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Donald E. Heller and Madeleine B. d'Ambrosio (eds.): *Generational Shockwaves and the Implications for Higher Education*

Cheltenham, 2008: Edward Elgar Publishing (and TIA-CREFF), 191 pp.

This book brings together the proceedings of a conference that took place in November 2007 around the question of generational change and its impact on higher education in the USA. This is particularly welcome given that studies exploring the impact of demographics and generational changes on higher education are relatively rare. Most of the authors in this book use the concept of 'generations' to discuss in broad terms how the Baby Boomers (born after the Second World War), 'Generation X' (born between 1960 and 1980), and the 'Millennials' (born after 1980) – and to a lesser extent the preceding 'GI generation' and 'Silent generation' – have shaped higher education as faculty members, students, and parents.

Some of the issues addressed by this book are loosely related to generations though. For instance, the retirement of Baby Boomers, who still make up a considerable proportion of US faculty, has more to do with the abolition of mandatory retirement about 15 years ago than with the *Weltanschauung* of the Baby Boomers. Hence, the interesting chapter by Valerie Martin Conley, 'As Baby Boomers Retire', points to the importance of social security and health care policies for the timing of retirement. It also reviews the legislation against

age discrimination in employment and pictures the lobbying process that has allowed tenured faculty to be exempted from mandatory retirement. While the end of mandatory retirement has not led to many court cases yet, it may change in the years to come when Baby Boomers will be terminated before they decide to retire. The chapter by Karen Steinberg et al. ('The "Boom" Heard round the Campus: How the Retirement of the Baby Boomers Will Affect Colleges and Universities') is another example: it shows that retired Baby Boomers could represent a new source of students for US colleges, as many of them would like to continue to work and even change their 'career' in their sixties and seventies, but the implications for post-secondary institutions in terms of teaching and student services do not, however, appear to be different from traditional institutional strategies geared towards 'non-traditional' students. Similarly, the 'balkanization' of faculty along the lines of different types of employment contract, leaving notably less room for tenured positions for the younger generations, has more to do with changes in the financing of and working conditions at higher education institutions (and, more generally, with changes in employment relationships in society) than with the aspirations of the new generations.

The book's chapters use the 'generation' concept in a wide sense, with fluctuating boundaries, and as a psycho-sociological rather than a demographic approach. From an academic standpoint, this is a weakness because the sociological concept of 'generation' as employed here will typically encompass various sorts of people born in the same twenty-year bracket, whose coming of age has occurred in very different economic, political – and generational – climates. Some of them will have danced to very different music at their high school proms. The use of the more precise demographic concept of 'cohort' would have been more helpful, not least because

more data and precise evidence could have supported the analysis. For example, some demographic studies show how different age cohorts, sometimes born within only a five-year span, experience different social fates, just because of a change in the shape of the economy or of policies governing access to higher education. One question that is touched upon, but that would have deserved deeper analysis, is to what extent the 'core values' of the different generations shape higher education or, conversely, are shaped by the prevailing conditions in higher education when they access it. In brief, an interrogation about what the causes and the effects are.

While this book does not offer the reader insights on how different generations have experienced higher education, whether as students or as faculty, it does provide interesting food for thought, drawing on the observations and insightful remarks and comments of distinguished US university leaders. The main interest of the book lies in the common thread that runs through almost all the chapters and the round-table transcripts, namely, the vivid and varied description of the responsiveness of higher education to changes in social and generational conditions. While common wisdom often depicts education (and higher education) as a conservative sector, prone to resist all social changes from the heights of its ivory tower, this book gives a totally opposite picture. Most contributing chapters show that it has been responsive to the ideal-typical needs and characteristics of different generations – or, more prosaically, of different social and economic times. This is, for example, addressed by a pragmatic analysis of how higher education institutions had (or have) to adjust their strategies to recruit and retain students and faculty for different generations. Similarly, the book helpfully reminds us that higher education changes all the time through a very natural process: the hiring and the teaching of people who are different and do not

share the same ideas or values, be it because they are part of the same generation or for other reasons. In many ways, to someone who does not belong to the 'baby boom' generation, the generational account offered by the book seems shaped by Baby Boomers' own ideas and prejudices about the other generations and, possibly, about higher education as well. However, this does not make the book less interesting, especially in light of the sustained influence of Baby Boomers on US higher education.

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**Mitchell A. Orenstein, Stephen Bloom,
and Nicole Lindstrom (eds.):**
*Transnational Actors in Central
and East European Transitions*
Pittsburgh, PA, 2008: University
of Pittsburgh Press, 260 pp.

This is an edited volume that revisits the pervasive influence of transnational and non-state actors on the politics of Central and East European states (CEE). It brings together studies on topics as diverse as transnational agendas on human trafficking in the Balkans, the IGOs in post-communist politics, the politics of Euro adoption, bank privatisation, the transnational church in national settings, political stability in Macedonia, and transnational actors. Research on such diverse topics meet in a common agenda, aimed first at contributing to the 'dual' [Przeworski 1991] and 'triple' [Offe 1997] transition literatures by reframing the debate on post-communist politics, and second at including new research on transnational politics that looks at the integration of the CEE states into an international system marked by complex interdependence. Hence, the authors introduce a new concept of quadruple transition.

The scope of the book encompasses how transnational actors influence domes-