

## RN17 | T05\_02: Care work

### Shaping the Future: Insights From a Longitudinal Study On Women's Career Aspirations During Pregnancy And Postpartum

Vilma Ražauskienė

Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania

This longitudinal study delves into the meanings of work for women during a transitional life stage. While the topics of opting out and opting in have garnered considerable attention, certain aspects of career development after childbirth remain underexplored. Existing literature often dichotomises women into two primary groups, and some theories propose a three-group classification. However, such divisions may be overly simplistic and not universally applicable to all women. The objective of this study is to enhance the understanding of women's career aspirations. To achieve this objective, two waves of individual semi-structured interviews with ten women at two specific time points were conducted: during pregnancy and four to six months postpartum [a third wave of the research – a couple of years postpartum – is underway and by the time of the conference will be 80 per cent completed!]. Although convenience sampling was employed for data collection, the research participants exhibited variation in marital status, educational level, number of children, breastfeeding practices, and other characteristics. The results of the study demonstrate that the meaning of work for the research participants varied both during pregnancy and after childbirth. Additionally, some participants unexpectedly adjusted their career aspirations after becoming mothers. The salience of the new identity as a mother is discussed as a precursor to temporarily stepping back from a career with aspirations to re-enter the labour market later on.

### Work, Employment And Industrial Relations In Adult Social Care

Emma Hughes<sup>1</sup>, Tony Dundon<sup>2</sup>

1University of Leeds, United Kingdom; 2University of Limerick, Ireland and University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Drawing on empirical data the paper contributes to sociological theory, policy and practice by developing a new framework to examine and understand work, employment and worker voice in the adult social care sector in England. We contribute to research on the adult social care sector highlighting significant concerns regarding low-pay, precarious contracts, training and progression (e.g., Heery et al., 2020; Rubery et al., 2015). However, much empirical research on the adult social care sector tends to focus on a specific organization or service. This paper adds to existing knowledge by examining the adult social care system more broadly.

Our research question is: How are the work and employment challenges in adult social care experienced by actors across the system?

To address the research question semi-structured interviews were conducted with 76 participants working in the adult social care sector. Additionally, 9 interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders including unions and charities. Respondents were asked about the work, employment and industrial relations challenges in the sector, the implications for different stakeholders and the institutional, economic and social changes required. The empirical data was supplemented with extensive secondary data.

The findings are organized under three themes which adopt a multi-level perspective to contextualise the empirical data. Worker, manager and stakeholder experiences of challenges in the social care sector are linked to individual, organizational and external factors. A framework is developed from the findings which contributes to sociological theory by providing a new perspective on the work, employment and voice issues in the adult social care sector. The analysis also contributes to policy and practice by suggesting how a more sustainable approach could be achieved in adult social care.

### Role Conflicts in a Transformed Task Environment. Lessons from Research into Childcare Labour in Germany

Ingo Bode<sup>1</sup>, Charlotte Herbertz<sup>2</sup>

1Universität Kassel; 2Universität Kassel

Regarding tensions around work and employment, human services can be seen as a very turbulent field in the 21st century. A case in point internationally is organised childcare, given strong policy commitments to develop a sector which had long been characterised by low public recognition and poor working conditions, in part because of its 'feminisation'. Engaging with the case of Germany, we explore implications of the sector facing a new task environment featuring ever more challenging expectations, among which high-end early education, the inclusive treatment of individual needs (including those of disabled children), and action against inequality and social marginalisation, also by developing co-parenting arrangements with families. Drawing on first findings from a research project started recently (together with colleagues from the Berlin School of Economics and Law), we examine the nature of this reconfiguration with a focus on labour-related role-sets arising from the evolving task environment. The paper is based on both a recent scoping review of studies in that sector and interviews with experts who have an overview over recent developments therein. We theorize about ramifications the above reconfiguration might have on the 'negotiated order' of work roles, also in the light of recent strike movements which, however, have widely concentrated on claims related to material working conditions (wages and staff ratios). The analysis suggests that, in the sector under study, the altered task environment elicits unresolved role conflicts susceptible to impede both loyalty-based employment relations and industrial action sensitive to the above reconfiguration and its problematic implications.