

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

VICTOR W. MARSHALL, WALTER R. HEINZ, HELGA KRUGER and ANIL VERMA, eds., *Restructuring Work and the Life Course*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2001, x + 512 p., \$85 hardcover, \$34.95 paper.

Major changes have occurred in national, and international economies over the past several decades. Increasing globalization of trade and investment, improved information technology, faster communication links, less costly transportation systems, and the movement of more women into the workplace, have all shaped the conditions under which individuals earn an income and live their lives. The associated migration of manufacturing jobs toward low wage centers in developing nations, corporate re-organization to take advantage of technology, job re-structuring to enhance the productivity of those workers who remained employed, and adjustments to standard working time models have also played a role in destabilizing work and thus life course patterns. With waves of unemployment, shifts toward part-time employment, increased levels of self-employment, higher performance expectations, layoffs, changing retirement ages, and a demand for increased levels of education and training for new workers, worker lifestyles and choices had to adapt to the new requirements if people were to survive in the modified economic and business culture. Each of these changes thus has had human consequences, and it is these consequences that have been affecting the working lives of numerous individuals, that are the focus of this book.

The editors have drawn the 28 chapters from papers presented at a conference dedicated to the study of the human life course, presenting a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the issues. They draw on the knowledge generated by a variety of disciplines including statistics, economics, sociology, social psychology, history, women's studies, information studies, family studies, gerontology, anthropology, industrial relations and human resource management, psychology, and life-course studies; the issues are relevant to the situation in several different countries. By including contributions from such an array of scholars in a single volume, the editors allow for cross-cultural comparisons while consolidating many of the major papers dealing with life-course research. Such a range makes the book more accessible to a larger array of (non-expert) readers while it does not delve into intricate detail on any single aspect of the material. Those phobic to economic formulae or sociological discourse on the implications of workplace change for group behavior, will find other topics of interest in this book. Of

course, the limited number of chapters that can reasonably be compressed into a single volume while at the same time restricting cross-cultural distinctions may also be a weakness.

While the use of such a variety of material could potentially lead to confusion for those unfamiliar with life-course research, the editors avoid this confusion by organizing the material into three broad groupings. Two deal with the direct "victims" of change at the workplace at various ages, and one discusses the consequences for families. The first ten chapters deal with topics of interest to those in the early and middle phases of their working careers, such as transitions into the workplace for under and over educated individuals, shifts in working hours and job availability, and gender swings in employment patterns. The second set of ten chapters deal with the somewhat different difficulties of older workers (such as early retirement and other changes brought about by job or corporate restructuring and re-organization). These chapters single out the effect of age and gender on the ability of workers to recover from such changes in their lives while looking at the effect of life-course changes on the family, especially children. The impact of children on parental life-course decisions is a highly gendered issue given the tendency for women to assume responsibility for the caregiver role despite the negative career implications.

While the volume appears to have been written to appeal to the general reader, the work is somewhat too technical as a 'mass-market' paperback. However, its mix of straightforward and complex writings makes it a reasonable choice as a text for those involved in life-course or labour classes. The volume provides both an interesting view of the current state of research in the field, and an insight into many of the problems that scholars face when researching this topic. Moreover, policy suggestions raise intriguing questions: there exists an interrelationship between the stages in the life course and factors that alter the status quo which are bound to change not only in the present but also in the future. Policy makers must carefully consider "improvements" in one area as they could lead to problems in others. Extending protection from job loss to senior employees, for example, could reduce cases of forced retirement but might also slow the hiring of younger individuals and disrupt the transition into the job market. This book contributes to the accumulation of knowledge necessary to understand the implications of workplace change on the life course of affected individuals and thus to the ability of policy makers to make reasoned decisions.

Sandra Magnusson *University of Alberta*