

**Applied Sociology Thematic Group**  
*For the Australian Sociology Practitioner*  
**Contact Email for October 2013**

Greeting one and all,

*Next month is the TASA Conference in Melbourne (Monash, Caulfield) Applied Sociology is assisting with Post Grad. Day's Theme of 'Becoming a Sociology Practitioner', in addition, there will be an Applied Sociology Thematic Group meeting at some time during the Conference (No date or time yet available but will let you know). If you are in Melbourne and available it would be great for us all to meet.*

The Australian Institute, largely an economic and political think tank, (although they do employ one sociologist,) (that seems largely to present their data in pictorial demographic form,) have just released some data on work generated stress. Stress, is usually defined as a state of tension produced by pressures or conflicting demands with which the person cannot adequately cope. This is usually approached through the medical route or the psychiatrist/psychologist route. The A.I. study tells us that 3.8 million worker don't take a lunch break. But 3 million workers do. What they don't tell us is what is determined by the employer.

What I have been more conscious of is that a lot of people have a written contracts which requires them to be present at work from 9am to 5pm, but the culture of the company expects them to be present from 7 or 8 am to 6 or 7 pm, in addition, 3.4 million Australian workers continue working whilst eating their lunch and 1 in 4 worker either check emails or take work phone call out of working hours. The A.I. reports that Australian Workers donate \$110 billion in unpaid overtime to their employers.

Central to all this is the old dichotomy, which is more important for a person 'work' or 'home and family'? For some work is all enthralling, and home is a place of noise, argument tedious labour. For others work is a tedious bore necessary to provide resources for the family which is a joyful, loving place. Or any combinations in between. In terms of stress both places can become the source of stress or a release from it. So what is the sociologist's connection to stress at work? Jary & Jary define Sociology as "the systematic study of the functioning, organization, development, and types of human societies". Abercrombie, Hill & Turner define Sociology as "the study of the bases of social membership. Or technically, as the analysis of the structure of social relationships as constituted by social interaction." What is lacking in the A.I. or the other descriptions is, what is to be done when the analysis has been made. Where is the applied sociology? The problem with applied sociology that it raises the question of ethics. There are sociologists who believe sociology should not occupy itself with ethical concerns. Right and wrong are said not to be sociological questions. However, when it comes to applied sociology the question ought to become real. Is it right that employers can sanction an organisation that defrauds their employees to increase its profits? Is it right for employers to demand a person gives extra time to its organisation rather than to the family? The generation of stress comes from the dichotomies that people are confronted with. Stress reduces the ability of people to perform at their best at home and at work. It seems to me that applied sociology must be prepared to challenge the misapplication of a social process.

Alan Scott  
Convenor