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Oral healthcare for the aging was severely disrupted during the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Transformative changes in care delivery involved teledentistry, mobile/portable dentistry, minimally invasive dentistry, aerosol minimization, and interprofessional oral care. Management of chronic oral health problems evolved through periods of limited to no access to daily and professional oral healthcare. Access to care has been influenced by availability of the oral care workforce, variability in long term care policy, and the lack of funding to cover medically necessary services delivered via asynchronous telehealth technologies. Impacts were identified six and twelve months into the pandemic. These will be compared to the state of oral healthcare for the aging 18 months from the start of the pandemic. The impact of vaccination on access to care will be explored. Variability between states (Idaho/Michigan/Minnesota/Rhode Island) will be addressed. Directions of new and needed research opportunities will be discussed.

Session 3615 (Symposium)

POST-RETIREMENT PAID WORK AND INEQUALITIES AT OLDER AGES

Chair: Benjamin Shaw

Co-Chair: Kevin Cahill

Discussant: Michael Giandrea

Participation in paid work frequently extends beyond pensionable age, with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development observing, in “Pensions at a Glance” (2017, pp. 126–7), that effective retirement ages in high-income countries exceed normal full-pension-eligibility ages by 10 months for men and two months for women. While working after pensionable age is becoming ever more common, not all workers on the cusp of retirement are able to continue in their current position or find a new job. Remarkably, little is known about the implications of unequal access to post-retirement work for social and income inequalities in later life, nor how job quality might change as people work into the years normally set aside for retirement. The four papers in this symposium address the following questions: 1) do bridge employment transitions exacerbate or mitigate income inequality later in life? 2) how does job quality (job satisfaction, physical and psychosocial working conditions) compare before and after pensionable age? 3) which processes lead to changes in working conditions in the late career? and 4) might empirical and theoretical gains be made by considering post-pensionable-age paid work as a specific career stage? The presenters use longitudinal data from the United States (the Health and Retirement Study, HRS), Sweden (Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health, SLOSH), and Japan (Japanese Study of Aging and Retirement, JSTAR) complemented by interviews with older workers in Sweden. This symposium will provide insights into the nature and consequences of working after pensionable age in contrasting institutional settings.

DOES BRIDGE EMPLOYMENT MITIGATE OR EXACERBATE INEQUALITIES LATER IN LIFE?

Kevin Cahill,¹ Michael Giandrea,² Joseph Quinn,³ Lawrence Sacco,⁴ and Loretta Platts,⁵ 1. *Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, United States, 2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, District of Columbia, United States, 3. Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, United States, 4. Stockholm University, Stockholm, Stockholms Lan, Sweden, 5. Stress Research Institute, Department of Psychology, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Stockholms Lan, Sweden*

This paper explores how gradual retirement impacts inequality later in life, with a focus on transitions from career to bridge employment. We use 26 years of longitudinal data from the Health and Retirement Study to document the various pathways that older Americans take when exiting the labor force, and examine how bridge employment impacts non-housing wealth and total wealth, including the present discounted value of Social Security benefits. We find that gradual retirement in the form of bridge employment neither exacerbates nor mitigates wealth inequalities among Americans who held career jobs later in life. We do find evidence that wealth inequalities grow among the subset of older career workers who transition from career employment to bridge employer at older ages. These findings provide quantitative evidence that bridge employment at older ages is taken by those who need to continue working financially and those who continue working for nonpecuniary reasons.

HAVING A POST-RETIREMENT JOB: IMPROVISATION AND CONTAINING COMMITMENTS

Loretta Platts,¹ Agnieszka Ignatowicz,² Hugo Westerlund,³ and Dara Rasool,⁴ 1. *Stress Research Institute, Department of Psychology, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Stockholms Lan, Sweden, 2. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England, United Kingdom, 3. Stockholm University, Stockholm University, Stockholms Lan, Sweden, 4. Dalarna University, Falun, Dalarnas Lan, Sweden*

This qualitative paper focuses on individuals who work after pensionable age, a distinctive period in the late career when workers are supported by the known and reliable income of a pension. Using constant comparative analysis, we analyzed interviews from a purposive sample of 25 Swedish people in their late sixties and early seventies. We examined conditions for being in paid work in terms of enabling factors (self-employment, shift work, shortage occupation), improvisation, and the role of chance. The interviews revealed that post-retirement workers took charge of the aspects of work that mattered most to them, evading the disciplinary aspects of work by controlling scheduling and limiting the duration of their commitment. These constrained commitments had knock-on effects of improving psychosocial working conditions. Women and immigrants—groups facing low pensions—experienced the greatest financial consequences of being unable to work in their retirement years in order to supplement their pension income.

CHANGES IN JOB QUALITY AS PEOPLE WORK BEYOND PENSIONABLE AGE IN SWEDEN

Lawrence Sacco,¹ Kevin Cahill,² Hugo Westerlund,³ and Loretta Platts,⁴ 1. *Stockholm University, Stockholm, Stockholms Lan, Sweden, 2. Center on Aging & Work*

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This paper uses data from the biennial Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health to examine changes in job quality among older workers, controlling for work intensity and employment characteristics. Job quality outcomes included job satisfaction and physical (dangerous, strenuous or unpleasant work) and psychosocial (job strain, effort-reward imbalance, work time control) working conditions. First difference estimation was used to analyze within-individual changes in job quality, as well as changes in hours, employment characteristics (shifting to a non-permanent contract, the private sector and self-employment) and health. Individuals who worked beyond pensionable age experienced statistically significant improvements in job quality, with larger improvements among those who reduced working hours and shifted from permanent to non-permanent contracts, from the public into the private sector, and from wage-and-salary to self-employment. We conclude that work beyond pensionable age is a distinctive period characterized by employment that becomes more flexible and rewarding and less stressful.

JOB QUALITY IN THE LATE CAREER IN SWEDEN, JAPAN, AND THE UNITED STATES

Hugo Westerlund,¹ Loretta Platts,² Lawrence Sacco,³ Ayako Hiyoshi,⁴ Kevin Cahill,⁵ and Stefanie König,⁶

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This paper examines job satisfaction and psychosocial and physical job quality over the late career in three contrasting national settings: Sweden, Japan and the United States. The data come from an ex-post harmonized dataset of individuals aged 50 to 75 years constructed from the biennial Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health (SLOSH, 2006–2018, n=13936 to 15520), Japanese Study of Ageing and Retirement (JSTAR, 2006–2013, n=3704) and the United States Health and Retirement Study (HRS, 2006–2016, n=6239 and 8002). The job quality outcomes were physical labour, psychosocial working conditions (time pressure, discretion, pay satisfaction, job security) and job satisfaction. Random effects modelling was performed with age modelled with spline functions in which two knots were placed at ages indicating eligibility for pensions claiming or mandatory retirement. Interestingly, in each country, post-pensionable-age jobs were generally less stressful, freer, and more satisfying than jobs held by younger workers.

Session 3620 (Symposium)

PRESIDENTIAL SYMPOSIUM: STORIES OF STRUGGLE AND RESILIENCE: EXPERT INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST YEAR

Chair: Danielle Waldron

Co-Chair: Kalisha Bonds Johnson

Are you an ESPO member curious about what the “new normal” means for your future career in the field of aging? Or are you a GSA member interested in hearing from your colleagues about their experiences over the past year? Welcome to the ESPO Presidential Symposium! During this session, speakers will share honest and candid insights about their careers in the field of aging amidst the pandemic, racial discrimination/social unrest, and economic insecurity. Speakers in the ESPO Presidential symposium include: Dr. Thomas K.M Cudjoe, Dr. Candace S. Brown, and Dr. Marnin J. Heisel. Dr. Cudjoe, a physician, will discuss his clinical experience treating older adults with COVID-19, the shift to tele-health, and his research on the impact of social isolation on older adults. Dr. Brown, an academician, will discuss how the new attention to the longstanding issues of social injustice in the U.S. shaped her teaching pedagogy, research, student mentorship, and provide critical context regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) professors. Dr. Heisel, a clinical psychologist, will share how his intervention research on resiliency and well-being in older adulthood shifted amidst the “new normal,” as well as how older adults in his clinical practice encountered and coped with difficulties over this past year. As our society confronts social injustice, tackles health implications of COVID-19, and adjusts to a new way of life, we must consider how these factors, together, inform the interdisciplinary stories of struggle and resilience in the field of aging.

A PANDEMIC PARADOX: INNOVATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCY AND SUICIDE PREVENTION IN OLDER ADULTS

Marnin Heisel, *Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial negative impact on the health and well-being of older adults, a demographic with the highest proportion of fatalities in North America. Long-term care and retirement homes have been especially hard hit. Sheltering in place can increase social isolation among older adults and contribute to feelings of stigmatization, burden, stress, anxiety, anger, and despair. As older adults also account for high rates of suicide, fear of infection, reduced access to professional and social supports, and growing apathy, hopelessness, and social isolation could amplify suicide risk (see Zortea et al., 2020). The speaker will discuss how his program of research on psychological resiliency and suicide prevention in older adults has pivoted online over the past year, and how the pandemic has paradoxically inspired innovative approaches to research, education, clinical practice, and social advocacy for older adults that will likely continue well beyond the present time.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES AMID DISRUPTIVE TIMES

Thomas Cudjoe, *Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, United States*

Today many older adults are experiencing intensified social isolation and loneliness as they attempt to “stay safe at home.” The notion, is a stark contrast from our understanding of the importance of social connections on health and well-being. This session highlights: first hand experiences