‘Towards Explaining the Adoption of High Performance Work Systems: Evidence from SAL’

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In spite of the evidence that high performance work systems (HPWS) are associated with gains in organisational performance, as well as with positive outcomes for employees, their adoption appears to be limited and inconsistent. There has been some work which has tried to explain the factors which predict adoption of HPWS, but it has chiefly involved the exploration of empirical patterns rather than the testing or development of theoretical models. We therefore lack a compelling theoretical explanation of the factors which predict adoption of HPWS. This seminar will present initial findings from analysis of the Study of Australian Leadership (SAL), a national workplace study conducted in 2015 by the Centre for Workplace Leadership at the University of Melbourne, and the first such Australian survey since AWIRS 1995. A series of theoretical propositions will be presented and then explored using analysis of the SAL data. While the results are preliminary at this stage, they provide a basis for theoretical development and further analysis.

Bill Harley is Professor of Management in the Department of Management and Marketing at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His work focuses chiefly on the impact of management practices on employees' experiences of work and has been published in journals including Journal of Management Studies, British Journal of Industrial Relations, Work Employment and Society and Industrial Relations. Between 2010 and 2015 Bill was an Editor of Journal of Management Studies, where he is currently Consulting Editor. He is also a member of the council of the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies. He has acted as a consultant a number of national and international organisations including the OECD and the ILO.

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