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Cover Feature
Life Balance: Are we any closer to getting this right?

Special Articles:
ABC Learning in need of a deft response
Economics and Psychology: Two sides of the leadership coin

A publication of the College of Organisational Psychologists
Organisational Psychology — the science of people at work
Contents

Cover Feature
Life Balance:
Are we any closer to getting this right?

4 If you don’t know where you are going you won’t know how to get there:
Clarifying the importance of work-life balance
Louise Parkes & Peter Langford

9 Work-life balance in Australia in the new millennium: rhetoric versus reality
Article Summary by Rosie McMahon

13 The impact of cars on quality of life and wellness
Tom Pietkiewicz

Special Articles

17 ABC Learning in need of a deft response
Mark England

19 Economics and Psychology: Two sides of the leadership coin
Rosie McMahon

Editor I 3
About the College of Organisational Psychologists I 22
Publication Guidelines I 23
Editorial

Summer holidays, the beach, barbeques, aeroguard and balmy nights... all part of the season for many Australian holiday makers. But I wonder how many people won’t be taking holidays now, choosing instead to work through the Christmas period, or alternatively, having to work.

Our contributors for this edition’s theme ‘Life balance: are we any closer to getting it right?’ would suggest that employers are still not managing this issue well in Australia. As long as work-life balance is considered costly to implement and maintain and possibly even contributes to lower profitability, it is unlikely that there will be a change to organisational policy.

The impact of this is to the social fabric of our lives: to cope, people choose to have less children and work part time so that they are available to support both children and the elderly. On the other hand some people work long hours but the pressures become greater.

Not surprisingly, women rather than men are more at risk of overload, experiencing high levels of work interfering with family and family interfering with work and of physical and emotional caregiver strain. This is regardless of lifecycle stage, generation cohort and position.

An interesting article on the impact of cars on quality of life and well-being, looks at the psychological impact of higher levels of traffic congestion leading to longer periods of time in traffic and subsequently less periods of time at home with the family.

Our article on ABC Learning’s recent demise also plays a part in the work-life balance debate. Australian families are dependent on available quality childcare and the 2008 credit crisis demonstrates only too highly how vulnerable they are.

Readers may be also interested in my interview with Barry Bloch, an organisational psychologist who provides an challenging outlook on the link between psychology and economics.

The next theme for our March edition of Illuminations is ‘The Great Skills Shortage: Impacts and Actions’. We would like to invite you to contribute to this topic which reviews how the skills shortage is impacting organisations and what solutions Organisational Psychologists might be developing to address the issue. This will be an interesting topic particularly with the 2008 global financial crisis contributing to the unfortunate retrenchment of many employees. Submissions are due by the 28th February.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Illuminations and we look forward to providing you with some compelling and interesting reading in 2009.

Seasons Greetings

The National Committee of the College of Organisational Psychologists would like to wish all our members and readers a safe and happy holiday season.
An executive’s face slowly darkened and her brow furrowed with indignation. Oh no. Here it comes. “Are you telling us that work-life balance is not important?”

Well, yes... and no. “Of course it’s important” we reassure her, “but the question is, what is it important for?”

We are presenting the results of an employee survey of several thousand staff in this executive’s organisation. The two key outcomes measured by our survey (and in Voice Project’s research involving over 20,000 employees and 1500 organisations) were (1) staff engagement – passion for their work, the organisation and their intention to stay, and (2) organisational performance – measured by staff perceptions of achieving organisational objectives, delivering high quality customer services and continual improvement. In our consulting reports and presentations we estimate the “importance” of a broad range of management systems and practices by how well they correlate with these outcomes. While openly acknowledging that correlation does not prove causality, our suggested priorities for action are those practices that appear to be important, but on which the organisation is scoring poorly. These priorities are not set by the organisation, or by Voice Project’s theoretical model, but by the pattern of survey responses of staff within the organisation.

As is usually the case, when this specific organisation compares work-life balance (WLB) against a broad range of other management practices, WLB shows only a weak positive relationship with staff engagement and organisational performance. This finding is consistent with Voice Project’s research showing that work-life balance had the lowest correlation with employee engagement and intention to stay when compared to 27 other aspects of the work environment (Langford, in press).

Work-life balance had the lowest correlation with employee engagement and intention to stay when compared to 27 other aspects of the work environment.
The primary documented consequences of poor WLB are for individuals, families and wider society, such as declining fertility and birth rates, marital stress, reduced community participation, and lower care for the young and elderly.

This is not the answer the executive wants. As Communications Director for this large organisation, she tells us she is not about to write this message into the CEO’s summary speech to staff. We agree with her work-life balance, wellness and workload are all issues that need to be addressed in this organisation, but management need to be very clear about why they are doing it, how it can be achieved, and how to evaluate the outcomes. Because according to the data we’ve just collected in their organisation, WLB will not provide their biggest “bang-for-the-buck” if they are striving to improve engagement, retention and organisational performance.

Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson (2008) have recently outlined a framework for evaluating how and why an organisation should implement WLB-friendly policies. The steps include planning and alignment, customization, culture and demonstrated value. It is a useful framework to help us think about some of the issues around WLB.

(1) Planning and alignment

Perhaps the most important question for organisations to face honestly is “What is the purpose of WLB policies in the organisation, and where do they fit with other organisational priorities and strategies?”

Abbott and De Cieri (2008) investigated influences on management decision-making in the area of WLB. It emerged clearly that management and employees perceived WLB as a reward for staff, and thus a drawcard for attracting and retaining talented employees. The common belief is that WLB is particularly valuable for women, older employees, and the younger “work to live” generation Y. Hence, chief influences on the development of WLB policies were the perceived tightness of the labour market, and whether the economic position of the organisation allowed for and justified the cost of such policies. Indeed, we know from Voice Project research that employers are more likely to implement work-life balance practices if they think they are facing a shortage of skilled labour (Parkes & Langford, 2007).

Despite the overwhelming perception that WLB is a strategy to attract a diverse workforce, Parkes and Langford (2008) found that work-life balance was no more important for engaging women than men. Although not as exciting as the current debate about generational differences, our data also shows the unsurprising finding that work-life balance is harder to achieve and more important for middle-aged employees with children, and less important for engaging single employees and generation Y. In fact, most employees (73%) reported being able to satisfactorily meet both their non-work and work responsibilities, and balance work with other aspects of their lives. In contrast, most employees were dissatisfied with the organisation’s ability to provide career opportunities, to consult employees about decisions that affected them, or to share information and knowledge between different sections in the organisation.

Bardoel et al argue that the planning and alignment step includes establishing the business case for WLB. However, many researchers are starting to openly express scepticism around this ‘business case’, for example,

“Improving work–life balance is socially desirable – workers obviously like it and firm productivity does not suffer. However, our results do not give a green light for policy makers to regulate even more work–life balance. Even if productivity does not fall, work–life balance is costly to implement and maintain, and may result in significantly lower profitability” (Bloom, Kretcher & Van Reenen, 2006 p2, in Brough, Holt, Bauld, Biggs & Ryan, 2008).

In contrast to the lack of findings for a business case for work-life balance, the primary documented consequences of poor WLB are for individuals, families and wider society, such as declining fertility and birth rates, marital stress, reduced
community participation, and lower care for the young and elderly (Brough et al., 2008).

Thus WLB is an economic tool that organisations offer to satisfy employees’ social goals. Whether these goals are in alignment depends on the economic and workforce environment of the organisation. Where the management and employee goals conflict, ethical dilemmas will emerge for organisational psychologists working with these organisations around who the “client” is, and whose interests they serve. The holy grail among psychologists has been to prove that WLB affects the bottom-line for organisations, thus neatly bringing into alignment management and employee interests. We’re not convinced, however, that this goal will ever be fully attainable. What really needs to happen is for organisations to reflect upon their definition of the “bottom-line” and decide whether they wish to stand beside employees, unions and government to share responsibility for the welfare of staff and the well-being of the community. With the profile of corporate social responsibility continuing to rise, perceptions of organisational success are closely linked to their reputation for being ethical. It would be more fruitful to consider work-life balance as a key performance indicator of ethical corporate behaviour, and a core strategy for constructing and managing work in a socially sustainable way.

(2) Customization, culture and demonstrated value

In the conversation after our presentation, the Communications Director admits that she works 60–70 hours a week, she loves her job and sees her role as critical in the organisation. She can understand that highly engaged employees will sometimes sacrifice work-life balance to achieve organisational goals, especially if the organisation provides support in other ways.

Beyond exploring planning and alignment, Bardol’s framework also examines whether work-family initiatives have been appropriately customized and developed to deliver outcomes for the specific organisation and individuals, whether steps have been taken to build a culture to support work-family initiatives, and whether the work-family initiatives are monitored to demonstrate value to all stakeholders.

If staff engagement is the goal, then as consulting psychologists we can find ourselves recommending work practices to engage staff that can, as a side-effect, impact negatively on work-life balance. These include practices focusing on individual performance such as appraisal (especially if performance is linked to pay), career development, and involvement in decision-making (Parkes & Langford, 2007). While these practices can bring financial and career rewards, they can also induce pressure to work long and intensively.

It is this long and intensive work that appears to be the biggest enemy of work-life balance. Consistent with previous research, Parkes and Langford (2008) found that the strongest predictors of WLB are heavy workloads and long working hours. Work overload has a dual impact on WLB through longer work hours as well as the increased emotional and cognitive strain experienced during the work which flows over into the family environment (Skinner & Pocock, 2008). Hence, evaluating WLB policies in the context of organisational culture and other HR practices is essential.

For example, part-time work is probably the most common do-it-yourself approach to WLB. Parkes and Langford (2008) found an overwhelmingly positive association between part-time work and better WLB. Women reported a slightly higher satisfaction with work-life balance than men, but this effect was completely mediated by women’s greater likelihood of part-time or casual employment. Nevertheless, while reducing hours, part-time work may increase emotional and psychological strain if workload is not adjusted to match the hours, and some negative relationships between part-time work and WLB have been found (Brough et al., 2008). Similarly, WLB policies such as flexible start and finish times, and work-from-home arrangements have been found to increase productivity, reduce costs, increase workforce participation, and improve WLB. However some employees use these policies to spend more time working! Hence organisational culture is a critical determinant in whether these practices translate into better WLB.
...some of the most significant cultural contributors to WLB include fair and supportive supervisors, good relationships with co-workers, support for diversity (such as the prevention of harassment and bullying), a concern for equal opportunity, and a priority placed on health and safety within the workplace (Parkes & Langford, 2008).

Our own research suggests some of the most significant cultural contributors to WLB include fair and supportive supervisors, good relationships with co-workers, support for diversity (such as the prevention of harassment and bullying), a concern for equal opportunity, and a priority placed on health and safety within the workplace (Parkes & Langford, 2008).

The overall conclusion from our research and practice is that there may forever be a trade-off between “work” and “life”. The question “Are we getting it right?” feels a little like Alice asking the Cheshire Cat which way she should go. The return question inevitably is “Right for what?” Instead of seeking an even balance of work and life for all employees, we should perhaps focus more strongly on achieving work-life “alignment” – that is, congruence between values and behaviours. The objective should be for organisations to build flexible cultures that enable employees to choose how best to achieve this alignment. In such an environment, some employees can choose to tip the balance in favour of “work”, and others can place a stronger emphasis on “life” while still contributing positively to organisational performance. If managed in a creative and socially responsible way, a more positive and diverse alignment of work and life should allow the cross-pollination of values, passions and abilities between life and work domains.

References


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Work life balance in Australia in the new millennium: rhetoric versus reality

Research Summary by Rosie McMahon

This research summary is based on an original report written by Canadian academics Dr. Linda Duxbury and Dr. Chris. Higgins. The research was conducted in Australia in 2007 by Beaton Consulting Pty Ltd in Melbourne. This summary is an overview of the Executive Summary which can be found at http://www.beaton.com.au/probono.htm. A full report can also be found at this web address.

The report uses survey data collected in 2007 from a sample of Australian managers and professionals. The sample is made up of 11,920 men and women who work full-time as ‘knowledge workers’ in Australia. The study uses the elements in Table 1 (page 10) to describe ‘work-life conflict’.

The study demonstrates that work-life balance in Australia includes childcare but increasingly eldercare. While only 4% have an elderly dependent in their home, over 35% have an elderly dependent who lives nearby and 46% have responsibility for an elderly dependent who lives elsewhere. This often includes more than one elderly dependent.

While just under half of families share the care of their children, where they do not share care, the woman is 10 times more likely than the man to have responsibility. Interestingly, eldercare is more likely to be shared but when it is not, again, the women are more likely to have primary responsibility.

Of the respondents, 1 in 4 men and 1 in 5 women spend more than 50 hours a week at work with an additional 25 or so hours attending to family activities (chores, errands, childcare and eldercare), leaving on average 11 hours each week for personal and leisure activities. Additionally, around 20% of men and 10% of women spend more than 56 hours per week in work and the majority (69%) spending time working from home in the evening and on weekends.

The authors suggest that knowledge workers may spend long hours in work due to factors such as downsizing, the corporate culture encouraging long hours, increased use of technology, global competition, fear of not being seen to be a contributor and on a personal level, wanting to be seen to do a good job.

The gender differences remain poignant with men generally having lower demands overall than women – they are more likely to have a spouse who works part time and has assumed primary responsibility for the tasks at home, whereas the same can’t be said of women who do not enjoy this kind of support at home. Rather, they are part of a dual-career family where work and non-work demands are shared.

Conclusions drawn about work-life conflict of Australian Knowledge workers show that 42% in the sample report high levels of role overload, with 29% reporting that this interferes with family. Only 8% of the sample report high levels of family interferes with work and caregiver strain. This may change in the future however as the number of employees with elder care responsibilities increases.

So where are the risks? Women are more likely in every instance to be at risk of overload, experiencing high levels of work interfering with family and family interfering with work and of physical and emotional caregiver strain. This is regardless of lifecycle stage, generation cohort and position.

Despite this, employers are not likely to be flexible in a highly competitive labour market, nor where there are high levels of job dissatisfaction or intent to change jobs. Even when workloads and work-life conflict can be linked to increased absenteeism, employers are not innovative in how they manage these issues. What tends to give then, is the employee, who is more likely to reduce family size as a way of coping with work-life conflict, or try to negotiate flexibility with regard to work hours and location.
(which is found to be a strong recruitment and retention tool).

The impact of work-life conflict varies as shown in Table 2 (page 11).

Another arrangement used in an attempt to ease work-life conflict is part-time work. Australia has the second highest participation of part-time workers in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and many women work part-time in order to balance work and family. This may however contribute to the fact that managerial and professional women in Australia face a ‘glass ceiling’ when it comes to career advancement and opportunities. Women with child or eldercare, in particular, appear to be disadvantaged.

What are some practical things employers can do to help employees gain control over work?

- Start to track, measure and record the actual costs of unrealistic work demands.
- Hire more staff where the employer relies too much on unpaid overtime.
- Start to collect overtime data and overtime and turnover costs.
- Develop appropriate email etiquette – especially for after hours work.
- Limit the amount of work that employees take home.
- Paid time off work for training.
- Introduce new performance measures and rewards which focus on objectives, results and output not hours worked.
- Increase the number of supportive managers within the organisation and simultaneously reduce the number of managers who are seen to be non-supportive.
- Commit resources to improving people management and the number of supportive managers.
- Challenge the long hour’s culture.
- Increase perceived flexibility.

So, are we any closer to getting life balance right? What do you think? Please forward your thoughts to the editor, Rosie McMahon at rosemark@primusonline.com.au

Table 1: Type of work-life conflict and their meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work-life conflict</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role overload</td>
<td>Role overload occurs when an individual has too much to do and too little time to do it in.</td>
<td>Overloaded people constantly feel rushed and “time crunched”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work interferes with family</td>
<td>Work interferes with family occurs when work demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfil family and role responsibilities.</td>
<td>Where long hours in paid work prevent a parent from attending a child’s sporting event. Where preoccupation with work prevents someone from enjoying family time. Where work stresses spill over into the home and increase conflict with the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family interferes with work</td>
<td>Family interferes with work occurs when family demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfil responsibilities at work.</td>
<td>A child’s illness prevents attendance at work. Conflict at home makes concentration at work difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver strain</td>
<td>Caregiver strain occurs when an employee experiences physical, financial or emotional strain which can be attributed to the need to provide care or assistance to an elderly dependent.</td>
<td>The need to help parents bath, dress etc, imposes physical strain on many. Watching loved ones mental health deteriorating can emotionally overwhelm the caregiver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work-life conflict</td>
<td>Its impact</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the impact of role overload?</td>
<td>When compared to knowledge workers with low levels of role overload, knowledge workers with high role overload are:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.5 times more likely to agree that they have reduced their family size because of demands at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.6 times more likely to agree that they have delayed starting a family because of career demands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.8 times more likely to have high levels of absenteeism due to physical, mental or emotional fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twice as likely to report high levels of absenteeism (specifically, that they have missed 6 or more days in a 6 month period)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.3 times more likely to be absent from work due to ill health</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 times less likely to be satisfied with their jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.3 times less likely to be committed to the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the impact of work interferes with family?</td>
<td>When compared to knowledge workers with low levels of work interferes with family, knowledge workers with high work interferes with family are:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.5 times more likely to agree that they have reduced their family size because of demands at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 times more likely to agree that they have delayed starting a family because of career demands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3 times more likely to have high levels of absenteeism due to physical, mental or emotional fatigue</td>
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<td>1.3 times less likely to be committed to the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the impact of family interferes with work?</td>
<td>When compared to knowledge workers with low levels of family interferes with work, knowledge workers with high levels of family interferes with work are:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 times more likely to agree that they have reduced their family size because of demands at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.5 times more likely to have missed 3 or more days of work in the past 6 months due to childcare problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Twice as likely to agree that they have delayed starting a family because of career demands</td>
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<td>Twice as likely to have missed 6 or more days of work in the past 6 months (all causes combined)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Twice as likely to have high levels of absenteeism due to physical, mental or emotional fatigue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Half as likely to be satisfied with their jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the impact of family caregiver strain?</td>
<td>Compared to knowledge workers with low levels of caregiver strain, knowledge workers with high levels of caregiver strain are:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4 times more likely to have missed work due to eldercare problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.8 times more likely to have missed 6 or more days of work in the past 6 months (all causes combined)</td>
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<td>1.5 times less likely to report high levels of job satisfaction</td>
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The College of Organisational Psychologists is seeking to partner with sponsors committed to the cultivation of sustainable and effective Australian organisations.

The College is offering a number of innovative opportunities in its 2009 sponsorship program that will help position sponsors ahead of their competitors in terms of people attraction, retention and development and can be tailored to sponsors’ needs. A range of initiatives provide opportunities to market brands, products and services directly to our members and contribute to leading practice and knowledge about people at work in Australia. Opportunities include:

♦ College sponsorship, providing promotional benefits across the country in a customised package of event sponsorship and advertising. Three tiers of College sponsorship are being sought: Principal, Major and Supporting.

♦ The inaugural Futures Award, scheduled for 2009 which will recognise the top graduating Organisational Psychology Masters/Doctorate/PhD student in Australia.

♦ Workforce Sustainability Forum. The College is seeking sponsorship of a one-day forum engaging industry, academic, government, and media experts in a discussion of critical organisational psychology-related issues impacting on the sustainability and future effectiveness of the Australian workforce.

♦ Australian Workforce Brains Trust. The College is establishing a this new working group of Australia’s leading academic and industry thinkers in people performance, productivity and wellbeing to influence employment policy, organisational research and people capital practice.

♦ Publication sponsorship, including our eNewsletter REACH, distributed to 460 College members six times a year, and the quarterly business-focused eMagazine Illuminations, emailed to members plus business subscribers (typically HR managers and line managers).

♦ Conference Sponsorship. The 2009 Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference will be held in Sydney, and organisations are invited to sponsor sessions, exhibit, advertise or host conference events.

For more information on these sponsorship opportunities and how we can tailor a program to your organisation’s needs, contact Mark England, National Treasurer of the College of Organisational Psychologists. Mark can be contacted at mark_england@people.net.au
The impact of cars on quality of life and wellbeing

Tom Pietkiewicz
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Work-life balance, or home-work interface as some literature calls it, is a rather large and complex area. One factor that is increasingly playing a larger part in our life and work is the actual commuting time between work and home. While it is not unusual for Australians to spend an hour commuting each way to work, such times are almost unheard of in other parts of the world, especially Europe. Psychologists interested in work-life balance may be interested in understanding some of the factors at play in the increasing commuting times and therefore potential time lost at work and at home, its impact on people and how they can affect these factors through organisational design.

To a large extent the increasing commuting times have been caused by the advent of cars, or personal transport and the subsequent city design that resulted from this transportation type.

The car has become an integral part of our society. It is a symbol of status, freedom, mobility and of human conquest of technology. The car has shortened long journeys and offered convenience and comfort. The car is a tool of transport and leisure. Yet the car is a victim of its own success, as car numbers reach epidemic proportion around the world, the car is threatening our wellbeing, personal health and safety, the way we interact with others and our work and life, without even mentioning environmental impacts.

No where is the impact of the car more severe than in our cities. Cities have become unhealthy for many reasons. Research shows that large metropolitan areas in the USA such as Houston, Detroit and Atlanta which rely on and financially support the use of automobiles as transport are finding serious degradation in the quality of life (Burden, 2001). One of the biggest problems is congestion, the average resident of Atlanta will spend more than 12 hours a week stuck in traffic (Burden 2001), time that could be better spent with family, on leisure or more meaningful activities, such as actual work.

Australian author of 'Reclaiming our towns and Villages’ David Engwitch (cited in Burden, 2001) states that
It is estimated that urban rail services are 250% more energy efficient than motor cars, they reduce congestion, improve quality of life, clean up the cities and allow more human interaction, yet Australian governments insist on spending the majority of transport funds on building new roads.

Cities were invented to minimise travel and to maximise exchange (goods, services, culture, friendship, ideas and knowledge) and that the role of transport is to maximise exchange. Burden (2001) goes on to explain that all decisions in cities during our recorded civilisation of about 4000 years created progress that minimised travel and maximised exchange. It is only in the last 50-60 years that things have reversed, our use of vehicles have caused the urban sprawl, low density housing and remote suburban developments allowed people to get away from noise, crime pollution and urban decay. Sprawl pattern development, however, has created many new problems not previously understood, apart from breaking up communities it has made us dependent on high speed roadways as well as enslaving us to the car and the problems associated with it. Aggressive advertising by car companies, government policy favoring motor transport, a lack of viable alternatives and community attitudes have allowed car use to reach epidemic proportions in many parts of the world.

The impact of increased car use on people’s activity has been documented. Since 1975 the percentage of children traveling to school by car has doubled to 23% in 1994 which contributes to a total reduction in walking distances by 5-15 year olds of 28% annually over the same time (Roberts, 1998). The increased use of cars as transport is linked to the rise of obesity which in turn is linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and hypertension (Whitt, 1982). While the amount of walking has dropped by 42% in the US over the last twenty years, the percentage of overweight Americans has risen by 40% (Kientz, 2000). A direct link found that reducing walking in a community by 10% increased obesity rates by 1% in that community (Kientz, 2000). The pattern of decreased walking is further surprising when a quarter of all car journeys in the US are less than 3km (Roberts, 1998) well within walking distance.

The Mean Streets 2000 report (Kientz, 2000) finds that dangerous streets discourage people from walking, this can be attributed to government spending in the US which allocates 55 cents of federal transport funds on pedestrian projects while spending $72 per person on highways.

Car infrastructure is not only expensive and difficult to maintain it also occupies a lot of space, up to one third of land mass in Australia’s cities is occupied by roads and car parks (Manners, 1999). In fact Australian cities suffer a great deal from the mismanagement that occurred during the automotive post war boom, as many of our cities were being developed at that time. Melbourne which has a similar population to Rome has twelve times the land area. A combination of the vast distances travelled by Australians, our love for large cars and the fact that we drive old often poorly maintained cars makes Australians the biggest vehicle pollutants per capita in the world (Manners, 1999).

Perkins (1999) further blames cars for the negative effects on our psychology, especially traffic congestion creating road rage. Materialism associated with cars as status symbols for being yet another force of division in communities. Perkins (1999) also states that cities with the worst car problems in the world are also the ones which are growing in car use the most, he estimates the problems will get increasingly worse unless serious changes in policy are adopted.

Cars have such a negative effect on quality of life and wellbeing that in a recent international survey on quality of life the top cities were those that relied least on car transportation. The international survey on ‘quality of life’ looked at 218 cities around the world, looked at many aspects of community wellness. Conducted by international human resource firm Mercer, the survey judged cities according to 39 criteria including environment, transport, personal safety, culture, education and health. (Whelan, 2000). Judging by the list of problems associated with car travel, it is not surprising that the top four cities; Zurich, Vienna, Bern and Vancouver also had the best developed public transport systems.
In Vienna for example, public transport infrastructure is so good that 43.9% of journeys to work are by public transport, a contrast to Australian cities where the figure is less than 14% (Whelan, 2000). Vancouver’s improvement of rail services sees 75% of its users being previously single driver car occupants. It is estimated that urban rail services are 250% more energy efficient than motor cars, they reduce congestion, improve quality of life, clean up the cities and allow more human interaction, yet Australian governments insist on spending the majority of transport funds on building new roads (Whelan, 2000).

Despite the problems of congestion accidents and environmental impacts the car still receives special treatment that helps it maintain a dominant position in many countries. In the US subsidies for, petrol, roads, and parking make cars artificially cheap to operate. Low-density zoning policies together with the cars long range stretch cities over large distances, which once again makes cars even more necessary. Planning bias that favors more, faster and bigger roads over creative management of transportation makes sure that other options such as cycling are not given a fair hearing. Cycling is having a renaissance in Europe with up to 30% of urban trips in German cities being performed on a bike (Pucher, 1997). Public policy has transformed many highways in German cities into multipurpose travelways, amount of lanes for cars reduced and speed limit lowered, planting of trees and inclusion of bike ways and walk ways encourage cycling and walking. The modification of road signs and traffic lights, has allowed more people to cycle, at the benefit to their health and reducing of traffic in the cities. The new bike and walker friendly policies saw a reduction of traffic injuries by 30% since their implementation (Pucher, 1997). This changes can also be seen in Melbourne as an extensive network of cycable bike ways is created. Offering a healthy and cost effective option to car travel. Pucher (1997) expects that 5 billion people will live in cities by the year 2025. The need to move away from auto centered transportation will become increasingly more apparent.

Many city governments are now funding projects that are being tailored to providing many benefits to the community, these include the development of neighborhoods protection of environment, reduction of speed and creation of friendly approaches for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as improving public transport (Peaks, 1999). The urban sprawl is being reversed with more efficient inner city housing being developed that is well connected and linked to its surroundings.

Organisational Psychologists may have noticed an increasing trend in the decentralisation of business and workplaces away from the CBD. Many offices and workplaces are moving closer to where people are. This can allow businesses to tap into new employment markets, such as mothers, who can work only some hours a day and can benefit from the reduction in commuting times. Many companies are also offering facilities for bike parking and showers, allowing workers more flexibility, reducing congestion and helping improve the health and fitness of their employees. Improvements in technology have also resulted in an ability of employees to do much of their work from home.

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The 8th Industrial & Organisational Psychology Conference will be held from 25 - 28 June 2009 in Sydney. The conference will bring together researchers and practitioners from Australia and overseas to explore contemporary issues in workplace psychology.

A special emphasis will be on how I-O psychologists can help construct and manage work in ways that meet present needs of an organisation and its people, but with a view to long-term development and growth within the larger social, economic, and natural environment.

Situated on a breathtaking harbour, Sydney is one of the world’s most attractive and exciting cities. With its rich mix of colonial and indigenous history, multicultural cuisines and festivals, museums, exhibitions and theatres - Sydney is an experience waiting to happen. Recreation, exploration, adventure and relaxation await you in this city bursting with unique attractions, fine dining, world class accommodation, non-stop shopping and a diverse range of entertainment.

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*Professor Eduardo Salas*: Work Teams in Organisations: a Quarter Century of Progress

*Professor Sabine Sonnentag*: Staying Well and Healthy: Recovery from Daily Job Stress

*Professor Phillip Taylor*: Baby Boom or Baby Bust?: A new ageing workforce research agenda

*Professor Robert Wood*: Knowledge Based Leadership

*Professor Beryl Hesketh*: Future Trends and Influences of Organisational Behaviour
ABC Learning in Need of a Deft Response

Mark England
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Thousands of working Australians submit their children to ABC Learning style institutions as a ready solution to the need for child care. ABC Learning profitably expanded throughout Australia and internationally, fuelled by easy credit. With the credit tap now turned off, ABC Learning has been placed in administration and centers have been closed. Many parents are wondering where to place their children next year. Australia’s political leaders have stepped in to bridge the yawning gap created by this debacle.

Simultaneously, steps are being implemented that will alter the way child care is provided in Australia. These are based on psychological research that demonstrates the negative impacts of infants and children of current institutional arrangements. The levers to implement the fruits of this psychological research into early childhood needs are within the realm of organizational psychology.

The ABC Learning Collapse

The Honorable Julia Gillard MP released findings by the ABC Learning Ltd receiver on 10 December 2008 in relation to the 1,042 ABC Learning child care centers. The almost unprecedented act of a political leader releasing such findings underlines its political sensitivity.

The Corporations Act 2001 effectively requires that the unviable centers are closed to maximize the value of the assets. The threatened closure of centers impacts on approximately 20,000 children and 100 ABC Learning employees. Approximately 110,000 children are currently with ABC Learning. Additional government funds are being provided to maintain otherwise unviable centers until 31 March 2009 when creditors next meet.

Historical Perspective

Women born around Federation in Australia typically worked from 10 to 19 years of age, before marrying and rearing children. Marriage accompanied a permanent withdrawal from paid employment for women. Infants and children were cared for by women in the family home or, if institutionalized, in an orphanage. Now, orphaned children in Australia are sought after by families. For the core years of work from 25 to 59 years, women are increasingly as equally involved in the workforce as males. Parents seek to institutionalize their own children so they can work.

This demographic change is not unique to Australia. It is common practice in economically advanced societies. Almost 80 per cent of the three-to-six-year-olds in rich countries are in some form of early childhood education and care. For the under threes, the proportion is 25 per cent, rising to more than 50 per cent in individual OECD countries. UNICEF views as worrying the trend for a sharp increase in the number of children less than one year of age being cared for outside the home that has occurred over the last decade.

Child care in Australia is a partnership between parent(s) and child care institutions. Work – life balance has to date been measured by the ability for working parents to be satisfactorily employed by institutions and have time for leisure. A work-life balance equation will ideally take into account the ability for infants and children to be appropriately engaged while in institutional care. Effective child care is an important component of a meaningful work-life balance model.

Australian Institutionalised Child Care Fails International Benchmarks

‘The Child Care Transition’, a report by UNICEF on 12 December 2008, ranks Australia as having the third-worst childcare and early learning system in the developed world. Australia met two of the ten benchmarks, namely early learning staff accreditation and provision of subsidized childcare services for at least 25% of children under three.

UNICEF recommendations for Australia to consider include:

- Raising the gross domestic product spent on childcare and early childhood education from less than 0.05% to 1 or more percent.
- 12 months paid leave for all mothers and fathers to ensure babies receive loving individual attention for at least the first 12 months
- Better paid and educated early childhood teachers
- A ratio of 1:3 carers to children
- At least 80% of all child-care
staff trained

- Minimum staff-to-children ratios in pre-school education of 1:15
- A national child-care strategy that gives priority to disadvantaged children
- Subsidised and a accredited early childhood services for at least 80% of four-year-olds

The Commonwealth Spurred by the Community to Improve Child Care

Sir Robert Garran was, on Federation, Australia’s first – and for several days only – Commonwealth public servant. He set the tone for successive governments accepting advice from trusted experts. The 2007, 2020 Summit broke through that tendency by seeking advice from 1,000 prominent Australians who in turn reached out into the broad Australian community. An outcome of that summit was a call for integrated child care and child support centers.

Having apologized for the stolen generation, the Commonwealth Government has been spurred to act on national child care arrangements judged as neglectful.

More Expert Personalised Care Needed for Effective Early Child Development

Ilan Katz, director of the Social Policy Research Centre, says there is broad consensus in the neurological research that children up to 18 months old are better off with a parent or a one-to-one carer, and “from age two formal childcare will not be harmful and is often beneficial, provided it is good quality.”

Early Childhood Australia, the peak advocacy group for young children, recommends that one carer look after no more than three babies younger than two. The actual ratio for this age group is one carer for every five children in NSW, South Australia, Tasmania, the ACT, Victoria, the Northern Territory. In Queensland and Western Australia the ratio is 1:4, and NSW will move to a 1:4 ratio in 2010. The ratio suggested by Early Childhood Australia seems reasonable given the number of children under the age of two that may require care by a single birth mother. The higher ratios evidenced in different Australian states would therefore seem to reflect a weighting towards commercial pressures rather than developmental needs.

Advice by groups such as Early Childhood Australia is being considered by the government. An advisory panel on childcare, set up by Maxine McKew, the Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education, has recommended a ratio of one carer for every three children younger than two. The panel proposes that each group of children be cared for by a university qualified child care worker.

Summary Observations

In the past decade infants and children are increasingly cared in institutions as well as in the family home. Benchmark research is demonstrating that early development needs require measurable levels of care and support that is not currently provided in commercially driven Australian child care institutions such as ABC Learning. The 2008 credit crisis has demonstrated how vulnerable Australian work-life balance is to the current for-profit child care model.

The Commonwealth Government has urgently intervened to prop up current arrangements but early indicators are that a new model for child care is required in Australia. Indicators are that educational levels, staff ratios and parental leave all need to be improved in favour of child development needs rather than financial imperatives. These organizational changes demonstrate the divergence of psychological and for-profit pressures when appropriately caring for the needs of vulnerable infants and children. Organisational psychology is very much at the core of family work-life balance.

5. UNICEF. Launch of the Report Card 8: The Childcare Transition A League Table on Early Childhood Education and Care in Advanced Countries. 12 December 2008
Economics and Psychology: Two sides of the leadership coin
An interview with Barry Bloch
Rosie McMahon
rosemark@primusonline.com.au

At the 43rd Australian Psychological Society (APS) Annual Conference in Hobart in September 2008, Barry Bloch presented a paper titled ‘Leadership in a global economy - how can Australian leaders be developed to compete?’ This presentation provided a fascinating look at the changing demands and profile of our leaders and how we might go about developing them. We thought it might be interesting to follow up on this presentation and find out a bit more about the topic and about Barry Bloch!

Tell us a bit about yourself?

In October this year I joined Heidrick & Struggles who provide senior level executive search and leadership consulting services. Prior to this I was the Global Practice Leader for Leadership and People Development for Rio Tinto. I have also worked in leading consulting firms McKinsey & Company and PricewaterhouseCoopers and in specialist leadership and organisation development firms Emerge and SmytheDorwardLambert, all in London. I started my leadership, people and organisation development career with Old Mutual in southern Africa. I’ve now worked in over 25 countries and across many industries, providing coaching and top team facilitation to many top executive teams and individuals. I am a member of the APS and the College of Organisational Psychologists in Australia and a registered Psychologist in South Africa and the United Kingdom and have a Masters degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology from the University of Cape Town. I am actively involved in the professional development of organisational psychologists in Australia and previously in the United Kingdom. I would like to continue to support the profession of Organisational Psychology as we can contribute to major societal and organisational change.

What have you noticed about the changing role of leaders during your career?

Leaders - regardless of their industry - are currently facing some fundamental challenges that they have not had to face previously. Leaders must grow their businesses while trying to survive, which, particularly in our current economic environment, creates incredible pressure. This is exacerbated by the fact that competition is coming from markets other than traditional markets and operating models that leaders have been able to rely on in the past are no longer relevant. The regulatory environment is far more complex than ever before, there is a drive for higher levels of technical innovation and there are changing expectations from society about how leaders manage these issues. Add the dramatic emergence of growing economies like Brazil, Russia, India and China - ‘the BRICs’ - and we find that the role of leaders is changing significantly (see Diagram 1 on page 20).

Overlay on top of these issues, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and we find that many leaders are not equipped to deal with the issues at hand in any other than traditional ways. This is why we see so many global and local businesses cutting costs as a way of manoeuvring through the crisis. Leaders are resorting to short term leadership measures to survive. However our global economy requires long term leadership at times like this; different models of leadership that sustain growth and manage the complexities of the economy.

The answer for leaders now is to adopt a balanced approach, deliver-
Diagrams 1: The changing role of Leaders

Source: B. Bloch (September 2008). Leadership in a global economy - how can Australian leaders be developed to compete? Presentation at the 43rd Australian Psychological Society (APS) Annual Conference, Hobart, Australia. Printed with Permission

So what do you see as the future economic profile for leaders?

The 21st century is demanding a completely different economic profile for leaders. Leaders will find they are working in new operating models where markets drive greater levels of consolidation, traditional hierarchies are challenged as more and different players join the field, and societal norms will require tougher and newer regulations. We see this happening now as countries respond to the GFC. This will force leaders to ask themselves questions like ‘how can I ensure my business can survive and grow particularly when I have new competitors that I can’t see?’ and ‘how can I operate beyond a hierarchy and run my senior team and Board in a different way?’

Leaders will need to develop more tangible models of innovation in order to deliver higher levels of market capitalisation. This will include collaborating beyond company silos and boarders without breaching anti-trust to ensure growth and survival. Leaders will need to consider not only how to handle the business economics in a different environment but also how to attract, retain and manage talent during these times. To do this, leaders will need a more rounded set of leadership competencies.

How do you see this relating to Organisational Psychology?

Organisational Psychology is a fundamental contributor to business performance. Whenever there is a financial question, there is also a psychological assumption. For ex-
ample, let’s assume an international merger. While company executives might be focused on decisions around keeping incomes within certain parts of the world for tax purposes, this will by necessity impact people from, for example, the marketing department, their skills, customer focus and psychological contracts. If we are looking at tax implications on revenue and subsequent net present value we need to consider how this might impact, for example, the sales force and whether they can perform in a different way. We also make assumptions about leaders and their capacity, or not, to operate across cultures and countries.

Our role as psychologists is to surface and challenge these assumptions, to understand more fully the businesses we work in. To do this we need to work with leaders to develop integrated solutions that take leaders along a faster journey. This should be systematic and strongly link teams, systems and cultures and be delivered in a way which influences leaders at the top. Ultimately, what we do from an organisational psychology perspective should be a boardroom measure. Organisational Psychologists need to have a strong identification with their business partners and clients and be a part of the leadership team regardless of whether they are an internal or an external consultant.

What then, are the skills Organisational Psychologists should have?

There are three primary skills for IO Psychologists:

We need to understand that business leaders have been successful without us and start with the premise that we are not always fixing broken things! This includes understanding how to operate in a commercial environment but also be prepared to appreciate how little we actually know. This will require a level of humility.

We need to have the courage to challenge business assumptions. We can add real value as diagnosticians. We need to go hard at the levers for change but not try too many different things. It is not enough to apply an intervention purely because it is the ‘right thing to do’, it must also be the most effective. This means we need to be able to walk away from work if it is not achieving this.

Finally, we need to design practical and simple interventions that make a difference. We need to start where the clients is, not where the client needs to be; in other words, facilitate the client to understand the nature and value of the intervention.

How does this impact the role of Organisational Psychologists as leaders?

Leadership is not only hierarchical but also individual. It is important to be able to see ourselves as leaders focused on the development of an organisation and its people, not just as a consultant, advisor and (registration 8:15am)

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Building on participants existing knowledge, the workshop will provide a practical opportunity to walk through the change process and consider and apply the mindset, skills and tools needed to lead successful change. The workshop is designed to enhance the effectiveness of participants change efforts with a specific focus on the people leadership aspects of change.

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College of Organisational Psychologists

Organisational Psychology is the science of people at work. Organisational psychologists specialise in analysing organisations and their people, and devising strategies to recruit, motivate, develop, change and inspire.

The Australian Psychological Society’s College of Organisational Psychologists is the professional association for organisational psychologists in Australia. There are 460 members in the College, which operates at both a State and National level.

The College develops and safeguards the standards of practice and supervised experience, and advises and makes recommendations regarding the education and training of organisational psychologists. The College also acts as a focal point for media and general enquiries relating to organisational psychology.

The College supports organisational psychologists to achieve success through professional development and networking, access to the latest research and tools, raising the public profile of organisational psychology and representing College members on issues that matter.

The College supports organisational psychologists to achieve success by:

- Providing access to research, information and tools which build the credibility of our members;
- Providing national networking opportunities;
- Raising the profile of organisational psychology within the business and broader communities;
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- Working with universities to strengthen the link between science and practice.

Benefits of joining the College:

- Free subscription to the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Organisational Psychology (ANZJOP)
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See page 12 for information about the College’s sponsorship program.

Become a member of the College of Organisational Psychologists today and contact our Membership Coordinator, Kathryn von Treuer at kathryn.vonetreuer@deakin.edu.au or ring her on 0409 562 311.

Gina McCredie
National Chair, College of Organisational Psychologists
We would be like to invite readers to participate in the development and growth of *Illuminations*.

Please share with us any issues and insights, responses to published articles, and suggestions for publication.

Please forward any of the above to the Editor Rosie McMahon at rosemark@primusonline.com.au
Publication Guidelines

ILLUMINATIONS is a quarterly e-Magazine which publishes articles relevant to the work of organisational psychologists - for College members and related professionals (organisational psychologists, HR and business professionals). This publication is an opportunity for Organisational Psychologists to feature their work in both academic and industrial settings. Material submitted for this publication should meet the following criteria:

1. It clearly distinguishes how the work of organisational psychologists contributes to the study of human behaviour;

2. It is evidence based and outlines how organisational psychology contributes to improvement in organisational outcomes;

3. It provides learning for the wider psychological community about what organisational psychologists do;

4. It demonstrates how specialist areas of psychology have been able to work collaboratively to produce outcomes;

5. It clearly distinguishes the work of organisational psychologists from other allied professions and;

6. It provides an opportunity for professionals to debate and discuss issues relating to organisational psychology.

Submissions should be between 750 and 1500 words. They should conform to APA standards for style, referencing and layout. The following brief outline of is intended to be indicative only. The main points to be followed when preparing a manuscript are summarised below. Please provide:

- Single-line spacing of text
- Text in 9 point Tahoma typeface
- Identification of authors on the submission
- All tables, figures, statistical reporting and sub-headers in APA format
- References in APA format
- In-text quotations in APA format
- Abbreviations should be spelled out in the first instance
- Titles should be no more than 6 words in length
- Pictures/advertisements/inserts should be in jpg format
- Authors name, title, and place of work should be included

Submissions should be submitted as email attachments to the Publications Editor. Manuscripts which do not meet these guidelines will be returned to the author to resubmit.

Reference

2009 Publication Dates, Deadline Dates and & Topics

March 2009 Issue: 28th February Topic: The Great Skills Shortage: Impacts and Actions

Reviews how the skills shortage is impacting organisations and what solutions Organisational Psychologists might be developing to address the issue.

June 2009 Issue: 28th May Topic: Meeting the Future: Promoting Sustainable Organisational Growth

The title of the June 2009 IO Psych conference in Sydney - reviews current research and work being carried out to ensure sustainable business growth.


Reviews how models of work performance have changed over the years and how organisational psychologists might be addressing work performance differently today.


Reviews how the organisational psychologist adds value to organisations by speaking the same financial language as business managers.

Publications Editor - Queries & Submissions
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This publication is designed to show how organisational psychology adds value to organisations, with a focus on a different topic in each edition. The eMagazine is issued quarterly to both COP members and other interested parties. It is not just intended for organisational psychologists, but a wider business audience. We hope it will be read by many of our colleagues and clients in Human Resources, line management, and other business roles - so feel free to pass it on!