Imagining Work

Dr Penny Simpson
7th November 2012

Outline

What is Social Science?

Inductions

What is the ESRC?

Dr Dawn Lyon

Some recent research

Dilys Robinson

Festival of Social Science Events 2012

- This event is part of the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Festival of Social Science week

- This is the 10th annual Festival of Social Science

- This week takes place from 3-10 November 2012

The tenth annual ESRC Festival of Social Science • 3 to 10 November 2012

Our objective today

- Imagining work aims to ask the question of employees "how do you see yourself at work?"

- The event aims to increase awareness of ESRC and other research and introduces new visual and sensory research approaches designed to understand and explore employee perceptions of work, including those that might be taken for granted.

- This is essentially good management and a win:win for employees and organisations.

Presenters

- **Dr Penny Simpson** from the University of Brighton: Chair: recent research highlighting the importance of understanding employees' feelings about work particularly drawing upon more conventional sources of knowledge (quantitative and qualitative)

- **Dilys Robinson** from the Institute for Employment Studies (IES): the use of images and metaphors in research and client projects.

- **Dr Dawn Lyon** from the University of Kent: exploring visual and sensory representations of work. This presentation will draw on current research into the tacit skills of fishmongers to discuss the use of the visual in gaining new insights into work

What is social science?

"Social science is, in its broadest sense, the study of society and the manner in which people behave and influence the world around us" (ESRC, 2012).

Essentially, it is about people!...

About the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

- ESRC are the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues

- It is an independent organisation which receives most of its funding through the Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

- ESRC support independent, high quality research having an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector

- ESRC's total budget for 2012/13 is £205 million

- At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and independent research institutes

ESRC: Mission

The ESRC's role is to:

- promote and support, by any means, high-quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in the social sciences

- advance knowledge and provide trained social scientists who meet the needs of users and beneficiaries, thereby contributing to the economic competitiveness of the UK, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and the quality of life

- provide advice on, disseminate knowledge of and promote public understanding of, the social sciences.

The social sciences: a diversity of research topics

- Environment and energy
- Understanding behaviour
- Technology and innovation
- Health and wellbeing
- Global economy
- Security and conflict
- Social diversity
- Scotland and the question of independence

Benefits of social science research for society (ESRC, 2012)

- Social science affects us daily "at work, in school, when raising children, within our communities, and even at the national level".
- "Effective communication and engagement is key to enabling social science research to inform and influence policy and practice".
- "We are aiming to help people not only understand social science, but also have the skills necessary to question and challenge it".
- Your involvement is encouraged!
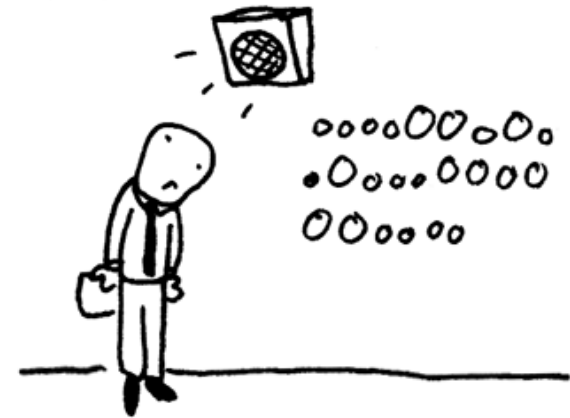
http://www.toothpastefordinner.com/092905/oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.gif

Understanding employee perceptions of work, including those that might be taken for granted : why is it important?

It is a complex picture: we will consider some examples from the ESRC and other recently published work:

1. *Not quite what it seems*: Volunteering
2. *More prevalent than initially thought*: Cyberbullying in the workplace
3. *Understanding influences*: Fuzzy requests
4. *We need less of it:* Toxic emotional experiences
5. *We need more of it* : Happiness

We need better understanding of it all!

ESRC research

1) Volunteering

Part of the presented context for this research by the report (ACSS and ESRC, 2010) was that the Government had been positioning volunteering as an approach to encouraging individuals back into work
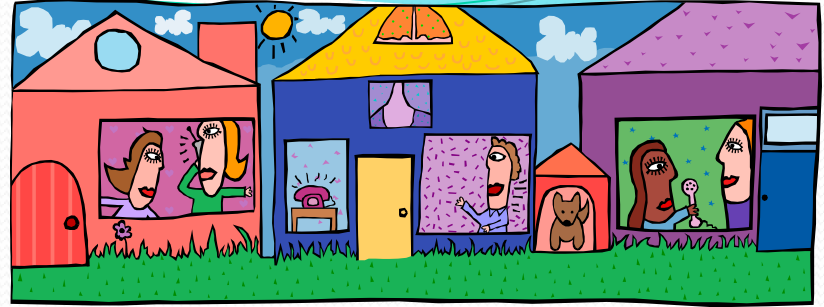
Why do such people volunteer?

HELP WANTED

ESRC funded research by Professor Irene Hardill AcSS of Nottingham Trent University and Dr Sue Baines

(ACSS & ESRC, 2010)

Findings

- "most people volunteer to make a difference in the community rather than for career development"

- "many volunteers are outside the labour market anyway because of their age, disability or care responsibilities"

- "volunteering enhances levels of active citizenship and community spirit in an area and helps people build up a sense of belonging to a place"

- "On a personal level, it can develop an individual's self-confidence and provide a structure for their lives, getting them out of the house and interacting within the community, providing the same sense of meaning and identity that many people find in a satisfying job"   (ACSS & ESRC, 2010)

2) Cyberbullying in the workplace

- Press-release 2nd November 2012

- Dr Christine Sprigg, Dr Carolyn Axtell and Sam Farley of the University of Sheffield, together with Dr Iain Coyne of Nottingham University

- Three separate surveys among UK universities employees asking about their experiences of cyberbullying.

- Surveys included considerations of actions that could be classed as bullying e.g. humiliation, being ignored, being gossiped about

- They asked participants if they had faced such online behaviour online and, if so, how often

ESRC (2012) Press release 2nd November Press release "Cyberbullying in the workplace "worse than conventional bullying"

Findings

- "Of the 320 people who responded to the survey, around eight out of ten had experienced one of the listed cyberbullying behaviours on at least one occasion in the previous six months".

- "14 to 20 per cent experienced them on at least a weekly basis – a similar rate to conventional bullying".

- "Cyberbullying – using modern communications technology such as e-mails, texts or web-postings to abuse people - is as common in the workplace as 'conventional' bullying"

- "Yet, the way cyberbullying influences both the victim and witnesses are more hidden in the workplace"

- "Overall, those that had experienced cyberbullying tended to have higher mental strain and lower job satisfaction" (ESRC, 2012)

Other recently published research

3) Fuzzy requests

- Wang, Beatty, and Liu (2012)
- Employee decision making with "fuzzy" requests
- How employees deal with customers is important

- 21 in depth interviews
- Web panel of 411 respondents
- National survey
- Retail employees

Findings

Customers affiliative style
"liking begets liking, with positive emotions being contagious or echoed back"

Customers dominant style
"employee adopting a defensive stance and judging the customers' request to be less legitimate, thereby reducing his or her likelihood to comply with the request"

Wang, Beatty, and Liu (2012)

4) Negative emotions at work (Keifer and Barclay, 2012)

- In the study of Keifer and Barclay (2012) the negative emotions (such as anger or frustration) were explored across three dimensions

1. Psychologically reoccurring "not again"
2. Disconnecting "heart sank"
3. Draining "felt isolated"

They termed these "Toxic Emotional Experiences"

Findings

One part of their findings

Negative emotions → **-ve Psychological health**

-ve Attitudes towards the organisation

-ve Performance

Simpson interpretation and model of the findings of Kiefer and Barclay (2012)

Findings

One part of their findings

Negative emotions → **Toxic emotional experiences (TEEs)**

Reoccurring
Disconnecting
Draining

Combined score

Simpson interpretation and model of the findings of Kiefer and Barclay (2012)

Findings

One part of their findings
Separate analyses

Negative emotions

Note: there were differing results for the individual TEE dimensions as compared with the composite score

Toxic emotional experiences (TEEs)

Reoccurring Disconnecting Draining

Combined score

Partial mediation

-ve
Psychological health

-ve
Attitudes towards the organisation

Partial mediation

-ve
Performance

Full mediation

Simpson interpretation and model of the findings of Kiefer and Barclay (2012)

Negative emotions at work (Keifer and Barclay, 2012)

One conclusion is that we need to "understand *how* emotions are experienced at work" (Kiefer and Barclay, 2012, p600)

5. Happiness

- Hot off the press......

- At least one pair of researchers (der Meer and Wielers, 2013) claim to have found the answer to "What makes workers happy?"

- "Challenging work with a high level of autonomy makes the workers happy, work pressure makes workers unhappy" (der Meer and Wielers, 2013, p357)

One local approach to happiness: 'Action for Happiness in Brighton'

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

"Taking action to increase happiness in Brighton"

http://www.actionforhappiness-inbrighton.org.uk/

Some traditional research approaches

......to understanding employee perceptions

- Performance management meetings and appraisals
- Organisational questionnaire surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups

Example from my own research: Motivation: which you think are the five most important factors in a job for you. Please rank them 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important factor and 5 being the 5th most important factor"

Examples of some more innovative research approaches

- **Expressive writing e.g.** Barclay L. & Skarlicki, D. P. (2009). Healing the wounds of organizational injustice: Examining the benefits of expressive writing. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94 511-523.

- **Diary methods e.g.** Bolger, N., Davis, A., & Rafaeli, E. (2003) Diary methods: Capturing life as it is lived. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 579-616

Examples of some more innovative research approaches

- **Narratives e.g.** Lawrence, T. B., & Maitlis, S. (2012). Care and possibility: enacting an ethic of care through narrative practice. *Academy of Management Review, 37(4), 641-663.*

Further examples of some more innovative research approaches

- **Netnography e.g.** Miley, F., & Read, A. (2012). Jokes in popular culture: The characterisation of the accountant. Accounting, *Auditing and Accountability Journal, 25*(4), 703-718.

- **Drama e.g.** Hayat, K. And S. Walton (2012) Delivering Equality and Diversity Training Within a University Setting Through Drama-Based Training. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*, Volume 3, Number 3, 1 October 2012 , pp. 59-74(16)

More innovative approaches

to understanding and exploring employee perceptions of work, including those that might be taken for granted.

that leads me to…….

- Dilys Robinson: the use of images and metaphors in research and client projects.

- Dr Dawn Lyon: exploring visual and sensory representations of work.

Additional references

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Francis, C. A. (2012). Employee impressions of a manager: Computerized simulation predictions. *Simulation and Gaming, 43(2), 215-235.*

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Robert, C., & Wilbanks, J. E. (2012). The Wheel Model of humor: humor events and affect in organizations. *Human relations 65(9), 1071-1099.*

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Wood, S., van Veldhoven, M., Croon M. and L. M. de Menezes, (2012) Enriched job design, high involvement management and organizational performance: The mediating roles of job satisfaction and well-being, *Human Relations*, Vol. 65, No.4, pp. 419-446