



American Idle

Late-Career Job Loss in a Neoliberal Era

by Annette Nierobisz and Dana Sawchuk

DESCRIPTION

In *American Idle*, sociologists Annette Nierobisz and Dana Sawchuk report their findings from interviews with sixty-two mostly white-collar workers who experienced late-career job loss in the wake of the Great Recession. Without the benefits of planned retirement or time horizons favorable to recouping their losses, these employees experience an array of outcomes, from hard falls to soft landings. Notably, the authors find that when reflecting on the effects of job loss, fruitless job searches, and the overall experience of unemployment, participants regularly called on the frameworks instilled by neoliberalism. Invoking neoliberal rhetoric, these older Americans deferred to businesses' need to prioritize bottom lines, accepted the shift toward precarious employment, or highlighted the importance of taking initiative and maintaining a positive mindset in the face of structural obstacles. Even so, participants also recognized the incompatibility between neoliberalism's "one-size-fits-all" solutions and their own situations; this disconnect led them to consider their experiences through competing frameworks and to voice resistance to aspects of neoliberal capitalism. Employing a life course sociology perspective to explore older workers' precarity in an age of rising economic insecurity, Nierobisz and Sawchuk shed light on a new wrinkle in American aging.

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