

# Relationship-Based Care, Austerity and Aged Care

**Donna Baines, PhD**

**Annabel Dulhunty, PhD**

# Permanent austerity (Pierson, 2010; Albo and Evans, 2010)

**Exhort practitioners to return to the true basis of care**

**Target individual behaviors, emotions and attitudinal change**

**Not system-wide reform (masks need for system-wide reform)**

- Aged-care organisations adopt a revolving door of patient care models
  - Patient-centered care
  - Person-centered care
  - Family-centered care
  - Client-centered care
  - **Relationship-based care**
    - Also, emotion-based care & the butterfly model
    - (Cropley, 2012; Koloroutis, 2004; Montague et al., 2017)

# Contexts

- **Austerity and neoliberalism**
- **Care Work - Managerialised and Gendered**
- **Funding Aged Care in Australia**
- **Models of Care Work**



# Rapid Ethnography



- **2 large aged-care organisations** (home care and residential)
- In-depth, semi-structured **interviews** (28)
  - 12 managers (3 female, 9 male)
  - 16 staff (12 female, 4 male)
- **Shadowed** 9 home care staff (all female) average of 4.5 hours each
  - 40 hours of shadowing
- **Participant observations** (24 sessions)
  - 3 hours average
- Review of **policy documents**
- Team research (5 researchers)
- Data analysed thematically (Kirby et al. 2010)

**Bolton (2009, 2004)**

## **Types of Workplace Emotion Management**

- 1) pecuniary** (emotional management for profit or to reduce costs)
- 2) prescriptive** (organisational and/or professional rules of conduct)
- 3) presentational** (general social rules)
- 4) philanthropic** (a gift, without strings attached, to the organisation, colleagues or service users)

## **Emotional management under austerity and RBC**

- 1) austerity-linked sacrifice** (like pecuniary but with aspects of philanthropic)
- 2) official discourse** (like prescriptive; specific to RBC)
- 3) faux control**
- 4) compulsory time philanthropy**  
(like philanthropic)

# 1) **Austerity-Linked Sacrifice** (like pecuniary but specific to late neoliberalism)

## **Pay and conditions**

**'they all make it clear that they feel they do not receive sufficient income for the effort they put into the work. Comparisons are made with their grown-up children on triple or double the wages.'**

**'make more at McDonalds'**

## **Workplace safety**

**'aggression can happen very often',**

**'we don't teach de-escalation techniques like you would in a mental health service because that's not what we're doing'**

**'carers not bodyguards'**



## 2) Official Discourse of Relationship-Based Care (like prescriptive; but specific to RBC)

- RBC 'is about that relatability, about being that real person'
- **No time to do RBC:** disrupts tight routines
- E.G. Some workers had trouble in 'setting up the routine of the relationship-based care, where we let the clients sleep in, get up at their time'
- **Inconclusive findings:** At the level of everyday work, RBC is not significantly different than other models of care



### 3) Faux Control

- 'We give them [the staff] permission to leave and to call their manager and talk through with their manager what's going on'

#### **Not possible to leave aggressive situations**

- 'He had Delores and someone else bailed up in his room. It was very scary. It's also happened to Heather on more than one occasion.'

#### **Carry their own phones and call each other for help**

- **Verbal abuse** - rescheduling home care: 'Some of them swear, some of them are just angry but.. you just have to take it as they're just venting.'
- **Excuse and normalize abuse:** 'you knew it wasn't at you. It was just at his situation...then he would kiss my hand...and apologise'



# 4) Compulsory Time Philanthropy

## (1) It's a choice

'That's a choice and it's my choice... I'm sitting at home doing nothing anyway. I might as well be at work being productive.'

'I just sort of break it up over the week and do a couple of hours each night.'

## (2) Organisational philosophy of altruism – formalizing unpaid work

'voluntary activities are not entirely voluntary' but were 'a condition and expectation of working here and getting sufficient hours'



# Conclusions

- In the context of austerity, emotions and emotion management were shaped by underfunding, under staffing and inadequate resources
- Leaned-out, fast pace and routinization of care work conflicts with RBC
- RBC operates as an extra-local, emotional management dynamic that redistributes some responsibility to workers (faux control) while workplace control remains with management and managerial models that remain viable due to the unpaid work and austerity-linked sacrifices of care workers