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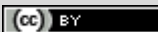
Book Review

Prendergast, David and Garattini, Chiara. (editors). Aging and the Digital Life Course. Berghahn Publishers, New York. 2015. ISBN: 978-1-78238-691-9. 300pp, \$120.00 (Hardcover) ISBN: 978-1-78238-692-6. (ebook).

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Dr. David Prendergast is a social anthropologist and Principal Investigator in the Intel Collaborative Research Institute for Sustainable Connected Cities with Imperial College and University College London. His research over the last fifteen years has focused on later life-course transitions. Dr. Chiara Garattini is an anthropologist working as part of the Health & Life Sciences group at Intel. She has a particular interest in exploring the way in which people understand and interact with technologies, and the challenges faced when technology is translated from the lab to the real world.

The twenty-seven contributors have advanced degrees and hold positions as researchers, professors, lecturers, authors, consultants and directors of organizations on global aging issues.

The purpose of the text is to convey global research findings that address the “complexities surrounding the emergent technologies and socio-technical practices encountered within the later life course”. The collection of studies explores a wide range of topics including social media, robotics, chronic disease self-care management, caregiving, gaming, migration and data inheritance. The guiding themes were: “People want to focus on what they can do, not what they cannot; Aging in place means more than staying at home; Health perception is not an objective quality; People often make the progression of aging by watershed events; Healthy aging is inextricably linked to social participation; and Health care networks are large and increasingly complex”.

The chapters are grouped under three sections that designate topics on (1) Connections, Networks and Interactions; (2) Health and Wellbeing; and (3) Life Course Transitions. The emphasis of chapters in section one is on the use of technologies for maintaining social contact with family and friends. The findings indicated that engagement in the use of complex technology by older adults depends upon the context where learning takes place. Unless people had previous contact with computers in the workplace prior to retirement, only basic technology was used. Informal peer-peer learning and games are more effective than formal classes in building confidence in using the devices. Barriers to using computers, tablets and smart phones were unsatisfactory past experiences and dissatisfaction with inadequate technical support. Costs for purchasing and maintaining the equipment were also cited.

The chapters related to health and wellbeing centered on maintaining social connections and remaining independent. Technical devices that aid people with behavioral change and self-care management of chronic diseases and telehealth monitoring are currently focused on long-distance physiological monitoring. Attention to the psychological and social factors is needed to avoid the ‘Iceberg Effect’ that fails to develop an effective relationship when the technologies are viewed as ‘companions’ in the self-management process.

The chapters related to Life Course Transitions provide information on a global trend of moving away from familiar settings to other more economical areas and countries; the development of digital social networks; motivation and engagement in digital games; and using technology for creating and sharing personal content that is important about their lives to pass on to family and others.

The text provides critical information on the global aging population and the use of technology in the Twenty-first century. Research findings demonstrate excellent material for application in a variety of settings, and for further research. It will be interesting to discover the differences in the use of digital technologies by the next older generation.