Gendered Ageing at Work: Beyond the ‘Double Jeopardy’

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Katrina Pritchard (corresponding author) and Rebecca Whiting
Department of Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck, University of London

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Gender and Generations

Various conceptualisations and categorisations of age are of central importance to our understanding and experience of changing employment, retirement and educational policy within the UK. Particularly in the media, but also in academic reports, certain issues are frequently positioned as either impacting or being caused by specific generations or cohorts. Generational tensions emerge as ‘young’ and ‘old’ are constructed as mutually exclusive in the labour market yet there are similarities in the means (including regulatory) and measures (including chronological age) of exclusion. Meanwhile, much advice is on offer to organizations so they might effectively ‘manage’ both individual generations (Y, X and so on) whilst also addressing inter-generational issues. In this respect, our interpretation of ageing is deliberately inclusive of all the above categories (Duncan and Loretto, 2004).

Situated within this broader context and drawing on our e-research project, our paper presents a discursive analysis of the ways in which age and gender are variously co-constructed via a variety of web-based media. We follow various ‘conversations’ as these provide the opportunity to examine specific constructions in relation to other discussions of interest to organization and management research. This will involve, for example, looking at relationships between age and gender as positioned in discussions with technology (Adam et al., 2004) or aesthetic labour (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Our analytic focus will be how specific discursive constructions produce particular ‘entanglements’ of gender and generation with respect to these topics, while also reviewing the extent to which we find (web)sites of resistance.

Our approach to e-research utilises a variety of tools to (e.g. Nexis, Google Alerts and Twilerts) to explore a range of media, thus enabling consideration of different forms of “bodies of texts” (Phillips et al., 2004: 636). This methodological focus will further address the current lack of analysis of web-based data in critical discourse studies (Mautner, 2005) though also prompts reflexive engagement with a variety of practical and ethical challenges (Hookway, 2008).


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