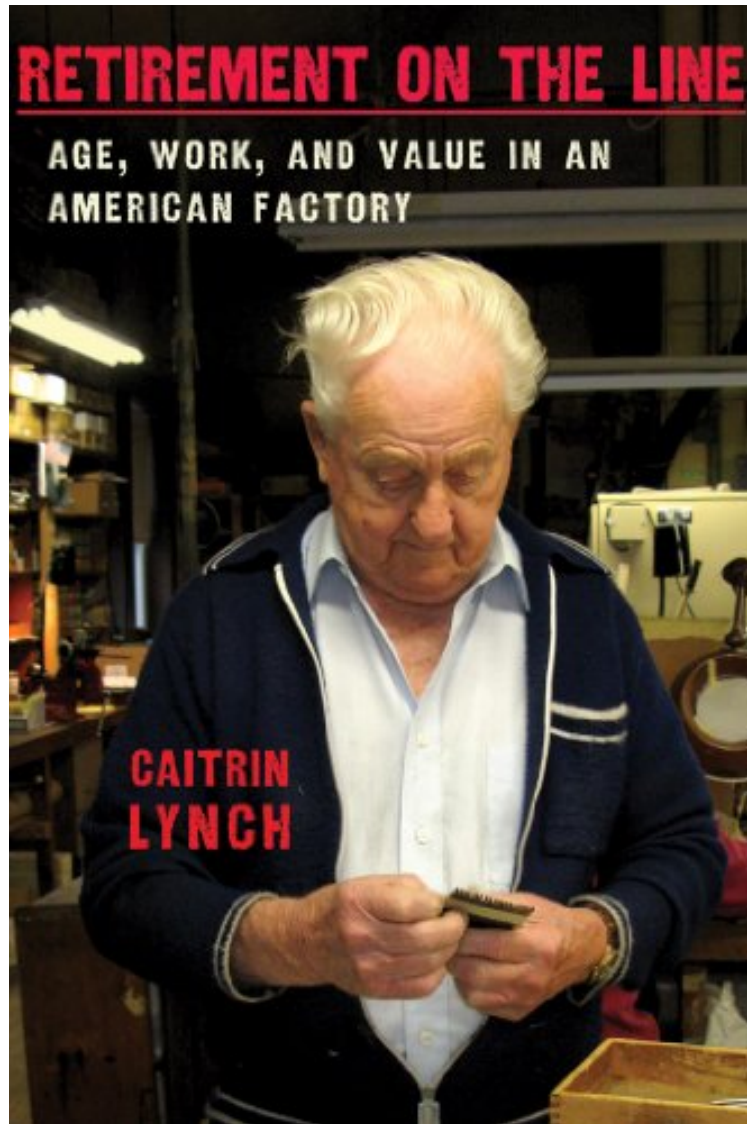


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Retirement on the Line: Age, Work, and Value in an American Factory

Caitrin Lynch

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Caitrin Lynch : Retirement on the Line: Age, Work, and Value in an American Factory before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Retirement on the Line: Age, Work, and Value in an American Factory:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. GoodBy OliviaHeTangIt's just like a new book. It's in brilliant condition and the price is also reasonable. One of the best second-hand book I ever bought.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. back to work in the "golden years"By Caren NichterI can't get this book out of my mind. I

had never heard of the Vita Needle Company, but I now see it as an alternate path to a meaningful old age in our culture. My bachelor uncle spent his last ten years in a nursing home, hungry for engagement and meaning in his life. My mother lived her last years in a "retirement community", a not unhappy place, but one in which her age cohort seemed to me to be segregated from our society at large. Isn't there a better alternative? The author, a cultural anthropologist and college professor, spent five years researching this book, part of that time actually working on the line with the seniors. She shares intimate portraits of the employees, of why they are working and what they have gained from this opportunity. She explores whether the company is exploiting the fact that, because these employees are old enough to receive Medicare, it need not pay for health insurance or other benefits. The majority of the employees are part time at relatively low pay, BUT they do receive a generous Christmas bonus that is based on how well the company has done that year (a sort of profit sharing), and their hours are entirely flexible. Some do work because they need the extra money, but many work in order to feel useful again and for the camaraderie they develop with fellow workers. They admit to feeling like a family. The factory, a family owned business begun during the Depression, is successful, despite the fact that they employ more workers than needed to allow for some to be off at any one time, and despite the fact that machines could possibly do some of the tasks. A German film company made a documentary, "Pensioners Inc.", about the company because, in Europe, after retirement age, people can rarely find work. Because the film was seen in other European countries, the company has attracted a steady stream of journalists. Even in this country, this is an unusual business model. With the wave of baby boomers poised to wash across our society, it is perhaps a model that needs to be studied and discussed at length. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Love WorkBy Jennifer Lynch American demographics are changing dramatically. Better health care options, nutrition, and social changes are creating an expanding population aged 65+. "Retirement on the Line" provides hard facts, research data on this demographic through readable vignettes. Specifically focused on the employer-employee relationship for working in retirement, it highlights the value for each party with a primary study of one employer. The author, an academic, combines economics, sociology and anthropology in this rich study. I look forward to reading her future work contrasting work for someone else (employer) vs. self-employment for the elderly in a field where they have expertise.

In an era when people live longer and want (or need) to work past the traditional retirement age, the Vita Needle Company of Needham, Massachusetts, provides inspiration and important lessons about the value of older workers. Vita Needle is a family-owned factory that was founded in 1932 and makes needles, stainless steel tubing and pipes, and custom fabricated parts. As part of its unusual business model, the company seeks out older workers; the median age of the employees is seventy-four. In *Retirement on the Line*, Caitrin Lynch explores what this unusual company's commitment to an elderly workforce means for the employer, the workers, the community, and society more generally. Benefiting from nearly five years of fieldwork at Vita Needle, Lynch offers an intimate portrait of the people who work there, a nuanced explanation of the company's hiring practices, and a cogent analysis of how the workers' experiences can inform our understanding of aging and work in the twenty-first century. As an in-depth study of a singular workplace, rooted in the unique insights of an anthropologist who specializes in the world of work, this book provides a sustained focus on values and meanings-with profound consequences for the broader assumptions our society has about aging and employment.

"In *Retirement on the Line*, Caitrin Lynch provides a welcome ethnography of the labors of old workers at Vita Needle, a family-owned factory in Needham, Massachusetts; Lynch does a superb job of attending to the voices of old workers in this factory, revealing the complex labor relations within contemporary capitalism, and complicating the discussion of exploitation. The readability of her book makes it an excellent addition to courses not only on aging but in the sociology of work, which tends to ignore old workers or see them as something 'other'?and for this reason, it also stands as a scholarly contribution for those who examine paid work."?Toni Calasanti, *American Journal of Sociology*(September 2013)- "Stressing a 'cultural anthropology' vantage point, and claiming that new understandings may arise from duly considered work in its culture-related dynamics, this book actually delivers valuable learnings on capitalism as a cultural frame. We learn from it not so much on the meanings of working at old age, but rather on old age capitalism and its meanings. Studying workers who take the accumulation of surplus-value as the measure of all values? this certainly provides a lesson on the undeniable resilience and continuance of the capitalist worldview."?Critique of Anthropology"The book is based on intensive ethnographic research undertaken by the author during 2006ndash; 2011. Working on Vita's shop floor, side by side with factory employees, enabled the author to produce a rich, nuanced, and insightful piece of anthropological writing that not only explores 'what work means for people hellip; of conventional retirement age'(3), but also touches upon broader social issues such as aging, productivity, and work ethic in the contemporary United States. . . . Lynch's book expands beyond a mere case study and proposes broader reflections on the struggles and aspirations of elderly employees?a group rarely studied by sociologists of work."?HannaGospodarczyk, *Laboratorium: Russian of Social Research* (2015) "Caitrin Lynch's ethnography of Vita Needle is excellent. *Retirement on the Line* brings vivid humanity to the issues of aging and the meaning of

work."?Jennie Keith, Swarthmore College, author of *Old People, New Lives* "There is a great, strong story at the heart of *Retirement on the Line*: a light industrial factory staffed by persons in their seventies, eighties, and even older. Caitrin Lynch's book is about a concentration of old (not older) workers and the local work culture they have created. Because she, too, worked at Vita Needle among them, her account is all the more trustworthy and vivid."?David J. Ekerdt, University of Kansas "Through her moving ethnography of the Vita Needle factory and its elderly workers, Caitrin Lynch raises provocative questions about what it means to age and what it means to work in our contemporary global economy."?Jane Collins, University of Wisconsin-Madison, author of *Threads: Gender, Labor Power in the Global Economy* "Are there workers with an average age of 75 years who have freedom, flexibility, choice, and a personal sense of control in the workplace and who are willing to accept minimum wages and (with Medicare coverage) no other health insurance? The author found them at Vita Needle, a small factory in Needham, Massachusetts that manufactures needles for a wide array of uses. Caitrin Lynch's skilled and thorough analysis of the workers' stories is sure to capture readers' interest in the value of employment after 'retirement.' Lynch's interviews and sympathetic participant observations also inform her portrait of Vita Needle's employment tactics and the effects of extensive media coverage on the workers' lives. Policymakers, students of labor, and individuals facing retirement will find this book absorbing and revealing."?Francille M. Firebaugh, Dean Emerita, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University and Vice-Chair, Board of Directors, Families and Work Institute "Retirement on the Line is an outstanding ethnography carrying readers inside a suburban U.S. needle factory whose employees' median age is 74. As Caitrin Lynch explores the daily lives of elder factory workers who choose to remain economically productive long after "retirement," she challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about aging, work, and value in late life and helps us rethink what retirement can mean at a time when economic crises are threatening state and private pensions. Its mix of wise insight into big-picture themes and intimate portraits makes the book a truly engrossing and enlightening read. It will have a large impact and a wide audience, both lay and academic."?Sarah Lamb, Brandeis University, author of *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India* About the Author Caitrin Lynch is Professor of Anthropology at Olin College. She is the author of *Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry* and *Retirement on the Line: Age, Work, and Value in an American Factory*.