

Learning Skilled Trades in the Workplace

This open access book describes and explains a fifty-year-old woman's process of developing trade competences. Drawing from daily journal entries, photographs, interviews from 10 fabrication shops, and online forums about trades, this autoethnography details the author's learning process at Howe's Welding and Metal Fabrication, where she has worked for over three years. This book uses accessible, everyday language and draws heavily from personal experience in trades, taking the value of trades as a given and explaining the process of developing the depth and breadth of conceptual and procedural knowledges—the competences—required to work in repair and fabrication shops like Howe's. This book combines a research-derived framework for analyzing scaffolded learning and expertise development with stories of learning how and learning what. Readers will gain a better understanding of knowledge development in trades workplaces, including how one-to-one interactions scaffold knowledge, how workers gradually enter a community of practice, and how workplaces can constrain learning. This book also gives readers a view of workplace learning over time and helps readers—researchers and practitioners—recognize opportunities for development toward expertise. The book is useful for tradespeople, especially newcomers to trades and, in particular, women.

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