

Purposeful Work Symposium (PWS) - Call for Abstracts

Event Details

Date: 18/05/2022

Place: University of Edinburgh Business School

Speakers

Tom Lawrence, University of Oxford, SBS, UK

Nelson Phillips, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Mentors (Academics providing Feedback on Papers)

Tom Lawrence, University of Oxford, SBS, UK

Nelson Phillips, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

John Amis, University of Edinburgh Business School, UK

Andrea Wessendorf, University of Edinburgh Business School, UK

Purpose

Through history and in recent times with frontline workers, climate action activists, pro-democracy movements etc., we have seen how intentional efforts of people and groups are shaping our social world and shifting beliefs and behaviour. Social-symbolic work brings the focus back to examining the efforts of such interested actors. While there are vibrant traditions of research that explore intended work of reflexive actors such as emotions, identities, relationships, boundaries, and institutions, social-symbolic work emerges as a general theory that calls to rethink these assumptions and boundaries.

Social-symbolic work specifically defines actors' process of constructing the world around them through focusing on their motivations, practices and resources (Lawrence & Phillips, 2019). Motivations are self-interests, morality, love and belonging. Practices are the repeated actions individuals conduct within their group within a world is understood as socially constructed based on discursive, relational, and material elements embedded in the temporality of their actions. The purposeful work actors engage in can have direct, indirect, and unintended effects. The notion of actors (including individuals, teams, or organisations) purposefully constructing our social world emerges as highly relevant today. Not only does this approach allow researchers to better comprehend how today's social world reached its current state, it also offers them the opportunity to problematize the structures responsible for such a world's noted changes. Through focusing on social actors' intentions and efforts, social symbolic work places such actors as capable of changing the world around them. We also need to consider who are actors that are not capable to change the social world they live in. Whose agency in society is compromised in some way? Modernity's introduction of differing social-symbolic objects in our everyday life further render the notion of social symbolic work interesting for one to focus on, while such a concept's inclusion of different forms of work, ranging from identity to strategy and institutional work further places it as a diverse field, capable of guiding differing research areas.

Social symbolic work includes notions such as entrepreneurship, identity work, technology work, organizational work, and institutional work. Our aim is to invite contributions that address, but are not limited to, purposeful work and/or social

symbolic work. We encourage papers across research fields, theoretical backgrounds, and philosophical underpinnings. The purpose of PWS is for researchers to exchange ideas, develop relevant academic conversations and gain hands-on feedback on papers by experts in the field.

Format

In PWS you will receive feedback on submitted papers, with two very insightful sessions on theorizing and doing empirical research.

- We have two sessions planned for all participants. First, Tom Lawrence will provide a presentation on theorizing and the theoretical challenges that researchers may encounter. Later in the day Nelson Phillips will take you through the 'how tos' of collecting and analyzing data in empirical research. Both sessions will be followed by Q&As.
- Through the day participants will be organized in small (3-4 people), in-person and/or hybrid groups and will receive feedback on their submitted papers from our mentors. All participants are expected to have read their group's paper and provide relevant comments to fellow presenters.

Application

We encourage applications from doctoral researchers currently enrolled in a PhD program. Early career scholars' applications will also be considered.

Please send by the 24th of April a single application document to Laura Fey, our head organiser. Your application should contain the following sections:

- Name + contact details, title, e-mail address
- Affiliation
- An extended abstract of no more than 500 words excluding references.

For all successful applicants, a full, 20-pages long, paper (double spaced, excluding references, appendices, tables and graphs) will need to be submitted by the 8th of May.

References

Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. (2019). Constructing organizational life: How social-symbolic work shapes selves, organizations, and institutions. Oxford University Press.