002). This volume takes a slightly different approach, comprising both single and co-authored chapters. Rather, the collaborative process centres on the detailed discussion of each chapter during meetings enabling members to fully engage with the other chapters in the volume. Authors and other group members also worked in small teams to develop summaries of the themed sections in order to elucidate the critical stance of the book, extrapolate key theoretical and substantive messages, and highlight methodological, policy and practice insights. We coordinated this process in order to foster coherence and ‘cross-fertilisation’. As said on average the group has met on a bi-monthly basis with each session attended by 12-15 members. Those unable to participate have offered their

feedback electronically. Those not writing chapters have also provided design and editorial ideas, along with constructive criticism. Digital recordings of each discussion have been uploaded onto a shared, but private electronic folder accessible by all members. Whilst we had some reservations about doing so, for example, concerns about deterring members from divulging particular issues or talking without fear of repercussions, the process has enabled more remote members, not least those living overseas, to feel part of the discussions. The recording also provides a useful documentation allowing authors' to make any necessary revisions. Chapters were submitted for group discussions in varying levels of completeness; some as outlines, others as polished drafts. Members then resubmitted their chapters for review by the editors.

Whilst we have been keen to maintain a collective ethos over time it has felt as though our role as editors guiding and shaping the process had increased. Susie, as coordinator of the meetings, was particularly concerned as she had to instigate a lot of organisation and decision-making processes. A significant proportion of the way through the process Susie announced she was expecting a baby three months before the submission of the manuscript, which meant that we were even more keen for deadlines to be met and, to some degree, had to be balance being, at times, a little authoritarian with maintaining a caring ethos understanding the immense pressures of work and personal lives. Susie went on to have a baby boy, and two other group members had babies during the course of developing the book. Whilst Susie was on maternity leave Chrissie took the reins in the final stages of the group meetings and chapter editing, but then Susie, with it seems a very helpful baby, was able to complete the final edit with Chrissie. All in all, three babies and a book.