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INTRODUCTION

ELLEN COLE AND LISA HOLLIS-SAWYER

Please note: The economic and social trends presented in this volume do not incorporate data from the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the timing of the research itself, the publication process, and the sudden onset of the pandemic. However, we believe that each of the chapters remains relevant in many ways—in regard to older women who continue to work, now online or still on-site; older women who have been furloughed or fired; and older women who have made the decision, given the state of things, to retire. We encourage readers who are interested to consult sources on women who work that do get frequently updated, in order to track new developments that may then augment the insights provided in the following chapters. For example, two sites that we have been following are <http://www.fairygodboss.com>, where you can find up to date research on women and work, and Our World in Data (<http://www.ourworldindata.org/female-labor-supply>; Ortiz-Ospina, Tzvetkova, & Roser, 2018), which has shown that “the global expansion of the female labor supply has gone together with an increase in the average age of women in the labor force.” This book is intended to educate a variety of audiences about state-of-the-art research on women age 65 and older

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Older Women Who Work: Resilience, Choice, and Change, E. Cole and L. Hollis-Sawyer (Editors)

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who work, to offer suggestions for the application of this research, and to provide helpful support resources for older women seeking employment or currently active in the workforce as well as professionals who work with this population. It is a project of the Committee on Women and Aging of the American Psychological Association's Division 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women). We, the coeditors, as well as the authors have been deeply committed to this project from its inception, recognizing its importance, even urgency, at a time when a majority of the baby boom generation plans to work into their 70s and beyond. Because women tend to outlive their male counterparts, aging in the workplace becomes increasingly a women's issue.

We have learned from the book's chapters that there are many reasons that women are continuing to work longer than ever before. Reasons range from identification with one's career to finding meaning, purpose, and social connectivity through work to the need for financial stability and paying bills, particularly, our authors tell us, those related to healthcare. Many older women workers continue to help family members. Some work because they choose to. Some work because they must.

Many countries have already begun to see rapid growth in the number of older workers staying in or attempting to reenter the workforce. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), for example, reported that the 65- to 74-year-old population of men and women at that time participated in the workforce at a rate of 26%, but that participation is expected to increase to 31% by 2022. In 1992, the participation rate of women age 62 to 64 was 30.5%, but it is anticipated that by 2022, their participation rate will be 47.4%. Among women age 65 to 74, their participation rate is predicted to grow from having been 12.5% in 1992 to 28.3% by 2022. In contrast, the labor force participation rates of men are declining.

We anticipate and hope that many will benefit from this book. Workplace practitioners, such as human resource managers, industrial and organizational psychologists, and consultants with health care centers or senior living facilities, will benefit from a greater understanding of older women employees and their associated workplace support needs, such as skill training in new technologies. We expect and hope that readers will be better prepared to advise policymakers around issues related to poverty, precarious work environments, and health care needs of older workers. For academic audiences, we believe this will be a beneficial reading source for any course examining women's development, the workplace, or broader issues of societal roles and public policies. Mental health professionals from a variety of disciplines as well as media and consumer psychologists will benefit from

a greater understanding of the fastest growing demographic in the United States and beyond.

Our range of topics, genres, writing styles, and research methodologies is intentionally broad, presenting diverse perspectives about older women's later-life work-role experiences through a feminist lens by authors from different but related fields and areas of expertise. We have attempted to achieve a balance between scholarship and advocacy while addressing a diversity of populations that include Appalachian women, immigrant women, poor women, women who choose to continue to work, and women in precarious work situations. We believe the various chapters compellingly demonstrate the impact of crosscutting factors such as sexism and poverty along with an exploration of boots-on-the-ground issues such as retirement, work-life balance, and civic engagement, as well as broad conceptual issues such as changing values and lifespan contexts.

Each contribution highlights strengths that older women bring not only to the workplace but also to the broader society. As with any essay collection, we expect the reader will benefit from a gateway perspective that allows each separate piece to complement the whole. To that end, we have divided the book into the following three parts, each with its own introduction: Part I—Personal and Career Identities for Older Women, Part II—Societal Roles of Aging Women Workers, and Part III—Diversity and Personal Grit in the Workplace and Beyond.

We believe the book provides one of the first in-depth examinations of older women delaying retirement and working past traditional retirement age. Because the topic is exceedingly current and there are currently no clear guidelines regarding the factors to consider or the resources needed to succeed in this extended career trajectory, our book is intended to break new ground on topics of interest to clinicians, educators, researchers, workplace practitioners, and anyone who is or knows a woman who is aging—mother, sister, friend, daughter, or spouse.

A GLIMPSE INTO OUR JOURNEY

To our surprise, we, the coeditors, experienced something familiar yet unexpected when we began this project. It reminded us of when we were pregnant as younger women and started noticing other pregnant women everywhere. This time we began noticing older women who work. Here is one example:

At a lunch counter not long ago, Susan (age 68) and Tanya (age 83)—these are their real ages but not their real names—began to talk about their

busy practices as real estate agents. Ellen asked them (politely, and with their permission) why they were still working. Susan said, “for the bacon.” She needed the money to pay the taxes:

We got ourselves into a conundrum. We bought a house so our daughter could live with us, and she doesn’t pay rent in spite of our repeatedly asking her to. It’s very awkward. But I enjoy real estate. It’s a good business when you still want to travel. The trouble is, people expect you to be at their beck and call.

Tanya, with her husband, runs a popular bed and breakfast (B&B) in addition to her real estate business. She said, “Frankly, the real estate business is for the income. The B&B gets harder and harder. You assume your pension and Social Security will cover everything, but expenses and taxes go up.” Both women agreed on another reason they work, expressed first by Susan: “If I didn’t work, my husband and I would kill each other. We spend too much time together, as is.” Tanya agreed: “He has to go everywhere with me. But he can’t come to my women’s lunches or go out on real estate calls.”

Please look around, and you, too, are likely to see what had previously not been on your radar screen: older women who work.

And another thing happened. Friends and colleagues, one after another, made suggestions for topics. One woman, who is celebrating her 50th year as a Catholic nun, asked, “Do you know that nuns never retire?” Here is an excerpt from an email she (Mary Lou Liptak, Sister of Mercy) sent the next day:

Another example of older women who work that could warrant examination as a model of endurance beyond traditional retirement age would be the thousands of women religious who literally built up the American Catholic Church throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and continue into the 21st. Impelled by following the mandates of their baptismal vows to serve, and strengthened by their religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, they are inclined to meet the needs of the downtrodden, wherever that may lead them. Women Religious are the fore runners in the feminist movement and innovators in ministry. They rolled up their sleeves to provide solutions to present day problems.

The whole concept of belonging to a religious community suggests that women religious never retire from that lifestyle but rather continue to fulfill their duties as long as they are able. When a Sister feels she no longer can serve in her present role, often times she will agree to a ministry of less intensity such as part-time worker, or serve in a volunteer role in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, or the many outreach ministries such as soup kitchens, food pantries, and other agencies that serve the poor. Sisters are often seen still ministering to the people of God well into their 70s, 80s and even 90s, beyond the age that society sets for retirement. Sisters who are physically unable to continue to serve in even a small role in active ministry, continue to provide a network of prayer for the Sisters who are still ministering, furthering their work and fulfilling their vows until death.

Another suggestion came from Leona Brandwene, associate director of education at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center. "What about athletes who later become coaches?" she asked, following up, too, with an explanatory email:

The sports arena is literally and figuratively an environment which stretches women to excellence and thriving through a passion for sport. With the passing of Title IX in 1972, the doors to sport opened for many women in the United States, and today's 65+ year old collegiate coaches who lead NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] programs across the country often blazed the trail as athletes themselves for new NCAA and scholastic programs that were launched in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Their pioneering spirit, first as athletes, and now as coaches, is the very expression of a life-long passion.

WHAT THIS BOOK COVERS

We ended up not including chapters about women in religious orders or women in athletics careers, even though these topics piqued our interest. As our thoughts developed on the book project, our focus veered away from specific career paths and toward broader themes, such as resilience, lifespan development, meaning-making, economics, how societies value older women who work and the work itself, and systems-level change to make work a healthier experience for older women.

The chapters in Part I are related to older women's perceptions of self in their evolving later-life career trajectories. Chapter 1, by Ashley M. Stripling and Jodie Maccarrone, illustrates how challenges for older working women such as ageism, lookism, and caregiving intersect with previously experienced hurdles (i.e., sexism, wage gaps) and how these may be more pronounced for women who already experience discrimination based on race, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. This chapter outlines pathways through which these challenges can facilitate growth and proposes a model of resiliency factors to inform gerodiverse women, professionals, and organizations about how to promote psychological well-being among our diverse and flourishing late-life female workforce.

Chapter 2, by Valory Mitchell, focuses on how developmental theory might regard the aging working woman. For example, the final two stages of the Eriksons' lifespan theory—generativity and integrity—offer a sharp contrast. Generativity has an outward focus, generating and nurturing one's contributions to society, whereas integrity looks inward, asking who one is and has been. Does a purposive work life keep the aging woman from her "appropriate" inner task? Or should developmental theories be flexed and ultimately revised to better capture a woman's journey toward

transcendence and end of life, when these transitions play out in the context of her work life?

Chapter 3, by Lorraine Mangione, Kathi A. Borden, and Elizabeth Fuss, addresses the meaning of work for the current cohort of professional women age 60 and older. How does this group make meaning out of their work and their decision to keep working? How connected is work to their values and sense of identity? What do they consider when they decide to keep working? These questions are explored within an existential, feminist, and lifespan development framework through personal and professional commentaries by the authors and themes and comments coming from women invited to write narratives about the meaning of work in their lives.

Chapter 4, by Nicky J. Newton and Katherine M. Ottley, presents original research examining the relationship to personal identity of voluntary versus involuntary retirement or continued work participation among older women. Associations with health, age, household income, and type of occupation are also examined. The authors note that women who chose to either continue working or retire exhibited higher levels of identity certainty than did women forced to do either, although findings differed by occupation type. They also demonstrate how qualitative data provides a broader picture of work-related identity, highlighting the importance of contextualizing retirement-linked research within the individual's life course.

Chapter 5, by Jackie Goode, is an autoethnographic account of the meanings of work for an older White Englishwoman. It traces her winding path into and out of different kinds of part- and full-time professional work alongside raising a family and her journey after retirement undertaking both paid and unpaid work. In doing so, it problematizes both the traditional notion of career as a linear unidirectional trajectory and the idea that work holds either instrumental or intrinsic value.

Part II presents a series of chapters related to women's roles in the workplace and in their communities in later life. Chapter 6, by Mary Gergen and Ellen Cole, examines through interviews and content analysis the topic of older women needing to work past traditional retirement age because of economic need, such as personal and/or family support. Issues discussed include declining health and other aging-related changes that affect continued employment for older women who are working, some of whom would prefer not to. The heart of the chapter consists of descriptions of how life goes for women who must work at low-income jobs in their older years. How do they manage? What are the positive aspects of their lives? What social and governmental assistance might make their lives better?

Chapter 7, by H. Lorraine Radtke and Janneke van Mens-Verhulst, explores the meaning of work-life balance/integration for older women, including those who work beyond “normal” retirement age. This collaborative effort integrates insights from two cultural contexts, the Netherlands and Canada. Although both share the status of being developed countries in the global north, there are some distinctive cultural norms of interest for considering older women, work, and work-life balance. Through critical analysis, the chapter addresses gaps created by research and theory development that has focused mainly on women below the age of 65 (the traditional retirement age in many countries).

Chapter 8, by Patricia O'Connor, describes a qualitative study of women 70 years of age and older who are working by choice. Rather than focusing solely on reasons for continuing to work that are related to self-identity, the study also highlights the effect of their working on their relationships with family and friends.

Chapter 9, by Ruth V. Walker and Alexandra I. Zelin, addresses women's and men's experiences with ageism in the workplace, using results from a phenomenological study of 70 participants, 22 to 87 years old, who participated in either story circles or in-depth interviews. Their results demonstrate that experiences with ageism are not a phenomenon reserved for older adulthood and that gender intersects with age to create opportunities for both oppression and resistance across the lifespan.

Part III includes chapters related to individual-difference factors affecting older women's workforce participation. Chapter 10, by Julie Hicks Patrick, Abigail M. Nehrkorn-Bailey, Michaela S. Clark, and Madeline M. Mareello, explores some of the factors that influence employment trends among older Appalachian women. Appalachia includes all of West Virginia and portions of 12 other states, encompassing 25 million residents. Appalachians live with lower annual incomes, higher poverty, higher unemployment, and higher morbidity and mortality rates than are seen in other regions in the United States.

Chapter 11, by Niva Piran, describes a study with 31 women of diverse social locations, age 50 to 70, about their embodied journeys. The findings suggest that work at an older age, although a discrete experience in women's lives, reflects needs, wishes, and pursuits that derive their meanings from women's unique life histories. Examples from the study include stories about overcoming physical and geographic constraints as well as constraints related to social power, relational connections, and cultural discourses.

Chapter 12, by Jasmin Tahmaseb McConatha and Frauke Schnell, focuses on the resilience and challenges faced by older immigrant working

women in the United States. Many of these women toil at low-income, dead-end jobs; discriminatory treatment often blocks their upward mobility. The authors present a case study of an older immigrant who arrived in the United States as a young woman. Through her story they identify resources that build resilience and explore ideas for policies, programs, and media culture that can change social perceptions and improve how these women fare.

Chapter 13, by Lisa Hollis-Sawyer, applies the “use it or lose it” principle to volunteerism and other outlets for physical, mental, and social engagement for older women. The chapter reviews positive personal and social outcomes of civic engagement and identifies factors that support women who wish to stay active in such networks and become “womentors” to others.

Overarching themes are explored at greater length in each of the part introductions, but here we’d like to offer a sampler of the types of questions we hope readers will consider while interacting with this text:

- What strengths do older women bring to the workforce?
- What must human resources professionals, managers, and executive leaders do or understand in order to capitalize on older women’s strengths?
- What needs to change in workplace cultures and other systems to make work a safe, healthy place where older women can thrive?
- What role do counselors and clinicians play in providing resources and advice for older women who want or need to pursue work opportunities?
- What roles can researchers play in shaping the workplace for older women’s needs? For example, how can they influence policy and other systems change?

There are many other topics and authors we would have liked to incorporate in this book. We received several excellent proposals that because of time and page limits and other factors we were unable to include, and we hope to see them published elsewhere, soon. One in particular was a chapter by Maria Alexandra d’Araújo and Jaime R. S. Fonseca regarding the importance of leisure in the lives of older working women in Portugal. Another was based on interviews of older Brazilian women conducted by Monica Teixeira, demonstrating that women who officially retire can find new and meaningful purpose.

We imagine that some readers will be shouting at our pages, “How could you not include [insert important topic here]?” This would warm our hearts because we know this work is important.

AND FINALLY

The U.S. Census Bureau (see Vespa, 2018) has targeted 2035 as the year the United States will pass an important population milestone: Older adults will outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history. Estimates expect 78 million Americans 65 and older that year versus 76.7 million Americans younger than 18.

Laura Carstensen (2009), from the Stanford Center on Longevity, coined the term “the longevity revolution,” with the bottom-line premise that more and more people are living to be centenarians—more than 1 million are expected in the United States by 2050. It then stands to reason that more and more of us will be in the workforce.

The takeaway for us, the coeditors of this volume, is the recognition that (a) the time is now for this topic and (b) we have been unable to cover it all. Please consider this book an invitation for you and others to follow.

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