

Review of Stephen Edgell, Heidi Gottfried and Edward Granter Eds. (2016) *The Sage Handbook of The Sociology of Work and Employment*, London: Sage.

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On first opening *The Sage Handbook of Work and Employment* I perused the 'Notes on Contributors and Editors'. I had no special motive for doing this, it is simply that it is at the beginning of the book. What this meant was that before I read any of the 35 chapters that spread across a volume of more than 700 pages I had gained a particular impression. Three things stood out to me. There are 44 people listed, and their biographical statements reveal their gender. Twenty are women and the rest men. Compared to most edited books that I read that would stand as one of the most equal in terms of gender representation. The second stand out was the disciplinary location of these authors within their respective universities. Those who identified as sociologists were the largest group, but this was still less than half of the total number of contributors. Next came employees of business schools, schools of management and the like, with the remainder spread over a range of disciplines mainly in the social sciences and policy studies. So far, the hints were that the sociology of work and employment was a relatively egalitarian field in terms of gender, as well as one that had travelled productively to a variety of locations of inquiry.

The book's contributors come from as far afield as The United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden, the United States, Canada, Germany, and Taiwan. What really stood out, and this was the third feature I noticed, was that with just one exception the 'notes' seemed to suggest that the sociology of work and employment was something conducted entirely in North American, British and, to a lesser extent, Australian and European, Universities. This is an observation, not a direct criticism of the book and of course sociology itself is a western discipline in its origins and development. As the book proudly acknowledges, the central interests associated with the sociology of work and employment were initially set out in the work of the classical triumvirate of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. The opening chapters explicitly map out this sociological heritage and traces its history as it emerged from the work of its founding fathers. The gendered implications of this fatherhood are also problematized. From this provenance the book firmly establishes that its central concern is work and employment as it relates to class, gender, and race, especially under capitalist conditions.

Following the scene-setting of the first seven chapters, the remainder of the book is organized into five parts. Respectively these are concerned with the experience of work, organization and work, non-standard work and employment, work and life outside of employed work, and finally globalization. Across this I found an impressive respect for working life and the people who do it. Our's is an era where much of the study of work and its organization has been taken over by business schools, and, despite exceptions, has been dominated by devising methods to extract more and more 'value' from workers for the

purposes of achieving interests defended in the name of shareholders and managers. The book attests to the value of sociology as a bulwark against an ever encroaching and mutating capitalism that such research supports. Indeed, as explained by the handbook editors', the deleterious effects of neoliberalism on working life over the past 40 years means that this branch of sociology is more important than ever, and to my reading the handbook does a great job of presenting a politically astute 'state of the art' of its field. There is not the space to comment on individual chapters here, but the subjects of inquiry and critique that are covered in the book include the quality of working life, the management and organization of work, worker resistance, exploitation, precarious work, unpaid work, unemployment, and work-life balance. It is in the final section on globalization that the geographical location in which work is done becomes explicitly addressed. Here the book moves to consider the effects of global value chains, outsourcing and labour migration on work.

In positioning the book's contribution to sociology, the editors compare their work to Robert Dubbin's *Handbook of Work, Organization and Society* published in 1976. With a shine of self-congratulation they evince that Dubin's book reflects "the cultural politics of its time" given that it assumes that all workers are male employees, and that only one of the authors is a woman (p. 10). The present volume, in its encycopedic coverage, is an achievement in mapping out the contours of a classic field of sociological study, as well as demonstrating its pertinence to the present day. However, like its predecessor the book shares the feature of reflecting the cultural politics of its time. But this time the politics at play is about the location of the generation of knowledge and of its subjects. If this handbook is anything to go by, issues of work and employment that occur in the global south are a special case deserving of their own sequestered spaces, geographically and intellectually. Moreover the study of these 'special cases' is to be undertaken in Universities in Europe and the 'white colonies' (as it would seem so as its reviews). Perhaps if a similar volume is published in forty years things will be different. For now the Handbook demonstrates the strength of a sociology that speaks loudly to issues affecting work and workers the world over, but one that speaks from a western institutional pedestal.