FROM "THIS JOB IS KILLING ME" TO "I LIVE THE LIFE I LOVE AND I LOVE THE LIFE I LIVE", OR FROM STAKHANOV TO CONTEMPORARY WORKAHOLICS

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ABSTRACT

F. W. Taylor is often celebrated as a founding father of organization and management theory, one whose commitment to efficiency is legendary. If we define efficiency in terms of maximizing output from a given – or lesser – number of workers it can be considered that, in some cases, Taylor's science has achieved a remarkable success. Contemporary organizations managed to create such a state of commitment (be it spontaneous or imposed), that people have adopted excessive working as lifestyle. Life is organized around work, with work occupying more and more territory from the former private life. We discuss the notion of excessive working, present several forms of excessive working, contest the idea that excessive working is necessarily noxious, suggest a dynamic understanding of the different forms of excessive working, and challenge researchers critically to discuss their practical success. As the saying goes, there can be too much of a good thing.

Keywords: organizational behaviour, excessive work, Stakhanov, workaholism, motivation, busyness, lifestyles.

[1] A preliminary version was presented at the 2007 EGOS colloquium, Vienna. We thank the participants for their comments and suggestions. Miguel Cunha gratefully acknowledges support from Instituto Nova Forum. Our title, comes in part from the title of a track on the CD by The Walkmen, *A Hundred Miles Off*, and, we think – but cannot be sure, as in the blues, traditions get reworked with vigour and matters of authorship are not clear cut – from the fine Chess Studios bass player, singer and composer, Willie Dixon but the second song title is also credited to a number of different people, including Mose Alison, another artist whom we would also be only too happy to credit.

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time the Puritan, bureaucrat, scientist and politician worked, according to Weber (Gerth & Mills, 1948), because of a calling or vocation. Lately, the calling has come into disrepute as a motive, at least for bureaucrats (du Gay, 2002). Yet, at the same time that older representations of work as a transcendently purposive activity are falling into disrepair, newer characterizations are emerging that stress that work has become a central life interest in some new and unexpected ways. While Weber was in no doubt about the ethic of vocation as a good thing, more recent accounts of work that picture it as all consuming are less sure.

For decades, organizational and management researchers discussed how workers could be motivated and how their levels of commitment could be enhanced. Numerous theories were developed for this and related purposes. Often they addressed employee motivation as a well-spring of effort in, and attention to, productivity. Individuals have been viewed as potentially lacking motivation and therefore the role of management, and in particular of human resource management systems, should be one of counteracting what is defined in terms of an individual tendency for laziness – rather than, say, a systematically skewed and disagreeable regime of work in organizations that seem indifferent to human circumstances. Many motivational tools have been developed to urge recalcitrance but this description of people is particularly visible in goal setting theory, theories X and Y, and job characteristics theory. For these theories

> "Employee motivation has always been a central problem for leaders and managers. Unmotivated employees are likely to expend little effort in their jobs, avoid the workplace as much as possible, exit the organization if given the opportunity, and produce low quality

> work. (...) As the future unfolds, motivation will, if anything, become an even more important managerial problem." (Amabile, 1993, p.185)

To address this central managerial issue, several theories have been constructed since the 1930s, stimulated to a great extent by the Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). The quest for the secrets of motivation attracted legions of researchers. Theories of motivation are among the most popular in the theory of organization (Miner, 1994) and cohorts of management students have received instruction in how to motivate people in the occupational world of organizations. Indeed, some organizations are so successful in this endeavor that they end up with an excess of commitment and motivation, such as the fabled Japanese corporate samurai (Ishiyama and Kitayama 2005); yet the emphasis on the need to increase the levels of motivation continues amidst an abundance of excess. We will discuss such matters below.

Work is one of the most basic and important activities for people in modern society, playing a central and crucial role in the life of individuals (Harpaz & Snir, 2003). From work, we are told, flows meaning, the satisfaction of social needs, means for acquiring material resources and a consumerist lifestyle. It is also an arena of competition in which continuous learning, improvement and propensity to change are necessary for continuing employability and career success. The race for efficiency escalates and those who do not speed up risk being disqualified: cross-nationally, the Spanish siesta has been abolished; Australian penalty rates for working on holidays have disappeared – every day is the same, legally, under 'Work Choices' legislation in the compulsion of employers to pay wage rates, and what was once a country with some of the shortest OECD working hours annually is now amongst the highest, after Japan. On the other side of the ledger, the Work Less Party (http://www.worklessparty.org/), in the

Canadian province of British Columbia, whose program is shortening the work week to 32 hours, has a marginal influence on the electorate; the International Institute for Not Doing Much (http://www.slowdownnow.org/) and the proponents of the Slow Manifesto also have few supporters.

By the early 1980s work seemed to be in decline; throughout the OECD unemployment was increasing, unions were responding in the more active social democracies with campaigns for a 35 hour working week, and eager enthusiasts of the new technology foresaw a future with a greatly reduced need for human work (reprised in Rifkin 1995). Fat forward to 2007: the French Presidency was won by Nicolas Sarkozy, the champion of more work, the need for greater commitment and motivation, the 'Americanization' of France rather than by the defender of the 35 hour week as the heart of French working identity, Ségolène Royal. It seems as if the literature on motivation and commitment has conquered even the French political heights, despite the popular commitment to a distinctive French culture and way of life and work. The technological utopia of a world without work seems to recede ever further into the background.

In such a conjecture as the present, it may seem that there is no need to reconsider the literature on the management of motivation: the battle has assuredly been won as we work longer, harder, faster, and with ever-increasing enthusiasm for the disciplines induced. However, it is precisely because the symptoms of excess are now too apparent that it is necessary to reconsider the contemporary commitment to work. Long workdays, increased stress, work-family imbalance, workaholism and presentism are labels that express the problems associated with excessive working as a 'lifestyle'. A lifestyle "can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual

embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material shape to a particular form of self-identity (Giddens, 1991, p. 81). Increasingly, for significant numbers of employees, work = identity.

FROM LACK OF MOTIVATION TO AN EXCESS OF IT?

If the lack of motivation was viewed as a recurrent problem in traditional industrial organizations, the excess of motivation can be advanced as a problem confronting people in some new organizational forms. In this section we offer a possible positive explanation for this change: organizations full of energetic and committed professionals are normally represented as benchmarks or exemplary practice. The fact is that this achievement is often obtained at the cost of the destruction of the balance between the several spheres of life. When commitment is too high, the focus on work and the organization tends to conquer other spaces for commitment and creativty, namely family life and the so-called third space discussed by sociologists, which occurs in the public places that host regular and voluntary gatherings of people beyond home and work (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2003; Rosenbaum, 2006). Rather than working to live, excessively motivated people live to work. The costs of excessive motivation and commitment will be discussed in the next section. In the remainder of this one, we will instead consider where this motivational surplus comes from. We consider how a fundamental change in the nature of organizations created the stage for a new type of performance: the change from complex organizations with simple people to simple organizations with complex people.

From complex organizations with simple people …

Organizations constructed in the industrial era resulted from attempts to maximize efficiency (Shenhav, 1999). These organizations were designed in such a way that the fragmentation of tasks guaranteed high levels of specialization and mechanization, via repetition. Jobs in these organizations were perfected – in the industrial sense – to such an extent that people were expected fundamentally to obey organizational design. Lacking robots, people were automatized as much as possible. Complex organizations were designed to maximize specialization, corresponding to a scientific one best way, as prescribed by Taylor's (1911) principles of organization and management. The organization as machine became a powerful mechanism of production and social control. People were part of the organizational machine and the organization viewed them as "simple", in the sense of devoid of any critical contribution to the organization's operations.

The brave new world of industrial and commercial efficiency nurtured the idea of the employee, which emerged in response to this new type of organizations: people-as-employees could be viewed as experts in obedience (Jacques, 1996; Clegg *et al*., 2006). With the exception of the design apex, they were viewed as childish or lacking the type of intelligence characterizing their superiors, as reflected in the famous Schmidt excerpt in Frederick Taylor's (1911) book. Of course, people did not correspond to the patronizing representation offered by the classical organizational thinkers; they were never the equivalent of the 'trained gorillas' or 'mental defectives' that Taylor imagined could do the jobs he designed. In this sense, people reacted against the system, as would be discovered by the Human Relations school.

In any case, the prevalence of this complex organization/simple people logic produced a number of negative effects, including cynicism (Feldman, 2000; Naus, van Iterson & Roe, 2007), retaliatory behaviours (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), aggressive and violent behaviours (Baron, 2004), and alcohol and drug abuse (Harris, 2004). Feelings of alienation and the perception of deskilling were at the core of some poignant critical analyses of organizations and the labor process (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979, Seeman, 1959), depicting the "dark side of organizational behaviour" (Griffin & O'Leary-Kelly, 2004). In this sense, it would be easy to create a separation between employees and the organization, as well as the notion that the organization could be resisted. Given the gap between the top and the base of the organization, and the often harsh and dulling disciplines of everyday work, resistance was not only tolerable but also almost expectable. Boring jobs, lacking excitement and responsibilities, invited unexpected responses from employees for whom only a small part of their self was engaged in and by work. One of the most illustrative is Latham's (2001) study of employee theft in a forest company: people stole not because they wanted to retaliate or rebuilt a state of organizational justice but because work was uninteresting and the pleasure of taking a risk more fun. Deadly dull work led to the necessity, for many, to reassert life through escape attempts (Cohen and Taylor 1976).

... to simple organizations with complex people

In the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (1820) wrote that 'the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk'. As if to prove his point, one of his philosophical savant's heirs, Braverman, published his critique of 'de-skilling' in 1974, just as the world was changing to a post-Fordist model (see the discussion of why this was so in Clegg 1990, particularly the account of the German debates). These changes

in the landscapes of work and organizations provoked a major shift in the nature of work. Close individual supervision and strit discipline loosened and employees were ‘empowered’ – at least to the point of being allowed to do what it was that their organization designers wanted them to do. Organizations in the West, especially those in the Anglo-Saxon world, were re-shaped accordingly. With less need for hierarchical supervision and more emphasis on the discipline of teams (Barker 1993), their structures began to change shape. Increasingly, organizations simplified their old command-and-control structures. These processes went by a number of names, including de-layering, downsizing, reengineering, flattening and so forth. But their final goal was typically to reduce headcount and, for the optimists, to genuinely transform the organization. When the latter objective was pursued, organizations engaged in the attempt to discover how to combine ample degrees of freedom with effective control. The reason for this movement was the emerging nature of knowledge work, transforming organizations in knowledge systems (Grant, 1996).

Knowledge-based work traditionally done by professionals with significant formal credentialing attached to their identity as such, spread from professional enclaves to wider applications in organizations on the back of new IT applications, and as this occurred, new forms of organizational coordination and control emerged. Peer-based forms of control, coupled with strong material and cultural incentives, began to alter the nature of work and the organization (Barker, 1993; Cunha, 2002). In these emerging forms of organization, structural simplicity was complemented by individual complexity; as Perrow (1986) remarked, with professionals one expects complex rules to be embrained. Organizations became, in other words, spaces where levels of individual autonomy and discretion were introduced under the aegis of a new logic of

accountability and independence (Mulvaney *et al.*, 2006) and these new enthusiasms, allied to new disciplines, soon began to change the nature of work markedly. The change from bureaucracy as constraining rules to the enabling of action that was regularly and routinely accountable was clear in what became leading organizational benchmarks, including the highly visible case of GE. Jack Welch's horror of bureaucracy symbolized this paradigmatic change (Elderkin & Bartlett, 1991). The specialists in eliciting obedience gave way to a breed of new professionals whom Gratton and Ghoshal (2003) termed voluntary workers, in the sense that they no longer corresponded to the "organizational men" described in classical texts (Whyte, 1955).

The shift from complex organizations with simple people to simpler organizations with more complex people brought a number of individual and organizational consequences. Individual differences became more apparent: different people created diverse outcomes. Changes in psychological contracts pushed individuals to invest in their employability (Schalk & Rousseau, 2001). In this sense, a record of continuous achievement became more important. It is no longer only a matter of doing a proper job: the new competition for jobs consists of securing a place in the job market, which means that the new voluntary workers must consistently "delight" potential employers with new "tricks" generated from cultures that stress initiative (Frohman, 1997), with many of these new "tricks" being justified in terms of a new rhetoric of entrepreneurialism and service (du Gay, 2002). The organizational consequences are apparent: people live in a hypercompetitive world that thrives on speed (D'Aveni, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989). As Walsh et al. (2003) discovered, vocabulary reflecting aggressive business competition increased systematically for the past century. Speed of production, of information flow, of capital moving through deregulated financial and trading

systems has become ubiquitous. We live in an increasingly present yet de-materialized here-and now. As the contributors to Case, Lilly and Owen (2007) suggest, the speeding up of organizational identity, technology and imagery is rampant. All these conditions, we propose, contribute to the emergence of extreme working.

SPEEDING UP WORK AND ORGANIZING SPEED

One of the correlates of organization at increased speed is a propensity to excessive working. In the popular press and daily conversation, people who work excessively are normally described as workaholics. The notion of workaholism is attributed to Wayne Oates (1971), a U.S. professor of religion who first reflected on his own compulsive and uncontrollable need to work incessantly. The term was coined after the word alcoholism and as this etymology suggests, it refers to an individual pathology, an addiction (Ng *et al*., 2007). *USA Today* (2007) referred to groups of US residents who gather regularly in church basements and hospital meeting rooms to talk about the addiction that had "damaged their physical health, destroyed friendships and hurt spouses or children. (…) The Workaholics Anonymous gatherings, whose aim is to bring members together to battle their compulsion to work, is a sign of how employees are finding it harder to maintain boundaries between work and life." A similar view of excess work has prevailed in the literature: "Whereas an alcoholic neglects other aspects of life for the indulgence in alcohol, the workaholic behaves the same for excessive indulgence in work" (Porter, 1996, pp. 70-71). And as for most other addictions, workaholism is viewed negatively, as tending to endanger health, reduce happiness, and lead to deterioration in interpersonal relations and social functioning (Killinger, 1991; Schaef & Fassel, 1988; Schaufeli *et al*., 2006). However, there is now a growing body of literature on workaholism with perspectives that go beyond the initial addictive view (Oates,

1971; Porter, 1996), which view it positively or, at least, with positive and negative nuances (Burke, 1999; Galperin & Burke, 2006; Harpaz & Snir, 2003; Korn et al., 1987; Machlowitz, 1980; Sprankle & Ebel, 1987).

Early attempts to define the concept (e.g., Spence & Robbins, 1992) have so far failed to find consensus in the research community, with the debate still focusing on the same initial issues of definition and nature of workaholism (Schaufeli *et al*., 2006; Ng *et al*., 2007). Conflicting views remain as to why people work excessively, what it is that constitutes workaholism, how to operationalize it, and which typologies provide a better and integrated view of this phenomenon (Douglas & Morris, 2006; McMillan *et al*., 2003). At the empirical level, contradictory research findings have also been reported with regard to the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of workaholism (e.g. Scott *et al*., 1997).

Spence and Robbins (1992) distinguish workaholics from work enthusiasts and enthusiastic workaholics (see also Burke, 1999). Enthusiastic workaholics are highly involved in their work, feel compelled or driven to work because of inner pressures, and feel enjoyment at work. Workaholics differ from the former because they experience little joy in work. Work enthusiasts are highly involved in their work and feel enjoyment at work, but they feel not compelled or driven to work because of inner pressures. Scott *et al*. (1997) propose three similar types of workaholic behaviour patterns: compulsive-dependent workaholics, perfectionists and achievement-oriented workaholics. Schaufeli *et al*. (2006) go along the same lines. Starting from the traditional view of workaholism as “a negative psychological state akin to an addiction” (p. 193), they fine-tune the definition to distinguish the “bad workaholism”, on the one

side, to work enthusiasm or “good workaholism”, on the other. Here again, it is the addictive inner drive the discriminating factor between the two. From this viewpoint, while good workaholics are engaged in their work and show vigour and dedication, bad workaholics are driven by their obsessive-compulsive personality (see Table 1).

Table 1 about here

Besides a stress on the inner driven factor, there is little agreement in the literature as to what a workaholic looks like. But the negative view appears to prevail, with workaholism being equated with other addictions, and workaholics depicted as “unhappy, obsessive, tragic figures who are not performing their jobs well and are creating difficulties for their co-workers” (Burke *et al*., 2006, p.201). Other more positive views are seldom expressed. Among the few exceptions, Peiperl and Jones (2001) see workaholics “as hard workers who enjoy and get a lot out of their work” (p.388) and Ng *et al*. (2007) portray them as diligent and dedicated workers who cannot control themselves.

Regardless of the perspective on workaholism adopted, what distinguishes workaholics from others goes far beyond the extent of working hours. In other words, the popular view of the workaholic as someone with long hours and/or excessively effort spent at their desks or in their lab, someone who tends either to be doing or thinking about work anytime and anywhere, is somewhat simplistic. Work enthusiasts have also been described in the literature in quite different terms (Schaufeli *et al*., 2006), as hyper-

performing workaholics, happy workaholics, achievement-oriented workaholics, work enthusiasts, and happy hard workers… rendering the notion of workaholism in itself not very helpful. It covers too many discriminate categories: as Kellaway (2006) stressed, "The important thing is not how long someone works. It is how happy they are in their work. If they are happy – and as Hewlett [& Luce, 2006] admit, extreme workers generally are – then relationships are likely to be happy(ish) too."

In summary, the negative connotation of workaholism as an addiction, if not a sin, and therefore intrinsically bad, is controversial. Empirical evidence collected by McMillan *et al.* (2004) suggests that, contrary to what is frequently assumed and empirically shown, satisfaction with personal relationships is not negatively affected by workaholic status. According to these authors, their data refutes the addiction theory, considering that the workaholics in their sample "did not appear to deny their behaviour (a key tenet of addiction theory), and they do not appear to experience increased impairment in intimate relationships (a key outcome of addiction theory)" (p. 183). Interestingly, the *USA Today* report on extreme working, which we mentioned above, concluded with some data (source: Hewlett, 2007), reporting that 90% of men and 82% of women extreme workers replied to a question asking them what they loved in their jobs in terms of "stimulating/challenging/adrenaline rush", and 52% of men and 43% of women referred "high-quality colleagues".

Apparently, some people "seek passionate involvement and gratification through work" (Schaufeli *et al*., 2006, p. 194) and extract genuine pleasure, or flow, from their work experiences. In other words, for these "happy hard workers", work is apparently fun, meaningful and leads to happiness and optimal experience. As Luthans et al. (2007)

argued, “for a person in flow, time is distorted and may even stand still; the person is immersed in an exhilarating state” because they are accomplishing “something difficult and worthwhile” (p. 160). It may not just be a question of individual psychology and preferences, however.

Rather than being an individual phenomenon, the pressure to work longer and harder may result from organizational pressures, with some writers suggesting that specific organizations can be labeled workaholic (Burke, 1999), because of their increased expectations of levels of social commitment and time by their employees. It may be not only the push to work, but also the pressure to succeed in an environment where work and the career play a crucial role in the definition of success. Predictions made during the 1970s and early 1980s that the value of work would be eroded and that a growing involvement with leisure activities and comfort would replace the traditional work ethic (Harpaz & Snir, 2003) are widely denied by the increasing number of working hours (Green & Skinner, 2005), their perverse consequences for individuals and organizations (Pfeffer, 2007), and the pressure to adopt measures against work-family imbalance (Birch and Paul 2003). Hallowell’s (2006) book on the “crazybusy” state of frenzy we live in, and Bruch and Ghoshal’s (2002) investigation of managerial busyness are illustrations of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon.

All the changes taking place in the new environments described in the previous section, as well as the increasing individualization of the relationship between people and their organizations (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998), lead to a re-conceptualization of the role of work in which individuals no longer work for the organization, are no longer men and women of the corporation or organization men (Kanter 1976; Whyte 1956). Rather, they

are now working for themselves, sculpturing and self-managing a career, even creating a boundaryless career (Ng *et al.,* 2007). It is a movement towards individualization (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998; Sennett 2006), coupled with increasing pressures for occupational success, material consumerism, and the idea that "all limits can be transcended with the right management mindset" (Tempest et al., 2007, p.1040), which places tremendous pressure on individuals to succeed. The pressure is not devoid of benefits: material gains can be significant, the excitement resulting from the job often intense and one can bask in the warmth generated by being surrounded by brilliant colleagues.

There is one other fact to consider: the effects of at least one hundred years of socialization and normative formation: individuals have been socialized to behave as organizational citizens. Similarly to countries, work organizations can now ask their citizens to make sacrifices for the greater good (Manville & Ober, 2003). Despite the supposedly voluntary and non-rewarded nature of organizational citizenship, there is growing evidence that some citizenship behaviours are in fact "compulsory", emerging in response to social pressures by managers and co-workers (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006a, 2006b). In other words, the change from obtrusive controls of complex organizations to the seemingly more transparent controls of simple organizations produced a major change in the relationship between organizational members and their organizations, (although, as Bowles [1997], Hancock [1997], and Bradley *et al*. [2000] point out, they are sometimes not so transparent). There are several potential explanations for this evolution: jobs done for intrinsic and/or extrinsic reasons result in different types of behaviour; also the academic and managerial communities have facilitated this

transition from salaried employees to enthusiastic members through the promulgation of strategic human resource management (Kallinikos, 2006).

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF EXCESSIVE WORKING AS LIFESTYLE

As discussed above, excessive working tends to be viewed as either pathology or a source of pleasure. We suggest that, to better understand the way workers live and experience their work, one needs to develop a more fine-grained analysis of work. With this in mind, we develop a typology of excessive working as organizational lifestyles, combining the outcomes and processes of excessive working.

Constructing a typology

Theoretically, our typology is composed by considering a number of putative dimensions, given theoretically. The first of these is the meaning of work, the sense in which it generates an involvement or distanciation of the self in the activity being pursued, a dimension which clearly derives from the discussions of alienation from Marx (1844) onwards. While the theory of alienation is not much addressed these days, in terms of more recent theory, people may be viewed as working for fulfillment through achieving their self-benefit or for the collective gain. Of course, working for self-benefit may result in collective benefit. But it may not: one of the potential weaknesses of the application of a goal setting philosophy in organizations has to do with the lower inclination of people with stretching personal goals to engage in deep collaboration with colleagues, putting their personal goals at risk (Wright *et al*., 1993).

Despite the possible forms of interdependence between individual and collective benefit, we suggest that individual behaviour is fundamentally motivated by either or

both of personal or collective benefits. In the case of personal benefits, people may pursue a given goal in order to achieve intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. Research in social psychology suggested that the introduction of extrinsic rewards and a component of surveillance have the effect of turning play into work (Lepper & Greene, 1976). In other words, activities that could be viewed as enjoyable lose their inner appeal and trigger less subsequent interest. Research also shows that people generally hold lay theories marked by an extrinsic incentive bias (Heath, 1999): people predict that others are more motivated by extrinsic incentives (such as money and job security) than themselves – and less motivated than themselves by intrinsic incentives (such as learning and challenge).

Another possible explanation for motivated behaviour at work is that people strive for the collective good, especially in those societies characterized as collectivist (Hofstede, 1980), where the common good is prized higher than individual gains. However, every society contains people with higher individualistic or collectivist orientations. Individualistic people place a greater emphasis on self-interest and personal achievement, whereas collectivist people consider the subordination of one's personal goals for the sake of collective welfare and the goals of the larger collective to which they belong. The first are more inclined to compete, be assertive, and place low emphasis on group harmony, while the latter are more willing to cooperate, avoid conflict and emphasize harmony (Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2002, 2004; Wagner, 1995). Individualists may cooperate with other group members to the extent that such a work group is instrumental to the attainment of individual goals that cannot be obtained by working alone (Wagner, 1995). The difference is that while collectivists cooperate and place group interests ahead of personal goals as a paramount end to be attained,

individualists cooperate as a means to get satisfaction for their individual interests and goals (Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2002).

Individuals may be motivated to work for the collective good of the team/organization but also for the betterment of society or for some human or “transcendental” cause. Such motivation can have ideological, spiritual or transcendental bases. Servant (Greenleaf, 1977), self-sacrificial (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999) and transcendental (Cardona, 2000) leadership and collectivist organizations (Rothschild-Whitt 1979) are examples of such kind of motivation. In short, individuals may be extrinsically, intrinsically and transcendentally motivated (Cardona, 2000; Morris, 1997; Strack et al., 2002).

The extent to which there is pressure in a job can be seen to derive either from what Foucault (1979) called discipline, allied with the induction of a psychological mechanism which is best thought of, after Freud (1989), in terms of compulsion, hence yielding ‘disciplinary compulsion’, or again, drawing on Foucault (1990), as its antithesis, the notion of pleasure achieved through an aesthetics of the self. As is well understood by Foucault, such aesthetics can take one far from the realm of working into the sexual subject; by contrast, those followers of a vocation find neither compulsion nor sexual fulfillment as primary pleasures, but instead are driven by the idea of duty in their calling.

What pleasure – as compulsion or aesthetic – ordinarily brings is joy that builds positive social capital, according to positive psychology theory (Clegg et al., 2005), albeit that for those subject to a compulsion, that joy can never be found. Psychologically, workaholics are compulsive-dependent in their dispositions, while work enthusiasts

seek a perfectibility of the essential self. By contrast with both, enthusiastic workaholics seek achievement-oriented mastery of the calling that is their duty. Thus, organizational requirements and demands may be lived as painful or exhilarating, building collective social capital or destroying it. In the first case, work is perceived as a source of physical and psychological symptoms. Research in the work sciences has devoted a great deal of attention to these symptoms, which include stress, burnout, and health problems. These may result from excessive demands, problems associated with job design (such as shift work), lack of person-job or person-organization fit, and so forth. The literature shows that work may be experienced as a source of negative psychological states. These problems, in turn, decrease individual skills, therefore leading to a deterioration of organizational performance. For example, rotating shift work may impede people from having adequate sleep patterns, which, for example, in the case of hospital nurses, may lead to sleepiness related accidents (Gold *et al.*, 1992).

In other cases, however, work is experienced as a source of enjoyment. As discussed in the introductory section, for several decades organizational psychologists have struggled to identify the sources of motivationally rich jobs. They assumed and empirically verified that when these jobs are carried out in organizations with authentizotic features (Kets de Vries, 2001a; Rego & Cunha, 2007), people may extract a genuine pleasure from work as demonstrated by Csikszentmihalyi's (1900) research on flow. The role of hedonism (Steers *et al.*, 2004) and of eudaimonism (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993) as drivers of human behaviour may also be considered and brought back to the theories of motivation, which have been so often substituted in practice by economic calculations of gains and losses. Psychologically, workaholics are compulsive-dependent in their dispositions, while work enthusiasts seek a perfectibility

of the essential self. By contrast with both, enthusiastic workaholics seek achievement-oriented mastery of the calling that is their duty. Finally, while the workaholic is normally seen as normatively bad and the professional vocation is usually seen as normatively good, the work enthusiasts are typically seen as neither good not bad.

With respect to contemporary accounts of overwork, we suggest that it is by combining the work processes centred on self, and the search for individual or collective benefit, and exhilarating or painful work experiences, with those of work outcomes, as we would judge them in terms of social capital contributions, psychological understanding, and normative views that a typology of organizational lifestyles can be constructed. The result is presented in table 2. The typology allows the distinction between several profiles potentially related with forms of extreme working: extreme workers, Stakhanovs, burned out and exploited.

Table 2 about here

Extreme workers (exhilarating, self-benefit)

An organizational lifestyle that was not recognized in the West until recently was that of the extreme worker. Extreme workers consider their demanding jobs exhilarating, and carry them out for self-benefit purposes. The notion of extreme workers was recently advanced by Hewlett and Luce (2006; see also Hewlett, 2007) to portray a type of individual almost fully dedicated to work. They have long workdays, six or seven days a week. The pressure and pace of their jobs tend to be impressive to outsiders. However,

when questioned about the way they see their work, they reveal high enthusiasm. The elements of extremity include unpredictable workflows, fast-paced work, tight deadlines, large amount of travel, high availability to clients, responsibility for profit and loss, etc. Some of these people are even academics for whom the game of getting papers accepted in academic journals is its own reward.

There are several reasons for the emergence of the extreme worker in our society. Besides the factors already pointed out above, we should mention also the cultivation of strong achievement needs, increased levels of competition for scarce positions in flattened hierarchies, and the emergence of an "extreme ethos" (Hewlett & Luce, 2006) that forces people and organizations to test their limits (Farjoun & Starbuck, 2007). The "strong personalities" referred by Locke and Latham (2004, p.395) will be especially inclined to take advantage of situations to demonstrate their superiority.

The job becomes a source of challenge, both physical and psychological. As one informant of Hewlett and Luce (2006) put it, the job "... gives me this rush. Like a drug, it's addictive" (p.53). Apparently, extreme workers are immersed in an occupational context where peak experiences or states of flow are common, helping us to understand the positive feelings elicited in such demanding conditions. Extreme workers not only get substantial material rewards from their work but also find the work itself rewarding. The combination of high levels of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation challenges the conclusions of laboratory studies that found that the presence of external rewards tends to undermine intrinsic motivations, a finding that tends to be taken as valid in the organizational world without much discussion (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Schneider *et*

al., 2005). Life in the artificiality of the lab and life as some love to live differ markedly.

Stakhanovites (exhilarating, collective gain)

Stakhanovism is a concept used in the literature to describe a sort of extreme worker driven by collective gain. The notion of Stakhanovism pays homage to the achievements of Alexei G. Stakhanov, a worker portrayed as a role model in the USSR, after setting several productivity records (Bedeian & Phillips, 1990). In 1935, working as a coal miner, he achieved superhuman results. For example, during one shift, he cut 102 tons of coal, a quantity corresponding to 15 times the normal output. He did so by reorganizing work so that the members of his team could specialize in a different part of work. He was a model worker, an embodiment of Lenin's post-revolutionary faith in Taylorism. Other workers, inspired by the example of Stakhanov soon set output records. In 1935, three months after the coal-cutting record, the first All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites took place. Stalin, in an address to the conference, urged employees to become super-productive. When someone produced 130 to 150 percent of the standard work norm, workers would become known as Stakhanovite and were rewarded with benefits, including higher wages, better jobs, and social/political recognition. A distinguishing feature of stakhanovism as a movement was that it was created from below, from the workers themselves, and would, supposedly, convert the Soviet Union into the most prosperous of all countries (Bedeian & Phillips, 1990). The same type of role modeling has been used in other totalitarian states, namely Cuba, with workers being portrayed as agents of the revolution, contributors to the society as a whole through their labor capacity, and in China, where in the Maoist era moral campaigns featuring exemplary workers and communes were a staple of propaganda.

The socialist mode of production envisioned “the satisfaction of social needs (economic, political, cultural) of the broad majority” (Jover, 1999, p.226) and implied, if necessary, the sacrifice of individual interest.

The notion of these martyr workers, willing to sacrifice for the common good, was an ideological creation. However, even in capitalistic economies workers are urged to contribute for the benefit of the collective. For example, the workplace is increasingly becoming the social centre for extreme workers (Hewlett & Luce, 2006). Given the increasing importance of work, the office acquires a different character: it becomes the place “where successful professionals get strokes, admiration, and respect” (p.55). In this sense, extreme workers get pressure to work as Stakhanovs: to get extraordinary results for the sake of the organizational community of peers, therefore strengthening the bonds of it. Such behaviours have been described as manifestations of “neo-organizational-feudalism”, marking relationships of vassalage. According to Hancock (1997), “contemporary work organizations seek to construct a symbolic culture which stresses individual commitment to an ethereal and almost superhuman organizational life world in which the organization itself is symbolically personified as the benevolent but demanding feudal lord” (p. 103).

Burned out (exhausting, no one’s benefit)

We have described, in the previous paragraphs, the cases of workers that stand up to enormous challenges with a positive disposition. The organizational literature, however, dedicates more space to the opposite phenomenon: burnout. Burnout refers to the depletion of psychological and physical resources in the sequence of excessive demands. It has been defined as “a response syndrome of emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment" (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p.621). The process of burnout, as presented in the literature, suggests that it results from the confrontation of individuals with excessive and chronic work demands. When this happens, people tend to cope with the situation through limited involvement, diminished commitment and a psychological separation between their sense of self and their jobs. Burnout may result from excessive demands of both qualitative and quantitative types. When individuals feel that they suffer from qualitative overload, they feel they lack fundamental skills to do the job. Quantitative overload refers to the perception that work cannot be completed in the allotted time (Kahn, 1978). Research shows that the consequences of burnout tend to be deleterious both for the worker and organization (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

Exploited (exhausting, someone else's gain)

The fourth cell in the typology corresponds to the case of the exploited worker. The figure of the exploited employee corresponds to a well-known profile in the literatures of management, psychology and sociology, especially those with an affinity for Marxist explanations of society. Here we see represented the individual who suffers the pains of non-motivating work, done for someone else's benefit, often under significant pressure to maintain a pace of working driven by the metaphorical 'speed of the line'. The importance of rapid pace has been presented as a relevant trait of organizing work, from the earliest modernist theories onwards: consider the case of Ford. The role of foremen at the company's Highland Park factory has been described as follows: "one word every foreman had to learn in English, German, Polish and Italian was 'hurry up'. It was 'putch putch prenko' in Polish, 'mach schnell' in German and 'presto presto' in Italian" (Klann, 1955, in Williams *et al*., 1992, p.531). The same pressure for acceleration was

still being witnessed in the auto industry seventy years later by Adler (1993) in the acclaimed NUMMI unit.

The existence of worker exploitation was and still is a major topic in critical approaches to organizations and management theorizing (e.g., Bowles, 1997). The idea is that the dominating forms of capitalism prevent people from being adequately rewarded (in material and psychological terms) from their participation in the work process. The exploited are usually described as either potential agents of a proletarian revolution or as silent and oppressed by their false consciousness, the weight of bourgeois hegemony or the seductions of consumer capitalism (Abercrombie *et al*., 1985; Ritzer 2004). The need to compete with companies from low-wage countries in the context of globalization introduced a major change in the life of blue-collar workers, making it organizationally imperative that if they are to cling to their jobs they have to work harder, faster, longer, often for less, and with less social and health security.

TOWARD A DYNAMIC UNDERSTANDING OF EXCESS AT WORK

In this section, we consider what may be taken as a major criticism to the existing research on organizational lifestyles: theories are often cross-sectional and static. In fact, up to now, management and organizational scholars have only focused on theories for each of the quadrants. But we know less about the dynamics and the longitudinal evolution of individual profiles. The question then is: how do people change between the quadrants of Table 2? There are several potential reasons for explaining the focus on within-cell, cross-sectional research, namely the methodological difficulties and the costs involved in longitudinal research, as well as the traditional view of the employee from a dispositional perspective, which tends to emphasize stability and durability

rather than impermanence and alteration. In fact, the inner work life of employees has rarely been addressed by management scholars (Amabile & Kramer, 2007). The result is a number of theoretical simplifications that do not explain the dynamism and complexity of organizational behaviour.

For the sake of illustrating the promise of the research possibilities contained in the development of a dynamic research agenda of excess at work, we advance exploratory possibilities for eight movements between cells. They are advanced as hypotheses in search of research, rather than as established findings.

Figure 1 about here

Movement 1: Superstar burnout

It is not uncommon for the so called A players – "the organization's most gifted and productive employees" (Berglas, 2006, p.105) – to feel burnt out. Berglas (2006) named the process as superstar burnout: A players who suffer burnout often express their inner conflict in such ways as extramarital affairs, chemical dependence, and gambling disorders. The fact is that, despite all the prescriptions available, we know comparatively little about what Kets de Vries (2001b) called the inner theatre of leaders, and even less about the inner life of organizational members, as noticed by Amabile and Kramer (2007). More research will therefore be necessary to illuminate the psychological processes that stimulate some people to act as A players or extreme workers, and the conditions that push them to situations of burnout. Locke and

Latham's (2004) call for the use of introspection as a method of studying motivation may be especially relevant for the topic we are addressing here.

Movement 2: The exploited

When burned out individuals change the definition of their situation in the organization, they can assume the role of the exploited. The lack of recognition – real or perceived – and the feelings of organizational injustice may increase individual cynicism – this being a significant dimension of the burnout concept (Berglas, 2006). The role of other concepts in this process should also be considered – for example frustration (Spector, 1997) and revenge (Bies *et al*., 1997). We therefore suggest that these organizational misbehaviour topics should not be treated exclusively as dysfunctions with a dispositional basis, but also as organizational processes that derailed – where excess may have played a role (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999).

Movement 3: Altruistic activism

Another possible movement in our typology is the one from cell IV to cell III: the former exploited worker becomes a Stakhanovite by changing jobs, organization and direction. In other words, they decide to embrace a cause and to leave the more of less passive/destructive role associated with position IV, through, for example, association with a union or an NGO dedicated to a cause that played a part in the previous feelings of exploitation. A parallel process with constructive intentions being ignited for the collective good happened in Ben and Jerry's when a secretary decided to create "green teams" to address the environmental impacts of the organization (Mirvis, 1994).

Movement 4: Repentant Stakhanovites

When Stakhanovites feel exploited, deceived or betrayed by “false messiahs” or cease to believe in the espoused “cause”, they may become extreme rather than exploited workers. The cynicism about what happens around them (in the organization or the society) or the skepticism about the possibilities of “changing the world” in the desired direction may render them indifferent or adverse to the “cause”. Instead simply feeling exploited, they remake their working motives/aims in favor of personal benefit or self-gratification, converting their altruistic efforts and energies into egoistic ones. This change may be stimulated by political and cultural transformations, such as those occurring in Russia and China, where communist ideals are being replaced by capitalistic ones, and where previous Stakhanovites are becoming “workaholic capitalists” (Moore, 1998). Stakhanovites may however become extreme workers through a “self-transformation” induced by other reasons (e.g., personal, intellectual, familial).

Movement 5: Converted extreme worker

Extreme workers may become Stakhanovites when they redirect their efforts and energies towards collective gain. For example, some individuals who feel self-fulfilled, from a material and professional point of view, may look for a more meaningful life and devote their working lives to developing and mentoring others – or to the betterment of the community/society. Bill Gates, known as a ferocious workaholic (Rivlin, 1999), announced that he would be re-prioritizing his life by leaving the day-to-day responsibilities at Microsoft in order to devote more time to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a philanthropic organization aimed to bring “innovations in health and learning to the global community”. It is not easy to know what really motivates Gates, but one explanation is the satisfaction of self-transcendence needs.

Other people may transform themselves, from extreme workers to Stakhanovites not after building huge fortunes but in response to triggering events (e.g., a life-threatening event, the loss of a loved one). In such situation there is some change in their narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1992) or some "authentic" transformation that induces them to align behaviour with the true self and "one's voice" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The transformation of the famous Brazilian manager Ricardo Semler is a case in point.

Movement 6: Repentant martyrs

When Stakhanovites feel exploited, deceived or betrayed by "false messiahs" (Bass & Steidlemeir, 1999) or cease to believe in the espoused "cause", a change can occur, for example, with layoff survivors who, after making sacrifices for the sake of the organization, become cynical about it and its authorities when observing unfair procedures towards their laid-off colleagues (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Survivor syndrome, it is sometimes called.

Movement 7: Burnout

Mirroring movement 2 in our interpretation, individuals with a feeling of being exploited may move in the direction of burnout. The persistence of a state of exploitation, combined with the lack of hope in the change of their situation (Snyder, 2000) may deplete their psychological resources and create a feeling of psychological exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Movement 8: The recovered

The final movement in our list seems less plausible in practice but may nevertheless be considered: burnt out individuals may, for some reason, realign their priorities, focus on work and transform themselves in new extreme workers. For example, the stress put by work on family life may push a person in the direction of burnout. But some people, confronted with the excessive demands of the situation may simply invest in the job at the cost of marriage, for example. And given the characteristics of extreme jobs, this investment may seem fair and satisfying, at least for some time.

We conclude this section with the words of caution that we have begin with: these brief descriptions are vignettes in search of theory, not illustrations of existing theory. Therefore, they should be read with care and taken as what they are: stimuli for further research on the dynamics of motivational states – including those leading to excessive work.

CONCLUSION

The discipline of organization and management has recently started to consider the phenomenon of excessive working. Considering that the field has traditionally focused on how to increase motivation, the occurrence of this phenomenon appears as something unexpected and unexplained. The dominant analyses of excessive working tend to present it as dysfunctional and harmful. We have taken it here as lifestyle. It can be a dysfunction/disease but may also be an individual choice and even a source of pleasure and social admiration – or, as Pfeffer (2001) put it, a badge of honor. Our argument is aligned with previous research, namely with Lindenberg (2001), for example, who suggested that the more activities are multifuncional (i.e. the more they

serve physical and social wellbeing and improvement goals), the more enjoyable they are, and thus the strongest the motivation to perform them. In line with Neveu (2007), we suggested the need to complement the traditional pathogenic view of excessive work with a salutogenic perspective, in order to distinguish the processes that lead to either burnout or extreme work.

We advanced a preliminary typology of excessive working that may be tested empirically. It presumes that the work involvement, driveness and work enjoyment dimensions proposed by Spence and Robbins (1992) are not enough to understand all the nuances that extreme work can assume. For example, two individuals with strong scores in the three dimensions (i.e., enthusiastic workaholics) can be significantly different because one is oriented towards self-benefit while the other is focused on the collective gain or a high order “cause”. Two workaholics may feel joy at work, although one obtains enjoyment from improving personal fortune while the other feels happy to work for collective gain, for being useful to the community or for working for a high order “cause”. Future studies may empirically test how this and other authors’ dimensions combine to produce different types of extreme work, and how such clusters are associated with antecedent and dependent variables (e.g., well-being, health, performance). Future studies may also study (a) how these work lifestyles relate with variables such as consuming patterns, leisure activities and family life and (b) if such variables moderate the relationship between work lifestyles and dependent variables, such as happiness and performance. Finally, future studies may identify individual and contextual variables that ignite the eight movements discussed above.

We suggested that it may be necessary to avoid the static perspectives of excess that tended to dominate the field and that a dynamic approach may be advantageous. Changes in the organizational landscapes lead to modifications in the relationship between organizations and their members. The traditional idea that excessive working is exclusively negative should be reconsidered and lead to a critical analysis of management research for at least two reasons. First, recent studies suggest that some people (apparently a growing number of people) enjoy working a great deal. Their sense of enjoyment does not preclude a number of negative consequences (see e.g., Kets de Vries, 2007) but it exists, and should be studied. The extreme ethos, so visible in the case of sports, may have invaded the field of work. Second, if organizations succeed in creating happy excessive workers, they have benefited, in part, from the research conducted by the academic strategic human resources management community (Wall & Wood 2005). As we discussed at the beginning of the paper, powerful theories of motivation have been produced and are still under construction and refinement, a process resulting in powerful social technologies aiming to achieve higher levels of fit (Kristoff, 1996), enthusiasm (Mishkind *et al*., 2005) and alignment (Colvin & Boswell, 2007; Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007). With this paper we suggested that, when it comes to excess, the role of managers and management academics should be carefully reconsidered in order to explore if we collectively contributed to the creation of too much of what has been perceived as a good thing.

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Table 1

Types of workaholic employee

(Sources: Spence & Robbins 1992; Burke, 1999; Scott *et al*. 1997; Schaufeli *et al*. 2006)

		Types of employee		
		Workaholics	**Work enthusiasts**	**Enthusiastic workaholics**
Work Processes	**Involvement**	Low: little outcome for self-identity	High: significant outcome for self-identity	High: significant outcome for self-identity
	Source of pressure	Disciplined compulsion of the self	Pleasure through an aesthetics of the self	Vocation as the duty of the self
Work Outcomes	**Social capital**	Low	High	High
	Psychological understanding	Compulsive-dependent workaholics	Perfectibility of the essential self	Achievement-oriented mastery
	Normative view	Bad workaholism	Neither bad nor good	Good workaholism

Table 2

Excessive work as lifestyle: A typology

	Self-benefit	*Collective gain*
Exhilarating	**I. Extreme workers**	**II. Stakhanovs**
Exhausting	**III. Burned out**	**IV. Exploited**

Figure 1

Eight movements regarding excessive work