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**Review of *Work and the Workplace: A Resource for Innovative Policy and Practice*. Sheila H. Akabas and Paul A. Kurzman.  
Reviewed by Michalle Mor Barak.**

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citizens make informed appraisal of the policy choices before them, leaving them susceptible to partisan propaganda.

Too much in *Quixote's Ghost* is asserted or assumed, and it is the lack of evidence, just as it was with Thomas Frank's best-selling *What's the Matter with Kansas*, that constitutes its fatal flaw. Indeed, Frank's entertaining book is a useful comparison: the more one reads, the less the engaging prose and the provocative theses are able to obscure the thinness and incoherence of what lies beneath. *Quixote's Ghost* seems to be a book about the politics of social policy, but isn't, because it pays too little attention to politics and to policy analysis. Ironically, what Stoesz offers is a work of political philosophy—his own kind of post-modern theory, nearly bereft of the empiricism he so years for.

Stephen Pimpare  
Yeshiva University

Sheila H. Akabas, Ph.D. and Paul A. Kurzman, *Work and the Workplace: A Resource for Innovative Policy and Practice*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. \$ 49.50 hardcover.

The workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will increasingly become leaner, technologically reliant, and more aggressive in pursuit of a healthy bottom-line. The global competition for resources and customers creates tensions between corporations' fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders and their ethical responsibility to their employees, their host communities and the environment. Forward looking work organizations recognize that, amid these trends, recruiting and retaining a productive and loyal workforce is dependent on careful attention to employees' well being and on their ability to assist employees in balancing the often conflicting demands of work and family. Sheila Akabas and Paul Kurzman's book, *Work and the Workplace* is the definitive scholarly text on occupational social work practice. Building on their extensive research, teaching, and practical experiences, the authors review the history, contemporary practices and new professional opportunities for social work in the workplace, and create a comprehensive

resource for management, labor, social service and government organizations.

The book begins with a thorough discussion of the origin and definition of occupational social work in national and international contexts. The first chapter introduces the authors' conceptual framework of occupational social work and sets the foundation for the rest of the book. Their framework is inspired by the Settlement House Movement and is firmly rooted in core social work concepts of ecology, social systems, and person-in-situation perspectives. By carefully delineating these conceptual underpinnings, Akabas and Kurzman demonstrate that practice in the world of work is strongly linked to the social work profession's very foundation. Social work practitioners, regardless of their practice specialization or micro or macro orientation, must understand the complex meaning of work in the lives of service consumers. The authors emphasize the fluid relationship between the "three worlds in which we live"—family, community and work. They note that these worlds are in a continuous state of interaction and mutual interdependence, thus presenting opportunity and challenge for the social work practitioner.

In the second chapter of their book, Akabas and Kurzman provide an insightful discussion of the differential meaning of work in people's lives. They note that people's jobs define who they are more than other characteristics, such as their ancestors, religious affiliation or educational attainment. Of particular importance is the authors' scholarly examination of diversity (gender, race, sexual orientation and disability) as it relates to economic, social, and psychological conditions in the world of work. Chapters three through six examine how practitioners can intervene to foster harmony between work, family and community in people's lives. The authors describe current policy issues in the context of the rapidly changing work environment, examine the corresponding practice issues in occupational and traditional social work settings, and discuss the common problems that are characteristic of work settings. They also identify prevalent models of service delivery and new approaches in occupational social work service delivery systems. Together, these chapters give the reader an exceptionally comprehensive view of micro to macro practice

in the world of work. Chapters seven and eight use employee disability to illustrate the potential for positive impact inherent in collaborations involving management, labor, and government, and examine social workers as workers and social service organizations as employers vis-à-vis issues of productivity, accountability, mobility and unionization in the workplace.

Akabas and Kurzman summarize current trends and potential for the occupational social work field in the ninth and final chapter of their book. Here the authors present their contention that there are many opportunities for making a difference in the lives of people, and in the circumstances facing organizations and communities. By targeting the workplace and acknowledging the significance of work in people's lives, they ably argue that social work is uniquely qualified to further work organization and employee personal goals.

Akabas and Kurzman's book is the finest yet by these recognized leaders of the occupational social work movement in the U.S. and abroad. It expands our understanding of the intricate relationships between employees and their work organizations, and provides a seminal contribution to the scholarly knowledge base of the social work profession. The case examples that are embedded in the text illustrate innovative interventions and evidence-based best practices, and bring to life the more scholarly content. These case examples would be helpful for instructors using this book as a main or supplemental text. This book is an outstanding resource for scholars, policy makers, social workers, union leaders and management practitioners who are interested in improving the well being of workers, work organizations and communities.

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