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Reviewed by Patricia M. Raskin, Associate Professor, Department of Organization and Leadership, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.

This handbook is the first of its kind. Prior to 1970, there was little attention paid to the intersection between the separate spheres of work and home. By the year 2000, more than 2,000 articles appeared in searchable databases and the focus on work and family continues to capture the attention of researchers, human relations professionals, government, and individuals, especially with the diversification of the labor force. As boomers attain retirement age, single parents enter the workforce, more families cope with the sandwich effects of having children at home and elders to care for, the issue of managing work and home has become more urgent. Further, younger workers expect to lead more balanced lives, and economic realities increase the likelihood that all of the adults in the family will be working, at least part-time. Work and family issues have also captured the attention of the general public. Hundreds of books on the subject have been published in the last 10 years. It is clear that the scholarship represented in this book about understanding the structures, interactions, and dilemmas surrounding the family and the workplace represents the birth of a field of study, and it couldn’t be timelier.

Research on work and family issues has emerged in labor economics, industrial relations, organizational psychology, occupational health psychology, sociology and industrial psychology, law, and anthropology, among other fields, as well as in industry, but work and family is rarely considered an undergraduate or graduate field of study. There are few graduate students who have room in their schedules for many classes outside of their majors, but work and family is beginning to emerge as important to students, and faculty recognize the need to incorporate disparate perspectives in their studies. So, work and family are usually taught in one of two ways: Either some aspect of work and family is embedded in or infused into other courses (such as human resource management), or, a multidisciplinary survey course is offered. For most faculty, of course, finding relevant seminal writings in disciplines other than their own is a formidable task. This handbook resolves the dilemma, and taken individually, the chapters can be used selectively in appropriate courses.

The book is organized into four major sections: I. Families and jobs in the 21st century, II. Disciplinary approaches and theoretical perspectives, III. Methodological approaches, and IV. Advancing policy and
organizational change. The book is anchored with a foreword by Moss Kanter, an early important and steady contributor to the advancement of knowledge in work and family, whereas the final chapter is written by Christensen, herself an early researcher in the field, even before it was a field. In her current role as program officer for the Work–Family program at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Christensen and her colleagues at the Foundation have funded much of the research that appears in the Handbook. Along with a handful of other deeply committed colleagues from academia, the nonprofit world, and industry, she is shaping the dialogue in the work–family domain for the near future in academia, industry, and government.

In Section I, the authors give an historical perspective to the study of work and family, and argue for its importance in a changing workforce, with well-thought out, data-based chronologies of changes in the workplace and the family. For readers who are primarily interested in getting an overview, this section, taken together with the last chapter (Christensen) could suffice. For many of us, though, the in-depth perspectives provided in the second and third sections serve as good blueprints for thinking about how to do research in this complex arena. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to do research, and they are described in such a way that the value of each is clear. Indeed, in the literature, the detailed descriptions of individuals, families, and communities depicted in qualitative approaches allow the reader to get a more in-depth understanding of the sometimes dry quantitative data reported in other disciplines. And, of course, we are more likely to see the qualitative results as meaningful when they are supported by large-scale data sets.

Within Sections II (disciplinary approaches), and III (methodological approaches), individual authors describe why and how research is done in work and family and the individual disciplines of policy, demography, family studies, anthropology, sociology, role theory, social psychology, economics, I-O psychology, law, and social work. Individuals who are among the pioneers in work and family research in their disciplines author each of these chapters. They are must reading for those who are embarking on research projects, as they constitute a road map for essential reviews of the literature. Chapter 14, Work and family From an Industrial/Organizational Psychology Perspective (Thompson et al., 2006) is particularly useful for readers of this journal. Within these sections, there is some overlap, as authors often borrow from other disciplines, either to make their argument or to describe what theories are important and how research paradigms emerged, although I actually expected more of that.

The third section is devoted to application: the relationship among theory, research and the reality of organizations, the legal system, and
policy. These chapters answer the questions “So what?” and “Now what?” and offer intellectual blueprints for managing change.

For those of us who teach multidisciplinary courses, this book has been long in coming. It is not light reading, but close attention to the individual chapters has an enormous payoff in understanding how work and family have changed in the last 35 years. It can be used in whole or in part as a textbook, and taken together with the resources of the Sloan Work–Family Network, it provides an almost complete set of resources for faculty and students. Unfortunately, this is an expensive book and poses a potential financial hardship for individual students. Having said that, however, it is an essential compendium in a field that has no disciplinary “home.” Every major theorist and researcher in work and family either is cited in or has written for this volume, and the bibliography alone is worth the price of the book.

Finally, I think it is important to admit that I am not unbiased. I am a former Sloan grantee, and currently co-edit (with Pitt-Catsouphes) the *Sloan Work–Family Encyclopedia*. Many of the authors who have contributed to this volume have been instrumental in my own understanding of the field and have helped to shape much of my current thinking.


Reviewed by Ira J. Morrow, Associate Professor of Management, Lubin School of Business, Pace University, New York, NY.

This volume contains a collection of 22 papers examining the linkages between current human services programs, including employee assistance (EAP), work–life (WL), and wellness services, in the workplace. The first section of the book examines conceptual models and measurement issues, and the second looks at general research on the integration of employee human services programs. Most of the remainder of the work presents various case studies of specific attempts to integrate employee human services with one section examining programs in academic settings, another presenting a case of integration by an external service provider, and two sections examining integration initiatives in three different corporations and in a community-based health care system. Another section of the book discusses integration initiatives in the public sector, and another section examines international perspectives on the integration of employee assistance services.

The topic of this book is clearly quite specialized with its focus on the integration of employee assistance, work–life, and wellness services. It is most likely to appeal to HR professionals and service providers
specializing in EAP, WL, and wellness programs, and to researchers who are active in the field. Each paper begins with a helpful summary and concludes with a comprehensive list of references. In addition, an appendix with a useful list of resources, including literature, professional organizations, and government agencies in the EAP, WL, and wellness fields is provided.

The first paper of the collection provides a conceptual framework for the integration of EAP, WL, and wellness initiatives. The authors examine trends in society including medicine, business, social work, globalization, and ecology that have led to “a more holistic and interconnected perception of strategic service integration.” In the field of medicine, for example, the authors cite growing recognition of the importance of mind/body interactions as well as an increased emphasis on health and wellness rather than merely treating illness. In the field of social work there is increased appreciation of the importance of family systems, of the fact that one member of the family can change the behavior of all members of the system, and that work groups resemble family systems. In business, it is critically important for organizations to attract and retain the best people, and an emergent theme of globalization is an enhanced emphasis on social responsibility with the encouragement of strong linkages between employees, employers, and the larger environment, and with a heightened regard for the importance of healthy and constructive corporate cultures characterized by respect for employees. Ecology, in turn, has led to framing questions such as “how organizations and workers can maintain a sustainable level of effort,” one that does not destroy employees in the process. These trends have shaped the thinking and practice of the EAP, WL, and wellness fields, which started independently but began to converge throughout the 1990s. The authors provide a short but informative synopsis of the history of these three fields and demonstrate how they have increasingly converged in terms of the services that are provided, the clients they serve, and the impact that they have on employees and organizations. The authors maintain that this trend makes sense, stating, “Individuals are complex and have interconnected needs that can be best addressed simultaneously or at least in a coordinated fashion. . . . Each field has adapted to the workplace by expanding services traditionally provided by the others, resulting in overlap. . . . The goal is the same: to help individuals to be productive at work and live personally fulfilling lives outside of work.”

Another paper provides a review of the literature concerning the integration of EAP, WL, and wellness services, and concludes that much of the existing literature is suggestive but lacks sufficient scientific rigor to build a persuasive business case for the integration of these services. Another paper takes an historical approach by examining the extent to
which organizational integration of these services has advanced since the early 1990s, concluding that there is increasing demand for the integration of service delivery. A paper reports the results of a qualitative interview study of experts in the EAP field of the pros and cons of the integration of EAP and WL programs. Another provides a descriptive account of a WL program for employees at the University of Arizona, and another provides an account of a typical week at Johns Hopkins University’s EAP program. Yet another academically based program, this time consisting of an integrated EAP and WL model for responding to deaths of faculty, staff, and students at UC-Berkeley, is described in a paper. The issue of the value of an integrated approach for fostering continuity in the workplace in the face of disasters including terrorism attacks is taken up in a timely paper. Two papers deal respectively with a wellness program at Motorola and an EAP at Wells Fargo, and another examines an integrated WL and EAP involving two specialized vendors at Ernst & Young. Integrated programs in the public sector, in the federal government, and in the state government of Minnesota are examined in two papers, and the international section of the book contains three papers dealing with the Australian perspective on integration, the results of a survey study of integration in the UK and Europe, and another that focuses on WL programs from an Irish perspective.

A careful reading of this book suggests that the concept of integration is not rigorously or uniformly defined, and that the various authors in this collection use the term differently. Some of the papers deal with the integration between WL, EAP, and wellness services, and some just look at integration between just two of these. The Ernst & Young study, for example, looks at the integration of EAP and WL programs but omits wellness, and the next paper describing a program at Fairview Health Services looks at the integration of EAP and wellness but omits WL. Other papers merely look at a single program that is somehow considered to be well integrated. For example, in the paper on Wells Fargo, we learn that its EAP program is not integrated with either a wellness or a WL program. Some authors do not define integration in terms of the relationship between any of these programs and another program but rather with other organizational functions. The Wells Fargo paper, for example, describes how its employee assistance program “aligns closely with specific strategy and operations of each Wells Fargo business,” and how it “collaboratively partners with senior and line management, Human Resources, the Employment Law Department, Disability Management and Risk Management, Corporate Benefits, Corporate Security, Learning and Development . . . .” This sounds like a very reasonable approach to take for designing and implementing any organizational initiative but does not seem to be consistent with the general thrust of the book, which is supposedly the integration specifically
of EAP, WL, and wellness programs. Yet another paper argues in favor of “a more traditional concept of organizational integration” by which the author means not integration with WL or wellness programs but rather with “the fabric of its host or sponsoring organization.” The concept of integration as applied to EAP, wellness, and WL programs is evidently quite muddled, and the question of what precisely integration means and includes and what it does not mean and excludes remains unresolved even after reading this 400+ page book. At this point in the development of the field, the concept of integration seems to mean almost anything that the author, researcher, or organization wants it to mean.


Reviewed by Michael J. Zickar, Associate Professor of Psychology, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

This book is about organizational artifacts, those everyday objects and symbols that are found throughout our organizational lives: business cards, billboard advertising, office place designs, and our computer set-ups to name just a few. Many times these artifacts lurk in the background of our everyday organizational existence, noticeable only by outsiders or specialists who obsess about organizational culture. Although artifacts have been previously studied by researchers primarily for their symbolic nature and their palpable manifestations of organizational culture, the editors of this book want to broaden our understanding of the nature and effects of artifacts. The thesis of this book of edited chapters, if it needed to be summed up succinctly, is that artifacts are more than just symbols of organizational culture and that they vary on several important dimensions. If there is a simple lesson to this book, it is that you can learn a lot by focusing on physical things that exist inside organizations.

The opening chapter by Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli entitled *Managing Artifacts to Avoid Artifact Myopia* lays out some of the conceptual framework that is used throughout the book by the various authors; in addition, they use the chapter to argue that most people are short-sighted in their views of artifacts, focusing solely on their symbolic value, and present a phrase *artifact myopia* that refers to researchers “not recognizing the full complexity of an artifact and its implications and potential implications.” They define three dimensions that can be used to evaluate and understand artifacts: a *symbolic* dimension (e.g., what meaning does the artifact elicit), an *aesthetic* dimension (e.g., what emotion does the artifact elicit?), and an *instrumental* dimension (e.g., how does the artifact help or hinder performance?).
Artifact study is a multidisciplinary enterprise including work by organizational psychologists, marketing experts, architects, environmental psychologists, fashion experts, and other far-ranging disciplines. Researchers from each of these disciplines have tended to focus on different aspects of artifact analysis. Organizational scholars tend to focus on the symbolic nature of artifacts as manifestations of organizational culture. Marketing experts may focus more on aesthetic dimensions whereas specialists and technicians may focus more on the instrumental value of a particular object. In rare cases, more than one dimension may be simultaneously considered. For example, in architecture, top architects consider both the instrumental and aesthetic dimensions of buildings that they design. In this book, the authors comment several times on examples when people consider solely one dimension, neglecting the other two dimensions. For example, Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli (Ch. 1) mention Apple’s “Power Mac G4 Cube,” which was that was supposed to revolutionize the appearance (i.e., the aesthetic dimension) of computers with its sleek translucent design. The product failed, however, because it did not perform well according to technical standards (i.e., the instrumental dimension). Throughout the book, one begins to appreciate the value of interdisciplinary dialog and analysis, given that different disciplines add diverse viewpoints that often complement each other.

The artifacts considered in this book are wide ranging and include things that seem obvious (e.g., employee clothing, business logos, and cartoons on professors’ doors), whereas other artifacts that were considered were less obvious. In the latter category, artifacts such as organization names and employees themselves were considered in detail by particular chapter writers. Many of the chapters focus on understanding the nature of a particular artifact. Having a series of successive chapters considering different artifacts helps build appreciation for the abstract nature of organizational artifacts.

Artifacts serve a variety of purposes. Fiol and O’Connor (Ch. 13) suggest that physicians started wearing a white coat as a way to appear more scientific to distinguish themselves from “quacks and fakes.” They point out that after white coats became symbols for legitimacy, other occupations, such as chiropractors, tried to co-opt the artifact to gain vicarious legitimacy. Armand (Ch. 5) suggests that a cartoon displayed on professors’ offices allows for expression of intellectual and personal values. The presence of artifacts serves myriad purposes and these chapters do a fine job emphasizing that.

The chapters use a diverse variety of approaches in analyzing and presenting information about the artifacts. Some chapters present data whereas others articulate theory or analyze case studies to support their points. Some of the more interesting approaches deserve notice. In an
investigation of organization names, Glynn and Marquis (Ch. 11) present results from an empirical study that presents potential names for various businesses and had MBA students rate the suitability of names. They found that names consistent with the mechanics of the operation (e.g., Quality Meats and Tony’s Pizza) were rated more suitable than names inconsistent with the operation (e.g., The Meating Place and First National Pizzeria, respectively). They also found that there are significant individual differences in interpreting the suitability of organization names, suggesting that artifacts are judged differently by different individuals. Anand (Ch. 5) analyzed cartoons on professors’ doors at a private university, tabulating the content of cartoons as well as the status of the faculty who posted the cartoons. Anand categorized the functions of cartoons into four categories: expressing communion with one’s academic discipline (e.g., a psychologist posting a cartoon related to the field of psychology), expressing differences (e.g., an assistant professor posting a cartoon that mocks endowed chairs), communicating something personal (e.g., on my door I have a cartoon that expresses that I do not eat), and interjecting comic relief.

Other chapters present case studies of particular events and organizations. Harquail (Ch. 9) details how employees at Land Rover (a sport utility vehicle that has extensive off-road capabilities) “lived the brand” by being immersed into the particular product that their company produced. Employees took off-road driving training courses, attended events that explained the technical nature of the vehicle and its history, and even were encouraged to include brand-related gear into their personal wardrobe. Harquail uses this example to argue that in this case, employees become artifacts, objects that symbolically portray the values of the corporation through their appearances. This can have a positive effect when the employees “look” like the image of the brand but can also have negative consequences when there is discontinuity between the brand image and the employee image. In another case study, Cappetta and Gioia (Ch. 11) analyze two Italian fine fashion houses, including one that has seen its best days and another that has been very successful in the recent past. Cappetta and Gioia discuss how artifacts contribute to the success (or failure) and story of these two organizations.

Occasionally this book was hard work for this reviewer, who was trained in the traditional neo-positivistic ways in which most I-O psychologists are trained in graduate school. Chapters filled with phrases like “transmogrify into transmutational objects” and “inherently polysemic” require that chapters be read with careful attention to language and analytic techniques. This is inevitable given that different writers approach their topics from different disciplines and, hence, different literary techniques.
This book is recommended to organizational scientists, to people who work in nonconventional marketing, and for those who want to better understand the physical and social environments present in our workplace. The book presents a series of interesting analyses of artifacts that are omnipresent in our everyday working lives. In addition, the book helps us look at our own work environments through new critical lenses.


Reviewed by Alan Clardy, Psychology Department, Towson University, Towson, MD.

This book provides an account of a transformation process at General Motors between 1992 and 2003. The author was well positioned for this task, having served as director of marketing research and planning, as well as general manager of corporate strategy and knowledge development during this period. According to the dust cover, the author developed the transformation process and worked closely with GM’s senior managers in its execution. The corporate results from the transformation should speak for themselves: an approximate $8 billion turnaround, from a loss to a profit, increased productivity and perceptions of quality, and gains in market share. He claims that the lessons from GM’s experience recorded here should lead to a greater understanding of such principles as the need for minimizing employee discomfort with change, starting with a destination in mind, developing an effective dialogue with customers, selecting a favorable business design, picking the right problem to work on, making assumptions explicit, and sharing knowledge. Even though this list represents conventional wisdom, he still has a tall order to fill. Unfortunately, the delivery comes up short: Although I appreciate and agree with the principles, that appreciation did not result from this account of GM’s transformation lessons for reasons presented at the conclusion of this review.

The first chapter is a hypothetical example of a company with mediocre performance. Seeking a solution, various senior managers advocate partial remedies based on their functional viewpoints. A senior advisor suggests total system, disjunctive thinking, which, sure enough, provides the platform for reinvigorating the business. The story is a parable about General Motors, and the remainder of the book examines GM’s experiences and examples in this context. The remaining chapters are organized into three sections.

The first section is about applying the proper business design. The framework for this discussion is based on a “sense and respond” model (Haeckel, 1999). According to Barabba’s sources, the primary driver of
growth in the 1980s and 1990s was innovation in business design. A business design is a set of decisions about how the firm will profitably deliver value to its customers, including how the company selects its customers, differentiates itself, defines its production tasks, obtains its resources, distributes its outputs, and generates profits. There are three prototypical business designs from which to choose. “Make-and-sell” designs assume that future consumer demand can be predicted, enabling a mass production model. This was the de facto model of industrial firms, including GM, during most of the 20th century. Second, a “sense-and-respond” design assumes the future can neither be predicted nor controlled. As a result, the enterprise has to design business processes that enable it to better respond to changing conditions by actively seeking information about emerging customer needs and providing customized production. Third, “anticipate-and-lead” designs assume that the future can be constructed and shaped by what the enterprise does now.

The challenge for leaders in the 21st century enterprise is to select and develop a business design that fits tomorrow’s competitive challenges, defined (in Ch. 2) as the New World of competitive challenges. Unfortunately, in this New World, many companies are still trapped in an Old World make-and-sell body.

The four chapters in the first section illustrate how GM attempted to break out of this mold into more of a sense-and-respond, anticipate-and-lead design. For example, GM started looking at how information technology could be used within its current business plan, such as the “auto choice advisor” (a Web page where customers can get vehicle recommendations regardless of manufacturer). Other examples of transformational innovations include On-Star and an idealized design process.

The second section of the book is about listening, learning, and leaving, key words describing examples of GM’s transformation process. Set in the context of a new management team installed in 1992, the five chapters here focus on various aspects and facets of making decisions. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 provide the best examples of the strategic thinking process in use and include a number of specific illustrations, such as how GM dealt with messy problems in the areas of new model selection, design, and branding. Section III argues that marketing should be a frame of mind that permeates all areas of the organization, not something confined to a specific department. In other words, “it is everyone’s job to listen to and understand customers, to sense their needs, and to develop appropriate products and services that either meet or exceed those requirements.” To do this, though, the firm must operate as a learning organization that shares knowledge across its width and depth.

Chapters 11, 12, and 13 explore how a marketing mentality and learning organization approach apply to management practices. The desired
outcome is a decision-making process characterized by shared knowledge, trust, and situational learning. In the concluding chapters, the author recommends scenario planning as a viable way to estimate future conditions and to develop appropriate organizational responses.

This is a frustrating and ultimately disappointing read. On the plus side, he brings in ideas of others in potentially useful ways. For example, the introduction of the three business models is an interesting framework for considering business design options. His calls for effective practices in decision making and learning from customers are sound, even if jaded elements from today’s standard consulting canon. His descriptions of GM’s supposed attempts to change are suggestive and indicate initiatives to establish a learning organization design.

Yet, these positives are more than offset by a number of negatives. GM is a prime example of an Old World organization facing the need for profound transformation. A thorough, empirical, and nuanced analysis of attempts at transformation would be very enlightening, and although he suggests a transformation process, the analysis is too superficial and one-sided. He seems to concentrate as much on plans and projections—what should happen—as on what actually did happen, relying on broad and sweeping claims with rather shallow evidence. Consider his description of GM’s response to developing a business plan for the new competitive world, where he posits that “GM is now positioned to use its existing business competencies and resources to lead by introducing a new business design that improves the customer-relationship experience with GM products and services . . . .” One of the bulleted points supposedly backing this claim is that GM has a database of over 30 million customers with which it can communicate on a personal and frequent basis. To say that a firm is in a position says nothing about how well it actually executes in that position, however, and the possession of a large database is not the same as saying whether, how, and/or to what effect it is being used. In short, there is a recurring frustration with his expository approach.

The supporting evidence reads more like news releases from GM’s PR function (which it sometimes is), and the evidence does not seem to be critically analyzed or assessed. The net effect is that his illustrations about GM’s transformation come across as self-serving, simplistic, and, finally, unconvincing. Compounding this approach is a tendency to talk about GM as a reified, anthropomorphized abstract, that is, that “GM” learned something or “GM” did this. There’s little insight into the issues, people, and dynamics involved in the process.

A final issue with this book is that, given GM’s recent plight (see, for example, Naughton, 2006, or White & McCracken, 2006), the entire up-beat, congratulatory tone of the book seems to be seriously disconnected from reality. If all these transformations have in fact occurred, why are
dire predictions about GM’s future still being made? I kept thinking of John DeLorean’s (Wright, 1979) account of GM’s insular executive culture, where executives could operate in a top-floor, oak-paneled fantasy world. The discrepancies between what he says took place and the today’s apparent reality kept making me think that that disconnect has not been overcome. General readers may find his account of GM’s recent attempts at transformation suggestive, but advanced readers would be advised to spend their time with Haeckel (1999) instead.

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I recently searched Amazon.com for texts on organization development (OD). When I used the search term, organization development, I found 18,645 hits. A casual scan indicated that quite a few of the books in this category were published after 2000. This volume of literature suggests that people are buying books on organization development. I know that I buy one or two books a year on this topic.

In my consulting practice I continue to use my organization development skills as I work with senior-level leaders and teams on topics ranging from organization design to continuous improvement to team building and retreats. Organization development is an important part of my consulting practice.

My primary professional affiliation is with the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. I no longer am a member of the Organization Development Network.

I present this information to underscore the facts that I am familiar with the field, that I do stay fairly current with the literature, and that I have clients who value the organization development skills that I bring to them.

I was quite surprised, therefore, when the authors made a quite convincing case that OD has lost its impact since its foundation almost 50 years
ago and that, for the most part, the field has been marginalized. The authors stress that OD should be highly relevant to organizations today given the many challenges that face organizations. Yet, senior leaders make little use of OD.

I suddenly realized that the authors were talking about my practice. Over the past 20 years I have slowly integrated more and more industrial engineering concepts into my OD work as my clients were asking for support on projects that had a much stronger continuous improvement orientation.

Bradford and Burke have assembled a group of 14 (including themselves as editors and contributors) very distinguished names in the field of OD. In 11 chapters, the authors present their views on the current state of OD and what OD practitioners need to do to “save” OD.

Burke and Bradford offer, in Chapter 1, a general definition of OD:

> OD is one form of organization change. Based on (1) a set of values, largely humanistic; (2) application of the behavioral sciences; and (3) open system theory, OD is a system wide process of planned change aimed toward improving overall organization effectiveness by way of enhanced congruence of such key organizational dimensions as external environment, mission, strategy, leadership, culture, structure, information and reward systems, and work policies and procedures.

After providing a brief history of OD, they offer the questions to which the other 12 leaders in the field responded:

1. If OD is potentially so much more relevant today that when it started, what happened?
2. Where did it go off the tracks?
3. Is it possible to regain the relevance it would appear to deserve?

Each of the chapters is interesting, provocative, and well written. As a group the authors generally agree on a number of points. I have addressed these points in the remainder of this review.

**OD is in the hospital**

One author, Harvey, suggests that OD is in intensive care and should have its tubes removed. The other authors take less extreme positions, although they would agree that OD has lost its luster and needs to be rejuvenated. Greiner and Cummings point out that, “At its core, OD brings a concern for and set of methods to address issues of change, process, and relationship—all conducted within a value set of participation, openness, and trust. But in our opinion this is not enough to move ahead. These early precepts have to be modified and better integrated with the realities of problems facing today’s organizations.”
OD has lost market share

OD practitioners missed an important opportunity in the 1980s when organizations began to look seriously at continuous improvement, reengineering, and change management. The international management consulting companies (e.g., BearingPoint, Cap Gemini, IBM Business Consulting Services) recognized the business opportunity. The change management consultants, and not the OD consultants, now work closely with the CEOs and the heads of major divisions on transforming the world’s corporations. Today these consulting firms are focusing on “lean” enterprises, mergers and acquisitions, and six sigma applications.

OD has lost relevance

The humanistic concepts of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s do not have the same drawing power today. OD practitioners need better grounding in the fundamentals of business, in anthropology, in culture, and in change management. They need to think, talk, and behave like business people. Practitioners need to become conversant with new developments in the field including organizational learning, future search conferences, large group interventions, and appreciative inquiry. Practitioners must acknowledge that organization leaders are not the enemy and that return on investment should be part of the conversation.

OD practice needs to be theory based

The “pioneers” of OD were primarily university based or regular readers of relevant research. Over the years, practitioners began to come from much more varied backgrounds. Today there are no entry-level hurdles or requirements to be met before calling oneself an OD consultant. Academic researchers continue to be interested in theory. Practitioners focus on implementation and the methods and techniques to effect change. Integration and communication between these two groups remain a priority. Practitioners need to do more than simply use OD techniques.

I found this text to be very sobering. I encourage all OD practitioners to read it. I strongly encourage students in OD programs to read it.

Reviewed by Alessia D’Amato, Center for Creative Leadership, Brussels, Belgium.

This book is definitively one to recommend to anyone in a service business, although, according to the authors, the primary audiences for the book are researchers in organizational studies, I-O psychologists, and
human resource managers. In this book, the authors use a very critical eye to put forward the strengths and weaknesses of studies on service and service quality. They very clearly report how much has been attained in the field, but on the other hand provide evidence that in one research tradition the external customer has been hardly recognized, while in another tradition little emphasis has been placed upon the operational issues associated with service delivery (e.g., the design of service facilities).

The starting point of the book is a discussion of selected relevant theories and practices of service quality. Although there is nothing really new on this subject in this book, its contribution is to put the complexity of the field into an organic and disciplined order. Research and theories that emerged from different fields of research and interest (e.g., marketing, I-O psychology, and OB) acquire a new light and unexpected connections when they are merged in an organized structure in which all of the pieces of the puzzle have finally been put in their right place.

The book starts with a debate on the why of service quality; it explains how the research interest emerged, what service is, and why service quality is an important topic to study. It discusses in detail the thinking and empirical research on the delivery of customer service from disciplines such as marketing and organizational studies (I-O psychology, OB, and HRM). It includes an essential reporting of the history of quality service over the past 25 years, which is all but exhaustive but leads straight to the point the authors want to make: that is, the triangulation between the different research traditions. After a seemingly didactic look at the concept of service with the basic question “what is service?” and the analysis of its foundational qualities—(relative) intangibility and inseparability, simultaneous production and consumption, and heterogeneity—the reader is introduced to the functional quality, the how of the service delivery, as opposed to the technical quality, the what of the delivery process. Building from this, the next step is to define what quality is, and a user-based approach is displayed—rather than a philosophical and a technical one—which is adopted throughout the book. In the author’s words, “the features of service delivery match a subjective, user-based approach to quality considerably better than they match an objective, technical approach. The user-based perspective has therefore become the main approach to assessing quality in the services literature.”

Leading concepts of the book are the very well-known service profit chain and the metaphor of the satisfaction mirror (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997). The service profit chain starts with an emphasis on the internal functioning of the organization and its impact on the final profit, which shows that success does not happen by itself but needs to be planned and followed up. Effort must be put into providing employees with tools and resources to successfully fulfill their duties. This will impact the
service provided to the internal as well as to the external customers, will be a valuable marketing tool, and will generate customer loyalty, resulting in a steadier stream of revenues for the company.

From this assumption, the next chapter develops the idea of how service quality is defined and measured from the customers’ vantage point: that is, to trace the evolution of the definition and measurement of service quality as perceived by customers, using as a starting point the seminal work of Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) and the SERVQUAL survey. Keeping with the tradition of Schneider’s writings, a major issue in the research is valid measurement, and the authors tackle the problem of valid measurement of service quality. The interested reader will find here suggestions and warnings about tailor-made approaches to service quality measurement. As the authors state in reference to validated instruments, “the content remains the same in its focus on visible aspects of the service delivery process, but the form of the dimension is very different for... industries. Each dimension... can be made specific for a particular industry or organization.”

The bridge between service quality and customer satisfaction is put in place, and light is shed on the distinctions between the two seemingly similar constructs, which become strictly different when the measurement process is analyzed. The reader will learn how the measurement of quality is a perception, even though relative to expectations, whereas the measurement of satisfaction is an evaluation.

Chapter 3 covers the operations management (OM) approach toward studying service, one of the parameters of interest of the organization. The central question is what the firm does to yield the experiences that customers have, taking into account simultaneously—as much as possible—the delivery processes, the systems, the employees, and the customers. Following a discussion of the variability of customers, several models are presented (e.g., the customer-contact model of service delivery, the classifications of services for aiding marketing programs). Some major points are debated, such as the involvement of the customer in the process and procedures in this direction. A conclusion of the third chapter is the acknowledgment that the presence and the participation of the customer in the service production, as well as the interaction with the employees, have received so far little attention from HRM/OB researchers, leading to service climate as the focus of these two disciplines.

Even though the involvement and the level of knowledge of the literature, as well as the personal interest of the authors, are very high throughout the book, the most engaging chapter is the one on organizational climate and climate for service. In a few dozen pages, the history of the development of the concept of climate for service and the latest empirical studies are extensively explored. The first point is how members of service firms experience the motivational tactics and leadership practices focused
on delivering superior service quality to customers. A psychological perspective is adopted: “Organizations are defined by the experiences and perceptions of their member as by their structure, their physical layout, and other seemingly more objective data that may exist on or about them.” Climate for service is defined as the degree to which the internal functioning of an organization is experienced as one focused on service quality.

If a criticism can be made of this chapter, it would be about the discussion of methodological issues related to levels of analysis. Although surely a very important topic for the authors, it is not so relevant for the readers in this specific context. The interested reader could easily refer to the specific literature on the subject, which is widely published. Very enlightening for the newcomers to this field is the causality path for service quality, from customers to employees. Much more relevant for everyone, and well presented, is the focus on a very practical issue: how to create a climate for service. Which are the elements to focus on to create and/or change a service climate? Leadership and the foundations of the construct—work facilitation and internal service—are called out as causal, generating the HRM (e.g., training, selection, performance appraisal, and compensation) and market segmentation.

The final chapter integrates the emphasis on HRM issues with a marketing and operations management approach, and provides suggestions for future research directions.

My overall feeling about this book is that for all its apparent simplicity, it requires two readings: the first because the focused theoretical background makes the reader want to see the conclusions; the second because of the enjoyable writing style, the strict linkages between the chapters, as well as the good practices that are spread throughout the book. These good practices, as well as repeated suggestions about gaps in knowledge and the literature that can be useful for both professionals and scientists, calls for a second reading to focus on specific issues of interest.

REFERENCES


Reviewed by Gary B. Brumback, Palm Coast, FL.

The authors, both law professors, note at the very outset of their book that the average pay of a CEO of a large, public corporation in 2003 was
500 times the pay of an average worker. That ought to be unconscionable to anyone with any notion of sensible and equitable pay and the practical limits on what any CEO can do single handedly to boost corporate performance (the authors cite one study showing only 30% of stock price changes reflect corporate performance). Having argued for a high–low income ratio of nine to one in his time, I wonder if Plato would be indignant today.

Although acknowledging “outrage costs” when shareholders and the general public learn of give-away compensation, the authors deliberately avoid taking any moral stand on the issue. Their perspective, instead, is theoretical and practical. It is theoretical because the authors espouse a theory they claim explains why executive performance is, in their view, insensitive to that part of compensation intended to drive performance, namely equity-based incentives, or stock ownership. It is practical because, if their theory is valid, a better understanding of executive pay setting could lead, in their opinion, to a recoupling of executive pay and performance and a significant increase in shareholder wealth.

Their theory, the “managerial power model,” competes with at least five alternative models, all seeking to explain why and how financial incentives are becoming a larger part of executives’ compensation. Theorists naturally defend their theories, so throughout the book the authors rebut rival theories. The debate does not stop at the end of the book, as the authors have since engaged in an “exchange” with a management professor who presents some compelling counterarguments (Bebchuk & Fried, 2006; Conyon, 2006).

Their dominant rival is known as the “principal/agent model.” It underlies existing corporate law and governance arrangements and has, the authors note, guided most empirical research. Basically, this model argues that compensation committees of boards of directors, who represent the principals (i.e., dispersed owners), negotiate “at arm’s length” with the agents (i.e., CEOs) to set executive pay. Supposedly by keeping their distance and objectivity and by recognizing their obligations to the principals, committees establish cost-effective contracts with agents that are intended to motivate agents to manage the corporation well and to increase the principals’ wealth.

It does not work that way at all according to the authors. What really happens, they argue, is that CEOs, through their powerful influence, set their own pay and increase their own wealth. As for shareholders, they are taken to the cleaners. Compensation committees have had, as I ad lib the authors’ model, “their arms broken by strong-armed robbers,” or have been overwhelmed by, as I can imagine author and political commentator Arianna Huffington (2003) saying, the tough “pigs at the trough.” (I’m
trying to inject some humor into this review because the book is dreadfully dry and definitely not a page turner).

Well, maybe the authors are right and their rivals are not. But how do the authors know that compensation committees’ arms are broken? They do not know, which is precisely why they have a theory. They do not sit in on negotiations. They do not “cross examine” CEOs and committees. They simply believe that the presence of costly but useless incentives is evidence of the absence of arms-length contracting and that their model best explains why that is so.

In case you are curious about the four other rivals, and I think you should be if you are at all interested in the subject, and before I finish this review, here they are in a nutshell, as I label and understand them. One is the market model that predicts changes in executive pay when there are changes in the supply of and demand for CEOs. Another is the better board model that predicts CEOs will justifiably demand more incentives when boards are making them work harder. A third is the turbulence model that predicts greater executive compensation when the corporation is buffeted by strong outside forces such as major technological changes in the industry. The fourth is the accounting model that predicts changes in executive pay based on how strict or lenient is the accounting for the equity component of pay.

Remember, now, that the authors are lawyers, so if you read this book, be ready to wade through a lot of analytical arguments. For instance, the authors consume one chapter just to offer plausible reasons to doubt that outside and supposedly independent directors on the board and its compensation committee (a criterion of the better board model) will engage in arm’s-length bargaining. The authors’ basic rebuttal is that a CEO can easily make outsiders dependent on the CEO in over a dozen ways, such as, to cite just a few, influencing nominations of directors who want to keep their seats, encouraging or discouraging increases in director pay, and lavishing perks and other rewards on the directors. The authors consume another chapter just to rebut the accounting model’s explanation of the widespread failure of corporations to reduce “windfall” options, and yet another chapter to rebut the market model. And so on it goes.

The author’s model naturally is given prime exposure throughout the book. Besides their rebuttals of the alternative models, the authors cite numerous findings from the research literature that they believe can only be fully explained or predicted by their model. For instance, once anti-takeover defenses are deployed against hostile bidders, the subsequently less vulnerable CEOs extract significantly greater pay concessions. These CEOs, the authors argue, have used their influence to protect and enhance themselves even further.
Such defensive measures are just one example of the unscrupulous ways in which CEOs are presumed to abuse their power over compensation committees. Other examples the authors discuss include “camouflaging” compensation contracts to minimize outrage costs, obtaining “stealth wealth” that is never reported, increasing the value of options when stock prices fall, trading on inside information, securing a generous but sham consulting contract upon retiring, and arranging for a “soft landing” (i.e., with a “golden parachute”) if dismissed. The last two examples seem to demonstrate CEO power even when it is going out the door. In the broadest sense, if you ask me, any element of executive pay without performance, especially excessive pay, is fraudulent and not unlike embezzlement (that may be the moralist coming out in me).

Although the book’s main aim is to explain rather than solve the problem, some “partial remedies” are offered in the last two chapters for how to improve compensation packages and corporate governance. Legislative reform is not proposed because the authors contend that the judiciary is “ill equipped” to judge the matter and, thus, usually defers to the “business judgment rule.” But neither the judiciary nor that rule need be taken as sacrosanct. For lawyers who author a critical analysis not to go on to propose legal reforms as one means to curb abusive power is perplexing in light of arguments by some authoritative critics that legal reforms are absolutely necessary (see, e.g., Drutman & Cray, 2004).

The book ought to be titled “pay without performance management.” The authors are so narrowly focused on financial incentives being “insensitive” to performance that they fail to determine what should be the role of the board in setting performance expectations for CEOs and in appraising their performance against those expectations. The right kind of expectations and an honest appraisal ought to make oversized pay for undersized performance less likely or at least more conspicuous. Of course, there is every reason to believe that CEOs who operate according to the author’s theory will control the entire performance management cycle, not just the pay decisions.

The authors’ view of performance is also too narrow. To them, performance that does not increase shareholder wealth is unacceptable. But increased shareholder wealth is neither the sine qua non of corporate greatness nor even in some cases a legitimate corporate objective. How could, for instance, increased shareholder wealth created through corporate wrongdoing be considered legitimate?

The authors would welcome good compensation contracts. To me, however, any compensation contract is an inherently bad management practice. It should be abolished and the role of compensation committees minimized. Contracts and committees accommodate and legitimize a CEO’s manipulative schemes and are no substitute for genuine
performance management conducted by the whole board in “arms’-length collaboration” with the CEO.

Common to all of the theoretical models, including the authors’, is an underlying premise of financial incentives that puzzles me. It is presumed that CEOs are “risk averse” and must be financially motivated by performance incentives to take risks to increase shareholder wealth. Yet, financial incentives in the form of stock offerings are considered risky, particularly compared to base salary that is normally kept disconnected from firm performance, and thus, CEOs are presumed to “prefer a smaller amount of risk-free cash to risk incentive compensation” (and apparently, there is a move away from stock options to cash incentives). Go figure. Obviously, though, there is little or no risk if CEOs actually do set the parameters and are smart and devious enough in doing it!

An I-O psychological perspective on performance management at the top might be illuminating but this perspective is nowhere to be found in the book, and almost all of the nearly 40 pages of footnotes represent the fields of law and economics. Had the authors’ perspective been broader, the prominent work by Lawler and his colleagues probably would have been mentioned (e.g., Conger, Lawler, Finegold, 2001; Lawler, 1990; 2000).

I am ambivalent about this book, but I have decided to endorse it anyway. I would like to think there are a few I-O psychologists who would be interested in examining all six theories, adding their own, and keeping company with Lawler et al. If you are one of them or if you should decide to read the book for whatever reason, consider reading also the exchange articles I mentioned. Conyon’s arguments and citation of evidence contrary to the managerial power model are hard to dismiss. Nevertheless, my intuition says this model makes the most sense among the rival theories, and seems consistent with all of the literature I have read about imperial CEOs and abusive corporate power (see, e.g., Korten, 2001).

REFERENCES


Reviewed by Gary L. May, Associate Professor of Management, Clayton State University, Morrow, GA.

Working and learning collaboratively in an online environment has become an integral part of both business practice and the higher education process. Palloff and Pratt, experienced online instructors and educational consultants, tapped into this trend early and have produced a series of books about online learning, including *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace* (1999), *Lessons from the Cyberspace Classroom* (2001), and the *Virtual Student* (2003). *Collaborating Online* is their latest entry in the series. I have read all the Palloff and Pratt books and found them to be useful in both my teaching and my consulting practice.

*Collaborating Online* is more of a “how to” book, intended as a guide to building community and making collaboration work in a virtual environment. The book is divided into two parts, with the first part providing some basic concepts about collaboration in an online context and the second part outlining example collaborative activities.

Part I consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 reviews some basic theory about collaboration and working with virtual teams. Collaboration refers to learners working together in pairs or small groups to achieve shared learning goals, such as solving a problem, completing a task, or creating a product. The authors define the interactive nature of collaboration and community building and make the case for positive impact on learning. I like how the authors integrate relevant research into their discussion, providing a good set of references for readers who want to dig deeper. Another useful section in this chapter discusses virtual team dynamics and provides a model of the elements of effective online groups.

Chapter 2 lays out the process for achieving successful online collaboration and provides tools for the instructor to assist a group in moving through that process. The main point of this chapter is that collaboration doesn’t just happen. It takes planning and coordination on the part of the instructor to carry out collaborative activities successfully in an online class, so there is a useful discussion of the steps an instructor should follow along with some tips for successfully navigating each phase. The steps include setting the stage, creating the environment, guiding
the process, and evaluating the process. The authors also present some good examples of instructor communication, such as explaining to the students why they will be working in groups, providing clear guidelines and expectations for the work to be done, and offering guidelines for team agreements.

Chapter 3 is one of the most useful chapters because it addresses the many challenges that instructors face when implementing collaborative activities online, such as lack of participation, problems with leadership and decision making, poor instructional design, and cultural differences. The biggest issue is that some students prefer independent study and often resist collaborative activities. They may have had bad experiences in other courses or do not want to exert the extra time required to coordinate with others to complete a task. This chapter gives some good suggestions for dealing with negative student attitudes and equipping students to collaborate more effectively, such as providing instruction and information about conflict management and conflict resolution.

Chapter 4 addresses assessment and evaluation of collaborative work. This chapter was a disappointment for me. Driven by accrediting agencies, assessment and documentation of learning is a critical issue in higher education today. I serve on our school’s assessment committee and we’ve worked many hours on developing a comprehensive approach to assessment across the curriculum. Our goal is to document that graduating students indeed know what they are supposed to know and can do it on a course by course, student by student basis. As I’ve learned from experience, this is especially challenging in an online course that is collaborative in design. Palloff and Pratt provide some examples of rubrics and check sheets, but their emphasis is more on evaluating the collaborative process (e.g., how the team worked together) than the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes by student. I agree with them that tests and quizzes are only a small part of the equation and projects, papers, and portfolios should play an important role in assessment. But I was looking for more specific “how to” examples in this chapter. In addition, I believe they overemphasize self-reflection and peer assessments, which often have problems with validity and reliability (see, for example, May & Gueldenzoph, 2006).

Part II of the book identifies 13 different types of collaborative activities (e.g., role playing, simulations, case studies, Web quests) and provides an example of each along with tips for the instructor. I found this section very practical and picked up some ideas for course design. For example, Palloff and Pratt provide a useful template for setting up a debate, which can be a lively and fun way to help learners engage with one another while raising the level of critical thinking in the course by pushing students to prepare material to support their own position and to evaluate the positions of others.
Despite the criticism about the assessment chapter, I think Palloff and Pratt achieve their objective of providing a useful primer on using collaboration in online learning. The book is well organized, their style is easy to read, and the content is drawn from years of practical experience. *Collaborating Online* will be a valuable resource for anyone involved in developing and delivering online learning.

**REFERENCE**


Reviewed by John W. Fleenor, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, NC.

Surowiecki, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, begins *The Wisdom of Crowds* with an anecdote involving Sir Francis Galton, the founder of differential psychology. After watching a weight-judging competition at a livestock fair in the fall of 1906, Galton was surprised to discover that the average of the individual guesses of the crowd accurately predicted the weight of an ox. In fact, the group average was closer to the ox’s actual weight than most the individual guesses of the crowd members, including cattle experts, farmers, and butchers.

Galton posited that when individual judgments of group members are aggregated, they can be very accurate, often more so than the most intelligent members. In his book, Surowiecki uses findings such as Galton’s (primarily from psychology and economics) to explore implications of the concept that large groups are more intelligent than the select few. The aggregation of information in groups, therefore, can result in decisions that are far superior to decisions made by individual members of that group. The group, however, is not necessarily more intelligent than every individual member—some individuals may be smarter, for example, when stock market decisions are involved. It is unusual, however, that a particular individual will be as consistently accurate as the group. There are some similarities between this idea and statistical sampling theory that is, that a random sample of individuals will be more representative of the population of possible outcomes, thus resulting in better predictions.

When a crowd consists of diverse, independent, decentralized individuals, their aggregated responses will be more accurate than even the
predictions of experts. Surowiecki presents a number of anecdotes to illustrate this argument, including the following:

On the television show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, contestants are asked a series of questions. When stumped, they have the option of telephoning a smart friend or polling the studio audience. Although smart friends were right 65% of the time, the audience was correct 91% of the time.

Immediately after the 1986 *Challenger* explosion, the stock price of Morton Thiokol fell well below that of the other companies that were involved in building the shuttle. Six months later, the cause of the explosion was determined to be the booster rocket O-ring seals, which were manufactured by Morton Thiokol.

The history of the Olds automobile company is similar to the histories of most new industries—a glut of alternatives in the early days, followed by a winnowing out of the winners. The winners are the companies that incorporate the most effective technologies in their products, as decided on by the wisdom of crowds (customers). Although this process may seem inefficient, the diversity of ideas allows meaningful differences among early concepts, not just minor variations on a theme. The system works because it is able to recognize losers and kill them off quickly.

According to Surowiecki, there are several advantages to the wisdom of crowds—their judgments are faster, more reliable, and less subject to politics than decisions made by committees or experts. In order to be wise, however, a crowd must possess the following qualities: diversity of opinion, independence of thought, decentralization of knowledge, in addition to a method for aggregating judgments into a collective decision.

Applications of the wisdom of crowds are currently found in three major categories: prediction markets, Delphi methods, and opinion polls. The most common application is the prediction market, which a speculative or betting market created to make verifiable predictions. Assets (or wagers) are cash values tied to specific outcomes (e.g., who will win the election) or parameter (e.g., a company’s revenue). Current market prices indicate the probability of the event or the expected value of the parameter. Delphi methods are tools that elicit, judge, and aggregate the collective value of ideas. Opinion polls are surveys designed to measure the opinions of a population by asking questions of a representative sample then extrapolating the responses to the population.

According to Surowiecki, prediction markets are the most successful. Unlike opinion polls, prediction markets can forecast outcomes very accurately. For example, prediction markets ask, “Who will win the election,” rather than “Who will you vote for?” as do opinion polls. When people have an opportunity to express an opinion regarding the outcome rather than reporting their choices, the collective wisdom tends to be correct.
The Iowa Electronic Markets (IEM), which is made up of about 800 individuals who buy and sell futures on different election outcomes, is often more accurate than national polls. Futures markets like the IEM exist for Hollywood box office receipts, news, and sports. They work because they possess the fundamental characteristics of groups that are key to making good predictions—diversity, independence, and decentralization.

Surowiecki voices strong support for prediction markets. He describes the success of public and internal corporate markets as evidence that a collection of individuals with varying points of view, but with the same motivations, can produce an accurate aggregate prediction. According to Surowiecki, group predictions have been shown to be more reliable than the decisions of any individual expert. He advocates extension of the existing futures markets into unconventional areas such as the prediction of terrorist activity.

To support his argument, Surowiecki indicates that his publisher is able to publish more compelling books by relying on individual authors to bring book concepts to them. The publishers are, therefore, able to tap into the wisdom of a much larger crowd than would be possible with an inhouse team.

However, not all crowds are wise, as reflected by panic selling during stock market slides. Surowiecki discusses situations in which groups make poor decisions, which occurs when group members conform rather than reflect independently. This “groupthink” phenomenon contributed to failures such as the Columbia shuttle disaster, where the NASA hierarchy ignored the wisdom of rank-and-file engineers. Surowiecki also describes the failure of the U.S. intelligence community to prevent the 9–11 attacks because of its inability to share critical information among the various agencies.

To be wise, groups must be diverse. Groups with diverse knowledge and skills make better decisions than homogenous groups or one or two experts. Diversity adds different perspectives, which improves the group’s problem-solving abilities. Groups that contain only smart people may not excel at decision making because the members duplicate each another’s skills. According to Surowiecki, adding individuals who may not be as smart, but have different skills, will improve the ability of the group to make good decisions.

This book is a well-written and fascinating account of the wisdom of crowds. Although it is written for a lay audience, readers of this journal will find many parallels to their own work. For example, the relative merits of aggregated judgments versus clinical prediction has long been debated in the psychological literature. As posited by Surowiecki, aggregated judgments (i.e., the wisdom of crowds) appear to be superior (see, for example, Pynes, Bernardin, Benton, & McEvoy, 1988).
The persistence of prejudice and of discrimination is one of the major reasons why [affirmative action] is still needed today and is likely to be needed for decades to come.” So conclude Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen in their chapter, Understanding Affirmative Action, in the current edition of the Annual Review of Psychology. Because race has been one of the dominant variables of interest for our profession over the past 40 years, I was hopeful their review would shine some nonpartisan light on this contentious policy.

There are two major arguments for affirmative action, according to the authors. One is that it is needed to assure diversity. Do affirmative action policies assure diversity? When college admissions policies are race sensitive, more Blacks are admitted and, according to a prestigious study by Bowen and Bok published in 1998, they graduate at the same rate as Whites. Could the same results have been obtained through a policy focusing on social class instead of race, as some have argued would be preferable? Not according to one analysis with which the authors seem to concur.

In another study, of law school admissions, affirmative action policies placed Blacks in higher-tier schools than comparably qualified Whites. Blacks were subsequently less likely to graduate or to pass the bar. The researchers invoked the “mismatch” hypothesis to explain these results and to suggest that affirmative action actually resulted in fewer Blacks with law degrees practicing law. However, Crosby et al. enumerate a litany of flaws in the study. One suggestion that they presumably endorse is that the mismatch interpretation fails to acknowledge “the truth” that simply attending law school “contributes to a considerable boost in annual earnings” for Blacks.

The authors clearly favor the notion that diversity is a good thing and cite studies that show “positive learning outcomes” and “positive ‘democracy outcomes’” for students, both Black and White. They admit

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1Views expressed are the reviewer’s and not necessarily those of the North Carolina Office of State Personnel.
there is less evidence of its benefits in work settings. Introducing diversity has its costs (e.g., “initial friction and turnover”), but lab studies show that heterogeneous groups outperform homogeneous groups—under narrowly defined conditions.

The second argument for affirmative action is that it promotes fairness. This is a paradoxical claim in that many Americans oppose affirmative action precisely because they believe it is unfair. How this paradox is reconciled requires a few twists of logic. To the argument that affirmative action “disrupts meritocracy,” the authors point out that Whites have long benefited from policies that also disrupt meritocracy, such as legacies in education and, in business, personnel decisions that are “often based on habit or business exigencies.”

More substantively, they then point out that affirmative action is needed because discrimination still exists in the United States. Recent studies confirming the stubborn persistence of racism are quite convincing—in many everyday situations, Blacks get the short straw. (Coincidentally, Skitka and Sargis, in their chapter, The Internet as Psychological Laboratory, describe a study of ethnic discrimination on a German auction Web site. It took sellers with Turkish names longer to receive payments from winning bidders than sellers with German names. One is sadly inclined to admit the universality of this tendency to give those different from “us” the short straw.)

A compelling argument for affirmative action is that the policy does not depend upon individuals who have been discriminated against to take action, which is the modus operandi of equal employment opportunity. The so-called “denial of personal discrimination” effect, a phenomenon that Crosby discovered, presumably militates against this happening. Rather, affirmative action requires organizations to monitor the numbers and correct any patterns of bias that are detected.

One of the alleged unintended consequences of affirmative action is that it taints its beneficiaries with the belief that they could not have made it on their own, affecting both recipients’ self-esteem and others’ beliefs about the recipients’ abilities. According to the authors, “Under many conditions that are likely to exist in the real world outside the laboratory (e.g., when a person knows she is qualified to do work), the undermining effects of ‘affirmative action privilege’ evaporate.”

A second negative consequence is that the policy can create resentment and tension if it is seen as a form of reverse discrimination. Poorly conceived diversity programs may produce such results, the authors concede, but in general, they claim that Whites exposed to beneficiaries of the policy “tend to appreciate the contact” and “seem to value race-based remedies for discrimination.”

A number of attitudinal studies cited by the authors illustrate just how daunting affirmative action’s task is. In one study, people expressed more
enthusiasm for policies intended to help disabled individuals than those targeting minorities or women, “perhaps because of different judgments of deservingness.”

I began this review citing Crosby et al.’s belief that affirmative action will be required for some time to come. The authors are unashamedly supportive of affirmative action as a means to achieve diversity, so I cannot conclude that theirs is the nonpartisan review for which I was hoping. Their earlier review (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003) does a better job of explaining why they feel compelled to enter the political arena selectively armed with data from the social science literature. It is also a longer review and a more satisfying read. And yes, their *Annual Review* chapter is selective, as all reviews must be. But some of the studies not mentioned are those that arrive at unpleasant conclusions regarding affirmative action. For example, Kochan et al.’s (2003) review that found little support for the policy’s business case—especially for racially or ethnically diverse work teams—is not cited.

As I read Crosby et al.’s chapter, two thoughts kept intruding. One: Is so much bureaucratic regulation required? We have built a minor industry around EEO and affirmative action. I wonder what the cost of regulation is and how much of a productivity sink our obsession with counting people by their race and sex creates. Which leads to thought number two: What happens when the racial makeup of the nation becomes so fragmented and complex that affirmative action programs can no longer clearly define racial groups, let alone determine who is in what racial group?

While skimming the other 21 chapters of this year’s *Annual Review* for material of interest to I-O psychologists, I did a double take when I read: “Achievement goal theory . . . has emerged as one of the most prominent theories of motivation.” Well, perhaps the most prominent in the world of education. (The theory has received some attention in training and development circles.) The gist of this theory, as explained by Meece, Anderman, and Anderman in their chapter, Classroom Goal Structure, Student Motivation, and Academic Achievement, is that students adopt one or the other of two kinds of motives for learning. When they embrace a mastery goal orientation, they strive to develop their abilities; when the focus is on performance goals, they strive to be better than others. Classrooms can be structured to emphasize one orientation over the other. When students transition from elementary to middle school, they generally move from a mastery environment to one that emphasizes performance. And this has deleterious effects on the performance and behavior of many students.

In one study, researchers worked with middle schools to “reform” the learning environment to emphasize mastery goals. The environment was successfully altered and students transitioning into middle school continued to focus on mastery goals and to enjoy the positive outcomes associated
with that orientation. Ironically, the *No Child Left Behind Act*, by emphasizing accountability and testing beginning in the early elementary grades, encourages, if not forces, the institutionalizing of a performance orientation. The research links performance environments to lower motivation and more disruptive behavior, truancy, and cheating in many, but not all, students.

Furthermore, Meece et al. report an “intriguing anomaly” in that students who embrace a mastery orientation perform less well on measures of achievement than performance-oriented students. This calls to mind the old adage that you can expect what you inspect. Although this is a fairly thin chapter, light on both theory and data, it brims with interesting analogies to work motivation and training and development practices.

Other chapters of interest: Check out Skitka and Sargis’s *The Internet as Psychological Laboratory* that I mentioned earlier. They do a nice job of discussing methodology and exploring possible limitations of Web-based research. Ozer and Benet-Martínez, in *Personality and the Prediction of Consequential Outcomes*, offer a broad review of personality as it affects outcomes in three domains: individual (e.g., happiness, physical health), interpersonal (e.g., peer and romantic relationships), and institutional (e.g., occupational choice and performance, political attitudes). Tyler, in *Psychological Perspectives on Legitimacy and Legitimation*, reviews recent work on legitimate power, with particular emphasis on its role in political and legal institutions. Also worthy of a look is Crano and Prislin’s *Attitudes and Persuasion*.

REFERENCES


BOOKS AND MATERIALS RECEIVED*


*The publications listed are either already scheduled for review and/or are included as a new listing. Readers interested in reviewing for *Personnel Psychology* are invited to write our Book Review Editor, Dr. John W. Fleenor, Center for Creative Leadership, One Leadership Place, Greensboro, NC 27410—or e-mail him at fleenorj@leaders.ccl.org—providing information about background and areas of interest.


