

2017 POYA Winner

Antonia Dietmann



“I can be me in DWP”

The UK Civil Service aims to be the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020.

As the largest Department with 83,000 staff, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has an important role to play in achieving this.

Between March to August 2017 the DWP reviewed its strategic approach to diversity and inclusion (D&I). This was to include appreciation of the Department's achievements to date, reaffirm the commitments already made, identify future areas of focus, and signal a shift from diversity to inclusion. By this, it was meant that DWP is a place where a person's 'whole self' is important rather than specific elements of diversity, of which many could be meaningful to someone. A core strand of the new D&I approach was that some of our future priorities and actions would be identified as a result of listening to employees explain what would make a meaningful difference to their working lives.

Antonia created this 'listening strand' of the strategy project using an innovative method to start a national conversation about inclusion, bringing out the whole person focus and importantly the concept of employee voice. Questions about what inclusion meant to colleagues and how everyone could all be part of making DWP an inclusive place to work went viral around the organisation. Antonia and the team analysed these to understand the themes.

She partnered with staff groups to deliver the research, paid particular attention to accessibility and ethics, and championed the use of evidence to inform strategy development. This ensured that writing the strategy was an illustration of the inclusive and whole-person approach the team were advocating. DWP launched its new inclusion strategy ahead of National Inclusion Day 2017 as part of a nation-wide campaign called 'I can be me in DWP', which used employees' voices gathered through the listening activities. Following this there was a series of activities where employees were encouraged to share their 'I can be me' stories via blogs and discussions. Teams talked about what inclusion meant to them and made a commitment to do one thing to make their environment more inclusive.

Antonia said, 'I was absolutely delighted to win the DOP's Practitioner of the Year award. It was a total shock. I'd like to thank my colleagues in DWP for their support on the project – in particular Hoda Hussein who was instrumental. The inclusion project shows how important it is to get to know each other as work, treat people as unique, and share information about yourself to build strong relationships – particularly so you can help colleagues learn about your background, abilities, and interests. Our relationships with each other at work are the most powerful tool we have to do our work better and have a more engaging and enjoyable time whilst doing it.'

Antonia Dietmann, Head of Employee Engagement at HM Courts & Tribunals Service

2017 Student Prize for Excellence (SPE) Award Winner Charlotte Hermans



Developing the HERO within change: A qualitative exploration of a psychological capital intervention in the context of organisational change

Organisational change represents a highly topical and acute challenge to occupational psychologists in both practice and research. Driven by unstable markets, a globalised economy and rapid technological advances, enhanced emphasis on businesses' competitive edge has stressed the need for invasive change initiatives that redefine how, where and when people work. The transition to new ways of working, including Agile Working, represents one such change that many organisations are undergoing to respond to increased needs for agility and adaptability.

Faced with organisational changes, employees inevitably fall back onto their psychological resources in handling changing or conflicting demands. Psychological Capital (or simply, PsyCap) is thought to present one such resource that people draw on in the face of challenge or adversity. Stemming from Positive Psychology, PsyCap is defined as a core construct encompassing four positive psychological capacities: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism – the 'HERO within'. Research indicates that PsyCap is a malleable construct that can be trained effectively through short micro-interventions, making it an optimal resource for workplace development. While existing evidence for the effectiveness of PsyCap micro-interventions (PCI) is convincing, the literature lacked both an empirical understanding of underlying mechanisms and a 'real life' application to a changing workplace.

Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by generating a deeper-level understanding of the 'why' behind PCI effectiveness and exploring its potential value for supporting employees through organisational change. With the recipient's perspective of workplace interventions widely understudied, a qualitative approach was adopted to allow for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. A PCI was delivered to a team of HR professionals in the real estate sector who transitioned to agile working as part of organisational restructuring. Four weeks post-intervention, participant's experiences were explored by means of a focus group discussion. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the value of the training for participant's everyday work reality in coping with organisational change.

Systematic analysis of the findings suggested positive effects of the intervention on three levels of experience: intrapersonal, interpersonal and work-related. Drawing on a theoretical framework suggesting four trigger mechanisms, evidence was found that PsyCap was built through cognitive, affective, conative and social mechanisms.

In particular, the findings suggested that PsyCap development in the context of organisational change:

- changes the appraisal of situations by enabling people to change their perspective and adopt a realistic attitude of where their influence lies (cognitive effect);
- counteracts negativity and cynical attitudes associated with the change by radiating a sense of positivity and appreciating existing strengths (affective effect);
- encourages collective goal achievement and intentional agency by building a sense of efficacy (conative effect);
- strengthens a climate of trust through authentic engagement and building strong support networks (social effect).

These findings underpin the study's key insight which suggests the benefits of PCI to go beyond its direct recipients by 'trickling' into organisational culture. A key implication of this study points to the value of investing in positive psychological leadership training to enhance change acceptance throughout the organisation in a cost-efficient, sustainable and evidence-based way.

Charlotte Hermans, MSc Occupational Psychology, City, University of London

2017 ACP Winner Jonathan Passmore



“In recognition of the Wiley Organisational Psychology Series”

I'm delighted to receive this award which is in recognition of the Wiley Organisational Psychology series, containing eight volumes and two million words on Organisational Psychology.

However the award is really a recognition of eight teams who brought these books to life, the several hundred academics who shared their knowledge and all who donate the royalties from this massive project to a charity that addresses one of the scandals of our time – The Railway Children. We, as a team, would invite you to watch the video which focuses on how some children are drawn into the world of work, often children who have experiences of the care system or who have no care or family to help them (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISftdydZNtA>).

In accepting the Award I would like members to consider:

1. The BPS has a vital role to play in helping employers and employees to adopt evidence-based practices at work. We as a community need to be stronger in making the case for chartered occupational psychologist status and the importance of evidence-based knowledge which is informed by research.
2. As chartered psychologists we place a high value on ethical conduct – and we need to be willing to challenge poor ethical practice when we see this, and need to adopt an ethical stance focusing on raising standard for all not just our clients, for example, how can we help our employers to adopt an ethical stance to the children who work for subcontractor manufacturers in the developing world or delivery contractors working on zero hour contracts in their supply chain.
3. Thirdly, as chartered psychologists we need to think about our own professional development. How can we continue to improve, stay up to date with research and contribute good science based on our work with real organisations. We need to heal the divide between academics, who work is too often focused on how many angels can we fit on a pin and practitioners, who focus is the next contract. By working across the academic – practitioner divide we can achieve more.

I am engaged in a number of research projects at present from reviewing coaching practice across Europe to coaching ethics, coach competences and neuroscience.

The European Coaching and Mentoring project which has just been completed. The project involved a survey of coaches and mentors across Europe, involving 51 countries and in 40 European languages. The survey secured just under 3000 responses with good representation across Europe. My research colleague, Dr Hazel Brown from Winchester, and I have published one technical paper – The State of Play in European Coaching and Mentoring, which is available for free from the Henley Centre for Coaching website. We have a further 10 national reports plans, looking at coaching in a selection of European countries. We are also working on a number of peer

review papers exploring themes such as coaching ethics, coach training and mentoring practices. The project was a delight as it enabled us to connect with so many European colleagues, forming research hubs in each country who helped to translate the online questionnaire and to promote it among their coaching network.

The second project which is also coming to a close is a two-year study of coaching ethics. This has involved four separate studies, starting with a global survey of coaching supervisors, which is just about to be published in a journal, an IPA study of supervisors' felt experience of ethical decision making and a study with regulators of coaches and supervisors, including interviews with police officers, insurers and professional bodies including the ICF, AC, APECS, EMCC and the BPS. The last study in the set was data collected from the European survey on ethical scenarios. This revealed that coaches might not be as ethical as we might hope they would be, and suggests a need for the ethical decision making and ethical practice to be improved in coach training and for professional bodies involved in coaching to re-emphasise the importance of ethical standards to their members.

The third study is a collaboration with Dr Yi-Ling Lai, for Portsmouth University. We are exploring coach competences and specifically the differences in competences between what universities involved in coach training provide, and what do commercial providers of coaching look for in hiring associates. The study is revealing some interesting differences between what is required by the market and what training institutions and professional bodies suggest needs to be taught. Once again ethics is way down the commercial organisations list, as may be not surprising as we often don't think about the importance of ethical conduct, until things have gone wrong.

The final study is at data collection stage and is looking at brain responses to coaching. We are specifically exploring positive and negative affect and how coaching might stimulate these responses through different interception styles. We hope to have data from the study to publish by the late end of 2018.

Apart from these, I have a couple of new book projects on the go, following on from the Wiley Blackwell series.

Colleagues can follow this work and other projects, plus download papers if you would like to connect to me on Researchgate – https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jonathan_Passmore

Dr Jonathan Passmore DOccPsych,
Centre for Coaching, Henley Business School, UK & University of Evora, Portugal