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Discovering Work:

A Symbolic Interactionist Study of Telework

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ABSTRACT

Teleworking has been studied in many ways. This project strays from the typical study and uses a symbolic interactionist framework to study how teleworkers and non-teleworkers interpret working from home. This project is conceptualized as an exploratory, qualitative study seeking to expand the awareness of how the experience of telework is interpreted by teleworkers and non-teleworkers. The study is inductive and seeks to develop theory from fieldwork.

The method of in-depth interviewing was used to access the sensemaking of thirteen teleworkers and three non-teleworkers. During the study it became apparent that what was being uncovered was as much about work as telework. With this discovery, Giddens' (1984) structuration theory was applied to analyze the results at an institutional level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST STUDY OF TELEWORK

1.0 Introduction

> *Then I scream from the top of my lungs, what's goin' on.*
>
> From the song "What's Up" by the 4 Non Blondes.

Decisions are being made to 'telework' by both organizations and individuals. These decisions are being made with simplistic views of what telework is or is not. Central to the idea of teleworking is the teleworker. The teleworker makes sense of the telework phenomenon and this phenomenon changes to suit this understanding. Providing a richer view of what the teleworkers 'do' may help both those exploring the idea of teleworking and those already engaging in teleworking to gain a deeper understanding of the telework phenomenon and its implications for work.

The academic and popular understanding of telework is a miscellany of ideas. The writers on telework have highlighted varied characteristics of teleworking. However, are these characteristics in fact the ones experienced in the everyday life of a teleworker? Perhaps we need to go deeper into the realm of teleworking and explore the experiences of the everyday teleworker. It is only by asking the individuals who telework and recognizing that multiple views of telework may exist that we will access rich and varied meaning on the effect of telework on everyday life. Further, by working with individuals and examining the everyday life experience of the teleworker, issues related to telework that fail to surface in the literature and that need to be considered may be uncovered.

Telework, a flexible work arrangement allowing workers in organizations the ability to work from home, has been embraced by companies, practitioners, and academics as a progressive work arrangement. It is often described as a new way of working that

offers workers and organizations alike the potential to reach new levels of excellence and perhaps enhance the work experience. Telework has been painted as a new way of working and the number of organizations who 'do it' is expanding rapidly. The Gartner Group (1996) estimates that in 1997 there will be fifteen million U.S. teleworkers and eight million European teleworkers. They also predict that more than eighty percent of organizations will have at least fifty percent of their staff involved in some form of remote access by 1999. As such, companies are looking for 'how-to' guidelines and large numbers of people see themselves as pioneering a new way of working.

But is it really a new way of working? Are teleworkers somehow different from other workers? What is "it" that the Gartner Group is counting? Why do we even care? The move to working from home and working with distant people is old and even commonplace now. So who are the teleworkers? Who gets to work in this manner? Why is telework considered a new way of working? Is telework different from work? Is something happening with telework that is changing the fundamental nature of work? What distinguishes telework, why does it need distinguishing and what are the consequences of the distinction? Finally, why is it even important to answer all these questions?

1.1 Telework Literature Review

Telework has become a furiously researched subject. The telework rhetoric typically deals with the visible issues of remote work locations and technology and how to use them effectively (Gordon, 1988; Olson, 1983). Two approaches are prominent. The first research approach is prescriptive. It is primarily concerned with how to implement successful telework programs. The research includes how to choose effective teleworkers (Belanger, 1996), program advice for managers (Ford, 1991; Hartman et al., 1992; Wilkes, 1994), and frameworks for determining the suitability of implementing telework in an organization (Fritz et al., 1994). The second research approach examines the impacts of telecommuting (telecommuting is an often-used

substitute for the term telework) on society, organizations, and individuals. The data for this research typically comes from surveying individuals who fall within a particular definition of telework or working closely with the management of an organization known to telework. Typically cited benefits of telecommuting for society are: less air pollution, less crowding in cities, lower demand for fossil fuels and less wear and tear on highway transportation systems (Humble, Jacobs and Van Sell, 1995). These perspectives are often gleaned from government reports and included in research as fact; whereas, it is in fact often speculation. Organizations assumably benefit from productivity gains and lower rates of absenteeism and turnover.[1] Benefits for individuals derived from survey data are: improved quality of life at work and the quality of life away from work by enhancing the telecommuter's concentration, flexibility, and control over time. Disadvantages derived from survey data include isolation and the lack of credibility regarding work status (Humble et al., 1995; Shamir and Salomon, 1985; Skyrme, 1994). Telecommuters, typically but not unanimously, report more time with the family, more leisure time, lower transportation and clothing costs, and lower stress levels. Further research that covers sociological issues includes such things as increasing the communication effectiveness of teleworkers (Chadwick, 1996), examining the risks of exploitation for those working at home (De Villegas, 1989; Di Martino and Wirth, 1990), or examining the social and environmental impact of working at home (Gurstein, 1990). Raghuram et al. (1996) was one interesting study that explored how telework affected organizational and individual-level outcomes such as productivity, satisfaction, and commitment. The researchers did in-depth interviews of teleworkers, their managers, and their subordinates. However, this study differed from other studies in how it examined the problem. The Raghuram study (1996) expressed the idea of working in another location using the construct of distance. First, they reviewed historical developments in work and then demonstrated how distance has emerged as a core operative in telework. Distance was further explored as

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[1] The magnitude of productivity gains varies from study to study. Typically, the range of gains reported is from 10 to 200 percent. Interestingly, only productivity gains have been reported.

a construct and then used to explore the organizational implications of telework. This study was illuminating both in its examination of organizational implications and in highlighting the importance of moving past the conventional to gain insight into telework. The Raghuram (1996) study offers a useful example of using a different lens to examine a subject.

As an organization or individual interested in pursuing information about the "how" of telework the sources are extensive. Information on telework is found in books, academic articles, practitioner conferences, newsletters, the Internet, on-line forums, and discussion groups (CompuServe, AOL, Prodigy). However, the review of literature reveals a paucity of empirical research and a lack of theoretical foundation. Additionally, what is missing from the literature is an understanding of how teleworkers make sense of the teleworking experience. There is an absence of understanding about how the teleworkers adapt and adjust to working at home. Indeed, unless we explore the everyday life of the teleworkers themselves how can we truly understand the telework experience?

Telework research has typically been conducted in a positivist fashion and has adopted a managerialist tone. Positivism is a philosophical system based on the assumption that there is an objective truth existing in the world that can be revealed through the scientific method where the focus is on measuring relationships between variables systematically and statistically (Cassell and Symon, 1994). Researchers seek to explain and predict what happens in the teleworking world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituents. This is counter to the interpretivist philosophy that one can only 'understand' by occupying the frame of reference of the participant in action. Telework itself can be studied using either framework but the majority of current research has used the positivist approach. In fact, a substantial body of research exists on telework. Part of the reason for a positivist approach might be telework's link to the pragmatic world of business where quantitative and 'objective' data is preferred in making strategic decisions about how to implement telework

programs. The current research on telework has been mainly studied from the organizational perspective. Surveys, detailed questionnaires, and interviews are common methods used. Positivist case studies of organizations represent a particularly popular method (Hughson and Goodman, 1986; PonTell, 1996; Skyrme, 1994). Many theories have focused on the rational or individual nature of teleworking and much insight has purportedly been gained about teleworking. Concerns for efficiency, effectiveness, and implementation have been based on logical and scientific concepts (Chadwick, 1996; Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Ramsower, 1985). These studies offer useful and practical information. However, these studies do not capture what telework means to the individuals who do it nor is it their purpose to do so. Yet we still need to examine the meaning of teleworking by talking with those who 'do it'. But before we can do that we need to understand how to distinguish telework from other work.

1.2 What is [not] Telework?

Many authors have highlighted the lack of a clear definition for telework (Hartman et al., 1992). Authors argue that the current research lacks a taxonomy for identifying and studying different types of telework (Fritz et al., 1994; Hartman et al., 1992). For example, telework could encompass mobile workers, individuals who work from home, and individuals who work from satellite offices. To confuse things further there is no consistent vocabulary. Many authors (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Heilmann, 1988) use the term telework interchangeably with other terms such as telecommuting, distance work, or remote work. Telecommuting is often the term used in the literature and practice. However, the word telecommuting highlights the importance of the commute and not the work itself. 'Telework' describes the phenomena more appropriately as understanding 'work' is important in gaining an understanding about telework. Regardless of the terminology used, confusion about telework still exists.

There are many definitions of telework. Fritz et al. (1994) define telework as "the geographical distribution of work by an organization enabled by information

technology." McQuarrie (1994) defines the term telecommuting as "a work arrangement in which employees work in their homes and 'commute' to their offices through the use of such technologies as computers, modems, fax machines, and electronic mail." Kraut (1987), who chooses to use the word telework, uses a definition similar to McQuarrie's. Kraut (1987) defines telework as "the use of computers and telecommunications equipment to do office work away from a central, conventional office." Ford's (1995) more narrow definition of telecommuting is "the substitution of communications technology for travel to a central work location." Other authors simply view telework as an innovation (Ruppel, 1996), as work patterns with flexibility in location and time (Bailyn, 1988) or as remote work arrangements (Hartman et al., 1992). These remote work arrangements can include working at a client site, on the airplane, at a hotel, from the home, or from offices in suburb locations, sometimes called telecentres.

It is useful to examine in some detail a definition used in the literature. Di Martino and Wirth's (1990) definition of telework is often appropriated by other authors and offers a good example of a typical definition of telework;

> "Telework is a form of work in which (a) work is performed in a location remote from central offices or production facilities, thus separating the worker from personal contact with co-workers or any others there; and (b) technology enables this separation by facilitating communication."

Within this broad definition, Di Martino and Wirth (1990) distinguish two main types of telework:

- telework performed in a location near or in the worker's home;
- telework performed in a business-determined location. These are often called telecentres. This form of telework is primarily aimed at cost reductions or better servicing of the market and includes telecentres, client sites, and offices in suburb locations.

There is some pattern to all of the definitions with an emphasis on remote work arrangements, flexibility, the use of information technology, location, and organizational employees. These can be distilled to the three main themes of location, organization, and technology. However, there is ambiguity and no real consensus in describing telework. Depending on the author's emphasis telework can include and mean many things. For example, if an organizational employee works away from the office at a client site, this fits the definition of telework but is rarely considered as 'teleworking'.

Di Martino and Wirth provide a useful definition because it encompasses three critical constructions used within the telework literature: location, organization, and technology. Many other authors along with the authors mentioned earlier also use similar definitions that contain these three themes (Fritz et al., 1994; Hughson and Goodman, 1986; van Sell and Jacobs, 1994). Examining the different assumptions made in defining telework may provide some clarity on what telework can encompass and where the assumptions lead.

First, telework is viewed as being restricted to a particular location other than the traditional office (Belanger, 1996; Ford and Butts, 1991; Gordon, 1988). This office can be at a client site, at a hotel, in a car, at the home, at a neighborhood office complex, or perhaps a combination of all, including the office (Hartman et al., 1992; Kraut, 1988). However, it seems the assumption is typically made that the location the work is being done at is in the home (Bailyn, 1988; Fritz et al. 1994; Wilkes et al., 1994). This is particularly true for those examining an organizational perspective. Thus, telework is mainly concerned with the home environment as the main location of work other than the office.

Second, telework is concerned with organizational employees (Gordon, 1988; Hughson and Goodman; Skyrme, 1994; Turban and Wang, 1995; Wilkes et al., 1994). Working

from home is not necessarily teleworking unless you are an employee of an organization (Hartman et al., 1992). The scenario of a consultant working for a large firm that employed this individual's services but, in fact, these services were provided from the home would fall outside the realm of what is typically defined as telework. These individuals may do work 'for' an organization but it can be argued that they are not part of the corporate body itself. The same would be true if an individual was self-employed and used the home as a base office. Focusing on organizational employees as part of defining telework excludes the category of self-employed home workers because they do not work for an organization. Self-employed home workers are an important category themselves and some of the experiences they have would be similar to organizational teleworkers, but there would also be many differences, and they are typically placed outside the popular realm of telework research. Thus, being an organizational employee is an important part of the understanding of telework.

Third, technology is perceived as the enabler of telework. Many authors view information technology as the enabler of working anywhere at anytime (Bailyn, 1988; Belanger, 1996; Stanko, 1994; Turban and Wang, 1995; Van Sell and Jacobs, 1994) That is, technology offers the capability to "commute" to the office (Mokhtarian and Salomon, 1994; Robertson, 1989). E-mail, telephones, computers, and fax machines are the tools that allow work to be done anywhere (Kraut, 1988). Employing technology to do the work from a location other than the office is a critical component of what is perceived as telework. Importantly, it is the connection of computers to a larger network that is often viewed as the impetus in moving the work from a central office. Many proponents of telework feel that without technology telework would not exist. Thus, technology is considered an important component of telework.

Depending on how one examines and defines each of these constructions determines how narrow or broad the resulting definition becomes. Still, even with the broadest definition the current understanding of telework further precludes a variety of work. Telework seems to be concerned with wage work. Other work being done at home is

necessarily excluded. Moreover, telework is typically described as work that deals exclusively with information and is typically white-collar work (Shamir and Salomon, 1985). It is unlikely that a construction worker could telework. Even within the realm of white-collar jobs it is deemed that several categories are not suitable to teleworking. For example, management often is expected to be in the office so as to be accessible to employees. One must also distinguish between high-level jobs and low-level clerical jobs when investigating telework because those in low-level jobs are more likely to be exploited (Bailyn, 1988). Wilkes et al. (1994) suggest that appropriate policies and procedures should be developed to determine which workers and jobs are candidates for teleworking. So if telework is seen as a new way of working, it seems to marginalize other categories of work and workers. For example, some studies suggest the need for workers to have appropriate behavioral characteristics in order to be successful teleworkers (Fritz et al., 1994). Also, as discussed earlier, it appears that telework subscribes to particular constructions. For example, most of the telework literature, practitioner articles, and organizational documents use at least one of the three constructions of location, organization, and technology when defining telework.

Focusing on location, organization, and technology results in missing some other worthwhile aspects of telework, such as examining the time division between time spent working in the office and time spent working at home. Within these descriptions and definitions of telework there was no specific mention of how much time needed to be spent away from the office to be considered a teleworker. However, to be explicit, a person's entire job does not need to be seen as telework. Rather, telework should describe part of the job. There was some understanding that it would be a regular work day that was spent working from home. That is, the day spent working away from the office had to be a weekday. Working on a weekend from the home, although similar in form to telework was actually not considered telework. Some studies (Hartman et al., 1992) noted that using technology to facilitate overtime work after spending the day in the office should also not be considered telework. Moreover, the individuals doing this type of work and the organization facilitating it would probably not view this activity as

teleworking. The telework working arrangements vary depending on how much time is spent working in an office and how much time is spent working elsewhere. Thus, an additional construction of telework that may affect how telework is experienced is time spent at the office and time spent working elsewhere.

Telework itself, upon first glance, seems to be organizational employees working some of the time from home. Still, researchers have struggled to subscribe to a comprehensive definition of telework and in doing so complicated what might be simply defined. It has to be realized that telework itself is not some 'real' phenomenon but one that is entirely our imaginary construction with multiple inclusions and exclusions. My purpose is not to explore the contradictions surrounding the term telework as argued by academics or advocates of telework. Rather, I want to try to understand the common-sensical understanding of telework in a manner that considers how teleworkers construct their notion of telework. Simply, I want to delve into how teleworkers themselves experience 'telework'.

Merely choosing one definition and focusing my research to fit the scope of that definition would have been one simple approach. However, upon investigating the descriptions of telework I determined that the multitude of meanings would make this line of action problematic. I would necessarily choose a definition that privileges one particular notion of telework when what I want is to have the respondents I interviewed define the notions of telework important to them. Moreover, even though the definitions privilege one aspect of telework, they also hold multiple meanings. This plurality of meaning is part of the problem.

Depending on the definition chosen, telework can include several work arrangements. Instead of becoming caught in the spiraling argument that occurs when we pursue this line of reasoning, I have decided to focus on people who defined themselves as teleworkers. These individuals have an implicit definition of telework. To them telework appears to be the following types of work:

Telework is a working arrangement where individuals who are organizational employees divide their work time between an office location and the home.

This broad definition captures two essential constructions of telework recognized earlier and, notably, leaves one out. First, it captures the concept that telework is concerned with individuals who work for an organization. Second, these individuals divided their work time between the office and the home. This division of time is their decision, although it can be and is influenced by many things. Technology was not seen as a critical component of teleworking. Technology may facilitate the ability to work from home by providing communication mediums and computers that help do the work. However, it seemed that technology's importance is limited to its role as a tool and not an essential component of the experience of telework.

As described, the current literature holds important assumptions in the way it defines telework. It seems that one foundational aspect of the telework phenomena is that the location of work often is the home. Yet, work and home are often perceived as separate realms with separate activities. It is perhaps useful therefore to look closely at these phenomena as a starting point in learning how telework is understood by teleworkers. Moreover, it is important to look carefully at the literature about work and home as a means of framing the teleworker's reactions.

If we understand the concepts of work and home we can examine what symbols teleworkers use to understand working at home, determine how telework is experienced, and how this experience may be different from other work. Nippert-Eng's (1995) study on the boundaries of home and work and how they are negotiated will help us pursue these answers.

1.3 Work

Individuals perceive work differently. One of the most common questions we ask when we first meet someone is "what do you do for work?" or "what do you do for a living?" In the questioning there is the implicit understanding of work as an activity and as a location. We often have the expectation that "we go to work to do the work". For example, stating that I work *at* the university of Calgary suggests that not only does the university of Calgary pay my wages but that I physically travel there to do my work. Work is also often thought of as something done for money. We do not work for free. The exception of school homework (or graduate work for that matter) comes to mind. However, this is done with the hope that it will eventually lead to work with wages. In fact, school homework may be a child's first experience with the idea of work as something tedious, requiring effort, and taking away from other "fun" activities. Moreover, in spite of the consciousness-raising efforts of feminists, "work" is generally equated with "wage-work". It referentially excludes domestic, non-paid labor, and must be preceded by the qualifier "volunteer" when done outside the home for no wage (Nippert-Eng, 1995). Also, a person's work is often used to help us decide a person's worth. If we are introduced to a veterinary doctor we may be impressed by their love for animals and that they have dedicated so much to helping animals or we may think what a foolish occupation. Without digressing too much this example highlights the importance of personal beliefs in determining the worth or value of something.

Work itself symbolizes a healthy economy. The assumption of many world leaders is that if we all are working then the 'economy', another complicated symbol, will thrive. Work is also deemed to be honorable. Schools at all levels are geared to educating in order to employ. In fact, degrees in history, psychology and the arts, to name a few, are labeled purposeless by both those who take them and those in other more practical faculties like engineering or commerce. I do not wish to argue about the value of a degree; but rather, I want to highlight the perspective of education as the bridge to

employment. In today's society, work has become the predominant feature in shaping who we are and what others think of us.

Work is a fascinating subject and one not easily bound and partitioned. Instead it can be looked at in many frames. Work does not refer to particular types of activities. "One man's work is another man's play" is an appropriate if somewhat overused adage. Work is often understood in comparative terms. We leave work to go 'home' or to go and 'pursue leisure'. This is emphasized when we look at weekend pursuits. In many cases work is a means to an end. It is commonly believed that happiness depends on leisure. Aristotle wrote in his *Ethics*, "Because we occupy ourselves so that we may have leisure, just as we make war in order that we may live at peace." In modern times this means working for the weekend. We work so that we may enjoy our leisure time and our home.[2] Even if our work is pleasurable we work so that we may make money to do other pleasurable activities. Devry, a technical school, has created an advertising campaign, "It's as much fun as work can get," that accents society's assumption that work is not usually fun.

1.4 Work and Home

Work represents our public persona (Goffman, 1959). We typically dress and act differently when we go to work than when we stay at home. Home is where we can be ourselves.[3] Home is where we utterly relax and do anything we want. Home is our private persona. At work, we control our emotions, we try to remain alert, we are presentable and have specific work tasks that are to be accomplished. Our time is not completely our own. Instead, we are selling our time to do "work" for money. At home our time can be used to do as we will. Although this is not completely true as we must make time for cooking, household chores, and possibly looking after children. The difference is that we are not accountable for our actions at home to any others. At

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[2] See Rybczynski (1991) for an insightful look at work and leisure.
[3] Of course this is not always true as in the case of abusive homes.

home we can decorate the walls with what we want and contentedly wear velour track suits knowing we will not be ridiculed.[4]

Work and the home have developed strong ideologies. Postman (1992) defines ideology as "a set of assumptions of which we are barely conscious but which nonetheless directs our efforts to give shape and coherence to the world." In our times the concepts of "work" and "home" have become distinct ideologies. Each word raises specific realities in our minds. These are shared realities and powerfully shape how we act. Nippert-Eng (1995) summarizes this wonderfully:

> "Home" and "work" are not merely places, then, but "experiential realms".
> They are combinations of conceptual, social-structural and spatio-temporal
> categories, guided by a historical-given model. We see "home" and "work" as
> distinct locations in space and time, but, even more importantly, as places
> dedicated to largely separate sets of tasks, people, relationships, things, specific
> ways of thinking about and responding to them." p 25

Social scientists have written about "home" and "work" as if we all know what these terms mean and often as independent realms. Nippert-Eng (1995) suggests that "home" and "work" are inextricably, conceptually defined with and by each other. Exploring one without exploring the other cannot get to the heart of what it's really like to experience either, independently or jointly, for one person or many.

Nippert-Eng (1991) suggests using a continuum in which to view the multiple ways that home and work are conceptualized. The continuum ranges from "integration" to "segmentation". Within the integration paradigm, an individual does not differentiate

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[4] Of course, depending on the fashion at the time, velour may also be worn to the workplace. However, there may be limits to what is considered work dress. As I write this a large oil and gas company has issued a new policy disallowing casual clothing. In the press release the company leaders stated they were concerned about the appropriateness of dress of many of its employees and were demanding less casual wear at the office.

between home and work. Meanings and everyday life of home and work are intertwined and inseparable. Nippert-Eng (1995) captures the essence of this position;

> "People, motives for involvement, thoughts, tasks, and the intellectual and emotional approaches used to engage in them—even objects—are experienced in the same way, no matter where we are or what the task at hand. That is, the extreme integrator possesses a single, all-purpose mentality, one way of being, one amorphous self." p 5

At the other end of the continuum "home" and "work" are conceived of and experienced as completely mutually exclusive worlds. In either world a different self may be enacted and presented to the world.

Within the 'real' world there are instances along the entire "home" and "work" continuum. Any person can be integrating or segmenting. Also, at different times in your life there is often a shift along the continuum towards one of the poles. For example, a mother having her first child is likely to begin to demarcate the "home" from "work".

There are many nuances of 'working' from home. Our understanding of work and how it relates to telework must be further examined. The same is true for the home. If we examine the functions of work and home perhaps we may learn something about telework. However, the reverse may also be true. If we study working from home then this line of inquiry may more appropriately tell us about work and its ideology than a direct study of work would do. Jahoda (1979), in studying unemployment, developed the theme that work has certain latent functions. For example, work imposes a time structure on the working day. A study on telework could achieve some of the same things. To achieve this insight into work requires looking past telework itself to those who are actually teleworking. The 'teleworkers' are merely those who 'telework'. Yet, it seems that we can gain real insight about telework from those that do 'it'. In this particular case, the focus on individuals who spend some time working

from the home might highlight some of the symbols of the work place and how work itself is interpreted by them.

2.0 Symbolism and Symbolic Interaction

Placing the work structure in the home structure will disrupt some of the boundaries that separate work and home. The teleworkers will need to adapt their sensemaking to understand their work. Undoubtedly they will use symbols to do so. Nippert-Eng (1995) states that;

> "boundary work is first and foremost a mental activity, but it must be enacted and enhanced through a largely visible collection of essential practical activities." (p. 7)

The ways we manage ourselves, objects, people, thoughts, and tasks are the practical activities that help us adapt our understanding and make sense of our world. These activities represent the symbols—the things we think with—that help negotiate the process of working from home. Teleworkers have to create their own symbols to understand their work. Now that we have an understanding of where to look, what are some of the symbolic manifestations recognized in working at home and what do they mean to the people doing it? Specifically, to understand the sensemaking of teleworkers, I have examined the symbolic processes contained in teleworking using a symbolic interaction methodology.

It has to be recognized that an interpretivist frame, specifically a symbolic interaction frame, can offer new knowledge and extend new insight on the prescriptive literature that exists. A symbolic interaction study may recognize experiences with telework that have so far been overlooked. An interpretative view adds a dimension to the telework domain that is potentially illuminating about how people make sense of their work. In addition to rational patterns, it explores the complex and non-rational patterns that can influence how people work. Accessing these complex and non-rational patterns is best accomplished by working directly with people who work from home and trying to understand how they make sense of what they do.

Morgan, Frost and Pondy (1983) define a symbol as:

> "Signs which express more than their intrinsic content; they are significations which embody and represent some wider pattern of meaning." (p. 5)

The role of symbols within sacred realms of life is well recognized. The Crucifix as a symbol of Christianity is one common example. Symbols are also commonly used in everyday life. For example, words are often not enough to tell someone you love them. A simple kiss can be used to symbolize all the love, affection, and care you have for someone. Another example is the symbol of the water cooler in the work place. The water symbol creates a mental picture of a place of interaction with co-workers. Examining symbols offers unique and powerful insight into the meaning used to understand and contend with everyday life.

The symbolic interaction framework offers a useful analytic technique to access how individuals who work at home make sense of their environment. Symbolic interaction concerns itself with how events and situations are interpreted through individual "sensemaking" processes (Prasad, 1993). Prasad (1993) offers an exemplar of studying the symbolic processes involved in the computerization of work. This study was extremely helpful in developing this research.

Adopting a symbolic view of telework may accomplish several ends. Symbolic perspectives help explain what telework represents to people and how those representations can influence their style of telework. Telework is comprised of various interactions, such as interacting with your family during the day or working with other people in the organization who work in the office or from their homes. In the process of these interactions, people are continuously constructing their social world (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Symbolic perspectives go beyond explaining telework in solely rational and economic terms and help reveal the expressive world of organizational members (Turner, 1986). Since the symbolic frame is not grounded in an assumption

of instrumental rationality, another understanding of telework can develop out of this perspective (Bolman & Deal, 1985).

Anthropology, sociology, psychology and literature have all addressed diverse aspects of the symbolic frame and offer examples of the value of this perspective. However, there are no studies on symbolism in the domain of telework. The symbolic interaction frame can offer much insight into the telework domain. Symbolic perspectives, which help researchers enter the cognitive world of teleworkers, help explain what telework represents to people.

2.1 Central Ideas in Symbolic Interaction

Symbolic interaction provides a methodological framework for understanding the symbolic processes involved in telework. It offers a perspective to try to understand the individual sensemaking of telework.

Symbolic interaction belongs to a group of social constructionist sociological approaches employing predominately qualitative methods and frequently characterized as interpretive methodologies or perspectives (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Symbolic interaction offers a way of conceptualizing the world and a methodology for conducting research. Symbolic interaction implies a research focus as well as specific preferences with regard to methods of data collection and data analysis (Prasad, 1993). It has its own distinct ontological and epistemological assumptions and related methodological preferences (Prasad, 1993).

Morgan and Smircich (1980) state:

> " A preoccupation with methods on their own account obscures the link between the assumptions that the researcher holds and the overall research effort, giving the illusion that it is the methods themselves, rather than the orientations of the human researcher, that generate particular forms of knowledge. "

To overcome this obfuscation, I want to be explicit about the nature of the belief I bring to the subject of study, in this instance, telework. I believe that social science has a human centered reality; therefore, in social science a subjective reality is 'real'. As an interpretivist, I am concerned with how people make sense of reality. Thus the ontological assumption I hold is that individuals and society are inseparable. I see the world as an emergent social process that is created by the individuals concerned. Social reality, insofar as it is recognized to have any existence outside the consciousness of any single individual, is regarded as being little more than a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meaning (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

The belief that meaning is created in social interaction rests in the assumption of the self as social construction. That is, we have an image of ourselves created through our interaction with others. Our self image is based on how we view ourselves and how we think we ought to be. Everything is interpreted to this self image. Thus society is produced by 'us' putting individual and shared meaning onto things. This is a dynamic process and constantly influenced and changing with our interaction with others. Symbolic interaction is focused on understanding these shared meanings and how individuals make sense of their own social situations (Prasad, 1993).

Prasad (1993) summarizes the symbolic interactionist position succinctly;

"In its current form, symbolic interaction owes much to both German Phenomenology (Husserl, 1970; Simmel, 1950) and the philosophy of American pragmatism, in particular the ideas of Mead (1934, 1977), Cooley (1918), and James (1890). Drawing upon these two strands of thinking, Blumer (1969) developed a methodology for social research that he called symbolic interaction. Many of these ideas were also elaborated by Stryker (1968), Rock (1979), Hewitt (1988), Maines (1988), and others, who contributed to establishing symbolic interaction as a stable and influential school of thought in American sociology." (p 1403)

Symbolic interaction is not exclusively concerned with the study of symbols. It may be useful to state that the word symbolic is understood as 'meaning'. Therefore, symbolic interaction is primarily concerned with the study of human meaning which is seen as existing in symbolic realms, and related meaningful action (Prasad, 1993).

Central to the symbolic interaction perspective are Blumer's (1969) three premises of symbolic interaction. The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them (Blumer, 1969). Objects themselves have no intrinsic meaning other than the meaning that individuals attach to them during social interaction. Thus, telework has no intrinsic meaning other than the meaning we give it in social interaction.

The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows (Blumer, 1969). Meaning is not created in a vacuum. Prasad (1993) offers insight into this premise:

> "Symbolic interaction concerns itself with how events and situations are interpreted through individual "sensemaking" processes. According to this perspective, human beings possess images of themselves that are shaped by meaningful social interaction. These self-images influence how people assign meaning and how they eventually engage in meaningful action." (p 1404)

Thus, in studying telework, how different individuals make sense of telework in their own self-images and visions of themselves in the situation would be of interest. In fact, one of the central concepts of symbolic interaction is the "definition of the situation" (Cooley, 1918; Hewitt, 1988), the process whereby people make sense of and articulate for themselves and others different situations, events, and contexts (Prasad, 1993). Thus, a symbolic interaction study would examine how individuals define telework on the basis of meanings of the work itself, their own self-images, and the influence of other social forces on those images.

The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the thing she or he encounters (Blumer, 1969). This is recognized as "enactment". Each person will interpret telework differently and create meaning based on their interpretation of what they do and how they do it. Thus, enactment results in individuals holding different local meanings of symbols. This can be seen in the symbolism of the home. To some the home is a place of comfort and a place to work. Others perceive the home as only a place of comfort. To the latter individuals the home is not and cannot become an alternative to the office. Each individual will interpret telework based on their beliefs regarding the home. It is important to recognize that symbolic interaction does not view meaning as static. Rather, symbols are constantly produced and reproduced through meaningful social interaction. This concept of "enactment" or the process whereby symbolism shapes and influences everyday practice is key to the symbolic interaction perspective. In studying telework, we are interested in how the symbolism of telework influences how individuals work from home.

Symbolic interaction rests on the assumption that every situation is likely to be filled with multiple and frequently conflicting interpretations and meanings (Prasad, 1993). Some of these individualized meanings crystallize into collective, enduring, taken-for-granted realities. This concept, called the 'sedimentation of meaning' refers to how some meanings evolve into powerful symbols that play a critical role in sensemaking. For example, Prasad's (1993) symbolic interaction study of work computerization identified the symbolism of professionalism as being sedimented. Prasad identified three distinct meanings of professionalism held by the individuals within the organization under study. Yet, Prasad went further to examine the influences behind the meanings of professionalism and why this symbol seemed to be more influential and permanent than other symbols. To do so, Prasad examined the institutional and social forces behind the sedimentation of professionalism. These sedimented meanings help shape powerful symbols that play a critical role in sensemaking. In studying telework,

identifying the most powerful and enduring symbols and understanding the influence of these "sedimented" symbols on telework would be of interest.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

My research questions emerged from a pilot study I conducted exploring the symbols of telework, my theoretical orientation, and a desire to fully explore the symbolic aspects of telework.

The key research questions guiding my actions were:

1. What are the multiple symbols associated with telework perceived by the individuals interviewed?

2. What are the meanings of these symbolic interpretations?

3. How do these symbolic realities influence the process of telework?

These research questions were primarily guided by the symbolic interactionist premise that we live in a world of symbols and act in terms of the meaning we hold for these symbols. The questions recognize this premise and attempt to identify those symbols, their meaning and their influence.

This project is conceptualized as an exploratory, qualitative study seeking to expand the awareness of how the experience of telework is interpreted by teleworkers and non-teleworkers. The study is inductive and seeks to develop theory from fieldwork. I have borrowed a passage from Postman (1992) who summarizes social research and captures the aim of my symbolic interaction study:

> "Science itself is, of course, a form of storytelling too, but its assumptions and procedures are so different from those of social research that it is extremely misleading to give the same name to each. In fact, the stories of social researchers are much closer in structure and purpose to what is called imaginative literature; that is to say, both a social researcher and a novelist give

unique interpretations to a set of human events and support their interpretations with examples in various forms. Their interpretations cannot be proved or disproved but will draw their appeal from the power of their language, the depth of their explanations, the relevance of their examples, and the credibility of their themes. And all of this has, in both cases, an identifiable moral purpose. The words "true" and "false" do not apply here in the sense that they are used in mathematics or science. For there is nothing universally and irrevocably true or false about these interpretations. There are no critical tests to confirm or falsify them. There are no natural laws from which they are derived. They are bound by time, by situation, and above all by the cultural prejudices of the researcher or writer." (p. 14)

It is important to emphasize that the rich meaning and variety of understanding I am seeking lends itself to an interpretative mode of inquiry. Moreover, using Berger's (1964) words:

> "...'meaning' is not ordinarily a 'problem'. It becomes problematic as the result of specific transformations within the society, transformations that put into question the previous taken-for-granted institutionalizations and legitimations."
> (p. 211-212)

Using an interpretative method provides a richer understanding of telework and the ability to appropriate the meaning used in the sensemaking of those who work at home to help understand the 'telework' experience and manage it accordingly.

3.2 Qualitative Methods

To understand the questions I have posed I will be relying on qualitative methods of data collection. To answer my research questions I required detailed accounts from individuals. I wanted more than cursory answers. Rather, I wanted descriptive, meaningful answers that could most successfully be obtained through in-depth qualitative data collection methods. Indeed, as Prasad (1997) notes:

"Interpretive fieldwork is more concerned with understanding social situations from the standpoints of participants within them." (p 103)

The key to gaining this understanding is to focus on local meanings and interpretations and attempting to grasp the individual's point of view. The intent of qualitative research is to understand the particular, the individual, and the unique. Qualitative methodologies are used when the researcher seeks 'meaning' of the lived experience. Further, the methodology of symbolic interaction calls for qualitative methods as a means of gaining insight into complex symbolic realities. To clarify how I am using the terms 'method' and 'methodologies' I have borrowed Prasad's (1997) definitions of these terms. Prasad (1997) defines the term methodology as "the intricate set of ontological and epistemological commitments that a researcher brings to his/her work." Method is defined as "the actual set of techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze the data."

The information I am seeking cannot be easily or fully measured numerically, but rather, is more subjective and expressed in the form of ideas, behaviors, actions, reactions, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings. Trying to capture these forms of information led me to working within an interpretivist framework. From this perspective, the qualitative researcher (Creswell, 1994):

- learns about a social event through the experience of the "subjects" i.e. the teleworkers;

- focuses on understanding and describing social reality versus explaining it; and

- does not test hypotheses and predict outcomes but observes and interprets behavior.

The intent of working within an interpretivist framework is to understand complex symbolic realities of individuals who telework.

3.3 Research Design

Precise methods do not exist for symbolic interaction research; however, symbolic interactionists are committed to more open and inductive methods (Prasad, 1993). In developing my research design I looked at three items. These were:

1. Data collection;
2. Determining the limit of what and who is to be investigated; and
3. Analysis of the data.

3.3.1 Data Collection Strategies:

The sensemaking of people who worked from home resulted in multiple meanings just as people in workplaces might have different meanings on what they do. The meaning is affected by many things. Our childhood can affect how we conceptualize the home and work. Was the home a happy place? Did our mother and father integrate or segment home and work? Combining these personal experiences with cultural perceptions of home and work leads to very personal and diverse perspectives of home and work. At the more concrete level, there are factors such as marital status, workplace rules, job occupation and status, and gender and workspace ergonomics that shape how we understand our home and our work. Certain occupations, like assembly work, just cannot be done at home. Also, the more senior responsibilities an individual accrues the more discretion in choosing how the work is completed. Each of us responds to these constraints and experiences in understanding how we make sense of the world. As things change, perhaps with the arrival of a new born baby, we adapt how we understand things. The most direct method to access these experiences is through interviewing.

In-depth interviewing is one of the basic data gathering techniques of the symbolic interactionist. Described as, "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149), in-depth interviewing was my overall strategy employed in collecting my data.

I had a list of predetermined questions, however, I used these more as a guideline to cover topics. Appendix A contains a list of the questions used in the interviews. Initially, I created my questions based on my experience as a teleworker and my theoretical orientation. Subsequently, these were modified in a pilot study I conducted exploring the symbols of telework. King's (1994) ideas on the qualitative interview guided the formulation throughout the development of the questions. Specifically, I used his suggestions to use the interview questions as a guide to cover topics I wanted to cover, adding probes or even whole topics that had originally been excluded, but emerged spontaneously and dropping or reformulating questions that were incomprehensible to participants. I used a common opening question to start the interview and then allowed the interview to proceed naturally. The questions did, however, focus on understanding the individual's meaningful experiences with working at home and the individual's feelings, insights and beliefs about teleworking.

3.3.1.1 The Process of Interviewing

During the pilot study I interviewed three people. Specifically I had questions grouped across five areas:

1. Personal background including questions on education, family status and personal interests;
2. Current job background including questions on present work position, major responsibilities, and likes and dislikes about the job;
3. Career history including questions about background and career goals;
4. Technology including questions on the tools used to do the job; and
5. Other questions including questions about interaction with managers and how the respondents colleagues work.

Subsequently, the questions changed at the end of the pilot. They continued to change during the process of this research study as well. After the first interview the questions were modified to reflect new questions that arose in the discussion. After two more interviews I modified the questions to reflect some key categories that I saw as

important. I also eliminated the questions about career history as these ideas were being captured in background on the person and/or on the background about their jobs.

After completing eight interviews I felt comfortable with my questions. Moreover, I had become much more proficient in the actual interviewing process, probing in detail areas that seemed salient. The questions that remained typically represented issues I thought salient by being repeatedly present in each interview.

My interview questions remained static after the eighth interview, the only thing changing was different probes depending on the how the interview proceeded. The final questions captured data in the following broad categories:
1. Background;
2. Job description;
3. Changes in work style;
4. Routine;
5. Interaction with others; and
6. Perceptions about working from home.

I found that this categorization captured the range of data I required to gain access to the symbolic realities of telework held by the individuals interviewed. I removed any specific questions on technology as this topic routinely came up without introducing it.

I did not ask questions in each category and then move on to the next set of questions. Rather, I used a semi-structured interview process. This meant I had categories of questions I wanted answered but rather than systematically asking each question in a particular order I used my interview questions as a guide asking questions when it seemed natural or relevant. However, I consistently began each interview with general conversation to develop some rapport. Then I began asking about general background. This allowed the respondent to talk generally about themselves and get comfortable with being interviewed. From here I let the interview follow a natural path asking

questions from my interview list when it made sense to do so. Certain respondents spoke to certain topics in great detail. For example, one respondent kept coming back to the issue of trust. This resulted in some interviews providing very rich data on specific ideas. It also highlighted the multiple realities that existed in how the respondents understood teleworking.

Using a semi-structured interview allowed the interview to take a more conversational attitude. In the interview I avoided the use of "why" questions. Instead I focused on "how" and "what" so as to keep the focus on describing the experience as it was lived (King, 1994). My goal was to reduce the unnaturalness in the interview and allow the respondents to talk about whatever came to their minds. However, all interviews were recorded and this made some of the individuals being interviewed uncomfortable. Having these people talk about their personal background, something most people feel comfortable talking about, helped them relax for the more difficult questions later in the interview. It also allowed some rapport to develop between them and myself. My goal, which I mainly succeeded at, was to make the interview resemble more a conversation between two people rather than an interrogation of one by another. The interviews ranged anywhere from forty minutes to two hours. Only in one instance did the interview proceed unnaturally. However, at this interview, once the tape recorder was turned off we continued our discussion in a much more relaxed manner with the individual sharing some very personal information. Actually, I believe that this person just did not want the personal information to be captured on tape because once the tape recorder was turned off the respondent immediately shared her story and we essentially began the interview from the beginning. Interestingly, no comment was made about the tape recorder being turned off, yet we both recognized that more conversation would occur. When the tape recorder was turned off the interview proceeded for another fifty-five minutes with me using my notebook to capture the respondent's discourse. This method of capturing responses posed no problem and the interview was a success with the respondent sharing a very detailed story of her telework experience. In later interviews, I was careful to note if the tape recorder caused any undue anxiety and

always began and continued the interview for a short time after I turned the tape recorder off. This often resulted in additional information that proved useful. With the exception of the one interview it was my strong belief that the tape recorder caused minimal interference in gaining access to detailed personal information and stories. The interviews were transcribed to ensure exact words and phrases of the subjects could later be studied and analyzed.

All the respondents enjoyed the interview and we spent upwards of another hour continuing to talk after the interview had 'officially' ended. Often, further details were provided in this socializing. All respondents were interested in what others whom I had interviewed did while at home and how they might be the same or different. Many also commented that they had never thought about work at home in the manner that arose in the interview. This suggests that the study may have caused some effect in how people will interpret telework in the future.

The data collection resulted in transcripts of thirteen interviews with teleworkers, three interviews with non-teleworkers, and an additional three interview transcripts from the pilot study as well as my observational notes written after each meeting.

3.3.2 Determining the limit of what and who is to be investigated.
I intended to focus on the subject of telework. More specifically, I examined the symbolic processes contained in teleworking using a symbolic interaction methodology. To determine the "who" required choosing subjects who possessed the characteristics under observation or those who could share experiences on the phenomena being researched. Within the domain of telework I intended to investigate individuals in various jobs who saw themselves as teleworking. In the literature there are numerous definitions of what a teleworker is or is not. The term 'teleworkers' typically refers to those people who work at home, with or without a computer. However, my main criteria were that if the individual believed she or he teleworked I would interview her/him. Still, I did have some general constraints on whom my sample would include.

I decided to focus on individuals who worked for an organization and who spent the majority of their work time at home.[5]

I chose to focus on individuals because telework needs to be considered carefully as a phenomenon lived by individuals. To truly understand telework at the individual level I needed to talk to individuals who both perceived themselves as teleworkers and were perceived as teleworkers by their organization. I chose individuals who worked for organizations because I saw telework as being intertwined with an organizational focus. Self-employed individuals who work out of their home face some similar experiences but I believe the fact that they do not work for an organization made them different enough from 'teleworkers' to exclude them. Finally, I chose individuals who spent a significant part of their work time at home because I felt these individuals would be most familiar with the impact of working at home versus working at a traditional office.

It should be noted that I have decided to ignore teleworkers who work in another office location, sometimes called a telecenter, rather than the central office. I did this because working in a telecenter is very similar to working in an office with the difference being that the telecenter office may now be closer to the home reducing the commute. Additionally, employers of teleworkers were not interviewed. My research focus is on understanding the teleworkers. However, I do believe that the employer's perspective is extremely important and warrants its own research study.

To gain access to 'teleworkers' I used contacts from various industries to help identify organizations that permitted their workers to work from home. I was able to identify several good candidates who considered themselves teleworkers. I then used the telephone to approach these potential respondents for interviews. Finally, I arranged a meeting with each teleworker at either their home or their office. Most were open to

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[5] I aimed for individuals who worked at least three days per week from home.

being interviewed and several individuals then referred me to others they knew who teleworked.

Altogether, I interviewed thirteen teleworkers. Appendix B contains descriptions of each respondent. These descriptions will provide some context to the comments and quotations I used from the respondents. These teleworkers were drawn from eight organizations of varying sizes. The years employed with their company's ranged from a minimum of three years to a maximum of twenty-four years with a range of values in between. Five of the organizations had formal telework programs with published guidelines. The remaining three organizations had telework programs that were based on informal agreements with each individual. These arrangements were as varied as the individuals themselves. Some worked at home every day going into the office intermittently during the week. Others worked at home in the mornings and in the office in the afternoon. Still others haphazardly split their time between the home and the office. The majority of the organizations were large Canadian and U.S. corporations. Office sizes ranged from as little as five to as many as six hundred. The respondents themselves held diverse occupations, positions, ages, and lifestyles. All had some level of post-secondary education varying from university degrees and master degrees to college diplomas. Also, the amount of experience working at home ranged from three months to as long as ten years. Finally, of the individuals interviewed, three were female and ten were male.[6] Tables I and II summarize details about the teleworkers I interviewed. Unless otherwise specified, it can be assumed that when referring to the respondents I am indicating the respondents who worked from home.

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[6] The number of male and females is not meant to reflect anything in particular. I have just enclosed these details for interest. However, it is reasonable to expect men's and women's experiences to differ although I did not specifically look for any differences.

TABLE I

Teleworker Respondent Job Characteristics

Position	Number
Clerical/Administrative	1
Director	1
Project Manager	4
Senior Technical	2
General Manager	1
Support Staff	1
Sales	3
TOTAL	**13**

TABLE II

Teleworker Respondent Characteristics

Married	Children	Worked from home every day	Dedicated Home Office Space	Age	Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children
10	5	7	11	28-48	6

Along with the teleworkers I also interviewed three non-teleworkers. Appendix B contains descriptions of the non-teleworkers. These were individuals who had the opportunity to work from home but opted to continue to work from the office. Their understanding of telework is important as it too is unique and highlights the multiple realities that exist about telework. Tables III and IV summarize details about the non-teleworkers I interviewed.

TABLE III

Non-teleworker Respondent Job Characteristics

Position	Number
Project Manager	1
Support Staff	1
Sales	1
TOTAL	**3**

TABLE IV

Non-teleworker Respondent Characteristics

Married	Children	Occasionally Worked from home	Dedicated Home Office Space	Age
1	1	1	3	28-35

All names and any references to companies have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

3.3.3 Data Analysis.

The analysis procedure followed the grounded theory approach formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). I also employed Charmaz's (1983), Corbin and Strauss' (1990) and Martin and Turner's (1986) more recent articles on specific procedures used in grounded theory. Further, to aid the analysis process I used a software program called NUD.IST™ (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing).

In grounded theory it is critical to begin analysis from the start of the research process and use this to direct the next interview. Any seemingly relevant issues should be incorporated into the next set of interviews. However, the data collection was standardized in the sense that I had certain questions that I wanted answered. To ensure I captured any salient issues, upon beginning the interviews (after completing the

pilot study), I would complete four interviews and then transcribe the tape recordings, listening to each tape several times and reading the transcripts looking for issues I may have missed or covered cursorily. This allowed me to capture all potentially relevant aspects of the topic as soon as I perceived them. This process is a major source of the effectiveness of grounded theory. This process itself guides the researcher toward examining all the possibly rewarding avenues to understanding (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Using the grounded theory approach assumes that phenomena are not conceived of as static but as continually changing in response to evolving conditions. Thus, this approach required that the data and the theory be constantly compared and contrasted throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Grounded theory has specific procedures for data collection and analysis. From my pilot study on the symbols of telework I had developed categories prior to the actual data collection. Specifically, I had identified four broad categories of symbolism within the realm of telework and six symbolic forms. The symbolic forms for these categories were developed by examining the transcripts from the respondents from my pilot study and looking for identifiable instances that seemed to describe a symbolic reality. I felt these symbolic forms and categories would recur in the interviews for this study and offer a useful guide to begin analysis. The categories of symbolism from the pilot study were: tradition, routine, social relations, and technology. In my pilot study these categories seemed to reflect themes around which I could group the symbols I had discovered. These categories subsequently changed with further analysis but they offered a useful starting point.

I used Martin and Turner's (1986) example of concept cards to place similar incidents from different interviews onto the card. To perform the actual analysis I used printed transcripts to systematically examine the dialog for evidence for data fitting within the categories I had identified in the pilot study. I reviewed each transcript several times

and listened to the tape recordings to extract verbatim sections, coding these to the relevant categories and symbolic forms. I also looked for dialog that pointed to other symbolic realities by examining each interviewee response for symbols and meanings. This led to the creation of new categories or breaking an existing category into sub-categories. This resulted in multiple symbolic forms. I used different color highlighters to differentiate between the multiple symbols and meanings. Beside each highlighted section I would make notes on what themes I believed were emerging. To capture these themes I entered each node in NUD.IST™. These acted as 'virtual' concept cards.

Each concept card represented a single symbolic form. Often, one incident was placed on several concept cards. Later, after explicitly defining the concept I dropped some of the incidents that no longer fit within this concept. I also created new concept cards. This was an iterative process and provided a powerful process to sift and analyze the data. This program was extremely useful in helping me keep track of and organize the volumes of transcripts. I could easily assign or drop text from an interview to a concept card and then review the concept card at a later time. NUD.IST™ also allowed me to keep track of the symbolic forms and how they related to one another and what category the symbolic forms fell under.

To explicitly define the categories I chose for the concept cards I used Charmaz's (1983) suggestion to take the code on the concept cards and describe what it is about. After this process was completed I examined these coded categories and their relationship with one another for patterns and themes that suggested the addition, deletion, adaptation, or merger of a symbolic form. The concept cards were particularly useful in identifying the multiple symbolic meanings of telework thus directly answering the first and second research questions.

Once I had defined the symbolic forms I again examined the transcripts and concept cards to look for instances where the symbolic realities influenced the sensemaking of

the teleworkers. I created a second set of cards listing the influences the symbolic forms had on the process of telework. I also examined relevant literature to provide further insight and background. This provided the analysis to answer the third research question of how the symbolic realities influenced the process of telework.

Subsequently, after repeatedly revisiting the data, my original categories of symbolism were modified to three broader categories. They were changed to: work performances, legitimization, and control. The categories from the pilot study were subsumed under these new categories as were all of the symbolic forms. These three categories also captured all the new symbolic forms discovered during the research. Each category is characterized by a theme and contains a cluster of symbols.[7]

In the analysis of my data and the presentation of the results I did not want only to present short quotations. I find that when I read these quotations I feel that the writer has chosen text that legitimates that particular sentence regardless of any other statements that stand in contradiction. Instead, using short quotations as well as short texts allowed me to share all my confidants shared with me. In my analysis I summarized the stories, concepts, and ideas that lead me to choose the areas of symbolism that I did. I also included shorter quotations where it seemed appropriate. This seemed to be the most worthwhile method of discussing the discovered meaning.

4.0 Research Findings and Analysis
4.1 The Multiple Symbols of Telework

The first research question was to identify the multiple symbols associated with telework that the respondents possessed. My goal was to detail the different constructions of telework that arose in interviews with the respondents. It should be noted that these symbolic representations of telework did not arise in all the interviews nor were they equally influential in shaping the respondents' actions. However, they were the symbols that I saw as the most pervasive across all interviews. It is important

to note that for each respondent there was a different level of credibility and influence with each symbol.

I identified twelve symbolic constructions of telework (see Table V). All twelve symbolic constructions were further grouped into three categories. These categories are work performances, legitimization, and control. Each category is comprised of different symbolic elements but is characterized by its own theme. However, there is some overlap of themes between categories. Legitimization emerged as the overriding theme and its overtures permeate the categories of both work performance and control. Still I felt that using the three categories helped organize the resulting analysis.

The theme of work performances captures representations of telework as being continuous and discontinuous with office work. That is, working from home is still working, typically, doing the same work that was previously done only in the office; yet, there are some discontinuities in the actions of working at home that made it different from office work. In many instances, non-teleworkers were doing the same work as the teleworkers but chose not to work at home. In constituting the category of 'teleworking' some new realities were created even though the work was the same. This category contains the symbolic forms the lexicon of work, realms, the office, uniqueness, reaching out and touching someone, interruptions, and the binary office.

The second theme, legitimization, is characterized by the symbolic elements that represent the need for the respondents to justify and legitimize their work at home. Its two symbolic forms are labeled justification and the front.

The third and final theme is control. This category represents the symbolic forms that influenced control on the actions of those who worked from home. It has three symbolic forms. They are the time table, hierarchical observation, and normalizing judgement.

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[7] The themes and symbolic forms are discussed in detail in section 4.1 and 4.2.

Table V summarizes the themes and the symbolic forms.

Table V

The Multiple Symbolism of Telework

Unifying Theme	Symbolic Form
Work performances	Lexicon of work
	Realms
	The Office
	Uniqueness
	Reaching out and touching someone
	Interruptions
	The Binary Office
Legitimization	Justification
	The Front
Control	The Time Table
	Hierarchical Observation
	Normalizing Judgement

4.2 Local Meanings of The Symbols of Telework

The second research question was designed to uncover the meaning of each symbolic representation. Telework represented multiple realities to the respondents. There was a particularly strong demarcation between non-teleworkers and teleworkers. Even amongst the teleworkers each symbol was interpreted differently. For symbolic interactionists, focusing on meaning is important (Prasad 1993). Thus, it was necessary for me to explore the different meanings of the symbols held by the respondents. This

was important because the interpretations the respondents held influenced the way telework was enacted. I will discuss the local meaning of each symbolic form identified in Table V in detail.

4.2.1 Work Performances

The first group of symbols fall under the category of work performances. It contains the symbolic forms lexicon of work, realms, the office, uniqueness, reaching out and touching someone, and interruptions.

4.2.1.1 The Lexicon of Work.

The name lexicon of work captures the essence of this symbol as it refers to the business vernacular used by the respondents to describe their constructions of work. The respondents all had similar descriptions of their job.

Respondents described their jobs in two ways. First, they described typical on-going responsibilities and then they spoke of ad-hoc jobs that punctuated the routine. Typically, the respondents stated that all the functions of their job could be done from home. However, all the respondents made some effort to go into the central office to socialize and catch up on gossip. This hinted at the need to maintain some social link to the organization.

In discussing what they did for a living, the respondents consistently used similar words to express notions of what they did. These words were the typical vernacular of the business world and were used to describe 'the job' in constructed terms that seemed to have shared meanings. So similar words or concepts were being used to describe "work at home" and "work at the office". It seemed that to understand what working at home meant, the respondents used words or concepts that described how they worked in an office.

In describing their jobs the majority of respondents shared all or most of the following constructions of work:

- autonomous work;

- required to work with geographically remote others;

- head office was typically in another city;

- politically not necessary to be in the office;

- evaluated on high level objectives;

- work was project oriented or goal oriented;

- minimal social interaction with peers outside of work and during typical office work hours: however, all made some effort to occasionally visit the office to engage in idle conversations; and

- traveled to the office at least once per week regardless of the need to be there.

The shared meaning of the job was similar to that held by the non-teleworkers. However, the non-teleworkers each felt there was some pressing requirement that made it necessary for them to work in the office. Table VI provides some examples of these different meanings of the local meanings of the lexicon of work.

Table VI

The Lexicon of Work

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	I enjoy the autonomy of my job. Axle is a very flat organization. The autonomy, the ability just to experiment and run your own show. As a project manager you get that very much. You hire your own team. You've got your own budget and you look at your assignment manager as purely an individual that can support you when required. Nothing more than that. In the head office, you pop into the office periodically because it pays to be seen and you hear stuff over the baffles and you have water cooler chats about all the stuff that's going on. Here you don't have the same dynamics so there's less incentive to come into the office...

Organization Member	Quotation
Clancy	And as far as working, a lot of it is project and product based. So that's how you manage it which is a lot more, it's a lot more interesting compared to some of the other day to day routine.
Al	I'm now becoming more involved with project oriented tasks.
	But I mean I like everything about it. I have a lot of autonomy.
Harold	I like the autonomy where working for a large project within a large corporation, the tasks tend to be relatively independent and mainly because they're technical so, as I represent an expert, I have an expertise in a certain area, so when someone comes to me I can then manage my work just based on those requests that are coming in.
	I was remote regardless and I had very high level objectives. Just goal oriented objectives. Things like, ensure that your department implements electronic mail as part of the corporate initiative by July, right. Well, nobody on a week to week basis is holding me accountable for specific tasks. They're just looking at the big picture and that enabled me then to work with, you know, be flexible beneath that.
Jim	The only reason I go into the office is generally to pick up some mail and you know, really that's your only interface with people that work there. So it's kind of nice to stop in and say hello and let them know you are still working there.
Craig	Well I like this job because I pretty well run my own shop.
Pam	My clients are primarily back in Ottawa and Toronto so they couldn't care less whether I'm sitting here or at home.

4.2.1.2 Realms

I named the second symbolic reality held by the respondents realms. Realms refers to the domains of home and work. Realms captures the different meanings about home and work held by people who worked from home and the symbols they used to help understand these roles.

Part of the meaning of realms was derived from the ideologies of the home and work. At home or work the interaction with others and the activities the respondents engaged in created meaning about the home and work. These meanings were also impacted by what others were doing. For most of the respondents, the features of working from home were incongruous with the normalized idea of work. There were several features that highlighted the continuity and discontinuity between the home and work. In total I identified five features that were pervasive in the interviews.

First, was the social nature of the realms. Work was a place of interaction among co-workers. Typically, the respondents work friends were not privy to the private details of their personal life. Social interaction was kept to mundane topics such as asking about the weekend. At home, the respondents interacted with those closest to them and shared details that would not be shared with co-workers.

Second, was the orientation towards time. Time could be manipulated while at home. The respondents were free to plan their time as they liked. At work, time was controlled by work activities. At work the respondents did not have the same discretion as at home. Of course, for the respondents with children the discretion to do what they wanted was not completely their own. For example, Harold as the primary care-giver of his child, recognized certain blocks of time as his son's time and would give over this time completely to his son.

Third, was the nature of activities that were performed. Again, at home the respondents were free to do whatever they wanted. At the work place, the respondents were mostly limited to actions that concerned work. While working at home during the work day the respondents held some resistance to doing non-work activities. However, there were certain non-work activities engaged in by all respondents that could just not be done if working in an office. For example, Ed took breaks from work to play with his children. Pam, Jim, and Al did housework during the day to free up time at night.

Fourth, work was a public place while the home was a private place. This was particularly evident in the dress routines engaged in by the respondents. All respondents dressed casually, many in sweats, while working at home but changed into business clothes when they left the home. Also, this meaning was reflected in the sense of comfort the respondents felt about working from home. Frank was previously a manager and felt great pressure to get to the office to show others he was working. He then changed jobs and was no longer a manager. He also began working at home full time. After beginning to work from home, Frank noticed the ease in which his day now began. He did not need to rush to the office to be on display. Instead he began work quietly when he wanted. The respondents viewed the home as a place of comfort and the domain where they could be themselves. At work there was an opposing meaning. Work was where the respondents felt they needed to be presentable. Work was comparable to being on stage at a performance (Goffman, 1959).

Finally, work was viewed as an environment prone to interruption while the home was perceived as a controlled, quiet environment. At work, the respondents found it difficult to avoid interaction with peers. There were many demands and ad-hoc activities that pushed and pulled the respondents. The respondents recognized the home as a place of solitude where they could control their activity.

The non-teleworkers held strong meanings about the home and work. For the non-teleworker it was difficult to extricate notions of home and work. Instead, the ideologies of home and work collided. Home was not construed as a place of work by the non-teleworkers, so it was difficult for the non-teleworkers to imagine others worked when at home. In the words of one non-teleworker:

"Come on, if you are at home there is no way you'll be working."

These words highlight the powerful sensemaking occurring for this non-teleworker. That is, Darin held the strong belief that working from home was just not compatible with work. Darin later belligerently stated:

"Yeah right, if you are at home you will work."

Marlo's insightful question highlights the strength of the ideologies of home and work for him:

"How do you reward yourself if you have a good day and want to leave work early or for that matter a bad day and want to leave work early."

Marlo had clear and separate meanings about the home and work. He made every effort to complete all his work at the office and to never bring work home. He saw this as infringing on his private and comfortable domain. In his words:

"I really try to end my day at the office. There is no need to have nervous stress at home."

The non-teleworkers also had strong feelings about being in the office to further their career aspirations by interacting with co-workers and management on a daily basis. Table VII provides some examples of the local meanings of realms.

Table VII

Realms

Organization Member	Quotation
Pam	And it's nice to be at home on the phone as opposed to the office, just a little more laidback.
	The one thing that's kind of nice is that if you, you know, I have a complete office set up, the bathroom is next door, I don't have to walk out. There's no security code to get back in. The kitchen is just down the stairs so everything is really close. It is comfortable.
	I shower and jump into my sweats right away. Of course, there is no way I would wear those to work.
Al	Well, the main reason I work from home is the individuals I have daily contact with are all remote so, you know, so I supported Brad Wilson in Winnipeg, Steve Dixie in Victoria and I had managers I was in contact with in Toronto so there was no necessity for me to

Organization Member	Quotation
	be in a building when I can commute or I was conferencing or communicating over the e-mail or voice mail or whatever. So I was sitting here going well, I don't need to be in the office.
	I mean, there's a lot of advantages in terms of, you know, I was never a big suit guy anyway so a lot of people feel more comfortable and actually I stand up a lot and think and walk around the house when I'm thinking. Well, you can't do that in an office,... and I find I'm more relaxed and I can think a little clearer
	I think people, when you say you work at home, they go, oh, well, you don't really work. And you know, some people get up and don't put in a full 8 hour day. So traditionally, it makes sense that people would think that way. But unless they do it they don't really understand what they get from it.
Harold	In Toronto I began doing it [telework] because I could not do certain tasks in the office that I needed to. Ones that required solitude and concentration.
Ed	Like people that I first meet, I don't. You know, that ask what I do and the neighbors always wonder what I do but as soon as they get to know what I do they understand it a little bit more...I just tell them, yeah, that I work out of my house. And that generally leads to a lot of questions like, that must be nice or how does that work or you know, that sort of thing.
Jim	The one thing is I'm not wearing suits as often because when I'm working from home there's no need to put a suit on.
	If I'm going out to meet a client then I'll get changed and dash out but at home I mean I wear something designed for you know, comfort.
	I find in the summertime I'm trying to squeeze in as many hours at work and I'm trying to get in as much golf as possible at the same time having that freedom to get some of the things done around the house, you know like in the summer you have more clothes to wash...I find that great.
Frank	I mean, the people at the other end of the line don't need to know what you're wearing. You could be nude if you want. The thing is

Organization Member	Quotation
	it is more comfortable because in a way a suit and tie is a restriction. I guess you know I feel more comfortable. So the routine is more comfortable. I have in times now that I work at home and this is something personal, I've gone into a bit of meditation and kind of mid-morning I just have a quiet mediation for 10-15 minutes. Well, I think the good part is that if you tend to be in the office your time can be very quickly eaten up in given tasks that are not planned and you can spend a lot of time in the office doing things for people and doing things for others as a support resource and not really working towards your objective and your goals. So even though you can set your priorities for your day and whatnot you can get side-tracked very easily because of the interruptions and just being in the office. So that's the good part is the fact that you probably have a little bit better time management control. And you can sit down and you got more quiet time and you can actually get at your priorities in a much more focused manner.
Kirk	You know the previous routine was I get up in the morning, shave, shower, put on a suit and I'm off to the office. Now I get up probably a half hour before I should log in to my e-mail, have some breakfast, dilly dally around, put a ball cap on, put my shorts on and a sweatshirt and I'm in the office.

4.2.1.3 The Office

The symbolism of the office refers to the respondents perception of the function of an office. The symbolism of the office held by the non-teleworkers and the teleworkers was quite different. This was in part due to the interaction each group had with their co-workers and how important this interaction was perceived to be. Typically, the teleworkers held the meaning that interaction with peers was not too important; whereas, the non-teleworkers viewed this as an important aspect of working. As such, the meaning held by the respondents was that working in an office full time was not critical to their future success nor to fulfilling daily social interaction needs with local co-workers.

As the respondents began to work from home this had the effect of further minimizing interaction with local co-workers. Pam's thoughts were typical:

> "It's because I've no one that works on a project here, right. They're all based across Canada. So if I don't have anyone in, nothing in common to talk with any more, why go in."

Moreover, for the respondents there was no pressing need to be in the office. As such, for many of the respondents the office was not held to be an important function of work. This was especially apparent for those whose head office was in another city. Mike's statement captured this sentiment:

> "One of the greatest challenges is just moving out here and Axle's head offices being in Ottawa, I've been working there for 2 1/2 years. You're balancing with executives and senior managers all the time. Working out in the Calgary office it's very autonomous, you don't get the same interaction with your peers because there just isn't the peer volume in the Calgary office. And it's much more challenging to be visible in the organization when you're based in Calgary because the decisions are being made in Ottawa. So it's a challenge. In that respect, it stimulates telecommuting because it doesn't matter if you're here. You know, because in Ottawa, you pop into the office periodically because it pays to be seen and you hear stuff over the baffles and you have water cooler chats about all the stuff that's going on. Here you don't have the same dynamics so there's less incentive to come into the office because I'm just as productive, I'm more productive at home than I am at work anyway. And the only incentive for me to actually come into the office is we've got bigger, better data access in the office rather than at home."

It was clear that Mike did not view being in the office as critical. He later restated this:

> "There's absolutely, like I'm saying, no incentive for me to come into the office..."

Yet, he did hold some of the same meaning of what was important about an office as the non-teleworkers. That is, interacting with management and peers. However, at

this moment in time, Mike felt comfortable with his ability to manage his career and communicate effectively from home and so he teleworked. The lack of need to be constantly in the office to socialize and interact with co-workers and management was a common, shared meaning among the respondents. However, there was some need to visit the office occasionally. Several of the respondents felt that they had to drop into the office occasionally to affirm to the non-teleworkers that they did in fact work for the same company. As Jim observed:

> "The only reason I go into the office is generally to pick up some mail and you know, really that's your only interface with people that work there. So it's kind of nice to stop in and say hello and let them know you are still working there."

The non-teleworker's meaning about the office differed from the teleworkers. The non-teleworker respondents saw office interaction as essential to the job and their career growth. One non-teleworker saw working in an office as an opportunity to "learn from the ones who have something to teach." Marlo, also a non-teleworker, valued his co-workers and management and believed that they had many things they could teach him. In his words:

> "Group dynamics are key. There are lots of interruptions but you gain a huge synergy and elevated knowledge."

For the non-teleworkers the office was a place of interaction, divertissement, and learning. Some of the teleworkers still perceived the office as a place of learning but because they were at home they no longer engaged in daily interaction. Frank, a teleworker, reflected on the informal interaction he used to regularly engage in when he worked in an office:

> "If you're talking the latest information, the hallway talk, some of our marketing resources, I think that's where you actually miss, you know, you miss those resources. [...] sometimes if you're in the office, it's not just the hallway talk, but things just happen, a new program or a new announcement or a win somewhere where somehow that seems to filter around the office or you just hear about it, you know, because you're there and that's what you miss when at

the home. So it's kind of data or information that you'll just miss because it's not electronic and it's just in the air, it's just there."

Frank filled this void by arranging lunches with co-workers every week. Mike was the only teleworker who spoke strongly about interacting with peers and getting exposure. Mike stated:

"If you're hanging out at home, no one ever sees you, you rarely get involved in meetings, yeah, you're delivering some, whatever your job is, a presentation here, an analysis there, whatever it might be. That's fine. But you're only going to get so much exposure that way. You're, I think, inevitably, you're kind of going to be rated as a good employee, nothing more and your learning curve is going to be stunted because you learn by interaction with your peers. You don't get that by working at home. And you don't get that as much working in Calgary, frankly. You get that a hell of a lot more in Ottawa."

A second meaning held about the office by the respondents was that the office was a place of disruption, distraction, and interruption mainly due to interaction with peers. Marlo, a non-teleworker, worked in an open bullpen with five other team members. They each had their desk within a large open office. In this environment the only way to concentrate was to face the computer and block out any distractions. According to Marlo, there were many distractions:

"There are a lot of interruptions with work and the social 'what did you do last night?' type question. But that's the whole thing. It is an office setting and interaction is the whole point."

Clancy, a teleworker who worked three days a week at home would concur:

"If I'm at the office and I'm going to shut my door, I may as well be at home and shut my door because if I don't need to interact with people here why bother."

At home there were distractions but the most common one attributed to being in the office, that of interacting with co-workers, was removed. This allowed greater focus on the work. Al's dialogue highlighted this point:

> "I go up to that office and I try to work and I always have someone walk in, oh, how's it going, what did you do, what have you been up to. And like, you're working and you've got a flow of thinking going and someone comes in and breaks your concentration. I find being home alone you can really concentrate on what you're doing and probably productivity from that alone is increased by 20%. Because there aren't any interruptions, there's no outside people asking you stupid questions, not even relevant to your work and you're sitting there and you got it going pretty good. So flow of thinking and concentration I think is greater at home alone."

4.2.1.4 Uniqueness

The respondents held the impression that their action or routine was unique. The respondents deemed their reasons for working from home, how they worked from home, and their conduct at home was unique whereas all three of these aspects were similar among the respondents. For example, Julie believed she was unique because of her flexibility in deciding whether to work from the home or the office. Mike, Clancy, Pam, and Mary also shared this particular perspective.

The symbolism of uniqueness also held meaning for the respondent's perception of themselves as mature and responsible adults and, in the words of Clancy, of others as "untrustworthy teenagers". Two respondents used the phrase "no one babysits anyone else around here". This further captured the sentiment of many of the respondents who saw themselves as responsible adults who should be trusted. The respondents recognized the importance of their discipline and their motivation to work. The respondents felt that others may take advantage of working at home and not put in full days, but not themselves. This suggested these respondents perceived the office as the

baby-sitter. That is, the office performed the function of control in setting the hours that must be worked and how work should be performed.

"Screwing the pooch" as Mike bluntly stated is something others do but rarely him. Al talked about his feelings about productivity for those who work at home:

> "I mean I was pessimistic, I still am pessimistic because I know what you can get away with and productivity for the company is not necessarily going to increase."

He then detailed an interesting story about a colleague who was working from home but was also working for another company as proof that people are going to take advantage of their freedom. Mike would agree utterly with Al's statement and story:

> "I bet there are people that can get away working their 5 to 6 hours a day, are happy with that and no one knows better. They get away with that and will never get fired. They will always be able to float through any issue because they're doing their job and doing it adequately. They don't have higher aspirations so they can hide out at home and get by working 5 or 6 hours per day. But mind you, if you ever read Dilbert, I don't think this is unusual for a large company."

Only Julie, speaking candidly, admitted to ever slacking off:

> "If I am going to be working at home that day and I know it I will sleep in a bit."

A productivity increase in work performance was perceived by each individual. However, they did not necessarily believe others achieved this increase. The perception was that while "I work hard at home others may not have my dedication or discipline" and thus will not accrue the increased productivity. This meaning was strongly held by the non-teleworkers who believed that home was not a place of work and held too many temptations that would distract you from working. Marlo aptly stated:

> "They may not watch Oprah but they have the opportunity to watch Oprah."

The lack of trust in co-workers is a shared reality held by the teleworkers and the non-teleworkers. Both the teleworkers and the non-teleworkers believed that those working from home took advantage of their situation. Of course, as mentioned earlier, the respondents rarely admitted to abusing their empowerment and as one respondent excitedly said, "I would never watch daytime television!" Jim, a teleworker, captured this sentiment:

> "Certainly some of the people wonder whether people are actually working. I think that their assumption is that people are at home and they're not working, you know, they're watching television, they're doing whatever it is they would do. And that isn't the case."

Table VIII provides some examples of the local meanings of uniqueness.

Table VIII

Uniqueness

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	My first thing would, see, for me, it's interesting because I've kind of ripped off the system in a sense, in a very positive way in the sense that if you had to say to me, ok, we're shutting down your office and you're working at home and that's the only place you can work at, I would sit there and go, let me thing about that. Because I like coming into the office. I also like working at home. I have the best of both worlds.
	See the thing is, I could, there are a lot of people out there screwing the pooch, I would imagine.
Pam	Most people who work at home that I work with will either take the odd day and work at home. It's not a scheduled thing. Or they seem to work at home all the time. I work at home when I want which is not typical.
Clancy	I mean. I think some people will take advantage of it but the time that I've been here, there's those few, not bad apples, but those few

Organization Member	Quotation
	that take advantage of it.
	I'm in a special case here because I came in in September here and I didn't really know a lot of people.
Al	I think there's a lot of work to be done. I mean I was pessimistic, I still am pessimistic because I know what you can get away with and productivity for the company is not necessarily going to increase. I think what you'll see is that a lot of people will manipulate their time and they'll start doing other things on the side and start getting...
Harold	It's also an unusual arrangement...one fellow commented that I redrew the line because then as a man going part time and stay at home dad, it's not typical.

4.2.1.5 Reaching out and Touching Someone

I have used this slogan from an American phone company to label this symbol. It captures the essence of the communication that occurred in the course of working from home. That is, reaching outside the home to communicate with others. For the respondents there were three predominant paths to communicate:

1. Phone - voice messages, person to person, or conference calls;
2. E-mail; and
3. Organized face to face meetings.

These three forms of communication were fundamentally similar for those who worked in the office. They only varied in the percentage of time engaged in each. For example, Bill, a non-teleworker, would not use the phone to communicate with his co-workers. He believed in personal face-to-face communication to increase his effectiveness in getting things done. "There are a lot of interruptions with work and the social 'what did you do last night?' type question. But that's the whole thing. It is an office setting and interaction is the whole point."

In the interviews it became clear that the nature of communications changed very little when the job function moved to the home. The application of advanced computer equipment was not as critical as suggested in the literature. For the respondents the telephone was the most widely used form of communication. This was true for the non-teleworkers as well. Being on-line and having e-mail was also common but seemed to be of limited importance. In fact, whether in the office or at home, communication was often geographically remote involving communication with other individuals across the world. This directly impacted the interaction the respondents had with co-workers by diminishing the direct interaction the respondents had with their local peers. Often, it was difficult for the respondents to even get to know their local co-workers as they saw each other only intermittently. Many of the respondents had very little interaction with their local co-workers. Pam offered an example of her way of working:

> "We work with nine or ten other companies across Canada. Nine different
>
> companies, nine different time zones, different cultures and so on."

Working with remote others and different companies was true for the non-teleworkers as well. For both the teleworkers and the non-teleworkers the phone was the most common tool used by the respondents to communicate with their remote colleagues. Often phone meetings were arranged making the calls seem more formal.

At home and the office, the phone was the tentacle that reached into the organization and out into other organizations. Additionally, using phones and e-mail to communicate was adequate for the respondent's needs. Thus, working at home had minimal impact on the communication of the respondents.

Another aspect of the symbolism of reaching out and touching someone held by the respondents was the ceremony involved in attending face to face meetings. When preparing for these meetings the respondents showered and dressed in appropriate garb. There was also the necessary packing of files and other items that were required. It was important not to leave anything at home that might be required in the meeting.

Another part of the ceremony was when the respondents arrived at the office. It was an occasion when someone who typically worked the majority of their time at home visited the office. Frank noted this when he talked about the few times he did go into the office:

"When you're in (the office) they kind of treat it like, hey, Norm's here".

Table IX provides some samples of the different local meanings of the symbolism of reaching out and touching someone.

Table IX

Reaching Out and Touching Someone

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	Well, you see, I'm a different case than most folks here because I dropped in here kind of mid stream so I felt like I had no big relationship or deep relationship with a lot of folks around the office. In that case it certainly hasn't stimulated my ability to meet folks in the office because I'm not here all that much and neither are a lot of other people. So in that case it surely has impacted the office relations because you don't have that camaraderie.
Pam	We have offices all across Canada and we don't see the people that we work with on a regular basis. We just talk to them.
	Well, the way we work is that most of the people that are on my team or in my group are actually already located in other cities and then all my customers which are the telephone companies are also located in other cities so the nature of this job is you spend most of your time on the phone in conference calls as opposed to face to face meetings.
Clancy	You know, because of the situation where you close doors and you only meet twice a week. Like, I'm not trying to date you or anything, you know. So you don't get a chance to interact a lot. So it just takes that much longer to get to know them and to have the friendships, you know.
Al	The advantage for me is that a lot of the people I communicate with are out East so they're 2 hours ahead, so if I get up at 7:00 I'm kind

Organization Member	Quotation
	of working with them anyway.
Harold	And I don't have to spend a lot of time interacting with other people. And in Calgary what I do primarily is just send an e-mail for communication. I work for a woman here. She's more of a group leader systems analyst, not so much a formal supervisor but she needs to be plugged in with respect to the work that's to be coordinated. So I'll send her e-mails and say, this is what I've done, this is what I've got on the go. And I've noticed that since I've gone to a part time arrangement and working from home, she will, she's formalized the communication as well, in that, she'll come in Monday mornings, verbally, sort of what's going on. And she never did that before. So in some respects communication has actually improved. Where I think it was taken for granted before. And sometimes e-mail is just a way of documenting what you've done. So it's not necessarily a request but it's to cc. somebody and say I just completed this and by the way this is for your information.
Julie	[Commenting on the remote communication:] ...everyone we work with is remote but connected and ...Like we've got a client in Ottawa right now that we have set up a high speed connection so we can share data files.
Kirk	[Commenting on remote work:] I have clients that I have never met.
Frank	...Because a lot of the work does tend to be on the phone. So if you can make that more efficient then that just makes it cleaner and easier for you to work with.
Jim	Making sure you have got everything for a meeting and not having to say oh I left it at home. It is just planning ahead.

4.2.1.6 Interruptions

Each respondent stated that they hated interruptions and that working at home allowed them to concentrate. However, it was often mentioned that with the loss of these

chance discussions spontaneity never occurred. This ambivalence may have been driven from the belief that chance meetings result in useful, productive actions. The spontaneous discussions may even have occurred, perhaps over the phone, but being uninterrupted seemed to be more important to the respondents.

The respondents relished that when working at home there were no longer interruptions from co-workers wanting to chat. They attributed this benefit to substantially improving the quality and productivity of their work. The same respondents also lamented that they missed the fun of chatting with co-workers. It appeared that when feeling gregarious the respondents wanted to talk to someone and felt it was okay to be interrupted or interrupt someone but interrupting was convenient only when it happened on their terms. When the respondents were interrupted by someone else at an inconvenient time it often became an annoyance. I am not sure why this reaction occurred but it may have been related to a sense of control over the environment. It also highlighted the ambivalence that individuals had towards interruptions. Sometimes interruptions were desirable and at other times they were annoying.

It seemed that the respondents recognized that their reduced interaction with their peers might be detrimental in aspects such as idea creation and exposure to management; but this loss of spontaneity was more than offset by their increased ability to focus on the work at hand. The respondents, by having no interruptions from co-workers, felt they were able to concentrate and focus on their work. This symbolized to themselves and their peers their increased work effectiveness.

Table X provides some examples of these different meanings of the local meanings of the interruptions.

Table X

Interruptions

Organization Member	Quotation
Pam	You might lose a little bit of just the interaction among employees. I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing.
Clancy	And it bothers them that way because you know, and that's one of the things is that, it's like anything else, is that you know, with telecommuting or with your head office being somewhere, sometimes you're out of touch, you don't find out as fast. And that's the same with telecommuting is that if you're in the office and with a group and I've seen this in Ottawa, if you were a group and working away, like some of the stuff that goes on, the day to day interaction, something will come up and get addressed and get sent out. But if you're not there you won't know about it or you might be bypassed sometimes. But there are trade-offs, you know.

I think one of the things it loses and it's because of the communal setting at work, maybe not, like I say, so much here yet for me but in Ottawa it would be the spontaneousness of new suggestions, new thought processes because when you're at home, and you know yourself, when you have somebody to bounce it off verbally, it's a lot easier than to bounce it off in a written way. |
| Al | I mean the camaraderie, the conversations by the coffee machine, like when you worked there, I mean, having a conversation, just hanging out, hey what's new. I miss that because it's not there. And a lot of the networking you used to do, indirect networking within a company, you lose contact with by doing this.

One thing that annoyed me is people coming in and disturbing you when you're working. That is the biggest thing I've noticed since working at home. I go up to that office and I try to work and I always have someone walk in, oh, how's it going, what did you do, what have you been up to. And like, you're working and you've got a flow of thinking going and someone comes in and breaks your concentration. I find being home alone you can really concentrate on what you're doing and probably productivity from that alone is increased by 20%. Because there aren't any interruptions, there's no outside people asking you stupid questions, not even relevant to your work and you're sitting there and you got it going pretty good. |

Organization Member	Quotation
	So flow of thinking and concentration I think is greater at home alone. I call it the home alone program, by the way.
Frank	If you tend to be in an office your time can be very quickly eaten up in given tasks that are not planned and you can spend a lot of time doing things for other people and doing things as a support resource and not really working towards your objectives and goals. So even though you can set your priorities for your day and what not you can get sidetracked very easily because of the interruptions and just being in the office. So at home you have a little bit better time management control. And you can sit down and you got more quiet time and you can actually get at your priorities in a much more focused manner.

4.2.1.7 The Binary Office

Technology in general, and the computer specifically as symbols of modern work are ubiquitous in today's society. With this understanding it was not surprising to find the respondents viewed the perspective of turning the computer "on" as a reflection of working and "off" as the end of the day or "not working". The respondents used the symbol of the computer as an important work artifact to represent the office at home.

For the office worker, arriving at the office symbolizes 'work'. The respondents had to produce their own symbols of work. Technological artifacts were the symbols of work. The respondents viewed the perspective of turning the computer "on" as a reflection of working and "off" as the end of the day or "not working". The same was often true with the telephone. For example, one respondent viewed turning the ringer on as the start of the work day. Second, the computer was viewed as the office. Simply, the *computer itself,* symbolizes the spatial concept of work and *the use of the computer* symbolizes the temporal concept of work. Again, the same was often true for the telephone.

Telework is viewed in a particular way. Primary to this perspective is the technological aspect of telework. However, in the interviews it became clear that the nature of

communications and the use of technology changed very little when the job function moved to the home. The application of advanced computer equipment was not as critical as suggested in the literature. Perhaps the technologically enabling factor implicit in telework is the fact that computers (i.e. office technology) are available at home rather than the ability to communicate with the center. Technology is not practically a necessary part of teleworking; however, in a sense it is symbolically important. It allowed the respondents to 'switch' modes from home to virtual office, an essential transition if one is to be a successful, diligent teleworker.

Table XI provides some examples of the local meanings of the binary office.

Table XI

The Binary Office

Organization Member	Incident, Quotations, Opinion, Event Etc.
Mike	[Talking about starting his day:] ...and I'll go sit at the computer and I'll start doing stuff. I turn the phone on because I turn the ringer off so we don't get phone calls like we have gotten at 6 a.m. which is 8 a.m. Ottawa time, or 5:30 in the morning. So I turn the ringer off until I wake up, say 6:30 or 7. So the ringer will be on so I can answer calls. I'm basically in the office at that point.
Clancy	[Commenting on the computer:] I use the computer for everything.
Harold	[Referring to turning on/off the computer:] Phone me anytime and I will have the office ready. ...once I've shut that computer off work's done.
Buzz	And now they all have little notebooks and you can work anywhere. I take my office wherever that computer goes.
Frank	[Describing the work routine prior to working from

Organization Member	Incident, Quotations, Opinion, Event Etc.
	home:] My main work was going into the office and working out of the office now I use the computer from home.
	[Describing the tools provided to work from home:] I'm not really set up efficiently as I can be yet and that's something I'm working towards and getting better at the tools that we're given to work.
Ed	Once I've turned the computer off my day's work' is done.
Pam	[Commenting on the technology:] ...there's some really neat tools. We can actually look up a number and dial out and it saves you a lot of time. So once you're set up, you're great.
Craig	I was one of the first people issued a laptop so it made it quite easy to work from home.
Jim	I've got a notebook that basically if I lost it I wouldn't be able to function.
Al	[Describing a typical work morning:] I'll get up and go to my office environment, be it here [home] or be it at the main office, and I log on to my computer. Basically, once I've shut off the computer work is done.

4.2.2 Legitimization

The second group of symbols cluster around the category legitimization. This category expresses the need for the respondents to convey to co-workers, management, and friends that they are "working". There are two symbolic forms in this category. The first symbolic form is justification. This symbol helped the respondents justify to themselves their success in working from home. The second symbolic form is the front.

4.2.2.1 Justification

Justification was an extremely pervasive symbolic reality for the respondents. In describing their work styles the respondents used particular phrases and words that emphasized their increased work output while working from home. Each respondent commented that their productivity was enhanced due to working from the home and provided rationale and concrete examples of their success in working at home. Table XII identifies some of the key words used consistently by each respondent to describe their style of working at home.

Table XII

Words used by the teleworkers to describe teleworking

I'm doing well, productivity, improvement, performance, at the top, counterproductive, efficient, discipline, motivation, effective working

The respondents saw themselves as working how they wanted and thus felt more comfortable with their job and therefore assumed they were more productive. Gurstein (1990), in her study on home-work, also found an overwhelming consensus among the individuals she interviewed that working at home was more efficient. Gurstein (1990) went on to make the point that such an overwhelming consensus that working at home was more efficient than working in an office may corroborate the "Hawthorne Effect" theory that when people are in control they are more likely to feel productive in their work. Additionally, the respondents felt that they were not wasting time by commuting to work when they could do the work at home. The increase in productivity need not necessarily be true or even validated. In discussing productivity with Ed and why he thought his productivity had improved he paused for several moments before answering:

"It's more of a gut feel than anything else."

Even though productivity was rarely documented the respondents all declared an improvement in their work production. Part of their motivation in doing this may have

been to reinforce to their co-workers, managers, and themselves that they were working hard as they were much more productive.

The respondents also felt they achieved increased productivity by the avoidance of interruptions in the workplace. Respondents referred to the distractions that occurred due to interaction with co-workers in the work place. At home respondents noted that distractions were minimal, allowing maximum concentration and the ability to focus on work.

Table XIII provides some examples of the local meanings of justification.

Table XIII

Justification

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	Driving on the QE (the Queen Elizabeth Expressway is outside of Toronto) is a waste of time. It's 2 hours productive work time or personal time that I'm killing. And I know that I'm just as productive at home.
Pam	Just the flexibility. I set it up so that I'm on conference calls and things in the morning that are very conducive to working at home and not having any distractions. So you can really go, go, go.
	My most productive time is in the a.m. and so I think that's good for me to be at home for my most productive time.
	And your time is really well spent because there's actually less things to waste your time there, there's nobody to talk to.
Clancy	And there again when you do work from home you realize how much more work you get when you're not distracted by all that. You know, cubicles and all that bit.
	I'm more productive at home than I am at work anyway.
	I'm probably more focused so that means I'm more dedicated to what I'm doing and if not dedicated then definitely more focused.

Organization Member	Quotation
Frank	I'm kind of not a morning person so, and I can actually get pretty productive in the morning. So I don't miss going into the office first thing in the morning.
Kirk	People want to chat and a lot of time is wasted because people are, oh, did you hear about so and so...
Mary	I find it to be extremely efficient for me (working at home). Very little work gets done because people are constantly talking about whatever, saying, how are you doing?...
Al	[Talking about his work productivity at home:] And actually it ended up being the work production as far as the output, probably better and more driven being done from home than being done from here because of interruptions and that. I find being home alone you can really concentrate on what you're doing and probably productivity from that alone is increased by 20%.
Craig	Employee satisfaction. I think just the fact that you're able to choose to do it or not do it, just like flex time or whatever if it's much more, if it suits the employee, that person is more satisfied and a happier person when they come into work. And secondly, you can be a lot more productive.
Jim	[Speaking about concentrating at home:] I don't have any other distractions, it's very easy to work hard.
Julie	Now as my job got more research oriented one of the problems was I was really busy at work and it was really hard to concentrate on that type of work, when you really have to pay attention and do the research and the writing and to be interrupted is really counterproductive.
Ed	Well, actually, one thing I've learned is that my productivity has gotten a lot higher...because I've eliminated a lot of the idle discussion...

4.2.2.2 The Front

Goffman (1959) defines the front as:

> "the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance." (p. 22)

Goffman considers appearance, manner, and setting together when he discusses the front. However, for those working at home these three concepts were disjoined. Appearance, or how one looked and dressed became unimportant because the face to face contact was removed. Instead, the 'manner', understood as the social attitude or the way one speaks and acts to another, became the key "front". Managing this front became very important for the respondents. This was especially important in managing perceptions.

The front was a pervasive symbolic reality for the respondents. The front symbolizes the actions the respondents did to present a persona that represented how the respondents wanted the world to view them. The front was similar to the face an actor puts on for a performance. Actually, a front is put on by everyone at sometime, although we may not always be aware of it. For example, we may act differently when dealing with the president of the company than when dealing with the complaints department. The front's actions are comprised of how we present ourselves to others. These actions would include, among other things, our mannerisms, tone of voice, vocabulary used, and how we dress.

The front refers to the public persona and reflects the images the respondents portrayed when in their work mode. These were the things the respondents wanted others to see as their main characteristics. Typically when 'working', the respondents described themselves as efficient, productive, autonomous, and motivated. In short, they saw themselves as hard working professionals. This represents the front of a diligent, responsible, and productive worker the respondents wished to present to the public and to their co-workers.

Most communication for the respondents occurred using the telephone. As such, affecting a front was not easily accomplished. In person, it was somewhat easier to make an impact either through mannerisms, style, or manner of dress. Over the phone it was not as easy to present a front. However, the respondents still tried to present a front in other ways. First, the respondents were particularly conscious of ensuring that what they said over the phone was delivered on and formally followed up. Second, for all the respondents a common shared belief was the perception that working from home was less professional than working from an office. A result of this was that the respondents rarely shared that they worked from home with others outside their organization. Finally, when at home the respondents answered the business phone line at all times to show others that they were on the job and working.

The respondents held the belief that face to face communication was an old way of doing business and that teleworkers required new ways to present fronts and make an impression. The respondents were particularly interested in presenting the front of a professional, hard working person. However, they realized that accomplishing this over the phone and without direct contact was difficult. For some of the respondents the quality of work output rather than perceptions created in face-to-face meetings was one way of accomplishing the front they desired. However, when dealing with management, many of the respondents felt that they were now being evaluated by how they conducted themselves over the phone and felt it was not within their power to make the impact they desired. The respondents were concerned that without direct contact the front they desired could not be established and that management might find them lacking. Still, besides quality of work output, none of the respondents knew of any other way to make an impression. Al spoke to these points:

> "That's I think another area that needs to be worked on because a lot of
> people's performances were judged on personal views as well as work views
> like their quality of work. Unfortunately, I think that's changing but there's
> more emphasis on quality of work. I don't daily interact with all these guys and
> ladies. I just interact on a need to basis but if there's a requirement like a

monthly forecast, you know, the quality of the work supplied is really the basis of my performance. And you know, obviously when your on con calls or they're asking you questions of your opinion, financial opinion or business opinion on anything, they judge your performance on how you conduct yourself in your response. But it's less communicative over e-mail, voice mail, telephone, versus you and I sitting in the same office. So the mannerisms and the way people physically conduct themselves that used to be, you know, people used to take that as part of the performance evaluation, which is now gone, so now it's based on, if I phone him, does he phone me back within the day. Now that's kind of a criteria. When he submits his reports are those reports done thoroughly complete, do they answer the question I asked, well, yeah, ok. So does he meet the expectations of his customers, being the sales guys, well yeah, well then that's his performance."

Al understood the need for a front but was struggling with how he used to affect a front and how he now affects a front.

Dress, the most recognizable front, was also important to the respondents. The respondents were very conscious of what they would wear when going into the office or leaving the home to meet with others. When using the phone it did not matter what was worn. However, when meeting in person, presentation affected the front. All the respondents were aware of this and strongly believed that when leaving the home they must dress professionally. Moreover, meeting face-to-face provided an opportunity to make an impact that would bolster the front created over the phone.

Table XIV provides some examples of these different meanings of the local meanings of the front.

Table XIV

The Front

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	If someone calls me at my work office they don't even know it's being transferred to my home office. It's transparent. So that's great because no one needs to know where you are working.
	Like I'll call someone say at 3:30 here they're not in the office because it's 5:30 Ottawa time. I'm expecting their call at 6:30 which is like the beginning of their day, the next day. So I've learned that I have to have the ringer on by 6:30 or 7:00.
Clancy	...I will shave and I will dress in jeans or a shirt, I won't work in sweats. I don't have sweats. I mean I look at it as work.
Ed	If I'm going out then I'll get dressed in a suit or something like that and if not I'll just put on a pair of jeans or something like that.
Frank	I don't know how much I'd attribute to the home office but there was that sense of a loss of professionalism, a loss of the old environment which was more stable or you know. I call it the old environment because it's the way we used to do things. Now things are changing. And I think that's the other thing. You have to kind of, in my mind, you have to try this and look at new things and look at new ways of doing things.

4.2.3 Control

This group of symbols is encompassed by Foucault's (1977) penetrating ideas on 'discipline'. These ideas have direct bearing on the sensemaking of teleworkers. The 'disciplines' are methods to control the body. They include the scale of control, the object of control, and the modality. The scale of control refers to the focus on the body itself and gaining control over gestures, movement, and attitudes. The object of control refers to how we use our bodies to complete tasks. Its focus is on repetitive exercises forcing economy and efficiency. In work terms this could relate to productivity. Finally, modality refers to supervising the processes of the activity rather than the

result. Today, this may mean monitoring the amount of time a worker is logged into the computer as a means of judging the amount of work done. Although Foucault describes these disciplines as having arisen in the early eighteenth century, the disciplines have comfortably taken a place in the work domain and are enacted every day.

Foucault discusses several principles of discipline of which three pertain to the sensemaking of the teleworkers. These principles, whose names I have used to label the symbolic forms within the control category include the time table, hierarchical observation, and normalizing judgement. Each is discussed in turn.

4.2.3.1 The Time Table

The first symbolic form in the control category is the time table. Similar to a time table, where segments of time are designated for certain activities, the respondents had an understanding of being able to demarcate time. Further, keeping track of how much time was spent doing what helped determine whether an adequate job was being performed. For example, there was company time, personal time, and children's or family time. The length of the time spent 'doing' each helped the respondents judge their performance or adequacy of what was being done. The respondents were particularly preoccupied with putting in a day's work. To help judge a complete work day the respondents typically used time. Thus, working eight hours reflected a good day's work.

The was also used to organize the day by demarcating the time. Mary used the time table to completely organize her days:

> "...then I'll work (in the home office) until 5:30pm. At 5:30pm the nanny goes home so I come out at 5:30pm. Monday, Wednesday, Fridays, from 7:00pm to 8:00pm I go the gym. So from 5:30pm to 6:30pm I feed the baby, get the baby ready and then the baby, my husband and me all go."

Mary completely demarcated 'her time' from the 'company time' and had established a regimented program to organize her days. Other respondents had similar concepts of demarcating time and mentally keeping track of the number of hours spent 'working' or 'not working'. Clancy's words captured this point:

> "Part of it too is that working at home gives you that freedom that if you feel like going out for lunch that day with your family you can go and you can go for a two hour lunch or you can do some errands because you know that you'll put the time in somewhere else."

Commuting was seen as a waste of time by both the teleworkers and the non-teleworkers. That time can be wasted is itself interesting and suggests society's compulsion with time as an important resource. Darrin and Bill, both non-teleworkers, hated the morning commute. Both stated that "the travel time offers nothing". All the non-teleworkers identified the savings in commuting time as the most valuable aspect of teleworking. As Bill, located in a large metropolitan city, delicately states:

> "At first I thought telecommuting was stupid but the saving in time is awesome."

Table XV provides some examples of these different meanings of the local meanings of the time table.

Table XV

The Time Table

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	[Time as something that should not be wasted:] Yeah, I did actually. I worked on the road a lot in a sales support function. I worked at home a ton just to avoid the commute. I was living in Burlington which is about a 45 minute drive from Toronto. My office was in Toronto. If I had no reason to be in Toronto I'm not wasting 1 1/2 hours of my day, up to 2 hours there and back,
Pam	It's quite an advantage because you save a lot of time.

Organization Member	Quotation
Clancy	Like I said, you know, I can work 5 hours or 6 hours say, my time, I came in just after 6:30 today and I have work to do. I can leave anytime I feel like it or I can stay till whatever time I feel like, as long as I put in my 8 hours at some point.

But when I split, when time is finished up, usually at 5 if I know that I'm not making up time or I don't have a project deadline, usually around 5, 5:30, like supper time, is when I finish for the day. And when I finish I mean that's formally like sometimes, we don't watch a lot of TV and if we're not going out, going to bed early or my wife is doing something, I mean I might read something else that I haven't finished. But that's an informal thing. I need something to have me fall asleep, you know.

What that means is because a lot of my people are in Ottawa is I can start at 6:00am at home but then it means I can take a break off and I can go for lunch, or I can go tobogganing with my child and then go back to it later to do my other stuff, like some of my presentations or ads and stuff. You know, depending on your workload and the time. So the time management and that's what I really like about it. |
| Harold | But I really look at the commute as a waste of time when I only have to get into the system to solve the problem.

The first priority when I'm at home, because I'm the caregiver, is my son. So I have to deal with the changing and the breakfast. And sometimes that collides with my personal priorities, so I have to shower, those kinds of things. So for the first 1 1/2 hours it's kind of a mangle of dealing with me and dealing with my son. And then it, I try at that point to log in and see if there are any urgent matters because on a week to week basis there are a lot of activities going on and notifications coming in and so on. So I check these. And if everything is clear then what I'll do is look at my to do list and say, is there something that I should be doing today between about 10:00 and noon. That's when my son sleeps and I try and keep him on a routine so I can plan some of my time around. Then lunch becomes lunch, a commingling of my priorities and my son's again. An hour and a half after lunch is really his time, maybe 2 hours, where we're doing things together. Then I know that he goes to sleep for another 1 1/2 or 2 hours. And so I will look at that time again and |

Organization Member	Quotation
	see what I can do for work. If I still have some things at the end of the day then I look to when is my wife coming home and juggling between work and my time for the evening. So what is the highest priority and do I have something. So at work what should I do and log in again, then you do some of that. And my wife primarily takes care of him in the evenings.
Mary	Yeah, I leave here at you know, noon, or as close to noon as I can make it. It takes me about 10 minutes to get home. Then I'll spend 45 minutes, I'll have my lunch, I'll play with the baby. Then I'll go into my office at home.
	And then, Tuesdays and Thursdays, the baby has a bath and all that sort of stuff, so he doesn't get cleaned on Mondays, Weds and Fridays because there's not enough time.

4.2.3.2 Hierarchical Observation

The second symbolic form in the control category is hierarchical observation. This refers to the modern bureaucratic concept that each level of the hierarchy keeps watch over the lower ranks. This works well in a typical office environment but is negated when individuals work from home. Of course, even when a person can be seen it does not mean they are working. Regardless, when working at home, suddenly the idea of using visibility to control the respondents was removed. This seemingly gave some control back to the respondents. However, they now assumed the responsibility of disciplining themselves. Several of the respondents realized this new sense of control. Words like 'liberating' and 'freedom' were used regularly to describe the feeling of working from home. As one respondent stated:

"Working from home allows me a more easy kind of thing to ease into the day".

Part of the freedom came from not having to be on display and not having to deal with the pressures of the work place. The respondents were able to start the day at their leisure. Alternatively, if finished for the day there was no need to hang around and be seen. At home, if the respondents finished before 5:00pm, it was easier to quit for the

day than in a traditional office where it might be noted they left early.[8] In an office leaving early often resulted in co-workers noticing the early departure with scorn.[9] In fact, a senior manager I spoke with confided that often he finished everything he needed for the day but could not leave because if he left early it was assumed he was idle and that his role in the company would be perceived as less critical than the other senior positions.[10]

The people who worked from home had some control over their time. Strong words like "freedom" and "liberating" highlighted the powerful sensemaking being constituted. Frank described his start to the day:

"So that's the good part is the fact that you probably have a little bit better time management control. And you can sit down and you [have] got more quiet time and you can actually get at your priorities in a much more focused manner."

Harold said the same things but in much stronger words:

"It was rather liberating to sit at home with a frothy cappuccino and to focus just on the task and to literally leave a lot of the pressures behind."

Finally Jim's dialog detailed the variety of things that he could do at home that were just not possible if working in an office.

"The other day I had to get, you know, when I'm building this room next door, I needed someone to come in and do the stipple. It's nice because now I can arrange to have someone come in and do that during the day without, oh, I have to dash from work to home to meet the guy to get it done. He can get it done while I'm working away. So that's a really nice thing. The ability to go and put a load of laundry in, just throw it in, go and work, you know, when it's done you can throw it in the dryer. It doesn't take any time out of your day's

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[8] As discussed in the previous section the symbol of the time-table plays a role in determining how many hours are worked and when an appropriate quitting time might be.

[9] Perhaps a somewhat cynical comment but it does seem to be supported by both the interviews and my life's experiences.

[10] To his credit he did take leave of this company.

schedule. You get little things done that you wouldn't have been able to do before so it's kind of, especially when you're really busy. I find in the summertime, you know, you're trying to squeeze in as many hours at work and I'm trying to get in as much golf in as possible at the same time that having that ability to get some of those things done, you know, because I find in the summertime you go through a lot more clothes than you do in the wintertime just because you're out and about and you're getting a lot dirtier. That I find is absolutely great."

Working from home removed the respondents from the controlled office environment and created the opportunity to perform personal tasks. However, to some of the respondents this meant something a little different. Working from home was a fragile freedom. The respondents could still do some personal things but it must not be exploited or the ability to work from home could be removed. Clancy's predilection to this belief was seen in his simple statement:

"It's up to you to prove that it's good or it's up to you to screw it."

The respondents recognition of this control is highlighted in their description of their managers as feeling a loss of control. Ed experienced this directly:

"I've had two different managers since I've been doing this. The first guy that I dealt with was more a, more of a, you know, he wasn't real comfortable with the concept. He wanted to feel like he had more control I think or he felt a little bit threatened by the fact that...Well, normally he was used to being able to walk down two offices and say what's going on here, you know, or what's this. Whereas you have to manage and you have to trust that your employees are doing what you want them to do and all that sort of thing. So he was I think originally a little bit uncomfortable with it but then he got pretty used to it and generally when things go well, nobody cares anyway."

Finally, Clancy realized that he was gaining something by working at home that he could not get if he worked in the office full time:

" You're a more satisfied individual because, like for me personally, I'm happier because I see my family and I can interact with my family and part of that interaction is that my partner can sleep in in the morning because my daughter gets up early and I'll make breakfast and then wake her and we'll have breakfast, whatever will be ready and not all the time. And then when she's awakened then I can go downstairs and I'm happy because I got to share one on one time with my daughter. I know my wife is very happy because she got an extra 1/2 hour or one hour to sleep and it's not her having to worry about that stuff where I dash off here. My daughter's up, she's got to be up. So it's a little special treat."

Another aspect of the symbolism of hierarchical observation was the respondents understanding of themselves as mature adults and the belief that being a mature adult means holding certain responsibilities. The respondents felt that when working at home they could be trusted to do their job. As two respondents pointed out there was no need to 'babysit' them. As adults they could be trusted to act responsibly.

Table XVI provides some examples of the local meanings of hierarchical observation.

Table XVI

Hierarchical Observation

Organization Member	Quotation
Mike	And it's very autonomous. You're running your own show. No one babysits anyone else here. You don't have a boss in the traditional mold. So you have to be very independent minded in the first place to work.
Clancy	And it's the same working at home with telecommuting. I mean, you can measure me by how much I log in remotely but we all know that's fine, you know the line is being accessed but you still don't know how much work. I mean, I can log it in at 9:00 in the morning, or 8 or 7:30 and not touch it. I can go out to the park or whatever, right. You're only going to know if I'm goofing off is if

Organization Member	Quotation
	I have an accident then all of a sudden I'm in the hospital on work time, where you could do the same here. So I mean there's those measurements and they have to be and they could be formal or informal. But I think you have to trust the individual. Like our guiding principles. Those are very very important to Axle and the one reason that I stay at Axle, one of the big reasons that I stay at Axle is the corporate attitude and not just the department attitude. And what I mean by that is that I have respect for you as an individual because you come through those doors downstairs, you're an adult and you know that you'll get to work. And if it's 5 hours that you can get it done and you can go golfing, that's great. But if you're on a project, you know, like 2 months down the road and it's going to take you 12 hours, you're going to be there and you're going to do it. You don't lose your adulthood because you don't come through a door.
Harold	Yeah. I didn't even really have to. I had the authority because being the supervisor of a remote site and reporting back to somebody back in Calgary, they were far less concerned with how I conducted my time...
Mike	It's really hard as a manager to give up, to let up, you know, to let go type of thing. Because if I don't see you, I don't know if you're screwing around. And the problem is in the call center world, just because you're there doesn't mean that you're not screwing around because there are usually ways of doing that type of thing.
Pam	The thing is that again depending on what you're doing, we're all responsible adults here. It's a small group, we're 25 people here. So you know, you're driven because you know you've got a good thing here. You don't want to give it up.

4.2.3.3 Normalizing Judgement

The third symbolic form in the control category is normalizing judgement. This symbol refers to the constant pressure to conform to a set of idealized rights and wrongs making it readily apparent when deviating from normality or acceptable actions. It is similar to 'laws' but different in the important aspect in that laws are negative.

Laws are in the form "do not do this or that" or you will be punished. Foucault's (1977) 'disciplinary power', as enacted through normalized judgement, is different. It not only punishes or reprimands, it rewards. This is a very powerful force that uses the idea of "normal" to conform behavior. The respondents held very distinct meanings of normalized judgement. The meanings were understood from past tradition——what they used to do in the office—and the perception of what other co-workers thought of them working from home.

Tradition may be defined as the set of formal and informal practices, policies, ideas, and expectations that guide the behavior of organizations and individuals as they carry out work. For the respondents the idea of 'normal' seemed to derive from tradition. Thus what had been done in the past was often what was done now. For the respondents and the non-teleworkers, working from home was a departure from tradition and in the words of one teleworker, those who could not understand the notion of working from home were of the 'old school' mentality. In fact, the idea of 'old school' thinking was used by many of the respondents to describe those not open to working from home. Respondents understood telework as somehow different from 'normal work' and that they themselves did not hold the old school mentality.

The 'old school' mentality captures the idea of working regular hours, and separating the home and work into separate realms of differing activity. Those who hold the old school mind set do not accept working from home as a 'normal' way of working. So the meaning held by the non-teleworkers was that telework is something different from regular work. Teleworking as something different from what had traditionally been done was even true for the respondents who had worked from home the longest. As Ed exclaimed:

> "I was chosen to work from home because I was the right age, I hadn't worked in an office forever and you know had that right mind set."

Ed recognized that he was chosen because he would accept trying something new and was of a particular frame of mind to succeed.

Another aspect of normalizing judgement was that every respondent held the belief that others perceived them to be "sloughing off" while at home. Co-workers, friends, and managers were said to have directed comments that the respondents perceived as suggesting that when at home the respondents did not work very diligently. As such, the respondents saw themselves as somehow different from their peers who remained in the office. What the respondents were doing was not 'normal' and as such was singled out and joked about.

Table XVII provides some examples of these different meanings of the local meanings of normalizing judgement.

Table XVII

Normalizing Judgement

Organization Member	Quotation
Harold	[Commenting on his work day:] My work day typically falls in the parameters of 9 to 5. I find that works best for me. Some of them seek isolation. Others get used to it. It's a traditional thing. It is the way it was always done.
Ed	[Commenting on his office at home:] I don't have a traditional office...Our next home will definitely have more space and a traditional office.
Al	[Discussing the need to meet the rules of the company:] So disciplining yourself to follow a routine that's still within the rules of the company because every company says 8:30 to 5:00 which I'm sure you're finding is becoming more relaxed in the 90s than it used to be.
Clancy	[Talking about what others say:] Well, you know, the thing is, you know, even my boss makes a lot of jokes about it. The fact that they will never catch me on Friday afternoon and all that kind of stuff.

Organization Member	Quotation
	You don't lose your adulthood because you don't come through a door.
	I mean, you're looking for an excuse to can the practice, where here you're not looking for an excuse, you're looking for ways to keep it going. So it's a reversal of the old management mentality.
	There are a few people here that still have somewhat of the old school mind set and I find that hard to take. I come in at 6:30, if I come in at 6:30 because I know I have stuff going on down there or it's quieter or whatever. I mean, I woke up why not get in here and I'll leave at 3:30 or 4 or whatever. You know, you'll get a passing remark and you know that it's in a joking remark but it makes me wonder sometimes like if they mean it in a cutting way. But more and more people, like my attitude is why are you working here, I mean, you know. It's there and if you don't like it go back to one of the old....
Mike	[Talking about a company he used to work for:] I was hired by a company back in 1990 and was never into the traditional work scene. That company has always been hard core.
	[Talking about his current organization:] You don't have a boss in the traditional mold.
	I can see how your boss, if a boss is coming from the old school as they say, all of a sudden this person isn't coming in I'd be very concerned about that.
	It doesn't really matter how you work. You're running your own show and have to be treated as such. No one babysits anyone.
Frank	[Reflecting on what others think of work at home:] Perception is not necessarily the reality.
Jim	[Discussing what others say about work at home:] ...they say oh, well, you don't really work....lazy, not hardworking...you got Oprah on?

4.3 The Enactment of Symbolic Realities

The third research question explored the influence of symbolic realities on the respondent's actions as related to the process of telework. The symbolism of telework shaped the respondent's constructions of telework and their interaction with telework. Prasad (1993) writes;

> "For symbolic interactionists, this process of enactment, whereby symbolic realities mediate meaningful action, is a central concern of any research project." p 1419

Those who chose to work at home were labeled teleworkers and a different set of organizational realities was created and enacted. In the following paragraphs I will describe the influence of the symbolic representations identified previously on the process of telework.

4.3.1 Work Performances

The influence of the symbolic forms on work performances had direct consequences on how the respondents encountered telework and uncovered very interesting things about work itself. Those who worked at home were performing the same work as colleagues who decided to stay in the office but often enacted very different realities.

As discussed previously, the work of those in the office and those at home was similar; but the category of 'telework' was created for those who chose to work at home. Ultimately, based upon the interviews with the non-teleworkers and the teleworkers, the day-to-day work of the respondents was similar to that of their office co-workers and in some instances identical. The only distinguishing feature of telework was that some of the respondents work now occurred at home. Non-teleworkers contrasted with these constructions of work in one significant way. The non-teleworkers felt that a portion of their work required them to be in the office. As Marlo stated:

> "I could do maybe 9/10 of my job remotely but the 1/10 that deals with the data warehouse I have to be here because that is where the warehouse is."

Similarly, Bill detailed the need to be in the office to interact with other people in order to get his job done. Part of this need to be in the office was related to getting exposure to management and furthering his career. Otherwise, both the teleworking respondents and the non-teleworking respondents shared similar constructions of work. So it appeared the constructions of work among all those I interviewed were similar whether working in the office or working from home. However, the non-teleworkers in this study made the conscious choice to remain in the office even though they could have worked from home.

4.3.1.1 Home as a place of 'no-work'.

The symbolism of realms had a very strong influence on the meaning of telework. The non-teleworkers perceived the ideologies of the home and work as different realms with varying activities. One result of this perspective was the non-teleworkers did not view the home as a place of work. Instead, it was viewed by the non-teleworkers as a place of no-work.

In direct contrast to the respondent's objective to be seen as hard working and dedicated was the response received by the respondents from colleagues, clients, and even friends who worked in an office. The non-teleworkers held perceptions, mainly negative, of people working at home. These perceptions often were developed from reflecting on how they would act if they worked from home. As Darin, a non-teleworker, bluntly stated:

> "Yeah right, if you are at home as if you are going to work."

Frank's statement is typical of many comments received by those who worked at home:

> "Originally they sort of thought, ah, that's got to be the best way to go. It's pretty slack. You're out by yourself and so the joke used to always be, did I get you out of bed when they phone and stuff like that. And that bugged me a little bit, you know, because you're out here and you're working but nobody sees you. I didn't like that so much."

Apparently these comments were frequent and although said in a joking manner they did irritate. Clancy's comment about how people remarked on working from home highlighted this:

> "You know, you'll get a passing remark and you know it's in a joking manner but it makes me wonder sometimes like if they mean it in a cutting way."

For the non-teleworkers, their strong ideology of the home and work had the consequence of shaping their understanding of the home as incompatible with working and created the belief that those who worked at home were really not working. The teleworking respondents understood that some people just cannot accept people working from home actually can succeed and believed that one needs to be somewhat unique to work from home. As Mike pointed out:

> "I'm sure you've met some people, not everyone could telecommute. And most people would admit that they could never work at home because they would never do anything."

The non-teleworkers and the teleworkers recognized that work in an office tends to be interrupt driven, particularly with interruptions from co-workers. At home, there were also interruptions, for example a ringing phone. However, when working at the office the phone was not always seen as an interruption as the ringing phone could be ignored. An interruption from a co-worker was harder to ignore and was the disruption that the respondents focused on in the interviews. It was interesting that the ringing phone did not need to be answered in the office. In an office, the respondents believed that it would be assumed they were 'busy' or in a meeting. At home the phone typically could not be ignored because the general perception of the respondents was that if they were at home and not answering the phone then as Craig stated:

> "Where are you and what are you doing?"

4.3.1.2 Home as a place of comfort

The symbolism of realms also shaped how the respondents acted when they were at home. A common and old theme of the home and work is the idea of private and

public realms. These can be viewed as further examples of the home and work as binary opposites. Goffman's ideas on front stage and backstage are useful in explaining the actions of the respondents in these realms.

Goffman's (1959) book offers many insights into the sensemaking of the teleworkers. Applying Goffman's (1959) ideas of front stage and backstage onto the similar dichotomy of public and private personae is extremely pertinent to understanding the sensemaking of teleworkers. Backstage is where we can be ourselves. It emphasizes the comfort of the home. It also highlights the privacy of the home. It is somewhere where we are sheltered from the harsh cruelties of the world. In this light, it is clear why some of the non-teleworkers felt uncomfortable calling their teleworking co-workers at home. For most of the co-workers this was a domain they have not been invited to participate in and thus felt awkward calling.

At home the respondents were in their domain and enacted routines that were "stress free" and "comfortable". At home the respondents felt as if they were backstage at a performance. Backstage also can refer to the private persona. The private persona encompasses the actions we do in private and wish to keep separate from our public persona. These are the actions we typically do in the home. Relaxation, comfort, and intimacy are three obvious characteristics of the home. One respondent highlighted these characteristics of the home environment when he detailed wearing "fuzzy pink slippers and a housecoat" while he worked from home. Comfort ruled in the home domain and all the respondents spoke of the ease of starting the day at home and the bliss of wearing anything they liked. The fact that working at home reduced the "stress" of the morning routine suggested the powerful ideology of the home as somewhere private as well as a domain where activities were under the respondent's control. As one respondent stated:

> "It's nice to have your sweats and you can get relaxed, have your coffee and kind of ease into the day."

Another said:

"It's nice to be at home as opposed to the office; it is just a little more laid back."

The backstage was where the respondents felt they were comfortable.

4.3.1.3 Fictions of working.

The symbolism of realms also affected the activities that were performed while working. What was mentioned by most respondents but discussed only briefly was that it was not plausible to work every moment. Not all time can be productive. What was unique about working at home was that the respondents no longer had to display fictions of working. Consider make-work. While at work and displaying the public persona a certain decorum is required. While at work one must always appear busy. One subtlety of this is that without the ability to close an office door a person is on public display and must always appear busy. Interestingly, this seems to apply to all hierarchical levels. The one time a person is caught playing a game may become the one thing that others suspect this person does the majority of the time. Even the fact that someone can get "caught" doing something other than work speaks to the powerful ideology of the work place. One thing that changed for the respondents was they were able to work how they wanted when at home and it was easier to quit for the day. Ed's experience when he had to go back to work in the office highlighted his reaction:

> "And you know what I find too is, I did have to go back to work in an office for about 4 months and it drove me nuts. I went back and you know, I'm the kind of guy that I don't like to sit around now, you know. If I'm done work, I've done everything that I have to do, I don't like to sit around from 3:30 to 5:00 just to wait until 5:00 which is what you have to do in that kind of an office situation. You know, to be involved with the, politically it looks better and you know, all the support people and everything else. So I found that very kind of constrictive."

4.3.1.4 Separating the home environment from work

The symbolism of realms also influenced the respondent's need to have some physical separation of the work space in the home. The respondents wanted to separate the home environment from the work environment. Respondents actively did this by developing home offices away from the living space of the home. Clancy explained what he did:

> "When we put in the new office we had the option of taking a third bedroom upstairs to do it but that's kind of the family office, you know, as far as the bills, the cheques and all that but also a playroom for our child. We have a family room or a TV room downstairs but the way we did it was I insulated my walls and my ceiling so it would be quiet. So when I'm in the home office and actually I'm usually pretty good at that is if I want to concentrate on something I can block out everything."

Frank's actions were similar:

> "I've actually purposefully set up the doors and the closed area and they know that if I'm here they don't interrupt me."

The separate space acted as a psychological boundary to prevent work and social life from interfering with one another. Five respondents had built separate offices complete with locking doors that they used to separate the work space from the home space or in other words put the front stage backstage. Jim's dialog offered a good example of how important it was to separate the work environment from the home:

> "I've created a room, it allows me to close the door and that way I can close it off and I don't really need to care about other people seeing it and also it allows me to kind of leave the office."

Another activity of this nature was to not allow the children to enter the home office during "working hours" and even, as one respondent did, keeping the office a secret place from her infant child. Another respondent also raised the point that when he

worked at home he actually never left the office. Blocking out the office by shutting a door was a simple action that allowed the respondents to enact leaving the office.

4.3.1.5 Rethinking the home as the workplace

The symbolism of realms also helped the respondents to reconceptualize the home and work. What was once two separate domains became blurred. Even for those who integrated the home and work, having the home as the predominant work site required a shift in understanding. The respondents conceptualization of their work at home was reflexively determined by looking back to what they used to do when they were in an office and attempting to make this conceptualization fit into their "work at home" environment. The respondents began this process by highlighting that working at home was less important than what they did for a job. As one respondent with a few years experience of working at home stated:

> "To me the telework aspect of the job is natural now and so I don't really think
> of it as being anything amazing."

To the respondents, work is work whether in an office or at home.

Working from home, the idea of "working" from the home was incongruous with many of the respondents ideological concepts of home and work. With regard to the jobs and the actual work being done nothing changed when the respondents began to work from home. Working at home became very ordinary and part of the job. However, this position seemed applicable only to the respondents who had worked at home for a longer period of time.

The initial move to work from home was disconcerting to the majority of the respondents suggesting that there was an adjustment required in making sense of working from home. Frank vividly described his initial reaction to working from home:

> "The start was very, very confusing. Like I say, when you had a desk at the
> office and you had one here, it just felt like you were unorganized. It felt like

you were really nowhere. You were in the gray area and it just felt like you kind
of didn't belong."

This was common for those just beginning to work from home. At least part of this
disturbance was related to the disruption of their routine. Doug explained how things
were when he began teleworking:

"The biggest thing that I ever had to do was get organized. For the first three
or four months I was just running because I did not know when to be accessible.
Now I know how to organize my day."

To help make sense of working from home many of the respondents focused on their
job routines rather than where they worked.

Mike completely rethought his position and viewed himself as running a consulting
firm. This was an interesting enactment as Mike saw himself as different from the
teleworkers and his co-workers. In doing so Mike understood and enacted a different
reality than all the other respondents.

"It's funny because the way I positioned the way I work is I'm just running my
own company. It's my own consulting firm, you might talk to HR about this,
I'm running my own show. I'm essentially leasing this little office space and
I've got an office space at home. Axle provides me with the technical support I
require but I'm an independent consultant that they've brought on and my clients
are based in Ottawa and Toronto. So, that's my relationship with Axle and it's
great. Axle provides me with technical support. That's the way I look at Axle.
But, again, it's like running my own business because I always wanted to run
my own business. I suspect someday I will run my own business. This is a neat
stepping stone to doing that because you get all the security of working for a big
company, I mean support of working for a big company but the total autonomy,
it's a home based business for all intents and, I don't see myself as
telecommuting as much as I see myself running a home based business."

4.3.1.6 Home and Work as two separate realms

The symbolism of realms also influenced how the respondents reacted when individuals they were dealing with realized that they were at home. When the caller was unaware that the individual he was conversing with was at home, unexpected sounds like a dog barking or a baby wailing exuded background noises that conflicted with the perceived setting and perhaps with the manner of the individual, who was trying to sound 'business-like'. Instead of business background noises, the sounds of the home were heard. The respondents, in the words of one, "sensed a feeling of awkwardness" on the other end of the telephone whenever sounds incongruous with an office were heard by someone they were speaking with. This suggested some individuals felt uncomfortable when dealing with individuals who worked from home. Further, the respondents were still uncomfortable with others knowing they were working from home.

The symbolism of realms also influenced how non-teleworkers interacted with individuals working from home. The feeling that there was a sense of awkwardness inferred that both the respondent and the person he was speaking with were uncomfortable with something. The discomfort likely arose because there was a conflict of roles. Talking to someone at home typically occurred with friends and not business contacts. Invading the privacy of the home felt awkward. This was true even for co-workers and managers. One manager of teleworkers hated calling his subordinates at home because he felt he was intruding in a space where he had no authority and often called hoping for the voice mail rather than having to speak directly with his subordinates at home. When he would call he would often ask, "Are you at home or at work?" implying that even during work hours the home and work boundary was very nebulous to him. Another non-teleworker respondent felt he was "invading their privacy" when he called co-workers who worked at home. He worried they might be doing something else and he would be interrupting. This also highlighted the powerful ideology of the home and work spaces.

4.3.1.7 E-mail as an inbox/outbox

The symbolism of reaching out and touching someone had consequences for how communication channels were used. The respondents typically used e-mail sparingly to send information. Instead, with e-mail there was often the curiosity to check and see if any new messages had come. This occurred even after the work day was completed.

E-mail's main use was similar to an inbox/outbox. That is, people logged on to their e-mail accounts to see if there were any specific tasks they were required to do. They also sent notification to others to tell them what they had completed. Craig's dialog described a typical use of e-mail:

> "Then later in the day, about 3 or 4, I check my remote mail. What I'll do then is download the day's mail from the servers, go through it and reply to various things that I can then I'll upload the responses, generally while I wander downstairs for supper. Then in the evening I'll check to see if there's any late breaking issues that have come up."

Harold used e-mail similarly:

> "E-mail is just a way of documenting what you have done. So it's not necessarily a request but it's to cc somebody and say I just completed this and by the way this if for your information."

4.3.1.8 Less Interaction with co-workers

The symbolism of reaching out and touching someone had the consequence of reducing interaction with co-workers. As discussed, the co-workers that the respondents typically interacted with were remote. Co-workers who were local did not work on the same projects and there was often very little they had in common. One result of working with peers who were remote was that face to face interaction was already minimal and it was an easy step to begin working from home as the phone was already the main source of communication. Mary's response is typical of the teleworkers:

> "I miss out on hey do you want to go for lunch. Those sort of things but it is not important to me."

Harold, in talking about his co-workers, expresses similar sentiment:

> "We used to socialize more. I find that now it's much more difficult to do that.
> That desire is not there to socialize in the same way and more responsibility at
> home means I just don't do it."

This may point to the changing nature of work relationships as the three non-teleworkers also had minimal social relations with their co-workers. The difference is that the office workers had at least cordial face to face interaction on a daily basis with their peers. These may also be instances where a certain personality type (i.e. an introvert) preferred the solitude of telework.

4.3.1.9 Visits to the Office as Special

Another consequence of the symbolism of reaching out and touching someone was that because of the infrequent visits to the office the respondent's limited time in the office was viewed as special and important. This time was viewed as a limited resource to be used effectively. Ed highlighted an example of this:

> "What we do now too that makes those meetings more productive is that myself
> and my other counterpart will go into a meeting and they know that this has got
> to be business because these guys are only here for a day so everything we do
> has got to be dealt with and out of here because everyone else is on the road
> again."

4.3.2 Legitimization

Work and home have become ideologically distinct. Further, they have become binary oppositions. The public persona of work and the private persona of home reflected this. Moreover, work and no-work—which again is the home—can also be opposed. The trouble then becomes how individuals effectively convey that they work when at home, a place where "no-work" occurs.

Thus, even if the respondents do the same work at home as someone else does at the office, they have the added pressure of conveying the fact that they are working,

consciously producing and reproducing symbols connoting work. Bill, a non-teleworker captured this sentiment:

"You can work just as hard at home and never get recognized for it."

One consequence of this was the time and effort the respondents spent in manufacturing symbols that conveyed the process of working. This was analogous to following the criteria to making a good decision and stating that because the criteria was followed it must be a 'good' decision. For those at home, time spent manufacturing symbols conveying 'work' did not necessarily imply they were working.

4.3.2.1 Showing tangible results to prove you are actually working

The symbolism of justification, used by the respondents trying to convey they were in the process of working, is supported by Goffman's (1959) idea of dramatic realization. Those who worked at home were unseen and dramatizing their performance constituted a problem. As Kirk, quipped:

"You have to be seen working to be seen as working."

For the office workers, conveying work was straight forward and included things such as staying late at the office to 'show' their work ethic or joining a committee that offered exposure to senior management. For the teleworkers these activities were more difficult to engage in. Teleworking shifted the respondent's relationships with their managers from behavior-based to outcome-based contracts. One instance of this was that project deadlines became field markers used by the respondents to prove outcomes.

The respondents wanted to be seen as working while in the home environment, ideologically seen as an environment of no-work and employed tactics to prove they were working. One simple tactic used was showing management tangible results.

Julie, a teleworker who spent three days a week at home, explained her experience:

"And so you need to show evidence of that so I always feel that the times I do work at home are the times that I can show evidence too it seems."

4.3.2.2 Using technology to convey working

The symbolism of justification also had consequences for how technology was employed. For those working at home the phone was a very powerful symbol. To those working at home it represented the door into the home office. Like a door it can be shut limiting access to all. Also, a ringing phone represented a knock on the door that could be answered or ignored. Many respondents, even when "not working" or finished for the day left the phone on. If it rang it was a quick transition back to work mode. To the respondents, being accessible by phone after 5:00pm was very much like staying late at work even if they were doing nothing. This was seen with the routine employed by the majority of the respondents. Ed detailed the routine used by many of the respondents:

> "If I am satisfied with what I have done I will just knock off and leave the
>
> phone on and my office is right here and I'll come out and play with my kids...I
>
> won't call forward my phone to the voice mail. I'll leave it here until 5:30 or
>
> something like that so if a call comes in I'll be able to pick it up."

John detailed a similar routine:

> "At the end of the day, you know 5 o'clock, I'll leave the phone on and then I'll
>
> get a return call from someone but I'm not doing work, I'll be in the family
>
> environment...but it is easy for me to go and pick it up."

A similar routine was also used in the morning, as many of the respondents work required speaking with clients or co-workers in different time zones.

Mike described his morning routine:

> "The show is open at 6:30am. When you learn the routine of when people in
>
> Toronto return calls you turn your ringer on by 6:30 or 7:00am."

These routines depicted a person as diligently working and operated as a powerful front suggesting professionalism and hard work ethic. It was a simple tactic used by the respondents to convey their diligence. What was not known was what the caller thought. One respondent said that the people he spoke with were impressed at his diligence in working so late; however, he mentioned that this impression quickly

evaporated upon learning that he was working at home. Since the respondents were at home it was easily dismissed by others that they were actually working, particularly if it is after the close of a traditional office day.

The symbolism of justification used by the respondents was continuously enacted; however, its effect appeared to be easily dismissed by those in the office.

4.3.2.3 Emphasizing productivity

The symbolism of justification also influenced how the respondents portrayed productivity. With the understanding of how they may be perceived the respondents continually tried to convey instances of 'high productivity' to portray themselves as continuously and effectively working. The respondents used detailed conversations, ostensibly selling to their co-workers and management their high productivity when working from the home. The reasons provided reflected the nature of the home as discussed in the symbolism of realms. That is, the home was a quiet, comfortable place where it was easy to concentrate. Pam offered a typical example:

'The work I do and things I do in the morning are very conducive to working at home and not having any distractions. So you can really go, go, go."

4.3.2.4 Activity as work

The symbolism of justification had consequences in how the non-telework respondents presented themselves and how they understood telework. To the non-teleworkers, working was something that should be done in the view of others. Darrin, a non-teleworker, commented:

"If you're not around then what are you doing?"

Bill's thoughts were similar:

"You don't know what they are doing. In the office you get a sense of who his working and who is not. Those at home, who knows?"

Of course, Bill did feel that those who worked at home might be extremely hard workers but rarely were recognized as such. Bill spoke of the difficulty of evaluating

his success in his job. He spoke of the need to demonstrate the activity "unofficially" because of the nature of the job. This activity included working the odd weekend and long hours. Being seen by the executives, particularly the president of the company who walked the floors after hours, had created a culture where it seemed that to succeed one must be seen. As Bill noted:

> "There is one guy who has been around a lot of years and teleworks but gets no exposure. His career has suffered and he is trying to get his office space back. It does not pay to be out of sight."

The non-teleworkers have rejected working at home for these various reasons. They also saw their co-workers who were at home as less successful than those who worked in the office.

4.3.2.5 Providing evidence of professionalism

The symbolism of the front affected how the respondents acted to manage their appearance. The respondents believed that non-teleworkers did not believe working at home was professional. While working from home the respondents still needed to communicate their competence even if they did not meet others in person. To the respondents, professionalism was an important front to maintain. For those at home, the need to convey an air of professionalism was almost entirely reliant on 'manner' as most interaction was now occurring either through the phone or e-mail. The 'manner' was communicated using elegantly styled e-mails or clear enunciation while speaking on the phone. However, this front was somewhat unsatisfactory and the respondents struggled with how to present a front while working from home. Further, they saw working at home as a limitation when trying to present a front.

The front suggests why working in the home was kept transparent from others by the respondents. It also offers an explanation for why the respondents would answer the work telephone outside established work hours. In the first instance, the respondents were trying to portray the image of professionalism while hiding the fact that they were working from home. This is partially due to the fact that when an individual takes on

an established role, in this instance an employee of an organization, there are already particular fronts established for this role, for example, working downtown is considered normal practice for organizational workers (Goffman, 1959). However, if an individual does not know you are at home then he will judge your professionalism upon your manner and how you conduct yourself on the telephone. In the second instance, the respondents were trying to maintain the front as diligent and hard working individuals.

4.3.2.6 Hiding the home as the workplace

The symbolism of the front also had consequences for how the respondents tried to create an environment that was professional by hiding the home as the workplace. For many of the respondents, working from home was incompatible with the idea of professionalism and efforts had to be made to ensure that the receiver did not know they were at home. For example, almost all the respondents had work phone numbers that transferred the call directly to their homes. This action was completely hidden to the caller ensuring they did not know the call was routed to the home. Prestige is so much a matter of symbols, for example the large, corporate corner office, that there is a tendency to preserve a front which hides the insides of things (Hughes, 1951). The respondent's need to hide the fact that they worked from home changed with business relationships. Respondents readily told friends that they were working from home while business colleagues were rarely told. Frank's discussion reflected this point:

> "You take the dog here you know, you'll be on a conference call or something and the mailman will come to the door and you hear the dog barking. That's a little, you kind of get used to it but you have to chuckle at it and say hey, you're working out of the home. And you can feel, there's a sense that you feel that it's not as professional, like you get that sense that it's not as professional..."

4.3.2.7 The power of clothing

The symbolism of the front also influenced how the respondents dressed. For example, the concept of professionalism was still intertwined with the images of working from an office and dressing in business clothes (i.e. a suit).

In face-to-face encounters appearance and manner are inextricably intertwined. For example, we expect that a scruffy, dirty, unshaven man in worn clothes will not "put on airs" and talk down to the individuals he is asking for money. However, if this scruffy individual used a phone he could more easily portray an aloof volunteer canvassing for charitable donations. With the appearance separated from manner the respondents all could and did dress casually while at home while still maintaining the front of professionalism. Further, with the expectation that business dress was required the respondents all wore business dress when going to the office or meeting with clients and colleagues.

When the teleworker left the home it was expected that he/she resume the role of the professional in both manner and appearance. The most obvious change was with respect to clothing. As Goffman (1959) writes:

> "When one's activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of
> the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might
> discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed." (p. 112)

The accentuated aspects made their appearance in a front region or the 'front stage'. Each respondent dressed professionally when meeting with others. This fit the expectation that other individuals the respondents met expected them to be professionally dressed (i.e. dress clothes, suit and tie). Jim's routine was typical:

> "If I'm going out then I'll get dressed in a suit or something like that and if not
> I'll just put on a pair of jeans or something like that."

Moreover, the mental result of changing clothing was significant. What we wear is a powerful symbol of how we think of ourselves and our environment. Changing from

casual clothes to business clothes helped the respondents with their transition into the role of the professional office employee. Changing clothes also helped them adopt a business mentality. If not convinced of the ability of clothes to change an individuals mentality as well as convey it, think of the line used in many television dramas "I think I will slip into something more comfortable." One respondent spoke to this point directly:

> "I tend to find myself putting sort of a business frame of mind on by putting on business clothes. Now we don't wear suits to the office normally anymore. We're sort of a casual operation. But I still find the actual act of getting up and putting on dress clothes and going into the home office itself and starting to work, you know, sort of puts me into an office frame of mind."

Harold offered a similar point:

> "I always get up and shower and put on jeans or khakis and try to be respectable because it's part of my routine anyway. It's like if I'm grubby I have a grubby feeling day."

While at home, all the respondents dressed in comfortable clothes ranging from sweats to casual pants. Interestingly, several of the respondents laughed at people they heard had to wear the suit and tie at home in order to begin the work day and maintain the mindset of professionalism. This was incongruous with the respondent's concepts of working from home but certainly matched the concept of dress helping shape how one thinks.

4.3.3 Control

Control is the third and final category. One assumption in the telework literature is that control is given up by the supervisors and that the people who work from home experience greater freedom than those who stay in the office. Management's concern is that employees will abuse this freedom and not contribute a full day's work. Management is preoccupied with ensuring a good day's work is done and the concern is that without direct supervision this cannot be accomplished. There are several ways that control was constituted.

Often people negatively associate salaried workers who work a structured eight-hour day as having a union mentality. Salaried workers are expected to work longer hours with no extra remuneration. This attitude was typical among the teleworker and non-teleworker respondents. At home, working these extra hours was not as necessary and it was certainly simpler to escape the gaze of superiors who expected employees in their office past 5:00pm. Of course, this was not universally true and the respondent's all worked extra hours for important projects or imminent deadlines; however, typically an eight hour day was seen as sufficient to fulfilling a good day's work. Frank's dialog offered an insightful look at a common response among the teleworkers:

> "If I'm in the home office, I found even though you've got the door and the closure here I could tend to cut it off earlier. I tend to break the work off and get back into the home, but it's a, you know, 5 o'clock like that's typical punch clock type of thing, 5 o'clock, where you can't make any more calls or you make a few more calls and what will happen, I'll leave the phone and then I'll get a return call from someone but I'm not doing work, I'll be in the family environment. So what will happen, if someone wanted some information or whatever I'll leave, I won't call forward my phone to the voice mail. I'll leave it here until 5:30 or something like that so if a call comes in I'll be able to pick it up. But around 5 or something like that I tend to break it off early and I found if I'm in the office, depending on what you're doing, you could easily work until 5:30. You know, your time or you've been talking about a project or something with an advisory, you'll tend to easily go over, you don't look at 5 as a punch clock. You just kind of work until kind of the resources kind of leave. When you're here on your own there aren't any resources to kind of keep you. So it's a discipline, you either, like I say, you work until 5 or you make your calls or you do some tasks."

As Frank's dialog showed there was some compulsion to work until 5:00pm but in the home environment it was easier to break off earlier.

The respondents also provided examples that made it seem as if someone was watching over their shoulder at home. Kirk stated:

> "You do not do certain things during the day as the expectation is you should not be doing that and somehow will be found out."

The explicated emotion seemed to be that the home really did not (or should not) feel like home when working there. In the literature there was no prevailing view of what conduct was appropriate at home. However, the respondents understood that they were expected to act in a certain manner and not exploit the fact that they worked at home. Much of how the respondents determined appropriate conduct was derived from tradition and replicating how they worked when in the office.

Frank highlighted the power of the time table and it's influence on action when he described how his mornings used to be when he worked in the office:

> "What I found is, [...] it used to be this kind of a mind set that you had to be in the office by a certain time. It's like punching a clock. Like, you know, you be there at 8:15, like if you're there at 8:30 you feel like you're being remiss, you know. If you're there at 8:00, hey, I'm doing great, I'm a keener, I'm in there, way to go."

4.3.3.4 Tradition helps determine the routine

The symbolism of normalizing judgement had definite consequences for the respondent's encounter with telework. The respondents used tradition as one guide to what others would perceive as 'normal'. Clancy, who worked three days a week at home, in describing how he had arranged his schedule highlighted the powerful influence of tradition:

> "I have a real hard time personally staying home on Mondays and Fridays still because I think it's my own personal connotation of people sloughing time off [...] I worked with people that called in sick on a Monday or a Friday or I had a boss that would go to afternoon meetings on Friday and you knew darn well that

he had his golf clubs, right. [...] like, I like working at home Tuesday,

Wednesday, Thursday but probably never or rarely will work at home Friday."

In this example, the perception of Fridays as slack days kept Clancy from working those days at home. Society has a compulsion with work; however, it is assumed that at any opportunity we will not work.[11] Hence Clancy's reluctance to work from home on a Friday may have derived from his need to convey to others that he could be trusted as a hard worker and as a person who would fulfill his obligations to the company.

Similarly, the respondents followed the work day their peers did even though they had more flexibility. Al's description of his daily routine showed this:

> "If you don't get yourself into a routine you start doing things, like I was doing, having a shower at 9:00. So now I don't do that anymore. Now, like this is kind of my lunch hour so I had a shower for lunch and it kind of refreshes me...It kind of breaks the routine up. Do something different. So I'm still within the confines of traditional times when we should work."

4.3.3.5 Rules of the company need to be followed

The symbolism of normalizing judgement also influenced daily actions. There were "rules of the company" that had to be followed. First, was the idea of traditional times that should be spent working. All the respondents mentioned the need to work within the confines of a 8-5 day (at the minimum). It was suggested that the work day typically ended at 5:00pm. As Harold stated:

> "It is important to discipline yourself to follow a routine that's still within the rules of the company because every company says 8:30 am to 5:00pm."

Often, mindless tasks like delivering courier packages would be done to fill up the work day and ensure an eight hour day was worked.

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[11] This has become an irritant with me. I worked part-time and attended school full-time while doing this thesis. I was constantly asked when I would get a "real life" or

The rules were often not written and formal but unspoken and part of the corporate culture. Frank 's morning ritual of going to the office highlighted this point.

> "And it's funny, you know. Now it came from the people around you because if you walk in the office late, you're noticed."

In the office, rules existed and the expectation was that they would be followed.

Ed, who worked from home almost every day, tried not to engage in 'home' activities. However, at home it was easier to bend the rules and even though he felt some discomfort it was not difficult to accept his wife's request.

> "So, you know, she'll come in and just you know, borrow a car to do this or do that. And actually one of the things that you have to watch is the tendency that when you're here and she wants to go out and do something that, you know, and the kids are asleep, that she'll just say well is it ok if I go and really that's not the way that it's supposed to work but we kind of do it anyway."

Using company time, even break time, to do non-work things or things not usually done at work during the traditional work hours of 9 to 5 was seen as a breach of trust. Many of the respondents felt the need to rationalize this type of break. For example, Al explained his routine of cleaning up the house during the day allowed more quality time to be spent with his spouse. Julie stated she felt guilty about doing housework during the day it but it saved time later and besides it woke her up. Guilt was a commonly described emotion among many of the respondents. The idea of working a set number of hours and being diligent was the normalized view of working. At home it was easy to do other things instead of work during the work day. Even though, many respondents experienced guilt when they were not working during the work day and not conforming to the normalized ideal of working.

"start contributing to society". This emphasized to me that school, like volunteer work, is not viewed as 'work'.

4.3.3.6 Routines typically try to replicate work in an office

The symbolism of normalizing judgement was also instrumental in influencing the respondent's need to replicate work in the office. The respondents, by emulating work at the office would ideally make working at home 'normal'. Consequently, this would make working at home equivalent to working in an office. Part of this enactment was the respondent's need to shatter the concept of the home as a place of no-work. Another part of the enactment was that working at home required the individual to create their own routine whereas at work it was something that was typically set by what others were doing, corporate culture, tradition, and rules. At home the respondents set their new routine by simply doing what was being done in the office and adapting it to suit their needs.

Interestingly, after the first few weeks of teleworking each respondent had a distinctive morning routine they used to begin the work day. It seemed that the one routine that needed to be replaced was the commute. Moreover, the respondents typically discovered a convenient way of functionally organizing their days. For example, doing phone calls in the morning and reading and writing in the afternoon.

A non-teleworker commented:

> "People like the freedom that they're having at telecommuting, that they're not stuck into the 8 to 5 grind. Everybody shows up at 8, goes for coffee at 9:30, goes for lunch at 11:30, goes for coffee at 2:30 etc. etc. etc. They like the freedom and I think it's good for the morale. It makes people more inventive in doing things in new ways if they have the feeling that they have enough control over their lives to be able to do that, that makes them you know, generally more productive and more happy in what they're doing."

It seemed that non-teleworkers assumed the teleworkers were doing their own thing at home; meanwhile, the teleworkers themselves were trying to replicate similar routines to people who worked in the office. One respondent even arranged to meet with friends for coffee as part of her daily routine. Overall, the respondents developed new

routines in organizing their day into functional activities and reproduced traditional ones in how and when they worked.

4.3.3.7 Making working from home transparent

The symbolism of normalizing judgement had further consequences for making working at home seem 'normal'. A simple way to achieve this was to make working from the home transparent to all others. In a typical workday there was the breakdown of other peoples' routines because the respondents were no longer at the office. Thus to some non-teleworkers, co-workers who worked from home inconvenienced them because they were not readily accessible in person. However, the non-teleworkers did not see this as a problem inasmuch as the teleworkers did. Several respondents held the notion that they must never impede on anyone else's routine. One way of doing this was making working from home transparent to all others.

To those working at home, one objective was to maintain the semblance of normal activity and routine. Mary discussed the importance of not disrupting other people's schedules:

> "I'm more than happy to come into the office for a meeting if the best time to have that meeting is a time I usually spend at home."

Pam had similar sentiments. She had created a schedule that allowed her to work mornings at home and afternoons in the office.

> "I set it up that way so people know where I am and prior to myself working at home I worked with a lot of people who work at home and I didn't work at home at that time so I'm pretty aware of the difficulty if you're on the other side of the fence, getting hold of people and all that kind of thing. So I just thought it would be easier if I sort of made a strict guideline that way."

By making working from home transparent to those in the office, working from home could assume it's position as 'normal'. This was a simple tactic that was used to make working from home a 'normal' action.

Several other respondents spoke of the need to be flexible and ensure that they were available when needed. Except for one of the respondents with children, the purpose of working at home was not to be the primary care givers. It did allow greater interaction with the children but flexibility was required and being house-bound was inappropriate.

4.3.3.8 Management's reduced influence

The symbolism of hierarchical observation had consequences on the manager's influence on the respondents. The respondent's mangers did not ostensibly play a particularly strong role in influencing action or motivation. Only one respondent seemed to be daunted by her manager. Julie highlighted how she felt her manager reacted when she worked at home:

> "The other thing I want to talk about is the sort of delicate line between your boss knowing that you are working. I mean your boss needs to know that you are getting work done. And I know sometimes it is very subtle but I know times that I don't have things to show him and I have been working at home he is not 100% happy because he wants to see the results. Obviously he doesn't want to be paying me to fluff around and so I feel the pressure to show those results, although there are times when I do fluff around."

In this case Julie believed that she must show some product of her work to prove she had worked. For the other respondents their managers had very little impact on their actions. This might be explained by the fact that the majority of the respondents were experienced in their jobs and had developed a relationship of trust with their manager based on their competence.

4.3.3.9 Evaluation as discipline

The symbolism of hierarchical observation had consequences for how control was constituted for the respondents. As discussed earlier, with the increased sense of control, the respondents saw working at home as less stressful. Julie stated:

> "And it is also less stressful, quite a bit less stressful except for the fact that maybe you have to produce something."

Julie's statement indicated that there was still some control over her actions. Control over the respondent's actions was now through evaluation.

Evaluation, always present in an organization, was important to the respondents who worked at home. Many of the respondents realized that since they were no longer in the company gaze they had to convey their capabilities in other ways. One decentralized organization emphasized the importance of scoring well on its evaluation methods and the respondents from that company seemed particularly aware of the need to propagate a reputation as a hard worker. Mike described this program in detail:

> "This is another thing where your performance will kill you, because they have this thing called resource central and when you're finished your project, everyone floats: you have an assignment manager and you have a project but everyone floats. If you work, say hypothetically, you work at home and you're lazy and you don't do anything your project manager is going to know that your performance sucked, right, so when you're done that project you go into this thing called resource central, you float, right. You're a free agent waiting to apply for it...So if you're a dog working at home and people know you're a dog, your project manager knows you're a dog, like as a project manager say, I'm looking for a type of a person, a marketing person. I'll get 3 or 4 applicants on average per position. So who are you going to talk to, you're going to talk to the previous project manager. If you get that reputation at Axle as being a person that doesn't work very hard and generally needs a lot of guidance and support...what Axle does is reward people that excel and I don't know if other organizations quite as clearly do that...And at the end of the day my assignment manager and my contribution to the organization speak for itself. So if my contribution declines or isn't there then I'm toast. If it is then you're rewarded. That's the beauty of Axle. And that's why Axle works in the telecommuting environment because it's a very matrix oriented organization where compensation is based on your performance...if your performance drops, so does your matrix placement, so does your compensation. So I can see in some

organizations you could stagnate and kind of get away and hide but at Axle it's very difficult to hide because your contribution would drop working at home if you're watching the soaps."

The evaluation method power compelled the respondents to feel they must always be performing or they would suffer the consequences of a failing career. Clancy reiterated Mike's point:

"If you work at home and just watch TV or whatever your manager will know. Your performance will suffer. So when that project is done word will be out and no one will want to touch you."

Evaluation methods also offered the respondents a rationalization to reflect their work style as 'productive'. As Kirk stated:

"I think the results are really the only way you can judge people and if they're getting their work done then they must be doing something right."

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Symbolic Interaction

This study looked at the symbolic processes of teleworking using the method of in-depth interviewing. My focus was on individuals who worked for organizations and spent part of their week working from home. I also focused on a particular kind of work. That is, I examined work that often involved paper work, telephone calls, or meetings. This type of work is often referred to as white collar work. Using a symbolic interactionist framework meant I examined the multiple symbols of teleworking and the meanings of the symbols (Blumer, 1969). The study also examined the influence of these symbols on the process of telework. As mentioned earlier in a passage from Postman (1992), my study aspired to be a form of storytelling. I have tried to interpret the events, examples, descriptions, anecdotes, and stories of the respondents. The interpretations cannot be proved nor disproved. Neither are they universally applicable statements on telework. Instead, this study provided the unique perspective of attempting to understand individual sensemaking processes. This

understanding emerged through detailed in-depth interviews and the use of the symbolic interactionist framework.

This study suggested that teleworking holds multiple meanings for individuals. This became particularly apparent when those who did not telework were interviewed, yet held strong feelings of what telework meant to them.

The symbolic interactionist understanding of telework allowed me to look past the common themes prevalent in the telework literature and attempt to understand the individual sensemaking of people engaged in telework. What resulted was an understanding of the meaning of the symbolic processes used by the respondents to understand working from home. These symbols highlighted how telework was created differently in each person's mind. The popular understanding of telework as something different from normal work contrasted strongly with these individual perceptions. For each respondent the notion of telework was enacted in different ways. However, the commonality of all the symbols was that they were really just representation of aspects of work as we know it. I realized that the symbols being uncovered and the sensemaking occurring was not only about telework but really was about understanding work itself. So, at another level, symbolic interaction uncovered several of the core values or sedimented meaning held about work itself.

Section 4.3 identified many examples of the enactments resulting from specifically held realities. Meanings held about home and work greatly influenced the teleworker's and the non-teleworker's sensemaking of telework. A foundational assumption of the teleworkers and the non-teleworkers seemed to be the idea of *work* from *home*. The respondents did not see themselves as 'teleworking' as much as simply working from home. Further, in this study it seemed as though teleworkers tried to replicate work at home to resemble work in the office. In fact, many of the respondents actions were enacted to symbolize that working at home was similar to working in an office. There was the desire to make working at home seem normal or legitimate to all others. In

fact, legitimization of working from home permeated almost all of the respondent's actions. The non-teleworkers had the option to work at home but chose not to for varying reasons. The primary reason was that they did not view the home as a legitimate location to work, mainly because they felt the home offered too much temptation to not work.

Other actions separated the home from work. It was important for the teleworker, in various ways, to symbolically or physically separate work and home. By making a physical separation, not only was working easier for physical reasons, (i.e. less noise, space to work) but perhaps more importantly, it allowed the respondents to make the symbolic separation so necessary to 'getting down to work'; that is, to focus, concentrate and stay disciplined. Further a physical place to work helped construct this symbolic place. This may actually be a ubiquitous characteristic of someone who needs to remain motivated. For example, if you have a hobby, you may have a space (or place) where you do it; a time when you do it; and perhaps most of all a love of doing it.

At the beginning of this study my goal was to use the symbolic interactionist framework to understand the sensemaking of those who teleworked. The symbolic interaction framework showed that at the individual level there were particular realities and particular enactments (Blumer, 1969). I believed that with the creation of the word 'telework' a new symbol was developed along with new realties of what this word meant and represented. At some point in the research I realized that by studying telework all I was really doing was studying work itself. Thus, the symbolic interactionist framework and the focus on symbolic meanings and the influence of these symbols on action revealed strongly held symbols about work itself. In fact, this study has alerted us to some of the foundational aspects of work and how individuals interact with them.

So if what we have been discussing is the institution of work itself, then we need a theoretical lens that can encompass the institutional level and can relate the notions of telework and work. Such an institutional lens, which considers at the same time the agency inherent in a symbolic interactionist view, is structuration theory (Giddens, 1984).

Telework is just an alternative way of working and structuration theory helps to look at how work itself is being altered from one form to another, but that there are obvious resistance's that try to reproduce the older notions of work. Telework challenges the existing work structures; for example by having workers do their work at home rather than in the central office. If work is changing then, most likely, the nature of jobs and the workplace will also change. Perhaps we need to rethink the fundamentals of how we work, why we work, and how we want work to evolve.

So what does the effort put into studying telework actually say about work? Giddens' (1984) structuration theory provides a powerful framework for social analysis and offers an excellent basis to help answer this question. Relevant portions of this framework will be used to analyze what we can learn about work by the study of people who telework.

5.2 Structuration Theory

Structuration (Giddens, 1984) offers a holistic basis for developing an understanding of how the interplay between human agents and social institutions unfolds and how social change comes about. Structuration is a theory that has been put forth by Anthony Giddens (1984) with the focus upon understanding human agency and social institutions. Giddens' theory provides an excellent way to look at work and examine why it is changing. It is with this understanding of structuration theory that I see its application in helping me draw my conclusions.

Structuration theory is a means to unite different paradigmatic streams of thought and produce a more holistic analysis of social phenomena. An excellent summary of structuration theory is provided by Macintosh & Scapens (1990). I will provide only a brief overview of the key concepts.

Structuration rests on the central notion of the duality of structure. Structuration theory attempts to show how social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution. Giddens' (1984) definition of the duality of structure is:

> "Structure as the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction." (p. 374)

Simply put, the ongoing nature of society is a result of human action and the ongoing nature of human action is a result of society. Thus, social structures guide human agency and are possibly recreated as a result of the actions carried out.

Structure is a process not a product or steady state. It develops through time and across space and is defined by Giddens (1984) as:

> "Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action." (p. 377)

Rules are seen as either interpretive or normative. Normative rules represent structures of legitimation. Interpretative rules create signification that provide ways for actors to interpret events.

Giddens (1984) describes resources as being of two categories, authoritative and allocative. Authoritative resources are capabilities which generate command over

persons while allocative resources are capabilities which generate command over objects or nature.

Agency then arises from the individual's knowledge of the rules and capacity to utilize resources. On an individual basis, this capacity for agency is formed by rules and resources available in a person's particular social position which is defined by gender, wealth, social prestige, class, ethnicity, occupation, generation, and education. Agency differs in extent according to social position.

According to Giddens, the human need for ontological security leads us to repeat routine patterns of behavior that unintentionally reproduce existing structures. However, all agents have the ability to deploy a range of causal powers and thus, all power relations involve some sort of conflicting interaction of control. The agent is presented by Giddens as operating in both a deterministic manner and a voluntaristic manner.

Just as agency is a complex notion with many facets, so too is the notion of structure. Giddens (1984) provides a structuration framework which includes three dimensions of structure: signification, domination, and legitimation. Macintosh (1994) described these dimensions as follows. Signification provides meaning. It is the abstract cognitive dimension used by agents for communication and understanding. It includes organized webs of semantic codes, interpretive schemes and discursive practices. Domination provides influence. It is the blueprint for power relations of autonomy and dependency. It is concerned with allocative and authoritative resources that provide for the coordination and control of people and things. Legitimation provides morality. It is the shared set of values and ideals, normative rules, mutual rights and moral obligations.

Structuration theory offers a means to understand the factors that influence work such as the underlying ideologies of work and home. Specifically, the theory can provide insight into understanding work by examining agency, existing social structures, and

the nature of the interaction between the two. The teleworkers can be seen to be working at the agency level while structure is the edifice of work. The symbols uncovered during the symbolic interaction help us understand the interaction between agency and structure.

5.2.1 Structure

Structure represents the institutional forces that influence how the respondents conducted their activities. The influence of the symbolic realities on the actions of the respondents provides insight into the structure of work. Smith (1998) in examining the corporate culture of women, noted that any work arrangement that deviates from the norm needs to be legitimated by those doing it. Attempting to move outside the boundaries of what is perceived as a normal work arrangement highlights the immutable structure of work. For example, work ideology affects where work is located (i.e. central office space), the number of hours worked, control of employee's actions, and how time is spent during the day. Work itself is perceived as inevitable. That is, work is something we all need to engage in to live. Moreover, work provides many with an identity of who they are; for example, an officer of the law when asked what his job is might reply "I am a policeman."

Fundamental to the structure of organizational work is the belief that the central work office is utterly necessary in order 'to work'. So the dominant structure of how work should be organized was impacting how telework was constituted by the respondents. The respondents main concern was with legitimation of telework. The time spent manufacturing symbols by the respondents was a direct result of trying to convey 'work'. Also, the respondents attempted to replicate notions of the office at home to make the home more like the office. There were three structures of work that were prevalent in the respondents experience of telework. They are the ideology of home and work, the panopticon, and the clock.

5.2.1.1 Ideology of Home and Work

The ideology of the home and work greatly influenced the mind-set of the respondents. A structure of signification highlighted by the research is that mentally and spatially, home and work signify two very different realms. One result of this was the need of the teleworkers to separate work and home. The simplest way was through the use of space (i.e. creating an office space). To the respondents it seemed that demarcating the work and home was necessary in order for them to make sense of either realm. The separation of home and work was essential to the non-teleworkers who's opinion of what activities belong where was especially demarcated.

Modern society has created very separate notions of the home and work. We rarely expect the home and work to be inextricably woven together (Nippert-Eng, 1995). Instead we see the home and work as separate activities and realms. In each, we enact different realities. This was particularly true when the respondents were new to working from home and needed to develop new notions of the home and work. Further, home and work were culturally viewed as binary opposites. Thus, home was equivalent to no-work. So working at home or the place of no-work was a difficult notion for many to embrace.

A consequence of the work ideology and of modern society is that unless you are from the capitalist class or from a class of people such as artists, it is difficult to convey effectively that you are working unless you can show some widely accepted symbols that connote work. For the respondents to convey that they were working when at home, it was insufficient, readily apparently from the respondents discussions, to let the products of their efforts speak for what they had done. There appeared to be a *felt* need to continuously convey that they were in the "process" of working. The office worker may not need such explicit symbols because the very act of being at the office is symbolic of work being done. At home, the respondents cast about for symbols to convince 'people' they were not engaged in no-work (i.e. home) but rather in work. The most obvious symbols seemed to be the ones that 'automatically' connoted work.

This included always being accessible and detailing how effective and productive working at home could be.

The concept of professionalism is a structure of legitimation. The idea of professionalism pervaded the respondent's understanding of office work. For example, clothing worn was either seen as professional or unbefitting an office environment. Further, part of the respondent's understanding of telework developed from their belief that the home was a less professional workplace than the office. To the non-teleworkers, it seemed that those who worked at home were not important enough to have an office in the thick of things. The respondents reaction was to make working from home as closely resemble working in an office as possible by reproducing notions of the office. It was only with this legitimation that they could embrace the home as the work place.

The existing work structures compel individuals to legitimate their work. Seen from this perspective it is not surprising that the respondents all received comments from co-workers, friends, and even neighbors who were fascinated, yet harbored some disbelief that they could actually work at home. Until the home gains new signification as a legitimate place of work this reaction will continue thus creating the means to undervalue teleworkers and working from home.

5.2.1.2 The Panopticon

The panopticon (Foucault, 1977) refers to the architectural innovation of Jeremy Bentham that brought together the innovations of the disciplinary power. The panopticon was initially designed for the criminal element but Bentham also envisioned it's use in schools, factories, barracks and madhouses. The architectural plan was to have a central tower encompassed by an annular building. The idea was that the rooms in the annular building would isolate individuals in a small room where they could be watched by individuals in the watch tower. Each cell would have a window on the inner and outer cell to illuminate all the inhabitants to the observers in the watch tower.

The major effect of the panopticon was to use visibility to utterly control. In Foucault's (1977) words:

> "The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions—to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide—it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap." (p. 200)

The respondent's panopticon is signified by evaluation methods. Part of the need for evaluation methods is management's need to exercise power and still influence the actions of their employees. Another part of the need for evaluation methods is derived by the respondent's replacing the need of direct feedback from others to know they are doing well. Further, as mentioned in the symbolism of the front, many respondents understood that with less face to face interaction it was more difficult to manage other's perception of them. Less direct, non-verbal feedback was unavailable to assess if the work they provided was adequate. The respondents believed or wanted to believe that the only way to judge people nowadays was by results. Thus, 'objective' evaluation methods, while acting as a panoptic, were actually sought out.

Work includes a structure of domination; that of the employee/employer relationship and the exercise of power between the two. The panoptic represents a form of power that displays itself automatically and continuously. In the office, visibility is the panopticon. At the home office the panopticon refers to the control of conduct while working at home. With teleworking the exercise of power is changed. Direct management is no longer possible and a certain amount of trust is required between the managers and those working from home. However, with the respondents, the managers were still able to exercise some power via evaluation methods. The respondents perceived evaluation methods to be the new form of control over their work performances. Evaluation took on a new level of signification for many of the

respondents because their interaction with their management was minimal, yet, it was still important to the respondents to know how they were doing.

In an office environment conduct is rendered appropriate by the effects of visibility alone. When individuals began working at home they were no longer under the direct gaze of co-workers or their managers. With this influence gone what replaced it? What was the affect of the individuals who worked at home? How does management know they are working? Other authors have highlighted the problem of power and control within the telework domain and recognize that fundamental changes are required (Chamot 1987; McQuarrie, 1994). Of interest is the idea of trust between the worker and the employer and how control is instituted (if at all) over people in their homes. It seems that the respondents provided their own means of control using time; however, evaluation techniques seemed to have elevated significance for many of the respondents. Foucault's (1977) ideas on the panopticon illuminates the sensemaking of the teleworkers.

Visibility or 'being seen working' by others was a powerful legitimation structure. At the work place the specific symbol of productivity is partially resolved merely by being seen. Indeed, visibility in the office acts as the panopticon. For the respondents being visible was not literal in the sense of being seen, but rather being recognized as part of the contributing team. To the non-teleworkers it was literally a matter of being seen or not being seen. The non-teleworkers held the strong belief that those who worked at home out of sight of management and co-workers could not possibly be working. Reproducing this notion of work for those working at home was physically impossible; however, legitimization symbols were critical in communicating the process of work. This was primarily enacted by always being accessible to co-workers. This included making arrangements inconvenient to themselves to attend meetings and ensuring the work phone was answered at all times. This structure's dimension must also include the notion of trust. To many of the respondents, trust, or rather, that they could be trusted was part of their understanding of why telework would succeed for them. That is,

many of the respondents had developed a level of trust with their management and to a lesser extent their co-workers. With trust the need to legitimate working at home was reduced.

In this light, it begins to make sense that the respondents would seek out evaluation methods and initially not resent the panoptic power of the evaluation methods. Also, using evaluation techniques might alleviate some concerns of management in having employees who work from home.

5.2.1.3 The Clock

To measure 'time' we use the clock. The clock originated in the Benedictine monasteries of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was used to signal the canonical hours. As Postman (1992) notes, "the clock is a means not merely of keeping track of the hours but also of synchronizing and controlling the actions of men." It's influence on how we think is profound. Think, for example, of the multitude of actions controlled by the clock. It marks the time the sun rises, offers guidelines on when we should go to bed, tells us when our favorite television program is on or controls things like the hours of operation of the retail stores where we shop or when we start and finish work. For example, to the respondents it seemed that work was something that began at around 8:00am and ended at 5:00pm. Time within these parameters signified 'company time'. Any time spent not working in these parameters required rationalizing. As Frank, a full-time teleworker, stated:

> "If you're supposed to be in the office at 8:30am then you should be technically starting work at 8:30am."

Foucault (1977) details the time table's three great methods; "establish rhythms, impose particular occupations and regulate the cycles of repetition." This concept has had a profound affect on modern work life. Working in an office lends itself to a time table to efficiently use organizational resources. For example work begins at 8:00 am sharp. At 10:15 a break is to be taken for no more than 15 minutes. At 12:00pm lunch is to

be taken and work again resumes at 12:45. This rigid time table insures that all organizational personnel are working at the same time and that resources are accessible during these times. In fact, union contracts typically stipulate strict time constrictions outlining what is work time and what is the worker's time. White collar work is perceived as more flexible, however, in actual practice this may not necessarily be true. Working at home should require even less rigid adaptation to a time table, however, this was not true for the majority of the respondents who had some difficulty breaking away from the rigidity of the time table. This is very revealing about work and how it's structures are resistant to change.

The respondents all felt some compulsion to work standard hours and to work a certain number of hours each week. This fits Giddens (1984) belief that the human need for ontological security leads agents to repeat patterns that unintentionally reproduce existing structures. The respondents reproduced the work time table of the office at home. This fulfilled the need to legitimate their home office. Interestingly, it seemed that the individuals I interviewed did not have the flexible time management often touted as one of the benefits of office and telework. Further, the teleworkers, who seemingly had complete flexibility, rarely took advantage of working flexible hours. It seems that the flexibility of office workers is a workplace myth that is called into question by studying telework. In fact, the hours of 8:00am until 5:00pm signified the notion of company time and it was difficult for the respondents to spend this time on non-work activities.

As time is so symbolically influential, it is not surprising that it played such a large role in the sensemaking of the respondents and as one of the foundational aspects of the structure of work.

6.0 Implications

Imagine a world where everyone worked from home. Imagine yourself working from home all the time. To most, both seem unlikely scenarios. Part of the difficulty is

envisaging work as something other than what it currently is. Work seems to be immutable. It is difficult to conceive of it ever being altered, let alone replaced by something else.

How work is currently organized dominates the validity of any other structure of work. Part-time work, shared work, and remote work, among other variations are compared to the typical centrally organized office structure. So if we are looking to the future and want to do a little theoretical speculation and examine what work will look like we need to go back and look at the structures highlighted through the examination of telework and speculate which ones will erode, stay the same, or mutate into new structures (Zuboff, 1988).

To look at where work is going requires knowing where the home is going (Nippert-Eng, 1995). With the alteration of the ideology of the home it can be argued that there will be a resultant change in the ideology of the workplace. But how is the home changing? The home has become less insulated from work. While we can and do bring work home we rarely bring home to the office. While we personalize our offices with pictures of our families or instances of our lives or share anecdotes with co-workers we are encouraged to minimize the amount of home we bring to work (Nippert-Eng, 1995). Bringing work home, however, is often encouraged. We may have worked the occasional weekend and evening but now the ability to work all day everyday at home has arrived. The home is now an extension of the office. Empirical evidence of this is seen through the increasing number of houses that incorporate home offices into their floor plan (Gurstein, 1990). Another, of course, is the increasing number of people that are in fact working from home (Gartner Group, 1996). It seems that one conjecture we can make is that the once private space of the home is becoming public space and being invaded by work. With the home office perceived as 'public space' it will be easier for co-workers and management to view the home office as a valid location for work.

The home will take on new social meaning (Nippert-Eng, 1991). It will be seen as a part-time office. The home will be one retreat to work on reflective tasks. It will operate as another workplace and an alternative to the office, possibly offering a break from the office community. Moreover, because more time is spent at home during the day a sense of neighborhood community might arise. If this occurs the importance of the office as a key socialization realm could be reduced. In fact, this study suggests the importance of the office as a place of community is already eroding. Moreover, one finding in this study was that although many of the respondents worked in a large office they had minimal contact with their peers at this location. The people they actually worked in conjunction with were typically located in other cities. As a result, interaction with office peers was limited suggesting a reduced importance of the office as a place of community. Perhaps a new social role will be created for the home or the worker. The nature of the office as a place of community and socialization is still strong; however, the community in which we live may be renewed as the place to engage in social contact.

Structure formulation suggests that change occurs through action from the agents who control the resources, in this instance the employers. Employers will resist the change to the corporate structure to accommodate more flexible work arrangements, however, their power will be mitigated by the need to offer flexible work arrangements in order to recruit new workers. This interplay of power suggests that even those who exercise the power do not have complete authority and that power itself has duality in its structure.

Employers do not want to give their employees complete freedom nor do employees expect it. Employers need to see and touch their employees some of the time. Further, companies need their employees to act together. Think of a small company and how it begins to thrive. First, two or three people start the company and need a common place to work and share experience. As the company grows more people are required to help manage the work. Further interaction is needed with the new workers to enable

It is difficult to imagine how the structure of time will erode. Within our global world time controls too many aspects to see it's importance as one of work's key structures dwindle in influence: countries still look at the number of hours worked as a key indicator for employment; unions negotiate on hours worked and hours required for breaks; companies typically pay by the hour; and salaries are negotiated with an implicit understanding of the hourly wage being paid. However, with more individuals working 'out of sight' perhaps there will be less emphasis on the number of hours worked as an indicator of performance. Further, individuals will still adhere to time schedules but perhaps build some flexibility into their days.

So what happens to working at home? While telework challenges the centralized structure of modern corporations, it seems that it does not yet threaten to topple it. Telework and other non-traditional work patterns will become accepted work configurations. But to finish with some wild conjecture; if any place can be the 'office' then the phenomenon of telework disappears and we are left with just 'work'. However unlikely this might appear it is conjecture based on the reasoning that the structures identified as eroding seem to suggest an evolution where work will become severed from the organization. Ideally, the work location or the organization worked for will no longer matter. Employees will split their time between any location they desire to work from and for any organization. Trust will reenter the work realm and become ingrained in the work culture. But can we optimistically hope for this putative notion of work? Why not? Without some notion of how we want work to evolve we cannot influence its evolution.

7.0 Limitations

Certain constraints exist in a study of this nature (Creswell, 1994). Foremost, is the access to information. Various respondents may consciously or unconsciously withhold information that could alter the understanding of the research. Second, the data collection was mainly restricted to in-depth interviews. Using other methods of data

collection may have uncovered other information that altered the understanding of the research.

8.0 Suggestions for Further Studies

Telework is a concept that needs to be examined from two perspectives. First, telework refers to a broad package of working arrangements. The current literature provides answers in this regard. Second, telework has to be viewed as an enabler. This is where the literature falls short. The literature has taken a technologically deterministic approach without trying to understand the complexities of work itself. Further, many of these authors are working under the assumption that all teleworker's experiences are the same. This perspective minimizes the role that individuals play in the process of change.

Reaching organizational excellence requires a much more profound, informed understanding of how work is experienced and understood. With the combined knowledge of these two perspectives the transition to reaching organization excellence can be creatively attacked. Also, this study suggests the benefit of paying greater attention to individual work styles and the needs of the individual. We are all different and we need to leverage that individual diversity.

It is with this understanding and objective that I believe the symbolic interactionist methodology can be used to research and benefit other areas of the telework and work domain. I researched working at home. In this study I examined both work and the home in detail. What I neglected was an in-depth understanding of the office and it's purpose. A study on the purpose of an office would provide immense illumination on both teleworking and again on work itself. It seems that for now there is some need for people to go into the office. Several respondents even stated that they have "absolutely everything" they need to work from home, however, they still go into work. At some level the home office did not fulfill all the needs of the respondents. This raises the question "what is an office for?" To many of the respondents the work place was a

place of prestige and community. Work also provided identity to who they were and possibly, to some degree, their worth. Other answers might be for visibility, companionship, separation of the home and work, and habit. For the majority of the respondents home was not viewed as an all day alternative to the office. Identifying what needs an office fulfills would be a fascinating and useful study. Further, a comparison between working in an office and in the home would be interesting. This would be more than just a comparison of conditions, but rather a look at how each realm is experienced and understood and how individuals act and make use of symbols in the different spaces. It may also be useful and interesting to look at complementary areas of work experience such as flextime, part-time, taking work home, homework, and self-employed home businesses. All these situations contain multiple meanings which are influenced by the symbolic process. Understanding the symbolic process of these could reveal tangential insight into the work experience and the work at home experience.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Background

Family - Married? Kids?

Education

Current Job - Background on the person's job

Tell me about your work?

What is your present position in the company?

What are your major responsibilities?

How long have you held this position?

What do you particularly enjoy about your job?

What are some of the challenges you face?

The change in work style

Did you always work from home?   How long have you been working from home?

How do you split the time between work and the office? (i.e. how much time spent at each location?)

When do you go to the office (if this is an option) When do you stay home?

Do you miss anything about going into the office on a regular basis?

Why did you begin working from home? Whose decision was it? Organization's?

Manager? Own? What was it like when you first began this new style of working?

What are some examples of how your job has been affected by working at home? Any others?

What is good about the way you work?

What don't you like about the way you work?

Do you have a specific office space? Are you happy with it? Do you use it outside of work? Do others in the family use it?

Are there any aspects of your job that you are unable to do away from the office? Do you need to go into work to access anything? (board room, photocopier etc.)

Routine

How do you organize your day? Do you have a routine? If yes, how did you establish it? Is this different than when you worked in an office?

Do you have a specific routine at the beginning of the day? How do you make the transition to *work*? What do you wear at home? How about at the office?

Do you have a specific routine at the end of the day? When do you quit for the day? How do you make the transition to *home*?

Do you take breaks from work during the day? Why or why not? What things do you do on your breaks?

Do you separate your work life from home life? (leisure, family) How? Are you happy with the balance? Has your family life changed since you began working from home? (i.e. have co-workers over for dinner or bring the kids to work)

Interaction

What has been affected in your interaction with co-workers?

How do you interact with your manager? How are you evaluated? Does working at home change this?

How do you interact with others during the work day? (i.e. phone, e-mail) Do you spend time with co-workers socializing? Do you consider this work?

Are meetings held? Where do you hold them? Do you ever have then in your home? Why or why not?

Perceptions

Do you tell people that you work from home? Why or why not? If so, how do they react to your style of working? How do you respond?

How do your colleagues do their job? How is it the same as your approach? How is it different?

How do you think other co-workers at your company *who work in the office* describe your work style? What do they think about working from home?

Do others in your company work from home? Do you share stories about working from home? If so, like what ? Do you know of any others who work in a similar manner to yourself? Do you share stories with them? Like what?

If someone asked you if they should work at home what advice would you offer?

Other questions

What does the company gain from you working away from the office? What do they lose?

Technology

What tools do you use to do your job?

Things to look for

Dress - what are they wearing?

Setting - describe where they work

APPENDIX B

Descriptions of the Respondents

All names and any references to companies have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. These descriptions are included to help provide some context to the various stories, anecdotes, and quotations used throughout the study by sharing what I know about the respondent's situations. I have also included my impressions of the respondents. I do not profess these to be completely accurate but they provide some characteristics that made an impression on me in the interviews. Further, when I met the respondent at their home I have provided some short notes on their home office.

Descriptions of the Teleworkers

1. Julie Embers

Married	Yes
Children	No
Age of Children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	3
Years of experience teleworking	1 ½
Dedicated Home Office Space	No
Age	28
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	No
Organization Size (# of people)	20

Julie works for a small research and consulting firm. Her responsibilities were initially administrative in nature but have expanded to include some writing and editing. She enjoys her work and is challenged by both the heavy workload and the expanded role as a writer.

Julie is an enterprising women who is very driven to succeed. She is completing her masters while working full-time. She does not work full-time at home but only when she requires. This typically results in working two to three days from home. Julie is very conscious of her manger's perception of when she works at home and takes great pains to ensure she has some product of effort when she returns to the office. Since I interviewed Julie, she has had a baby boy, is near completion of her thesis, and is working only part-time.

2. Frank Edwards

Married	Yes
Children	Yes
Age of children	16 and 18
Number of days worked from home/week	5
Years of experience teleworking	1 ½
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	45
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	150

Frank has worked at the same Fortune 500 company his entire 24 year career. He started in service and worked his way into management. Recently he has moved out of management and into sales. This move created the opportunity for Frank to work from home. Initially, Frank split equal time between the office and the home before deciding to work completely from the home.

Frank's current job is to provide enterprise support for several large companies and act as a manufacturers representative.

Frank is a very sincere man and seemed genuinely interested in providing thorough answers. Our interview ended in an extended discussion about work in general. His home office is at the very front of the house. It is separated from the rest of the house by very elegant French doors. The kitchen is visible from the office and Frank says that this is sometimes distracting. He is thinking of building an office in the garage because the idea of separating the office from the house appeals to him. The only thing preventing him from doing this immediately is the cost.

Frank seems fairly comfortable in his setup at home. The office is decorated quite handsomely and there was very little clutter when I visited. In fact, the office was very organized. A book shelf housed any work literature and the desk held the computer and the printer.

3. Buzz Laroque

Married	Yes
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	5
Years of experience teleworking	4
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	41
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	30

Buzz is a 41 year old journalist who also writes screenplays. He is also the president of a company he created that provides corporate writing services. Buzz has opted for a work life that is spent at home or at a client's office. Buzz is extremely articulate and has an understanding of the interview process. When we met at his home Buzz was

casually dressed in a turtleneck shirt (is this not what all writers are supposed to wear) and casual pants.

Buzz works with his wife. They share an office in a smaller home (1500 sq. ft.) outside the downtown core. The office is about 12 ft by 10 ft and is situated on the basement floor. However, there is a window that allows natural light to enter the room. Buzz's desk faces the wall and Linda's (his wife) desk also faces the same wall (i.e. Linda stares at Buzz's back). They have discussed moving Buzz's desk to another part of the basement. Apparently Buzz's voice is too deep and distracts Linda when she is on the phone. The area where Buzz suggested he may try working from is best described as a dark cubby hole in the corner of the basement. If he decides to work out of this spot I admire his ability to work in poor conditions.

The room is painted white and appeared clean and bright. It did have a cluttered look, somewhat akin to an antique shop, with various office artifacts distributed around the room. There was one piece of abstract art hanging crookedly over Buzz's desk.

Both Buzz and Linda have there own private lines and answering machines. Buzz has a headset he uses while working (i.e. interviewing clients). Interestingly, he takes notes of interviews using a pen and then transcribes them into the computer even though his typing ability is sufficient to do it directly. He finds that using the pen and paper allows him to listen more attentively. Also, the typing can be heard by the client on the other end of the phone. Both Buzz and Linda have computers. Buzz has a laptop computer and an Internet connection. E-mail is a recent tool that Buzz has begun to use and he finds it extremely useful. For example, he can send his work for an edit without leaving the office.

4. Ed Jones

Married	Yes
Children	Yes
Age of children	2 and 4
Number of days worked from home/week	5
Years of experience teleworking	8
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	35
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	30

Ed works for a large truck and auto manufacturer as an area general manager. He is responsible for the operations of nine dealerships across western Canada. He began working at home as part of a reorganization and pilot to test working from home. He has grown to like working from home and does not see himself returning to the office for the foreseeable future. During the day Ed shares the home with his wife and children. He enjoys this aspect as it allows him to really participate in his children's development.

Ed has an office on the main floor of the house. The office is about 10' by 7'. It is fairly cluttered containing a computer, fax machine (that could photocopy), filing cabinet and two desks. On the wall are pictures of friends and family. Natural light comes in through a window that opens onto Ed's workspace. Ed is content with this space but mentioned that in their next house he will specifically look for a larger office. The office was unremarkable in that it looked like any other office in a large office building.

5. Harold Cost

Married	Yes
Children	Yes
Age of children	1
Number of days worked from home/week	3
Years of experience teleworking	5
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	31
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	200

Harold works as a senior systems analyst on a reengineering project implementing a new software package for his organization.

I met Harold at his company office where he spends one to two days a week. His remaining time is spent at home. His office was utterly organized with no extra papers spread across the office. I sense that Harold is an exact, meticulous individual. He has created what in today's times is an unique situation. Harold works part-time at a large organization and is the main care giver of his 1 year old son.

Harold, in a past job, was responsible for managing the technology and other requirements for his organization's remote workers.

6. Al Klass

Married	Yes
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	5

Years of experience teleworking	¼
Dedicated Home Office Space	No
Age	32
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	No
Size of local office	150

Al is the western-Canadian controller of a large international technology company. He recently began working from home. Almost of all his work is now done from a home office. Al offered an interesting perspective of someone who has just began working from home.

I met Al at 2:00pm at his house. He had just taken a shower and was dressed comfortably in shorts and a Mickey Mouse sweatshirt. He had just finished his lunch break.

Al lives in a condo in the downtown core. It is a smaller house that is only two years old. Al uses his dining room table, a glass round table that would sit four adults, as his desk. He has a laptop computer connected to the Internet on the table and a cordless phone lying next to the computer. At the end of the work day he typically moves these tools out of the way. He likes his work space as it is on the main floor and gets natural light. He did mention he wished that he had a traditional office and stated that in his next house this will be one of the things he insists on.

7. Clancy Farmer

Married	Yes
Children	Yes
Age of children	3 ½
Number of days worked from home/week	3

Years of experience teleworking	2
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	35
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	80

Clancy is a project manager for a large telecommunications company. His focus is on understanding local competition. Clancy was extremely personable and we immediately hit it off. As we proceeded he confided some confidential and personal information to me. This synergy between us allowed me to really probe him on some of the questions. The interview lasted about 2 hours. Clancy had strong personal views on work and life and it seemed that he held values that were important for him to live by. I enjoyed the interview and the great detail he shared was useful.

Clancy works part-time at home and the office. He is still working out a routine but it seems that he will work 3 days at home one week then 2 days at home the next week.

Clancy had several awards around his office and seems to be an excellent worker. He also mentioned that he speaks at events and has been given gifts for these presentations.

Clancy spoke in-depth about the trust required when working from home.

8. Pam Baker

Married	No
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	every morning, afternoons are spent in the office

Years of experience teleworking	2
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	30
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	No
Size of local office	80

Pam works for a large firm marketing calling cards. Pam was friendly, however, the interview was extremely short. She was quick and to the point. She mentioned that a lot of her friends work from home and offered to introduce me to some. Pam seemed to feel more comfortable talking about her friends.

Actually, the most interesting thing about the interview was when Pam brought up that she worked mornings at home because of health problems. Pam stated she has stiffness in the morning. She brought this up after the interview and rather shyly. Perhaps the tape recording was intimidating to her. My impression was that she would be happier if she was able to work full time in the office. In the mornings, Pam does tasks that do not require typing or other motor skill work (like phone calls and conference calls).

Pam was particularly interested in hearing how other teleworkers were similar or different to her. She became much more interested in talking after the tape recorder was shut off and provided some interesting stories.

9. Jim Merlin

Married	No
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	5
Years of experience teleworking	2

| Size of local office | 80 |

Mike works as a project manager for a large telco. Mike is a very self assured and independent (one might say cocky) man. He never came out and said it directly but he thought of himself as a performer and I believe that his organization recognized him as such.

Mike's goal is to go into business for himself in the next few years. He views working from home as a useful stepping stone in reaching this goal believing it teaches independence.

Mike showed me the unique on-line system his organization has created where you apply for jobs. Thus, as your reputation at this company increases you can compete for better and better jobs and are also sought after for jobs. I imagine there is a lot more to the system than meets the eye but as a motivator for employees it seems to be an excellent idea. It suggests that this organization has some progressive ideas. Mike also explained some of the unique human resource aspects of his company. This organization rewards employees in various ways. Depending on your hot buttons you can be rewarded with extra time off in lieu of money or job relocation or work terms abroad etc. It does not matter what it is, compensation becomes unique and personalized for each employee.

11. Mary Piper

Married	Yes
Children	Yes
Age of children	1
Number of days worked from home/week	mornings at work, afternoons at home
Years of experience teleworking	1
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes

Age	early thirties
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	Yes
Size of local office	600

Mary works for a large oil and gas company in the frontier business unit.

Mary is a technically oriented person. She is in her early thirties. My impression of her is that she is a very competent, no-nonsense person. She provided quick and to the point answers.

Mary is the mother of a one year old. Both her and her husband are engineers. Mary enjoys her job thoroughly. Her home is in the downtown core. As I listened to Debbie talk I was surprised at the time regimented life style she leads. Her main reason for working at home is to be close to her son. Mary has a full time nanny but being at home allows Mary to be with her son at lunch and then immediately after her work day is complete.

12. Craig Hope

Married	No
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	2-3
Years of experience teleworking	3
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	early thirties
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	No
Size of local office	80

Craig is the director of information services for a large organization. One of his responsibilities is the technical management of the remote access of teleworking for his firm. Because his firm has outsourced many of the IS services he does not have many direct reports. This may change as the company is examining insourcing.

Craig was to the point and almost brusque but still quite friendly.

13. Kirk Mchale

Married	Yes
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	5
Years of experience teleworking	10
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	early thirties
Shared home space during the day with a spouse and/or children	No
Size of local office	120

I met Kirk for a coffee where we conducted the interview. Kirk works for a large distribution company. Kirk represents a product line within his company and enjoys his work. He has worked from home for over ten years and would have it no other way.

Descriptions of the Non-Teleworkers

1. Bill Murphy

Married	Yes
Children	Yes

Age of children	6 months and 3 years
Number of days worked from home/week	0
Years of experience teleworking	0
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	33
Size of local office	75

Bill works for a large information technology service provider. Bill is a very work oriented individual and works long hours and the occasional weekend.

Bill has a keen grasp of his organization and what it takes to be successful in it. He also had an interesting perspective of business and work in general.

2. Marlo Mack

Married	No
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	0
Years of experience teleworking	0
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	34
Size of local office	85

Marlo works for the technology department for a large oil and gas company. He works longer hours in order to keep his work at the office. He does very little work at home and will even go to the office on the weekend to avoid working from home.
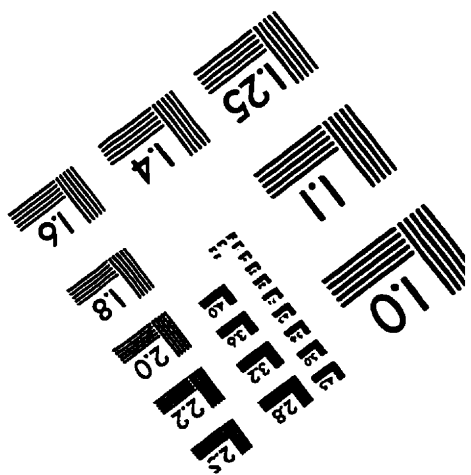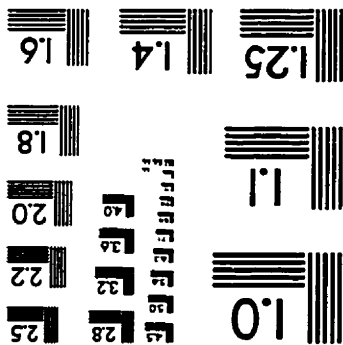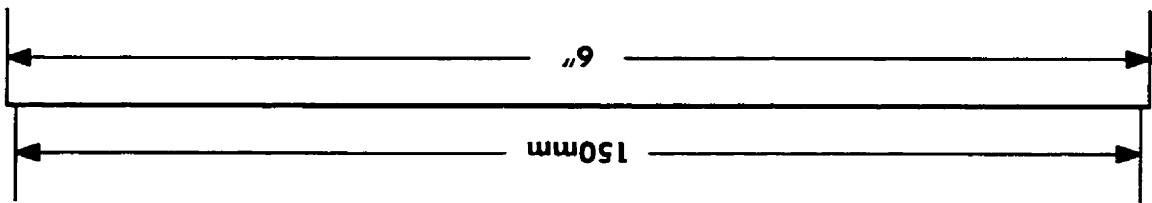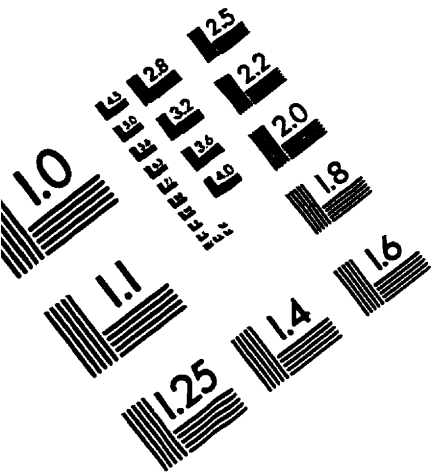
3. Darrin Jones

Married	No
Children	No
Age of children	N/A
Number of days worked from home/week	0
Years of experience teleworking	0
Dedicated Home Office Space	Yes
Age	28
Size of local office	15

Darrin works for a small market research company. He provided an unique perspective on telework because he had very strong opinions on who should or should not work from home.

TEST TARGET (QA-3)

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