

Does Work Develop Workers?

Jack Demick and Patrice M. Miller
(Eds.)

Development in the Workplace
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Review by
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Many psychologists take the view that leisure fosters personal development whereas work allows individuals to express the abilities and interests that they have developed. On occasion, work may prompt workers to develop their abilities and expand their interests, but organizations do not design work to serve that purpose. Accordingly, psychologists are not accustomed to thinking about work as a facilitator of human development. When psychologists study work and workers, they do not concentrate on development, but instead deal with adjustment variables such as success, satisfaction, stability, and strain. Nevertheless, changes attributed to the transition from an industrial age to an information age may force psychologists to reconsider whether occupations just implement a self. Maybe work can also develop the self.

Demick and Miller have prepared a book that explores the issue of adult development in the workplace. As editors, they sought to induce a synthesis of theorizing from the specialties of developmental psychology and organizational psychology. The specific angle they use to approach this intersection is intriguing. They recommend that paradigms commonly used to study cognitive develop-

ment in adults be used to examine how work tasks, occupations, and organizational culture might influence individual development in the workplace. Readers need not be familiar with the vast literature on cognitive development in adults; but, it would help to know about the contributions of Jean Piaget, William Perry, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Heinz Werner because the chapter authors generally use their models.

To focus attention on the intersection of work and individual development, the editors made it the topic of the Sixth Adult Development Symposium sponsored by the Suffolk University Psychology Department and the Society for Research in Adult Development. All 13 chapters in the book, with the single exception of the integrative chapter by the editors, originally were presented as symposium papers. The editors organized the subsequent book into three parts defined by the unit of analysis chosen by the chapter authors. Part I contains eight chapters that deal with individuals in the workplace; the two chapters in Part II concentrate on dyads and groups; and the two chapters in Part III address organizational culture.

Unfortunately, Part I falls far from the mark of exploring adult development in

the workplace. Rather than focusing squarely on that topic, its eight chapters instead present rather typical developmental stage research that happened to be conducted at a workplace, or used work as the content for examining a structural model. Because each chapter reads like a journal article, readers may think that they are reading a special issue of a periodical. From the chapters, readers learn that (a) occupational groups differ in world view, (b) reasoning about work follows a stage model, (c) workplace interventions foster moral development, (d) a stage model of cognitive development reveals differences between and among medical and pharmacy students, (e) ego development relates to thinking about leadership, (f) commitment to work relates to career choice attitudes, and (g) worker chronological age does not bias supervisor evaluations. Although each study is interesting, as a group they skirt the issue of individual development in the workplace.

Just when readers may become convinced that none of the chapters will address the book's stated topic, three chapters demand full attention. Jan Sinnott's intriguing chapter explores interpersonal conflict at work as a pathway to adult development. Sinnott asserts that intragroup conflict and complex thought stimulate each other to foster both individual and group development. She concludes her chapter with an insightful list of practical methods that can be consciously used to transform intragroup conflict into individual development.

In the next chapter, Linda Morris asserts that a learning organization prompts learning and personal development amongst its employees and continually transforms itself. She integrates information from 24 journal articles and concludes that learning organizations emphasize collective intelligence, adapt quickly to new demands from the environment, and plan transformations of the organization and its individual members. Such organizations strive for a balance between the developmental needs of the workers and the organization. To accomplish their goals, learning organizations reinforce new patterns of thinking, and may thereby promote a worker's cognitive development.

In "Atmosphere and Stage Development in the Workplace," Commons, Krause, Fayer, and Meaney use a general systems model to characterize the relationship between individuals and their organization. They demonstrate that workers' responses to a particular de-

mand do not indicate a fixed structure within the workers. Instead, the workers' responses reflect the outcome of an interaction between individual differences in developmental level and the contingencies of reinforcement used by the organizational culture. Unfortunately, many organizations just do not reinforce higher stage responses. In contradiction to the premise of the book and the assumption made in previous chapters, the authors of this chapter warn that workplace atmosphere typically places a ceiling on individual development, rather than encouraging development to higher stages. Their study provides a heuristic framework for research on the interaction between workplace atmosphere and individual development. Moreover, it compels readers to question whether or when work develops the worker.

Development in the Workplace takes the first step in promoting a synergistic relationship between adult development and organizational psychology. The next step may be to add the contributions of vocational psychology to the mix. Research on adult career development offers information about adaptation to work, insights that may be useful in exploring when and how work develops workers. Furthermore, vocational psychologists have recently begun to use developmental-contextualism as an integrative framework for studying careers. Critical variables in this transactional framework, such as embeddedness and affordances, may enhance research aimed at comprehending how a workplace fosters or hinders the personal development of its occupants.

Clearly Demick and Miller have realized their aspiration to chart a new territory. Their book expands the conception of adult developmental psychology by aptly demonstrating that work can provide the focus for study of development. In so doing, they have produced a unique book, hopefully one that will move psychologists to reconsider the roles of work and leisure in fostering adult development. ■

One Side of Workplace Emotions

Stephen Fineman (Ed.)
Emotion in Organizations
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Research on emotions in the workplace is not new (e.g., Hersey, 1932); but only in recent years (e.g., Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989), in part due to Hochschild's book *The Managed Heart* (1983), has it emerged as a central topic in the study of organizational behavior. Thus, there is much that remains to be understood about emotions in work organizations. The purpose of this collection of 10 essays is to stimulate such growth in our knowledge base.

Social constructionism, psychodynamics, feminist theory, and the dramaturgical approach represent the principal conceptual tools the authors used to explore emotions in the workplace. Consistent with their theoretical orientations, the authors' research methodologies are highly qualitative and often interpretive. In and of themselves, such approaches to the study of emotions in the workplace, of course, are not problematic; however, they are only one set of options for inquiry. Generally, the authors do not attend to what experimental social psychologists have learned about affect and the application of that knowledge in organizational behavior (e.g., Barron, 1993; George & Brief, 1992; Isen & Barron, 1991). In one sense, therefore, this collection is too narrow in scope.

Alternatively, the scope of the book is in no way troublesome in terms of the kinds of organizational concerns addressed. Those concerns, for example, focus on the study of emotions in boss-secretary relationships, in the Polish Communist party, in a hospital unit for

victims of cancer, in regards to the phenomenon of organizational nostalgia, and in universities surrounding the issue of political correctness. Clearly, the book demonstrates the potential breadth of the study of emotions in organizations; and, indeed, it serves to stretch the boundaries of organizational behavior's domain.

All in all, is this book a worthwhile read? Absolutely, at least for those researchers unfamiliar with the sorts of theoretical and methodological approaches the authors adopt, for anyone interested in the particular organizational concerns they address, or both. Ultimately, will the book generate much research on emotions in work organizations? Regrettably, I doubt it. This is so because I believe the theoretical and methodological approaches advanced in the book will be a turn-off to most organizational behaviorists who are more comfortable with the traditional thinking and mechanics of social and organizational psychology. For these more traditional types, like myself, the book does contain real hurdles in terms of ideology, terminology, and what are considered to be the rules of scientific evidence. Nevertheless, those hurdles are worth jumping for the audiences I have indicated. The book probably would have been a real gem if the editor had collaborated with others well schooled in the social psychology of affect in work organizations. Perhaps, however, such a marriage between the avant-garde and traditionalists is too much to hope for; and, students of emotions in work organizations