
ETD Archive

2008

Navigating the Paradoxes of Working from Home

Susan L. Rosiek
Cleveland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive>

 Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Rosiek, Susan L., "Navigating the Paradoxes of Working from Home" (2008). *ETD Archive*. 510.
<https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive/510>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Archive by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

NAVIGATING THE PARADOXES OF WORKING FROM HOME:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NEW COMMUNICATION
PRACTICES OF TELEWORK

SUSAN L. ROSIEK

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

Bowling Green State University

May, 1997

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

MASTER OF APPLIED COMMUNICATION THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

at the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2008

This thesis has been approved
for the School of COMMUNICATION
and the College of Graduate Studies by

Thesis Chairperson, Dr. Guowei Jian, Ph.D.

Date

Dr. Susan Kogler-Hill, Ph.D.

Date

Dr. George Ray, Ph.D.

Date

NAVIGATING THE PARADOXES OF WORKING FROM HOME:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NEW COMMUNICATION
PRACTICES OF TELEWORK

SUSAN L. ROSIEK

ABSTRACT

Many of today's organizational employees are turning to flexible work programs, such as telework, to help them balance their work and life responsibilities. Previous research indicates working from home has positive effects, but the same research reveals telework can have a negative impact on work-life balance. There are gaps in the amount and variety of theoretical development in the area of telework. The goal of this research study was to extend the scope of telework analysis beyond technology use by exploring the various tensions teleworkers encounter when working from home, learn how teleworkers alter their communication practices to deal with these tensions, and generate a grounded theory of dialectics of telework. A qualitative research method of interviews, observation, and organizational document review was used to study teleworkers at a professional services firm. The findings helped to develop the Organizational Telework Tension Model, a grounded theory of telework, which claims teleworkers have a perception of how others view them, filtering into the multiple ways they manage the four identified dialectical tensions of telework and inevitably how they communicate with colleagues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Telework	4
Overview of Telework	4
Two Perspectives on Telework	6
Communication Research on Telework	9
Dialectical Tensions	10
Overview of the Dialectical Framework	10
Dialectical Tensions in Telework	13
Management of the Dialectical Tensions in Telework	16
III. METHODS	18
Research Site	18
Role of the Researcher	21
Data Collection	21
Data Analysis	24
IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS	28
Overview of the Organizational Telework Tension Model	29
Value of Working in the Office	29

Value of Working from Home	32
Working in the Office Versus Working from Home	34
Teleworkers' Perception of How Others View Teleworkers.....	38
Dialectical Tensions of Telework	42
Tension One – Increased Comfort and Increased Anxiety	42
Tension Two – Increased Autonomy and Increased Restriction ...	44
Tension Three – Increased Isolation and Increased Interaction.....	46
Tension Four – Desire to Achieve Personal Objectives and Desire to Demonstrate Commitment to Work	48
Reactions to the Dialectical Tensions of Telework	52
Integration – Unifying Work and Home Life	53
Separation – Separating Work and Home Life	53
Rededication – Devoting Self to Work.....	54
Communication Strategies for Managing the Dialectical Tensions of Telework	56
Communication Strategies for Tension One.....	56
Communication Strategies for Tension Two	57
Communication Strategies for Tension Three	58
Communication Strategies for Tension Four	59
V. DISCUSSION	65
Summary of Findings.....	65
Theoretical Implications	66
Limitations	73

Directions for Future Research	74
Other Factors Affecting Teleworkers	74
Telework and Work-Life Balance	75
Different Theoretical Frameworks.....	75
Conclusion	77
REFERENCES	79
ENDNOTES	83
APPENDICES	84
A. Interview Schedule.....	85
B. Interview Participant Demographics.....	87
C. Summary of the Dialectical Tensions of Telework	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Summary of Positives, Negatives, and Communication Modalities.....37 of Working in the Office Versus Working from Home	37
II. Summary of the Dialectical Tensions of Telework64	64

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Organizational Telework Tension Model (First Half)	41
2. Organizational Telework Tension Model (Entire Model)	63

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social influences have altered life for employees and employers as they once knew it. Today, the number of traditional two-parent U.S. households (one parent in the workforce and the other at home) is less than 25% (Greenblatt, 2002). Extended families are often geographically dispersed, placing child and elder care in the hands of immediate parents and offspring. As well, the costs of education and assisted living have skyrocketed. As a result, the average employee's family, social, and financial burdens have increased dramatically. Many of these employees are turning to flexible work programs, such as telework, to help them balance their work and life responsibilities. Telework, in particular, enables office employees to accomplish the same work at home, a satellite office, or a client location during a convenient time by employing a multitude of communication technologies, such as teleconferencing, online instant messaging, voicemail, and e-mail.

In her discussions with work/family experts, Solomon (1994) found 60% of the companies she spoke with had formal policies for some type of flexible work arrangement, like telework. As well, 46% of employees cited the presence of family-supportive policies allowing flexibility as very important in deciding to take a job.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, an estimated two million people telecommuted in 1992 and, almost a decade later, in 2001 the Labor Department said 19 million Americans worked online from their homes or some other location outside the office (Pearlson & Saunders, 2001). The practice of telework is visibly growing, but not as fast as one might expect based on the promised benefits.

Many workers today telework by using communication technologies, such as e-mail, voicemail, telephone and video conferencing, mobile phones, online instant messaging, intra-company bulletin boards, virtual workspaces, and personal digital assistants. These technologies are enabling employees to work from their homes, in their cars, or from remote locations in order to accommodate the multiple avenues of their lives and their careers. In 1997, Lawe reported America Online carried over 13 million e-mail messages daily (as cited in McQuillen, 2003). Internet usage increased steadily over the last decade and, in 2004, the Pew Internet & American Life Project (Fallows, 2004) reported nearly two-thirds of Americans were online and that Internet use continues to spread from work to home and to every day activities, such as accessing news and paying bills. Today, computer-mediated communication is no longer a novelty but a means through which much of our business and social interaction takes place and has become almost a necessity for telework.

Previous research indicates working from home has positive effects and can lead to perceptions of greater productivity, higher morale, and increased flexibility (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). The same research reveals telework leads to longer working hours and can have a negative impact on work-life balance. Is it possible the very means through which organizations are trying to help employees maintain balance

between work and life is actually creating additional challenges? What could be the cause of this? And, why do some individuals report achieving a balance between work and other life responsibilities while others do not?

There are gaps in the previous telework research. First of all, there are very few theoretically-grounded studies and, secondly, a majority of the studies focus on technology use. Many of the studies use quantitative analyses to examine technology use through social presence and information richness theories. Other studies focus on the reasons surrounding why organizations implement telework programs, such as costs, retention, and productivity. There simply is a lack in the amount and variety of theoretical development in the area of telework around how teleworkers experience their home environment, communicate differently, and manage work-life balance. This study attempts to fill this theoretical gap by extending the scope of analysis beyond technology use to examine the paradoxes and communication processes surrounding telework.

When employees telework, they communicate with their in-office colleagues different than when they themselves are in the office. The in-office impromptu, face-to-face discussions become scheduled conference calls or interruptive e-mail and online instant messages. Is it possible, in part due to these changes, that working from home creates tensions for teleworkers with their in-office colleagues? And, if so, how are teleworkers dealing with these tensions? The goal of this research study is to explore the various tensions teleworkers encounter when working from home, learn how teleworkers communicatively manage these tensions, and generate a grounded theory of dialectics of telework. The literature review in the next chapter examines research on telework and discusses a theoretical framework for this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Telework

Overview of Telework. Telework enables office employees to accomplish the same work at home, a satellite office, or a client location during a convenient time by employing a multitude of communication technologies, such as telephones, cell phones, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, instant messaging, voicemail, e-mail, faxes, pagers, and personal digital assistants. The following section reviews how telework originated in the workplace, why organizations are offering such programs to their employees today, and the different views on how telework impacts employees positively and negatively.

Telework first originated as a way for organizations to save costs and retain employees. As Dutton (1999) explains, telework can have advantages for a company, such as increased productivity, higher employee morale, more efficient office space use, and the ability to hire personnel who might otherwise be unavailable or attracted to more flexible jobs elsewhere. Today, telework is heralded by many organizations as a way to help employees escape time consuming commutes and restructure their days to evenly distribute the demands of both paid work and unpaid life responsibilities, also termed

work-life balance. For instance, an employee can schedule a doctor's appointment for the middle of the day and then check e-mail and complete work from home following dinner.

So why do people decide to telework and why do organizations offer it? Hill, Hawkins, and Miller (1996) indicate companies allow people to telework for the following three reasons: (1) To enable a parent caring for an infant to have the option of working from home, (2) to allow a valuable employee the option of taking a new job without physically relocating, or (3) to accommodate a person with disabilities who can no longer get into the office. Tremblay's (2002) case studies confirm telework is more attractive for individuals who have a spouse and children because, by reducing their travel time, they can be at home later in the morning and earlier in the evening and thus achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities. As well, Tremblay (2002) says some employees telework to escape the stressful environment of the office and its bureaucracy.

The Hidden Brain Drain task force, commissioned by the Center for Work-Life Policy (Hewlett & Luce, 2005), questioned a national group of 2,443 women and 653 men with graduate, professional, or high-honors undergraduate degrees between the ages of 28 and 55 to answer why women are leaving their careers. Survey results indicate the top reason is for family time. Many of these women left their professional positions because they did not feel they had the flexibility to maintain their careers and meet family needs. More and more organizations today are trying to retain and attract talent such as these professional women and avoid the costs of retraining new employees, so they are offering flexible work programs such as telework.

These organizations say flexibility can help employees manage work and life responsibilities. Some research verifies this assumption to be true. For instance, Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, and Weitzman's (2001) findings indicate flexibility in work processes, such as individualized work schedules and meal-break and work location flexibility, with the help of technology, can help employees manage the stresses associated with balancing work and family demands. In fact, their research indicates job flexibility benefits both individuals and businesses. Individuals with perceived job flexibility were able to work longer hours before workload negatively impacted their work-life balance.

Flexibility is a major theme in much of the telework literature. Tremblay's (2002) research indicates the advantages of telework in terms of the balance between work and family responsibilities are mainly related to flexible schedules and the reduction of travel time. Kurland and Bailey (1999) found telework provides employees with more autonomy and control over their work lives via schedule flexibility, allowing them to work when they prefer and, in turn, improve their productivity. Hill, Miller, Weiner, and Colihan's (1998) qualitative analysis revealed teleworkers' perceptions of increased flexibility, as well as greater productivity and higher morale.

Two Perspectives on Telework. A review of the literature on telework reveals there are two perspectives on how telework affects work-life balance. Some view telework as part of the problem, increasing conflict for employees and others see telework as part of the solution, decreasing conflict for employees. Hobson, Delunas, and Kestic (2001) say work-life balance programs, such as telework, communicate to employees they are valued and result in increased employee commitment and motivation. Di Martino and Wirth (1991) cite a study reporting telework can lead to substantial

productivity gains of up to 60%, attributed to lack of interruptions, improved concentration, increased motivation and morale, and higher energy levels achieved through the elimination of wasted time and commuting frustrations. Popular press accounts of successful telecommuting programs often report teleworkers take fewer sick days, have higher job satisfaction, and have higher work performance ratings (Kurland & Bailey, 1999).

While many studies report telework has positive effects for workers, some research indicates telework has a negative impact on work-life balance (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Hall (1990) explains home-based flexible work arrangements can present hazards of potential work spillover that interferes with personal responsibilities, contributes to social deprivation, and removes one from political office loops. Zedeck's (1992) spillover theory proposes the work microsystem and family microsystem significantly influence one another through a permeable boundary, contributing to positive and negative spillover (as cited in Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996). Although there is potential for negative spillover affects, Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman (1993) point out:

... flexibility in work arrangements can empower individuals with the control to integrate and overlap work responsibilities and family responsibilities in time and space, leading to positive spillover and helping to achieve a healthy work and family balance (as cited in Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996).

Tremblay (2002) found employees were dissatisfied with telework because of the feeling of isolation, risk of working more, difficulty of motivating themselves, and work-

family conflict. Hill et al (1998) say many of their respondents wrote that camaraderie, mentoring, co-worker networking, and esprit de corps suffered due to telework. As well, their research indicates the virtual office blurs the boundary between work and family and does not contribute to the ability to balance the two. Perhaps individuals who do have the option to telework are trying it out and yet deciding to leave their careers because they do not find telework helps them balance work and life obligations.

So do teleworkers perceive telework and its affect on their lives differently? Even in the same study, teleworkers at times report completely opposite perceptions. For instance, in Hill, Hawkins, and Miller's (1996) research, some teleworkers report their families thrive because of flexibility, while others report their families struggle because workplace and schedule flexibility blur the boundaries between work and family life. Write-in comments of teleworkers in Hill et al's (1998) study reference increased workload, longer hours, and potential for burnout, although quantitative survey results indicate mobility has no influence on the number of hours worked. Hill et al (1998) suggest that perhaps teleworkers who are having difficulty negotiating a new set of boundaries between work and personal life in the virtual office may feel as if they are working longer than the clock indicates.

Perhaps both perspectives of telework brought to light by previous research are true, but differences can be accounted for by how teleworkers navigate their environments at home and communication with colleagues to satisfy personal and work needs. The research we have examined thus far provides us with basically two perspectives; however, communication research presents new developments in this area.

Communication Research on Telework. Meyers and Hearn's (2007) study suggests there are six communication constructs teleworkers indicate are relevant to telework, which are as follows: (1) Importance of communication for social/career influence, (2) satisfaction with communication for social/career influence, (3) satisfaction with both managerial and co-worker support, (4) dissatisfaction with informal communication, (5) importance and satisfaction with communication technologies, and (6) managing communication with supervisor. Although these communication processes were reported in Meyers and Hearn's research as necessary for telework, an affinity toward these processes reported by teleworkers did not predict their self-reported productivity. Rather, individual self-efficacy, or the belief in one's value, particularly in the terms of getting things done with and through others was revealed to be one of the most important prerequisites for telework productivity.

Through a case study, Hylmo and Buzzanell (2002) also studied teleworkers by analyzing in-house and telecommuting employees' discourses. The authors specifically make note that very few theoretically-grounded studies have been conducted on telework and most have used quantitative analyses to investigate social presence and information richness. Most previous telework research has focused on the technological capabilities or costs surrounding telecommuting across organizations. There is a lack of theoretical development in this area and I argue that more theoretically-based research is needed on telework. In my research, I strive to begin to fill this theoretical gap and, through a qualitative analysis, examine telework as more than simply technology use, but rather as a communication process. I argue that telework in itself is a communication phenomenon

wherein organizational employees are beginning to develop new communication practices in order to effectively telework.

As suggested earlier, when employees telework, they communicate with their in-office colleagues differently than when they themselves are in the office. The in-office impromptu, face-to-face discussions become scheduled conference calls or interruptive e-mail and instant messages. It may be possible that the communicational, environmental, and emotional changes of working from home create dialectical tensions for teleworkers. A dialectical tension is a contradiction between cohesive opposites, such as flexibility and structure (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). How teleworkers deal with these dialectical tensions could lead to ambiguous perceptions of telework benefits and drawbacks.

Dialectical Tensions

Overview of the Dialectical Framework. Dialectics, in its simplest form, is the study of opposites. A dialectical view assumes that any phenomenon implies and generates its opposite. For example, consider the following opposites: (1) Day and night, (2) hot and cold, (3) life and death, or (4) good and evil. In each case, the existence of one side depends on the existence of the other. For instance, how can we know what cold is without knowing what hot is? Or, how can we visualize day without knowing night? As Morgan (1986) explains, “Opposites are intertwined in a state of tension that also defines a state of harmony and wholeness” (p. 255). The author goes on to question whether this tension lies at the basis of all change and whether flux could be a symptom of contradictory tendencies through which phenomena change themselves.

The questions Morgan raises and the idea of dialectics have a long history. Taoist philosophy, originating in ancient China, emphasized how the way of nature is

characterized by a continuous flux and wholeness shaped by the interplay of yin and yang, denoting the dark and sunny sides of a hill. This philosophy stresses that “all of natural and human life is shaped by the cycle of coming and going, growth and decay, everything being in the process of becoming something else” (Morgan, 1986, p. 256). The Taoists believed many human situations could be improved by influencing the relationship between their opposing elements of yin and yang.

Many of the Taoist beliefs were brought into Western ideas through the work of Heraclitus and have been developed by generations of social theorists subscribing to what is now known as a dialectical view of reality. For example, they influenced the work of nineteenth-century German philosopher Hegel as well as social theorists Karl Marx and Mao Tse-tung, who developed a dialectical view that the world evolves as a result of internal tensions between opposites into a theory of social change.

Marx’s beliefs focused on how profit making and capital accumulation places people in conflict with each other. He dialectically viewed these phenomena in terms of the forces that pit buyers against sellers and how surplus value creates an opposition between the interests of capitalists and the work force. Although Marx used a dialectical view to focus on the strains and tensions found under capitalism, as Morgan (1986) explains, “The method can be applied to the analysis of all kinds of societies and organizations, since the principle of dialectical opposition is a universal one” (p. 257).

The key concepts inherent in a dialectical approach are listed as follows:

(1) Contradiction, (2) totality, (3) process, and (4) praxis. A *dialectical contradiction* is the coexistence and conflict of opposites. It may best be described by contrasting the concepts of dualism and dialectic. A dualism is an opposition in which the two polar

points cannot exist together, while a dialectic is an opposition in which both forces exist simultaneously (Miller, 2002).

The term *totality* refers to the idea that the contradictions present in a dialectical relationship are unified and cannot be understood in isolation (Miller, 2002). *Process* comes into play in how we view dialectical contradictions, as part of a social process (Miller, 2002). These could include processes of conversation, processes of relationship, processes of lifespan or, as for this current study, processes of telework. Finally, *praxis* is based on the argument that interaction goes on in the midst of dialectical contradictions and so “considers the choices social actors make in the midst of dialectical tensions and the ways in which these choices and actions create, recreate, and change the nature of dialectical contradictions” (Miller, 2002, p. 186). In other words, praxis is how social actors react to and deal with dialectical tensions.

Communication researchers Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery used a dialectical view while focusing on human relationships. Their theory of relational dialectics proposes relationships consist of natural contradictions. These contradictions are not dualisms, as either-or concepts, but rather dialectics in which the tension created by the contradiction is not something to be resolved by choice but instead defines the nature of the relationship (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). In their work, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) identified three major dialectical tensions in relationships, which are as follows: (1) The connection-autonomy dialectic, (2) the certainty-uncertainty dialectic, and (3) openness-closedness dialectic.

Organizational researchers also have used a dialectical approach to study organizational democracy and change. In their research, Stohl and Cheney (2001) used a

dialectical approach to analyze the tensions and paradoxes of employee participation and workplace democracy. The researchers define tension as the “clash of ideas or principles or actions and to the discomfort that may arise as a result” (p. 354). For example, how can someone be a good worker and a good parent at the same time? The researchers define paradox in terms of interaction-based situations in which, “in the pursuit of one goal, the pursuit of another competing goal enters the situation (often without intention) so as to undermine the first pursuit” (p. 354). Beginning their initial research on this topic in 1994, Stohl and Cheney (2001) built on the experiences of other researchers; drew conclusions from meta-analyses of research on participation; and made use of surveys, interviews, and anecdotes from popular literature to develop four main categories of paradoxes, which are structure, agency, identity, and power.

Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) used a dialectical approach to study the tensions involved in three generational approaches to organizational change. They believe that, “Dualities and tensions play an important role in organizational change and in theory building about organizations” (p. 74). Howard and Geist (1995) also studied organizational change by focusing on the dialectic of control. The authors’ case study of a utility company used field observation and interviews to examine organizational employees’ responses to the contradictions evolving from a pending company merger.

Dialectical Tensions in Telework. In the same way as the above researchers used dialectics as a lens to explore the dynamics of their topics, I argue a dialectical approach can be extended to study telework, helping to explore the contradictions teleworkers face when working at home and understand the processes and communication styles used to manage these tensions. Pearlson and Saunders (2001) began to study the dialectics of

telework. In their research, Pearlson and Saunders (2001) discuss difficulties of telework and the virtual organization by outlining three paradoxes. The authors first explain the paradox of increased flexibility provided in a telework arrangement versus the increased structure instilled by a manager to keep better track of schedules. The second paradox is of greater individuality induced by isolation versus greater teaming required to coordinate work. The third paradox is of more responsibility to accomplish tasks independently versus greater control by managers who fear losing influence over out-of-sight workers.

Pearlson and Sanders' (2001) three paradoxes can be viewed as the dialectical tensions of flexibility and structure, individuality and teaming, and individual responsibility and manager control. Perhaps teleworkers struggle with these three tensions, and possibly others, as they work from home. Pearlson and Saunders' (2001) work is a good start down the road of studying the dialectical tensions organizational employees face, but their research takes a strong managerial perspective. The dialectical tensions they identify may apply to managers but not staff-level teleworkers. In addition, Pearlson and Saunders provide only managers with suggestions on how to deal with dialectical tensions. The strategies they propose sound as if they make sense, but they were not developed from empirical research. In this current study, I strive to provide solid empirical research to discover the dialectical tensions a broad range of organizational teleworkers face.

In their telework research, Hylmo and Buzzanell (2002) revealed how and why telecommuting functions paradoxically in organizations. The authors mention one of the reasons why many organizations are reluctant to embrace telecommuting is due to the paradoxes that accompany this type of work arrangement. They explain that telework can

be a success because it helps businesses to be flexible, reduce costs, and exhibit concern for employees' quality of life, among other things. On the other hand, telework can be a threat because it eliminates employees' attachments based on face-to-face communication, culture, and friendships. Hylmo and Buzzanell (2002) suggest that:

When recognized as context- and time-dependent inconsistencies, members can productively handle paradoxes so that creative solutions transcending the immediate situation can take place. Thus, it is essential to examine telecommuting as a paradoxical process and practice embedded within specific contexts (p. 331).

Hylmo and Buzzanell highlight the fact that other researchers have mentioned some paradoxes related to telework but, as I indicated, more research is needed in this area. Hylmo and Buzzanell's (2002) study differs from previous telework research in that, as I suggested earlier, most prior work has focused on the technological capabilities or costs surrounding telecommuting across organizations. Also different from previous researchers, Hylmo and Buzzanell analyze telecommuting as a communication phenomenon. These findings affirm my desire to study the communication aspects surrounding the tensions of telework.

Transitioning from in-office work to telework is a big change. It is a shift from in-person to remote supervision, from face-to-face to technology-based communication, from office to home facilities, and from in-person to electronic or virtual collaboration. The combination of these changes can have a great impact on a new teleworker or even a teleworker that shifts from in-office to home-based work from day to day, creating a variety of dialectical tensions for the teleworker. To better understand the communication

practices of telework, I propose the first research question for this study by drawing upon a dialectical approach:

RQ1: What are the dialectical tensions teleworkers experience?

Management of the Dialectical Tensions in Telework. Existing research implies people react to or manage tensions in patterned ways. In their theory of relational dialectics, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) highlight eight praxis patterns, or ways people deal with the dialectics of human relationships, which are as follows: (1) Denial, (2) segmentation, (3) balance, (4) reaffirmation, (5) disorientation, (6) spiraling inversion, (7) integration, and (8) recalibration. Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) found three approaches to change that vary in the degree to which people recognize, process, and manage dualities. The first approach relies on selection of one pole, the second uses separation of the poles, and the third prefers synthesis to transcend tensions between poles. The researchers recommend employing a fourth alternative for managing dualities called connection, which seeks to embrace and give equal voice to bipolar positions.

Stohl and Cheney (2001) offer five suggestions for managing the paradoxes of employee participation and workplace democracy, which are as follows: (1) Exit, secession, or spin-off – when the paradox is so fundamental that departure is the only realistic option, (2) voice – when the goal is to bring about a wider recognition that the paradox itself is real, (3) loyalty, rededication, and adaptation – when one identifies with the organization and works to improve it, (4) neglect or determined ignorance – when one is simply muddling through, and (5) synthesis, reframing, and living with or within the paradox – when one combines the conflicting aspects of the status quo, takes on a new attitude, and recognizes the paradox is an inevitable part of the organization.

In studying employee reactions to organizational contradictions, Tracy (2004) found that correctional officers in a prison engaged in a combination of five tension-management techniques, which are as follows: (1) Selection – choosing one pole of a tension over the other, (2) vacillation – switching between two poles, (3) source splitting – dividing tensional poles among employees, (4) various tactics that allow for simultaneously attending to multiple goals, and (5) withdrawal. Finally, using a dialectical perspective to study group communication in a community theater group, Kramer (2004) found theater members used a number of strategies to manage their tensions, including denying, avoiding, venting, naturalizing, and minimizing the tensions.

It is possible teleworkers use a combination of the patterns described above to manage the dialectical tensions of working from home. Di Martino and Wirth (1991) raise an interesting point that telework is not for everyone. As the literature review indicates, there are as many negative perceptions of how telework affects work-life balance as there are positive ones. So, why are there so many discrepancies? Perhaps perceptions of telework are influenced by how individuals deal with the dialectical tensions brought about by working at home. Hence, I propose the second research question for this study:

RQ2: How do teleworkers communicatively manage dialectical tensions?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Site

The organization under investigation in this study is Accounting Firm ABC,¹ a global leader in professional services. Specifically, the study focuses on a single department or group within Accounting Firm ABC, called the Knowledge Center. Accounting Firm ABC is one of the world's largest accounting firms in the provision of assurance, tax, and transaction services. The global Accounting Firm ABC organization implements a broad array of solutions to help companies capture growth, improve financial performance, and manage risk anywhere in the world. According to the company Web site, its 130,000 people in 140 country practices provide a range of services centered on its core competencies of auditing, accounting, tax, and transactions. A fast growing company, Accounting Firm ABC's 2006 global review brochure reports global revenues increased 10% in 2006 to \$18.4 billion in U.S. dollars.

The department of interest in this study, the Knowledge Center, creates, facilitates, and maintains the organization's knowledge sharing and knowledge management processes to provide Accounting Firm ABC professionals with services and tools, so they can use knowledge to win new clients, accelerate service delivery, and

build existing client relationships. Knowledge at Accounting Firm ABC constitutes anything that has been previously created by other Accounting Firm ABC professionals or outside sources, such as pursuit proposals, information on previous client work, PowerPoint presentations, processes, industry news, or articles – anything Accounting Firm ABC professionals can customize and reuse for their own client work. This knowledge is accessible electronically via more than 1,500 databases available through the company's intranet site. The Knowledge Center also offers Accounting Firm ABC professionals business research, analysis, and competitive intelligence services, as well as assistance with storing and reusing knowledge. Additionally, the Knowledge Center helps Accounting Firm ABC professionals work and share information with clients virtually through a secure external Web site and via webcasts and podcasts.

Because Accounting Firm ABC has employees scattered throughout the world, much of the work accomplished between colleagues is done virtually with the help of e-mail, voicemail, conference calls, video conferencing, instant messaging, and internal Lotus Notes or Web-accessible databases. Many professionals that work together on a regular basis have never met each other face-to-face or see each other live only monthly or quarterly. This is true of Knowledge Center employees as well. The North American Knowledge Center has 200 employees. Specifically, 110 of those employees are headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, with the remaining 90 employees scattered out in 11 U.S. and four Canadian offices. The Knowledge Center also has global offices, but this study will concentrate on the North American employees.

Knowledge Center employees work in one of seven departmental groups and thus may have completely different roles. The Knowledge Center team responsible for the

intranet develops its architecture and platform and maintains the integrity of internal content. The external information team consists mainly of lawyers that work with vendors to secure externally-purchased content by negotiating contracts, redistribution rights, and prices. The information services group provides research, analysis, and competitive intelligence services to internal Accounting Firm ABC professionals. The Internet and extranet team maintains the architecture and content for the company's public Internet Web site as well as the external password-protected Web site for clients. The community liaison team members specialize in different industries and service lines and help Accounting Firm ABC professionals integrate knowledge and technology into pursuits and engagements, so they have the right resources on hand to improve team efficiencies and manage accounts globally. The webcast group helps to organize and broadcast webcasts and podcasts to our clients. Finally, the marketing and training team communicates, trains, and builds awareness of Knowledge Center products and services among Accounting Firm ABC professionals by publishing articles in firm newsletters, creating marketing and training materials, and delivering training sessions to individuals and groups.

Telework is a common practice among Knowledge Center and Accounting Firm ABC employees as a whole. The organization has a flexible work arrangement (FWA) program that helps employees set work hours and locations that fit the needs of their lives and work teams. The FWA program is promoted to employees as a way to help them balance work and life responsibilities in a high-demand organization. In many cases, telework is a part of an employee's chosen FWA program, but not necessarily. This study

concentrates only on the FWA employees who telework from their homes at least two to three times a week.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher for this study, I am an employee of Accounting Firm ABC and of the Knowledge Center. I have worked for the Knowledge Center for seven years doing communications and training as a part of the marketing and training team, described earlier. I am an acquaintance of a large number of the North American Knowledge Center employees, especially those based in the Cleveland, Ohio office, because that is my home office. My work group, in particular, is comprised of 10 employees located in the Cleveland, Atlanta, and Toronto offices. A majority of my team's meetings and work collaboration takes place virtually. In addition, many of my team members, as well as those in other departments with whom I work, telework from home two to three times a week as part of their company-sponsored flexible work arrangements (FWAs). Finally, I have experienced teleworking from home occasionally myself, but not as a standard means of working.

Data Collection

To investigate the research questions listed in the previous chapter, this study employs grounded theory qualitative research methods. Grounded theory methodology is designed to help in the systematic collection and analysis of data and to generate a theory that relates to a particular situation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory methods have been used to examine the dialectical tensions employees in this case study encounter when teleworking from home and how they manage these tensions. As Montgomery and Baxter (1998) indicate, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are viable

when using a dialectical approach, but the field observation and interviews of qualitative research can bring to the surface information and details not attainable with standard survey methods. Because studying the dialectical tensions of organizational teleworkers is a relatively fresh endeavor and the experiences teleworkers encounter are highly personal, qualitative research methods were used to help discover the many facets of dialectical tensions for teleworkers at Accounting Firm ABC, which can be tested among other teleworking groups in future research.

The primary method for data collection was via 15 semi-structured interviews, during which there was the potential to garner information from participants not attainable with a standard survey method. The use of a semi-structured interview method provided opportunities to probe interviewees on concepts and themes they brought to light, which were not originally conceived by the researcher. The interviews were approximately 30 to 60 minutes in length, took place in Accounting Firm ABC conference rooms or offices, and were guided by the interview schedule included in Appendix A consisting of 10 open-ended questions. The interview schedule began with a question designed to have teleworkers describe a typical day when they work in the office and when they work from home. The questions then moved to gather information specifically about teleworkers' at-home work experiences, such as why they choose to work from home, how often they do it, what technologies they use, and how they communicate with in-office colleagues. Finally, the questions moved to inquire about how working from home has affected their personal and business relationships and work-life balance. Each question was designed so that I could probe for additional information to obtain the motives behind actions and further discuss interesting concepts interviewees

brought to my attention. The interview schedule was tested when used for my previous research project on telework and work-life balance. The questions were modified and refined as I decided to use a dialectical framework for this research. The interviews were tape recorded by the permission of the interviewees. All of the interviews were transcribed, resulting in 99 pages of single-spaced typewritten transcripts. The transcription process provided me with an initial opportunity to review the interview content and begin to develop the content categories, described below.

Interview participants were acquired via researcher acquaintances and by recommendation from the Knowledge Center human resource professional and other study participants. The interview group consists of twelve women, three men, 13 Caucasians, one African American, and one participant of Indian decent. Regarding participant ages, six range between 25 to 34 years of age, seven range between 35 to 44 years of age, and two range between 45 to 60 years of age. Interview participant roles vary with nine categorized as general staff, four as middle management, and two as leadership. All but one of the interviewees has children. All but one of the participants are based in five of the 16 North American Knowledge Center offices, which are as follows: Atlanta, Cleveland, San Jose, Toronto, and Washington D.C. A detailed breakdown of interview participant demographics is included in Appendix B.

The second data source consists of electronic organizational documents, including the company's internal flexible work arrangement (FWA) Web site, from which employees can get information and success stories on FWA arrangements. As well, I reviewed internal electronic company newsletter articles about the topic of FWAs published between September 2005 and June 2006. Finally, the third data source includes

field notes from participant observation done between September 2005 and June 2006, from which I acquired a sense for how teleworkers relate to other employees while working in the office. I observed situations such as conversations at the coffee machine and water cooler, employee interactions in work cubes and offices, work team discussions over lunch, conversations in the elevator, and exchanges during work team meetings. During some of these situations, I was a participant observer, taking part of the interaction and during other situations I was simply an outside observer, watching while others interacted. Participant observation allowed me to watch the study participants in action, which helped discover actions which typically occur on a daily basis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study followed a combination of the guidelines set out by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Creswell (1998) for grounded theory methodology. After interview data, field notes, and organizational documents were collected, the tape-recorded interview data were transcribed and then read and copied, line-by-line, into Microsoft Excel which was used as a mechanism for analyzing the data. In addition, memorandums made during field observation and the content of internal organizational newsletter articles and Web site pages were added to the Excel matrix. Microsoft Excel was used to organize data into the categories and to outline conceptual relationships

The first step in data analysis, open coding, helped segment the data into categories. According to Creswell (1998), open coding is when “the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information” (p. 57). During open coding, 12 main categories were developed, which are as follows: (1) Boundaries, (2) commute, (3) technology, (4) relationships, (5) work

from home, (6) work from the office, (7) home versus office, (8) telework arrangements, (9) work-life balance, (10) telework impressions, (11) company culture, and (12) teleworker insights. Across these categories, a consistent teleworker perception emerged. The influences of this perception were further segmented into the following four main categories: (1) Relationships, (2) work-team culture, (3) internal company communications, and (4) personality. During this stage, microanalysis or detailed line-by-line analysis was used to help generate the initial categories and subcategories and suggest relationships among each. As well, the techniques of asking questions and making comparisons, otherwise termed as constant comparison, were employed to obtain a grasp on the meaning of happenings that might otherwise seem obscure, help uncover possible properties, and aid in moving the analysis from a descriptive to an abstract level.

To help explain the process of open coding, I provide an example of how I coded the development of the “work from home” category. During line-by-line analysis, consistent categories began to surface. One category emerged as the types of work completed at home, so I created a category for “work done at home.” As I read on, other categories also began to emerge, such as the positives and negatives of working from home in addition to specific communication behaviors utilized when working from home. I soon realized through asking questions and comparing participant quotes and concepts that these three categories appeared to bucket under a larger category which I termed “work from home.” In the end, the “work from home” main category consisted of 18 smaller sub-categories, which are as follows: (1) Work completed at home, (2) positives, (3) negatives, (4) communication behavior, (5) home office space, (6) managing expectations, (7) time spent, (8) reasons for more time spent, (9) comfort, (10) tradeoffs,

(11) pressures, (12) negotiating situations, (13) impressions, (14) accessibility/ responsiveness, (15) productivity, (16) distractions, (17) personality, and (18) connectedness. All 18 of these categories consisted of multiple quotes and phrases, with comments, connections, and relationships to other concepts noted to the right.

Following open coding, axial coding was used to identify which of the initial categories represented central themes or actual dialectical tensions and which of the categories were influencers of these tensions. According to Creswell (1998), axial coding is when “the investigator assembles the data in new ways” (p. 57). This coding was used to identify the following: (1) What caused the phenomenon or dialectical tension to occur, (2) what actions worked in response to the dialectical tension, (3) what context and intervening conditions influenced the dialectical tension, and (4) what consequences resulted from the dialectical tension (Creswell, 1998). Through this analysis, I discovered the three praxes for managing the tensions.

Finally, selective coding was used to systematically relate the central phenomenon or central dialectical tensions to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that needed to be further developed (Creswell, 1998). During this phase, integration was used to organize the categories around the four central dialectical tensions and develop a story. To help explain selective coding, I provide an example of how I developed the story from my research findings. After axial and open coding, I had an Excel spreadsheet listing the four dialectical tensions of telework with basic descriptions. I then went back through all 12 of my original main categories, organized with their sub-categories onto 12 separate Excel spreadsheets. I

pulled information and quotes from each category and placed it beside the appropriate dialectical tension. As well, I made separate notes to the right of each tension to help fill in gaps that I had missed in earlier coding and help better explain the tension. As I did this for the four tensions, I also duplicated it for the three praxes for managing the tensions. Selective coding also helped me to better see the factors influencing the perception I found teleworkers have of how they think in-office employees perceive them and how this affects their management of the four tensions. Finally, after selective coding, I developed a diagram to graphically portray the results.

Throughout the analysis process, Microsoft Excel helped me to organize the data during line-by-line analysis, check interpretations, and develop patterns into categories and subcategories. A majority of the interpretive work, conceptualizing, and theoretical sampling for this study was performed separately. The data primarily was analyzed to address the following two research questions: (1) What are the dialectical tensions teleworkers experience and (2) how do teleworkers communicatively manage dialectical tensions? Additional information did surface from the analysis, some of which is included in the research findings to help explain what influences and shapes the dialectical tensions.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The two research questions for this study are as follows: (1) What are the dialectical tensions teleworkers experience and (2) how do teleworkers communicatively manage dialectical tensions? The key findings for these questions can be summarized in a grounded theory, the Organizational Telework Tension Model. To illustrate these findings and the model, I will first provide an overview of the model. Secondly, I will look at the values teleworkers see in working in the office and working from home. This finding, although not directly related to my research questions, helped to uncover the multiple variables that shape the perception and management of dialectical tensions in telework. Third, I will discuss the perception teleworkers expressed of how their coworkers view teleworkers. This perception was found to be significant in influencing the tensions. Fourth, I will address how the findings answer the first research question by identifying four dialectical tensions of telework. Finally, I will discuss how the findings answer the second research question by discovering three praxes or ways teleworkers deal with the dialectical tensions of telework and provide specific examples of how teleworkers communicatively use the praxes to manage tensions.

Overview of the Organizational Telework Tension Model

The Organizational Telework Tension Model illustrates how the variables of relationships, work team culture, internal company communications, and personality influence and contribute to the strength of the teleworker's perception of how others view teleworkers. The model graphically shows how this overarching perception acts like a filter which determines how the teleworker deals with the dialectical tensions of telework. The strength of this perception for an individual teleworker has a major impact on which of the three praxes he or she chooses to deal with the tensions of telework, contributing to how he or she actively communicates with colleagues and views his or her overall work-life balance. Finally, the model illustrates the four dialectical tensions of telework, outlined later in this chapter, and how the teleworker strives to balance his or her work and life by communicatively employing different praxes. In the remainder of this chapter, I will begin with the values of working in the office and from home as expressed by teleworkers at Accounting Firm ABC.

Value of Working in the Office

Beginning with the industrial revolution, a large population of people began commuting to locations away from their homes to perform their jobs. This tradition still holds true for a majority of workers in our society. One could see why an assembly-line worker needs to be at an on-site work location, but why does someone who works on a computer all day? What value do people see in working in the office? Many of the participants in this study, although teleworkers, still see value in working in the office. A majority of participants agree the main value of working in the office is that it is easy to connect with other people live. For instance, one participant commented, "It's easier to

just run into them [other people] if I have a couple of minutes between calls or whatever to catch up.”

Participants also agree another value of working in the office is to build relationships through face-to-face interpersonal chat. For instance, I observed a specific instance when a work team was talking in the morning while everyone was making their way into the office and booting up their computers. The team talked for 20 minutes about personal topics, such as children and favorite television shows. What seemed like merely a non-business-related conversation quickly turned to what the team was going to be presenting at a meeting later on in the day and the details of that presentation. Similar to this situation, an interview participant recalled the following story:

... we spent 15 minutes this morning talking about a tragedy today with a colleague but kind of venting and talking; and it rolled from a conversation about dying to diversity to what happened on “24” last night ... You know it was great, because I don’t see these people a lot so it’s nice to develop that type of relationship. But actually getting work done, I don’t know? We all agreed that it was death defying because we had just spent a lot of time talking, but you know tomorrow I’m just going to be so much more comfortable presenting with them, because we teamed. You know and it’s true because we do, we all have little stories and we shared and it was nice.

Another value this study found for upper management participants is that they value working in the office to gain knowledge about the work environment. For instance, one participant explained, “... it’s not critical to my job, but it is for me useful to hear

what's going on to just sense the ... I don't know, the mood of the environment." The study also found there are a number of people who telework and like and/or prefer to work in the office but, for personal reasons, choose to work from home on occasion. These are the individuals the study found have the most difficulty dealing with the tensions of working from home. We will discuss managing tensions and personality more thoroughly later in the results.

So how do people communicate when they are in the office? The two main values of working in the office are directly related to how people communicate while in the office. Related to connecting with people live and building relationships through live interpersonal chat, the main way people communicate while in the office is via face-to-face communication. For example, one participant mentioned, "When I'm in the office, it's probably a little bit easier just to walk over to Tony's cube or just to turn around to one of my colleagues and say hey what are you working on." Another participant said, "The thing that does happen more in the office is side conversation."

Another major communication vehicle in the office is Microsoft Sametime, which is an instant messaging software used internally at Accounting Firm ABC. From interview responses, it appears that quite frequently Sametime replaces face-to-face communication in the office to the point where it has become socially acceptable to first Sametime a person even before picking up the phone or walking over to talk with someone live. A participant remarked, "What I noticed is that people would be Sametiming each other on the same floor ... sometimes people Sametime you instead of walking down and speaking to you." Another person commented, "Even when you're in

the office the person next to you will IM [Sametime] you. It's become like a social way of interacting.”

Due to the Sametime culture at Accounting Firm ABC, in addition to the dispersed work groups where people on the same team work in different cities, some employees feel working from home is not much different than working in the office. For instance, one participant said:

We have virtual members of our team anyway, so it doesn't really ... the way we interact with each other isn't dependent on us being face-to-face very often. So, me sitting at home being online and available with a telephone line and an instant messaging technology to many people is no different than me being in the office, because they wouldn't be seeing me anyway.

Based on interview data, it seems that at times the benefits of working in the office, realized through face-to-face communication, are sometimes overlooked and replaced with the use of Sametime instant messaging, in essence, diminishing the value of working in the office. Now let us examine the value of working from home, the reasons people decide to telework, and how teleworkers communicate with their colleagues.

Value of Working from Home

Study participants indicate two main reasons they decided to work from home. The first reason was due to a physical move to a location away from an office where their colleagues reside, and the second was due to better accommodate children's needs and/or schedules. Participants reveal working from home contributes to the following benefits:

(1) Less interruptions, (2) more time, (3) more productivity, (4) less stress, and (5) greater convenience. “One of the benefits [of working from home] is having almost what I feel like an extra two hours at the beginning and end of the day and I try to optimize on that,” said one participant. Another commented, “The days that I work at home ... those hours I’m less stressed, I’m less tired, because I get to sleep a little later, and I’m not frustrated and stressed out from the hour commute each way which adds time onto the day.”

So how do people communicate with their colleagues differently when they work from home? According to the interview data, the overwhelming view is that Sametime instant messaging and the phone are the two main communication vehicles used when working from home. One participant’s response sort of sums it up, “Sametime is number one. I don’t think it [teleworking] would be possible without Sametime.” The general feeling is that most people first Sametime to confer and get quick answers and then use a phone call or e-mail to follow up or for longer conversations.

The major difference in communication style for teleworkers who mainly work with colleagues in their local offices, rather than colleagues who are geographically dispersed, is to instant message people with Sametime or call them on the phone, rather than physically walk up to them. For individuals who regularly work with team members in multiple work locations, communicating with colleagues from home is very similar, if not the same, as communicating with them while working in the office. For instance, a participant explained, “Teaming for me is very often with an extended team that goes beyond the one location. So, I would say for the large majority it’s [communication] completely invisible, it’s seamless and invisible.”

The use of Sametime varies among the study participants, with two distinct schools of thought. One school uses Sametime only for quick conversations. The other school uses Sametime for interpersonal chat and a way to connect with colleagues on a personal level when they are not physically with them. For instance, a participant from the first school of thought commented, “Sametime and e-mail I think are tools for cutting out the chatter and getting direct to the point, because not a whole lot of time is there to type out all this happy stuff.” A participant with a different perspective said the following:

A Sametime conversation would be like hey what’s up? Let’s have just a brief catch up of this is hey friendly, but I really have something I need to ask you. It’s like I find myself doing that ... the softer, not touchy feely, but the realizing that in my head I know we’re close and we’re cool, but this is a way to just reinforce that because we don’t see each other everyday.

Working in the Office Versus Working from Home

What are the downsides and similarities to both in and out-of-office work? Based on the research, there seem to be two overarching negatives associated with working in the office. Working in the office can be more distracting with more interruptions. Secondly, it can be more stressful due to the commute to and from the office. Both of these negatives contribute to perceptions of why telework is beneficial and why teleworkers value working from home. First of all, the distractions and interruptions of the office take away from a person’s ability to concentrate and complete projects, therefore, a worker might feel as if he or she is, and might actually be, accomplishing

more when he or she works from home. Secondly, due to interview comments, a long commute into the office sometimes contributes to a later workday start and earlier finish, so that one can get to the office in the morning and leave work in time to pick up children from daycare or simply beat the rush hour traffic. Working from home eliminates a commute and makes picking up children at daycare more convenient. Finally, participants seem to be more likely to take a lunch hour if they work in the office and work through lunch when they are at home. Therefore, in general, study participants indicate they do not work as many hours in the office as they do when they work from home.

Along with the positives of less distractions and more time to accomplish work at home, there also come tradeoffs. Many participants indicate there are two distinct tradeoffs for working at home which together lead to a third. Repeatedly, interviewees comment that working from home lends itself to the following: (1) Less human interaction and (2) less interpersonal chat. One participant recalled a specific incident, “I had no idea what was going on and how upset she had been [someone's father passed away] and I had missed that because I wasn't in the office. So, you don't chit chat. You don't get into personal things as much as you do here in the office.” Another participant's perspective reveals, “I like being home, but I do love coming into the office. I know that's crazy, but I love being in the office. I like the social connection. I like the interaction.”

These two tradeoffs lead to a third tradeoff which is the perception of being less connected to people through relationships. For instance, one participant said, “I am not as connected as I use to be people wise, the social circle.” The last finding is specifically

interesting because, when asked if working from home affects or has affected relationships with in-office colleagues, a majority of participants comment that it has not and does not affect those relationships. Perhaps this finding is due to the fact that none of the study participants works only from home. They all work in the office two to three days a week, which allows them to do relationship building while they are in the office. Another reason may be due in part to the fact that a majority of the participants had pre-existing relationships with their managers and/or colleagues prior to beginning their work-from-home arrangements.

See Table I on the next page for a summary of the positives, negatives, and communication modalities of working in the office versus working from home.

Table I

Summary of Positives, Negatives, and Communication Modalities of Working in the Office Versus Working from Home

Working in the Office	Working from Home
<p>Positives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with people live • Building relationships via face-to-face interpersonal chat • Gaining knowledge about the work environment 	<p>Positives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less interruptions • More time • More productivity • Less stress • Greater convenience
<p>Negatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More distracting with more interruptions • More stressful due to commute 	<p>Negatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less human interaction • Less interpersonal chat • Less connected to people through relationships
<p>Communication Modality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face • Sametime instant messaging 	<p>Communication Modality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sametime instant messaging • Phone • E-mail

Regardless of the personal benefits and drawbacks of working in the office and working from home, the fact is that in- and out-of-office colleagues must work and communicate together. My earlier assumption was that transitioning from in-office work to telework was a big change but, due to the available communication technology and cultural norms at Accounting Firm ABC, it appears that communicating with colleagues while working in the office or from home is not all that different. This is especially true for those individuals who work on geographically-dispersed teams. So, why then, if communicating with colleagues is not a major issue, are some people more successful at

working from home than others? What are the other elements or conditions that affect a person who works from home?

Teleworkers' Perception of How Others View Teleworkers

An interesting pattern developed out of the interviews that there is an awareness of a certain perception associated with telework. It appears from comments that this perception is in large part internally constructed by the teleworkers, rather than by in-office colleagues. For instance, there is no evidence that in-office employees actually perceive teleworkers as teleworkers think they do. None of the interview participants said an in-office employee told them they perceive them a certain way. Teleworkers themselves perceive telework in certain ways and therefore enact pressures on themselves to counteract their own perceptions. The overwhelming perception is that teleworkers think that if in-office colleagues cannot connect or communicate with them for some reason, in-office colleagues will think they are “goofing off” or not working. Not all interviewees blatantly state this as a perception, but their comments and conversation point to this perception as being the basis of their actions. There were some people who did specifically cite the above perception. One participant said:

I realize that if they picked up the phone and called me at the office and I didn't answer, there's a thousand valid reasons why I might not answer. But, the perception is that if you're at home and you don't answer, you're goofing off. So, I probably have some additional stresses that I put on myself that way just to make sure that I'm responsive.

Another teleworker commented, “I have a little bit of concern. I don't think it's so free flowing that ... you know I'm always trying to make sure that they know I'm working.”

There are a variety of variables that affect how strongly a teleworker feels about the above stated perception. First, relationships with in-office colleagues and managers in particular have a big influence. For instance, if the teleworker has a good, long-standing relationship with his or her manager or colleagues, then the affect of the perception is diminished. For example, a participant stated, “I think you need to have established a certain level of trust and relationship with the people [in-office colleagues] first in order to telework. If you don’t have that then I think it would be hard. I don’t think I could do it.” Another teleworker also commented on trust saying:

If the trust is not there, there’s just suspicion instead. And, you are putting in those longer hours or odd hours, not because you feel like I really want to give back or want to fulfill my obligation, but it’s like well, if I don’t do this, they’re going to think I’m slacking off because I’m working from home.

Secondly, the work team culture plays a big role in the strength of the above cited perception. Some teams embrace telework more positively than others. One participant commented, “If it’s [telework] embraced by the team, you know it just seems to work. Our managers are often managing us remotely and it’s just something that we do and it just seems to work.”

Thirdly, internal company communications about telework impact the perception’s affect. From my review of organizational documents, such as internal company newsletter articles and Web site data, I found recently there has been a lot of communication at Accounting Firm ABC about flexible work arrangements including telework. These communications endorse telework as one of the means to help balance

one's work and personal life. Based on the consistency in messaging from geographic area to area, it is obvious the articles are part of a top-down company communication plan to promote flexible work arrangements. Many participants commented that since these internal communications have been published, there seems to be an overall increased comfort level with telework. "The backing of the firm has made it [telework] more socially acceptable," said one teleworker. Another participant remarked, "I'm really amazed at how the firm has even pushed more that this [flexibility like telework] is the culture. This is the way you know to work-life balance."

Fourth, personality seems to play a role in the comfort level of a teleworker and how he or she allows the perception to affect him or her. Confirming some existing research, there appears to be two distinct groups of teleworkers. Those teleworkers who like to work from home because they enjoy the quiet, alone time and those teleworkers who find it difficult to work at home because they think their homes are more distracting than the office. Here are some interviewee thoughts from both perspectives:

There are other people who thrive I think in being in that sort of collaborative mix all the time and they get energy from that. I'm not that way really. So, for me, those home-office days are a way to take this cubicle world that we live in, where you can't shut the doors ... it lets me shut the door for a couple of hours.

So much of being at home for me is about not being at work. And, so trying to work from home is like trying to drag my brain back into work mode. So, literally, walking into the office ... now I'm at work and you get 100% of me at work. And, I like that.

The research results thus far help us create the first half of the Organizational Telework Tension Model (Figure 1), shown below. I will build the second half of the model as I move into the remainder of the results, which outline the dialectical tensions of telework.

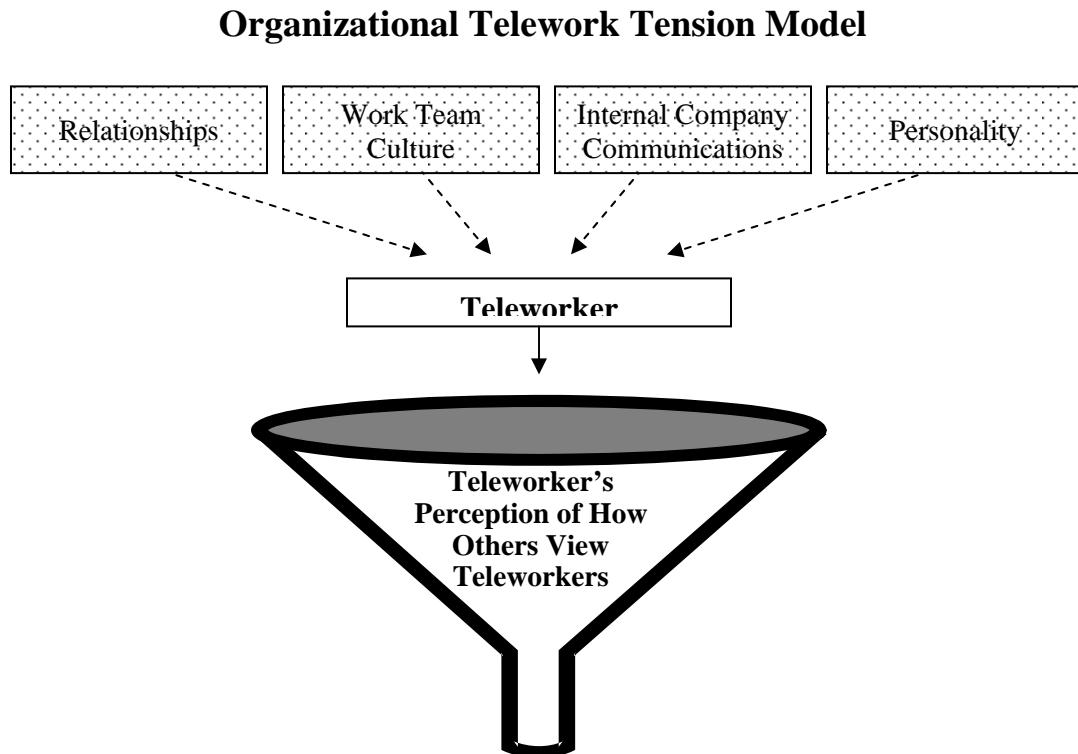


Figure 1. Organizational telework tension model. Entire model displayed on page 63.

The goal of this research study is to discover the dialectical tensions teleworkers face when working from home and how they manage these tensions. The findings reveal that working from home does not lead to tensions with in-office colleagues, but rather creates internal tensions for teleworkers, influenced by the telework environment and competing goals. The interview data falls into patterns revealing four distinct dialectical

tensions. Variability comes into play in how teleworkers manage these tensions. Due to teleworkers' perception of how others view them, influenced by a combination of factors including relationships, work team culture, internal company communications, and personality, teleworkers deal with the tensions differently contributing to how they view their overall work-life balance. Let us take a look at each of the dialectical tensions of telework separately. Then we will discuss how teleworkers are reacting to and dealing with the tensions.

Dialectical Tensions of Telework

As discussed earlier in this paper, the key concepts inherent in a dialectical approach are as follows: (1) Contradiction, (2) totality, (3) process, and (4) praxis. A dialectical contradiction is the coexistence and conflict of opposites (Miller, 2002). We will define these contradictions as the dialectical tensions of telework. Totality is the idea that the contradictions are unified and cannot be understood in isolation. If one occurs, the other occurs in tandem with it (Miller, 2002). Process refers to how we view the contradictions as part of a social process (Miller, 2002) and so, for this study, it refers to how we view the dialectical tensions of telework as part of the practice of telework. In other words, teleworking lends itself to these contradictions; and so people who telework all encounter these contradictions in some form and to some degree. What differs is how they deal with the contradictions and vary their communication practices as a result. Praxis, in its simplest form, refers to the choices teleworkers make to deal with the contradictions or tensions (Miller, 2002).

Tension One – Increased Comfort and Increased Anxiety. The first dialectical tension this study found is the tension of increased comfort and increased anxiety. A

teleworker experiences an increase in his or her comfort level due to a reduction in stress levels because he or she does not have to do the following: (1) Battle traffic during a commute to get to work, (2) get dressed for an in-office work experience, or (3) rush around in the morning accomplishing daily routines, such as getting self and everyone else ready and taking children to child care in time to drive to work.

One participant commented, “I think that it [teleworking] takes a lot of stress off because, the days that I’m home, it’s a little bit more relaxed because I’m not rushing around trying to get ready and get out the door and get downtown.” Another interviewee said, “I don’t have the stressors of being made up for work ... it’s less stress to figure out what I’m going to wear.”

Many participants indicate that a great deal of the increased comfort has to do with not having to commute. For instance, two teleworkers comment as follows:

I’m not frustrated and stressed out from the hour commute each way, which adds time onto the day. You know I can quit at 5:30 p.m. and have my kids back in my house by 6:00 p.m. and you know theoretically be eating by 6:10 p.m.

On average, I get four more hours morning and night, because I’m able to be home more instead of losing I do I lose a full work day a week driving cause it’s an hour each way; that’s ten hours a week. That’s a lot out of the schedule.

With the increase in comfort also comes an increase in anxiety brought about by the following: (1) The stress of needing to be productive, respond quickly to requests, portray a professional appearance on conference calls, and get personal things done at

home and (2) a feeling of insecurity that one is missing something by not being in the office. For instance, a study participant made the following remarks about being anxious with regard to responding quickly to coworkers when working from home:

I try to make sure that I'm always accessible. If I'm going to go have lunch or run out to the doctor or whatever, I try to make sure I mark myself as "unavailable" [on instant messaging], so people aren't trying to contact me and wondering where the heck I am. I probably have some additional stresses that I put on myself that way just to make sure that I'm responsive.

Another participant expressed his or her concerns over home responsibilities by commenting, "I feel more stressful in some way [working at home], because I see the toys that I didn't pick up beforehand or the basket of laundry there that should be folded." Still another participant remarked about being anxious over things going on in the office by saying, "I'm just in the back of my mind kind of anxious that something's going on that I don't know about."

Tension Two – Increased Autonomy and Increased Restriction. The second dialectical tension this study found is the tension of increased autonomy provided by a telework arrangement coupled with increased restriction instilled by self. A telework arrangement provides a person with the freedom and flexibility to do the following: (1) Walk around the house or multi-task at home, for instance by throwing in a load of laundry when he or she is on conference calls, (2) take breaks, for instance by washing dishes or walking out on the deck, or (3) get comfortable on the couch to complete an individual project, such as an intense research report. A few teleworkers provided examples of how they practice their autonomy at home:

I can throw in a load of laundry, that's what I do. How long does that take and then go back to work.

One of the days I'm home, my son is gone at preschool, so I'll walk him up to preschool at 8:20 a.m. and then I'll go back to get him at 11:00 a.m. ... it lets me feel like I'm a part of his life.

Last Friday, during my lunch hour, I was at home. In my mind, okay I've got 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., so I went grocery shopping and got back.

I can go and sit on the deck and actually sit and eat my lunch and enjoy some rays.

I end up when working from home being able to get up at the same time I would if I were driving into the office but, instead of having to drive, I capitalize on that and take the dogs to the park.

With the increase in autonomy also comes an increase in restriction instilled by the teleworker to do the following: (1) Be present at his or her computer or connected to the technology so he or she is instantly accessible and (2) to communicate with his or her manager and work team more frequently, so he or she knows what is going on in the office and his or her team knows what the worker is accomplishing during the course of the day. One participant commented on how he or she is cautious about leaving his or her office when at home by saying, "At home, I'm afraid to pop out, even though obviously I have the freedom to do it, because I don't ever want anyone to call me or Sametime me, instant message me, and me not be there." Other teleworkers commented, "The norm is for me to go to the refrigerator, heat something up, and sit down and eat at my computer,"

“I check my voicemail all the time,” “They [colleagues] have my cell phone number and my home number,” and “I’m always on Sametime at home.”

Another participant discussed how he or she communicates differently when working from home by, “Being more obvious about the fact that you are working when you are at home ... making sure that they [colleagues] get communication from you and that communication can be in a lot of different ways.”

Tension Three – Increased Isolation and Increased Interaction. The third dialectical tension this study found is the tension of increased isolation coupled with increased interaction with colleagues. Because a telework arrangement places a worker at home by him or herself, the situation lends itself to isolation, which can provide both benefits and drawbacks. Benefits to this type of seclusion are listed as follows:

(1) A quiet environment with no live interruptions or side conversations, improving productivity; (2) no office politics, decreasing stress levels; and (3) no chances to be dragged into face-to-face, impromptu meetings. The last mentioned benefit can be both positive and negative, leading either to improved productivity because the teleworker is not interrupted or to missed opportunities for collaboration. Finally, the drawback of isolation is that it can lead to decreased social interaction for the teleworker, limiting personal connections and knowledge-sharing.

One study participant commented on her experience with regard to isolation by saying she is able to better concentrate, “I feel like in some ways I have the ability to concentrate more because I can reduce some level of interruption, you know, where I don't have people walking in.” Another teleworker said, “I actually got more done [teleworking] because there wasn't as much back and forth interaction or overhearing of

even some of the office politics that go on.” A third participant talked about her productivity with regard to working at home alone as follows:

Sometimes those downtimes at home for me are my most productive times ... I’ve had some projects that you truly need you know four hours of time to sit down and just get it done. That’s hard to do sometimes in our cubicles. You know to just get your brain around something and get it done. So it’s [teleworking] helped actually with some of the projects that I’ve had to work on lately.

But not everyone likes the seclusion of working alone. One interviewee discussed that she teleworks from home on occasion because of the flexibility it provides to her with regard to her family’s schedule, but she does not really like to work from home. “I like the experience of coming into work of being around noise and action and, for me, teleworking is quiet and boring and you know makes me itchy.”

This study found that along with the quiet, isolation of working from home also comes an increase in interaction with colleagues via electronic communications. Such communications can include any of the following: (1) A swamp of e-mail messages, (2) an increase in electronic interruptions such as instant messages and phone calls, and (3) an increase in using Sametime instant messaging for interpersonal chat with co-workers.

A majority of the teleworkers interviewed express that the main way they communicate with their in-office colleagues is through instant messaging or the phone, both quick virtual communication tools that allow for immediate responses. One

participant who is the member of a virtual work team discussed the daily experience of working with his teammates as follows:

Somebody may be working from home on Friday and we have to accommodate for someone who's working from home in Canada or you know working from home in Cleveland, so we have much more frequent touch points and the communication happens ... it's not face-to-face as much, but it happens more often.

Tension Four – Desire to Achieve Personal Objectives and Desire to Demonstrate Commitment to Work. The fourth dialectical tension this study found is the tension of the desire to achieve personal objectives coupled with the desire to demonstrate commitment to work. Because a teleworker does not have to physically commute to get to an office, he or she literally “earns back” that commute time, in turn, providing him or her with more time to sleep in, get the kids to daycare, do laundry, work more hours, or whatever he or she so chooses. From interview comments, the reason many teleworkers decide to embark upon a telework arrangement in the first place is to help them better balance their home and work lives by providing them with more opportunities to carry out home-related responsibilities. Therefore, from the very beginning, there is a desire to accomplish personal or non-work-related objectives.

One participant explained she initially began teleworking so she could spend more time with her child. “That was part of the reason I originally did it [began teleworking], so that I could go pick up my daughter earlier and have more time you know with my little one,” she said. Another participant said teleworking helped her after having a child. As she described, “It [telework] definitely helped me balance my life,

especially after having a baby ... canceling out commuting, you save a lot of time and energy. It's not just time, it's energy as well."

Still other teleworkers simply like to use their extra time for different things, such as follows:

I can go and sit on the deck and actually sit and eat my lunch and enjoy some rays. That is so "gladdening" to me.

One of my team members goes and digs in the garden on breaks when she's at home.

There are things I just need to contact people for during the day, during the business day and it's easier for me to take care of those when I'm at home than in the office.

An interesting trend for a majority of the teleworkers in this study is that, despite their desire to use their extra time to achieve personal objectives, most teleworkers actually use this extra time to work more hours. Here are some comments from several study participants regarding long work hours:

Right now I work a lot of hours, on average, over 50 hours a week.

I work a lot like after the kids go to bed.

I find that I tend to work through lunch a lot.

When I'm working from home, I'm on [the computer] way earlier than when I'm working in the office.

So why do teleworkers work such long hours? And, why are they working rather than accomplishing personal or home-related tasks? The resounding reason teleworkers give to explain this increase in work time is to demonstrate their commitment to work as

appreciation for their telework arrangement. Not all participants come right out and say this but, from their stories and surrounding comments, all indicators point to this explanation. Some participants indicate they work more to take time to communicate with their managers and work teams via more frequent touchpoints, such as e-mail messages, instant message conversations, or live phone calls. This comment supports the third tension of increased isolation and increased interaction, but I also found this increase in communication is due in part to the teleworker's desire to demonstrate work output.

So why do teleworkers find it necessary to demonstrate their commitment to work? Many teleworkers feel a sense of gratitude to the organization for being able to work from home. With that sense of gratitude comes one of two things: (1) A willingness to overcompensate as a sort of thank you to the organization or (2) a need to overcompensate so not to lose the benefit. One participant commented on being grateful by saying, "The one thing that I think I've kept throughout this sort of evolution of this alternative work arrangement is that sense of gratitude for having that arrangement and unfortunately, coupled with that, is the need to overcompensate." Another teleworker said:

Flexibility [telework] is a wonderful thing that it allows you to do this stuff, but it creates, if you're honest and doing the right thing, it should create in you a tremendous feeling of responsibility to the people who have given you what I consider to be really a gift.

This sense of gratitude toward and desire to give back to the organization also plays into one of the ways teleworkers manage their tensions and we will discuss this in more detail later.

A third participant talked about not wanting to lose his or her ability to telework by commenting, “In the beginning, it started out as being just grateful. You were grateful that you had the opportunity [to telework], so you didn’t want to lose the opportunity so you tended to work more.”

Some teleworkers feel pressure to work more, because they want to demonstrate that they are actually working. This pressure stems back from the perception, discussed earlier, that some teleworkers have of how in-office employees view them. For instance, one participant commented, “I feel a certain pressure when you’re working remotely, because people can’t see you and you feel like you need to produce. There’s a certain feeling there. So, I tend to get really focused on my job.”

Finally, there are those teleworkers who work overtime simply because it is convenient for them to work. Two teleworkers comment on this convenience as follows:

There’s no pressure to work overtime ... but if I’m finishing a project or an e-mail, I’ll keep on working. Where if I’m in the office, I’ll be like I have to get home to you know my wife will be leaving for school in the evening, so I have to get home quickly to be there for the kids. I don’t have to do that when I’m working from home.

You get stuck behind your desk! And, it’s so easy for that to happen.

Especially, working 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., you find that at 1 o’clock in

the afternoon you haven't taken a break, because you don't really have anywhere to go, apart from going to make a cup of tea.

Management teleworkers bring a slightly different perspective to the mix with regard to working overtime. Comments from the study participants who are considered to be management indicate they work a lot of hours as well, but for slightly different reasons. In addition to some of the above mentioned reasons, remarks indicate management teleworkers work long hours out of anxiety that they are missing something or due to the allure of or lack of control. "I work a lot of hours because feeling like I'm needed, feeling like I'm missing something," said one manager. Another manager commented as follows:

Why work overtime or on the weekends? The macho answer would be because I'm a workaholic! The real answer is probably insecurity. If I really get down to the trucks of it, I'm just in the back of my mind kind of anxious that something's going on that I don't know about. In addition, part of it is the allure of control and of power and a big span in your scope and sphere of influence across the world or 24/7 or you know whatever – it's an ego thing probably.

Reactions to the Dialectical Tensions of Telework

So how are teleworkers reacting to and dealing with the tensions of working from home? Three types of reactions surfaced in this study, including integration, separation, and rededication. The majority of participant teleworkers are dealing with the four tensions either by merging work and life together to make things more transparent, or by

separating work and life to create boundaries. Other teleworkers employ a third reaction by exhibiting a rededication and loyalty to work.

At first glance, the answer to the question of “how are teleworkers reacting to the tensions” was not that obvious, because it appeared the praxis was a tension itself. The reason is because this is the area where many of the interviewees seemed to contradict their own comments. In one instance, an interviewee would explain how he or she is integrating work and life together, but in another instance would provide an example illustrating the complete opposite. How can a person try to separate work and life while at the same time try to integrate it? And, why would he or she want to do both? To answer these questions, let us first look at each of the reactions and corresponding behaviors respectively.

Integration – Unifying Work and Home Life. Integration is similar to connection, which Seo, Putnam, and Bartunek (2004) define as seeking to embrace and give equal voice to bipolar positions. For the purposes of this study, integration refers to how some teleworkers choose to combine the work and life dimensions of their lives in order to deal with a tension. An integration of a tension of telework might include the following: (1) Attending conference call meetings during non-work hours, (2) responding to e-mail messages at night or on weekends, and (3) washing dishes or doing laundry on breaks or during the lunch hour.

Separation – Separating Work and Home Life. Separation (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004) is when teleworkers choose to divide the work and life dimensions of their lives and set boundaries between when work occurs and personal activities occur. A separation of a tension of telework might

include the following: (1) Working in an area of the home designated as the home office, (2) refusing to attend meetings on vacation days or weekends, and (3) performing work and home-related tasks during designated hours of the day, for instance, work from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and spend time with family from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Rededication – Devoting Self to Work. Rededication is similar to what Stohl and Cheney (2001) refer to as loyalty, rededication, and adaptation when an employee deals with a tension by identifying with their organization and working to improve it. The results of this study reveal that some teleworkers deal with their tensions by rededicating their efforts and enthusiasm for their work to the organization. It may be that the teleworker had an experience while working for the organization, perhaps a good work opportunity or flexibility in the midst of a family crisis, that influenced him or her to now be even more dedicated to the company. If this employee encounters tensions while working at home, he or she will try to transcend the tensions by working harder for the organization. Rededication to the company does not imply the teleworker does not care about home life, but rather that the employee will take greater steps to complete work even when home life interrupts. For instance, if a child is sick, a teleworker who has decided to rededicate will use his or her teleworking flexibility to take the child to the doctor, but then may work even later into the evening than is necessary to make up his or her missed time and complete projects.

Another way of describing the first two concepts of integration and separation is by examining the concept of “spillage,” a term used by many of my interviewees. Spillage refers to the home or work responsibilities that occur during untraditional times of the day. For example, an 8:00 p.m. work meeting scheduled to accommodate an

Australian colleague's time zone or a child's 10:00 a.m. medical appointment scheduled when the doctor is available. Spillage can happen from both sides of the fence – work can spill into home and/or home can spill into work. The praxes of either integrating work and home life or separating work and home life are similar to balancing spillage. It appears that a teleworker balances the spillage of work and home life based on the particular tension, their personal needs, and the needs of the organization. They accomplish this either by means of increasing spillage through merging work and life together and making things more transparent or by means of minimizing spillage through separating work and life and creating boundaries.

It seems that teleworkers usually have a preference for using one of these mechanisms over the other in dealing with various tensions. For instance, one teleworker discussed with me how she does not like to be bothered by other things when she is working. "Usually, when I'm working I tend to go into this 'work' mode and I really don't like to be disturbed about things other than work. I just like to focus on work." Also siding with the separation of work and home, another teleworker talked about how she purposely keeps things separate:

I keep things very separate, although there are times when a stray one-year old makes it into my office and says "da, da, da" in the middle of a conference call. And, I'm like "stop!" Because I'm very conscious, I don't want things ... I want to be very professional and I don't want to have children in the background or the radio in the background.

On the other side of the fence, a third teleworker talked with me about how she likes for work and life to merge, "I would rather let things spill over, you know, I don't

have any problem with spillage ... spillage is good!” Finally, a fourth participant commented on how work and home life just seemed to have progressively merged over time. “One of the things that I am seeing that definitely kind of gradually happened over the years is that work is part of my home life and became a much more pervasive influence,” said the teleworker.

Communication Strategies for Managing the Dialectical Tensions of Telework

Based on interview comments, communication is a tool teleworkers use to help manage their tensions as they are integrating, separating, or rededicating. As discussed early in this paper, working from home is not so dissimilar from working in the office, apart from the physical separation from in-office colleagues. What my research found is that even though teleworkers communicate with their in-office colleagues in similar ways as they do when working in the office, teleworkers alter the ways in which they use communication technologies and the types of things they communicate. Let us examine each of the four tensions and the various ways teleworkers alter their communication styles when trying to integrate, separate, or rededicate.

Communication Strategies for Tension One. To manage the first tension of increased comfort and increased anxiety, teleworkers use a variety of mechanisms to alter their communication with colleagues, which are as follows: (1) Increase the number of phone calls, e-mails, and Sametime instant messages they send to colleagues, (2) communicate their availability by being logged on to Sametime instant messenger constantly, (3) eliminate background noise when participating on conference calls, (4) stay logged on to e-mail and Sametime after work hours, (5) send e-mail messages at

night, and (6) follow up with colleagues more regularly on projects. One teleworker commented as follows:

The pressure is on me I think to make working from home as seamless as possible. When we're on the phone, I don't want them [colleagues] to hear my son in the background. I don't want them to hear the dog barking in the background. I don't want them to Sametime me and have me respond an hour later, because I'm upstairs doing dishes.

Communication Strategies for Tension Two. To manage the second tension of increased autonomy and increased restriction, teleworkers use a variety of mechanisms to communicate their accessibility to colleagues, which are as follows: (1) Instantly respond to Sametime, e-mail, and phone calls by staying in their home offices all day and taking only short breaks, (2) visibly indicate they are available to chat on Sametime by marking themselves with a green box, and (3) use the Lotus Notes calendar to display their schedules, contact information, and cell phone numbers.

One interviewee discussed how she made a diligent effort to always be accessible. "I'm available all the time per instant messenger," she said. Coinciding with the notion of availability, another study participant commented, "With Sametime, call forward, e-mail notification of voicemails ... people can reach out to me at any point in time and get to me as if I were in the office." Finally, a third teleworker talked about how she communicates to her team about of her availability by saying:

My way that I've always kept people aware of where I am ... I use my Notes calendar and I've always got my home-office days in there with my phone number, so they [teammates] know when they can reach me that

way. When I have something to do, like a doctor's appointment or whatever, even if it's in my off hours, I'll put it in my calendar.

Communication Strategies for Tension Three. To combat the third tension of increased isolation and increased interaction, teleworkers alter their communication with colleagues in variety of ways, which are as follows: (1) Communicate more regularly with team by sending more e-mails, Sametimes, or phone calls, (2) use Sametime for interpersonal chat, (3) speak up and make voice known on conference calls, (4) put self on "away" on Sametime with an explanation to take advantage of quite, alone time, and (5) take better advantage of talking live with colleagues when in the office.

Some teleworkers explained to me how they tend to e-mail a little more frequently when working alone at home and needing to feel connected to their teams. One participant said, "When e-mailing, I tend to copy them [manager] more so that they can keep up, because you know I can't always go in the office like everyday and talk to them."

Many participants talked about how they use Sametime more often to communicate with their teams throughout the day and specifically how they use the tool to keep up interpersonally with people. For instance, one teleworker discussed how he uses Sametime to informally chat with people just as he would when he stops by someone's desk in the office to say hello. He provided an example as follows:

We do a lot of that to just not soften, but build that presence of you know you are concerned about them as a person, for instance, "how are you doing? I know you lost your father a few weeks ago, so what's it like to be back. Hey we gotta get rolling on this." So, I find myself doing that a lot.

Related to becoming personally involved with coworkers, some participants feel that being able to come into the office and communicate with colleagues live a few days a week allows them to make up for the tradeoffs of working from home. One participant commented, “I couldn’t do this job without the personal connection. I couldn’t care about this job like I do if I didn’t have the personal connections. So, coming into the office just reinforces that, builds them and strengthens them.” Another teleworker said she proactively takes advantage of her time in the office to reinforce her relationships. “I put little reminders in my calendar ... coffee or you know go say hi to Roni when in the office, so people don't feel too disconnected from me,” she said.

Finally, another technique some teleworkers expressed was that of making sure they are active participants on team conference calls. One teleworker specifically talked to this notion as follows:

In my opinion, if you are a person who is the majority of time out of the office, you have to be more diligent about being in certain places or even involved in certain group activities, even if they're virtual ... even if it's people hearing your voice, so that you do not become someone who feels too far away from the group ... that you are a person who is seen as connected. And, again, it's not a face-to-face thing, it's connectivity.

Communication Strategies for Tension Four. To manage the fourth tension of desiring to achieve personal objectives and desiring to demonstrate commitment to work, teleworkers employ the following tactics: (1) Set personal boundaries, (2) work in the evenings, and (3) change in-office days to accommodate meetings and/or project work.

The limit and degree to which a teleworker chooses to use these tactics depends on which of the three praxes they have chosen to leverage.

As a teleworker utilizes the praxes, they may need to alter how and what they communicate to their colleagues. For example, if a teleworker chooses to integrate work and life responsibilities, he or she may decide to take two hours out of his or her mid-morning to go to a doctor's appointment and then work two hours in the evening following dinner. As a result, this teleworker may alter his or her communication with colleagues in the following ways: (1) Make a note of the morning appointment and evening work time on his or her Lotus Notes calendar for all to view, (2) leave Sametime on but mark self as away, making a note that he or she is at an appointment but will be back online until a certain time, (3) send e-mail and/or voice mail messages to his or her team and manager informing them of the schedule change, and (4) send an e-mail in the evening to his or her manager and/or team with a status update on the project. As a result of this teleworker's decision to integrate work and life, therefore altering his or her work schedule, this teleworker is increasing his or her communication with colleagues. From my interviews it appears that those teleworkers who have decided to rededicate to work may try and make it clear in their communications that they are getting things done and may end up working overtime in the evening in order to complete work or overcompensate for their schedule change.

Many participants spoke with me about the tactics they use as a result of choosing to integrate work and life, separate work and life, or rededicate to work. Several teleworkers reference boundaries they have put in place to make sure they are not working too much. For example, a person commented, "One thing we do as a family I

mean we feel very strongly about eating dinner together. So, at five o'clock truly I'm going to cut off so, if I've got to do work later, it happens after dinner." Another person specifically referenced the term boundaries, saying, "You do have to set those boundaries, definitely. It's easier to do on my home office days, because of the added time that I get out of eliminating my commute time."

Some teleworkers talked about their need to turn their computers off as a mechanism for sticking to their boundaries. From my interviews, it became apparent that these were the participants who had rededicated to work and so were very diligent about keeping up with e-mail communication and presenting themselves as being very productive. One participant discussed her need to shut her computer down as follows:

At the end of my day, whether it's eight o'clock, or six o'clock, or four o'clock, I shut down my computer instead of keeping it on, because the temptation is there to, when there are down times, instead of going and reaching for a book you go to your computer and check your e-mail cause you want to stay on top of things and then it becomes all consuming.

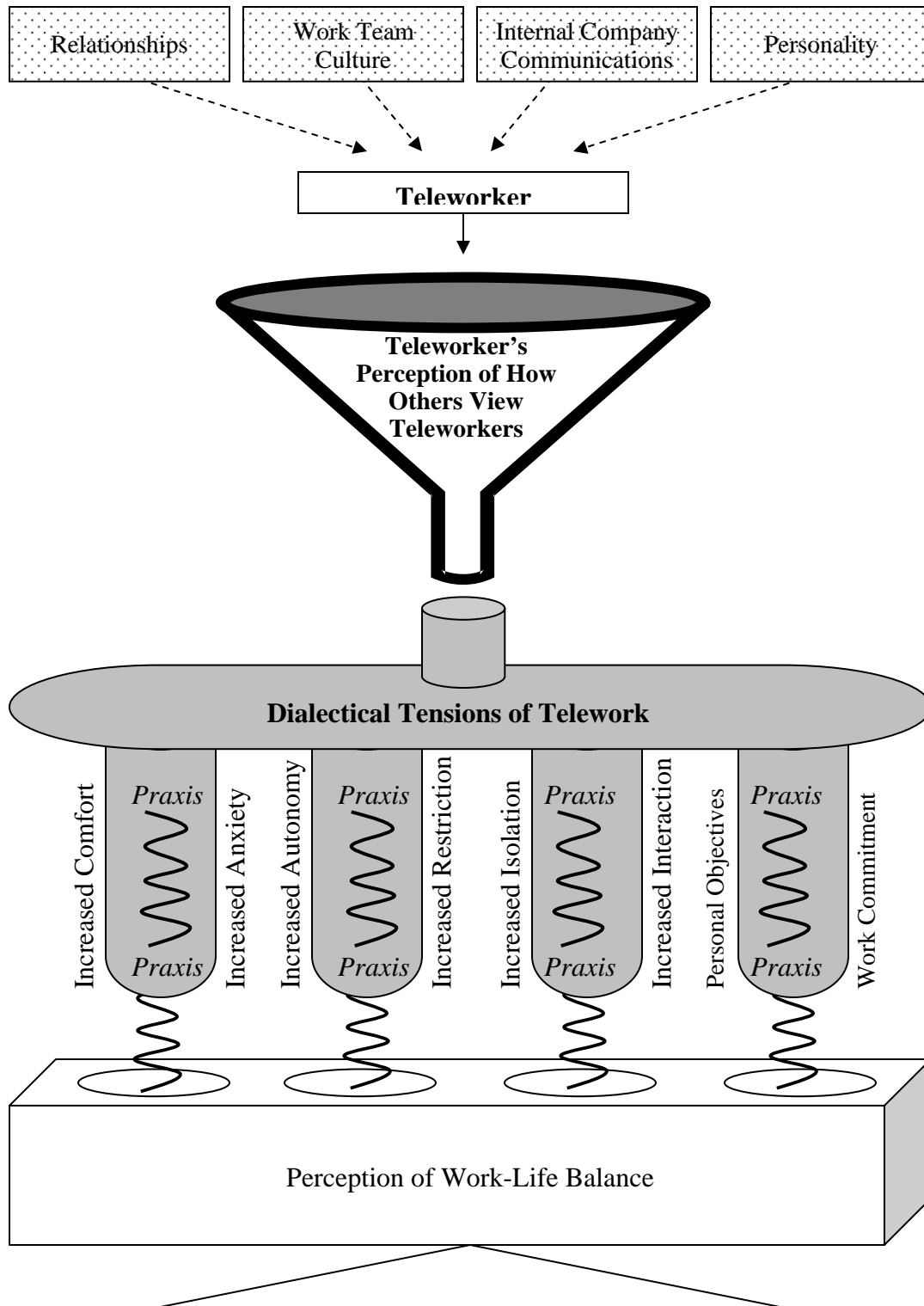
I found that teleworkers who are rededicating to work as a reaction to this fourth tension, try to appear very versatile with regard to their work schedules so as not to appear that their work arrangement is hindering work progress. For instance, one participant said, "I try to be very flexible. If I need to be here for a meeting, I'll switch out my days." Another teleworker who appeared to also be rededicating to work explained to me how, although she chooses to work overtime, she is in her own way maintaining boundaries. Her comments are as follows:

When I am done working, Sametime is off. You know because sometimes I'll put in a couple of hours over the weekend on something but, even if I am truly working over the weekend, I will rarely, rarely, rarely get onto Sametime. Because then at that point it does, work does become an intrusion. If I leave Sametime on so that anybody can get me anytime they want, then it is crazy, then it is pretty stupid of me.

As you may have seen from the above examples, the timing and frequency of a teleworker's communication depends on the praxis he or she is employing at a certain time in response to a specific tension. For example, if a teleworker is responding to the tension of increased isolation and increased communication by using the praxis of separating work and life, he may choose to put himself on "away" status on Sametime and not communicate with coworkers at all in order to minimize being bombarded with Sametime messages, so he can take advantage of quiet, alone time to get work accomplished. On the other side of the spectrum, if a teleworker is responding to the tension of increased comfort and increased anxiety by using the praxis of integrating work and life, she may choose to put herself on "active" status on Sametime even during lunch and dinner times, so that she can respond to coworkers immediately even if it means taking herself away from another work or home-related responsibility.

Shown on the next page is the entire Organizational Telework Tension Model (Figure 2). This graphic summarizes the research results into a single frame.

Organizational Telework Tension Model



Note. Praxis = Integrate Work and Home Life, Separate Work and Home Life, or Rededicate to Work

Figure 2. Organizational telework tension model.

The table below summarizes the four dialectical tensions of telework and the accompanying praxes. (See appendix C for this table with supporting participant quotes.)

Table II

Summary of the Dialectical Tensions of Telework

Tension	Pole A	Pole B	Praxes
Increased Comfort and Increased Anxiety	Increased comfort – Reduction in stress levels due to lack of commute, increase in available time to achieve work or personal tasks, not having to get ready, no rushing	Increased anxiety – Increase in stress levels to be productive, to respond quickly, to get personal things done at home, to portray a professional appearance, insecurity as if missing something	Integration, Separation, or Rededication Examples of integrating work into home life – Attend meetings during non-work hours, respond to e-mail late at night, take conference calls while making dinner
Increased Autonomy and Increased Restriction	Increased autonomy provided by a telework arrangement – Freedom, flexibility, and independence to walk around, multi-task at home, complete individual projects	Increased restriction instilled by self – Need to be at computer or tied to technology to be instantly accessible and to communicate with manager and/or team, more frequent touchpoints and interpersonal chat	Examples of separating work and home life – Maintain boundaries, work strictly in home office, set specific times to do work and home activities
Increased Isolation and Increased Interaction	Increased isolation – Quiet, helps productivity, no office politics, no live interruptions or side conversations, no being dragged into meetings, decreased social interaction limiting personal connections and knowledge-sharing	Increased communication/interaction – More electronic communication, more electronic interruptions, interpersonal chat via Sametime (instant messenger)	Examples of rededication – Overcompensate and/or demonstrate commitment to company in more work hours, change in- and out-of-office days to accommodate meetings
Desire to Achieve Personal Objectives and Desire to Demonstrate Commitment to Work	Desire to achieve personal objectives – Need to get personal things accomplished, desire to work normal hours, spend time with family, take time for appointments, do home-related work/errands	Desire to demonstrate commitment to work – Need to demonstrate commitment to work as appreciation for telework arrangement, longer work hours, more frequent touchpoints, communications, etc.	

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The goal of this research study was to explore the various tensions teleworkers encounter when working from home, learn how teleworkers alter their communication styles to deal with these tensions, and generate a grounded theory of dialectics of telework. The findings have helped to fill the gap in telework research by producing a grounded theory of telework illustrated in the Organizational Telework Tension Model. The theory claims that teleworkers have a perception of how others view them. The strength of this perception is influenced by teleworkers' relationships, work team culture, internal company communications, and personality. The extent to which teleworkers embrace this perception filters into how they manage the four dialectical tensions of telework, which were identified as follows: (1) Increased comfort and increased anxiety, (2) increased autonomy and increased restriction, (3) increased isolation and increased interaction, and (4) desire to achieve personal objectives and desire to demonstrate commitment to work. The three praxes for managing the tensions were identified as follows: (1) Integration – unifying work and life, (2) separation – separating work and life, and (3) rededication – devoting self to work. The study also found that

teleworkers do alter their communication practices as they utilize one or more of the praxes to manage their tensions. The following section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, as well as suggests its limitations and steps for future research.

Theoretical Implications

This study found that Pearlson and Saunders' (2001) three teleworking paradoxes of flexibility and structure, individuality and teaming, and individual responsibility and manager control did not resonate with the teleworkers from Accounting Firm ABC. This could perhaps be due to a difference in cultures between the companies under investigation or that Pearlson and Saunders' (2001) research took a strong managerial perspective. The current study sought the experiences of managerial to staff-level employees. Additionally, because telework is becoming more commonplace in many corporations, perhaps the dialectical tensions of telework are evolving as the institution of telework and its communication practices mature and those performing telework adapt their work and communication styles accordingly.

This study's discovery of the tension of desiring to achieve personal objectives and desiring to demonstrate commitment to work and the praxis that some teleworkers use of integrating work and life responsibilities to manage their tensions both resonate with Zedeck's (1992) spillover theory. The theory proposes the work and family spheres influence one another contributing to positive and negative spillover (as cited in Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996). The concept of spillover was also termed as "spillage" by some of this study's participants. As you can recall, some study participants liked spillage and others did not. Those people who liked spillage might possibly be the teleworkers

who integrate work and life activities as a praxis for their tensions. Those people who did not like spillage might be those who struggle with the tension of desiring to achieve personal objectives and desiring to demonstrate commitment to work.

Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman (1993) made assumptions that flexibility in work arrangements can empower individuals with the control to integrate work and family responsibilities, leading to positive spillover and helping to achieve a healthy work and family balance (as cited in Hill, Hawkins, & Miller, 1996). Many of this study's participants also choose to integrate work and life responsibilities to help manage their tensions. One would assume that because they choose to integrate work and life this leads to a positive work-life balance, but we have no evidence this is the outcome and thus further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

My research results agree with Hobson, Delunas, and Kestic (2001) who said work-life balance programs, such as telework, communicate to employees they are valued and result in increased employee commitment. Many of my study participants choose to rededicate to work as a reaction to the tensions of working from home. The teleworkers I noted that chose this option, specifically mentioned they feel a kind of gratitude toward the company for allowing them to telework and, as a result, want to give more back to the company. For example, recall an earlier quote when one teleworker said, "The one thing that I think I've kept throughout this sort of evolution of this alternative work arrangement is that sense of gratitude for having that arrangement and unfortunately, coupled with that, is the need to overcompensate."

As well, this willingness to overcompensate may explain the findings in the study Di Martino and Wirth (1991) cite which reported that telework can lead to substantial

productivity gains of up to 60%. This particular study attributed the gains to lack of interruptions, improved concentration, increased motivation and morale, and higher energy levels achieved through the elimination of wasted time and commuting frustrations. I argue these things may also contribute to higher productivity for some teleworkers, but the last one of higher energy levels achieved via elimination of wasted time and commuting frustrations is what resonated with my study participants the most. The increase in time and energy due to the lack of a commute is a statement I heard over and over again.

With regard to working overtime, my study does confirm that some teleworkers choose to work a lot of hours, however, it does not confirm Hill et al's (1998) suggestion that teleworkers who are having difficulty negotiating a new set of boundaries between work and personal life feel as if they are working longer than the clock indicates. Rather I believe the teleworkers who decide to rededicate to work as a method of managing their tensions do in fact work a lot of hours to prove they are being productive and contributing to the organization. In addition, as mentioned earlier, many of my participants indicated they worked more hours simply because they start earlier and end later because they do not have a commute. My research results are more in line with the results of Hill et al's (2001) study, which reveals individuals with perceived job flexibility were able to work longer hours before workload negatively impacted their work-life balance. The teleworkers in my study who appeared to have rededicated to work and were working long hours did not seem to be concerned with workload or its affect on their work-life balance, but this could be due to other factors not revealed in my study or perhaps my

role as researcher and colleague may have impacted the interview itself. This is another area for potential future research.

Tremblay's (2002) case studies confirm telework is more attractive for individuals who have a spouse and children because of the reduced travel time, helping them achieve a better work-life balance. It is true that 14 out of 15 teleworkers I interviewed have children and many indicated they began teleworking to spend more time with children, so it is safe to assume Tremblay's research is accurate. But, in saying this, it is naïve to assume that individuals who do not have children are not interested in teleworking. There are many reasons a person without children may want to telework, such as relocation to an area away from an office or to participate in an activity close to home soon after the work day is over. Based on the internal communications I read from Accounting Firm ABC, this company is trying to promote flexible work arrangements such as telework to employees from all walks of life. Another benefit of telework Tremblay (2002) reports is of escaping the stressful environment of the office and its bureaucracy. Although I did have a couple of participants mention this was a benefit of working from home, my research cannot emphatically confirm this assumption.

My research aligns with many of the studies reporting the advantages of telework in terms of the balance between work and family responsibilities. First of all, all of my participants indicated telework has helped them manage work and life responsibilities. Similar to Tremblay's (2002) study, a resounding number of my participants specified that elimination of commuting to and from work alone helps them to manage responsibilities due to an increase in time and physical energy levels. Interestingly, my study confirmed Kurland and Bailey's (1999) findings that telework provides employees

with more autonomy and control over their work lives, but the result in my study is somewhat different. Kurland and Bailey indicate this autonomy allows teleworkers to work when they prefer and, in turn, improve their productivity. My study found that this increased autonomy creates a dialectical tension which is coupled with increased restriction. Although teleworkers now have the ability to work when and where they want, they feel a need to restrict themselves so they are always available to in-office colleagues and create the appearance they are being productive and not goofing off at home. One of my study participants talked about this new version of control, paired with the need to produce, as follows:

The whole thing about working from home is control. It shifts the focus of control, who has control ... so you could have all the communication you want, but you're still home and your manager can't see you or what you're doing. The sort of contract relationship here between employee and a manager is much more on trust and faith and demonstration of delivery and output.

Finally, my results also confirm Hill, Miller, Weiner, and Colihan's (1998) study findings which cite teleworkers' perceptions of increased flexibility, as well as greater productivity and higher morale. All of my study participants talked with me about how teleworking provides them with greater flexibility in their lives, allowing them to be both more productive at their jobs and better able to meet family/life needs. Specifically, one participant talked about how much telework has helped her balance work and life by commenting, "I do not believe I would be the person that I am today – the mother, the daughter, the sister – if I did not have the flexibility in my work. It has been a saving

grace for my life and my relationships.” Additionally, all of my participants reported being highly satisfied with their jobs and their ability to telework. Two participants specifically mentioned the ability to telework is a benefit they see equal to a substantial salary increase and some indicated they are still with the company mainly because of their ability to telework.

My study did not align with many of the negative effects of telework reported by previous research. According to Tremblay (2002), teleworkers were dissatisfied due to feelings of isolation, risk of working more, difficulty of motivating themselves, and work-family conflict. De-motivation and work-family conflict did not arise as issues in my study at all. Isolation did appear as part of the third tension of increased isolation and increased interaction, but it was not revealed as being completely negative. Rather teleworkers enjoyed the isolation as an outlet to complete work and, as the tension indicates, with isolation comes an increase in virtual interaction with colleagues via e-mail, Sametime, and the phone. As well, the risk of working more appeared as a result of the third praxis of rededication to work. Teleworkers who rededicated to work to manage one or more tensions did appear to work more hours, but these additional hours were not unwanted or spoken of as a bad effect of telework. Rather these teleworkers felt they were giving back to the organization as a sort of thank you for being able to telework. Again, it is possible the lack of negative effects reported during interviews may have been influenced by my joint role as researcher and colleague.

Additional negative effects of telework cited by Hill et al (1998) such as poor camaraderie, mentoring, co-worker networking, and esprit de corps did not appear in this research. Rather it appears that teleworkers at Accounting Firm ABC find other ways to

communicate with colleagues, such as interpersonal chat via Sametime, to allow them to maintain existing relationships. Hill et al (1998) also mention the blurring of the boundaries between work and family caused by teleworking does not help teleworkers balance the two. I argue that many teleworkers use the integration of work and life as a way to manage their tensions and so this helps them to set a balance that fits their needs. Other teleworkers prefer to separate work and life and so, for these individuals, an integration of the two may cause potential problems. This does not appear to be an area that can be generalized across the teleworker population, because it is influenced by work style and personality.

Earlier in the paper I asked, “How can a person try to separate work and life while at the same time try to integrate it?” After outlining all of the research results, let us look at this question in light of what we discovered about how teleworkers try to manage their tensions. Perhaps teleworkers do not actually mean to do both at the same time, but rather utilize each of the strategies at different times making it appear from an outsider as if they are trying to do both. For example, to combat the tension of increased autonomy and increased restriction, a teleworker may choose to separate work and life deciding that between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. he or she will only do work and not attempt to get home-related tasks done, so that he or she can be instantly accessible if colleagues call or Sametime. In attempting to manage the tension of desire to achieve personal objectives and desire to demonstrate commitment to work, this same teleworker may choose to integrate work and life deciding to read a work document while he or she makes dinner.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, much of the previous telework research takes one of two perspectives with regard to helping employees balance work

and life, which are as follows: (1) Telework is part of the problem, increasing conflict for employees and (2) telework is part of the solution, decreasing conflict for employees. In light of this study's results, I think my earlier assumption is correct that it depends on how the teleworker navigates and manages his or her dialectical tensions to satisfy personal and work needs. As well, a teleworker's perception of how others view him or her, influenced by varying relationships, work team culture, internal company communications, and personality may contribute to how the teleworker manages these tensions. Due to these multiple factors, balance to one teleworker will not mean the same thing as it does for another teleworker. Additionally, it may be possible that the way a teleworker deals with his or her tensions could lead to ambiguous perceptions of telework benefits and drawbacks. This last assumption is an area for potential future research that would take this study to the next level.

Limitations

My study's findings are limiting because they are based on a case study of one company, including interviews of only 15 employees. Future research is needed on this topic with more teleworkers at various companies, within and across industries, to confirm the accuracy of the Organizational Telework Tension Model. Additionally, I conducted combined staff-level and management interviews and found that, although few, there were some differences between the responses. Future investigations could segment out larger populations of staff-level and management participants to identify if there are in fact more variances in the work habits and communication styles of the two teleworking populations. A third limitation is that this research is based on the teleworker's perspective only. Interviews with in-office employees who work with

teleworkers could add an element to the research not investigated in this paper and could confirm or invalidate the teleworkers' perception they have of how others view them.

A final limitation for this study pertains to my joint role as the researcher and an employee of the Knowledge Center at Accounting Firm ABC. As an associate to many of the interview participants, my mere acquaintance may have influenced people's responses. Although I made it clear to all of my interviewees that their responses were confidential and they would not be identified if the results were shared with upper management, this concern may still have influenced participants to suppress the information they shared with me. For instance, perhaps the reasons for working overtime participants shared with me, such as gratitude for their ability to telework, also includes fear to a certain extent. Additionally, as interviews are guided by free-flowing conversation, it is possible participants' familiarity with me steered discussions toward particular topics or themes.

Directions for Future Research

Other Factors Affecting Teleworkers. Some of my participants contribute the success of their telework arrangements to working in the office a couple days a week. These comments strengthen Hall's (1990) research findings which suggest employees who work at home and in the office, as opposed to those who work at home full-time, are more likely to be satisfied. This is a topic warranting future investigation.

Many of the documents collected for this research were that of recent internal company communications, such as newsletter and website articles, promoting flexibility and telework as a mechanism for helping to balance one's professional and personally life. It is very possible that communications such as these have contributed to a company

culture accepting of telework arrangements and influencing the ways teleworkers deal with their tensions and the communications they find necessary. More research is needed across companies to investigate how much company culture plays into how teleworkers deal with dialectical tensions.

Telework and Work-Life Balance. A topic close to the teleworking sphere is that of work-life balance. Is it true the point that Di Martino and Wirth (1991) raise that telework is not for everyone? Perhaps the variances in how teleworkers deal with dialectical tensions contribute to their perceptions of telework and its influence on other aspects of their lives. This could be why some teleworkers perceive more work-life balance than others. This is yet another possible topic for future research.

Different Theoretical Frameworks. A next step for the theory of telework produced from this study is to further examine the perception teleworkers have of how others view them. I recommend studying this perception through the lens of symbolic interactionism, which suggests people respond to the meanings they create as they interact with each other (Miller, 2002). One of the important concepts within symbolic interactionism is that of the generalized other, which refers to a person's perception of how others perceive him or her. The perception teleworkers have of how others view them is the "generalized other" in symbolic interactionism. For a teleworker, this perception has an impact on how a teleworker reacts to and manages the four dialectical tensions of telework. It would be interesting to examine the extent of this impact and how a teleworker alters his or her communication with in-office colleagues in response to confirmation or invalidation of the perception. As well, it would be interesting to extend

this research by interviewing in-office employees to either confirm or nullify teleworkers' perception.

Another theoretical framework that could be used to study telework is impression management. Impression management refers to “the goal-directed activity of controlling information about a person, object, entity, idea, or event” (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007, p. 343). Due to the perception teleworkers have of how in-office employees perceive them, it is possible teleworkers use impression management strategies in their communication to influence their in-office co-workers' perceptions. The concepts of impression management and symbolic interactionism all weave together to “provide a complex picture of the interplay of individual perception and psychology, symbolic communication, and societal norms and beliefs in the social construction of society” (Miller, 2002, p. 51). It would be interesting to examine teleworkers across a variety of companies considering the theory of telework generated by this study in tandem with the concepts of symbolic interactionism and impression management to see how organizational culture and beliefs play into teleworkers' perceptions of self and influence their management of dialectical tensions and communication with in-office colleagues.

Although there are limitations and areas for future study, the findings from this study can be used to better prepare organizational employees for the challenges of telework by doing the following: (1) Educating organizational leadership and teleworkers on the potential challenges teleworkers face and how they might mitigate these challenges and (2) educating organizational employees on telework best practices.

Conclusion

A popular quote by Joseph R. Sizoo says, “In making a living today, many no longer leave any room for life” (First Congregational Church, 1986). But, statistics indicate, if flexible work options such as telework are available, people are using these programs to try and make room for life by balancing the two. Di Martino and Wirth (1991) said in 1991 the number of national teleworkers was growing by five percent annually. Experts at the time predicted telework would eventually become established as part of the growing trend toward more flexible working arrangements. Telework has slowly caught on, but not at fast a rate as predicted.

Is it possible the vary means through which organizations are trying to help their employees maintain balance between work and life are actually creating additional challenges, contributing to why telework has not yet become a norm in most companies? This research study has made an attempt at answering what the cause of this could be. The results found that teleworkers face four dialectical tensions and, depending on the strength of their perception of how others view them, they communicatively manage these tensions using one of three methods. What we have not firmly answered is how their choices contribute to their overall perception of telework and its influence on other aspects of their lives. But, because of varying personalities, life circumstances, and work situations, the answer to this question may not be the same for any two teleworkers. What this research has done is provide teleworkers with the realization that they do face challenges and offered them some ways they might be able to make telework a better personal experience.

I end with one final personal remark and area for potential future study. My experience in working and communicating with teleworking colleagues and teleworking myself on occasion has left me with the impression that regardless of how an individual deals with his or her personal tensions of working from home – whether he or she decides to separate work and life, integrate work and life, or rededicate to work – the decision will lead to a system that works for the teleworker and his or her family, even though it may not appear to be balanced as defined by society's standards. The key I found for the several teleworkers I interviewed was their satisfaction in meeting the balance or imbalance they set out to create. As one teleworker commented, "Ultimately the secret is finding what works for you and keeping focused on the fact that the reason you're doing this [teleworking] is to maintain a balance, not to overwhelm one or the other area."

REFERENCES

- Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues & dialectics*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Connolly-Ahern, C., & Broadway, S. C. (2007). The importance of appearing competent: An analysis of corporate impression management strategies on the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review, 33*, 343-345.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Di Martino, V., & Wirth, L. (1991). Working at a distance. *Worklife Report, 8*(2), 8-10.
- Dutton, W. H. (1999). The virtual organization: Tele-access in business and industry. In A. McKinlay & K. Starken (Eds.), *Shaping organizational form: Communication connection, and community* (pp. 473-497). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fallows, D. (2004). The internet and daily life: Many Americans use the internet in everyday activities, but traditional offline habits still dominate. Washington, D.C.: Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- First Congregational Church. (1986). *Heart warmers*. Marshalltown, Iowa: First Congregational Church.
- Greenblatt, E. (2002). Work/life balance: Wisdom or whining. *Organizational Dynamics, 31*(2), 177-193. Retrieved December 1, 2003, from <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=7513354&db=pbh>.
- Hall, D. T. (1990). Promoting work/family balance: An organization-change approach. *Organizational Dynamics, 18*(3), 5-14.

- Hewlett, S. A., & Luce, C. B. (2005). Off-ramps and on-ramps: Keeping talented women on the road to success. *Harvard Business Review*, *March*, 43-53.
- Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., Ferris, M., & Weitzman, M. (2001). Finding an extra day a week: The positive influence of perceived job flexibility on work and family life balance. *Family Relations*, *50*(1), 49-54. Retrieved on December 1, 2003, from <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?a990013&db=pbh>.
- Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., & Miller, B. C. (1996). Work and family in the virtual office: Perceived influences of mobile telework. *Family Relations*, *45*(3), 293-301.
- Hill, E. J., Miller, B. C., Weiner, S. P., & Colihan, J. (1998). Influences of the virtual office on aspects of work and work/life balance. *Personnel Psychology, Inc.*, *51*, 667-683.
- Hobson, C. J., Delunas, L., & Kestic, D. (2001). Compelling evidence of the need for corporate work/life balance initiatives: Results from a national survey of stressful life-events. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, *38*(1), 38-44. Retrieved on December 1, 2003, from <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=4131481&db=pbh>.
- Howard, L. A., & Geist, P. (1995). Ideological positioning in organizational change: The dialectic of control in a merging organization. *Communication Monographs*, *62*, 110-131.
- Hylmo, A. & Buzzanell, P. M. (2002). Telecommuting as viewed through cultural lenses: An empirical investigation of the discourses of utopia, identity, and mystery. *Communication Monographs*, *69*(4), 329-356.

- Kramer, M. W. (2004). Toward a communication theory of group dialectics: An ethnographic study of a community theater group. *Communication Monographs*, 71(3), 311-332.
- Kurland, N. B., & Bailey, D. E. (1999). The advantages and challenges of working here, there, anywhere, and anytime. *Organizational Dynamics*, 3, 53-67.
- McQuillen, J. S. (2003). The influence of technology on the initiation of interpersonal relationships. *Education*, 123(3).
- Meyers, N. & Hearn, G. (2007). Communication issues and communicative self-efficacy for sustainable telework: An empirical study. *Proceedings of the International Communication Association. 2007 Annual Meeting*, pp. 1-31.
- Miller, K. (2002). Interpretive Perspectives on Theory Development. In K. Miller (Ed.), *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Contexts* (pp. 46-59). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Miller, K. (2002). Theories of Communication in Developing Relationships. In K. Miller (Ed.), *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Contexts* (pp. 153-173). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Montgomery, B. M., & Baxter L. A. (1998). *Dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of organization*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pearlson, & Saunders. (2001). There's no place like home: Managing telecommuting paradoxes. *Academy of Management Executive*, 15(2), 117-128.

- Seo, M., Putnam, L. L., & Bartunek, J. M. (2004). Dualities and tensions of planned organizational change. In M. S. Poole, & A. H. Van de Ven (Eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Solomon, C. M. (1994). Work/family is a delicate balance. *Personnel Journal*, 73(5), 82.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Stohl, C., & Cheney, G. (2001). Participatory processes/paradoxical practices: Communication and the dilemmas of organizational democracy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 14(3), p349-407.
- Tracy, S. J. (2004). Dialectic, contradiction, or double bind? Analyzing and theorizing employee reactions to organizational tension. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32(2), 119-146.
- Tremblay, D. G. (2002). Balancing work and family with telework? Organizational issues and challenges for women and managers. *Women in Management Review*, 17(3/4), 157-170.
- Walther, J. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1992). Relational communication in computer-mediated interaction. *Human Communication Research*, 19(1), p50-89.

ENDNOTES

¹Pseudonyms were used for the names of the company under investigation, departments within the company, and interview participants to protect their confidentiality.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Explain to me what an ordinary work day looks like for you when you work at home. When you work in the office. (Probe for the types of things that make him/her want to finish work early and/or continue to work after 5:00 p.m. and whether it differs per location.)
2. Why did you make the decision to telework from home as part of your flexible work arrangement? (Probe for his/her teleworking history, when it started, changes in the arrangement, etc.)
3. How many days out of the week or month do you telework from home? (Probe for why he/she prefers this arrangement.)
4. What communication technologies do you use when you telework and for what types of activities? (Probe for if these technologies differ when working from home versus in the office.)
5. How do you communicate with your colleagues when you telework? Does this differ with the way you communicate when you're in the office? If so, how? (Probe for stories or examples.)
6. How does working from home affect your relationship with your spouse/significant other/relatives? (Probe for how the relationship changed since starting to telework and for stories or examples.)
7. How does working from home affect your relationships with your peer employees who work in the office? Who also work from home? (Probe for how the relationships changed since starting to telework and for stories or examples.)

8. How does working from home affect your relationship with your manager? With your subordinates? (Probe for how the relationship changed since starting to telework and for stories or examples.)
9. Do you think teleworking helps you balance your work and life responsibilities? How do you think? (Probe for stories or examples.)
10. Is there anything else you want to share in regards to teleworking that you don't think you've had an opportunity to express?

APPENDIX B

Interview Participant Demographics

Ref. No.	Home Office	Department	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	No. and Age of Children	Position
1	San Jose	eChannels	F	Caucasian	25 – 34	1: age 1	General Staff
2	Atlanta	Deployment	F	African American	45 – 60	2: ages 21, 23	Leadership
3	Toronto	Deployment	F	Indian	35 – 44	3: ages 14, 16, 18	Middle-Management
4	Pittsburg	Deployment/eChannels	M	Caucasian	25 – 34	0	General Staff
5	Cleveland	Deployment	F	Caucasian	25 – 34	2: ages 4, 1	General Staff
6	Washington DC	Knowledge Services	M	Caucasian	45 – 60	2: in twenties	Leadership
7	Cleveland	Knowledge Services	F	Caucasian	35 – 44	3: ages 4, 8, 9	Middle-Management
8	Cleveland	KnowledgeWeb	F	Caucasian	25 – 34	1: age 2	General Staff
9	Cleveland	Knowledge Services	F	Caucasian	35 – 44	2: ages 4, 6	Middle-Management
10	Cleveland	eChannels	F	Caucasian	35 – 44	4: ages 2, 4, 6, 8	General Staff
11	Cleveland	Network Coordination	F	Caucasian	25 – 34	3: ages 2, 4, 6	General Staff
12	Cleveland	Network Coordination	F	Caucasian	35 – 44	1: age 5	Middle-Management
13	Cleveland	External Business Info. Acquisition	F	Caucasian	35 – 44	2: ages 6, 8	General Staff
14	Cleveland	Knowledge Services	F	Caucasian	25 – 34	2: ages 2, 1	General Staff
15	Cleveland	KnowledgeWeb	M	Caucasian	35 – 44	4: ages 4, 6, 8, 10	General Staff

APPENDIX C

Summary of the Dialectical Tensions of Telework

Tension	Pole A	Pole B	Praxes
<p>Increased Comfort</p> <p>and</p> <p>Increased Anxiety</p>	<p>Increased comfort –</p> <p>Reduction in stress levels due to lack of commute, increase in available time to achieve work or personal tasks, not having to get ready, no rushing</p>	<p>Increased anxiety –</p> <p>Increase in stress levels to be productive, to respond quickly, to get personal things done at home, to portray a professional appearance, insecurity as if missing something</p>	<p>Integration, Separation, or Rededication</p> <p>Examples of integrating work into home life –</p> <p>Attend meetings during non-work hours, respond to e-mail late at night,</p>
<p>Increased Autonomy</p> <p>and</p> <p>Increased Restriction</p>	<p>Increased autonomy provided by a telework arrangement –</p> <p>Freedom, flexibility, and independence to walk around, multi-task at home, complete individual projects</p>	<p>Increased restriction instilled by self –</p> <p>Need to be at computer or tied to technology to be instantly accessible and to communicate with manager and/or team, more</p>	<p>take conference calls while making dinner</p> <p>Examples of separating work and home life –</p> <p>Maintain boundaries, work strictly in home</p>

		frequent touchpoints and interpersonal chat	office, set specific times to do work and home activities
Increased Isolation and Increased Interaction	Increased isolation – Quiet, helps productivity, no office politics, no live interruptions or side conversations, no being dragged into meetings, decreased social interaction limiting personal connections and knowledge-sharing	Increased communication/interaction – More electronic communication, more electronic interruptions, interpersonal chat via Sametime (instant messenger)	Examples of rededication – Overcompensate or demonstrate commitment to company in more work hours, changing in- and out-of-office days to accommodate meetings
Desire to Achieve Personal Objectives and Desire to Demonstrate Commitment to Work	Desire to achieve personal objectives – Need to get personal things accomplished, desire to work normal hours, spend time with family, take time for appointments, do home-related work/errands	Desire to demonstrate commitment to work – Need to demonstrate commitment to work as appreciation for telework arrangement, longer work hours, more frequent touchpoints, communications, etc.	

Dialectical Tensions of Telework – Tension One

Increased Comfort and Increased Anxiety		
Pole A	Pole B	Praxis
<p>Increased comfort – Reduction in stress levels due to lack of commute, not having to get ready, no rushing</p>	<p>Increased anxiety – Increase in stress levels to be productive, to respond quickly, to get personal things done at home, to portray a professional appearance, insecurity as if missing something</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate more with phone, e-mail, and Sametime • Be available on Sametime constantly • Be diligent about not having background noise on conference calls • Work longer hours • Stay logged on to computer later • Check e-mail at night • Follow up with colleagues more regularly on projects
<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that it takes a lot of stress off 	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to make sure that I'm always 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having managers and co-workers who work from a different location

<p>because, the days that I'm home, it's a little bit more relaxed because I'm not rushing around trying to get ready and get out the door and get downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't have to worry about driving and getting the baby ready to drop him off anywhere. • I don't have to fight the bear of the traffic either going or coming and I don't have to worry about if I'm going to get there in time for a meeting, because I don't have those in-transit concerns. • I don't have the stressors of being made up for work...it's less stress 	<p>accessible. If I'm going to go have lunch or run out to the doctor or whatever, I try to make sure I mark myself as "unavailable," (on instant messaging) so people aren't trying to contact me and wondering where the heck I am. I probably have some additional stresses that I put on myself that way just to make sure that I'm responsive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like to be as responsive, you know treat everyone equally, but at home I'm even more conscience of when I get pinged to respond immediately. • I think it's very unprofessional when you start to hear things in the 	<p>but not necessarily on an FWA does put the pressure on you to deliver. Like the pressure is on me I think to make working from home as seamless and possible. When we're on the phone, I don't want them to hear my son in the background. I don't want them to hear the dog barking in the background. I don't want them to Sametime me and have me respond an hour later, because I'm upstairs doing dishes. I mean I don't think that's ever happened. It puts the pressure on me to make working from home as seamless of an experience as possible.</p>
---	---	---

<p>to figure out what I'm going to wear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I log on (to the computer) in my pajamas. • It's just very convenient and I'm able to get a lot done. • When I'm working from home, it's a matter of just going a couple of steps as opposed to several miles. • I don't have to worry about whether or not I've got gas in the car • I don't have that need to get home, because I'm already home • Obviously not having a commute time to work, which sometimes 	<p>background. When all you have is that...I mean it's not the way you dress. If that's the impression and impressions count...if the impression's me and my baby crying in the background or a radio or something going on in the background, I think that can convey a very unprofessional message.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel more stressful in some way (working at home), because I see the toys that I didn't pick up beforehand or the basket of laundry there that should be folded. • There are lots of tasks and I've got way too many tasks at home and it's just the nature of being a homeowner but being 	
--	---	--

<p>takes me an hour and a half to get downtown to the office, it cuts down on a lot of time and it allows me to concentrate and then do more work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do I lose a full work day a week driving cause it's an hour each way; that's ten hours a week. That's a lot out of the schedule. • I lost three hours a day commuting. • One of the benefits is having almost what I feel like an extra two hours at the beginning and end of the day and I try to optimize on that. • Even if I work until 5:00 p.m., I can 	<p>interested in working on projects around the house. Given that there are all these things inviting me at home, that's always a ... it's more than a distraction sometimes, it's really a bother.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm easily distractible and my house is sitting there staring at me to pick up, clean, you know, a number of things. • ...I'm just in the back of my mind kind of anxious that something's going on that I don't know about. 	
--	---	--

<p>stand up and walk in the kitchen and cook dinner immediately, instead of having a 45-minute commute to get home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yea, it's kind of funny, because you roll out of bed later but I'll still be at work so much quicker because I don't have the commute.• I'm not frustrated and stressed out from the hour commute each way, which adds time onto the day. You know I can quit at 5:30 p.m. and have my kids back in my house by 6:00 p.m. and you know theoretically be eating by 6:10 p.m.• The days that I work at home ...		
---	--	--

<p>those hours I'm less stressed and I'm less tired, because I get to sleep a little later, and I'm not frustrated and stressed out from the hour commute each way, which adds time onto the day.</p>		
---	--	--

Dialectical Tensions of Telework – Tension Two

Increased Autonomy and Increased Restriction		
Pole A	Pole B	Praxis
<p>Increased autonomy provided by a telework arrangement –</p> <p>Freedom, flexibility, and independence to walk around, multi-task at home, complete individual projects</p>	<p>Increased restriction instilled by self –</p> <p>Need to be at computer or tied to technology to be instantly accessible and to communicate with manager and/or team, more frequent touchpoints and interpersonal chat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay in home office all day • Take only short breaks • Communicate availability via Sametime and Lotus Notes Calendar • Use Lotus Notes calendar to display availability, contact information, and cell phone number • Copy manager and/or team on e-mails
<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can throw in a load of laundry, that’s what I do. How long does that 	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being more obvious about the fact that you are working when you are at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that if I didn’t have Sametime, I’d feel a little bit in a black hole. I wouldn’t know ... this way I know

<p>take and then go back to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it's different is you know I can kind of multi-task at home. Like you know doing a load of laundry or cleaning up and so I think that's the good balance is when I take breaks. Whereas at work, you know I'm stuck here, I can get more done at home. • It's nice because I have a first floor laundry room and it's right next to the kitchen so, if I'm working in the kitchen, I can just run in there, throw stuff in and I can come back out. ...I tend to fall far, far behind on that kind of stuff when I'm 	<p>... making sure that they (colleagues) get communication from you and that communication can be in a lot of different ways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't take much for breaks. I have to remind myself to get up and move around, because I get very glued when I'm on the computer. • It certainly is an accommodation to be able to work from home and I don't want to give any fuel to the argument that I'm not available. • I'll have lunch and usually it's just a quick lunch. And, then it's starts again. • I generally tend to not take an hour 	<p>who's in the office. Even if someone's not responding, I know that they're around and they'll probably see my Sametime on their desktop and get back. And, I can reach out to people. (Ability to connect)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know but for some reason sitting in that normal kind of space just keeps me disconnected from all the other stuff. • Yea it's a little bit easier when you have like a set work space I think. A set place to go. You know you go in there, set up, and you just know that you're working right now. So, I think
---	--	---

<p>coming downtown everyday. It's like the last thing I want to do when I get home is put in a load of laundry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the days I'm home, xxx's gone at preschool. So, I'll walk him up to preschool at 8:20 and then I'll go back to get him at 11:00. I think it lets me feel like I'm a part of his life and I can see the teachers and I'm kind of more visible at the school. So, that's nice, it makes me feel a little bit more like I'm a part of his life. • Last Friday during my lunch hour you know I was at home, but in my 	<p>lunch, in fact, the norm is for me to go to the refrigerator, heat something up and sit down and eat at my computer ... which is probably not the best way to do things but it allows me to do a lot more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At home, I'm afraid to pop out, even though obviously I have the freedom to do it, because I don't ever want anyone to call me or you know Sametime me, instant message me, and me not be there. 	<p>it's a little bit easier for me to go in there and get organized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They (my team) just need my availability, they need my expertise when they need it and they need my responsiveness, which ... I'm quite capable of providing from home. • With Sametime, call forward, e-mail notification of voice mails ... people can reach out to me at any point in time and get to me as if I were in the office. • They don't think about you until they need you. And, if you can be there for them through a telework arrangement, at that moment that
---	--	--

<p>mind okay I've got 12 -1, I went out</p> <p>I went grocery shopping, you know and got back. You know things like that ... so it's the flexibility is just incredible, so instead of sitting here (in office) through lunch and doing work, I have a little bit more flexibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can go and sit on the deck and actually sit and eat my lunch and enjoy some rays. That is so gladdening to me. And, then go back to work. And even if it's only 10 minutes out there, I feel more refreshed. I took a break ... how lovely is that? 		<p>they need you, then it's fine. The other 8 hours they could care less about it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have Sametime so I'm able to connect with any of my colleagues as needed. • If anybody needs me, I'm easy to get a hold of. • My clients they could care less (that I work from home). As long as they know where to find me. • I'm available all the time per instant messenger. • When I have something to do, like a doctor's appointment or whatever,
--	--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are things that I just need to contact people for during the day, during the business day. It's easier for me to take care of those when I'm at home than in the office, then like I have to interrupt my office. In return, I just know that I'm going to give the firm the time I'm supposed to give it. It may just not be a linear kind of thing. • I end up when working from home being able to get up at the same time I would if I were driving into the office but, instead of having to drive, I end up being able to capitalize on that and take the dogs 		<p>even if it's in my off hours, I'll put it in my calendar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the calendar, the instant messenger ... being available, so that they can ping you. And, being able to attend meetings during the days that you're at home and working are all ways to communicate accessibility. • My way that I've always kept people aware of where I am ... I use my Notes calendar and I've always got my home-office days in there with my phone number. So they (teammates) know when they can reach me that way. • I share my phone number with the
---	--	--

<p>to the park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It really gives me a lot of freedom to manage my role here and what I need to do, but also to flex that around my home life, doctor appointments, you know, kid events, and stuff like that. • I had that flexibility also...to move things around, to work from home, to work from home a half day and then come into the office, to work from home all day then take care of whatever disruption of routine, for instance if someone's sick. • I will try to schedule like if I need to go into the doctor or if the baby 		<p>people here (in office) and you know with outside vendors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a time I had my home number right in my e-mail signature. Yea, I have my number on there and it says until 3:30 p.m. ... Fridays till 3:30 p.m. • Yea, I always try to keep it (Sametime) up. Because I do feel that there are some people who cannot work with people at home and if you're not on Sametime, they won't contact you. • I am more cognizant of putting myself on "away" on Sametime. You know, if I get up and get something,
---	--	---

<p>needs to go to the doctor ... try to do that on the days that I'm home. And, you know I can make up for that time you know by staying logged on later or logging on earlier. I think it does help balance in just getting things done in my personal life and for the baby as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You now it's no trouble for me to do laundry or wash dishes while I am on a conference call. I can actually get some stuff done around the house while I am working.• Having somebody at home during the day, means that if the plumber		<p>then I put myself on "away." If I have to go get the kids or if I'm going somewhere for an hour, then I'll put myself on "away." But I'll still be on Sametime and you can leave a message.</p>
---	--	--

<p>has to get in or if the cable guy's going to come you know, I don't have to take off work or schedule it on the weekends when usually they won't come anyway.</p>		
--	--	--

Dialectical Tensions of Telework – Tension Three

Increased Isolation and Increased Interaction		
Pole A	Pole B	Praxis
<p>Increased isolation – Quiet, helps productivity, no office politics, no live interruptions or side conversations, no being dragged into meetings, decreased social interaction limiting personal connections and knowledge-sharing</p>	<p>Increased communication/interaction – More electronic communication, more electronic interruptions, interpersonal chat via Sametime (instant messenger)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Sametime for interpersonal chat • Connect live with colleagues when in the office • Communicate more regularly with team • Put self on “away” on Sametime with an explanation to take advantage of quiet, alone time • Be diligent about being "involved" and staying connected to people
<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like in some ways I have the 	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At home, when I’m working, I much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it’s (Sametime) a two-way thing and also you can have fun

<p>ability to concentrate more because I can reduce some level of interruption. You know where I don't have people walking in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It (telework) cuts down on chit-chat, so it gives us a lot more time you know to go through all of these Daily Connections (electronic, internal company newsletter). • It's quieter. Less interruptions and I guess less phone interruption. • I actually got more done (teleworking) because there wasn't as much back and forth interaction or overhearing of even some of the office politics that go on. 	<p>prefer to talk things out than e-mail back and forth. So it's still some kind of contact. E-mail requires that I ... if I'm going to e-mail somebody, it's means I'm going to really think through something, have my thoughts together, anticipate what their future questions are, that kind of thing. And, it's harder for my brain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somebody may be working from home on Friday and we have to accommodate for someone who's working from home in Canada or you know working from home in Cleveland, so we have much more frequent touch points and the communication happens ... it's not 	<p>chatting with people ... to connect ... you can say hello. Just as you would when you stop by someone's desk and say hello.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had to constantly insert myself in to make sure I was on the right meetings list for calls, cause they all were very quick to do a lot of walk over the cube kind of communication. • So, we do a lot more of that to just not soften, but just build that presence of you know, "how are you doing? I know you lost your father a few weeks ago, so what's it like to be back. Oh, thanks for asking. Hey we
--	---	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not walking down the hall and getting pulled into a meeting. • You know maybe I get more done at home because they don't see a face, whereas when I'm in the office ... even today, people see I'm in and then they'll come over. • I'm not the kind of person that feeds over an environment of multiple people in the beginning of the project, so sometimes those downtimes at home for me are my most productive times. And, that probably brings a level of comfort out of it as well. 	<p>face-to-face as much, but it happens more often.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bulk of our team is in this location and is face-to-face, so what's different is that I'm calling people more that I might walk up to in the office. • I communicate with in-office colleagues through instant message and the phone somewhat. If it's a longer you know if it's something longer and more detailed, I would just instant message them and tell them to just give me a call. • The people on my team will Sametime me rather than call me. 	<p>gotta get rolling on this." It makes that a little easier. So, I find myself doing that a lot more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sametime keeps me connected to my team. • I like having the mix of both. You know I don't think I would want to telecommute 5 days a week and you know I don't miss being in the office 5 days a week, so I think it is a nice balance. • I tend to like give up things to my manager all the time when I'm working on them and copy them (manager) you know so that they can keep up, because you know I can't
---	--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've had some projects that you truly need you know 4 hours of time to sit down and just get it done. That's hard to do sometimes in our cubicles. So, you know ... undivided ... to just get your brain around something and get it done. So it's (teleworking) helped actually with some of the projects that I've had to work on lately. • I don't know if it's just the changing who I am a little bit slightly or where I need to get more energy to renew in isolation (at home), where it use to be definitely within people (in the office). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally (work team) I probably receive more Sametime. Um, then calling me, I think. You know sometimes they think they're bothering me because I'm at home, when I am, I'm working ... so call me at home! So they tend to Sametime me more. I'll pick up the phone. • I think you're more likely to "ping" (instant message) someone first than just pick up the phone. • I think the changes have been maybe in how much I communicate about it. And, that has generally been around who's my boss. So, it's been driven by the need to build trust with your 	<p>always go in the office like everyday and talk to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in my opinion, if you are a person who is the majority of time out of the office, you have to be more diligent about being in certain places or even involved in certain group activities, even if they're virtual ... even if it's people hearing your voice, so that you do not become someone who feels too far away from the group ... that you are a person who is seen as connected. And, again, it's not a face-to-face thing, it's connectivity. • even if your job is a heads down job and you can do it and it's self
---	--	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do miss the human ... I like people, so I miss the human interaction. • I like to be in a place with a lot of people and if I'm at home with my laptop and my empty house, I get ancy. Even if what I'm doing still wouldn't require me to interact, I just like to be around people. • I like the experience of coming into work, of being around noise and action and, for me, teleworking is quiet and boring and you know makes me itchy. 	<p>supervisor over that arrangement.</p>	<p>directed and it tends to be alone. Or, maybe you're doing a lot of virtual locations, particularly from a management standpoint and peers outside your own working group who know you intimately, you have to make a concerted effort to figure out ways to stay connected to that larger group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I put little reminders in my calendar ... coffee or you know go say hi to xxx, so people don't feel too disconnected from me. • Sametime keeps me connected to my team • the days that I'm home, I mean like I
---	--	--

		said I'm still in contact with most of them (colleagues) all throughout the day.
--	--	--

Dialectical Tensions of Telework – Tension Four

Desire to Achieve Personal Objectives and Desire to Demonstrate Commitment to Work		
Pole A	Pole B	Praxis
<p>Desire to achieve personal objectives</p> <p>– Need to get personal things accomplished, desire to work normal hours, spend time with family, take time for appointments, do home-related work/errands</p>	<p>Desire to demonstrate commitment to work – Need to demonstrate commitment to work as appreciation for telework arrangement, longer work hours, more frequent touchpoints, communications, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set personal boundaries • Work in evenings • Change in-office days to accommodate meetings and/or project work
<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the children’s needs I think became too much to handle for me to have to commute to and from work ... I just said, no, proposed that I work 2 days from home on an official work from home 	<p>Quotes:</p> <p>Working long hours ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don’t take much for breaks. I have to remind myself to get up and move around, because I get very glued when I’m on the computer. • I’ll have lunch and usually it’s just a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I guess that on one hand too, that (go in to office for meetings) may be something that I do because I feel personally that I don’t want people to feel that my arrangement infringes on them. So I don’t want them to have any excuse ... you know, so to speak.

<p>arrangement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm a single parent. And, one of the reasons why I really felt the need to was because I didn't have any other support. So, it began sort of as a result of that. But, it became very evident that, even if I had a partner, this would have been the ideal choice for me especially during the formative years of the children and the demands on their school. That was the biggest thing for me ... be there when they left for school, be there when they came home to support them with their homework. • That was part of the reason I 	<p>quick lunch. And, then it (work) starts again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I work more at night as well. So like I finish at 5:00 p.m. but there might be something I want to check up on. So, I leave my computer on in the office and then we'll have dinner and (the kids) will go to bed. And, then I'll go back to the desk and continue for a little while or check my e-mail or whatever. • I think that one of the things about teleworking is that you don't get enough exercise because you get stuck behind your desk! • Right now I work a lot of hours! On average, over 50 hours a week. 	<p>So, I tend to bend probably to meet needs, sometimes, you know.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On my days off being able to make a meeting or being able to make a call or participate when I'm at home, has had a very positive effect because there's no negative connotation that well when she's gone, she's gone and we don't have any access to her. It provides easy access and you know it doesn't have to be a whole lot but when it happens it happens and people feel like it's seamless. • I try to be very flexible. If I need to be here for a meeting, I'll switch out my days.
---	--	---

<p>originally did it, so that I could go pick up my daughter earlier and have more time you know with my little one</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of my reasoning for doing it too though was that my spouse travels a fair amount too, so for us it just helps us balance our stress truthfully • Number one with the realization that this is such a generous offering from the firm that there is no reason not to try it out, number two, being a mom at the time I really didn't want to be away from my son all that much, so it was something that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefit that the employer, the firm, gets is that I'm so much more willing to work more hours. • Sometimes I will work later in the evening or you know not sign off or log off right at 5:30 p.m. • An ordinary work day when I work from home is I'll log in at 7:30 a.m. • I work a lot like after the kids go to bed too. • I find that I tend to work through lunch a lot. • When I'm working from home, I'm on (computer) way earlier than when I'm working in the office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I am done working, Sametime is off. You know cause sometimes I'll put in a couple of hours over the weekend on something, but even if I am truly working over the weekend, I will rarely, rarely, rarely get onto Sametime. Because then at that point is does, work does become an intrusion. If I leave Sametime on so that anybody can get me anytime they want, then it is crazy, then it is pretty stupid of me. • I truly have a personality that, in particular with work, I can shut work off really easily and a lot of people can't do that. A lot of people
---	---	--

<p>I felt emotionally I really needed and number three I just recognize that it's a very valuable tool that could help to manage day care challenges and things like that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So then, of course, that (working more) takes its toll on your body. And, so, in the end I ended up working out a schedule that made sense for me so that I gave my time to the kids and to my home whenever necessary, but also to my work. And, that means unfortunately spreading out my work time throughout the day so the day seems really long and it's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I'm home though, it's hard for me to turn my computer off even on weekends. <p>Reasons for working long hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The one thing that I think I've kept throughout this sort of evolution of this alternative work arrangement, is that sense of gratitude for having that arrangement and unfortunately, coupled with that, is the need to overcompensate. • It's (working long hours) much more internally driven for me. If I sit down at the beginning of the year and I have a sense for what it is that I'm going to achieve ... how much I work is driven 	<p>mentally take work home and can't leave the environment and they live their work even if they're not at work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think if you have measures in place to say, you know I think I'm doing this a little bit too much, I must shut down my computer completely. • at the end of my day, whether it's 8 o'clock, or 6 o'clock, or 4 o'clock, I shut down my computer instead of keeping it on, because the temptation is there to, when there are down times, instead of going and reaching for a book you go to your computer and check your e-mail
---	---	--

<p>because it is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to facilitate dropping my kids off at daycare without substantially adding another 3 hours to their day, which is already 8 to 9 hours in daycare. Because of my husband's schedule, he takes 3 days, I take 2. So that's a way for us to manage that • I can go and sit on the deck and actually sit and eat my lunch and enjoy some rays. That is so "gladdening" to me. And, then go back to work. And even if it's only 10 minutes out there, I feel more refreshed. I took a break ... how 	<p>by what I need to get done, more than it is feeling pressured by somebody else to get that done, I think. I would say it's more goal oriented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel a certain pressure when you're working remotely, because people can't see you and you feel like you need to produce. There's a certain feeling there. So, I tend to get really focused on my job. • I don't feel any pressure (to work more hours). It's more a convenience. • my feeling is that if my manager trusts me to send me home and let me do what I want and if he trusts me to say "yea, take the afternoon off to go to 	<p>cause you want to stay on top of things and then it becomes all consuming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to set up appointments in advance, know which days I would have to balance or kind of adjust my schedule. • one thing we do as a family I mean we feel very strongly about eating dinner together. So, I mean, at 5 o'clock truly I'm going to cut off. And, you know, we'll be getting dinner going and having dinner together. So, if I've got to do work later, it happens after dinner. • You do have to set those boundaries,
---	--	--

<p>lovely is that, right?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are things that I just need to contact people for during the day, during the business day. It's easier for me to take care of those when I'm at home than in the office, then like I have to interrupt my office. • I burned out (working in office) and I realized that I didn't have any work/life balance. • It definitely helped me balance my life, especially after having a baby (laughing). ... canceling out commuting, you save a lot of time and energy. It's not just time it's energy as well. 	<p>the doctor or do whatever you need to do," I don't want to violate that trust. It is on me to do what I have to do, work as late as I have to work, get up as early as I have to, work over the weekend. It is my responsibility now to hold up my end of the bargain and deliver.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility (telework) is a wonderful thing that it allows you to do this stuff, but it creates if you're honest and doing the right thing, it should create in you a tremendous feeling of responsibility to the people who have given you what I consider to be really a gift. 	<p>definitely. It's easier to do on my home office days, because of the added time that I get out of eliminating my commute time.</p>
---	--	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolutely (helped balance), I do not believe I would be the person that I am today ... the mother, the daughter, the sister ... if I did not have the flexibility in my work. It has been a saving grace for my life and my relationships. • I know one team member who goes and digs in the garden on breaks when she's at home. You know, go, do what you need to do, so when you come back, you're refreshed. And, that's embraced. So, I don't feel like I have to lie about or hide that I'm, you know I'm taking a break. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He's (manager) very appreciative when I work or if I take an important call at home on my day off. I mean it's nice, because he doesn't need to do that, but he obviously is very appreciative of the work I do. So it's not a pressure at all, it's more the opposite. I want to. • Since I'm already home, if I don't have anything either pulling for my attention or that I want to attend to, then I'm happy just working. • I find work satisfying. • I work a lot of hours because feeling like I'm needed, feeling like I'm missing something. 	
---	--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I've got something going on on the work day, if I need to be flexible about my off day and I just need to jump online for a call or an hour to check in with somebody to send a document. It really gives me a lot of freedom to manage my role here and what I need to do but also to flex that around my home life, doctor appointments, you know, kid events and stuff like that. • What it ultimately ends up doing is helping me be successful consistently and it also takes away a lot of stress of the work life, because I know if something comes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, somewhat I'm doing in the office, somewhat not, because you don't turn off knowledge thinking, you know. You think about some things. So if that's (computer) up and something happens, I have more opportunity to capture it. • It's (computer) like beckoning "wo, wo, wo, wo" come to me! You know, just to check e-mail. • Cause it's (the computer) already on my desk, it's there, so I'll check. • You get stuck behind your desk! And, it's so easy for that to happen. Especially, working 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., you find that at 1 o'clock in 	
---	---	--

<p>up I can stay home and I can just log on and it works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working from home again was a very positive experience, because it gave me the flexibility to work around situations etc. around kids if someone's sick or if the routine is off suddenly. • It has balanced ... like I said before, I don't think I could work, doing what I'm doing you know without the flexible work arrangement. Yea, I think it's a win-win for our company. You know if you have someone who's a hard worker and takes it seriously and then it's a 	<p>the afternoon you find that you haven't taken a break, because you don't really have anywhere to go, apart from going to make a cup of tea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the beginning, it started out as being just grateful. You were grateful that you had the opportunity (to telework), so you didn't want to lose the opportunity so you tended to work more. • The fact that I have my computer there, I can run and check my e-mail at any point in time. On weekends my computer is up and running. • I want to work hard; I want to do better because of it (opportunity to telework). 	
---	---	--

<p>win-win for the person's personal life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the flexibility to work from home so that I'm closer and that those services (medical) are more accessible to me, that helps to really balance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes when people will get right back to me and say, "What were you doing up at 12 midnight or you know." But, again, I think I don't do that on purpose, it's more just getting things done. So, I think it's just being able to demonstrate that you are really committed to your job. I think that is the biggest thing. Then I think people don't sense it (telework) as so you know an issue. • There's no pressure to work overtime but if I'm finishing a project or an e-mail, I'll keep on working. Where if I'm in the office, I'll be like I have to get home to you know, my wife will be 	
---	---	--

	<p>leaving for school in the evening, so I have to get home quickly to be there for the kids. I don't have to do that when I'm working from home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Saturday, I sign on (computer) in the morning. You know sometimes people are working on the weekends and you'll pick up messages. I'll check it now and then during the day to see if anybody's sent me something. I don't necessarily spend a lot of time doing it, but you know so why turn the thing off if something comes up then I may want to know about it.• Why work overtime or on the weekends? The macho answer would	
--	--	--

be because I'm a workaholic! The real answer is probably insecurity. If I really get down to the trucks of it, I'm just in the back of my mind kind of anxious that something's going on that I don't know about.

- Part of it (working overtime) is the allure of control and of power and a big span in your scope and sphere of influence across the world or 24/7 or you know whatever, it's an ego thing probably.
- You don't have all the pressure like "oh, I have to beat the traffic out of downtown." So, you know, I actually probably work like an extra half hour

	<p>when I work from home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm the kind of person that just likes to kind of know what's on the horizon. So, I'm going to probably address the ones (e-mails received after dinner) that are urgent ... if I felt it was extremely urgent, I'd deal with it. But, at least I feel like I know what's on the horizon for the next day.	
--	--	--

Integrate Work and Home Life, Separate Work and Home Life, or Rededication to Work		
Alternative One	Alternative Two	Alternative Three
<p>Increased unification of work into home life –</p> <p>Attend meetings during non-work hours, respond to e-mail late at night, take conference calls while making dinner</p>	<p>Increased separation of work and home life –</p> <p>Maintain boundaries, work strictly in home office, set specific times to do work and home activities</p>	<p>Rededication to Work –</p> <p>Overcompensate and/or demonstrate commitment to company in more work hours, change in- and out-of-office days to accommodate meetings</p>
<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I keep things very separate, although there are times when a stray one-year old makes it into my office and says “dah, dah, dah, dah” in the middle of a conference call (laughing). And, I’m like “stop!” 	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the things that I am seeing that definitely kind of gradually happened over years is that work is part of my home life and became a much more pervasive influence. • It is very easy to have that 	<p>Quotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimately the secret is finding what works for you and keeping focused on the fact that the reason you’re doing this is to maintain a balance, not to overwhelm one or the other area.

<p>Because I'm very conscious, I don't want things ... I want to be very professional and I don't want to have children in the background or the radio in the background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, when I'm working I tend to go into this "work" mode and I really don't like to be disturbed about things other than work. I just like to focus on work. • As of late, I've kind of gone more toward a standard schedule of certain days that I try to work from home, so that it's just ... more so for the people that I work with. So that they know which days 	<p>(teleworking) become more consuming than what the intention was, which is to balance your work and home life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work kind of creeps into your evening a little bit, but that's ... it's not a bad thing. I don't feel like I have to do that, but I just do it cause I like to I guess. • I would rather let things spill over into, you know, I don't have any problem with "spillage." I like that ... "spillage" is good! • No, (don't feel pressure to keep computer on) It's really crazy, I know what it (computer) is meant for, and once I turn it on I don't really feel the need to turn it off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you've gotta be careful though, because if you pull more of those kinds of things (home responsibilities) into your life because you have the option of being at home, then it becomes an evasion on your professional life. So, it takes a lot of self discipline to manage that and keep your mind from becoming too distracted. • most people who are not within the CBK who I'm working with don't even realize if I'm in the office or if I'm at home. They don't know where I am. • I've had people tell me that they
---	---	---

<p>I'm here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing when I'm going to be working. On my Lotus Notes calendar, if you go in it will say on this date, xxxx's working from 8 – 11, you can contact her and I'll have it blocked out. 		<p>don't notice I'm on a telecommute and that's good, that's exactly the result I want. So, I hope that it has a ... you know you hate to say that it has not impact, but I hope it has no impact on my colleagues, personally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to have that balance so that when I'm working, I'm focused on work and I'm not trying to do other things. • I'll go get the kids, leave it (computer) on, and then I might check e-mail a little later or do some other things, but I try not to get into that habit when the work day expands too much when I'm at home,
---	--	--

		<p>because I'll want that same level of work to be done you know on the days that I'm not doing that you know I can see where that gets to be a slippery slope.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think you have to have boundaries to be able to spend time with your family. It's the same thing at work, cause you have to walk your talk. So, if you say 8 to 11, you have to be on the computer and available during that time. I think that's (setting boundaries) how you manage a balance. But, it's not always perfect.
--	--	--