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## Editors' Overview

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In this chapter we provide an introduction and overview of the topic of aging and work in the 21st century. To accomplish this we describe how the text unfolds by highlighting some of the key findings and issues raised by each chapter. In doing so, we provide the reader with a broad view of aging and work in the 21st century and a sense of the interconnectedness of the topics covered. We hope that by including such a chapter, the reader will come to see the whole of this text as something more than a collection of individual chapters.

Most developed countries are experiencing rapid aging of their populations, while those countries that have not yet begun experiencing population aging will do so during the first half of the 21st century (Henkens & Van Dalen, 2003). Along with this population aging, the workforces of these countries will also, on average, grow older. Given the sheer size of this phenomenon and the centrality of work to people's lives and livelihoods, as well the importance of the workforce to organizations and the economy, researchers, organizational decision-makers, those interested in public policy, and even the general public, have shown an interest in better understanding the aging workforce. Our contention is that a better understanding requires a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature with an eye toward identifying both recommendations for applied practice and future research needs. Thus, we set out to do just that with this edited volume by bringing together the top scholars in the various areas of aging and work to provide chapters that review and summarize their respective areas.

To better understand the size and nature of the aging workforce, Dawn Alley and Eileen Crimmins introduce both population aging and labor force participation as the key trends that lead to an aging workforce. They discuss what is known about population aging and the trends in fertility and mortality rates that underlie it. Then they discuss current projections surrounding

labor force participation of older workers. They next point out that although much is known about population aging, labor force participation is somewhat less certain. They identify factors such as diversity, technology, health, and retirement patterns that will help determine labor force participation of an aging population. Their discussion of these issues sets the stage and foreshadows many of the topics that are covered in subsequent chapters.

The chapter by Mary Anne Taylor and Holly Geldhauser, as well as that of Caren Goldberg, takes a closer look at specific demographic groups. Taylor and Geldhauser focus on aging among low-income workers. They discuss the negative impact of poverty on psychological and economic wellbeing and also point out that some groups, such as women and certain ethnic groups, are at even more risk of poverty as they become older. As their discussion unfolds, a strong case for active efforts to ameliorate poverty among low-income older workers emerges. They suggest a number of approaches to financial planning programs and programs aimed at increasing the employability of low-income older workers.

Meanwhile, Caren Goldberg directly addresses issues surrounding aging women and minorities in her chapter. She describes trends in labor force participation of these groups and discusses how being a member of these groups, separately and in combination with one another, may be negatively related to employment decisions such as those surrounding hiring, performance appraisal, training, and compensation—that is, how being older and belonging to one or more of these other groups might be related to a wide variety of work-related outcomes. Beyond this, however, she discusses not only the demographic characteristics and person-based stereotypes prevalent in the workplace, but also the nature of the labor market and stereotypes associated with jobs as well. She develops a model linking these individual and contextual constructs to organizational decision-making regarding work outcomes.

A key point from these two chapters is a reminder that decisions made about work-related outcomes such as who gets hired, promoted, offered training and the like, are fundamentally decisions made by people about other people within the context of the work and social environment. They argue that such decisions are based on perceptions that may or may not be accurate. This point is taken up in considerable depth in Lisa Finkelstein and Sara Farrell's chapter on age bias. However, these authors go a step further by disentangling perceptions from feelings and evaluations, and from decisions about older workers. They use this tripartite framework to review the literature on age bias. In doing so, Finkelstein and Farrell identify, (1) the motives that may initiate age biases, (2) the possible mechanisms that lead to age bias incidents, (3) the conditions under which these are more or less likely to occur, and (4) what might be done to prevent age bias.

The next two chapters deal with aging and two of the most popular variables in the HR/OB and I/O psychology literatures. These are employee per-

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formance and work-related attitudes. First, Jeanette Cleveland and Audrey Lim begin their chapter on job performance by discussing the various ways in which age and performance have been conceptualized. They distinguish between person-based measures of age, such as chronological age and subjective or personal age, and context-based measures of age, such as age status and perceived age as evaluated by others. They also distinguish task performance as measured by objective, subjective, and interestingly, health-related indicators, from contextual performance, counterproductive, and adaptive behaviors. These distinctions allow for a nuanced discussion of the relationships between the age and performance. They conclude that while much research has focused on chronological age and task performance, relatively little research has focused on these alternative ways to conceptualize these two constructs. They also recognize that performance is not just determined by ability, but also motivation. They encourage practitioners to be mindful of the effects of age when designing and implementing traditional performance appraisals, as well as more recent multisource feedback systems.

In their chapter on aging, worker attitudes, and motivation, Janet Barnes-Farrell and Russell Matthews begin by reviewing the literature on aging and employee attitudes, and concluding that there is a generally positive relationship between age and global job satisfaction, albeit not always linear. They then examine the relationship between specific attitudes such as the various facets of satisfaction, job involvement, and commitment. Next they turn their attention to both motivation and motives of aging workers. They conclude that while much is known about aging and work attitudes, as well as the “what’s and why’s” of aging and work motivation, there is still much more to learn. They suggest researchers begin treating age as a focal variable in their theorizing and empirical research. They also suggest practitioners be aware of the differing and changing needs and motives of workers as they age and provide opportunities for workers to meet these needs and motives.

The discussion of job performance and work attitudes provided in the preceding chapters leads nicely to the next two chapters, which address aging related to training and development, and older workers’ careers. Todd Maurer, in his chapter on training and development, points out that, like the research and theorizing on the topic of motivation, age is often included in research on training and development, but is rarely of primary or substantive concern. That is, age is treated as a predictor of outcomes surrounding training and development, but not in relation to the other individual and situational antecedents often included in various models of training and development. Rejecting this approach, he reviews not only the relationship between age and outcomes, such as participation and performance in training, but also how age is substantively related to a number of situational and individual characteristics that influence these outcomes. In doing so, he more fully captures age-related effects in the training and development process.

Next, Daniel Feldman's chapter addresses the topic of career change among older workers. In his chapter he describes the individual, job, and organizational-level factors that influence the decision of those over the age of 50 to change careers. Based on the notion of job embeddedness, he develops a parallel construct called career embeddedness. Career embeddedness refers to a multidimensional construct that is composed of a collection of variables that tend to tie individuals to their career. These variables are described along three subdimensions (links, fit, and sacrifices) with each arising from two sources (work and community). This new construct of career embeddedness has the potential for furthering our understanding of career change by moving our attention from strictly time-based variables (e.g., age, organizational tenure) to the underlying mechanisms for which these other variables tend to serve as proxies (e.g., involvement, personal investment, and maintaining important relationships).

The chapter by Steve Jex, Mo Wang, and Anna Zarubin tackles the issue of age and occupational health. They begin by reviewing the various perspectives on health and settle on the idea that health is a state of physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. In doing so, they move away from the narrow focus on physical health and the absence of disease. They then review the physical and cognitive changes that come with increasing age and their relationship to this expanded view of occupational health. They offer a number of suggestions for improving the health of aging workers, such as job redesign and health promotions programs. They also offer a number of suggestions for future research, such as that aimed at identifying those factors that may make aging workers more resilient to poor occupational health than younger workers.

Perhaps the single biggest factor that has brought about changes in the basic nature of work itself is the accelerated use of technology, particularly computer technology. Recognizing this, and the unique issues it presents to an aging workforce, Neil Charness, Sara Czaja, and Joseph Sharit describe the age-related changes in attention, perception, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities that influence the use of technology. An important conclusion in their chapter is that aging workers are both willing and able to use technology, but there are steps that can be taken to enhance this willingness and ability. Accordingly, they provide a series of recommendations for the design of training programs and the computer software that are aimed at increasing aging workers' effective use of technology.

At first glance it may seem odd to include a chapter on aging and work/family issues in a book on aging and work. However, as Boris Baltes and Lindsey Young point out, the basic issue of balancing the competing demands of the two most influential spheres of adult life is no less salient for aging workers than it is for younger workers. In their review, they note some of the different

priorities and demands faced by older, as opposed to younger, workers. They also discuss differences in coping strategies and resources that aging workers use to meet work and nonwork demands. They then focus on the issue of eldercare. They describe its potentially negative consequences for individuals and organizations, and offer practical suggestions about how to mitigate these consequences.

The chapter by Terry Beehr and Misty Bennett addresses the topic of retirement. These authors point out that while at one time retirement meant an end to involvement in paid work, this is no longer the case for many retirees. They organize their review by examining the predictors and outcomes of retirement at three levels, (1) individual and family, (2) organizational, and (3) societal. They also discuss bridge employment and volunteer work. In doing so, they provide a coherent and comprehensive review of what is known about the topic of retirement, and identify some important, yet unanswered, questions. A key take away point is that retirement in the 21st century will be different from what it was in the past.

In the concluding chapter, we (the editors) weave together the common themes from across the various chapters in an attempt to begin the process of creating a unifying framework or paradigm for studying aging and work in the 21st century. We discuss theoretical, methodological, as well as practice issues. In the theoretical section we highlight the common themes of successful aging, perceptions matter, diversity issues, and contextual factors. Next, in the methodological section, we discuss measurement, statistical, and research design issues related to aging and work. Finally, in the concluding section on practice issues, we discuss individual, organizational, and societal level issues that span the chapters in this book. We conclude the final chapter with a brief discussion, and a series of questions, related to the concept of creating a unifying paradigm for studying aging and work in the 21st century.

Taken together, the various chapters provide a comprehensive summary and integration of the literature on aging and work. They identify gaps in the existing knowledge base and offer recommendations to address those gaps. They also make substantive suggestions for public policy and organizational decision-makers to consider as they confront the issues associated with managing an aging workforce. In doing so, the chapters that comprise this text tell us not only where we have already been, but also provide a roadmap useful for charting a course into the domain of aging and work in the 21st century.

(Pls. provide references for the citations)

