

is widely used in everyday language. However, there is relatively little examination of the interpretive functions of the concept, nor, as I have noted here, their potential ideological functions.

Despite the inclusion of immense historical detail, at times, Burnett advances more abstract or unclear generalizations or claims with little empirical evidence or supporting examples. As a result, it sometimes feels like there is too much detail in some places, and not enough in others. In addition, an analysis or description of more recent generations (Generations X and Y are mentioned only in passing reference to “bookend” or “buffer” generations) could have enhanced the book’s appeal for students themselves from such generations. Generational identity formation could also be explained more clearly. What is it, how does this emerge, where do we see it expressed, and why does it develop at particular times (e.g., for some generations and not others)? A clearer explanation can be found in the work of Eyerman and Turner (1998) who described how a generational cohort can maintain a sense of collective solidarity and identity over time and space through collective memory and cultural embodiments, facilitated through media communication and the globalization of popular culture.

In sum, Burnett’s work is more appropriate for graduate students and academics specializing in generational or life course studies, than it is for undergraduate students. Readers will strongly benefit from first becoming familiar with Mannheim’s work (reprinted in 1963). Though the work is relevant to gerontologists, policy or practice implications are not considered. In focusing on examples drawn primarily from Europe (especially the UK) and the United States, the book’s suitability for an international (and Canadian) audi-

ence is dampened. It is unfortunate, in particular, that Burnett did not draw on the theoretical work by Canadian sociologist McDaniel (2001, 2004) on gendered generations. An integration of this work would have provided greater insight into “how women born at different times interact with generational webs of entitlement and responsibilities” (McDaniel, 2001, p. 194) and how *generation* should be considered a relational construct. In short, “women’s relations with those in previous and subsequent generations matter” (McDaniel, 2001, p. 198).

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Julie Ann McMullin and Victor W. Marshall, eds. *Aging and Working in the New Economy: Changing Career Structures in Small IT Firms*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2010.

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This book provides a good overview of the issues that arise for aging workers in the information technology (IT) field. While it fills an important gap in a specific industry, it also covers issues, such as worker stress and job training, which are relevant to many other industries. The book draws on data obtained from an international research study, “Workforce Aging in the New Economy

Project (WANE): A Comparative Study of Information Technology Firms”, funded in 2002 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The project was conducted by a team of researchers in Canada, the United States, Australia, and England, and is therefore globally relevant. The book deals with economic and personal struggles for both employees and employers in the

New Economy and provides many insights – both empirical and theoretical – that are invaluable to gerontologists, students in the gerontology field, and policy makers.

In chapter 1, McMullin and Marshall put forth the key concerns that will be examined in the book. They emphasize the need to explore problems from both employee and employer perspectives, which can at times be challenging for all involved. The authors introduce the term “New Economy” (Castells, 1996; Ranson, 2003) to the reader and explain how it occurred as a result of old business strategies diminishing, mainly in response to advances in technology and the commodification of knowledge. In fact, the authors consider whether we are in the middle of an information revolution, as described by Chris Benner in 2002, and as significant as the first and second industrial revolutions, illustrating the importance of the research conducted in this book. These advances in technology in the New Economy, coupled with the aging of the workforce, highlight the importance of retaining and retraining workers throughout the life course in order to avoid potential labor shortages and skill obsolescence. McMullin and Marshall also discuss the importance of using a life course perspective to ensure that research examines the significance of both individual lives and social change. Thus, the key objective of this book is “to contribute to our understanding of how careers take shape as workers age within the context of a changing labor market” (p. 2). Case studies involving observational notes, archival data, web surveys, and in-depth interviews were conducted in IT organizations to ascertain how transitions of workers over the life course influence employment relations and human resource practices. McMullin and Marshall also provide an excellent overview of the chapters that follow, providing a good foundation for the reader.

In chapter 2, Marshall, Craft Morgan, and Haviland examine the changing nature of careers for IT workers in the New Economy. They discuss careers at both the micro and macro levels in terms of individual pathways and social structure. They use Hughes’ (1971) definition of career that occurs at both the objective and subjective levels and theorize about an additional dimension of the career concept. In this dimension, a career can include transitions between employers while still maintaining security and advancing in the field. This notion of career is relatively new in the literature and is critical to understanding how careers can evolve over the life course, even with many transitions between employers, the current norm in the New Economy. From their research, the authors conclude that although the meaning of “careers” is changing over time, it continues to involve some element of upward progression in the workplace. They also emphasize the fact that many workers in small and medium-sized IT firms feel a sense of job insecurity due to the high turnover rate and unstable nature of this industry.

Chapter 3, written by Haviland, Craft Morgan, and Marshall, considers conceptualizations of career development in terms of the connection between a firm’s management practices and perceived career rewards for employees. Various elements of high and low career development firms are discussed. For example, firms are considered low career development if they experience inconsistent management or do not provide opportunities for skill upgrading, a key ingredient for career advancement. This chapter makes a novel contribution to the literature by discussing the issue of spousal teams and the effects they have on the morale of employees who often are unwilling participants of power struggles between these teams. Overall, chapter 3 provides some excellent insights into career development and success. It concludes that firms that focus on building human capital, as opposed to focusing on a specific career path for an employee within the firm, are considered the most rewarding for employees. For example, organizations that provide training related to technical, interpersonal, and leadership skills are more fulfilling to employees since the focus is on both current jobs and *future* career potential.

Both chapter 4, written by Gillian Ranson, and chapter 5, by Elizabeth Brooke, discuss gender issues in relation to career development. Ranson examines how men can experience “boundaryless careers” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) in small IT firms, yet these firms offer other internal rewards, such as the pride achieved from contributing to the organization’s success. She also emphasizes the importance of looking at the persistence of the breadwinner role for men, which is now paired with increasing family demands, and how these competing forces can influence career development. Brooke focuses on career development and wages by gender and age and discovers that women and older workers are generally found in firms that offer lower wages because of firm instability. This circumstance leads to a heightened sense of job insecurity for those workers, who are perhaps the most vulnerable in the New Economy.

In chapter 6, Adams and Demaiter discuss the importance of education and training for IT workers. They examine “self-programmable workers” and “generic workers” (Castells, 2000) – interesting concepts when applied to workers in the New Economy. Self-programmable workers are considered “flexible, adaptable, and quick to retrain”; generic workers are “lacking flexibility and skills” (p. 120). This chapter contains many useful insights into the education and skills of IT workers, such as the importance of credentials and self-learning, for self-programmable IT workers. It also points to some interesting gender differences that surface regarding acquisition of skills. For example, men are more likely to study computer science at the post-secondary level in Australia, Canada, and England, whereas women tend to learn these skills

in the workplace. As past research has shown that employers often have stereotypical attitudes about older workers regarding flexibility, skills, adaptability, and training, I think it would have been particularly informative if the authors expanded their analyses to investigate how aging employees are classified by employers, using Castells' conception of self-programmable and generic workers.

Chapter 7, by Charness and Fox, addresses issues related to training in terms of age, gender, and job status. Interestingly, the authors did not find age to be a factor in training opportunities, a result generally not found in the literature (See for example Zeytinoglu, Cooke, & Harry, 2007). Older workers are often at a disadvantage due to reduced access to training, and I am happy to see that this trend might be changing. Unfortunately, the authors did find that when given training, older workers were still offered fewer days for this purpose than were younger workers.

Chapters 8 and 9 explore the implications for health and policy that arise from the structure of IT work. In chapter 8, Shuey and Spiegel examine the effects of job-related stress that vary by age and illustrate its negative outcomes, including worker burnout. They make a noteworthy contribution to the literature by exploring the connection between life course transitions, such as becoming a parent, and its ability to heighten work-related stress. The chapter also points to the importance of the life course perspective's key concept of "linked lives", which has been ignored in much previous research. Using this notion, one can see how work-related stress affects one's ability to connect to others, for example. Chapter 9, by Cooke and Platman, also discusses how family transitions can affect workplace transitions, and thus both chapters illustrate the merit of using a life course approach to gain a better understanding of work and family issues. Cooke and Platman highlight the importance of family, gender, and professional networks, amongst other factors. They also discuss the need to alter workplace policies to better meet the needs of individuals passing through various life course transitions by providing them with better resources to assist in these transitions. Thus, these chapters do a good job illustrating the importance of examining the interaction between paid and unpaid work in the New Economy.

In chapter 10, Marshall and McMullin interweave various findings presented in the preceding chapters. In their words – "people age as they work, and they work as they age" (p. 225) – a very simple but often ignored notion in research. They illustrate the importance of using a life course perspective in research on work and aging, providing a great overview of the linkages in theory and method contained in their book. They also highlight policy solutions presented throughout the

book and insightfully suggest how the life course perspective could and should be used as a framework for policy development.

The fact that all the chapters in this book are based on the WANE study could be regarded as a weakness by some readers, but the variety of data obtained in this study and the mixed methods used, highlight the diversity of the research team and the significant contribution that this book makes to the aging field. Many of the authors' theoretical contributions – for example, on job-related stress or the connection between life course and workplace transitions – can clearly be applied to workers in other industries. However, I do suspect that workers with physically demanding jobs in construction or manufacturing may have unique experiences as they age in the New Economy, as compared to those in the IT industry. Future research that investigates similar concepts in these fields is warranted, and this book provides an excellent framework for such an approach.

Overall, the editors should be commended for compiling such a rich volume of work that provides invaluable empirical and theoretical insights into the relationship between aging and work. Thus, this well-organized and well-written book has countless strengths that make it an excellent choice for undergraduate or graduate students in gerontology, sociology, psychology, social work, health studies, or business. Further, academics and policy makers concerned with aging workforce issues will be well served by this text.

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