

Janna's Design Spine

REFUSING (TO) CARE

Keywords: artistic research, caring and uncaring repertoires, embodiment of social relations, ethical subject formation, ethnography, feminist ethics of care, feminist theory, post-qualitative research, post-phenomenological research, social/ethical organization

CARVING OUT SPACE (FIRST COMP, SECOND YEAR)

Working in the fields of feminist ethics of care, feminist political economy and feminist critical/crip disability studies, care scholars have furthered our understanding of conditions and contexts of care as well as of the social and ethical organization of care. My study contributes to these political and analytical projects by critically examining processes of refusing (to) care – an underexplored realm.

QUESTIONING (PROPOSAL, SECOND YEAR)

People refuse (to) care all the time. A carer can refuse to care by resigning from her work or abandoning the people she supports. Similarly, a care recipient can refuse a life-saving surgery, refuse medications or refuse to follow a mandated self-care program. People refuse (to) care as a part of their everyday/ everynight lives as well as in monumental, deadly, political events.

My aim is to learn about care by attending to the ways people refuse (to) care. I hope to tease out differences between caring and uncaring repertoires as well as between different configurations of care (such as institutional/formal care, self-care or collective care). I ask:

1. Processes – What practices and relations are involved in processes of refusing (to) care? How are processes of refusing (to) care shaped by conditions and contexts of care, caring arrangements or cultural logics of care?
2. Experiences – How do people experience processes of refusing (to) care? How do people artfully navigate/enact care and caring social relations? What does it mean – or what does it take – to refuse (to) care? What practical social/ethical work is involved in refusing?
3. Methods – How might centering processes of refusing (to) care create new ways of experiencing and understanding care, and new knowledges (related to social/ethical organization, embodied social relations, ethical social formation)? What if care isn't the only practice from which political imaginations are launched?

THEORIZING (SECOND COMP, SECOND YEAR)

My research will bring together post-phenomenological and feminist ethics of care approaches. Post-phenomenological theories will help me to focus on lived processes of caring, while feminist ethics of care theories will allow me to see processes as themselves vulnerable. Further, post-phenomenological theories will help me to probe how particular processes articulate to the social order, while feminist ethics of care theories will help me to probe how norms and values manifest in lived processes, situations and interactions. This study also draws on, and hopes to contribute to, research in feminist political economy and feminist critical/crip disability studies.

METHODOLOG-IZING (PROPOSAL, SECOND YEAR)

Working as an artist-ethnographer, I will bring together academic research methods and artistic research methods to explore, perform and enliven practices and relations of care. Methods are ways of learning about the social world, and ways of shaping or performing (certain aspects of) the social world (Law, 2010). Rather than focusing on people as objects of study, I will place processes of refusing (to) care at the center of my research.

I will also employ processes of refusing (to) care as analytical tools with which to understand how care is configured. The aim isn't to create a descriptive map of "concrete" or "actual" social "realities," but to shape new knowledges and new ways of experiencing and understanding care. I will start with specific practices and relations of care, and trace the social organization of care. I will also contemplate my own standpoint as a researcher – reflecting on processes of refusing (to) care as ways of knowing. I will draw on a variety of methodological approaches, including arts-based, ethnographic, feminist and post-qualitative approaches to inquiry.

FIELD WORKING / EXPLORING (THIRD YEAR)

Some possible places to explore processes of refusing (to) care:

- care recipients refusing care or opting out of life-saving heart surgeries or treatments (patients at Ottawa's Heart Institute?) – Is resisting formal/institutional medical care a practice of self-care? What practices and relations are involved in these refusals? Who is self in relation? What are they on about?
- carers resigning or walking away after extended periods of caring (former L'Arche carers? Carers accessing advocacy organizations?) – Where do carers end up? Can you ever stop caring? Does care become a different practice? What do we learn about the processes of refusing? What experiences lead up to the refusal?
- carers and care recipients negotiating limits of care or setting boundaries on care in daily life (residential group homes? Home-based care program?) Can withholding care be a care practice? Is caring always honest? Can refusing to care be a way of caring? When can caring being a way of thwarting people's autonomy? Withholding care can sometimes be a way of caring. What's a self to do when inadequate to care? Is it even possible to refuse care?
- examples from everyday texts or cultural productions (e.g., reports of mothers abandoning their children with disabilities in newspapers, episodes of real housewives, movies on care?)

REPRESENTING / CONNECTING (FOURTH YEAR)

Write/defend dissertation. Find some creative outlet – stories, exhibitions, thought pieces. Present at conferences (Anthropology, Carework, Women's Studies?).

PLANNING AHEAD

Committee: Susan Braedley, Janet Siltanen, Megan Rivers-Moore

Comp #1 – March 2017 / Comp #2 – August 2017 / Proposal – December 2017 / Data collection/analysis – January 2018 to June 2018 / First draft – December 2018 / Final draft – March 2019