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Research Profile - Jennifer Barbour

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Postgraduate Student/Staff Research Profile

Jennifer Barbour

School of Psychology, Griffith University

What is your role within the School of Psychology?

I am a PhD student in the organisational psychology program. I also work as a research assistant for Associate Professor Paula Brough, primarily on the Healthy Workplaces project.

What research activities are you currently undertaking here at the university?

My PhD research is broadly concerned with occupational stress in the police force, and evaluation of a large-scale organisational stress intervention (Healthy Workplaces). Specifically, I am interested in the effects of the workgroup environment or climate on individual employees' well-being and organisational health indicators such as turnover intentions. I am also interested in investigating if or how the Healthy Workplaces intervention effects the workgroup environment. The Healthy Workplaces project is led by my supervisor Associate Professor Paula Brough and funded jointly by Griffith, the Queensland Government and the Queensland Police Service (QPS). I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to work on such a large and well-resourced project. Aside from my PhD research, my research activities on the Healthy Workplaces project are very varied and so far have included evaluation of QPS's HealthStart program (a physical health intervention), preparation of articles for submission to journals and conferences, preparation of ethics, and design of the Healthy Workplaces survey.

What influenced your decision to undertake psychological research?

always enjoyed research and statistics as an undergrad, however after I finished honours in 2001 going on to do further study was the last thing on my mind. From 2002-2007 I worked for the federal government in Canberra and then for a human resources consulting firm as an analyst and consultant. I think I had been working full time for about 3 years before I considered returning to study, and specifically pursuing organisational psychology and research/academia as a career path. As an undergraduate I really had no

interest in organisational psychology. However many of my work experiences inspired me that improving the work environment and individuals experience of work is something worth doing.

Why is your area of study so important?

Prominent management professor Harold Leavitt wrote an article last year titled 'Big organizations are unhealthy environments for human beings'. This was his conclusion after over 50 years researching and writing about organisations, and says a lot about why improving the work environment is important. Occupational stress research, designing effective stress interventions, and fully evaluating how those interventions reduce stress, are all small but essential parts of helping to make workplaces more psychologically healthy. My PhD research looks at only a tiny part of improving organisational health, however together with existing and future research, it will hopefully give practitioners a sound evidence base from which to pursue better practice in design and implementation of stress interventions.
