

The Psychological Impact of Changes in Human-Tech Frontier

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My Perspective

- Counseling and vocational psychologist studying the role of work in the lives of people and communities.
- Major focus has been on expanding the inclusiveness and relevance of vocational psychology to embrace all of those who work and who want to work.
- Developed the psychology of working framework and the psychology of working theory (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, and Autin, 2016).
- Exploring the impact of automation in education and work, with a focus on human rights at work and the Decent Work Agenda (International Labor Organization)

The Psychology of Working Framework

- Research on psychological functioning and work is fundamentally clear:
- At its best, work provides people with critical functions in life:
 - Capacity for survival
 - Capacity for social connection
 - Capacity for self-determination
- The loss of stable or decent work (as per the International Labor Organization framework) is creating many challenges, including shifts toward radical and populist political movements as well as growing levels of disengagement for individuals.

The Psychology of Working Framework

- Work provides an anchor for people, yielding a sense of feeling alive and engaged in the world.
- A new book project is exploring the ways that working can furnish a sense of ...
 - Being part of something bigger than ourselves
 - Being able to care
 - Being the best we can be
 - Being able to work without harassment and oppression

- Being alive in the world

The Meaning of Work

- A key observation of our research is that access to decent work is associated with the capacity to fulfill fundamental human needs, which then leads to well-being and work fulfillment.
- The inverse of this observation is disconcerting:
 - Without decent work, people struggle to root themselves in activities and tasks that provide meaning and purpose.
 - Without decent work, people are more likely to develop challenges in their mental health and family relationships.
 - Without decent work, societies are more likely to fragment and lose coherence.

The Meaning of Work without Work

- Is it possible to have some of the positive aspects of work without a stable and decent job?
- This question is one that we need to explore in research.
- My take is that people need projects and tasks to give their lives meaning and purpose.
- Consider our lives as children:



Some directions forward

- Develop interdisciplinary teams to study these issues.
- Construct a set of studies that will produce a contemporary take on William Julius Wilson's classic, "When Work Disappears".
- It is now essential that we explore what happens "When Work Disappears and/or Evolves into Cyberspace."
 - The findings from Wilson's book helped to make a case for work as essential for individual well-being and the welfare of our communities.
 - We need collaborative research now that will map the same landscape and identify what we are gaining with technology and what we may be losing.

Some directions forward

- In terms of curriculum development, NSF and ITEST can consider the following:
 - Infusing awareness of the changing occupational context into our efforts.
 - Enhance students' critical consciousness about life and work
 - Develop strategies to help students maximize their capacities to interface with technology in education and work.
 - Integrate the STEM focus with needs within the current and future labor market that are not as vulnerable to being taken over by technology:
 - Empathic skills
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Caregiving

Thank you!

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