# Re-visiting employee cynicism: On decentrement of the subject via work blogging

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*The fact is that, in truth, discourse can clearly subsist without words. It subsists in certain fundamental relations which would literally not be able to be maintained without language*

(Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Book XVII, p. 12).

## Abstract

Employee cynicism is an emergent and increasingly regular feature of organisation studies. Currently, employee cynicism is portrayed in two distinct ways – an unconstructive employee characteristic that jeopardises organisation performance, or, is a topical form of employee non-cooperation under post-industrial labour processes. This paper seeks to inform such notions by presenting the case for a distinct approach to employee cynicism. By way of concepts developed from Lacanian theory and the examination of work blogging practices, we present fresh understandings of employee cynicism and its more nuanced nature. Our findings are unique as they consider how the 'cynic' evolves over time. As such, employee cynicism should also be considered as a process to emerge when individual employees become aware of a significant gap between organisational discourse and the ideal role for the subject taken by the job holder. We believe cynicism to be indicative of the employee compensating for irreconcilable gaps in organisational discourse and leads, for some, to a new perspective of their ideal role in relation to the work organisation. However, for others, this is not possible, and such cynicism continues to be denoted by unconstructive and non-cooperative characteristics.

## Introduction

There has been a recent and intensifying scholarly interest in the notion of employee cynicism in the competing domains of organisational behaviour (OB) and critical management studies (CMS). How employee cynicism is approached, however, varies depending on the theoretical approach taken. For instance, the managerialist view emphasises micro-level organisational factors, which in turn leads to employee cynicism being equated with mistrust in management (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989), loss of faith in leaders of organisational change (Reichers *et al.*, 1997), or negative reactions brought about by perceived breaches or violations of psychological contracts (Abraham, 2000; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). The alternative view, typically based on a critique of emergent total quality and human resource management doctrines, equates cynicism with responses to changes in how employment relations are managed O'Leary, 2003), responses to the changing nature of the public service ethic (Townley *et al.*, 2003), and 'sense-making' strategies (Naus *et al.*, 2007). Further views also portray employee cynicism as an emergent form of resistance under corporate culture initiatives (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Fleming and Spicer, 2002 and 2003; Ackroyd and Collinson, 2005; Fleming, 2005). Employee cynicism, as such, has come to be portrayed in two distinct ways – an unconstructive employee characteristic that jeopardises organisation performance, or, is a topical form of employee non-cooperation under post-industrial labour processes.

While we believe current understandings have major strengths in that they, in several ways, emphasise the instrumental and economically driven nature of employment, we also believe there is good cause to re-visit employee cynicism to engage its more nuanced nature. What is meant by calling for cynicism to be re-visited is to make the case, over the course of the current research; that current understandings are problematic in that, collectively, they represent an incomplete picture of employee cynicism. What is missing, we believe, concerns the engagement that acknowledges more tacit dynamics of employee cynicism that stem from the power of organisational discourse. The question is how such power informs the processes of decentrement in organisations, or in this case, the apparent disengagement and potential hostile feelings that employees direct at various parties in the work organisation. In other words, in this paper we problematise the notion of cynicism by suggesting that the soul or nucleus of 'being cynical' is largely absent from existing approaches. We attempt to overcome this oversight by conceptualising a side of cynicism that is not possible to observe or easily research via conventional research methods. That is, that there is a distinct possibility that such acts involve more than distrustful and misguided attitudes and varying levels of employee disengagement. We also argue that there are possible positive outcomes to be derived from cynicism, for *both* subject and employer organisation. In short, we aim to make the case for a third perspective on employee cynicism that departs from ideas based on what is good/not so good for the organisation, and what is and what should not constitute employee resistance.

More specifically, we re-visit employee cynicism by attending to alternative forms of identification and expression that arise as a result of paid employment, in this case the relatively new and topical employee practice of work blogging. Here we draw on the personally mediated narratives containing strong cynical undertones, or what we believe to be unique and unprecedented insights into the psyche of workers made possible by new trends in Internet use, developed in some cases over several years, which we believe detail how individual employees make sense of the symbolic order

of the organisations under which they are attached via their identity. However, our main exposé of employee cynicism comes by way of building on the discussion of such narratives with in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted with employees from a public service background who are also prolific work bloggers, as the main means of revealing a neglected side of employee cynicism.

Work blogging has recently attained mainstream status with the conversion of several such blogs into 'confessional-styled' paperback format (e.g. see Chalk, 2006; Copperfield, 2006; Reynolds, 2006; Simonetti, 2006; Blachman, 2007; Sticker, 2007; Gadget, 2008). However, it is almost certainly more relevant to note that work blogs have been identified as a creative form of conflict expression, or part of a wider trend of colonising relatively unrestricted and expanding Cyber spaces by autonomy seeking employees and their associated occupational and professional groups (Schoneboom, 2007; Richards, 2008; Ellis and Richards, 2009). Therefore, the basis for this paper is we believe the emergent practice of work blogging represents a new and innovative way in which a hidden and neglected side of employee cynicism can be explored. As such, the paper examines the realm of blogging on the basis that new spaces may well allow alternative forms of identification and expression to be enacted; yet, it is the part this pristine environment and processes play in mediating the distance that exists between subject and organisational discourse that allows us to look at employee cynicism in a fresh and insightful manner.

At another level, the paper contributes to the body of work inspired by Lacanian theory, which engages in deconstruction of organisational discourse. We argue that the passions and desire for expression at work and ambivalence that sustain the creative processes of learning and becoming for organisational selves, somewhat blocked in representations channelled via organisational discourse, can be expressed and operationalised via blog narratives or other virtual spaces turning into mainstream forums for millions of employees. Despite managerialist accounts of such activity dominating how work blogging is portrayed to the outside world (e.g. see Joyce, 2005; Spencer, 2005; Philips, 2008), we believe blog spaces are in actual fact positive spaces where employees – in the absence an employer, a professional body or trade union influence – make greater sense of the evident gap between the subject and his/her ideal roles inscribed in organisational discourse; roles that are tied to and limited by the organisational aims and objectives. As such, we call for a major re-assessment of employee cynicism by making the case that acts of apparent self-interest should also be considered as being means of achieving an internal form of emancipation. This is achieved in the main by the creation of networks across and within occupational groups, where knowledge and objects of work form the basis of alternative organisational communities and relations.

To achieve these aims the paper is structured as follows. Immediately following is a discussion of the recent surge of scholarly attention directed towards employee cynicism, divided on the basis of managerialist and CMS approaches to organisation studies. The second section is characterised by a more detailed discussion of the theoretical concepts used to expand our understandings of employee cynicism. The third section sets out and discusses the methodological approach taken in the current study. The analysis is presented in the final two sections, divided into a presentation of the data, followed by an overall discussion of the findings.

## Extant approaches to employee cynicism

As previously indicated, it is evident that the recent flurry of interest in the notion of employee cynicism can be divided on the basis of two distinct, yet broad scholarly approaches to organisational analysis. On the one hand is the field of OB, dominated by the widespread application of psychology-based analytical frameworks, that stresses the role of micro-level organisational factors as important drivers in the generation of cynical attitudes towards the organisation and key figures associated with the organisation. On the other hand, there is a further strand of organisational analysis – CMS – defined by a wide-range of sociological perspectives that pays particular attention to the role and relevance of the much broader social and economic structural conditioning in the generation of employee cynicism. The following discussion considers these two distinct approaches, by way of definition, conceptualisation and research approaches, as a means to uncover previously hidden conceptual weaknesses and limitations related to the notion of employee cynicism.

### Managerialist views of employee cynicism

In the OB domain cynicism is typically approached as being a trait of the individual. For instance, a 'cynic' is said to be someone who 'deeply doubt[s] the truth of what management tell them and believe that, given a chance, will take advantage of them' (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989, p. 2). However, cynicism is also typically approached in the field of OB as being an organisational-wide trait, in that cynicism is a shared value or attitude towards the organisation as a whole in the organisational setting. Consequently, key writers, such as Andersson (1996, p. 1398), believe cynicism to be 'an attitude consisting of an affective component (hopelessness and disillusionment) as well as a belief (distrust)'. For Reichers *et al.* (1997, p. 48) cynicism 'involves a real loss of faith in the leaders of [organisational] change and is a response to a history of change attempts that are not entirely or clearly successful'. More generally, cynicism is widely viewed as 'a negative attitude towards one's employing organisation, composed of the belief that the organisation lacks integrity…' (Abraham, 2000). It would seem that an OB perspective portrays employee cynicism as an unexpected and unwanted organisational by-product. Moreover, as it is the employee who is seen to be cynical, OB scholars tend to promote solutions that involve changing the employee's 'expectations' of the organisation, rather than radically altering the fundamental characteristics of the organisation. It is also evident that managerialist theorists continue to stay loyal to the problematic view that unitaristic values, typically in the form of widespread positive attitudes of employee towards the employer organisation, can be cultivated in a time of increased organisational uncertainty and changing employee expectations.

Despite such generalities, a wide-range of conceptual frameworks have been applied, adapted and designed to help decipher what can be done to reduce or eradicate dissenting behaviour. At a low level of abstraction employee cynicism has been researched in relation to problems associated with employee engagement (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006; Richardsen *et al.*, 2006; Watt and Piotrowski, 2008), self-preservation (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989), job satisfaction (Eaton and Struthers, 2002), organisational change programmes (Reichers *et al.*, 1997; Wanous *et al.*, 2000 and 2004; Stanley *et al.*, 2005), and, subordinates' and superordinates' perceived levels of support from each other (Atwater *et al.*, 2000; Cole *et al.*, 2006; Bryne and Hochwarter, 2008). As such, the most commonly applied conceptual framework

applied to employee cynicism involves the psychological contract, or an examination of micro-level attitudes and behaviour in work organisations that arise from the violation or breach of implicit or explicit expectations held by the individual employee (Andersson, 1996; Andersson and Bateman, 1997; Abraham, 2000; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Further conceptual frameworks applied include social cognitive dynamics (Bies and Tripp, 2005), work value constructs (Guastello *et al*., 1991), organisational citizen behaviour (Wilkerson *et al*., 2008), leader-membership exchange (Davis and Gardner, 2004), attribution theory (Wanous *et al*., 2000 and 2004) and social information processing (Qian and Daniels, 2008). Attempts have also been made to ground a new conceptualisation of employee cynicism based on employee belief, affect, and behavioural tendencies (Dean *et al*., 1998). In sum, approaches to situating employee cynicism within established OB analytical frameworks based on ideals of conformity and harmony, leads to a neglect of the importance of employee decentrement that arises from the unobtainable ideals of organisational discourse.

At a methodological level the review of empirical OB research on employee cynicism reveals the following. Firstly, such research tends to be directed towards elite personnel predominantly in large North American work organisations, especially in the public sector (e.g. Kanter and Mirvis, 1989; Reichers *et al*., 1997; Pearson et al., 2001; Stanley *et al*., 2005; Byrne and Hochwarter, 2008; Watt and Piotrowski, 2008; Qian and Daniels, 2008). Secondly, it could be said that many of such studies are dependent on control group experiments and the use of college students (e.g. Guastello *et al*., 1991; Wanous *et al*., 2000 and 2004; Bryne and Hochwarter, 2008, Wilkerson *et al*., 2008). A third noteworthy observation relates to fact that OB studies are overly reliant upon data collection methods that may well be efficient at measuring existing levels of cynicism, yet are blind to the side of employee cynicism that we wish to explore in more detail (e.g. Kanter and Mirvis, 1989; Andersson and Batemen, 1997; Reichers *et al*., 1997; Abraham, 2000; Atwater, 2000; Eaton and Struthers, 2002; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Wanous *et al*., 2000 and 2004; Cole *et al*., 2006; Richardsen *et al*., 2006; Bryne and Hochwarter, 2008; Qian and Daniels, 2008; Wilkerson *et al*., 2008). It seems that while there is high volume of OB studies directed towards employee cynicism, when such methodologies are combined with preferred interest-led theoretical approaches of organisational psychologists, the chances of anything more than a restricted view of unplanned social phenomena occurring in work organisations, such as employee cynicism, is greatly reduced.

## CMS perspectives on employee cynicism

In the CMS domain cynicism is widely associated with employee responses to the transparent rhetoric of 'employee friendly' management practices (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005). A key outcome of being misled by organisational elites is said to involve employees feeling devalued (O'Brien *et al*., 2004). More specifically, Fleming (2005) believes employee cynicism to be an interpretation of new management initiatives designed to blur the symbolic boundary between traditionally demarcated work and nonwork experience. As such, employee cynicism is defined in this particular instance as just 'one tactic of transgression employees use to thwart the cultural colonisation of their identities' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003, p. 159). However, not all those who adopt a CMS approach to organisation studies see cynicism in this manner. For example, cynicism has also been discussed in terms of being an alternative way by which employees make sense of the

changing workplace (Naus *et al*., 2007). Employee cynicism is therefore generated as a consequence of the current industrial epoch, defined by employers increasingly backing away from paternalistic and collective employment relations practices (O'Leary, 2003), and at the same time adopting rationalisation programmes that challenges traditional employee understandings of public service and customer care commitment (Townley *et al*., 2003). Therefore, in contrast to OB perspective, employee cynicism in the CMS domain is seen as a legitimately rational response to ongoing organisational changes.

Employee cynicism may well be a new focus of attention for researchers seeking to cut through the varnish of the new orthodoxy of work organisations, yet, the conceptual frameworks applied in arriving at this juxtaposition vary somewhat. Typical of such studies is the use of labour process analysis, which allows acts such as cynicism to be interpreted as an employee response to institutionalised structures of domination and control (Bolton, 2005). Indeed, the view that cynicism can be equated with resistance is evident in both theoretical and empirical accounts (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Fleming and Spicer, 2002 and 2003; Taylor and Bain, 2003; Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005; Fleming, 2005). Despite the disproportionate application of labour process analysis to comprehend acts of employee cynicism, a range of 'non-Marxist' and/or post-structuralist frameworks is also evident in this growing body of CMS literature. For instance, Townley *et al*. (2003) applies the 'principle of charity' in that employees can reasonably expect the language used by employers to be true. Similarly, several similar studies make use of discourse or narrative analysis to explore employee cynicism (e.g. O'Leary, 2003; Whittle, 2005; Llewellyn and Harrisson, 2006). Further approaches rely on more conventional frameworks, such as, a social identity approach (O'Brien, 2004), and the appropriation and reconfiguration of conventional OB models of employee responses to include cynical acts (Naus *et al*., 2007). However, while we believe CMS approaches offer more abstract and dynamic perspectives than competing OB approaches, we also believe a key strength – as an emergent and emancipatory-based critique of prevailing managerialist dogma – results in similarly limited understanding of employee cynicism. What we miss out on by taking current CMS approaches is an explanation as to why cynicism is typically equated with employee resistance and emancipation when no or little evidence is produced to demonstrate that is actually the case.

When compared to the OB approach, quite a different picture emerges in the field of CMS. Of note is the use of a wider range of data collection methods, particularly in the form of a preference for qualitative and longitudinal case studies. Key contributions here include Fleming's (2005) research on employee responses to management 'fun' programmes that involved an eight-month case study of one organisation and the use of interviews, observations and document analysis. Further studies (e.g. Taylor and Bain, 2003; Townley *et al*., 2003; Whittle, 2005) make use of ethnographic inspired methods to paint rich accounts of organisational life and in doing so aid a much broader and situational understanding of employee cynicism. A further observation of such studies reveals a proportionately more varied use of employee and occupational groups. For example, CMS have looked at the cynical attitudes of call centre workers (Taylor and Bain, 2003), local authority managers (Townley *et al*., 2003), telecommunication workers (Fleming, 2005; Llewellyn and Harrisson, 2006), office employees (Naus *et al*., 2007), journalists (O'Leary, 2003), and, management consultants (Whittle, 2005). However, a clear criticism of current

CMS approaches is the general lack of empirical studies, especially when compared to the volume churned out by OB empiricists. What is more, while such approaches may offer a richer image of cynicism to emerge, such studies are characterised by researchers who lack a capacity to appraise cynicism beyond its external manifestation – that of an oppositional practice.

In short, we believe the limitations surround a neglect of the quintessence of employee cynicism, in that employee cynicism is clearly more than a misinformed or cautious response to the actions of significant parties to the work organisation. Such sentiments are evident to an extent in a newly evolving approach to organisational analysis, which is closely associated with the works of Jacques Lacan. In the next section we briefly review and discuss the relevance of Lacanian concepts as a means to develop fresh understandings of employee cynicism and its more nuanced nature.

## Lacanian lens in organisation studies: Let the cynic speak!

In this paper, we adopt Lacanian lens as a critical approach to examine the problematic notion of cynicism in the realms of working. Lacanian perspective informs our ongoing dialogue with the existent literature in the area of employee cynicism (in the previous sections of the paper we have revisited the theoretical engagement with notion itself) and helps us to navigate through work-related practice of cynicism (in the subsequent sections we engage with the employees' blog narratives).

The work of Jacques Lacan, and in particular, his linguistic approach to psychoanalysis that places the relation between the subject and the language at the centre, has recently inspired various critiques of organisational processes that are associated with more individualised forms of competition in the workplace, including the problems of particular concern in this paper such as employee's distancing and cynicism (Kosmala and Herrbach, 2006; Contu and Willmott, 2006). The studies that engaged in Lacanian theorisation of discourse and subjectivity as well as their interpretations, incorporated in organisational analysis various aspects of Lacanian triad more or less directly: the imaginary (Roberts, 2001; Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule et al., 2003), the symbolic (Arnaud, 2002, Vanheule et al., 2003) and the real (Kosmala and Herrbach, 2006; Driver, 2005; Jones and Spicer, 2005). Such studies benefited from earlier psychoanalytic and psychodynamics explorations of working and organising (e.g. Hirschhorn, 1988; Schwartz, 1990; Gabriel et al., 1999) that emphasised the importance of more hidden and/or unconscious aspects of organisational life.

One of the key contributions of Lacan in his reinterpretation of Freud is an emphasis on the agency of language and its importance for a subject's constitution. Lacan argued that there is no psychic structure of one's own for the subject but the set of conscious and unconscious links that bond individuals and their relationships (Lacan, 1977), the links necessary for a constitution of the self. In other words, conscious constructions are intertwined with the imaginary and the symbolic orders through which the subject can know the self and fulfil own perceived desires and wants, and on such basis, can maintain the fiction of stable identity.

In *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan (1978) discusses the three orders that form an elementary foundation of human experience: the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. Lacanian triad is positioned in a relation to the language and the processes of subject's constitution. Lacanian triad also determines modes of subject's decentrement. The real mode of decentrement refers to the objective reality of illusive psychic experiences. The symbolic mode refers to a symbolic order by which one is spoken and/or narrated. The imaginary mode of decentrement refers to the fundamental fantasy itself (Zizek, 2002, p. 2). Language itself originates in the Other, that is beyond the subject's control. The real is located according to Lacan, outside the symbolic, outside the language. Yet, as the language has both symbolic and imaginary registers, and as the symbolic refers here to a linguistic dimension itself, it is in the imaginary that the language potentially distorts or alters the discourse of the Other. Subsequently, imagined identities as well as the nature, the roles and relations formed on such basis, at a distance from the real, are dialectically embedded in the surrounding discourse and its power. We argue in this paper that in the imaginary register, the subject can potentially break from discourse of the Other, represented here by organisational discourse.

In essence, Lacanian notion of decentred subject (1964/1965) is constitutive of unsettling subjective experience associated with the subject situatedness in the language, and as Zizek (1997) pointed out, incorporates the ambiguities of oscillation between the symbolic and the imaginary identification in the search for the self. In organisational realms, decentrement can be manifested via the awareness of increasing gap between the subject and his/her roles inscribed in discourse, a sense of disillusionment with the organisational language and its promise for the subject formation. The organisational ideal and the subject's awareness of a distance from the ideal and from associated symbolic forms and objects of work, result in an ambivalent relationship, and subsequently, can turn into cynicism.

In the organisational realms, some studies have attended to the dimensions of the imaginary identifications, addressing the role of the language in supporting such realms. Roberts (2001) in his examination of disciplinary processes in a relation to identification at work, pointed out the subject's desire for existence that is based on recognition; confirming a need for being recognised; a need that makes the subject vulnerable to control of others and by others. He emphasised the power of a 'lure' in the imaginary identification for the subject:

> Rather that assume an existential need for security and belonging, or alternatively to treat the ego as a pre-given structure within the psyche, Lacan's analysis suggests that the ego itself is only constituted in a series of founding identifications that prefigure and make possible a future subjectivity. The force of Lacan's analysis is to point to the power of the image as a lure or a trap (Roberts, 2001, p. 636)

We argue that cynical distancing from organisational discourse can also result in an alternative self-identification with a sense of autonomy; identification that is beyond 'a lure or trap' for identity construction and beyond a 'closure of existence' (Roberts, 2001, p. 635).

Kosmala and Herrbach (2006) addressed the power of organisational discourse as the interplay of competing 'logics' or 'ideologies' of public interest, client service, firm economics in PSF (audit) firms. They examined the employees' subjective positioning

and distancing, deriving from belief/disbelief dynamics with some or all of the conflicting elements of the overall organisational (firm) discourse. Consequences of such positioning resulted in a mode of 'play' or *jouissance* with norms of conduct and values, fuelled by the fantasy structures of organisational discourse, including privileging one or the other logic, or rejecting any or all of them. The fantasy structures of organisational discourse and associated power are also supported by the notion of symbolic debt and its role in organisational functioning. Symbolic debt is a form of commitment contracted by the firms' founders, predecessors and undertaken projects that continue to operate on an unconscious level via the heritage of linguistic signifiers and laws (Arnaud, 2003 p. 1146), strengthening the vibrations of a dominant *langue*. Contu and Willmott's (2006) analysis of identification of technicians workers constructed as heroes revealed how perpetuating the relationship of subordination can be constituted, they argued, as technicians 'ways of life'. A hero was identified as a symbolic function that signified the 'liberal' subject enacted and sustained via the improvisation of technician's work (p. 1779), thus, distanced from the organisational *langue*.

Our paper contributes to these studies that aim at deconstruction of organisational discourse by a direct engagement with the question how its 'empty' language is manifested at work and how the subject manages a process of being situated in it. We subsequently attend to the possibilities available to the subject to transcend an emptiness of organisational discourse. As most intimate feelings and desires can be also radically externalized (Zizek, 1998), we are interested in the processes by which employees challenge and alter an experience of decentrement in negotiating alternative spaces for work-related identification.

Zizek (1998) explained the meaning of Lacan's assertion of the subject's constitutive decentrement:

> its point is not that my subjective experience is regulated by objective, unconscious mechanisms that are 'decentred' with regard to my self-experience and, as such, beyond my control (a point asserted by every materialist), but rather something much more unsettling. I am deprived of even my most intimate 'subjective' experience, the way things 'really seem to me', the fundamental fantasy that constitutes and guarantees the kernel of my being, since I can never consciously experience and assume it. According to the standard view, the dimension that is constitutive of subjectivity is that of the phenomenal (self-)experience (Zizek, 1998)

We attend to the more nuanced nature of desire and lack-driven processes of the subject's decentrement that support forming of alternative identities to the organisational selves proscribed by organisational discourse and achieved via blog texts.

## Methods to get inside employee cynicism

Blogging about work is defined by the global reach of the Internet and not contrived national boundaries. However, mainly for the sake of convenience and based on occupational groups that are known to dominate work blogging activities (e.g. see Richards, 2008), we restricted our attention to public service workers in the UK. We draw our sample from a significantly larger publicly accessible database of nearly one

thousand work blogs[1]. Given that at the time when the research project began little was know about this work-related blog phenomena, we felt a purposive sample was appropriate and maximised the likelihood of 'gaining access' and allowing us to effectively mediate twin datasets based on blog postings and interviews with work bloggers. Initial communication regarding the research aims and objectives was made with public service bloggers (see Appendix One) who had well established blogs, via email, where contact details were available, or through posting entries on their blogs where they were not. Thirty work bloggers were approached and twelve responded, of which three subsequently declined a request to be interviewed. From these efforts we conducted in-depth, semi structured interviews with nine individuals. The comparatively small sample is evidence of the difficulty of researching groups which value secrecy. Even nine interviews may not have been possible were if not for one of the author's ongoing attempts to sustain an 'insider status' amongst work bloggers by maintaining his own publicly accessible blog.

In each interview the main emphasis was placed on the purpose for starting and importance of keeping a blog going. After all, the participant, in this case the work blogger, is best placed to reflect on what they derive from their blogging experiences. The interviews explored bloggers' motives for blogging and the factors shaping which facets of work experience is discussed in their blogs. The preference for many work bloggers to maintain invisibility, even from the researchers, combined with their geographical dispersion influenced the use of telephone, instant messaging and asynchronous email interviews (see Appendix One). Telephone and instant messenger interviews typically lasted for an hour each, whilst those conducted via email took place over a period of a week. All interviews were conducted between November 2007 and February 2008.

Although broader issues surrounding the use of e-interviews, whether through instant messenger platforms or email, are beyond the scope of the current research, it is nonetheless appropriate to briefly comment on the relative merits of such approaches in order that the validity and reliability of our data can be assessed. As such, while these approaches do not offer the same opportunities to assess and respond to non verbal cues or build verbal rapport, as face to face interviews, and may lack spontaneity (Murray and Sixsmith, 1998; Selwyn and Robson, 1998) they do afford a number of unique advantages (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006). Asynchronous email interviews can be more convenient for both parties, maintain confidentiality for the participant (Bampton and Cowton, 2002), allow participants time to consider responses, often leading to greater depth of answers (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006) and removes the need for time consuming transcription (Hamilton and Bowers, 2006) and avoids the loss of expressed data (Mann and Stewart, 2000). Instant messenger platforms also provides a written record of discussions, maintains anonymity for participants and are better value-for-money compared to telephone interviews when dealing with geographically remote participants (Mann and Stewart, 2000). Although our approach to data collection may be considered unconventional, and was influenced as much by situational factors than conscious design, we believe it to be apposite given our objectives and no less reliable than more traditional qualitative approaches.

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[1] The database is currently maintained by one of the authors of the current paper, and updated and available at http://workblogging.blogspot.com

In order to gain further insights into what is derived from workblogging we also reviewed our participants' blog posts for evidence of cynicism. In total 1356 blog entries – varying from a brief sentence or two to lengthy monologues stretching to hundreds of words – were read and a breakdown is shown in Appendix Two. We read all blog entries posted by our participants between March 2008 and February 2009 and their content analysed through using an appropriate coding frame. The vagaries of qualitative analysis are well documented (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996; Cassell and Symon, 1994) and careful consideration was given to ensure that codes, based on how cynicism has until now been approached in organisation studies, were allowed to emerge from the data itself. In doing so our intention was to be able to reproduce an account of what our participants would recognise as cynicism towards elite figures in work organisations.

Although work blogs may be viewed by many as being in the public domain, we recognised there remains questions over whether technical accessibility equates to 'publicness' (Berry, 2004). The reality is, bloggers may well publish their entries on an open, worldwide network, but this is likely to go largely unnoticed by most that use the Internet (Richards, 2008). Consequently, in reproducing blog extracts in a domain other than which they were intended has the potential to be intrusive and cause harm to their authors. In order to maintain appropriate ethical standards and be courteous, civil and respectful of the privacy and dignity of research participants (Jones, 1994), we obtained explicit permission to reproduce blog extracts from all research participants and provided a full explanation of intended use and likely audience.

## The surface and essence of employee cynicism

In this section we aim to engage with more nuanced aspects of employee cynicism. First of all we provide the evidence necessary to confirm work blogs to be a forum or outlet for employee cynicism. However, in staying loyal to the theme of the current research, there is only room to concentrate on employee cynicism directed towards the organisation. The attention then shifts to demonstrating the full range of cynical attitudes. In effect, we believe it is important to demonstrate that employee cynicism varies from being a form of individual expression that in actual fact conveys the genuine concerns of many, through to clear instances of cynicism that is far more reflective of self-interest, vanity and a narcissistic ego. In the third section we change direction slightly by presenting and discussing blog posts that demonstrate decentrement, where employees distance themselves from organisational discourse. In the final section we draw on interviews with work bloggers. From an employee perspective, we reveal what employees derive from being cynical and let the cynic speak.

### Cyber-cynicism

Employee cynicism is generally apparent in all the blogs used for this paper. The following examples demonstrate employees doubting the 'truth' (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989), having an attitude based on disillusionment (Andersson, 1996), lacking faith in their employer (Reichers *et al.*, 1997), or, questioning the integrity of those who have a significant say in how work is organised (Abraham, 2000):

[Patient aggression] happens on a regular basis…and management on a regular basis will try and make out that it was your fault the patient turned aggressive. And the Police will eventually turn up and ask for an ambulance to take him to A/E. And if we try and pursue a prosecution it is written off as not being in the public interest. So the gorilla in an overcoat [the basis of the wider blog post] will be out again drinking and causing offence and getting away with it until someone gets well and truly hurt…when it may be too late! *But through hard experience I do not take any shit on my truck!* (blog extract – PurplePlus – EMT, 31st December 2008, original emphasis).

What's with all these forms they keep sending round? Health and safety forms, forms from HR about working from home (how safe a work environment is YOUR armchair?!), other administrative forms. Pages and pages of 'em! If they meant something, fine, but they don't. For most of the academics they're sending the forms to, this is just ridiculous. What do the forms accomplish? Nothing for us academics! It just wastes hours of time filling them in - it's not just the form filling in, but also we're supposed to read the vast quantities of accompanying notes to explain the forms (blog extract – UniSpeak Lossy – academic, 31st January 2008).

Today I'm off to be a management puppet, as they have stuck me on the latest part of Time To Talk [employee involvement initiative], and it's time to get motivated (yeah right) (blog extract – What a Complete Brunt – London Underground security manager, 5th September 2008).

It can also be seen how the cynicism projected through Cyber spaces may also be reasonably interpreted as employees questioning practices 'mis-sold' by elites in the work organisations under the pretences of benefiting the employee (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005), resisting management initiatives designed to change how they see themselves in relation to the organisation (Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Fleming, 2005), and, attempting to make some level of sense of management practices designed to breakdown loyalties to previous ways of working, when online (O'Leary, 2003; Townley *et al.*, 2003; Naus *et al.*, 2007). It would seem that Cyber spaces have, indeed, led to new places for employees to be cynical about the organisations they are attached to, yet it would be an over-statement to claim work blogging is the work of Cyber dissidents.

## You're so vain – you probably think this blog is about you!

It could be argued, as illustrated in the blog extracts in the section above, that employee cynicism is about the individual communicating what are almost certainly shared concerns. In effect, it is likely that it is not only work bloggers who feel unsupported by their employer, have a sense of being over-burdened by time-consuming regulations, or even feel that it is pointless to spend time and effort putting forward suggestions for organisational improvement when it is likely that their ideas will not be incorporated into regular working practices. As such, if cynicism is about doubt, disillusionment, faith and integrity – all of which are highly subjective states – then it follows suit that employee cynicism is going to be prone to extremes. Similarly, if cynicism is based on individual perceptions, then it also follows that perceptions of an organisation's transgressions, or even perfectly genuine attempts to go about its daily business, will take on a personal slant from time-to-time.

Indeed, the narratives of work blogs also reveal a more narcissistic dimension to employee cynicism, as substantiated in the following extract:

> You would think that having one mother would be enough for me...but no. I appear to have acquired a whole ward's worth of them on the medical assessment unit. After a normal day at uni, I had received a phone call from the staff bank [employment agency for medical staff] saying that MAU [pseudonym for actual hospital] was desperate and I knew what I was doing on there, so was there any way I could do a few hours. We compromised at 19.00 - 02.00 - a half night shift. Suits me, and it's better than nothing for them (blog extract – I'm not a Drain on Society – casual auxiliary nurse, 29th May September 2008).

Here the employee is communicating an attitude of disenchantment with the employer organisation, yet the disenchantment is communicated as a personal affront, rather than a problem that is shared with similar employees. Clearer evidence of self-importance is further apparent in the blog narratives, as demonstrated by a dominance of the first person in such communications:

> Dr Grumble has had to abandon his early morning work. The reason is that when he opened the patients' notes they were all empty. Some clerk somewhere has opened a new file on each patient. Not a temporary file but a new file. That means that each of these patients has two sets of notes. One set is completely empty. It also means Dr Grumble cannot make decisions this morning. Dr Grumble was so angry he told a passing surgeon. To Dr Grumble's amazement, according to the surgeon, a neighbouring hospital is even worse. There they have 37,000 sets of duplicate notes. It is simply not acceptable. It is dangerous. Dr Grumble used to put each empty set of notes into an envelope and send it to a manager to make his point but they got fed up with him. So he has now given up. Like everybody else (blog extract – Dr Grumble – teaching consultant, 1st October 2008).

In this instance it can be seen how a practice that is likely to be a common employee grievance is taken as a personal offence. Further instances of narcissistic cynicism clearly demonstrate a sense that such attitudes are targeted at shared concerns over organisational practices, yet communicated on the basis of how the broader problem affects the individual:

> While I'm rostered on with Pally [a senior colleague with different and more rigid terms and conditions of employment], I'm officially 'relief'; we are the staff who get our hours week-by-week, filling in holiday and sickness deficits. My position with Pally was always on the basis that management could, if need be, pull me back down to fill gaps without notice. And so they did. No more nine days off. No more home-for-Christmas. No Christmas morning with my parents. Instead? Four night-shifts, starting on the 22nd. Night-shift on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day. It's hard to get into the holiday spirit when your plans are getting fucked in the ass without lube (blog extract – Trauma Queen – EMT, 28th December 2008).

It would be unfair and disingenuous to equate narcissism with 'bad', yet it is evident that what mediates this form of cynicism is different from that observed in the previous section. As such, and not wanting to offend work bloggers, what we see here is probably best understood as a personalised and self-absorbed take on the broader struggles faced by labour. However, both sets of extracts presented so far present more of an overview of employee cynicism. The next section directs the attention

towards a further key theme of the current research – the role of organisational discourse in employee cynicism.

## Organisational discourse, decentrement and employee cynicism

In this section we concentrate on demonstrating the importance of organisational discourse – e.g. official HR policies and procedures, codes of conducts, 'values', quality standards, mission statements, targets and performance indicators – in relation to employee cynicism. The link between the two is based primarily on ongoing employee attempts to break from organisational discourse by way of displaying negative attitudes and shared oppositional tendencies. It is said that employees pursue distancing strategies on realising there is a gap between organisational discourse and what is required by the employee to make them feel whole. To the outsider neither of these two could be said to be concrete phenomena, yet they appear to be very real forces that all employees have to contend with on an ongoing basis. In the case of contemporary public service employment, the decentrement process is expected to take the form of scepticism directed towards the many ways that publicly directed organisations attempt to remodel the nature of public service based on target-based efficiency drives. We expect, as such, that cynicism plays a key role in the way in which employees struggle to come to terms with such demands.

How and why employees, through acts of cynicism, distance themselves from organisational discourse varies somewhat. In the following instance we can envisage how a person who is employed to drive a public transport bus distances himself from his organisation's policy on lean service provision. Decentrement in this instance is created by the failure of such policies to accommodate even minor traffic delays, and in turn, serve to undermine the public service ethic of the bus driver:

> Last Friday was the worst day any one can remember for buses running late…On one side of the road works traffic was back 200 yards while on the Paignton side it was over a mile…Once drivers had lost time here they never had the chance to get back on time because we only just have enough running time to cover the route as it is. Once some things like this happens queues of angry, frustrated… (blog extract – BusDriving – bus driver, 19th September 2008).

Further evidence of decentrement is also apparent in work of a particularly 'unpopular' kind of public servant – the parking attendant. In the following extract it is evident that the employee shows commitment to the importance and value of the role, yet feels compromised by the extreme measures taken to guarantee that he will do the job:

> My managers are so fucking paranoid that I will stop and smell the roses that my movements are recorded and scrutinised daily. If I take too long on a street or car park they want to know why and what I was doing. If I didn't book a vehicle they want to know why. If this is common to all parking enforcers, *no wonder* we've got the reputation of being a lot of lemon sucking misanthropes. You'd be miserable too (blog extract – Walking the Streets – parking attendant, 28th February 2007, original emphasis).

Here decentrement occurs as the he struggles to reconcile how the objectives of the job and the manner in which is actually managed vary quite dramatically. The final blog extract perhaps demonstrates how cynicism and decentrement can occur at a professional level. In the following extract we see, again, how a significant gap

between organisational discourse (in this case the UK government as an employer to millions) and the ideal role for the subject taken by the job holder, gives rise to cynical outpourings:

> In the eyes of the government this is a 'successful' job [the sentence is underscored by a web-link to a news story about how a "rapid response unit" arrived at the scene of a serious road traffic incident, yet the ambulance that took the injured to the accident and emergency department of the local hospital took nearly one hour to arrive]. For the patient, for the parents, for the staff involved, for everyone that matters – this is **not** a successful job. If ambulance services weren't chasing government targets then this may well have been an 'unsuccessful' job for the government – but a success for everyone else (blog extract – Random Acts of Reality – EMT, October 1ˢᵗ 2008, original emphasis).

At this stage we find ourselves at a point where we can demonstrate that there is such a thing as 'Cyber-cynicism' and its nature is only different in terms of where it manifests, as well as the manner in which we as observers can witness acts of cynicism. We have illustrated how employee cynicism can take the form of concerning the self or concerning the wider interests of the main reference group of the employee. We have also illustrated how cynicism relates to employees noticing and beginning to detect and act on the apparent gaps in the organisational discourse. However, we end the overall findings section by attempting to further advance how employee cynicism is conceptualised by trying to get to the essence of what employees 'get out' of being cynical or where such attitudes 'takes them'.

## Cynicism and decentrement

In this section work blogging is taken to be broadly synonymous and inter-changeable with both employee cynicism and decentrement. In doing so, we begin with insights provided by employees on motivations to begin to write frank and extensive accounts of employment, in their own time. We also look at how blogging evolves after the novelty of publishing to the World-Wide-Web wears off and how, over time, the employee is changed by blogging practices. In effect, we seek to find out what leads the employee to be cynical, what cynicism can evolve into over time, and, what effect extended periods of employee cynicism and decentrement has on the subject.

*Why be cynical?*

The dataset does not reveal one affirmative reason why employees take to blogging, although it could be argued that decentrement is central to the beginning of this practice. It would seem that the most obvious motive to start blogging about work relates to restricted opportunities for employees to voice concerns about management, on work time:

> I used to get massively hacked off by the blatant ignorance and stupidity around me, and reckoned that I needed an anonymous sounding board or I'd go crazy…I used to get very angry about it, but you aren't allowed to express that anger while on duty. That way was instant P45 territory (parking attendant).

Other work bloggers refer to being frustrated with management in some way or other. For instance: 'I express on the blog what I would not dare to express in some work place settings' (teaching consultant), or that: 'sometimes you can vent about things to colleagues, but sometimes not even to colleagues' (academic). Yet, the lack of faith in

conventional outlets for employee voice was not the only reason to start blogging. Indeed, for some it was more of an alternative form of socialising and discussing work more generally, with cynicism forming an important yet less central role in such interaction. For one employee: 'it's a chance to get things off your chest' (EMT – no. 3), and for another it is a forum for 'anything that gets beneath me' (station security manager).

Further reasons to begin blogging depart from what has been illustrated so far. One employee, for example, blogged because he was 'trying to stop being so negative' (EMT – no. 1) about things that stopped him doing his job effectively. Two employees believed blogging was a perfect place to simply write about interesting or new employment experiences:

> I just thought I'd tell people stories about what happens to me while I'm working (bus driver).

> …there's nothing so queer as sick folk, and that may sound like a horrible thing to say, but some of things that go on in a hospital would make your hair curl (auxiliary nurse).

In such instances, decentrement and cynicism appears to have periodically entered the narratives of employees who have generally high levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, even an employee who uses his blog to enthusiastically detail early career experiences, is also drawn, by decentrement, into being cynical from time-to-time:

> The blog is about me, the people that I've met, the things that I've learnt because, obviously, I'm still quite early on in my career and I enjoy keeping a record of what I've done for myself (EMT – no. 2).

*The evolving nature of cynicism*

It is crucial to note how blogging as an activity changes over time. Indeed, interviews revealed how this forum of expression, for some, quickly developed a dynamic independent to organisational discourse. For instance, bloggers reported on re-aligning their outpourings with professional development: 'it's a good form of reflective practice' (EMT – no. 3), or considering a future career involving the use of skills developed through work blogging:

> …there is a natural development on from blogging, in that you do produce this body of written work, and the current trends seem to be involving the publishing of one's blog… (EMT – no. 2).

A shared reason to continue to blog appeared to revolve around using this medium of communication as a coping mechanism: 'my own place to vent myself' (station manager), or: 'I would have gone under in the first year, had I not been able to express my concerns [on my blog]' (parking attendant). However, several bloggers reported that they did not sense their blogging habits had moved on and they found themselves directing their frustrations towards a range of key organisational actors over a 'long cycle' (bus driver), there was always something 'interesting to write about' (auxiliary nurse), or perceived problems with employer discipline meant that they were typically 'left posting about something that happened a year or more ago' (academic).

One blogger, however, believed their on-line writings quickly moved from venting to providing first hand accounts from the workplace mixed with commentary from conventional media sources, such as newspapers:

> Initially it was extremely therapeutic. There are many things that appear in the press about health care that are plain wrong. As a consequence of writing the blog and the research that entails I have become increasingly convinced that a lot a what appears in the press is written by lazy journalists who have been spoon fed by political spin masters. The journalists rarely spot what is happening early. The bloggers are first (teaching consultant).

Similarly, one further blogger reported moving quickly from being overly cynical to providing the public with regularly up-dated nuggets of 'reality' based on the day-to-day activities of an EMT:

> There are different formats of blog posts that I like. There's the 'this is what I did today' and this is the person that I met, and I'll talk about the person. Then there's the 'this is what I did today' and this is the disease they have and then I'll talk about the disease. Or, this is what I did today and this is the protocols and procedures, which govern how I dealt with the situation. One way by which I could write about it could involve what a heart attack is. Another way of writing about it would be to say how immensely proud I am of the London Ambulance Service. Like, if someone has a heart attack, we won't take them to any old hospital, we diagnose it ourselves and then take them to a specialist unit that can give the gold standard treatment. Those are the three main ways in which I write (EMT – no. 1).

*The outcomes of cynicism*

Through time it was not only how the blog read to outsiders that changed; several of the bloggers reported changes in themselves, and in some cases this change was quite radical. At the very least blogging allowed one blogger to become more content in that they learnt: '…other people share my world view' (parking attendant). For another, the process helped the employee to become more alert to the things that went on around them: '…it helps me to think about things that little bit more' (bus driver). One blogger believed the process had allowed him to become more aware of how he did his job: 'I think I've probably got a bit more organised' (paramedic – no. 3). Other positive changes include being less isolated: 'I've met some amazing people through this' (auxiliary nurse) and that it has made an employee realise: 'what I do is such an important feature of my life' (EMT – no. 2).

For some employees blogging about work led to truly life-changing events with one employee seeing himself as a very new 'sort of mouth piece' for front line emergency workers (EMT – no. 1). Yet, for others the outcome was a sense of losing control: 'my blog has changed from something that was just for me to something that is also for others' (teaching consultant). Indeed, for one blogger the stress of contemplating being caught work blogging meant that the process of blogging did not lead to anything concrete:

> I think about the possibility that someone is reading who knows who I am in real life, and how likely it is or isn't that that person would be able to identify me from what I've written (academic).

One blogger, however, was adamant that they had not changed through blogging about work: 'No I'm still the same person I was before I started blogging' (station security manager), even if the nature of blog had changed in the same period.


## Discussion and conclusion

We began the paper by problematising the concept of employee cynicism by suggesting existing approaches over-emphasise external manifestations at the expense of a more nuanced side to this increasingly researched organisational phenomenon. In other words, we believe there to be good cause to re-visit employee cynicism. Instead of making the pre-assumption that employee cynicism is primarily concerning unconstructive behaviour and/or a form of non-cooperation, we attended to the employee's nature of desire and lack that supports and undermines forming our organisational selves outside the mirrors of organisations via cynicism. As such, via a Lacanian lens and a unique research opportunity presented by innovative employee use of new Internet communication technologies, this allowed use to make the case that the concept of employee cynicism needs to be adapted to reflect an inside constitution. In the context of the current study, this means the 'internal' constitution process has implications that can trigger innovations as a form of positive engagement – the subject attaining a new perspective of their ideal role in relation to the work organisation, including new states involving being far more philosophical about how they and colleagues fit in with organisational discourse. However, for reasons that are beyond the boundaries of this paper, positive engagement may not always be possible, or achievable, or it may just be the case that it was not achievable or detectable within the timeframes and analysis of the blogs that are central to our study. In such instances, for a minority of our research participants, being cynical about the organisation seemed to lead to a self-reinforcing process, or an intensified decentrement process, characterised by a more inward and more negative use of cynicism.

In more detail, we were particularly interested in investigating the processes of employees' emancipation from more restrictive forms of identification that are tied to unattainable roles and fragmented 'being' in organisational realms. In virtual realms, we argue, the fantasy structures operate through the balancing of objects of work with self-making via dialectic between the symbolic and the imaginary; the negotiation process of distorting the real, and reconciling the associated anxieties for temporarily acknowledged subject. As such, blogs spaces form the networks of practices that bring together individuals, their knowledge and objects of their work, forming new selves, organisational communities and relations. In the case of this paper, the organisational discourse is being redirected to create the new language, in the continuous formation of the blog narrative, a process of self-constitution.

These blog spaces also allow for the cynics to be heard and for the cynic to reflect on acts of cynicism, something neglected by existing studies. An expression of decenterment can be captured in the examples of various forms of work blog postings that allow employees the chance to be cynical about their employers and employment with minimal risks in terms of immediate disciplinary action (Schoneboom, 2007; Richards, 2008; Ellis and Richards, 2009), yet, with unforeseeable long-term consequences. In the virtual realms, we argue, the process of the constitution of the self can have both a radical and liberating potential for the subject and the

organisation. However, we also recognise that such indulgences do not necessarily lead to a form of inner or broader sense of liberation. We also recognise the limitations of our study in that the findings should be seen, principally, as a re-appraisal of existing understandings of employee cynicism, and to inform rather than dictate future research in this domain.

For those of us who are interested in developing the concept of employee cynicism we believe future research in this field should consider the following. Firstly, we believe there should be a greater emphasis on research design, in that the findings from this paper could not be achieved without multiple methods, involving a creative use of new spaces for employee activity, and creative interplay between the researcher and research participants. Secondly, we believe that there is good reason to further explore the possibilities for Lacanian concepts in organisation studies. For instance, the notion of decentrement opens up opportunities for primary research, as well as the chance to perform secondary analysis on existing qualitative datasets, such as oral histories or self-authored accounts of employment, that chart employee experiences over considerable lengths of time. In other words, there is no reason to restrict such concepts to emergent virtual realms, although the challenges of applying such concepts in non-virtual realms, characterised by inclusive and less accessible forms of expression, is likely be far more problematic. On a final note, we also believe more research should be conducted *with* and not on the subject/cynic. As such, it would benefit all parties if we were to pay more attention to conceptualising what makes the difference between making the leap from high levels of cynicism to positive attainment. Yet, by highlighting this matter, we are suggesting a more positive re-alignment of the subject is the work of the subject and impartial third parties, and unlikely to be achieved through attempts to 'manage employee expectations'.

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**Appendix One:** Work bloggers and details of interviews

| Name of blog and URL | Gender | Age | Occupation | Employer | Blogging since | Interview method | Interview date | Details of readership (provided by blogger) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Random Act of Reality - http://randomreality.blogware.com/ | Male | Mid 30s | Emergency medical technician (EMT) | NHS – London Ambulance Service | September 2004 to present | Telephone | 22nd November 2007 | About 30,000 people per day |
| 2.  Trauma Queen - http://www.traumaqueen.net/ | Male | Mid 20s | Emergency medical technician (EMT) | NHS – Scotland Ambulance Service | September 2004 to present | Telephone | 19th February 2008 | 1,500 to 2,000 unique readers |
| 3.  Purple Plus - http://kingmagic.wordpress.com/ | Male | Late 30s | Emergency medical technician (EMT) | NHS – unknown ambulance service | October 2006 to present | Telephone | 15th November 2007 | About 300 hits per day |
| 4.  Walking the Streets- http://parkingattendant.blogspot.com/ | Male | Late 40s | Parking attendant | Unknown local authority | January 2005 to November 2007 | Instant messenger | 14th November 2007 | 150-250 visitors a day |
| 5.  Bus Driving - http://busdriving.blogspot.com/ | Male | Mid 60s | Bus driver | Stagecoach | April 2004 to present | Telephone | 17th January 2008 | About 250 per day or 1750 a week |
| 6.  I'm Not a Drain on society - http://bloodystudents.blogspot.com/ | Female | Mid-20s | Casual auxiliary nurse | NHS Professionals | February 2005 to present | Telephone | 9th January 2008 | Normally about 250-300 per day, but can rise to 2-3,000 |
| 7.  What a Complete Brunt - http://whatacompleteblunt.blogspot.com/ | Male | Early 40s | London Underground security manager | Transport for London | April 2005 to present | Telephone | 6th February 2008 | About 100-130 hits per day |
| 8  UniSpeak Lossy - http://unispeak.blogspot.com/ | Male | Age not known | University lecturer – computing | Unknown UK university | September 2004 to present | Email | 2nd November 2007 (received final email) | Not known |
| 9  Dr Grumble - http://drgrumble.blogspot.com/ | Male | Mid 50s | Teaching consultant | NHS – unknown region | October 2007 to present | Email | 4th November 2007 (received final email) | Not known |

**Appendix Two:** Work blogging habits over previous year (1st March 2008 and 28th February 2009)

| Blog Title | Number of posts |
|---|---|
| Dr Grumble | 190 |
| Walking the Streets | 145 |
| UniSpeak Lossy | 13 |
| What a Complete Blunt | 243 |
| I Am Not a Drain on Society | 106 |
| PurplePlus | 53 |
| Random Acts of Reality | 163 |
| Trauma Queen | 235 |
| Busdriving | 205 |

**Notes:** The keepers of Walking the Streets and UniSpeak Lossy blogs stopped blogging around the date of the interview. The figure quoted in Table Two is the number of postings in the year up until the end of the blog.