

CARE MATTERS Podcast- Care poverty: in conversation with Teppo Kröger

Transcript

The Care Matters podcast is brought to you by the ESRC Centre for Care and CIRCLE, the Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities. In this series, our researchers welcome experts in the field and those giving or receiving care to discuss crucial issues in social care as we collectively attempt to make a positive difference to how care is experienced and provided.

Duncan Fisher

Hello and welcome to Care Matters, the podcast from the Economic and Social Research Council, Centre for Care and the University of Sheffield's CIRCLE Research Centre. My name is Duncan Fisher and I am a research associate at the Centre for Care.

We are delighted to welcome here to Halifax Hall in Sheffield, Professor Teppo Kröger as our guest, and in this podcast I will be talking with him about his newly published book on Care Poverty. Welcome to Sheffield and to Care Matters Teppo.

Teppo Kröger

Thank you, Duncan.

Duncan Fisher

Teppo Kröger is professor of social and public policy at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and also a part time professor of the Centre for Care Research in Bergen, Norway. He's director of the Centre of Excellence in Research on Ageing and Care, which is a major research investment by the Academy of Finland, consisting of around 60 researchers from the universities of the Jyväskylä, Tampere and Helsinki. He has studied social care for 30 years from a number of different perspectives, often in international collaboration, combining different research approaches and developing new conceptual frameworks, including welfare, municipality, demographic panic, care capital and care poverty.

In addition to care poverty, he has written comparative research on social care, the state of the art and articles in a number of international journals, including the Journal of Social Policy, Critical Social Policy, Health and Social Care and the Community and Ageing and Society.

He has co-edited books, including combining Paid Work and Family Care, which was co-edited along with Professor Sue Yeandle, the director of the Centre for Care. Again, a warm welcome to your Teppo.

Teppo Kröger

Thanks.

Duncan Fisher

I'd like to start Teppo, Could you please introduce the book and tell our audience what a little bit about what it's about?

Teppo Kröger

Yeah, well, this book is a product of a quite a long, long process. Maybe, maybe even 20 years. I've been trying to think of an approach to social care, long term care that would not only focus on resources or services that are provided, but it would really dig into the key question that I think that we should really be focussing on that. That is whether people who need help and support, whether they really get it or not. And that's really the key idea or the key question of this book. And then then I've been using and developing the term care poverty to stand for a situation where people don't receive enough or adequate help and support and care. And this book is on the one hand, it's introducing this concept and it's backgrounds. And on the other hand, it also tries to combine this concept to existing research on unmet needs. And then it also aims to summarise the earlier literature on this topic.

Duncan Fisher

And so in terms of the ideas that you mentioned there, how did the process of developing those ideas towards something of book length? So that could you say a little bit about how that that happened?

Teppo Kröger

Well, it is really taking quite a quite a while for me to think that how this approach should be presented and developed. And actually, I use the same concept already. Was it was it 17 years ago in an article about lone parents and their child care arrangements. But then since then I've been trying to also to use it in the context of, of care for older people. And we brought an empirical article in, in Finland that used this term, an approach that came out three years ago, I think.

But already then I felt that this is this is such quite a large issue and topic that it's not possible really to dig into it. In, in, in just a brief, short article that I need a longer format to discuss it from different approaches and try to try to cover it properly.

So, so then, then I thought out of the it means a book that it's kind of the only way to discuss it enough from from different perspectives is really to write a book.

Duncan Fisher

Thank you. And can you maybe just say a little bit about the I guess, the the kind of parameters of the research because and you mentioned data, but you previously used the term and the context of lone parent. And I know that you've written, for example, that although care, poverty or unmet need could be experienced in residential care, your book, for example, is not including that that setting. Is that right?

Teppo Kröger

Yeah, that's right. This this book is really focussing on all the people who live in the community in their own homes. And it's, it's that, that is the focus of it, even though I do think that the concept could be applied also in other contexts.

So it's not limited just to this, this, this topic. But in this book, I try to use and combine three different kinds of literature. And for myself, I think the most important literature is, is feminist social policy, which I've been reading since, since being a young student then and what has really impacted my, my thinking already for decades. But then, then in addition to that, I have been reading general theological studies, particularly social gerontology, and about long term care. But then there's also a third stream of literature that I then try to combine in the book is literature on research, on social inequalities and particularly poverty research. So. I tried to bring these three properties together to

provide a kind of a new, new starting point on new conceptual perspective into into care, and particularly to inadequate care.

Duncan Fisher

Well, I think that gives us a good sort of basis to to move on to discuss some of the content of the book. So I was really struck by the opening of the book introduction. And you give examples of new stories from different places about the consequences of care, poverty, and that's something that you returned to in one of the later chapters. Can you say a bit more about this? How does the book relate to everyday life and care?

Teppo Kröger

Well, I hope it does relate to everyday life and care, even though the book mostly consists of going through earlier literature and making some conclusions based on that. But actually, I think at least my motivation comes from really from, from, from the everyday life and being really worried about the situation of many of the people who cannot receive the help and support they would need in, in their everyday lives. And as you said, I also use some media stories of real life cases where the consequences of this lack of help and support had been quite dramatic, even fatal.

And I think that this is a real risk in in situations where people are left without proper attention and care. And I think it was also why I included these media narratives was that I see that it's we should see that this is really an important and a vital and critical issue.

It's not just a theoretical issue, but it's really something that affects people's lives in sometimes in very dramatic ways.

Duncan Fisher

Hmm. Yeah. And I would certainly that the examples that you gave were very dramatic and sad really and. Yeah. And quite moving. So the concept you mentioned about developing the concept of care, poverty has similarities with terms that you've mentioned already, such as unmet need. And in the book, you talk about the care gap and the care deficit. But why have you chosen specifically to develop and focus on care, poverty?

Teppo Kröger

Yeah, well, actually, all these other terms are also useful. And I'd been using them myself in my texts earlier and I see that they really have important contribution. But I still was kind of lacking a concept that that could kind of combine different levels and different approaches.

For example, this care gap and care deficit terms that are often used for in social policy discussions, they usually focus on very much on the macro level, on the social level, which is, of course extremely important. But then then you don't really see the individual level, the situations of individual older people and their struggles and problems in their daily lives. So, so and actually the term unmet need is quite, quite the opposite. It really, really focuses on the individual level and particularly thus these quantitative analyses of all of the factors that that affect people's situations. But then you kind of have missed the, the, the larger picture, the the social background, the the inequalities that are present in our societies and really inflames the the who gets enough support and who who doesn't and and using this term care poverty was my way to try to combine the individual level and the social level and also to learn from the long tradition of research and their agitation of poverty and apply their concepts and approaches to the study of care.

Duncan Fisher

Okay. Thank you. And so can you maybe just say a little bit more about the mechanics of that? Because you mentioned about how we have and we know what people. People's needs may be are. But in terms of care, poverty is about more than that interaction with the level of care that's available. And your book is not only services, it's also this including you include informal care as well, don't you, within your remit or your scope.

Teppo Kröger

Yes, that's true. That's also quite a lot of literature that focuses particularly on, on care services and, and formal care. And it's. Qualities and whether people are happy with that. That's also important. A strand of research, I think. But still, if we look only on on on formal care. The problem is that that we still don't know whether people have enough care and adequate care or not, because even if they don't receive formal care or adequate formal care, they might get get the help from their families or friends or social network networks. And that key question to me, at least, is that whether they are people who are totally left without adequate help, whether it comes from the formal care services or from the informal networks. And that is why I think that we should look at both at the same time, both both the care service systems and their provisions and their problems, but also at what of what families and friends are doing and what they are able to do or unable to do. So only if we look at both, both sides at the same time we get a full picture, I think.

Duncan Fisher

Thank you. That's a very interesting point. Thank you. So you mentioned in the book also the difference between and what your use of the term care, poverty and other terms that listeners may be familiar with, such as food poverty, fuel poverty in the UK. Certainly these have been and terms that we've heard quite a lot in the last the last few years. So how does care poverty differ from these terms?

Teppo Kröger

Yeah, it does differ because actually these there's food poverty, fuel poverty. They are still kind of subcategories of economic poverty, lack of material resources. But in the case of cardboard, that is not really the case. It's not about material deprivation.

It's about deprivation of adequate help as poor. So it's really I would say it's a parallel concept to poverty, not a sub concept of poverty. And this is it's kind of we are looking at different issues.

Poverty, food poverty, fuel poverty is really about these material conditions and care poverty is about care and help and support.

Duncan Fisher

And usually you really argue that this is something that is worthy of specific focus in its own right. There's a distinct form of inequality, really. Social inequality.

Teppo Kröger

Yeah. That that that that is what I'm, I'm saying in the book because I think it's really it creates two groups of people, those who receive adequate help and support and those who don't. And in my eyes, this is a it's a real phenomenon. And it's really a kind of inequality in itself. It doesn't go back to other kinds of inequalities, like poverty or material deprivation or other kind of issues. It's an issue in itself on its own. Right, I think.

Duncan Fisher

Okay. Thank you. And that leads quite well into the next thing I was going to ask you about. And because one of the purposes of the book is bringing together the state of the art, as you call it, the evidence, the existing evidence on care, poverty. Can you tell us a bit about what is already known about the issue and some of the factors and consequences around.

Teppo Kröger

Yes. I must say that that that it was more difficult than I thought to bring this literature together and summarise it, because I found out that the methods and terms and operationalisations actually differ quite a lot from each other. So sometimes it was quite difficult to put these, the findings of these different studies together. But, but still on, on a general level there, it is quite clear that that we have the issue of care poverty.

It exists in every country. Studies from all countries where this has been studied, there have found a certain level of unmet needs and inadequate care. Some countries seem to seem to have had more, particularly countries in Eastern Europe, southern Europe.

Maybe this bit contradictory evidence from countries like the UK or the US. There are studies that show very high levels of, of care, poverty or unmet needs. On the other hand, there are some studies that show considerably lower levels.

Teppo Kröger

So the evidence is not very consistent. And I think this partly because different studies use different methods. Nordic countries seem to be doing quite well. This maybe most studies come from Sweden that seems to be have very low level of care poverty. But still they are still older people in Sweden as well who don't have the Met needs met in an adequate manner. So it's it seems that no country is free from this problem. There are certain factors that that seem to come up in almost all studies.

And actually, these are not a very surprising fact. This health status is clearly linked to the situation. So the worse the health status that the more they are care needs are usually the more they are also unmet needs and the higher is kept.

Poverty income level does affect care, poverty, but not always and in every case. So there is a bit some contradictions in the evidence. But in general, poverty clearly is connected to poverty quite often. So it is is a major factor.

But then living alone is, is really very clearly a major, major risk factor for poor care. Poor is. So if you don't have anybody to live together with you, then then you are really certainly in a risk group, particularly when you have staff who have extensive care needs.

And then finally, there's also a chapter on, on consequences of care poverty And there there's already a growing body of evidence that shows that actually this situation where older people don't receive the help and support they need, it has many kinds of consequences. It affects their health. It affects their quality of life that they suffer in many ways, also socially. And it leads to easily to a kind of a vicious circle where things the health condition and the everyday life are get more and more problems all the time.

But it also seems to affect the use of health care and also the use of residential social care. So the more there they are, there is poverty amongst older the older population, the higher the use of hospital care or also institutional care, which kind of tells us that that care. But it also has

consequences and of costs for health and social care systems. And some costs could be avoided if the level of care, but it would be lower.

Duncan Fisher

Thank you very much. There's lots of interconnections under with health and with formal and informal care. And as you say, between care, poverty and more and more material poverty. You've mentioned your belief for years and your notion that this is a really important and important issue. Why should we be concerned about this? Why should we be concerned about care, poverty?

Teppo Kröger

Of course, the basic starting point is that is that our populations in in every country are really quite rapidly ageing, which means that the number of people with care needs and a need for help and support is, is, is increasing all the time.

So, so this the, the risks that are connected with, with care needs, not having them met, also going up. So this is becoming really a major issue. It's not about a small minority of all the people who might be at this risk. But it's becoming really a major. Very, very typical part of life course and of the population. So it's really a key issue, actually, in our societies, particularly in the near future, where we will all of our societies will enter this super age society stage in their development.

And of course, also from a actually, I, I am a social worker by my background and, and of course, the situation of, of people where they cannot get adequate help and support but that need to suffer in many ways that that is something that our societies shouldn't be accepting. It's also a moral issue. It's a ethical issue. And it really goes to the basics of the of our welfare systems, why they exist and what they should be doing and accomplishing.

Duncan Fisher

You mentioned there and we use the term 'super age' and which maybe I think a lot of our listeners will be aware of the general trend of rapidly ageing populations, but maybe the super age term, maybe you could just briefly say a little bit more about what you mean by that.

Teppo Kröger

Yes. Well, this term comes from the UN, and that has defined a 'super age' society to mean a society where more than 20% of the total population is aged 65 years or older. And these kind of societies are increasing rapidly in the world.

Duncan Fisher

Thank you. And in terms of policy then, so part of the in the conclusion to the book, partly what you do is you're essentially making a call for increased evidence about this about this issue and what may be some of the policy ideas or directions that that could be taken to combat or to alleviate care, poverty.

Teppo Kröger

I think this there's a need for more work on this. And I hope that my colleagues will take up this challenge. But certainly in the in the book already, we can see that that based on the current available evidence, we can see that that kind of a universal care service system that tries to cover the whole population is certainly quite efficient in decreasing the level of care poverty in a nation like Sweden or Norway. But then there can also be different kind of programmes or interventions that that could be particularly focussed on, on those groups of older people who are most at risk of, of care poverty. And that is that is people with low incomes with the most health problems with the highest care needs, and particularly older people living alone. So if these groups are provided

particularly support and also whether they are situations are known and checked, that that could certainly help to keep the level of care poverty on a decent, decent level. But I think this this is really an area we where we need much more research and also the effort of people who are working with policies and practises to really to develop the approaches.

I think that many of the policies and services that already exist are actually doing good work in this respect. But that might happen probably without really knowing the processes and mechanism how it goes, go.

So I think there really needs to be more, more attention to, to this issue and these practises and policies and, and certainly need for development and improvement.

Duncan Fisher

Now that the book is out there and has been published. What are your hopes? What are your hopes for it as intended for a particular audience who may find it useful? Who may find it helpful? Who might find it interesting?

Teppo Kröger

It's an open access book, which means that actually, I'm. I just hope that people will find it. And see it useful in taking the discussion further and maybe opening some new perspectives and ideas to the situation. An issue of whether people whether all people really receive the help that they need. Certainly the book is, in a way written for my colleague researchers in in different countries in Europe, but also out of Europe actually also.

Also, I hope that there could be some use also in the Global South for the book and its approaches, particularly when it also tries to include informal care, not just not just the formal long term care systems. And I actually hope that maybe some people also working with policy in practise would find it useful in their work when they are trying to develop the, the existing systems and interventions and their campaigns as well.

I also think that there need to be more attention to this issue. And I really hope that that in different countries there could be more, more, more work and more attention, attention to it and maybe even some campaigns to really provide care that is required and needed by older people, particularly in these in these risk groups. So actually, it's really I hope that there could be quite a broad, broad audience, people coming from different backgrounds and different countries as well that could find the book useful.

Duncan Fisher

Have you had people been in touch so far? Have you had any feedback?

Teppo Kröger

I got some feedback. And I and I also have been in contact with colleagues from different countries who say that they are interested in in trying to use this approach in their research. I think at the moment there are at least three countries where colleagues have recently made research proposals using the approach. And I certainly hope that it could be more in the future.

Duncan Fisher

And in terms of the process and your writing of the book, is there anything that that you learnt during this, during the writing, during the process that you could pass on to others, and particularly those who may be new to writing books or longer pieces of work. Is there anything you could share

potentially with maybe younger listeners, our listeners here still at postgraduate or doctoral level or even early career researchers?

Teppo Kröger

Well, I think I learnt that writing books is not rocket science, really. It's just. It's just like writing a long piece of paper or. Or two to it. It's also a great opportunity to really focus on a specific issue. I spend more time on that and select a few approaches, key approaches that then you can develop in the chapters. And of course it's quite important to have the key idea, the whole in your mind the whole time so that you or your book is a coherent piece of work and not just kind of a fragmentary. But I really it was really a very interesting experience and I would recommend that. But, but also, please be have a patient with yourself. And, and, and I must say that the writing took much longer than I thought.

So it's a bit difficult to do with very strict deadlines or timetables. But certainly I would recommend it to younger early career researchers as well as to more senior ones like myself.

Duncan Fisher

And what about the kind of nuts and bolts of the process? So like the idea of pitching your book or finding a publisher. Getting feedback and getting people involved in editing.

Teppo Kröger

Yeah, well, well, I, I could say that I, I was in, in a conference or a quite several years ago where I went to the, to a publisher to just to ask kind of first reaction to my, my, my book idea, which was not so clear at that time. I had the concept and some of some preliminary thoughts, but I didn't have any even an idea paper to show. But I just went to I went to the publisher desk and asked what, what do you think? How does it sound to you? And I actually I got a very positive response to that. And, and I that was really exciting, I must say, because at that time, I was sort of not so self-confident with the with the with the concept or the book or the idea.

But that was great encouragement. And of course, I'd been discussing quite a lot with my colleagues giving presentations in seminars and conferences and always getting good feedback, also critical feedback often on, on what I'd been planning and, and all those discussions and all the feedback I have received have always helped to, to go forward in the process and get also my own thoughts clearer. So I think it's one, one good to get away is really to just go forward to tell about your ideas to, to publishers and also to your colleagues in different places, conferences, seminars and maybe also privately with your close colleagues. And that that how it gradually develops into a book with time.

Duncan Fisher

Thank you very much. Just a couple of questions to ask you beyond the beyond the book in the life of the book. I guess a broader question really about you mentioned that you were you were a social worker previously before you and before you began your career in universities, in academia. And how would how would you say that your interests in care and research in care? How did they how did they develop?

Teppo Kröger

I think that that my three years as a social worker not such a long time. But they really made me to think and to see the issues on all on the practise level and or and in the lives of ordinary people. And this has been quite a major perspective also in my research work over the years. And I think very clearly in this book that that I'm really trying to kind of combine this kind of theoretical approaches

with the research that that looks into people's lives and discusses what kind of consequences our social and healthcare services have in people's lives. So I think that this kind of interests interest for both for macro and micro in a way comes from on the one hand, from my, my background as a social worker and then from my training as an academic. So I think that that that is something that that is quite. Basic, basic or the fundamental approach in all the work that I'm doing, including this book.

Duncan Fisher

And a final question and before we conclude, are there any particular academics or academic works that have influenced you and especially those in relation to care because there are audiences interested in this this topic, are there any particular works or academics that have influenced you.

Teppo Kröger

Well there are many, many. Of course, I should mention my mentor professor, Jorma Sipilä from from Finland and also Professor Anneli Anttonen, who have been kind of the precursor in international comparative care research. But, but then I when I was that PhD student and early career research, I really read quite a lot of previous research on care, particularly feminist social policy. There were many, many great classics, for example, by Claire Ungerson, who had a major, major impact on my thinking. And later, I also have been reading disability studies and for example, Jenny Morris. Her writings have really influenced my, my thinking a lot. And but they are they are really quite, quite many, many, I must say. But I must add that a lot of that that the literature that maybe that I read quite early in my career were really from the UK and I think they have really had a major impact on, on my thinking and my work.

Duncan Fisher

And of course you've written an article about the, the connections and the between care and disability studies, which is a really is a really interesting article. It's been very useful in my own work. So therefore. Just before we finish, can you please share with our listeners how they can get a hold of your book?

Teppo Kröger

While that is actually quite easy, I think you can just Google it with my with my name, all the term 'care poverty' and you can find the open, open access book available from the Springer Link website. But it's also possible to buy a buy a copy, a paperback or a hardback copy from the Internet, actually, from all Internet bookshops. It seems to be available. So I think it's very easy to find it if you wish. And I hope that some a few of you would like to take a look.

Duncan Fisher

So sorry just to say that, you know, people can Google it, but the books available through Springer Link.

Teppo Kröger

Yes. Because Palgrave Macmillan, my publisher, is part of the Springer Company. So it's the Springer Link website where you can find.

Duncan Fisher

Okay, thank you. For more episodes and the Care Matters series and to learn more about the Centre for Care, please follow the link and the episode description for a website and social media channels. All that remains for me to do is to thank our esteemed guest, Professor Teppo Kröger. So thank you very much, Teppo.

Teppo Kröger
Thank you, Duncan.

Duncan Fisher
And to thank you for listening. Thank you.