Foreword

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In writing here, I have the privilege and honor of wearing two hats. The first hat, and the reason I initially volunteered to write a foreword for *Caring on the Clock*, was so that I could reflect, at least briefly, on the many changes in the study of care work since my sister Emily K. Abel and I edited one of the first collections on this topic almost twenty-five years ago.

To be sure, as we brought together the fifteen chapters of *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives* (1990), we were attentive to a range of the varied issues raised in this wonderful new anthology. We addressed the fact that caregiving was a practice associated overwhelmingly with women, and we theorized about how feminist reformulations could help capture the meaning and nature of caregiving. We reflected on the constellation of events that were transforming the nature of caregiving in our society, such as the growing number of women in the labor force, the expanding size of the service sector, cutbacks in public funding for human services, and the aging of the population. And, well aware that context mattered, we organized the chapters around different domains in which the provision of care occurs.

Of course we had no way of knowing then how the scholarship on caregiving would expand over the next two decades. But it did. The initial theoretical foray of Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (1990) developed into full-blown books and essays. Some of this development is both reviewed and brilliantly expanded by the editors of this new collection in the first chapter about how to define and analyze care work.¹ The substantive work on a range of caregiving occupations and activities has exploded to include separate studies of a wide range of different occupations. This research also finds a home in this collection in the essays about occupations as diverse as nannies through hospice workers and nurses.

In addition, a whole new field has emerged in the scholarship of care—that which concerns itself with history—represented by the unique scholarship of Emily Abel on informal care (2002, 2013), the excellent writing of Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein on the history of homecare workers (2012), a burgeoning history of the nursing industry centered at the University of Pennsylvania, Ellen More's (2001) complex history of women doctors, and Mignon Duffy's (2011) astute overview of paid care in the twentieth century. Some of that development is included here in Duffy's chapter on "Beyond Outsourcing: Understanding the History of Paid Care." Finally, the collection explores whole new sets of issues—violence in the workplace, the experiences of migrant care workers, and paths to social change for caregiving occupations—that were barely understood (or foreseen) a quarter of a century ago.

As a result of this expansion, the tentative hypotheses Emily and I put forth have now been subject to empirical test: in some cases our guesses were substantiated, in others they were refuted, and in still other cases they have now been shown to be too simple and too narrow. Take just one example. We acknowledged that care work was rewarding; we insisted as well that it was hard work. Likewise, the essays in this book acknowledge the rewarding nature of care work in its many manifestations. But these essays also show concretely how variations in rewards depend on the context in which the work occurs. And by taking an unflinching look at just how hard the work is, the authors document the physical, emotional, and financial consequences of that work for the individual worker as well as the ways those consequences radiate out from the individual worker to the broader network in which she (or sometimes he) is embedded both in the workplace and at home.

The mention of the spillover of care work into the home provides the occasion for me to replace my first hat with my second one, as an editor (along with my dear friends and colleagues Rosanna Hertz, Naomi Gerstel, Karen Hansen, and Anita Garey) of the *Families in Focus* series at Rutgers University Press. When this book was first presented to us in proposal form, we were both wildly enthusiastic and a wee bit hesitant. We were enthusiastic because we were well aware of the marvelous scholarship each of the three editors had already produced. I have mentioned Duffy's historical work; I would add here Armenia's work on family day care providers (2009) and Stacey's work on home care aides (2011). We also were enthusiastic because the proposal contained a rich range of essays that touched on such critical points as pay, hours, and the bodily impact of the labor of care; we also appreciated how the collection as a whole represented the interdisciplinary approach of so much of the preexisting scholarship on care. Even so, we edit a series on the family. Would a book on paid care adequately make explicit the links to the issues that are the topic of our series?

We need not have worried. The marvelous introductory chapter—indeed the introductory paragraph of the introductory chapter—states explicitly that paid care workers “embody the complex intersections between families and

work,” not least because families today rely on “growing numbers of paid workers [who] are important partners in the provision of care across the life course.” If the introductory chapter lays out a key link between paid care work and families, many other terrific essays expand on that theme. One chapter talks about what happens when care workers are viewed like members of the family; another focuses on the time dimension of paid care and the resulting type of family life workers in different occupations can sustain; still another shows how workers move between institutional and home environments and how the “home” remains an ideal for many. In short, although the links to family are most explicit in the section titled “Work and Family,” the real relevance of paid care for family life is a theme throughout the chapters.

Running short on steam (and maybe imagination), Emily Abel and I wrote a brief acknowledgments section to our collection. It read: “Author’s prefaces are generally testaments to caring. We hope this book as a whole serves such a purpose.” Brief as it was, we were thinking, as we wrote that, about our own relationship and the care we already took of each other as we supported our simultaneous engagement in motherhood and scholarship; we were also thinking about the support we gave to the authors of the separate chapters as they struggled to find voice in a new field of scholarship. Shortly after the book was published, when first our parents, then Emily, and then our series editor, Joan Smith, fell ill, we learned at first hand even more about the satisfactions and demands (the rewards and the hard work) of caregiving in personal relationships. Watching the editors of this cutting-edge anthology interact with each other and with the many different authors included here, it is obvious that this next generation “gets it.” Reading this superb collection of essays, we know for sure that the scholarship on care is both alive and very well indeed.

Note

- 1 Some of these ideas are even more fully developed in a recent article by Duffy, Albelda, and Hammonds (2013).