PhD project title
Exploring the role of formality in voice and silence research

Supervisors
Dr Sarah Brooks and Dr Malcolm Patterson

Research centre
Institute of Work Psychology

Project description
When employees voluntarily communicate suggestions, concerns, problems, or work-related opinions to a more senior person, they are engaging in voice. Being able to raise issues is important for both employee wellbeing and organisational performance, but speaking up if you see something of concern is anything but simple. Organisations are not always places which appear conducive to voice. For example, formal power differences highlighted by hierarchical structures cause employees to feel that speaking up is risky (Jablin, 1979; Detert and Treviño, 2010). Also, formal role requirements lead to employees and managers working different shift patterns and covering different geographical locations reducing opportunities for voice (Glauser, 1984), and the provision of formal and informal voice mechanisms can affect propensity to voice and effectiveness of voice (Harlos, 2001; Brooks, 2017). Organisational practices and structures have been highlighted as an important area of influence over voice and silence but have received very little empirical attention. Based on the view that perceptions of formality are influenced by organisational culture and structural design, this research is likely to draw heavily on theories of upward communication as well as theories underpinning voice and silence. Applications are invited for this PhD proposal from strong candidates with experience and interest in both qualitative and quantitative methods.

References

PhD candidate profile
The PhD candidate should meet the following requirements:
• Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good inter-personal skills.
• High motivation and a keen interest in the research area.
• A first degree that is equivalent to a UK classification of upper second class honours or above. In addition, a good masters level qualification of merit or above, with a minimum of 60 per cent in the dissertation, research project element or equivalent experience. We also accept an MBA from an accredited school where the candidate can demonstrate that a significant research element has been undertaken. Applicants must also meet our English language requirements. For further information on entry requirements, please see: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply

Start dates
We have two start dates a year for PhD students. We strongly recommend that students start on 1 October as this makes it easier for students to attend compulsory training. However, we do recognise that not everyone will be able to commence studies at that time, so we also offer a second start date of 1 February.

Closing date for applications
Applications will be considered until a suitable candidate has been identified. For the 1 October start date, a full application must have been received by 15 July. For 1 February start date, a full application must have been received by 15 November.

How to apply
See http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply for full details of how to apply.

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact: Sarah Brooks at s.brooks@sheffield.ac.uk.