

Occupational Psychology

Lecture One

What is Occupational Psychology?

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What is Occupational Psychology?

Area of applied psychology relating to people at work

Concerned with human behaviour in work and organisational settings

BPS – *Applying the science of psychology to people at work*

Increasing exploration of the links between work and non-work (Borough & O'Driscoll, 2010)

Overview

- ▶ Occupational psychology takes concepts, theories and techniques from many sub-disciplines and APPLIES these to the workplace
 - ▶ Social, cognitive, developmental, etc
- ▶ Some of the areas we will be covering will be topics you have learned about previously
 - ▶ But, this doesn't mean that you can ignore these areas
 - ▶ The concepts/theories will be applied in a very different way to how you have covered them before

Brief history lesson..

- ▶ Occupational psychology was mainly about the study of individual differences, and was born out of Industrial and Organisational Psychology (America)
- ▶ WW1 = first mass testing: recruiting soldiers

Brief history lesson..

- ▶ Emphasis on investigating and explaining attributes that relate to performance at work, such as abilities, skills, traits and personality of a person
 - ▶ E.g., productivity, creativity and performance

Key Areas of Occupational Psychology



The British
Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology

1. **Personnel selection and recruitment**
2. Training
3. Performance appraisal and career development
4. **Organisational development and change**
5. **Human-machine interaction**
6. Counselling and personal development
7. **Designs of environments and work – health and safety**
8. **Employee relations and motivation**

Issues we will be looking at

1. Recruitment and selection processes
 1. Strengths and limitations
2. Psychometric testing
3. Leadership
4. Human error
5. Motivation
6. Addiction to work
7. Attitudes at work
8. Stress and well-being
9. The 21st Century workplace

Occupational Psychology

Origins

Origins of Occupational Psychology

- At least two distinct roots (Arnold et al., 2010):
 - 1) 'fitting the man to the job (FMJ) and fitting the job to the man (FJM)'
 - FMJ – focuses on the PERSON
 - Employee selection; training; vocational guidance
 - FJM – focuses on the JOB
 - Design of tasks; equipment; working conditions that suit a person

Both concern the relationship between an individual and their work

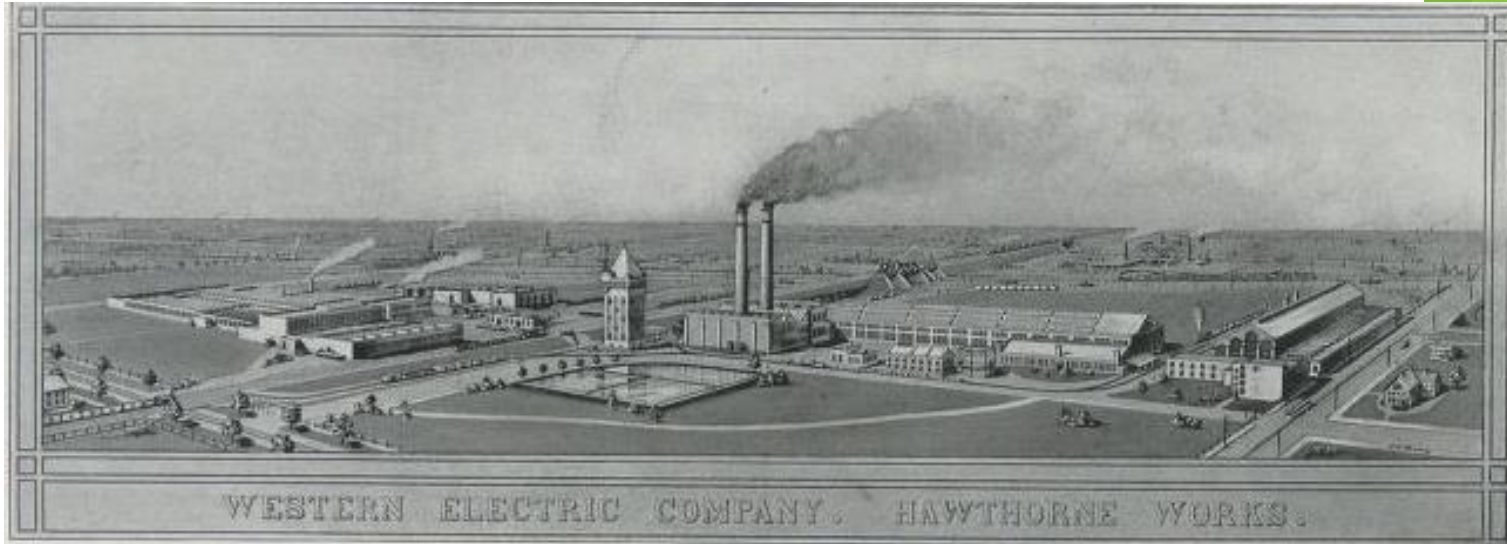
Origins of Occupational Psychology

- At least two distinct roots (Arnold et al., 2010):

2) Human Relations (HR)

- Concerned with the complex interplay between individuals, groups, organisations and work
- Emphasises social factors at work
- *The Hawthorne Studies*

The Hawthorne Studies: 1



- ▶ Mayo and Roethlisberger (1924)
- ▶ Originally designed to assess the effect of lighting conditions on productivity.

The Hawthorne Studies: 1

Group 1:
Experimental
group

Subjected to change
in lighting conditions

Group 2:
Control
group

No changes in
lighting conditions

**Was there a difference in productivity
between the two groups?**

The Hawthorne Studies: 1

Found that workers were more responsive to social factors – such as people they worked with and the amount of interest their manager had in their work – than the lighting that had been manipulated.

The Hawthorne Studies: 2

1927 – 1932

To examine productivity and work conditions

What effect does fatigue and monotony have on job productivity?

Can this be controlled through the introduction of rest breaks, reduction of work hours, temperature and humidity levels?



The Hawthorne Studies: 2

- ▶ Women working at electric plant
- ▶ Introduced:
 - ▶ Changes to working condition
 - ▶ No supervision whilst working
 - ▶ Instructed to work as they felt, and at comfortable pace.
- ▶ Productive capacity (output) measured for two weeks before study began

The Hawthorne Studies: 2



Six women worked at their own pace
with no supervision for **5 weeks**

No change in
productivity

Pay system
introduced

8 weeks later – 2
x 5 min breaks

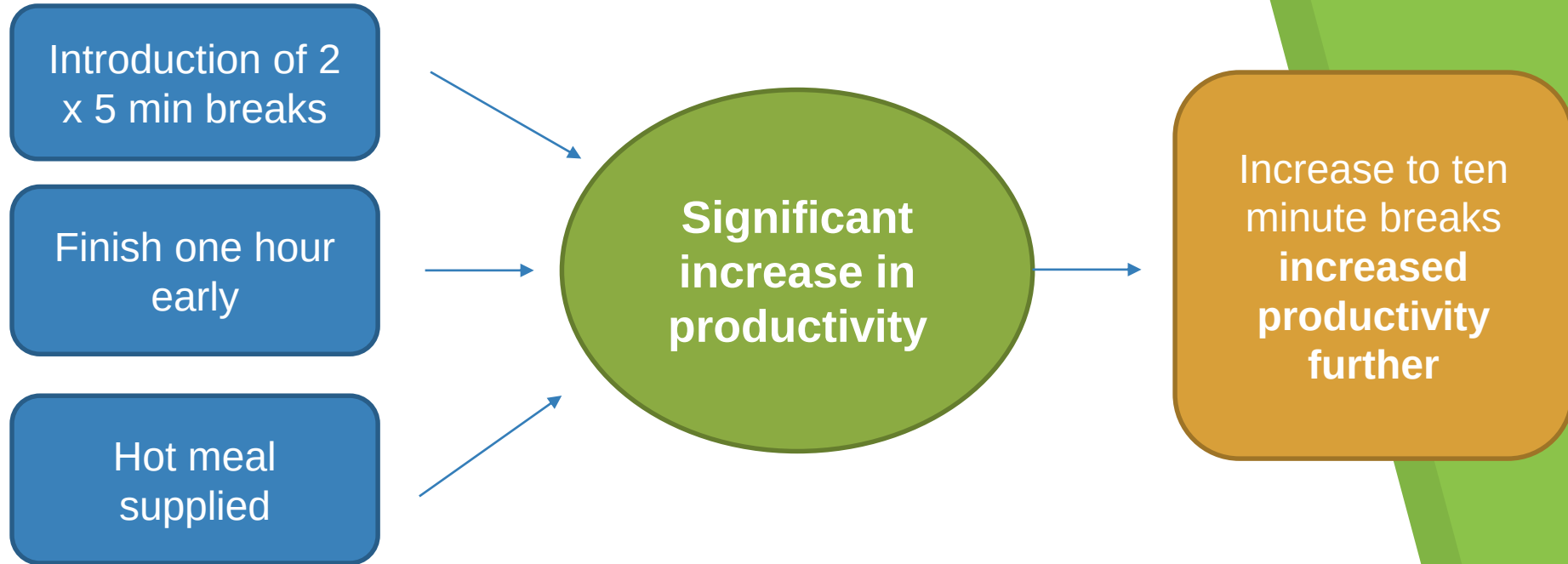
Work-day ended
half-day

Finish one hour
early

5 day week
introduced

The Hawthorne Studies: 2

And they found... what?!



The Hawthorne Studies: 2

Discussion points:

- ▶ Six women became a team
- ▶ Team gave itself to cooperation in the study
- ▶ Taking part freely and without afterthought
- ▶ Happy in knowledge that they were working with coercion from above or limitation from below

The Hawthorne Studies: 2

Conclusions:

- ▶ Work is a group activity
- ▶ The social world for an adult is primarily about work
- ▶ Need for recognition, security and sense of belonging
- ▶ Increases productivity!

The Hawthorne Studies: Overall

Why did these results occur?

1. Workers were highly responsive to additional attention from their managers

2. Although financial motives are important, social factors are equally (and perhaps more) important in defining the worker productivity



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Why Occupational Psychology?

Why Occ Psych?

- ▶ Kiechel (1993): individuals can expect to change jobs as many as ten times and work for as many as five organisations during their working life

The image features a collection of colorful speech bubbles and question marks on a white background. A central pink speech bubble contains the text 'Some questions occupational psychologists ask....'. To its left is an orange speech bubble, and to its right is a light blue one. Below these are four question marks in teal, pink, orange, and light blue. A faint yellow speech bubble is also visible in the upper right background.

Some questions
occupational
psychologists
ask....



- ▶ What is the best way to select people to work in jobs?



- ▶ How best can people be motivated to work to their highest level?



- ▶ How does stress arise in individuals in a work environment?
 - ▶ Why should we be concerned?
 - ▶ How can this be treated?



- ▶ Does job satisfaction matter? And, if so, what are the main factors in ensuring good job satisfaction?



- ▶ The effect of technology on occupations
 - ▶ How has this changed work and roles?
 - ▶ What are the costs and benefits?

TIME FOR A BREAK

Module Assessments

Module Assessments

1. 2,500 word essay

- ▶ Critically discuss the extent to which **psychological** characteristics predict successful leadership in the workplace.
- ▶ 12th March 2019

Module Assessments

2. 2,000 word applied research report
 - Design, conduct and report a research study to explore predictors of **work motivation**.
 - 30th April 2019

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:
 1. Decide on what groups you are going to work in
 - ▶ Minimum of two people; maximum of six.

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:
- 2. Identify appropriate psychometrically robust measures (if applicable). You must report the use of any measures appropriately according to the facets or constructs you are intending to include in your study.

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:
- 3. Select an appropriate measure of work motivation.

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:
- 4. Identify an appropriate hypothesis/hypotheses to reflect the design of the study.
 - ▶ Remember that you are conducting a multiple regression analysis for this assessment – you must word your hypotheses correctly for this type of design.

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:

5. Design your study appropriately.

6. Submit a completed proposal and ethics form to attain ethical approval to conduct the study before any data collection commences

- ▶ NO data collection will take place until full ethical approval has been provided.

Applied Research Report

- ▶ You must:
- 7. Carry out your data collection on a minimum of 30 participants per group.
 - ▶ Based on a minimum of two IV's – will require more if including additional IV's

Introduction to Personnel Selection

Why does selection matter?

- ▶ Personnel psychology is one of the most prominent topic areas in work and occupational psychology, and research findings have had a major impact on recruitment practice
- ▶ **Most of the world works as a capitalist society (like it or not!)**
 - ▶ Businesses survive or go bust based on their performance

Why does selection matter?

- ▶ **If the best is twice as good as the word, you want the best!**
 - ▶ But, how do you know who that is?
- ▶ **We can't 'clone' our best workers...**
 - ▶ ... Or can we?

- ▶ **This is what the selection process attempts to do**
 - ▶ Examine the data to find the 'ideal' person for the job
 - ▶ And then see if potential employees meet that ideal
 - ▶ Or choose the person who comes closest to it...

- ▶ **Employment legislation and guidelines requiring fair and valid selection procedures**
- ▶ **This is the defining role of an Occupational Psychologist**
 - ▶ The scientist-practitioner
 - ▶ Applying scientific principles to the procedure

The 'Selection Headache'

- ▶ **Selection is difficult!**
 - ▶ Predicting future performance over a period of years, and even decades, from limited information
 - ▶ Time and cost constraints
 - ▶ Ethics
 - ▶ Legislation
 - ▶ Impression management

The 'Selection Headache'

- ▶ Occupational Psychologists aim to apply scientific principles to this procedure
- ▶ Predict which of several candidates is likely to perform the job most effectively is a forecasting problem...
- ▶ But the guiding principles is: **Past performance is the best predictor of future performance**

How do we decide who to employ?

- ▶ To make a selection scientifically, we need a plan!

1. **Criterion:** definition of good performance
2. **Predictor:** anything that relates to, or can predict, the criterion
 - ▶ There may be lots of predictors, but we need predictors that will be
 - ▶ Useful
 - ▶ Cost-efficient

- ▶ **Design and validation in selection**
- ▶ **Job analysis**
- ▶ **Types of selection methods**
 - ▶ **And their strengths and limitations**

Next week....