TAKING THE PULSE AT WORK

Employer-Employee Relations and Workplace Problems in Australia Compared to the United States

SUMMARY REPORT

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EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND WORKPLACE PROBLEMS IN AUSTRALIA COMPARED TO THE UNITED STATES

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Rafael Gomez is Professor of Employment Relations at the University of Toronto and since 2015 has been the Director of the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources.

Acknowledgements

STUDY BACKGROUND

This study presents an assessment of the health of the employer-employee relationship (EER) in Australia and the United States (US). It investigates the determinants of EER in the two countries; analyses problems that contribute to, and grow out of, these relationships; and seeks to understand the consequences of these problems for firm performance and employee wellbeing. Our investigation into the health of Australia's EER complements two major, nationally representative workplace relations studies namely the Australia at Work (AaW) project and the Fair Work Commission's Australian Workplace Relations Study (AWRS).

A key finding of the AaW project, published over a decade ago, is that: "workers are generally happy with their work and work environment" (Van Wanrooy, Oxenbridge, Buchanan & Jakubauskas, 2007, p.85). But underneath this positive picture lies a significant minority of workers who were dissatisfied with both the objective[1] and subjective features[2] of their jobs. Additionally, the study also notes an inverse relationship between employees' perception of their relationship with their employers and their perceived level of job security (which finds support in

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[1] E.g. work schedules.
[2] E.g. manager trustworthiness.

Aletraris, 2010). This is of considerable concern given the deteriorating level of job security over the last decade, across a broad range of industries, in much of the developed world (Grimshaw, Ward, Rubery & Benyon, 2001; Hayter, 2015; Kalleberg, 2009; Standing, 2011).

The AWRS examined new workplace arrangements and employee management practices, and how these vary according to employee demographics and employer firm attributes (FWC, 2015). But it did not probe deeply into the views of managers and employees about their relationships, and how they feel about the aforementioned new workplace arrangements, which are critical to developing a better understanding of the state of EER (Wilkinson, Barry, Gomez & Kaufman, 2018).

Our aim is to give an overall assessment of the state of EER in Australia - and then compare it against that of the US in order to put Australia's performance in an international context. Australia and the US are similar in a lot of ways (e.g. ethno-linguistically, culturally and legally); but there are also a number of notable differences. For example, Australia's labour regulatory landscape has only recently become liberalised and decentralised (Barry, Michelotti & Nyland, 2006; Lansbury & Michelson, 2003; Plowman, 1989; Stewart, 2011; Wilkinson et al 2009), whereas labour regulations in the US have tended to be more liberal, decentralised and more reflective of business demands (Catz & Colvin, 2011).

KEY FINDINGS

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"...a significant minority of workers were dissatisfied with both the objective and subjective features of their jobs."

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"...an inverse relationship between employees' perception of their relationship with their employers and their perceived level of job security."

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THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS SCORECARD

To date, there is no universally agreed national EER assessment framework (Wilkinson et al, 2018). There have been numerous efforts to develop practical tools to assess the state of human resource (HR) management systems at the organisational level, which can be applied to the national level with some modification (e.g. Becker & Huselid, 2006; Beatty, Huselid & Scneier, 2003). But these tend to primarily reflect only management and organisational interests - as opposed to the interests of all stakeholders in the employment relationship (Marchington, Wilkinson, Donnely & Kynighou, 2016).

Consequently, for this project, we developed our own scoring tool that takes into account the interests of workers, management and the broader community in the employment relationship. We adopted Kaplan and Norton's (2001; 2007; 2010) balance scorecard approach and utilised Mackenzie King's (1918) model of an employment relations system to guide its structure and contents. Our report card purports to measure the state of EER with a set of 39 diagnostics, covering seven broad performance areas, namely:

1. Organisational outcomes;
2. Employee outcomes;
3. Management inputs;
4. Employee inputs;
5. EER climate;
6. Employment relations (ER) management practices; and
7. Community outcomes

The first column of Tables 1 and 2 on the subsequent pages list the specific measures under each of the seven performance areas.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

To collect the data needed to assess the health of Australia's and the US' EER against these criteria, we engaged ORC International to conduct a survey of employers and employees in the two countries. The survey instrument that we used consists of a series of subjective (e.g. I feel I have a great job security at this workplace) and objective (e.g. are you a union member) questions and statements, each of which corresponds to one of the abovementioned 39 individual measures.

Subjective questions and statements are measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest. In addition, we also included demographic questions pertaining to each respondent' age, gender, occupation, firm size, etc. The average of the median and mean of the aggregated data for each measure, in each country, determines the total score given for the measure in that country.

EMPLOYEE SAMPLE REQUIREMENTS

Employee respondents (n = 1,996 – Australia; n = 2,050 – US) were required to meet the following set of criteria in order to participate:

- ✓ Be 18 years old or over;
- ✓ Be employed and work at least 20 hours per week;
- ✓ Not have higher status than lower management; and
- ✓ Work for an organization with at least 21 employees.

EMPLOYER SAMPLE REQUIREMENTS

Employer respondents (n = 400 – Australia; n = 501 – US) were required to meet the following set of criteria in order to participate:

- ✓ Be 18 years old or over;
- ✓ Be middle-level management or higher;
- ✓ Manage a minimum of 11 employees;
- ✓ Rate themselves as somewhat or more knowledgeable of the employee-employer relationships at their organization; and
- ✓ Work for an organization with a minimum of 21 employees.

The quota sampling technique (Dodge, 2006, p.428) used in the data collection process ensures that participant characteristics reflect population characteristics in the two countries of interest. The results of our survey are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below. We have published a more detailed analysis of our Australian data in the *Journal of Industrial Relations* (Wilkinson et al, 2018). In the tables presented below, we have converted the mean and median numerical scores, for each measure, to an F-to-A letter grade (with grades above F also being distinguished into plus and minus categories).[3]

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[3] The conversion scale from numeric to letter grade is made to be as symmetric as possible. A numerical score of 1-2.59 corresponds to F; 2.6-3.59, D; 3.6-4.59, C; 4.6-5.59, B; and 5.6-7, A.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The overall score given to the state of EER in Australia is 4.97 by employers and 4.40 by employees,[4] which correspond to grades of B and C+ respectively. In the US, the overall score is 5.25 from employers and 4.48 from employees, which also correspond to grades of B and C+ respectively. These numbers suggest that the health of EER in Australia and the US are comparable and that the aforementioned similarities in the two countries outweigh differences in their institutional arrangements and historical industrial relations frameworks.

The 'average' bill of health for the employment relationship in Australia and the US suggest that the state of EER, in the two countries, is neither a cause for immediate alarm nor is it a cause for celebration. In other words, it is not dysfunctional, but there is considerable room for improvement. Pay, voice and involvement, as well as management competence, are common areas of concern for employees in the two countries. The following pages provide summary data on the state of the ER report card. Data from the from the employer and employee surveys from Australia are presented first in Table 1, and data from the US follow in Table 2 (note both tables span across two pages).

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[4] i.e. out of 7.

Table 1a: State of the employment relations report card in Australia: Employee and employer surveys

Australian Survey Data	Employer (ER) Survey				Employee (EE) Survey			
	Average		Median		Average		Median	
Section	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
I. Companies/Workplaces: Performance Outcomes								
1. Management has Optimized Financial Performance	5.08	B	5.00	B	-	-	-	-
2. Company/Workplace Financial Performance	5.28	B	5.00	B	4.91	B	5.00	B
3. Company/Workplace Competitive Position	4.29	C+	4.00	C	4.62	B-	5.00	B
4. Change in Employment	4.62	B	4.00	C	3.92	C	4.00	C
5. Company/Workplace Operational Efficiency	5.08	B	5.00	B	4.17	C	4.00	C
6. Employer/Employee Value Proposition	5.33	B+	5.00	B	4.66	B-	5.00	B
SECTION I SUBTOTAL	**4.95**	**B**	**4.67**	**B-**	**4.46**	**C+**	**4.59**	**C+**
II. Employees: Satisfaction/Performance Outcomes								
1. Job/Employment Satisfaction	-	-	-	-	4.61	C+	5.00	B
2. Great Place to Work	5.39	B+	6.00	A	4.91	B-	5.00	B
3. Pay/Benefits	4.85	B	5.00	B	4.32	C+	4.50	C+
4. Employment Security	5.08	B	5.00	B	4.76	B-	5.00	B
5. Friendly/Sociable Workplace Environment	5.22	B+	5.00	B	4.92	B-	5.00	B
6. Employee Advancement Opportunities	4.88	B	5.00	B	4.03	C	4.00	C
SECTION II SUBTOTAL	**5.08**	**B**	**5.20**	**B+**	**4.59**	**C+**	**4.75**	**B-**
III. Internal Management Capabilities/Performance								
1. Quality of Management Team	5.19	B+	5.00	B	4.35	C+	4.00	C
2. Quality of People Management	5.09	B	5.00	B	4.14	C	4.00	C
3. Confidence/Trust in Management	5.16	B	5.00	B	4.10	C	4.00	C
4. Effectively Deals with Underperformer/Problem Employees	4.48	C+	5.00	B	3.52	D+	4.00	C
SECTION III SUBTOTAL	**4.98**	**B**	**5.00**	**B**	**4.03**	**C**	**4.00**	**C**
IV. Internal Workforce Capabilities/Performance								
1. Quality of Workforce	5.40	B+	5.00	B	4.85	B-	5.00	B
2. Engagement	5.22	B+	5.00	B	4.67	B-	5.00	B
3. Provided with Good Job Resources	5.26	B+	5.00	B	4.59	C+	5.00	B
4. Low Employee Turnover	3.82	C-	4.00	C	4.77	B-	5.00	B
SECTION IV SUBTOTAL	**4.92**	**B**	**4.75**	**B-**	**4.72**	**B-**	**5.00**	**B**

Table continued on following page. Table from Wilkinson et. al. 2018.

Table 1b: State of the employment relations report card in Australia: Employee and employer surveys

Australian Survey Data	Employer (ER) Survey				Employee (EE) Survey			
	Average		Median		Average		Median	
Section	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
V. Employer-Employee Relations and Climate								
1. Employees Treated Fairly/Humanely	-	-	-	-	4.57	C+	5.00	B
2. Mgrs' Interest in Hearing EEs' Gripes/Problems	5.14	B	5.00	B	-	-	-	-
3. Relations between Management and Employees	5.28	B+	5.00	B	4.36	C+	4.00	C
4. Family/Partnership Feeling	4.98	B	5.00	B	4.14	C	4.00	C
5. Little Conflict/Infighting	3.97	C	4.00	C	4.14	C	4.00	C
6. Morale	5.21	B+	5.00	B	4.25	C	4.00	C
7. Employees' Connection/Interest with What Mgt. Says/Does	3.57	D+	3.00	D	3.68	C-	4.00	C
8. Employees Collaborate/Cooperate with Managers	5.27	B+	5.00	B	-	-	-	-
9. Good Workplace for Women/Minority/LGBT Employees	-	-	-	-	5.00	B	5.00	B
SECTION V SUBTOTAL	**4.77**	**B-**	**4.57**	**C+**	**4.31**	**C+**	**4.29**	**C+**
VI. Employee Relations Practices								
1. Employee Voice/Involvement in Way Work is Done	5.15	B	5.00	B	4.35	C+	4.00	C
2. Employee Listening and Opinion Methods	4.70	B-	5.00	B	3.83	C-	4.00	C
3. Effective Dispute Resolution	5.13	B	5.00	B	4.34	C+	4.00	C
4. Effective/Extensive Internal Communication	5.02	B	5.00	B	4.15	C	4.00	C
5. Collaborative/Commitment Management Style	5.03	B	5.00	B	3.81	C-	4.00	C
6. Positive Forms of Employee Motivation	4.99	B	5.00	B	4.12	C	4.00	C
7. Value-added from HR function at organization	5.48	B	6.00	A				
SECTION VI SUBTOTAL	**5.07**	**B**	**5.14**	**B**	**4.10**	**C**	**4.00**	**C**
VII. Community's Performance Outcome								
1. Customer Satisfaction	5.20	B+	5.00	B	4.77	B-	5.00	B
2. Corporate Social Responsibility	5.08	B	5.00	B	4.55	C+	4.00	C
3. Flexible Work Arrangements	5.06	B	5.00	B	4.38	C+	4.00	C
SECTION VII SUBTOTAL	**5.11**	**B**	**5.00**	**B**	**4.57**	**C+**	**4.33**	**C+**
VIII. OVERALL SCORE	**4.97**	**B**	**5.00**	**B**	**4.40**	**C+**	**4.41**	**C+**

Table 2: State of the employment relations report card in the United States: Employee and employer surveys

Section	Employer (ER) Survey						Employee (EE) Survey					
United States Survey Data	Mean		Bottom 20%		Upper 20%		Mean		Bottom 20%		Upper 20%	
	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
I. Companies/Workplaces: Performance Outcomes												
1. Management has Optimized Financial Performance	5.54	B+	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Company/Workplace Financial Performance	5.62	A-	4.54	C+	6.32	A	5.16	B	3.58	D+	6.37	A
3. Company/Workplace Competitive Position	4.41	C+	3.00	D	5.37	B+	4.64	B-	3.76	C-	5.44	B+
4. Change in Employment	4.86	B-	3.65	C-	6.50	A+	4.13	C	2.54	F	5.43	B+
5. Company/Workplace Operational Efficiency	5.53	B+	4.29	C+	7.00	A+	4.31	C+	1.52	F	5.79	A-
6. Employer's Get/Give Value Proposition	5.67	A-	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SECTION I SUBTOTAL	**5.27**	**B+**	**4.01**	**C**	**6.53**	**A+**	**4.56**	**C+**	**2.85**	**D-**	**5.76**	**A-**
II. Employees: Satisfaction/Performance Outcomes												
1. Job/Employment Satisfaction	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.79	B-	3.23	D	6.43	A
2. Great Place to Work	5.89	A-	4.34	C+	7.00	A+	5.03	B	3.22	D	6.43	A
3. Pay/Benefits	5.31	B+	3.37	D+	6.74	A+	4.58	C+	2.40	F	6.45	A
4. Employment Security	5.53	B+	3.51	D+	7.00	A+	5.06	B	3.27	D+	7.00	A+
5. Friendly/Sociable Workplace Environment	5.70	A-	4.49	C+	7.00	A+	5.04	B	3.35	D+	6.42	A
6. Fair, Respectful, Humane Treatment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.90	B-	3.11	D	6.43	A
7. Employee Advancement Opportunities	5.35	B+	3.43	D+	7.00	A+	4.12	C	1.43	F	6.46	A
8. Employee's Get/Give Value Proposition	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.85	B-	3.24	D	6.45	A
SECTION II SUBTOTAL	**5.55**	**B+**	**3.83**	**C-**	**6.95**	**A+**	**4.80**	**B-**	**2.91**	**D-**	**6.51**	**A+**
III. Internal Management Capabilities/Performance												
1. Quality of Management Team	5.75	A-	4.29	C+	7.00	A+	4.63	B-	2.04	F	6.43	A
2. Quality of People Management	5.54	B+	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	4.31	C+	2.09	F	6.39	A
3. Confidence/Trust in Management	5.66	A-	4.22	C	7.00	A+	4.32	C+	1.46	F	5.99	A-
4. Front-line Managers Engaged with EEs & Work	5.78	A-	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	4.45	C+	2.08	F	6.39	A
5. Effectively Deals with Underperformer EES	4.73	B-	1.97	F	6.43	A	4.24	C	2.09	F	6.54	A+
6. Value-added from HR function at organization	5.89	A-	4.18	C	7.00	A+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SECTION III SUBTOTAL	**5.56**	**B+**	**3.88**	**C-**	**6.90**	**A+**	**4.39**	**C+**	**1.95**	**F**	**6.35**	**A**
IV. Internal Workforce Capabilities/Performance												
1. Quality of Workforce	5.78	A-	4.56	C+	7.00	A+	5.04	B	3.35	D+	6.38	A
2. Engagement	5.63	A-	4.32	C+	7.00	A+	4.66	B-	3.30	D+	6.35	A
3. Employees Aligned with Company Goals	5.65	A-	4.41	C+	7.00	A+	4.66	B-	3.14	D	6.36	A
4. Provided with Good Job Resources	5.72	A-	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	4.77	B-	3.22	D	6.45	A
5. Low Employee Turnover	3.71	C-	1.40	F	6.49	A	4.80	B-	2.16	F	6.43	A
6. Difficult/Expensive to Replace Main EE Group	3.50	D+	2.08	F	6.37	A	4.09	C	2.12	F	6.40	A
SECTION IV SUBTOTAL	**5.00**	**B**	**3.51**	**D+**	**6.81**	**A+**	**4.67**	**B-**	**2.83**	**D-**	**6.40**	**A**

Table continued on following page. Table from Wilkinson et. al. 2018.

Table 2b: State of the employment relations report card in the United States: Employee and employer surveys

	Employer (ER) Survey						**Employee (EE) Survey**					
	Mean		Bottom 20%		Upper 20%		Mean		Bottom 20%		Upper 20%	
Section	**Score**	**Grade**	**Score**	**Grade**	**Score**	**Grade**	**Score**	**Grade**	**Score**	**Grade**	**Score**	**Grade**
V. Employer-Employee Relations and Climate												
1. Relations between Management and EEs	5.70	A-	4.29	C+	7.00	A+	4.62	B-	2.14	F	6.41	A
2. Management Receptivity/Interest in Hearing Employees' Problems	5.42	B+	3.41	D+	7.00	A+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Family/Partnership Feeling	5.58	B+	4.19	C	7.00	A+	4.30	C+	2.05	F	6.40	A
5. Little Conflict/Infighting	4.03	C	1.44	F	6.45	A	4.50	C+	1.51	F	5.68	A-
6. Workplace Morale	5.65	A-	4.31	C+	7.00	A+	4.42	C+	2.07	F	6.39	A
7. EEs' Connection with What Mgt. Says/Does	3.69	C-	1.40	F	6.45	A	3.90	C-	2.12	F	5.77	A-
8. EEs Collaborate/Cooperate with Managers	5.74	A-	4.40	C+	7.00	A+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9. Good Workplace - Women/Minority/LGBT EEs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.15	B	3.47	D+	6.82	A+
10. Management Decisions Match 'EEs are Most Important Asset'	5.88	A-	4.24	C	7.00	A+	4.56	C+	2.04	F	6.45	A
11. Money not Main Attachment to Job/Company	2.89	D-	3.22	D	7.00	A+	3.80	C-	2.17	F	6.49	A
SECTION V SUBTOTAL	**4.95**	**B**	**3.43**	**D+**	**6.88**	**A+**	**4.41**	**C+**	**2.20**	**F**	**6.30**	**A**
VI. Employee Relations Practices												
1. EE Voice/Involvement in Way Work is Done	5.66	A-	4.32	C+	7.00	A+	4.49	C+	2.07	F	6.42	A
2. Employee Listening and Opinion Methods	5.10	B	3.20	D	6.40	A	3.92	C-	1.41	F	6.40	A
3. Effective Dispute Resolution	5.50	B+	4.34	C+	7.00	A+	4.45	C+	2.04	F	6.43	A
4. Effective/Extensive Internal Communication	5.43	B+	3.47	D+	7.00	A+	4.31	C+	2.03	F	6.42	A
5. Collaborative/Commitment Management Style	5.13	B	3.18	D	6.35	A	3.84	C-	1.45	F	5.75	A-
6. Positive Forms of Employee Motivation	5.30	B+	3.51	D+	6.33	A	4.28	C+	2.14	F	6.32	A
SECTION VI SUBTOTAL	**5.35**	**B+**	**3.67**	**C-**	**6.68**	**A+**	**4.21**	**C**	**1.86**	**F**	**6.29**	**A**
VII. HR/Work Design												
1. Priority on Internal Candidates to Fill Positions	5.37	B+	3.53	D+	7.00	A+	4.52	C+	2.06	F	6.44	A
2. Company Invests in Training/Skills	5.50	B+	3.48	D+	7.00	A+	4.31	C+	2.10	F	6.43	A
3. Company Invests in Careful Selection/Hiring	5.46	B+	3.61	C-	7.00	A+	4.31	C+	2.12	F	6.41	A
4. Company Invests in Careful/Ongoing Performance Management	5.53	B+	3.53	D+	7.00	A+	4.27	C+	2.04	F	6.41	A
5. Significant Part of Pay is Performance-Based	5.15	B	3.16	D	7.00	A+	3.46	D+	1.00	F	5.86	A-
6. Use of Teams with Some Self-Management	5.40	B+	3.45	D+	7.00	A+	4.44	C+	2.03	F	6.39	A
SECTION VII SUBTOTAL	**5.40**	**B+**	**3.46**	**D+**	**7.00**	**A+**	**4.22**	**C**	**1.89**	**F**	**6.32**	**A**
VIII. Community's Performance Outcome												
1. Customer Satisfaction	5.75	A-	4.27	C+	7.00	A+	4.90	B-	3.46	D+	6.38	A
2. Corporate Social Responsibility	5.43	B+	3.19	D	7.00	A+	4.56	C+	3.25	D	6.49	A
3. Flexible Work Arrangements	5.24	B	3.13	D	7.00	A+	4.47	C+	1.96	F	6.48	A
4. Use few year-round temporary/project EEs	3.52	D+	1.32	F	6.47	A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. Pay high enough to cover min. living expenses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.43	C+	1.43	F	5.87	A-
SECTION VIII SUBTOTAL	**4.98**	**B**	**2.98**	**D**	**6.87**	**A+**	**4.59**	**C+**	**2.53**	**F**	**6.31**	**A**
IX. OVERALL SCORE	**5.25**	**B**	**3.61**	**C-**	**6.83**	**A+**	**4.48**	**C+**	**2.36**	**F**	**6.31**	**A**

The apparent reduction in the level of employee workplace satisfaction in Australia over the last decade is concerning. As noted, the AaW survey found that Australian workers were generally happy with their work environment in the early 2000s (Van Wanrooy et al., 2007). But the most that can be said of Australian workers today is that, on the whole, they are neither happy nor unhappy with their workplaces. The lower level of satisfaction can at least be partly attributed to their dissatisfaction with key aspects of EER in their organisations) – including around job security, the way employees are treated by employers (in terms of fairness) and the level of empowerment/autonomy that they enjoy at work.

Table 3 contrasts these summary findings between the two countries.

REDUCED SATISFACTION

"The apparent reduction in the level of employee workplace satisfaction in Australia over the last decade is concerning."

Table 3: Summary Findings - Total Employees (ORC Report)

	US	AUS
All things considered, I have a great job	⟷	⟷
Job Security	⟷	↓
Great Pay	↓	↓
Fair Treatment	⟷	↓
Voice and Involvement	↓	↓
Managers Empowering / Trusting Employees	⟷	↓
Great Leadership/Management Teams	↓	↓
Workplace Great for Women and Minorities	↑	⟷
Interest in Union (Not Currently a Member)	👎	👍

↑ Indicates higher levels of agreement. (Mean > 5.2)

⟷ Indicates moderate levels of agreement. (Mean = 4.8 – 5.2)

↓ Indicates lower levels of agreement. (Mean <4.8)

KEY ISSUES

Issues affecting Australian and US workers' perceptions of EER

Unlike other liberal market economies (LMEs), such as the US and Britain (see Hall & Soskicke, 2001), the state has traditionally "played a prominent role in Australian industrial relations ... In this regard, the experience of Australia is somewhat closer to that of continental Europe" (Lansbury & Michelson, 2003, pp.228). The conciliation and arbitration system, which was unique to Australia's employment relationships, promoted a highly regulated approach to labour relations and was the bedrock of the country's industrial relations system for almost a century (Lansbury & Michelson, 2003; Plowman, 1988; Stewart, 2011, Wilkinson et al 2009). But over the last few decades there has been a consistent trend in Australia's industrial relations landscape, towards decentralisation, liberalisation and labour commodification (Barry, Michelotti & Nyland, 2006; Wooden, 2000).

> "Employees in the US have a markedly different expectation, when it comes to job security, fairness and workplace empowerment - compared to their Australian counterparts"

The industrial relations reforms of the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially under the Howard government, introduced key provisions "that enhanced employers' market power, increased their capacity to pursue efficiency wage policies without the involvement of unions while concomitantly weakening workers' ability to bargain in the market place" (Barry, Michelotti & Nyland, 2006:60). Furthermore, the reforms weakened prohibitions against unfair dismissal and imposed considerable limits to the bargaining powers of employees (see also Stewart, 2011; Isaac & Lansbury, 2007; Howell, 2016). While the implementation of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) under the Rudd-Gillard government sought to reverse some of the effects of the Howard government's *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth), by the second decade of the 21st Century, Australia's industrial relations landscape has become remarkably different from how it looked in the pre-reform era.

Labour regulations in the US, on the other hand, have consistently been weak and decentralised (Katz & Colvin, 2011). Employee protection is much weaker than it has traditionally been in Australia (see Catz & Colvin, 2011; Kaufman, 1993). Accordingly, the level of job security and employee industrial power in American workplaces have always been considerably lower than those traditionally enjoyed by Australian workers. For instance, the long-standing and *prima facie* presumption of 'employment at will', in the US, means that outside the limited areas of unionisation and collective bargaining reach employers may not have to provide just cause, reasonable notice or severance pay for dismissing an employee (Catz & Colvin, 2011; Hayter, 2015).

Employees in the US have a markedly different expectation, when it comes to job security, fairness and workplace empowerment - compared to their Australian counterparts. Australian workers can easily recall a not-so-distant past, when their jobs seemed more secure, regulatory protection felt fairer and employees felt more empowered. This is not the case for US workers. This may provide an explanation for why Australian employees indicate lower levels of agreement in the job security, fair treatment and employee empowerment categories of the survey compared to their American counterparts; and are, overall, less satisfied with their workplaces than a decade ago when they participated in the AaW study.

Employee voice and involvement

We can contrast the gap between Australian and US employees' responses to the aforementioned measures against the similar way, in which they rate 'voice and involvement' in their workplaces. Trade union density has diminished considerably in both Australia and the US over the last few decades - approximately by the same rate (OECD, 2015). In both Australia and the US, union density is approximately half of what it was in the 1960s. The US may have a lower starting point - and indeed American unions have considerably been weaker than their Australian counterparts (Kaufman, 1993; OECD, 2015). But workers in both countries are equally able to recall a time when their voice and involvement in managerial decision making were greater than they are today. Consequently, workers in both Australia and the US indicate lower levels of agreement to the suggestion that their employers are 'great at providing employees with voice and involvement in the way work gets done' (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Extract from Workplace Report Card - Employees (ORC Report)

	US (2050) (A)	AUS (1996) (C)
Great Advancement Opportunities	4.4 BCD	4.2 B
Great Relations Between Management And Employees	4.8 BCD	4.5 B
Great Employee Morale	4.6 BCD	4.3 B
A Great Place To Work For Women	5.3 BCD	5.1
A Great Place To Work For Minorities, Such As Ethnic/ Racial/ LGBT/ Religious	5.2 BC	4.9
Great At Providing Employees With Voice And Involvement In The Way Work Gets Done	4.6 BCD	4.4 B
Great For Providing Employees With The Job Resources (eg, Tools, Training, Computers, Support Staff) They Need To Perform Well	4.9 BCD	4.6 B
Great For Having Enjoyable Co-Workers And A Friendly/ Sociable Workplace Environment	5.2 BCD	4.9 B

Qs14-21; Answer scale: 1 = Very Strongly Disagree to 7 = Very Strongly Agree
Base: Total within each Country
Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B/C/D).

According to one strand of literature, HR functions are meant to replace unions in their role as an employee advocate. But they have not always presented themselves as a credible internal voice mechanism for employees (Ellig, 1997). In our survey, we find employees do not think their HR departments are particularly effective in handling complaints and grievances (see Figure 2 below).[5] Moreover, despite more Australian employees saying that their organisations have put in place some kind of internal workers forum (compared to their US counterparts), Australian employees are just as dissatisfied with the level of 'voice and involvement' in their organisations as American employees (4.4 and 4.6 out of 7 in Australia and the US respectively; see below).

"Employees do not think their HR departments are particularly effective in handling complaints and grievances."

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[5] The statement: 'going to the personnel / HR department would be an effective way to handle a complaint or grievance I have with one of my managers' receives an average response of 4.1 and 4.2 for Australian and US workers respectively.

Figure 2: Voice and Representation - Employees (ORC Report)

Qs70-72; Answer scale: 1 = Very Strongly Disagree to 7 = Very Strongly Agree
Base: Total within each Country
Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B/C/D).
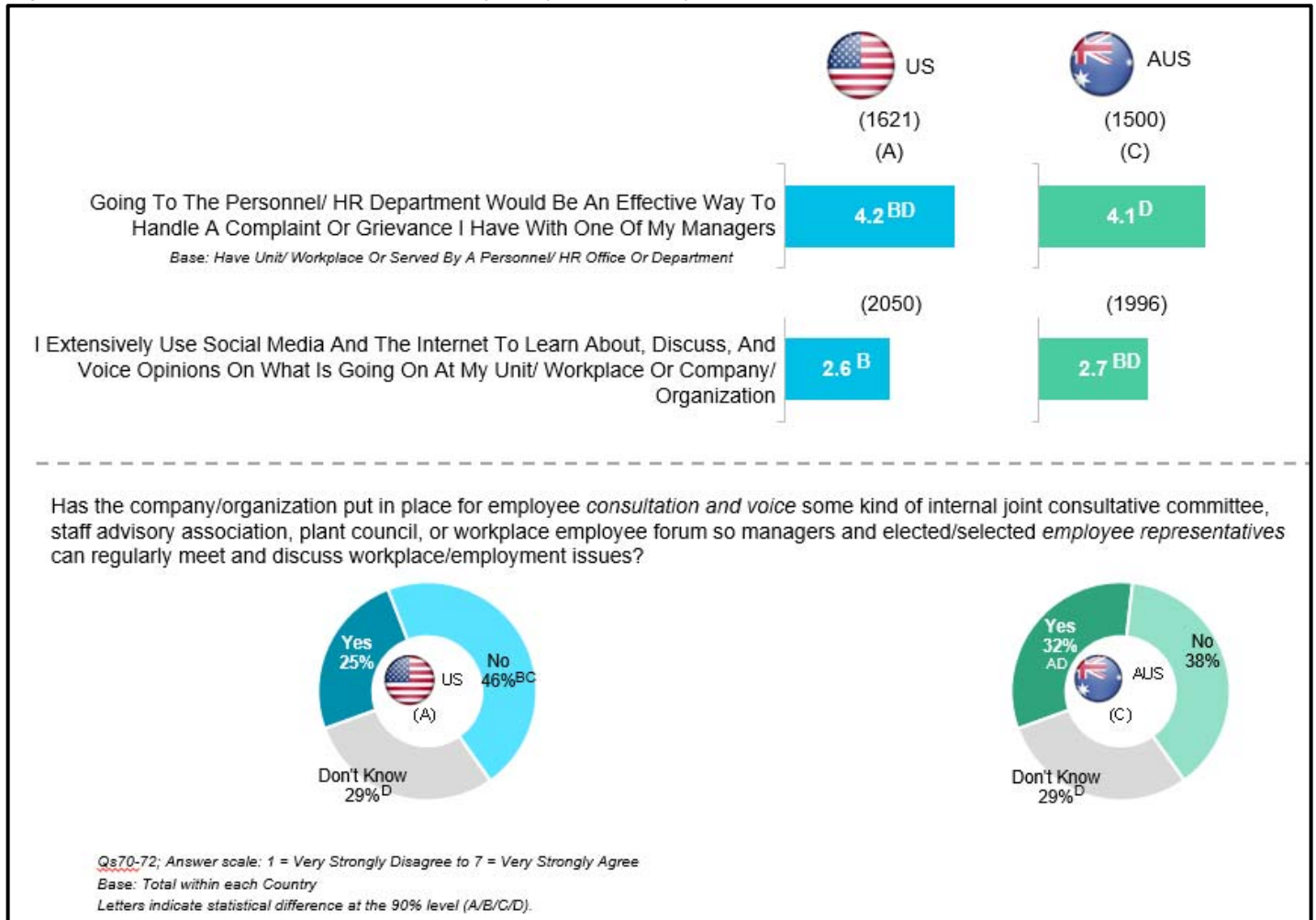
The gap between employer and employee perceptions regarding employee experience

Yet another notable aspect of our study is the finding that employers and employees, in both the US and Australia, have rather different perspectives on the state of EER in their organisations. Employers have a more positive outlook regarding the state of EER than their employees do. The largest gap, in both countries, is in the assessment of 'collaborative/commitment management style', which perhaps highlights management's over-estimation of their ability to make their employees feel included.

A closer look at the results, however, reveal that employers (i.e. managers) are not just simply uninformed or in denial about the experiences of their employees. For instance: Australian workers are generally less satisfied with the state of EER in their workplaces than their US counterparts; accordingly, Australian employers indicate lower levels of agreement with the statements posed in Table 4 than their US counterparts.

"The largest gap, in both countries, is in the assessment of 'collaborative/commitment management style', which perhaps highlights management's over-estimation of their ability to make their employees feel included."

Table 4: Summary Findings - Total Employer (ORC Report)

	US	AUS
For employees, my Organization is a Great Place to Work	⬆	⬆
My Organization has Great Performing Leadership/Management	⬆	⬌
Great Relations Between Management and Employees	⬆	⬆
My Organization is Great at Providing Employees with Voice	⬆	⬌
Leaders/Managers have the Trust of Employees	⬆	⬌
Workplace Wage Levels are Above Average	⬌	⬌
#1 Employee-Related Strategic Issue	Wages & Benefits	Work Environment
Relations Between Union and Organization is Very Cooperative	⬆	⬌
Employers' Perceived Interest Among Employees of Being in a Union	👍	👆

⬆ Indicates higher levels of agreement. (Mean > 5.2)

⬌ Indicates moderate levels of agreement. (Mean = 4.8 – 5.2)

⬇ Indicates lower levels of agreement. (Mean <4.8)

Furthermore, the gap between employer and employee responses in Table 5, below, is roughly uniform. Excluding the union question, the gap range between the mean employer and employee responses is only between 0.7 and 1.2 (which is quite a small range, on a 7-point scale). This indicates that employers do have some idea of the experiences of their employees. It is not the case that they are simply out of touch - because if they were, then we should expect a higher level of variation between the gap in employee-employer responses (i.e. in Table 5).

Rather, a more satisfactory explanation for the gap is that employer perception of employee experiences (as far as EER is concerned) is 'inflated' across the board. What this means is that employers have some understanding of their employees' experiences, but they feel that these employees are generally happier than they really are (e.g. with voice and involvement, management style, etc.).

Table 5: Disconnect Between Employer and Employee Perceptions (ORC Report)

	US			AUS		
	Employer	Employee	Gap: (Employer - Employee)	Employer	Employee	Gap: (Employer - Employee)
Leadership & Management						
Great performing 'first class' leadership-management team	5.8	4.7	1.1	5.2	4.4	0.8
Great relations between management and employees	5.7	4.8	0.9	5.3	4.5	0.8
Command-Control vs Collaborative-Commitment (Scale 1=All Command-Control, 7= All Collaborative-Commiment)	5.0	4.0	1.0	5.0	3.9	1.0
The statement "employees are this company's most important asset" is very consistent with top management's decisions and priorities at your unit/workplace.	5.9	4.7	1.2	5.4	4.4	1.0
Employee Voice						
Great at providing employees with voice and involvement in the way work gets done	5.7	4.6	1.0	5.2	4.4	0.7
Company has some kind of internal joint consultative committee so managers and elected/selected employee representatives can regularly meet and discuss workplace/employment issues? (% Yes)	63%	25%	38%	55%	32%	23%
Union						
Interest among employees/collegues of having a union	5.4	3.8	1.6	4.7	4.1	0.7

'Employer' respondents, in this study, predominantly consisted of managers, many of whom have successfully climbed the corporate ladder in their organisation – and benefitted from their organisation's processes and procedures which elevated them to their current positions. Consequently, they are more likely to consider that their organisations treat their employees fairly. As employees, they would have enjoyed more cordial relationships with their managers – and as employers, they are likely to have a more elevated view of their relationships with their employees. But this does not suggest that they live in a bubble. They are aware of their employees' experiences, though their view tends to be rosier.

Responses given by management regarding the state of EER in their workplaces may also have been based on their assessment of their relationship with their organisations' core workforces, to whom they are more likely to interact (Wilkinson et al, 2018). Core employees tend to be more satisfied and have better working relationships with their managers than peripheral workers. After all, they are more likely to enjoy better job security, a clearer progression path, and benefits such as the use of their firms' vehicles and subsidised insurance policies.

Another possible reason for the gap between manager and employee responses is, as earlier mentioned, that managers simply over-estimate their performance when it comes to making their firms great places to work for employees. Statements like 'My organization has great performing leadership/management' resemble competency measures for managers - and individuals have the tendency to over-estimate their levels of competence (DeAngelis, 2003). In addition, management respondents are likely to be more empathetic to the efforts of the firm's leadership team when it comes to fostering a positive relationship with workers because, after all, they are parts of such teams.

Priorities for Australian and US employees

As per Table 6 on the following page, the three strongest EER influencers of job satisfaction for workers in Australia and the US are as follows.

THREE STRONGEST EER INFLUENCERS OF JOB SATISFACTION

AUSTRALIA
1. Fair treatment by management
2. Management's trust and employee empowerment
3. Management's ability to get employees enthusiastic and engaged

UNITED STATES
1. Great' leadership / management team
2. Fair treatment by management
3. Management's ability to get employees enthusiastic and engaged

Employees in both countries ranked 'fair treatment' and 'management ability to engage' highly. But whereas employee empowerment is ranked highly in Australia, it is only ranked 7th in the US. Conversely, 'great' leadership / management team is ranked 1st in the US, but only 5th in Australia. Another interesting insight from Table 6 is that voice and involvement is highly correlated with job satisfaction in the US (ranked 4th) but not quite as highly in Australia (9th).

Table 6: Ranking of Top 10 Correlations with 'Unit/Workplace being a great place to work' (ORC Report)

	US	AUS
	All things considered, my unit/workplace is a great place to work	
	Rank	Rank
Great Leadership/Management Teams	1	5
Management's Ability to Get Employee Enthusiastic/Engaged	3	3
Management's Ability to Get Employees Knowledgeable and Focused on Work	5	4
Great Relations Between Management and Employees	6	8
Voice and Involvement	4	9
Managers Trust and Empower Employees	7	2
Provides resources to do the job	9	
Friendly/ sociable environment		7
Managers Treat Employees Fairly	2	1
Job Security	8	6
...		
Great Pay	18	21

Of concern is the fact that employee perceptions about their employers' leadership competence and voice in their organisations are similarly low in Australia and the US, as is their view on management trust and empowerment (which is reflected in employer perception, too, as per Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employee Ratings of Key Priority Attributes in Their Workplaces (ORC Report)
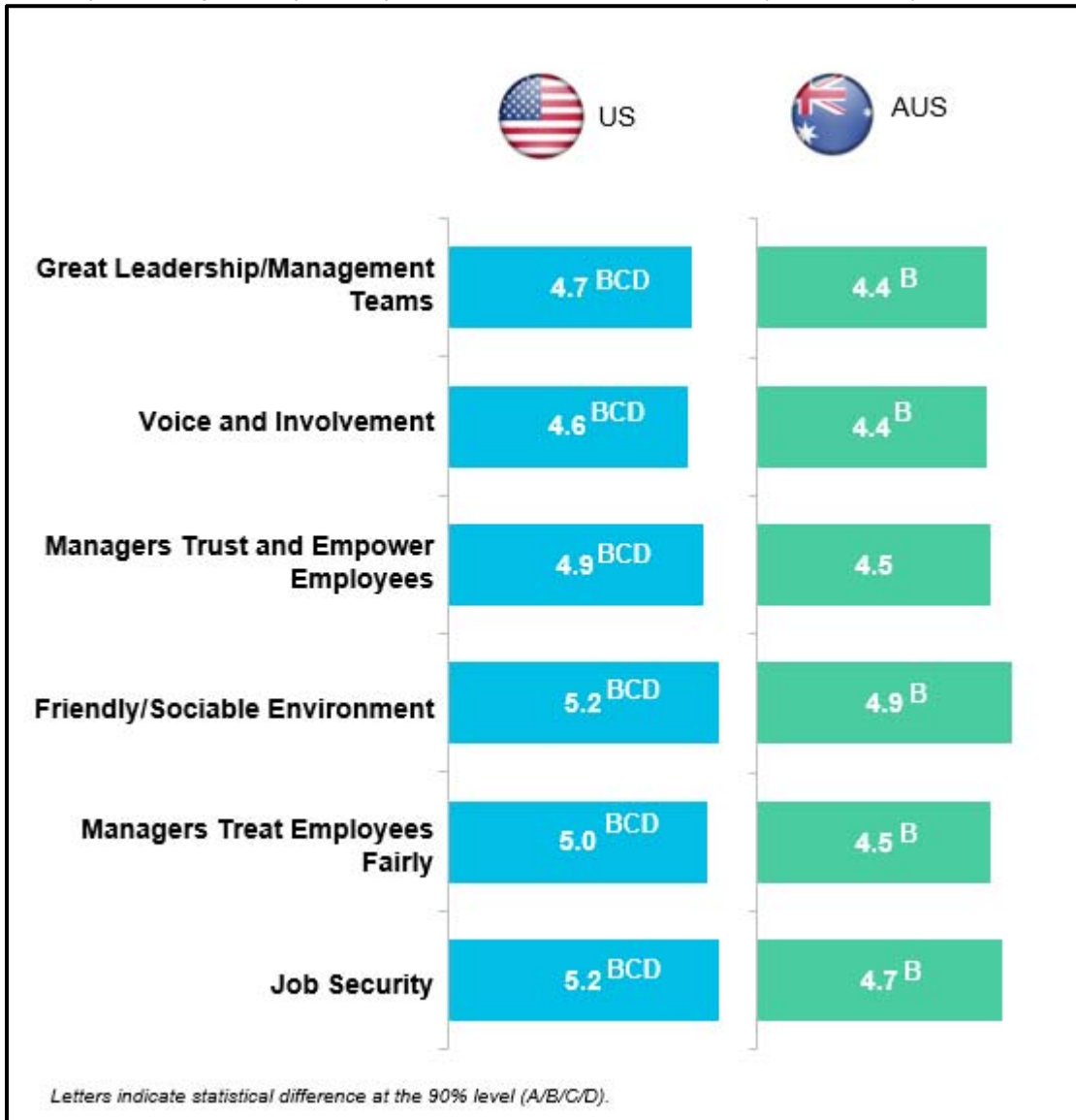
Figure 4: Employee Suggestions on Improving EER (ORC report)
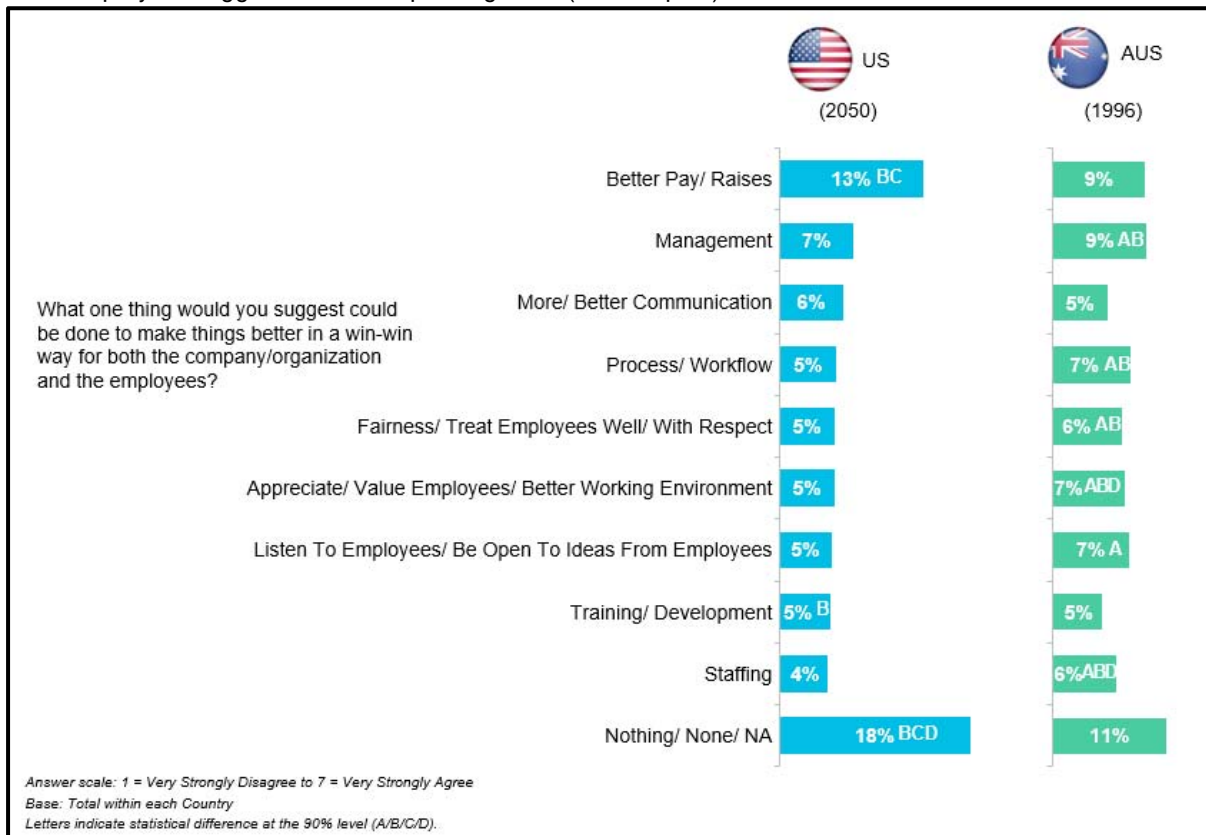
FURTHER ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

Scorecard differences by respondent demographics

Analysis into the relationship between employees' satisfaction in EER and their demographic characteristics suggest that:

"The most consistent differences [in both Australia and the US] are found between the age groups. Overall, those **18-34** and **65+ years** of age are **more positive about their job** situations than employees 35-64 years of age. Employees in their middle years face a number [of] pressures such as looking after their children, concern for aging in parents, pressures of peaking in their careers, saving for retirement, and increased expenses such as house payments and college tuition for them and/or their children."

(per ORC report; see Tables 7 and 8 following):

This suggests that factors external to the employment relationship has a considerable effect in moderating the state of EER in the two countries - and illustrates the spillover effect between work and the private life (Grzywacz, 2000).

Table 7: Employee findings by subgroups in the US

	Gender		Age Group						Membership	
	Male	Female	18-24 Year Olds	25-34 Year Olds	35-44 Year Olds	45-54 Year Olds	55-64 Year Olds	65 and Older	Yes	No
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(J)	(K)
Job Security	5.1	5.1	5.5 EFG	5.4 EFG	5.2 FG	4.9	4.9	5.5 EFG	5.3 K	5.0
Great Leadership/Management Teams	4.7	4.6	5.1 EFG	4.9 EFG	4.7 F	4.5	4.5	4.8 FG	4.5	4.7 J
Fair Treatment	5.0	4.9	5.4 EFG	5.2 EFG	4.9	4.8	4.8	5.3 EFG	4.8	5.0
Management's Ability to Lead Employees	4.7	4.6	5.2 EFGH	5.0 EFG	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.7 J
Managers Empowering/Trusting Employees	4.9	4.8	5.3 EFG	5.3 EFG	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.1 EFG	4.7	4.8 J
Great Pay	4.6 B	4.4	4.8 FGH	4.8 EFGH	4.5 G	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.7 K	4.4

- 🙂 More Satisfied
- 😐 Moderately Satisfied
- ☹️ Less Satisfied

Overall, males and females in the US feel similarly about their work situation and organizational dynamics.

As is typically seen in employee research, the youngest and oldest employees are more positive than those in the middle of their working years.

Union employees are more likely than non-union to feel they have great job security and great pay.

Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B, C/D/E/F/G/H, J/K).

Table 8: Employee findings by subgroups in Australia

	Gender		Age Group						Membership	
	Male	Female	18-24 Year Olds	25-34 Year Olds	35-44 Year Olds	45-54 Year Olds	55-64 Year Olds	65 and Older	Yes	No
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(J)	(K)
Great Leadership/Management Teams	4.4	4.4	4.8 EFG	4.7 EFG	4.3	4.3	4.3	5.0 EFG	4.4	4.5
Job Security	4.7	4.9 A	5.2 EFG	4.9 EFG	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.6 DEFG	4.9	4.8
Fair Treatment	4.6	4.6	5.0 EFG	4.9 EFG	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.0 EFG	4.5	4.7 J
Managers Empowering/Trusting Employees	4.5	4.5	4.9 EFG	4.8 EFG	4.4	4.4	4.3	5.0 EFG	4.3	4.6 J
Great Benefits	4.4 B	4.3	4.8 EFG	4.6 EFG	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.5	4.4 K	4.3
Great Pay	4.5	4.4	4.8 EFG	4.7 EFG	4.5 FG	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.4

- 🙂 More Satisfied
- 😐 Moderately Satisfied
- ☹️ Less Satisfied

Males and females in Australia feel similarly for most aspects of their jobs. Neither express much satisfaction.

There are some differences between the age groups. Younger and older employees are more satisfied with their work situation than those in the middle of their working years.

Non-union employees are a little more satisfied than union employees with some aspects of the their job, including being more likely to feel their managers trust and empower them.

Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B, C/D/E/F/G/H, J/K).

This phenomenon is also reflected in the responses of management respondents. Australian and American managers in their middle years tend to be less optimistic about the state of EER in their organisations compared to their older and younger colleagues (see tables 9 and 10 below).

Table 9: Employer findings by subgroups in the US

	Gender		Age Group				Level of Management		
	Male	Female	18-34 Year Olds	35-54 Year Olds	55-64 Year Olds	65 and Older*	CEO/President	Upper-Level MGT.	Middle-Level MGT.
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)	(J)
My Organization has Great Performing Leadership/Management	5.8	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.6	6.2 DE	6.1 J	5.9 J	5.5
Great Relations Between Management and Employees	5.7	5.7	5.9 DE	5.6	5.4	6.1 DE	6.1 J	5.9 J	5.3
Employees Effectively Collaborate with Managers and Each Other	5.8	5.7	6.0 DE	5.7 E	5.3	6.0 E	6.1 J	5.9 J	5.4
Organization Provides Employees with Tools and Equipment	5.7	5.7	6.0 DE	5.6	5.4	6.2 DE	6.1 J	5.9 J	5.4
My Organization is Great at Providing Employees with Voice	5.6	5.7	5.9 DE	5.6 E	5.3	6.0 E	6.0 J	5.8 J	5.4
Salaries for Employees are Above Average	5.2	5.1	5.7 DE	5.1 E	4.6	5.0	5.7 HJ	5.3 J	4.8

😃 Greater Agreement
😐 Moderate Agreement
☹ Less Agreement

Overall, males and females in the US feel similarly about their organization's leadership/management and employees.

As is often seen in employee research, younger and older managers are more positive about their organization than those in the middle of their working years.

Employees in higher levels of leadership or management are more positive about what their organizations offer employees.

Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B, C/D/E/F/G/H, J/K).

Table 10: Employer findings by subgroups in Australia

	Gender		Age Group			Level of Management		
	Male	Female	18-34 Year Olds	35-54 Year Olds	55-64 Year Olds	CEO/President	Upper-Level MGT.	Middle-Level MGT.
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(G)	(H)	(J)
My Organization has Great Performing Leadership/Management	5.1	5.3 A	5.2	5.1	5.4	5.7 HJ	5.4 J	4.9
Great Relations Between Management and Employees	5.2	5.5 A	5.3	5.2	5.5	5.8 J	5.6 J	5.0
My Organization has a Friendly Environment	5.1	5.5 A	5.2	5.1	5.6 CD	5.7 J	5.4 J	5.0
Employees are United as a Team	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.7 J	5.4 J	4.8
Organization Provides Employees with Tools and Equipment	5.2	5.5 A	5.2	5.2	5.6 CD	5.9 HJ	5.5 J	5.0
Salaries for Employees are Above Average	4.8	5.1 A	5.0	4.8	4.6	5.6 HJ	4.9 J	4.6

😃 Greater Agreement
😐 Moderate Agreement
☹ Less Agreement

Females in Australia are generally more positive than males about their organization's leadership, management, and overall offering to employees.

Employers 55-64 years of age are more likely than younger employers to agree their organization has a friendly environment and provides them with the tools and equipment they need for their jobs.

Employers in higher levels of leadership or management are more positive about what their organizations offer employees.

Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B, C/D/E/F/G/H, J/K).

An interesting observation on the employers' side is that the level of a manager's seniority positively affects their assessment of the state of EER in their organisations, which is consistent with our earlier suggestion of a possible bias, on the part of management respondents, regarding their employees' experiences (e.g. in terms of security, involvement, empowerment etc.).

"The level of a manager's seniority positively affects their assessment of the state of EER in their organisations"

Union representation

In both Australian and US workplaces, trade union membership is associated with lower employee satisfaction, worse EER climate and greater animosity towards management (see table 11 below). The association of unions with higher reporting of employee dissatisfaction is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, as Freeman and Medoff (1984) observed, it can be attributed to unions affording workers greater capacity to "voice" workplace concerns. Non-union employees tend to exit rather than voice their grievances, whereas union members tend to seek resolution for grievances through their representatives (Wilkinson et al, 2018).

Table 11: Union vs non-union employee attitudes

	US Current Union Membership		AUS Current Union Membership	
	Yes (J)	No (K)	Yes (J)	No (K)
Great Performing 'First Class' Leadership-Management Team	4.5	4.7 J	4.4	4.5
Managers Do A Great Job Of Treating Employees Fairly, Humanely, And Respectfully	4.8	5.0	4.5	4.7 J
Managers Do A Great Job Of Getting Employees Enthusiastic And Engaged In Their Jobs	4.4	4.5 J	4.2	4.4 J
Managers Do A Great Job In Getting Employees Knowledgeable About, Focused On, And Working Toward The Company/ Organization's Goals And Objectives	4.5	4.7 J	4.4	4.5 J
Great Relations Between Management And Employees	4.5	4.7 J	4.2	4.3 J
Strong Feeling Among Employees of Disconnect with Management	4.5 K	4.0	4.6 K	4.2
No Trust/Confidence in Management	4.1 K	3.6	4.2 K	3.7
Great At Providing Employees With Voice And Involvement In The Way Work Gets Done	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.2 J
Managers Are Great At Empowering And Trusting Employees	4.7	4.8 J	4.3	4.6 J
Great Job/ Employment Security At This Workplace	5.3 K	5.0	4.9	4.8
I Have Burn-Out From Excessive Work Load, Hours, Or Stress And Pressure	4.0 K	3.6	4.1 K	3.8
Every Part Of My Daily Work Is Tightly Controlled And Monitored	3.6 K	3.3	4.0 K	3.6
I See A Lot Of Favoritism/ Discrimination At Work	4.2 K	3.9	4.6 K	4.0
Workpalce Ranks High in Terms of Satisfied Customers	4.7	5.0 J	4.8	4.8

Letters indicate statistical difference at the 90% level (A/B, C/D/E/F/G/H, J/K).

As for interest in union activities, employees appear to have a good gauge on the level of interest among their non-union peers for becoming union members. In both Australia and the US, employee responses to 'interest among employees/colleagues of having a union' match the response to the question of 'What is your own personal interest in being represented by a union at your unit/workplace?' The averages are 4.1 and 4.0 for the respective questions in Australia; and 3.8 and 3.9 for the respective questions in the US.[6] Employers tend to have less of an idea, however, about non-union employees' interests in being represented by a union. They generally think that non-union employees are more interested in becoming union members than they really are.

Unlike other gaps between employer and employee perceptions, the variation of the gap in the 'interest in union' question is quite considerable (i.e. between the countries in which the survey was conducted - including the UK and Canada as well; see table 5). This suggests that rather than having a uniformly inflated view of employee interest in the union movement, employers seem to simply have little knowledge about their employees' level of interest in unions.

[6] As mentioned earlier, these are out of 7 on a Likert scale.

Table 12: Union vs Non-union Attitudes

Personal Interest in Being a Union Member
(Among non-union members)

🇺🇸 3.9   🌏 4.0

Answer scale: 1 = Strongly Do Not Want To 7 = Strongly Do Want

	US Current Union Membership		AUS Current Union Membership	
	Yes (J)	No (K)	Yes (J)	No (K)
Great Performing 'First Class' Leadership-Management Team	4.5	4.7 J	4.4	4.5
Managers Do A Great Job Of Treating Employees Fairly, Humanely, And Respectfully	4.8	5.0	4.5	4.7 J
Managers Do A Great Job Of Getting Employees Enthusiastic And Engaged In Their Jobs	4.4	4.5 J	4.2	4.4 J
Managers Do A Great Job In Getting Employees Knowledgeable About, Focused On, And Working Toward The Company/ Organization's Goals And Objectives	4.5	4.7 J	4.4	4.5 J
Great Relations Between Management And Employees	4.5	4.7 J	4.2	4.3 J
Strong Feeling Among Employees of Disconnect with Management	4.5 K	4.0	4.6 K	4.2
No Trust/Confidence in Management	4.1 K	3.6	4.2 K	3.7
Great At Providing Employees With Voice And Involvement In The Way Work Gets Done	4.4	4.6	4.3	4.2 J
Managers Are Great At Empowering And Trusting Employees	4.7	4.8 J	4.3	4.6 J
Great Job/ Employment Security At This Workplace	5.3 K	5.0	4.9	4.8
I Have Burn-Out From Excessive Work Load, Hours, Or Stress And Pressure	4.0 K	3.6	4.1 K	3.8
Every Part Of My Daily Work Is Tightly Controlled And Monitored	3.6 K	3.3	4.0 K	3.6
I See A Lot Of Favoritism/ Discrimination At Work	4.2 K	3.9	4.6 K	4.0
Workpalce Ranks High in Terms of Satisfied Customers	4.7	5.0 J	4.8	4.8

Table 12 (above) reveals that union members are generally more skeptical about their employers and the nature of EER in their workplaces in general, compared to their non-union counterparts. This is true in both Australia and the US.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we developed a tool for assessing the state of EER in Australia and the US - and conducted a large survey of employers and employees in the two countries to collect our data. Our findings indicate that employees in Australia and the US are only moderately satisfied with the state of EER in their workplaces. Common grievances among employees in both countries are with respect to the lack of employee voice and involvement, insufficient pay, and the inadequate leadership competence of their managers. This is particularly worrying because these factors (alongside employee empowerment) also happen to be the key determinants of the health of EER in both countries.

CONCLUSIONS

"Employees in Australia and the US are only moderately satisfied with the state of EER in their workplaces."

"Employers, however, are of the belief that employee experiences, and the state of EER in their organisations, are better."

Employers, however, are of the belief that employee experiences, and the state of EER in their organisations, are better. The gap in manager and employee perceptions about the quality of EER in their organisations is a key issue that employers need to address.

It is important to note, however, factors that contribute to the health of the employment relationship are not necessarily all internal to the workplace. The higher satisfaction reported by younger and older workers, compared to their middle-year counterparts, for example, suggests that things like family commitments, home and personal responsibilities, and other factors outside of the workplace can have a considerable effect in moderating employee experience, perception and attitudes - and ultimately the state of EER in the organisation.

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