Gender, Age and Inequality in the Professions

The literature on gender and professions shows that professional careers continue to be impacted by gender—albeit with important differences among professions and countries. Much less researched is the issue of the significance of gender and age-cohort or generation to professional work.

*Gender, Age and Inequality in the Professions* explores men’s and women’s experiences of professional work and careers through an intersectional lens by focusing on the intersection of gender and age. The chapters explore different professions—including Medicine, Nursing, Law, Academia, Information Technology and Engineering—in different Western countries, in the present and over time. Through original research, and critical re-analysis of existing research, each of the chapters explores the significance of gender and age cohort or generation to professional work, with particular attention to professionals just entering professional careers, those building professional careers, and comparisons of men and women in professions across generational cohorts.

The book contributes to literature on inequalities in the professions by demonstrating the ways in which gender and age converge to confer privilege and produce disadvantage, and the ways in which gender inequality is reproduced, and disrupted, through the activities of professionals on the job. The book constitutes a departure point for future research in terms of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on how gendered and age-related processes are produced and reproduced in particular organizational, professional and socio-cultural contexts. To enhance generational understanding, relationships and collaboration in educational institutions, organizations and professions, the book ends with a section on policy recommendations for educators, professionals, professional organizations as well as policy- and decision-makers. This book will also appeal to students and researchers in the fields of Sociology, Gender Studies, Organizational and Management Studies, Law, Medicine, Engineering and Information Technology as well as related disciplines.

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Although still a fairly young field, the study of gender and organizations is increasingly popular and relevant. There are few areas of academic research that are as vibrant and dynamic as the study of gender and organizations. While much earlier research has focused on documenting the imbalances of women and men in organizations, more recently, research on gender and organizations has departed from counting men and women. Instead research in this area sees gender as a process: something that is done rather than something that people are. This perspective is important and meaningful as it takes researchers away from essentialist notions of gender and opens the possibility of analysing the process of how individuals become women and men. This is called ‘gendering’, ‘practising gender’, ‘doing gender’ or ‘performing gender’ and draws on rich philosophical traditions.

Whilst Routledge Studies in Gender and Organizations has a broad remit, it will be thematically and theoretically committed to exploring gender and organizations from a constructivist perspective. Rather than focusing on specific areas of organizations, the series is to be kept deliberately broad to showcase the most innovative research in this field. It is anticipated that the books in this series will make a theoretical contribution to the field of gender and organization based on rigorous empirical explorations.

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Gender, Age and Inequality in the Professions

Edited by Marta Choroszewicz and Tracey L. Adams
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This book is the result of an intensive and collaborative journey to which many people have contributed along the way. The book dates back to the joint chapter, ‘Gender, Diversity and Intersectionality in Professions and Potential Professions: Analytical, Historical And Contemporary Perspectives’, which was initiated and put together by Jeff Hearn and his colleagues. As a follow-up, David Varley, Senior Editor at Routledge, proposed to Jeff Hearn to turn the chapter into the book. Jeff Hearn, after discussing the issue with Ingrid Biese, kindly passed on the idea of the book to one of this book’s editors. We would like to thank everyone mentioned above for initiating the process.

The book idea got its current shape at the Interim Meeting of RC52 Sociology of Professional Groups at what is now Oslo Metropolitan University in June 2017. This is where we—the book editors—met and intensively started to work on the book proposal.

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Introduction
1 Introduction

Themes, Objectives, and Theoretical Perspectives

Marta Choroszewicz and Tracey L. Adams

Introduction

Since the 1990s there have been numerous changes in the world of work owing to globalisation, rising competitiveness, technological progress, organisational change, and marketisation of higher education. These social and economic trends have combined to alter professional work and career prospects. Professionals may be more closely managed and monitored than in previous decades, and they face more precarious work settings. Professions are also transforming from the inside. Elite professions like medicine, law, and engineering were traditionally male-dominated in the West, but in recent decades women have entered these professions in large numbers. In many countries the professional workforce is more ethnically diverse as well, thanks to increased immigration, and the globalisation of the professional labour market. In light of these developments, men and women entering professions today face different workplace and professional environments than their predecessors.

This book explores the experiences of young professionals entering the workforce, and the significance of gender in shaping those experiences and intergenerational dynamics in professions, through contributions from scholars studying professionals in a variety of professions across national settings. There is a large body of research documenting how professional work is gendered (Adams 2010a; Davies 1996; Witz 1992): gender norms and expectations are embedded into the structure of professional jobs and career paths. Less research has focused on the significance of age cohort or generation. However, in light of the significant transformations shaping professional work and professional workers, generational differences in experience are quite likely. With this book, we argue that a gender lens alone is no longer sufficient to capture the experiences of men and women in professions. Rather, it is necessary to adopt an intersectional approach, and explore how age and gender intersect to shape experiences of professional work and careers.

The book includes contributions from researchers in six countries, presenting research conducted on about nine professional groupings,
in seven national contexts. Through original research, and critical re-analysis of existing research, each of the chapters in this volume explores the significance of gender and age cohort or generation to professional work, paying particular attention to professionals just entering professional careers, those building professional careers, and comparisons of men and women in professions across generational cohorts. Combined, the chapters demonstrate the importance of looking at the intersection of gender and age/cohort/generation when researching professionals and their work.

From the outset, it is important to emphasise that our perspective in this volume is limited to Western countries (the US, Canada, Nordic countries, and Western Europe) that are characterised by long research traditions on professionals and professional work (Adams 2015). At the same time, we highlight a need for more international and comparative work on the changing nature of professions in these societies through an intersectional lens. By bringing together researchers from across Western countries, this book brings attention to generational issues in the workplace, and develops policy recommendations for workplaces and employing organisations, professional groups, professional education programs, and governments.

In this introductory chapter we provide brief outlines of the theoretical context for the empirical chapters to follow by examining the significance of gender and age cohort to professional work, and by making a case for an intersectional approach to research on professions and professional work. We also outline the key themes of this book and highlight our main contributions. Finally we end the chapter with a summary of the different sections and chapters contained herein.

Professional Work

For decades scholars have debated how best to define professions and professional work. We will not repeat those debates here. Rather we take a more pragmatic approach to defining professions, but one that builds on the substantial body of research on work in this field (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1994, 2001; Johnson 1972; Larson 1977; Macdonald 1995). Professions are traditionally a set of occupations distinguished from others by their high education, complex body of knowledge and skills, their status, and their fiduciary responsibilities (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933; Greenwood 1957). Professionals mobilise advanced knowledge to provide important services to the public, states, and societies. Professionals have also been distinguished through their organisation; traditionally many have enjoyed some degree of self-regulation, in society and/or on the job. They have been granted discretion and latitude in the performance of their work. Exactly who is regarded as a professional has varied across time and place; however, in the West, there are considerable
similarities across nations. Among the most recognised high-status professions are lawyers, medical doctors and other health professionals, academics, engineers, and others. These are the same groups that are of key focus in the pages of this volume.

Although the work of professionals varies across field and specialisation, the literature has pointed to several key characteristics that are important to note here. First, professionals’ work involves drawing on complex, esoteric knowledge to provide often pragmatic solutions to clients. Most professionals have undergone advanced education involving exposure to complex, theoretical ideas, and on-the-job training to acquire practical skills required for effective service delivery. There is an expectation that professionals will continue to learn on the job, and (increasingly) regularly retrain to keep their skills up-to-date.

Second, professional work either directly or indirectly affects the well-being of others. The work of healthcare workers has a direct impact on the health of patients and clients, while the work of engineers has significant public safety implications. The work of lawyers, teachers, academics, and others directly affects the well-being, safety and security, and life prospects of those whom they come in contact with. Not surprisingly, then, the work of professionals has been regulated by codes of ethics and by governments, to ensure that professionals are using their skills responsibly and ethically and are acting to protect the public, rather than do harm (Adams 2010b; Law and Kim 2005). Professionals who fail to uphold their obligations are subject to discipline, which may include suspension, loss of license, and even criminal charges.

Third, professional workers have traditionally possessed a fair amount of autonomy in the conduct of their work (Freidson 2001; Johnson 1972; Larson 1977). The expectation has been that professionals need a degree of freedom in order to draw on their education and training, to meet the complex needs of clients. Historically, as long as professionals met their fiduciary responsibilities to the public, they were granted a considerable amount of leeway, concerning how they did so. They were allowed the freedom to find creative solutions to complex problems.

Fourth, there are internal status hierarchies within professions based on gender, class, and race, and generally a recognised career ladder; those professionals who are highly successful in their work have an expectation of promotion, or at least enhanced recognition (Davies 1996; Tomlinson et al. 2013; Witz 1992).

Fifth, professional workers often have a strong work-oriented identity. Professional work is not simply something professionals do for a living, but it defines who they are as people. Even when they are not working, professional workers identify as professionals.

Finally, all of these characteristics combine to promote a culture of long work hours. Professionals tend to work long hours (Choroszewicz and Tremblay 2018), and doing so is expected to ensure that clients’
well-being is met and skills are up-to-date; long hours are required for promotion.

While these characteristics of professional work remain important, professions have experienced substantial change in recent decades, as we noted earlier. Technological change and research advancements have altered the content of professional work, and increased the amount of work needed to keep professionals up-to-date. The popularity of neo-liberal ideologies has encouraged the questioning of professional monopolies, contributing to major changes in professional regulation (Abel 2003; Adams 2017; Evetts 2011, 2013; Noordegraaf 2011; Saks 2015). It has also altered the professional labour market, through its encouragement of globalisation, removal of barriers and protections, and reduced job security. Precarious employment within professions has increased substantially (Francis 2015; Francis and Sommerlad 2009; Kalleberg 2009), making professional careers increasingly fragmented and unsystematic (Biese and Choroszewicz 2018).

Organisational change has also been transformative. In the past, many professionals were employed in workplaces characterised by collegiality, in which professionals held significant leadership positions. Professionals were often managed by other professionals and professional norms guided conduct (Freidson 1986). In recent decades, this has changed, and professionals are closely managed according to managerialist principles now more than ever before (Noordegraaf and Steijn 2013). The introduction of new public management in public-sector organisations means that professionals in this sector, like their counterparts in the private sector, experience more regulations, discipline, and cost-cutting measures. These trends combine to alter the content of professional work, reducing the autonomy and authority of rank-and-file professionals (Livingstone 2018).

Globalisation and internationalisation are also trends affecting professions, expanding professional markets, resulting in larger and more complex work organisations, altering regulatory regimes and the nature of professional work itself, and contributing to a more diverse professional workforce (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2012; Susskind and Susskind 2015). Additionally, technological advances optimise traditional ways in which professionals work; they also actively transform the nature of work itself, and thus the types of tasks performed by professionals (Susskind and Susskind 2015).

Recent changes strike at the very heart of professionalism, affecting professionals’ autonomy (Muzio et al. 2013), job security (Kalleberg 2009), promotion opportunities (Tomlinson et al. 2013), and relationships with clients and colleagues (Gustafsson et al. 2018; Hanlon 1998). These changes impose multiple, conflicting pressures on professional workers (Noordegraaf and Steijn 2013). As a result, internal inequalities within professions are exacerbated (Noordegraaf 2013; Waring 2014).
Professionals are increasingly differentiated by gender, race/ethnicity, and age, as well as by status, organisational position, and authority. There is some concern that these divisions could undermine professional collegiality and shared identities. These changes have implications for professional workplaces, as well as professions more broadly. In light of the changing nature of professions, the next sections explore the significance of gender and age to professional work.

Gender and Professions

Feminist scholars have critiqued gender-blind approaches to theorising and studying professions (Crompton 1987; Davies 1996; Witz 1992). Gender is an organising principle that underlies the formation and structure of professions (Acker 1990; Davies 1996; Kuhlmann 2003). Cultural assumptions around femininity and masculinity, and institutionalised gender inequality, were central to the establishment of professions (Adams 2000; Davies 1996: 671). Historically, women in male-dominated professions faced exclusionary mechanisms that aimed to sustain a male monopoly and reinforce male dominance (Witz 1992: 6). Gendered expectations have shaped the division of professional labour (Adams 2000; Davies 1996) and continue to influence professionals’ social practices and identities. The gendering of professions takes place even in professions comprised of only women or only men (Hearn et al. 2016). Gendered processes shape professional hierarchies and specialties, and their combined impact, for women in male-dominated fields, has been one of cumulative disadvantage, limiting opportunities for their ability to obtain positions of power, authority, and influence.

Gender theory provides insights as to how gender operates at multiple levels from micro- through meso- to macro-levels (Acker 1990, 2006, 2012; Connell 1987). These frameworks enable us to examine, first, the influence of the state of gender relations in a country (i.e. gender order) on career opportunities of women and men, and second, the influence of the state of gender relations in a particular occupation or organisation (i.e. gender regime) on the development of tasks, work, and the construction of jobs as either ‘men’s work’ or ‘women’s work’ (Bloksgaard 2011; Choroszewicz 2014). This division continues to underpin the numerical domination of certain professions by either women or men, making it difficult for the opposite sex to access them. The gendering of professional work shapes career choices as well as social constructions of professional expertise (Bolton and Muzio 2007). For example, women’s professional career choices are informed not only by their sense of what is occupationally advantageous, but also by their beliefs about what careers are appropriate for them, and what careers they will be good at (Choroszewicz 2014). Male-dominated professions are seen to require masculine skills, while many female-dominated professions are seen to utilise feminine skills and
qualities. The selective and context-sensitive valorisation of traditionally feminine or masculine skills and qualities can create (and reproduce) niches between professions and among specialties within particular professions (Choroszewicz 2014). Women gain credibility in female-dominated professions and in professional specialties, which are also seen to be easier to combine with family life (Choroszewicz 2014).

Gender is also central to the status of professions (Davies 1996; Riska 2014; Witz 1992). While most archetypical professions were constructed as male-dominated, female-dominated professions have been regarded as semi-professions or non-professions (Hearn 1982). The majority of prestigious and high-status professions have been constructed or organised by men for men (Adams 2000), thereby privileging men in their career progress. Women’s inroads into these professions were associated with three interactive dominant strategies:

1. the need to live up to the established masculine ideals of professional roles and behaviours or be channelled to lower-status professions and professional roles (e.g. Adams 2000);
2. the need to convert feminine skills, qualities, and life experience into professionally powerful resources to strengthen their professional credibility (e.g. Riska 2003); and
3. the need to negotiate between, on the one hand, living up to the masculine ideals (sameness) and, on the other hand, cultivating the gendered dispositions expected of them (difference) in their pursuit of professional careers (e.g. Choroszewicz 2014; Simpson et al. 2010).

Today, in Western societies, women no longer face formal barriers to entering traditionally male-dominated professions as they did in decades past. However, despite advancements brought by gender equality legislation and changes within the professions, women are not yet integrated into the professions on an equal basis with men, as the chapters in this volume show.

While women and men are nowadays increasingly found in similar occupations and professions, their experiences in regards to professional activity, career choices and progression, and work–family reconciliation still differ. As a result, women and men professionals are still engaged in different work, different areas of the same work, and/or completing different tasks and responsibilities. They are also assumed to possess, and therefore put emphasis on investing differently in, skills and human capital—aspects that are now even more central to professional success. Women and men may enter professions with clear and often differential ideas of what sorts of career opportunities and specialisations are appropriate for them as women and men (Bloksgaard 2011; Choroszewicz 2014).

While in numerical terms, women’s share within professions has increased, in terms of substantive representation, the picture is more
complex and less optimistic. Substantive representation refers to how women are represented across top positions—positions of power, prestige, and authority—within the professions (Riska 2008). Women are still under-represented at this level. There are also rising voices arguing that women’s progress in professions has stalled in some Western countries (see e.g. Brenner 2014). The analysis of factors, processes, and practices that hold women back in substantive representation are multidimensional and complex, partly because they interlock with other social divisions, such as age and race/ethnicity, and partly because they are tied to specific socio-historical, organisational, and occupational contexts. These all pose particular challenges to current research on gender inequalities in professions.

To sum, gender shapes the organisation and experience of professional work, in complex and changing ways. This volume will contribute to our understanding of the ways in which contemporary professions continue to be gendered projects—in part by drawing attention to the intersection of gender with age, and a life course perspective.

**Age, Cohort, and Generation**

There has been little attention to the significance of age, cohort, or generation to professions and professional practice; however, with recent shifts to the age composition of the workforce, attention to age in work research has been revived (Kertzer 1983; Krekula 2007; Parry and Urwin 2011: 84; Schalk et al. 2010). This is particularly the case in management and organisational studies research. There has also been increased attention to generational differences in the workplace in recent years, with the entrance of the Millennial generation into the labour market, and emerging public attitudes that Millennial workers differ from their predecessors in many ways. Increased attention to age, cohort, and generation has been encouraged by the emergence of the life course perspective, which emphasises the significance of time, place, and cohort to one’s experience of life’s major events (Shanahan and Macmillan 2008).

Against misconceptions, ‘age’ is a complex concept, and it can be applied in diverse ways with numerous meanings and functions. Schalk and colleagues (2010: 78–80) combine some earlier typologies of age, which they organise on a continuum between age as an individual characteristic and as a characteristic of the environment. Among the age categories that they distinguish, the most relevant to the studies in this volume are chronological, organisational, and social ages:

1. **Chronological age** is an individual characteristic measured by the number of lived years. The distinction between younger and older workers is based on calendar age.
2. Organisational age is measured by the number of years in the same organisation or job. It can also refer to career stage.

3. Social age is a social marker of attitudes, norms, and expectations about appropriate behaviour, characteristics, and lifestyles expected of an individual at different ages.

Research has identified many barriers experienced by young workers in the labour force, including high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination from being stereotyped as unreliable and low-skilled (Foster 2013; Scheuer and Mills 2017: 49–50). Older workers are also subject to stereotypes and disadvantages in the labour force. Workers over fifty may be stereotyped as inflexible, unable to learn new things, and slower (Riach 2007; Scheuer and Mills 2017: 47–49). Those who lose their jobs in their fifties and sixties have more difficulty obtaining a new job than their younger counterparts (McMullin and Berger 2006). Thus, younger and older workers appear to face more difficulties; it is primarily those in their thirties and forties who seem most advantaged in the labour market (Riach 2007; Scheuer and Mills 2017; Thomas et al. 2014). Nonetheless, this can vary by career. In some jobs—such as those involving technology and computing—younger workers are valorised and by their mid-thirties, workers may be regarded as over-the-hill (Corbett in this volume; McMullin 2011). In contrast, in other careers, like academia, workers may not fully enter the labour market until they are in their thirties, and older workers may be held in high esteem (Hearn and Husu in this volume). Older workers may have the emotional capital needed for a job (Cottingham and Dill in this volume). They may also have more freedom from family responsibilities, and therefore, they tend to emphasise an individual capacity in managing work and family life (Choroszewicz in this volume; Olakivi and Wrede in this volume).

Age also influences career opportunities at career entry (Kay in this volume). The significance of organisational ages may also vary across sector, with loyalty and experience being rewarded in some fields, while in others there may be more benefit to changing jobs and work settings more frequently, to gain varied experience as well as to seek less hostile work environments and specialties (Adams in this volume; Adams and Kwon in this volume). Women are specifically vulnerable to experiencing multiple discrimination because of gender and age, which influences their employment trajectories and decisions to exit the profession (Boni-Le Goff, Le Feuvre, Mallard, Lépinard and Morel in this volume; Plickert in this volume). Women, among top earners, are still more likely to have lower wages than their male colleagues, even in countries with a reputation for gender equality (Magnusson and Nermo in this volume).

Age cohort and generation are also important concepts in research across the social sciences and humanities (Kertzer 1983; Mannheim 1952; Parry and Urwin 2011). ‘Cohort’ refers to ‘a group of individuals born at
the same time who are presumed to be similar as a result of shared experiences. Only chronological proximity to events and other drivers of difference are assumed to distinguish them from other cohorts’ (Parry and Urwin 2011: 84). Different cohorts may have distinct life experiences, as these are shaped by social structures, norms, cultures, and institutions, which prevail at certain historical periods (Elder 1994: 6–7). While this definition of cohort might be similar to the definition of generation, there are some notable differences between these two concepts. Age cohorts are often narrow in size (Parry and Urwin 2011). For example, one might speak of birth cohorts, grouping everyone born in the same year or in a few-year span together, or focus on a cohort of graduates entering the labour force—for instance, everyone graduating from a professional programme in a defined span of time can be said to form a cohort. In contrast, generations are usually much broader, often grouping people born in a twenty-year span of time (Shanahan and Macmillan 2008).

In his 1952 essay, ‘The Problem of Generations’, Mannheim provides an excellent baseline for research on generations. Mannheim (1952) sees generation as a social location marked by shared birth years and distinctive historical events—common experiences that create a bond among members of the same generation. Categorisations of the major generational categories vary (see e.g. Parry and Urwin 2011: 89; Smola and Sutton 2002); however, four generations have been studied most: The Silent Generation/Traditionalists (born 1925–1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1979), and Generation Y/Millennials (born 1980–2000). It is believed that the shared events and experiences of these generations provide common ground for them to develop shared values, features, and attitudes.

The reviewed literature suggests that generations differ in terms of their work commitment, working arrangements, and work preferences, as well as attitudes to work–life balance. There are also considerable differences in gender relations at work and in family life, between generations. Generations X and Y are prone to experience more contradictions in the state of gender relations at work and in family models, and may be more conscious of gender equality discourse and policies (Niemistö et al. 2016).

In the literature on generations in the workplace, it is the Millennials (or Generation Y) who have been singled out for special attention (Foster 2016). Millennials tend to be more highly educated than other generations, on average, but upon entering the labour force, they face more precarity and polarised employment opportunities than their predecessors did. As the internet, digital communication technologies, and social media have been present from the start of their lives, they are regarded as ‘digital natives’ (Milkman 2017: 2). Perhaps because of these characteristics, Millennials are believed to enter the labour force with a different set of expectations, and this has led to criticisms from their colleagues from other generations (Foster 2013). Millennials have been criticised for
being disrespectful, uncommitted, and holding unconventional work attitudes and behaviours (Laird et al. 2015; Ng et al. 2017). The differences between their approaches to work and those of the generations preceding them are believed to lead to potential workplace conflict and problems (Deyoe and Fox 2011).

**Intersectionality, Age, and the Life Course**

Intersectional theoretical approaches to social inequality explore how gender, race, and class intersect to shape social practices, organisation, and experience. Although gender, race, and class have each been seen as important structured systems of inequality in society, intersectionality research shows how the three are not separate, but actually ‘simultaneous processes of identity, institutional and social practice’ (Holvino 2010: 249). Indeed, gender, race, and class are co-constructed, to the extent that they gain meaning through their interaction in particular organisational, institutional, and social-historical contexts (Acker 2006; Glenn 2002; Holvino 2010). For example, meanings of gender have been shown to vary across race and class, and perceptions of race vary across class and gender (Glenn 2002). To understand intersectionality in organisations, Acker (2006) has coined the term ‘inequality regimes’ to refer to the processes, practices, actions, and meanings that produce and reproduce class, gender, and racial inequalities in organisations. This concept has been taken up by many other researchers exploring patterns of inequality embedded within organisations.

Yet, research on intersectionality has rarely considered the role of age cohort (Krekula 2007: 163; McMullin 2011). Indeed, Acker (2006: 445) argues that while age is a ‘significant basis for inequality’ it is ‘not . . . as thoroughly embedded in organizing processes as are gender, race, and class.’ Moreover, while gender, race—and to some extent social class—are socially constructed, and hence subject to change, they are not as changeable as age, which by definition alters throughout one’s lifetime. Nonetheless, it is the case that age intersects with other dimensions of inequality. Moreover, since gender norms, practices, and experiences vary across age, age may, in part, co-construct gender, and possibly other dimensions of inequality as well. To understand people’s experiences, it is important to explore the intersection of age with other dimensions of inequality.

Only a limited body of research has explored the intersection of gender and age to document inequalities in the workforce (McMullin 2011). Although in most fields men have been seen to approximate the ideal worker best (Acker 1990), ideal worker norms are also shaped by age (McMullin 2011; Thomas et al. 2014). Those who ‘transgress age norms’—those who are the “wrong age” either too young or too old to correspond with the “ideal worker” profile’ may face marginalisation
and even job loss (McMullin 2011; Thomas et al. 2014: 1571). Age-and gender-based assumptions about ability to learn and competence can fundamentally shape opportunities for professional employment, promotion, and career success (McMullin 2011). In light of this literature, it is important to incorporate age into intersectional approaches.

One valuable means of bringing age in is through adopting a life course approach. Life course approaches highlight the importance of social pathways, social contexts, and change over time, and in so doing highlight the centrality of age, cohort, and generation (Elder et al. 2003; Shanahan and Macmillan 2008). The age cohort or generation one is born into, combined with their historical time period, major social events, social institutions and cultural norms, and social position (including social class, race, gender) shapes the course of their lives. Central concepts within the life course approach are ‘trajectories’ and ‘transitions’. Trajectories are patterns of behaviour or achievement that occur over time (Shanahan and Macmillan 2008: 86). Career paths are trajectories, as is child-rearing. Transitions are changes in circumstances or roles. Graduating from school, or obtaining a new job are examples of transitions. Each transition or change is embedded within a broader trajectory, and a broader social context (Ibid). Our experiences of transitions can shape our trajectories. For instance, those embarking on careers during a recession experience this major life course transition quite differently from those who enter the labour force during good economic times and/or times of labour shortage. These initial differences lead to distinct career trajectories. Because transitions and trajectories are patterned and shaped by social-historical context, they vary across age cohort and generation (Elder 1994). The life course perspective thus draws attention to age cohort and generation, encouraging us to explore how individuals’ experiences of key life course transitions shape their trajectories (Shanahan and Macmillan 2008).

Bringing intersectionality theory and a life course approach together allows us to not only look at the simultaneous processes and practices constructing gender, class, and racial inequalities, but explore how these vary across time and place, how transitions are implicated, and what trajectories result. Blending these approaches allows us to explore how gender, class, and race structure social pathways, and how our experiences along these pathways change as we age. Moreover, the life course approach brings into focus generational differences in experience. Therefore combining the life course and intersectionality approaches leads to a focus on how the interaction of gender, class, and race may differ across generations and age cohorts. Overall, adopting a life course lens facilitates exploration of the intersection of age, gender, and other dimensions of social inequality.

Drawing on the insights of the life course paradigm, and research on age cohort and generations, one would predict that the experiences of men and women entering professions decades ago would be potentially
quite different from those entering more recently. As we have seen, pro-
fessions have undergone significant changes in recent years, including the
expansion of employment in large organisations, increased precarity, de-
regulation, and increased competition, to name only a few. What do these
changes mean for the career trajectories of millennial workers, compared
to their predecessors? How do they experience the transition towards
establishing professional careers? These are questions to which research
on professions has yet to find satisfactory answers.

This Volume: Themes and Objectives

This book explores men’s and women’s experiences of professional work
and careers through an intersectional lens, by focusing on the intersection
of gender and age. Gendered and age-related practices and processes are
produced and reproduced in particular organisational, professional, and
socio-cultural contexts, and they often impact women and men differenti-
ally. Each of the chapters acknowledges these influences either directly
or indirectly. By examining these processes across professional groupings
and national contexts, we enhance our understanding of the successful
transition and integration of young professionals into the labour mar-
ket. The explored cases reveal various logics and inequalities embedded
within professions and the organisations in which professionals work,
demonstrating cross-cultural similarities and differences. As many con-
temporary professions are at a crossroads, in terms of the way in which
they educate and train their members as well as organise their work
(Susskind and Susskind 2015), it is important to understand what the
professions can learn from one another in these respects.

We acknowledge that dimensions of inequality other than gender and
age are present, but they are not of primary focus here. Rather, our goal
is to enhance the literature on the significance of gender to professional
work, through a consideration of age and cohort/generation. As we have
noted, age has been a largely neglected dimension in the study of profes-
sional work, as has the intersection between age and gender. In keep-
ing with the life course perspective we focus predominantly on moments
of key life course transitions across professional careers—the transition
between school and work, entering the professional labour market, and
building careers. Our core objectives in this book are as follows:

- to explore the changing significance of gender to young profession-
als’ experiences and career paths as they enter professional work;
- to explore how gender and age intersect in shaping a matrix of privi-
lege and disadvantage in professions;
- to explore the ways in which gender inequality is both reproduced and
undermined through the activities of young professionals, and through
their interactions with their more experienced colleagues; and
• to explore professional work cross-nationally (and across age) in Europe, the US, and Canada.

Each of the chapters in this volume addresses at least one of these objectives. Combined, the chapters shed light on the significance of age cohort/generation and gender to professional work, across professions and social context. Although the chapters represent separate studies examining various issues across professions and national contexts, several common themes emerged that deserve highlighting here.

1. Challenges for young professionals entering and building professional careers:
   Several chapters in this volume explore the challenges experienced by Millennials as they seek work and begin working in professions, and as they attempt to build careers. Studies highlight labour market challenges and difficulties embarking on careers (Adams; Kay), challenges with finding supportive mentors and choosing specialties that will allow for some work–life balance (Adams and Kwon), and the difficulties of acquiring the right professional demeanour, including specifically emotional capital and resistance towards stress (Cottingham and Dill; Olakivi and Wrede).

2. Work–family balance challenges within and across generations:
   A few chapters in this volume highlight the ways in which competing pressures of demanding careers and family life are particularly relevant for young men and women professionals who strive for more fluid gender roles in family life and careers. Yet, they are constrained in their efforts by professional ideals and structures, which rest upon traditional gender norms of masculinity and femininity. Studies highlight the influence of national and occupational gender regimes on lawyers’ opportunities for work–life balance (Boni-Le Goff et al.), differential employment schedules of men and women lawyers as a function of workplace discrimination (Plickert), and increasing work–family balance challenges for Millennial men (Choroszewicz).

3. The shifting significance of gender to professional work:
   Chapters in this volume suggest that the gendering of professional work varies across time, professional grouping, and place. Men and women entering professions find a different landscape than their predecessors, and some gains have been made reducing the gender gap in earnings (Magnusson and Nermo), and in some instances work–family conflict (Adams); however, gender is still significant as men and women have different labour market opportunities and experiences of work environments (Adams; Corbett; Hearn and Husu), different experiences with social media use (Neville), and make different adjustments before and after they become parents (Boni-Le Goff et al.; Plickert).
Overall, the contributions in this volume provide rich insight into the individual strategies and tactics used by early career professionals to cope with structural inequalities. While these tactics and strategies are important coping mechanisms, in the concluding chapter we argue that they are insufficient to make these professions more inclusive for women and nascent generations of professionals. These strategies are also laborious and often invisible to others—especially to those in privileged positions. While some of these strategies do result in creating fissures in the professional practice, they are also resource-consuming, and thus they might further disadvantage these professionals in their careers.

The Chapters in This Volume

There are three sections in this book, each exploring professionals in different sectors. The first section explores workers in healthcare professions. The second focuses on workers in legal professions. The third considers other professional groups, with one chapter looking across professional groups and the others focused on engineers, information technology workers, and academics, respectively. All of the professional groupings discussed herein have been historically organised along gender lines, most as male-dominated professions, although a few were structured for women. Women have been entering male-dominated professions in recent decades—disrupting gender regimes, but not eliminating them.

The focus of the first section of the book is on health professions. In Chapter 2, Antero Olakivi and Sirpa Wrede examine the cultural and discursive resources that early career and experienced doctors in Finland use for mitigating and mobilising critical interpretations of their work. They show the ways in which the traditional ideals of a male medical profession in Finland are sustained by the inequality regimes that rest on the invisibility and the legitimacy of gendered and age-related inequalities. In Chapter 3, Tracey L. Adams and Eugena Kwon combine a gendered life course perspective with intersectionality to explore the medical specialty choices of young women pursuing medical careers. They find that gender, ethnicity, and age intersect to construct social expectations for womanhood and professional careers, leading women—especially young Asian women—to choose medical specialties perceived as more conducive to family and community life. In Chapter 4, Marci D. Cottingham and Janette S. Dill take up the issue of age-related dynamics and multigenerational conflict in the nursing profession. Their study reveals that younger nurses report feeling negative emotions more intensely compared to their Baby Boomer colleagues. Also, older nurses are more likely to evaluate their own care more highly overall and across a range of specific features of the job. Finally, in Chapter 5, Patricia Neville explores the role of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, as a platform for young
healthcare professionals to reproduce and to challenge inherent sexist assumptions in the profession. Neville also shows the ways in which social media is currently used by female professionals to present alternative and more gender-neutral perceptions about who can be a surgeon.

The second section of the book covers empirical research conducted on lawyers in five national contexts: Canada, the US, France, Switzerland, and Finland. In Chapter 6, Fiona M. Kay examines the factors that sort new lawyers into different work settings as they enter the legal labour market. Her study reveals that age, gender, and law school credentials surface as key determinants for lawyers’ first jobs. New lawyers who are older than the typical graduate, women, and racial minorities are more likely to enter the public sector as well as solo practice and small firms than large law firms. In Chapter 7, Isabel Boni-Le Goff, Nicky Le Feuvre, Grégorie Mallard, Eléonore Lépinard, and Sandrine Morel analyse the interactions between gender relations at the societal level and at the occupational level to understand how they shape gendered career outcomes among young lawyers in France and Switzerland. They find that despite a less favourable gender regime and a greater motherhood penalty in Switzerland, Swiss women lawyers enjoy relatively similar career prospects as their French counterparts as a result of greater occupational opportunities to re-enter the profession. In Chapter 8, Gabriele Plickert investigates how perceptions of workplace discrimination shape women’s and men’s employment schedules across the early stages of their careers. Her research demonstrates that women in their mid-thirties to mid-forties report a relatively high incidence of discrimination, which negatively impacts their employment schedules in contrast to men. In Chapter 9, Marta Choroszewicz examines the ways in which male lawyers negotiate different concepts of fatherhood when they unfold their legal careers. The study shows that barriers that traditionally hindered women’s career progress are currently also shared among some young male lawyers who do not necessarily want to organise their lives according to traditional gender norms. This disadvantages these men in their career progression in their organisations.

The third section includes a chapter on the gender wage gap across professions and three chapters that focus on engineers, information technology workers, and academics. In Chapter 10, Charlotta Magnusson and Magnus Nermo examine gender wage differences in highly prestigious professions over the span of forty years in Sweden—a country with a strong reputation for Nordic gender equality. The results reveal that while the share of young women in high-prestige professions and among top earners has increased since the 1960s, the gender wage gap remains relatively unchanged, in contrast to low and middle-high prestige occupations, where it decreased from about 10% to 23%. In Chapter 11, Jeff Hearn and Liisa Husu outline some prominent historical developments in the academic profession, across selected European countries. They
argue that despite recent policy developments focusing on the entry into academic careers, a long, extended career entry phase remains dominant, and it specifically disadvantages young female academics. In Chapter 12, Christianne Corbett examines how workplace experiences among men and women technology workers vary at different ages. The study reveals that young men have the most positive experiences, and women of all ages have the least positive experiences. Women are particularly less likely to report the presence of a supportive manager, advancement and development opportunities, and manageable levels of stress. In Chapter 13, Tracey L. Adams explores experiences of discrimination among women in engineering across different age cohorts. Her study reveals that despite new equality initiatives in the Canadian engineering profession, women—especially in the youngest and oldest cohorts—experience sexism and discounting of their skills. To deal with less favourable working conditions, women develop numerous coping strategies including job exit.

In the concluding chapter, we summarise the theoretical contributions of the chapters and formulate an agenda for future research. We also advocate for more joint efforts made by educators, policymakers, professional associations, organisations, professional leaders, and professionals to build more inclusive work environments for women and nascent generations of professionals. The chapter ends with a section on policy recommendations for educators, professionals, professional organisations, as well as policy- and decision-makers. The aim of the final section is to enhance generational understanding, relationships, and collaboration in educational institutions, organisations, and professions.

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Introduction


Marta Choroszewicz and Tracey L. Adams


difficulties they face in their work and careers? Currently, this legitimacy, satisfaction and tolerance seem somewhat strong, but there is underlying discontent. Whether—or perhaps when—this discontent will result in political action remains to be seen.

Notes

1 Two research assistants, Noora Fischer and Anton Sigfrids, performed the interviews as part of a research project funded by the Finnish Medical Association and independently executed by the University of Helsinki (PI Sirpa Wrede). The work of the first author was also supported by the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation and the Academy of Finland (#312310).

2 In Finnish, pronouns are gender neutral.

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contributors to these racial/ethnic differences. Community supports may be particularly important to minority women who lack supports within the medical profession.

Previous research has taken a gendered life course approach, revealing how gender norms and stereotypes reproduce gender inequality, in part through cumulative disadvantages that negatively affect women’s career trajectories (Moen 2011; Settersten 2003). We have argued that an intersectional life course approach is more fruitful as it highlights the ways in which age, gender, and race/ethnicity intersect to shape advantage and disadvantage over time. Here, we have seen that faculty members, clinical mentors, and social networks combine with differential family considerations to shape career transitions in a manner that could have long-term career implications. We recommend that future research adopt an intersectional life course approach, and suggest there is a need for longitudinal research to determine how educational and early career experiences shape career trajectories over time. Differential pressures in experiences in medical school could lead to long-lasting social inequalities in professional outcomes. Additional research in this area is necessary if we are to produce a future where individuals are not disadvantaged in professional careers due to the intersections of age, gender, race/ethnicity, and other dimensions of social inequality.

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that they become emotionally numb to the death of patients or tolerant of sexual harassment from surgeons. While policies might be instituted to provide additional time to older nurses to train the next generation, additional time does not necessarily mean that conflict can or should be fully eradicated. Indeed, conflict can be a productive force for challenging accepted practices in the profession and the wider workplace climate. The case of sexual harassment is one example of a professional norm that Millennial nurses, no matter how long they remain in nursing, might be loath to accept. In this way, individuals can exert agency and resist rather than merely adapt to situational demands accepted by prior generations.

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awareness of the inherent sexism in healthcare, especially when we consider how ‘gender neutral’ the rhetoric of feminisation is. There is a naïve assumption that feminisation has been accompanied by a cultural shift. While the numbers of women in healthcare professions are increasing, there is still much to be done regarding the values, norms, and beliefs within healthcare, to move away from the androcentric model of professionalism. Calls for such a paradigm change will benefit both women and men healthcare workers, as Millennials of all genders are openly concerned with flexibility and maintaining a healthy work–life balance (Ernst & Young 2016: 8). This chapter recommends that the healthcare establishment pays more attention to the online activism of healthcare professionals and recognises the need for the institution to address its implicit, unconscious or otherwise, gender biases. As the number of women continues to increase in healthcare, and in light of Millennial workers’ expectation of flexibility, we need to ensure that healthcare is a progressive and inclusive work environment for all.

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‘Male’ficence or ‘Miss’understandings?


Schële, I, Hedman, L and Hammarström, A (2011) ‘Shared Ambiguity But Different Experiences and Demands among Dental Students—A Gender Perspective’ 8 Qualitative Research in Psychology 1. doi:10.1080/14780880902874231


social mechanisms underlie retention across these trial periods in early professional careers? Answers to these questions will further advance knowledge of the pivotal transition from advanced degree education to professional careers.

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**Notes**

1. Racial minorities represented 13% of the near 20-year cohort (1990 to 2009 bar admissions). Included are Asians (4.7%), Blacks (2%), Southeast-Asians (5%), and other ethnic/racial minorities (e.g., First Nations, Latinos, blended races) (1.7%).

2. Today, in Ontario, law graduates are required to complete one of two experiential training paths: the Articling Program or the Law Practice Program (LPP). The Articling Program requires candidates to work for 10 consecutive months with an approved Articling Principal. The LPP consists of a four-month training program and a four-month work placement. Lawyers in the present study articled in the era prior to the introduction of the dual experiential training system. See www.lsuc.on.ca/articling/.

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less favourable gender regime in Switzerland is balanced by a more buoyant economic climate and by the perception—true or false—of a flexible entry and exit (and re-entry) structure of the legal labour market.

Conclusion

By focusing on one specific profession, we are able to shed new light on the interactions between national gender regimes and specific occupational structures and on how the interactions of these two levels of sociological mechanisms produce unpredictable gendered career outcomes. Our approach enables us to show that despite a highly conservative societal gender regime, Swiss female lawyers ultimately enjoy relatively equal career prospects as their French counterparts—if not slightly better prospects for those who remain in the profession, despite the strong pressures to exit that are exerted by an adverse national gender regime. The qualitative part of our study sheds some light on the potential positive effect of apparently more permeable boundaries between lawyering and other legal professions on Swiss women’s careers, by making it possible to return to lawyering after a period of time spent in alternative occupations, or even out of the labour market. However, additional research should be done to offer a more systematic investigation of this effect.

Our study also suggests that solo practice in France may represent a functional alternative to abandoning the legal profession altogether (as in the Swiss case), but that both these alternatives ultimately limit women’s access to the most prestigious and well-remunerated positions in the Swiss and French legal labour market hierarchy. Overall, our research calls for more systematic comparison of the evolution of legal professions thanks to robust survey instruments and complemented with qualitative research. In so doing, sociologists of legal professions could generate systematic findings that could then be replicated to the study of other professions, leading to more dialogue across sociologists of professions.

Note

1 The position ‘of counsel’ can have different professional meanings in the French or Swiss law firms. In some French law firms, former partners become ‘of counsel’ when they retire but maintain part-time legal activity.

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to improve research strategies to effectively facilitate solutions to the challenges women and men face in an era of accelerating workplace changes with greater levels of diversity.

The job expectations of millennials already challenge the expectations of prior generations with regard to attitudes and work-life–family preferences (Garcia-Manglano 2015). Understanding these generational dynamics, in addition to the individual challenges and preferences women and men face, will offer an understanding beyond static policies and temporary flexible work arrangements.

Note

1 Average age of participants by survey waves: AJD1 = 31 years (age range 27–42); AJD2 = 36 years (age range 32–47); and AJD3 = 41 years (age range 37–48).

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organise their private lives differently compared to their older colleagues. Further research should elaborate on the limitations of this study and examine heterogeneity within generations in terms of gender roles as well as ideas and practices among parenthood, fatherhood, and motherhood. There is also a need to study generational differences in the context of the ongoing restructuring of professions and organisations. Generation Y’s attitudes to work and achieving a work–life balance might be specifically shaped by an organisations’ lower commitment to their employees and the growth of precarious employment across industries.

References


Notes

1 Today, two months of paid parental leave, the so called ‘daddy months’, cannot be transferred to the other parent (Duvander and Viklund 2014).

2 The principle of statistical discrimination is that employers treat female employees as a group to save time and money, basing their judgements on women’s average productivity and not on an individual’s characteristics (Phelps 1972). Employers may be less prone to hire or promote a female worker (compared to a male worker) because employers know that women are generally more likely than men are to interrupt their work life, to take parental leave or to reduce their paid work hours (Ibid.).

3 For 1968, 1974, and 1981 the respondents are between the ages of 15 and 65.

4 The following estimation is used to calculate the percentage change: 100(exp(b)−1).

5 The gender differences have been tested with two sample t-tests.

6 It is worth remembering that that even if the occupations in these categories are similar to each other, the occupational groups based on broad two-digit ISCO-88 categories include occupations with varying degrees of qualification requirements. As the number of observations is low, we can only look at the overall gender wage gap, not divided by age categories.

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Men and Women in High-Prestige Occupations


Contemporary Reflections

In this chapter we have discussed experiential accounts, empirical studies, developing resources, and policy developments on and about aged–gendered early careers in academia and research. The long extended career entry phase in academia, with its built-in insecurity, is in contemporary contexts complicated further with moves to greater regulation and monitoring of university research and teaching, financialisation and neoliberalisation of academia, and increasing competition for research funding. In some universities, there are direct financial rewards for research funding success and publishing in, for example, journals whose impact factor is more than 1.0; such rewards may influence career decisions on short-term financial grounds, especially for early career academics.

In many parts of the world there is a significant narrowing of the criteria for academic appointment and promotion, with greater surveillance of teaching, and greater value placed on student evaluation and publication in high-ranking and high-impact English language journals with low acceptance rates—even to the extent that such articles can count for more than a whole book with a prestigious international publisher. These moves increase pressures on early career academics and researchers, especially those in universities, to mould their careers accordingly, often away from teaching, professional development, pastoral care, outreach, and promotion of societal impact. Increasingly, early academic careers necessitate very complex planning and decision-making, including around personal and family life, and (inter)national movements and migrations.

Importantly, even with the ‘feminisation’ of academia—specially numerically at the student and lower academic levels—gender dominance, principally of men of middle and older years, persists, with the caveat that ageism against older people also continues, especially for women, but also for some men too. Thus to understand the situation of early career academics one must consider the wider contexts of ageism, sexism, and age–gender relations, both societally and within specific organisations, professions, and disciplines. Taking all of these factors into account sheds light on the broader relations of age, gender, power, and professions at a time of their restructuring and reconfiguration in many arenas.

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experiences in their technology jobs are Millennial men, pointing to the continuation of the reality of ‘gendered jobs’ that Acker described nearly three decades ago (1990), as well as a preference for unencumbered ‘ideal workers’ in technology jobs.

These analyses suggest that technology jobs are not going to gradually become more gender balanced without intentional efforts to make them so. To level the playing field, organisations that employ technology workers must create working conditions that provide similar experiences for men and women. The results presented here point to some concrete steps that organisations can take to achieve this end. First, they can identify why women are less likely than men to perceive their workplace culture as one that supports gender diversity and address the issues. Second, they can provide women in technology jobs with more advancement and development opportunities to match those offered to men. Third, they can shape jobs so that workers find the amount of stress entailed in doing their jobs to be manageable, which includes providing opportunities for flexible work arrangements. If we are to reduce occupational gender segregation, organisations must address the ways in which technology jobs have become tailor-made for young men and less appealing to older men and to women of all ages.

Note

1 There is some evidence that lower response rates observed in recent years compared to past years are not necessarily associated with significant declines in sample representativeness (Curtin et al. 2000; Keeter et al. 2000). For example, Chang and Krosnick (2009) found that a sample with a 25% response rate was just as representative of a population as a 43% response rate sample.

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mental health challenges; it can also reproduce existing inequalities by age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

6. Steps should be taken to encourage firms to take on and invest in younger workers’ training, mentorship, and skills development. A focus on developing junior talent benefits society and the economy in the long run.

7. Governments should establish an equity or ombudsperson office to process complaints concerning harassment and discrimination, and to advise and assess what employers, professional associations, and education institutions should do to prevent discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, and race/ethnicity.

Finally, we advocate for more joint efforts between and among the various stakeholders to build more inclusive work environments for women and nascent generations of professionals.

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