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Are they "really working"? Organizational control in telework

by

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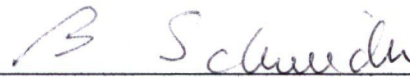
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## **Abstract**

Telework is a new form of work organization in which employees, using information and communication technologies, are able to work from locations other than a centralized office space. Emblematic of the information age in which we now live, telework has been hailed as transforming work as we now know it, yet since its inception has not met predictions of its widespread implementation. The question of how to control or manage employees who are not physically present in the workplace has remained unanswered. This thesis investigates the question of how organizational control can be achieved with teleworkers. New forms of control, called socio-ideological control, are explored. Using Giddens's structuration theory and data from qualitative interviews, I demonstrate that while teleworkers are controlled through bureaucratic means, they also enhance and extend this control through the active self-construction of their organizational identities, in a form of socio-ideological control.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Don, and to my children, Laura and Patrick.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An organization is essentially a social phenomenon. In this view, then, what happens when employees who telework are physically absent from an organization and cannot interact socially in order to accomplish their work? Is there a difference in their feelings of participation in the organization, their loyalty or commitment to an organization where they are not always physically present? Do they feel isolated and miss their co-workers when they are not in the office? Will they be overlooked for that big promotion? More importantly, are they "really working" when they are at home, and how do we know if they are "really working"? This is a common question put to teleworkers, and it is asked not only by friends and co-workers, but also by managers and supervisors. Managers have always relied on visual observation of employees as a means of control, and control is a central part of a manager's job. In 1995, Handy asked: "How do you manage people whom you do not see?" (p. 41), and this remains as an overriding and unanswered question surrounding telework.

### **The context of telework**

Many have identified the twenty-first century as being one of a revolution in the world of work (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, Handy, 1995). At the same time, we have left the industrial age and entered the information age<sup>1</sup> (Bell, 1973; Castells, 1997; Drucker,

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<sup>1</sup> Castells defines the Information Age as: "A historical period in which human societies perform their activities in a technological paradigm constituted around microelectronics-based information/communication technologies, and genetic engineering. It replaces/subsumes the technological paradigm of the Industrial Age, organized primarily around the production and distribution of energy" (2000, pp. 5-6).

1988). One characteristic of the information age, according to Castells (1997), is a dramatic change in the nature of work. As Castells puts it: "The 'organization man' is out, the 'flexible woman' is in" (p. 10), and this is demonstrated by what he calls the "individualization of work" (p. 10). Castells identifies another characteristic of the information age as being that of the redefinition of time and space: "I propose the hypothesis that the network society, as the dominant social structure emerging in the Information Age, is organized around new forms of time and space: timeless time, the space of flows" (p. 12). Emblematic of the information age, telework removes employees from the traditional time and space of work, and has been hailed as a new form of work organization, even as transforming work as we now know it (Apgar, 1998; Mason, 1993; Stanworth, 1997). However, typical of the fact that there are still many questions and paradoxes surrounding telework, some call it a "liberating" form of work (Harris, 2003; Moon & Stanworth, 1997), while others question this and ask if it is oppressive instead (Kurland & Egan, 1999).

### **The concept of telework**

It was American Jack Nilles<sup>2</sup> who first coined the term "telecommuting" in 1973 (Nilles, 1988); according to Kurland and Bailey (1999), he came up with the term while stuck in a traffic jam, in an attempt to envision a different way of commuting. Nilles linked the 1970s dilemmas of the oil crisis, rising energy prices, traffic congestion, air pollution, and urban sprawl, with the rise in availability of communications technologies,

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<sup>2</sup> Nilles has since been called the 'father' of the telework movement (Forester, 1988).

to come up with the idea of organizational decentralization and telecommuting. In Nilles's (1975) early conception, however, Nilles emphasized the concept of employees working from decentralized "work centers" compared to working from home.

Shortly after this, Alvin Toffler's book *The Third Wave* (1980), in which he coined the phrase "the electronic cottage" followed, and this stimulated a surge of interest in teleworking. Toffler's idyllic vision of a "home-centered society," with an estimate of between 35-50% of the population teleworking from their homes by the 1990s, led to an enthusiastic embracing of the concept by both academics and futurists (Geels & Smit, 2000; Kraut, 1987). This new way of working would be a return to a pre-industrial age paradigm, where work would again be centered in the home (Potter, 2003; Toffler, 1980). Thus Jackson and van der Wielen (1998) say that Toffler's conception, as part of a greater picture of future society, "exemplifies a disjuncture with previous ways of living and working" (p. 3).

Since the introduction of the concept of telework, there have frequently been enthusiastic and over-optimistic predictions of its growth and influence (Pyoria, 2003). The many predictions of the rapid expansion of telework could be due to Huws's (1991) claim that "the 'electronic homemaker' has become a highly charged symbol, embodying for many their hopes and fears about the future of work" (p. 20); or, on a more pragmatic level, the predictions could be said to be "based on a technologically deterministic view of the world that assumes if technology is appropriate it will be applied" (Kraut, 1987, p. 114). In the last twenty years, IT capabilities have expanded faster than predicted (Westfall, 1997); however, the overall growth of telework has been much slower than anticipated (Geels & Smit, 2000; Schweitzer & Duxbury, 2006).

While telework has been acknowledged as a new form of work, at the present time it is still embedded in hierarchical organizations which call for control and supervision (Stanworth, 1997; Taskin & Edwards, 2007). A large part of a manager's job is control and this often relies on visual scrutiny of workers; however, the issue of managing teleworkers has been under-researched (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2003; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram & Garud, 1999). In addition, the majority of teleworkers are knowledge workers who already present challenges to manage. Therefore, the research question guiding this thesis is: how can teleworkers be managed or controlled?

### **Organizational control**

Adami (1999) stated: "'Organization' implies the need for control...and control is used as the mechanism to integrate the diverse activities and interests of an organization's participants" (p. 133). Along with changes to the nature of work since the industrial age, there have been changes to methods of organizational control. Edwards (1979) relates that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most businesses were small and run by families. Thus these businesses exerted what Edwards calls "simple control," meaning the boss or head of the family would exert personal control over his workers (which Edwards notes is still used today in most small businesses). With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the factory system, control became "technical," meaning the maintenance of speeds in assembly lines (i.e., continuous-flow production), and was directed by managers and shop-floor supervisors. Then, as organizations became larger and more unwieldy, the need for more formal structures and more efficient methods of control became obvious.

The job of managers consequently entailed both co-ordination and control, and the concept of the modern bureaucracy was born.

Bureaucratic control came to the fore in the post World War II era and was exemplified by large firms such as IBM and Polaroid (Edwards, 1979). In contrast to simple control and technical control, bureaucratic control "rests on the principle of embedding control in the social structure or the social relations of the workplace" (Edwards, 1979, p. 21). Bureaucratic control relies not only on discipline and direct control, but also on the use of such things as job descriptions, evaluations, policies, rules, procedures, etc. Another important characteristic of bureaucratic control is that it "institutionalized the exercise of hierarchical power within the firm" (Edwards, 1979, p. 131).

Now we have entered the "information age" and the era of knowledge workers, who are not producing tangible goods on an assembly line, or even processing insurance claims according to procedures, but rather, are using their intellectual power to complete their work tasks. The addition of advanced information and communication technologies complete this picture to enable employees to telework. Teleworkers, being increasingly composed of knowledge workers, present a unique challenge to manage. Not only are they using knowledge to accomplish their work, they are not even on site, where a manager could at least visually see them working at a desk. In an effort to maintain control over knowledge work, new methods of control are being introduced (Alvesson, 1993a). These new methods are called "socio-ideological" control and include the concepts of normative control, identity regulation, and organizational culture. Thus I look at the intersection between these new types of socio-ideological control and the challenge

of controlling teleworkers. Can these new methods of control be used in telework situations? In this thesis, I will demonstrate that organizational control is exerted on teleworkers not only through bureaucratic methods, it is also enhanced and extended by the teleworkers themselves through the active self-construction of their organizational identities.

### **Outline of thesis chapters**

In Chapter Two, a literature review, I begin by reviewing the general literature on teleworking. I next review literature on socio-ideological methods of control. Socio-ideological methods of control involve attempts by management to control workers by instilling them with beliefs, values, and ideology commensurate with those of the organization. These new methods of control are coming to the fore in modernity and the information age as ways to control workers who work with information and knowledge, which are not readily measurable. In the final portion of this chapter, I review literature that has been written on methods to control and manage teleworkers in particular. This will situate my particular research question in terms of what has been written about teleworkers and control.

In Chapter Three, a theory chapter, I will outline the theoretical framework I use in my analysis. This is Giddens's theory of structuration, a theory which unites the concepts of structure and action. Giddens regards the repetition of day-to-day routines as contributing towards the formation of structure. Thus this theory will help to demonstrate how teleworkers, when removed from the daily routine of their work in an office, work to

recreate the structure that they are missing because they are not in the office.

Structuration will also demonstrate how teleworkers use their agency to achieve results and goals, one of which is the goal of continuing their opportunity to telework.

Giddens's later work on modernity and self-identity also includes concepts which are valuable for use in studying teleworking. One of these is the concept of "time-space distancing," a feature of modernity signifying the fundamental transformation of time and space that occurs as a result of information and communication technology, instant travel, etc. This is fitting to apply to teleworkers as they have been removed in time and space from their usual workplace. The other concept is that of "ontological security," which Giddens says is challenged with the complexity accompanying modernity. I will show that teleworkers "work" on or construct their self-identities as both a response to the disruption of being removed from their usual offices, and as an extension of organizational control.

To answer my research question using this theoretical framework, it was necessary to ascertain teleworkers' day-to-day routines in an effort to discover the meaning behind their everyday experiences while they were teleworking. Therefore in Chapter Four, I outline the method used for my research, which was qualitative, in-depth interviews with teleworkers. I give background on why this type of interview best suits my study. I also outline the practicalities of my research which include sample size, the ethics approval process, recruitment criteria for participants, etc.

Chapter Five is an analysis chapter, where I demonstrate how Giddens's structuration theory assists in determining exactly what the interview data tells me about teleworkers and control. I look at two areas of organizational control: first, bureaucratic control, and how it affects the teleworkers, and following that, I examine how the teleworkers do their own "work" by constructing their self-identities to extend and enhance this bureaucratic control.

In Chapter Six, discussion and conclusion, I review the entire thesis and what my analysis has shown. I then proceed to discuss the contributions these findings have made, and what implications these findings have for future research areas. To form a complete picture, I also discuss the limitations of the research that I have done.

All of these chapters taken together will provide a new and different perspective on telework and organizational control, which I hope will be valuable to both employers and employees.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

To situate my study within the current literature on telework and to examine how others have investigated the question of organizational control and teleworkers, in this chapter I review literature on teleworking, literature on socio-ideological methods of organizational control, and finally literature that looks at the issue of control in the context of teleworkers. I will begin by discussing the problem of defining telework and by reviewing predictions, both optimistic and pessimistic, regarding the future of telework. I then move on to examining the overall literature on teleworking, which ranges from such diverse perspectives as transportation and environmental impacts to feminist perspectives on telework. Increasingly, teleworkers are found to be knowledge workers (Stanworth, 1997), and so are not subject to traditional organizational control systems which rely heavily on physical presence and visual scrutiny (Taskin & Edwards, 2007). With knowledge work, which has been characterized as both complex and ambiguous (Alvesson, 1993b), control can be more effectively achieved through what are called socio-ideological methods (Jackson, Gharavi, & Klobas, 2006). Thus, after my overview of the general telework literature, I will move on to literature regarding socio-ideological methods of organizational control, which includes the concepts of organizational culture and identity regulation as control. Finally, I look to more specific literature on the subject of these and other types of organizational control as used in telework.

## **I. Overview of telework literature**

### *Defining telework and existing assumptions*

Before reviewing the telework literature, there is primarily a need to define the concept of telework, which has proved to be a vexing question for scholars. This has resulted in a great deal of literature that discusses definitions and conceptualizations of telework. Sullivan (2003) says, "the search for a universally accepted definition of telework that is suitable for academic research has been the source of considerable contention and debate" (p. 158), and Ellison (1999) contends that despite the debate, a consensus still has not been reached. Garrett and Danziger (2007) say that the term telework is used to refer to separate but related phenomena, and Sullivan (2003) claims there is general agreement that above all, telework is remote work that involves the use of ICTs. Ellison (1999) reports that some scholars argue technology does not necessarily have to be involved, and Jackson and van der Wielen (1998) write that still others place the home as the defining attribute to telework. Finally, Qvortrup (1998) contends that the terminology around telework is becoming increasingly problematic because it is focused more on the employee's remote work location rather than on the organizational aspect of telework.

While the telework concept was initially called telecommuting by Nilles (1975), Kraut (1987), argues that the prefix "tele" means from afar, and thus telecommuting would be a redundant term. Kraut therefore suggests the use of the term telework, "work from afar" and defines it as: "the use of computers and telecommunications equipment to do office work away from a central, conventional office" (pp. 114-115). There are legions of other terms used to denote telework. Qvortrup (1998) says that the term "electronic

homework" was often used in Europe in the 70s and 80s, but in this definition, referred to low-paying clerical work, usually performed by women at home. Qvortrup says that the term "flexiwork" is currently gaining popularity in Europe, and is defined as including "work performed 'everywhere' (at the office, at home, in travel) using computers and telecommunications" (p. 31). Other terms to describe telework are virtual work, distributed work, and distance work (Huws, 1991; Qvortrup, 1998), and Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus & Hambley (2008) regard virtual work as being largely synonymous with telework. In general, I have found in my survey that the term "telecommuting" is usually used in the United States, whereas "telework" is used in Canada and Europe (Baruch, 2001; Ellison, 2004; Pyoria, 2003), hence for the purposes of this thesis I will use the term "telework."

Solid, reliable statistics on the actual numbers of teleworkers are difficult to come by (Horvath, 2010). Akyeampong (2007), for Statistics Canada, reports that telework in Canada experienced strong growth in the 1990s, followed surprisingly by a slight drop-off in numbers, from 1,426,000 workers in 2000 to 1,322,000 in 2005 (i.e., 10.2% of the workforce in 2000 to 9.8% in 2005). In the USA, World at Work (2007) reports that in 2005, 12.4 million workers teleworked at least one day per month, which is roughly 8% of the American workforce.

While much of the academic literature attempts to measure issues surrounding telework using quantitative methods, this literature concurrently has a problem due to the fact that there is a lack of consensus around the basic parameters of the who, what and why of telework. Jackson and van der Wielen (1998) say that this "lack of conceptual clarity frustrates cross-study comparison" (p. 5). Jackson and van der Wielen also note

that the rigour of statistical studies is variable, another factor which makes comparisons less valid.

Bailey and Kurland (2002) agree that there are problems defining telework, and that there are methodological differences between studies. Another problem Bailey and Kurland identify is that many studies are based on explicit or implicit assumptions on the researchers' parts. These assumptions influence not only what research questions are addressed, but also the design of the studies. Some of the assumptions noted by Bailey and Kurland are: that job satisfaction and productivity increase with telework, that telework is motivated by a desire for a reduction in travel or commuting, and that women choose telework because of family issues. Bailey and Kurland found that none of these assumptions were supported by existing research. More important, however, is the common assumption of researchers that most employees are teleworking full-time, whereas in reality most teleworkers only do so one or two days per week, and spend the rest of their time in the office. According to Bailey and Kurland, the assumption that teleworkers do so full-time is not reflective of the current state of most teleworking situations.

*Spanning the spectrum: rise or demise?*

Huws, Korte, and Robinson (1990) say that the image of the lonely teleworker at his/her desk at home, connected to his/her employer and the world by an electronic cable "has given rise to some of the most optimistic utopias, as well as some of the most pessimistic dystopias of recent years" (p. 1), and the teleworking literature reflects this.

Some initial predictions of telework were widely off the mark. In 1971, AT&T predicted that all Americans would be working from home by 1990 (Baruch, 2001; Stureson, 1998). And in 1980, Toffler predicted that 35-50% of the workforce would be working from home by the 1990's. Both Handy and Mason predicted drastic changes, Handy (1995) saying "If there is an office in the future, it will be like a clubhouse: a place for eating, meeting, and greeting, with rooms reserved for activities, not for particular people" (p. 42), and Mason (1993) saying, "In the coming millennium....some people believe the office will become more of a concept than an actual space in a building" (p. 14). These predictions portray substantial transformations to the nature of work, which clearly have not yet taken place.

At the other end of the spectrum are works which counter these optimistic predictions. Pyoria (2003) compares the slow implementation of telework to the unfulfilled promise of the paperless office, and says that even though Toffler's view can now be seen as outdated, "unrealistic and populist claims still doggedly raise their heads when discussing the prospects of telework" (p. 168). After an extended period of full-time working at home, Forester (1988) became lonely and disillusioned and returned to commuting to an office three days a week. Calling the electronic cottage a "myth," he contends that most literature on telework is written by people who have not actually experienced it, and that there is more stress and psychological strain to working alone than the literature depicts. Stureson (1998) says that early predictions were over-optimistic and that telework should now be viewed as "an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary development" (p. 319). Citing the vast urban sprawl occurring in Silicon Valley, and the long, tedious commutes of people who work there, Langdon Winner asks

"Whatever happened to the electronic cottage?" (2001). Instead of the peaceful, country life that Toffler portrayed, Winner argues that new technologies mean people work in an office during work hours, drive a long commute, and then are on call at home the rest of the day, increasing their stress levels. Finally, Bergum (2007) proposes two possible reasons for the drop in interest in telework: that telework has diffused and is now more common than thought, or that the original conception of telework has changed from a full-time at-home worker to different and more fluid concepts like e-work, virtual work, mobile work, and e-collaborations.

#### *Transportation and environmental impacts*

Nilles, Carlson, Gray, and Hanneman (1976) write that "until recently in the history of man, communication over any distance was dependent upon transportation" (p. 1). Nilles's (1975) initial conception of telework was as a solution to traffic problems and its surrounding issues (pollution, the energy crisis, urban sprawl, etc.), as seen by his christening of the concept as "telecommuting." However, in 1991 Nilles wrote that while telecommuting could be seen to reduce urban sprawl by allowing commuters to work from home, it could also been seen as inciting urban sprawl, since there would be less constraints on workers' home locations if they do not have to commute, thereby increasing the spread of suburbia. Perez-Perez, Sanchez, Carnicer, & Jimenez (2004) point out that since there are three types of teleworking (home-based, telecentres [also called 'hoteling'], and mobile teleworking), the only type that could be said to have environmental impacts is the first, home-based. They found that teleworking does have a positive impact by reducing commuting and pollution. Mokhtarian (1991) looks at

telecommuting and travel behavior, and offers hypotheses for future research on aspects of travel behavior that the implementation of telecommuting can affect (such as frequency of trips, time of day/time of week of trips, numbers of people making trips, etc.) In doing this, Mokhtarian states it is essential to try to ascertain what future levels of telecommuting will be. Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus, and Hambley (2008) present a thorough review of telework's impact on various aspects of transportation and commuting. They found that telework does reduce vehicle trips, which in turn lowers emissions and reduces road congestion. Fewer vehicle trips also contribute to energy conservation, fewer road accidents, and lower costs for road maintenance.

Additionally, Verbeke et al note that the establishment of teleworking programs is beneficial when an area is faced with either a natural disaster such as the 1998 ice storm in Eastern Canada, or a terrorist attack, such as the 9/11 attacks in the USA. Having a telework program already in place would allow employees to work from home and consequently would reduce the amount of time lost to an organization in such situations.

### *Boundaries and space*

Since telework is most often performed in the home, this intersection of home and work has been of interest to scholars. Boundaries between work and home have become more permeable, and so with a teleworker in the family, families then need to employ various strategies to negotiate these boundaries (Nansen, Arnold, Gibbs, & Davis, 2010). In talking about time and space in relation to teleworking, Nansen et al use actor-network

theory<sup>3</sup> to explain that technologies enter the home to mediate the temporal and spatial boundaries around telework. This way, the technologies themselves are given agency and in so doing have a role in "the reconfiguration of domestic spaces and domestic times, and thus the reconfiguration of boundaries" (p. 147).

Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton (2006) discuss boundary management and "work-family effectiveness." Bailyn (1988) says in telework people have to learn how to control the boundary between home and work in new ways. Salaff (2002) says the uncertainty surrounding telework is what prompts people to do boundary work, and Gurstein (2001) reports on teleworkers who work from home and feel their homes have been "invaded" by their work. Some authors claim that the time spent in the "journey to work" is what allows people to separate home and work, and with the loss of this in telework, the boundary between home and work becomes difficult to maintain (Ellison, 1999; Salomon & Salomon, 1984).

The concept of "space" has drawn some attention in the literature since teleworking involves employees working from a space other than the office. Additionally, the use of information and communication technologies disembed communication from time and space, and ICTs are usually the main form of communication for teleworkers. Hislop and Axtell (2007) concentrate on "mobile" teleworkers, that is, employees who telework not from home, but on the road, either while travelling, or at a client's location, who they say have been neglected in the telework literature. Halford (2005) proposes a "re-spatialization" of the workplace. She

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<sup>3</sup> In actor-network theory, as Nansen et al put it, "Technologies are not simply neutral tools, but active participants in constructing the familial, the organizational and the social" (2010, pp. 139-140). (cf. Law, 1992).

points out, as Bailey and Kurland (2002) noted, that literature on teleworking and virtual working ignores the fact that many people work from both home *and* a workplace, connected by ICTs. Therefore Halford suggests looking at these as "hybrid workspaces," workplaces that are "multiply located." Halford says traditional management practice is "spatially embedded," i.e., managing is done at an office and a manager relies on visual information or embodied communication that his staff is working. This leads to the question of how work is managed in hybrid workspaces. Some of the managers in this study recognized that there would need to be a more fundamental change to their management practices; however, Halford does not make any suggestions for how management practices might indeed be changed, and brings up thoughts about power/control and resistance in the conclusion, almost as an afterthought. Thus Halford only goes halfway, presenting a problem without a solution.

### *Gender*

Other literature focuses on women and telework from a feminist perspective. Pyoria (2003) notes that the futuristic visions of teleworkers tend to be based "on a peculiarly male world premised on the assumption of little or no responsibility for others" (p. 175). Stanworth (1997, 2000) writes that women who telework are predominantly clerical, and are vastly under-represented in professional jobs, and that teleworking maintains the conventional workplace gender divide. While some say that women take on telework to balance work and family (eg., Salaff, 2002), Mirchandani (2000) and Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, and Andrey (2008) contend that home-based work for women is "contradictory." While telework ostensibly allows women to integrate home and work,

the resulting proximity of work to the home can then be a source of stress and anxiety for women. Others note that telework is supposed to give women "flexibility," but it does nothing to change traditional gendered roles within the household, and women often end up doing even more work (usually child care) than they would have if they were not teleworking (Bryant, 2000; Hilbrecht et al, 2008; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001).

### *Telework—unfulfilled expectations*

As previously mentioned, the literature contains some wildly optimistic predictions of telework implementation, countered by some pessimistic views. But most literature seems to agree that while telework has become more widespread, it has indeed not met expectations.

In the following section, I explore a diversity of explanations that have been posited in the literature as to why the growth of telework has not fulfilled expectations.

### *Technology*

Clear and Dickson (2005) say that "underlying much popular thinking and writing on telework is a technological determinist assumption that given the right technology, it is inevitable that teleworking will 'take off'" (p. 218). But Nilles (2007) states that technology has always been adequate for teleworkers' needs, even from the 1970s, and that technology has never been a barrier to teleworking, despite organizations using problems with technology as excuses for not implementing telework programs. The disembedding properties of ICTs have allowed organizations and employees to become more flexible, indeed have allowed for "reshaping the structures, practices and

experiences of working routines and environments" (Nansen, Arnold, Gibbs, & Davis, 2010). Despite newer ICT methods, Duxbury and Neufeld (1999) write that the use of the telephone increases with teleworking, and that other media, such as email, does not provide teleworkers "with enough social presence or information richness to handle certain communications" (p. 6). Scott and Timmerman (1999) found that the basic telephone was still the most used communication technology for teleworkers (also confirmed by Handy & Mokhtarian, 1996). Scott and Timmerman suggest an almost back-to-basics approach, saying since newer technologies are seldom used, it is not worth it to invest in them for teleworkers. At the opposite end of this spectrum is Venkatesh and Johnson (2002), who claim current technology and its desktop metaphor are too limiting for telework and this is one reason for the slower-than-expected adoption of telework. They propose using a virtual-reality technology instead of the desktop metaphor. The desktop metaphor does not let the teleworker either see or think past his or her own desktop, whereas the virtual reality system "would offer full visual and auditory rendering of the actual office space....A virtual office system would also emulate many of the daily activities, for example simulating the natural sequence, sound, and visual aspects of knocking on a door or leaving a written note" (p. 663). Their quantitative study found greater support for the virtual reality system as opposed to the conventional model, thereby positioning use of the virtual reality system as perhaps ensuring greater success and take-up of teleworking in general.

### *Isolation*

Kurland and Egan (1999) contend that the fear of isolation is a primary reason why employees are reluctant to telework. This concern can be about both professional isolation and social isolation (Harrington & Santiago, 2006; Kurland & Egan, 1999; Marshall, Michaels, & Mulki, 2007), professional isolation being an employee's concern that they will be passed over for promotion or recognition because of their lack of visibility in the office. Ellison (1999) says that informal communication between co-located employees is vital for "disseminating information about organizational norms, for socializing new employees, and for encouraging collaboration and sharing of information" (p. 344), and so these essential social elements of work are missed by many teleworkers. Cooper and Kurland (2002) find that employees perceive a link between professional isolation and employee development, which can be formal (such as workshops), but more importantly, informal development, which occurs during day-to-day learning experiences on the job. In other words, employees felt that missing out on informal networking and learning could cause them to miss opportunities for advancement. Cooper and Kurland also find that this fear of isolation causes teleworkers to limit the amount of time spent teleworking, so as to avoid becoming isolated. Salomon and Salomon (1984) confirm that from the employees' point of view, this social interaction on the job is important not only for the feeling of belonging, but also for advancement and promotion.

Golden, Veiga, and Dino (2008) find that professional isolation in teleworking affects job performance and causes an increase in job turnover. With teleworkers feeling

"less fulfilled in their basic human need to belong" (p. 1413) they are less committed to and more likely to leave their organizations. In contrast to this, however, Verbeke et al (2008) find that organizational commitment and loyalty increases in teleworkers.

### *Telework as a paradox*

Some literature claims that telework is "paradoxical" and that this is the reason telework adoption has been lower than predicted. Westfall (1997) and Khalifa and Davison (2000) say the paradox is essentially that while telework can offer many organizational benefits (such as reduced overhead, improved productivity, etc.) and benefits for employees (such as flexible work hours, better work-life balance, etc.), the actual number of teleworkers remains at a low level. Pliskin (1997) identifies the paradox as being that telework has not met expectations despite huge gains in technological capability since the 1960s.

Pearlson and Saunders (2001) claim that the slow growth of telework is due to the paradoxes faced by managers: telework offers increased flexibility to workers but necessitates more structure on the part of their managers; telework offers more individuality to employees, while much modern work is performed by teams; and, telework allows for more responsibility on the part of employees, while managers feel the need for more control.

Hylmo and Buzzanell's (2002) paradox is that telework is both a success and a threat to organizations. Looking at telework within the context of organizational culture, they focus on telework's "discursive and paradoxical constructions" (p. 333). According to Hylmo and Buzzanell, telework can be called a success because it allows an

organization to adapt to the changing world of work and offer flexible options to employees. However, they call it a threat because: "it dissolves attachments based on face-to-face communication, cultural rites and rituals, friendships, and other workplace relationships" (p. 331).

Finally, Tietze (2002) says that teleworking brings contemporary questions to bear about the relationship between work and family; she claims teleworkers can suffer a loss of identity, which these workers then need to reconstruct in light of the tension between home and work. Her conclusion thus reaffirms telework as ambiguous and paradoxical.

## **II. Socio-ideological methods of control**

None of the literature reviewed to this point deals with the organizational impacts of telework in a comprehensive manner. Most literature focuses on the individual, rather than the organization or the interaction between teleworkers and co-workers and supervisors located in the office (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden, 2007; Lautsch, Kossek, & Eaton, 2009). Much of the literature already cited includes references in passing to problems of trust and control, but this never merits more than the passing reference. However, Nilles (2007), the "father" of the telework movement, says: "The foremost deterrence to the acceptance of telework was and still is what I call the *industrial revolution mentality*. The central issue of that mentality is the trust problem; the adversary relationships between the levels in the organizational hierarchy" (emphasis original, p. 5). Handy (1995), who foresees offices turning into clubhouses, says about what he calls the managerial dilemma: "Trust is the heart of the matter. That seems

obvious and trite, yet most of our organizations tend to be arranged on the assumption that people cannot be trusted or relied on, even in tiny matters" (p. 44). Telework obviously challenges traditional methods of control, but this topic remains under-researched (Kurland & Cooper, 2002; Taskin & Edwards, 2007). I posit that it is the issue of trust and control which is a significant impediment to telework adoption, because the question of how to control someone who cannot be seen remains unanswered.

As a majority of teleworkers are knowledge workers (Stanworth, 1997; Taskin & Edwards, 2007), in this next section, I will explore socio-ideological methods of control, which are methods of control used for knowledge workers. Drucker (1988) writes that as businesses are becoming what he calls "information-based" there is a shift in employment from clerical workers to knowledge workers, who he says "resist the command-and-control model that business took from the military 100 years ago" (p. 45). Knowledge work is also characterized by complexity and ambiguity (Alvesson, 1993b). Therefore, these new organizations and their employees call for new methods of control (Alvesson, 1993a). Robertson and Swan (2003) observe that knowledge-intensive firms present a challenge to manage because of the difficult balance between autonomy and control. Rather than traditional forms of hierarchy and structure, they lend themselves to types of normative, ideological, or cultural control (Alvesson, 2001). These types of cultural or ideological control are identified as socio-ideological control. Karreman and Alvesson (2004) define socio-ideological control as "managerial efforts to manage such experiences and accounts—beliefs, meaning, norms, and interpretations... This form of control targets social relations, emotions, identity formation, and ideology" (p. 152).

### *Organizational culture as control*

As it is with telework, there is a lack of consensus around the definition of organizational culture (Ogbonna, 1992; Sathe, 1983; Smircich, 1983); however, Alvesson (1987) points out that many definitions have the sense of shared meanings and norms between organizational members in common. Smircich (1983) identifies two divergent approaches to organizational culture: as something an organization *is*—a root metaphor, or something an organization *has*—a variable that can be manipulated. Of this first view, Smircich says: "culture as a root metaphor promotes a view of organizations as expressive forms, manifestations of human consciousness. Organizations are understood and analyzed not mainly in economic or material terms, but in terms of their expressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects" (p. 347). Here I will discuss the second approach, culture as a variable that can be manipulated, as this view of organizational culture then gets taken up by organization and management studies as a tool<sup>4</sup> that can be used for organizational control (Adami, 1999; Siehl, 1985; Strangleman & Roberts, 1999). Of this approach to organizational culture Ray (1986) says "as far as top management is concerned, what is important is the articulation and channelling of the culture in directions which supply employees with guidelines and which promote a system of strongly-held, shared values....conscious attempts must be made to dispense the culture in ways that are perceived as helpful in achieving the goals of corporate leaders" (p. 289). Ray asserts that as the nature of work has been changing, old forms of bureaucratic

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<sup>4</sup> In this view, organizational culture is often called "corporate culture."

control are no longer effective or applicable, and are being replaced by the management and manipulation of corporate culture. But Ray continues on to say that currently there's no evidence that this type of manipulation is functioning as a form of control. Fitzgerald (1988) notes that while organizational culture can function as control, to do so means being able to change underlying values, but "we have no comprehensive theory to account for the process by which values are relinquished and replaced" (p. 10).

According to Ogbonna (1992), organizational culture can change, but the direction cannot be explicitly controlled. Attempts to "manage" culture flounder because many managers have trouble envisioning the future and are unsure in which direction they want to go.

One approach to organizational culture in terms of control is to view the organization as a "clan" (Ouchi, 1980; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). In modern organizations where bureaucracy is not as effective for control, Ouchi suggests the organization can be seen as a clan. This entails the development of two areas of "shared knowledge": a shared paradigm, defined as "shared frameworks, language, and referents" (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983, p. 475); and "goal congruence" between members of the clan. But Alvesson (1993a) criticizes this conception of Ouchi's by saying it remains at an "abstract" level. Some authors delineate differences between "strong" and "weak" organizational cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Sathe, 1983), and Sathe (1983) says that geographic dispersion can contribute to a weaker organizational culture. Clan control and organizational culture have both been used in the context of teleworkers; this will be examined later in the chapter.

The active management of corporate culture can include attempts at normative control. Kunda (1992) describes normative control as: "the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions....it is the employee's *self*—that ineffable source of subjective experience—that is claimed in the name of corporate interest" (emphasis original, p. 11). But Kunda goes on to ask if normative control is really a "movement of liberation" (p. 16), or a form of tyranny, as some critics suggest. Alvesson (2001) writes "sometimes the norms are internalized to the point where people fully adopt the orientations deemed to be best for the company" (p. 880). Robertson and Swan (2003), taking a critical view, note that "'strong' cultures are seen as cultures that serve the interest of management by limiting the capacity of individuals to reflect upon and assess, different and competing value systems, other than the dominant corporate ideology" (p. 837).

There are other drawbacks to organizational culture and clans used as control. For example, Martin and Siehl (1983) say: "it is likely that cultural development....is not as responsive to direct managerial attempts at control as many would like to believe. It may be that cultures cannot be straightforwardly created or managed by individuals" (p. 53). Alvesson (1987) and Knights and Willmott (1987) both postulate that a problem with the organizational culture perspective is that it assumes consensus within organizations, and Willmott (2003) says "corporate culturism" means management assumes that employees will give the core values of the company priority. Alvesson and Lindkvist (1993) also express doubts about being able to successfully "design" culture, essentially saying that culture is not something that can be imposed on someone.

### *Identity regulation as control*

Another technique of socio-ideological control involves managerial attempts to regulate identity. Alvesson (2001) writes that "management is partly about regulating people's identities" (p. 878), and this regulation will "accomplish a 'subjectivity base' for the right kind of action, including whatever is in line with the image, rhetoric and orchestration of social interaction deemed appropriate" (p. 877). Further, he claims that the regulation of identity is an important technique to deal with the ambiguities of knowledge work. Identity that is shaped by management objectives can be seen as an extension of the concept of normative control, yet this perspective on identity remains under-explored in the literature (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Ezzy (2001) writes that "new forms of normative control result in a process of colonization of the self" (p. 636). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) assert that due to the insecurity around identity in modernity, the worry and anxiousness that people feel about their identities makes them receptive to "corporate and managerial opportunities" (p. 626) for investing their identity work in the organization.

Alvesson and Willmott identify "modes of regulation" through which the management of identity can serve as control. Most of these are established through specific discourse. Defining an employee according to job characteristics and hierarchical location is one method, and defining an organization favourably in comparison to other organizations is another. Alvesson and Willmott identify that "a particular interpretive framework" (p. 629) can be advanced by management: "Through a particular vocabulary of motives...including archetypes and stories, a set of reference points about what is

important and natural for a person to do becomes established" (p. 629). In addition, the organization may establish a "distinct set of rules of the game" (p. 631), which involves emphasizing the "natural" way of doing things (reminiscent of Deal & Kennedy's definition of corporate culture: "It's the way we do things around here" 1982, p. 4). "Defining the context" by using unique language to identify the "scene" that the corporation operates in, gives organizational members something to affix their identities to. These methods can operate explicitly (e.g., job title) or subtly (e.g., unspoken rules of the game), but all contribute to the employee's identity formation being shaped according to the ideology of the company.

Casey (1996) writes about what she calls a "post-occupational corporate culture" where employees have relinquished their occupational identities in favour of identifying with the 'team' and 'family' (i.e., the corporation). Corporate culture is so all-encompassing that "the organization immerses employees in a constant, everyday practice of discursive 'colonization'....the process in which dominant organizational values and behaviours displace or transpose former practices, including affective experiences such as anger, cynicism, or resistance" (1999, p. 174).

Identity regulation as control relies on the communication of values and norms to employees who are physically present in the work environment. Thatcher and Zhu (2006) relate that teleworking reduces these direct circumstances; consequently, it is not only difficult to exercise control, it is also difficult to communicate these values and norms. Thus they feel that teleworking affects the organizational identification of employees, making it more difficult to maintain. Teleworking "lifts" employees out of temporal and spatial boundaries, and thus alters traditional cues and contexts that employees draw upon

for their identities. Therefore teleworking presents challenges not only for organizational control, but also organizational and employee identity.

### **III. Telework and organizational control**

In the following section, I will examine differing perspectives of organizational control and telework. First I outline managing and telework. This is followed by literature that suggests specific managerial strategies that can be used with teleworkers. Harrington and Santiago (2006) write that "a virtual office requires drastic changes to the way workers are evaluated, organized, and informed...Managers are no longer able to manage by 'walking around' and viewing employees" (p. 2). Indeed, as Karreman and Alvesson (2004) say, exercising control is a major part of a manager's job. Dimitrova (2003) maintains that the resistance of managers, due to their fear of losing control of their workers, has become one of the primary reasons behind the low numbers of teleworkers. Managers are often the first line of providing approval for employees to telework, so their influence and importance cannot be underestimated.

In closing this chapter, I will explore the more specific socio-ideological methods of control as they can be applied to teleworkers, namely, organizational culture and self-regulation.

#### *Managing telework*

I return to Handy's (1995) question: "How do you manage people whom you do not see?" (p. 41). Telework challenges traditional methods of managing, which are still rooted in the belief that physical proximity and observation are necessary to properly

manage workers. In general, the issue of how to manage teleworkers has been under-researched (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2003; Reinsch, 1997; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999), which is surprising as managers play a key role in allowing or preventing employees from teleworking. Wiesenfeld et al (1999) say that not only has the role of middle managers been neglected in the literature on telework, these managers play a crucial role because they are often an obstacle to implementing virtual work, and of course, their cooperation is essential for virtual work/telework to succeed (also see Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Lautsch, Kossek, & Eaton, 2009). Shin, Sheng, and Higa (2000) state that middle managers' opposition to telework stems from a belief that their own jobs will become more difficult and workloads will increase due to the complexity of managing teleworkers. But Wiesenfeld et al (1999) go further than this: they say that managers feel personally threatened by the prospect of telework because telework "potentially threatens critical aspects of a managers' self-concept, including identity, esteem, and managers' sense of control" (p. 34). However, Wiesenfeld et al base their analysis on the assumption that in a virtual setting, the organization as a whole will be altered, with the possibility of change to the traditional hierarchies and governance structures found in most organizations. Wiesenfeld et al suffer from some conceptual confusion. It is not clear if they are discussing a "telework" situation, where most of the workers would be in a central office, or a completely virtual situation. A completely virtual organization would of necessity have a different structure than an organization where some employees telework only some of the time.

Manoochehri and Pinkerton (2003) look at the opportunities and challenges of managing teleworkers and discuss some of the obstacles to implementing telework. From

an employee's viewpoint, there is a necessity to overcome the perception that one is not really working; whereas from the managerial viewpoint, there is resistance to telework due to the fact that a manager would no longer be able to physically observe his or her employees.

Noting that Huws et al (1990) demonstrated that many teleworkers experience diminished relationships with co-workers, Reinsch (1997) looks at the relationship between teleworkers and their managers, which he says has been under-researched. This study is quantitative, with hypotheses of objective values proposed that would relate to the relationship between manager and employee. The results suggest that after an initial "honeymoon" phase, the relationship between a teleworker and his or her manager deteriorates, but picks up again after a year of teleworking. The author recommends that in addition to current criteria for selecting teleworkers, the relationship between manager and employee should also be considered.

### Managerial strategies

Nilles (1997) says that for telework to succeed, both teleworkers and their managers should receive proper training, which he says includes working together to establish goals and objectives. Lautsch, Kossek, and Eaton (2009) discuss two differing perspectives on management strategy: either providing more measurable specifications to teleworkers, such as clearly laying out job requirements, finding a way to measure outputs, etc.; or, instead of instituting tighter controls, to treat teleworkers the same way as their colleagues in the office.

Selecting the "appropriate" employees is considered by some to be an important strategy for ensuring telework success. Omari and Standen (2000) say that a common reason managers do not utilize telework is uncertainty over who is best suited to telework. They say that while certain personal attributes of an employee are important, such as self-discipline, commitment, and ability to work independently, it is important to look beyond just the employee and consider things such as the remote work environment, task characteristics of the job, etc. Kurland and Cooper (2002) found that managers used control strategies that included behavioural, output, and clan control. Included in this was selecting the right individuals for telework. One proposed solution to the problem of isolation in teleworking is to avoid selecting employees who may be "too social" (Haddon & Lewis, 1994).

To try to gain control and improve the process of telework implementation, Manoochehri and Pinkerton (2003) also suggest selecting the appropriate employees, and further suggest the implementation of official guidelines as to which employees would be best suited for telework. To solve a manager's dilemma that he or she cannot see his or her workers, Manoochehri and Pinkerton recommend "setting clear performance objectives and measures for both the employee and manager" (p. 13).

Felstead, Jewson, and Walters (2003) observed several specific managerial strategies used in their study, two of which were implementing surveillance, and one of which was managers making unannounced visits to teleworkers' homes with excuses such as health and safety assessments, appraisals, training, etc., when the real reason was only an attempt to "increase the visibility" of the teleworker and check up on them. The teleworkers reported feeling that the visits were an intrusion.

Adami (1999) suggests that with "professionals" (i.e., knowledge workers), indirect forms of control such as job description, career development, flexible work arrangements, and organizational culture are more appropriate than direct controls such as hierarchy, rules and discipline. She also identifies "input controls" such as "recruitment, development, and socialization processes" as types of normative controls. These help new employees "fit in" and also ensure that employees' skills, knowledge, attitudes, etc., match those of the organization. While Adami also says organizational culture can be used as control, she also says that employees who are not on site "may not be socialized into the group to the same degree as employees who work on-site and more effort may be required to achieve that integration" (p. 135).

#### *Organizational culture and controlling telework*

Gainey, Kelley, and Hill (1999) are interested in the effect of teleworking on corporate culture, and say there are conflicting views of whether telework strengthens or weakens corporate culture. Similarly, Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus, and Hambley (2008) state that teleworking's effect can be either positive or negative—it is dependent upon the openness of an organization's culture to telework. Standen (2000) writes about telework in terms of the best "fit" between telework and organizational culture, saying that managers need to consider the culture before implementing telework. Dimitrova (2003) says that teleworking employees, since they are out of the office, could lead to the "loss of the collaborative spirit in an organizational culture that increasingly required cooperation and teamwork" (p. 181). However, none of these studies view organizational culture as a control strategy or mechanism.

Hooegeveen (2004) claims that clan control can be used in the case of telework. Instead of managers physically observing employees to monitor them, which is not possible in teleworking, using clan control means that "shared values and beliefs are used to align the goals of the individual worker with those of the organization" (p. 1). However, beyond the suggestion that standards and rules need to be established, which would include "selective staffing" for teleworkers, Hooegeveen is short on specifics. Further, Hooegeveen does not specify just *how* the clan would work to achieve control. Kurland and Cooper (2002) cite three control strategies that can be used for teleworkers: behavior control, output control, and clan control. They are more specific about how clan control can be utilized: "Clan control embraces selective staffing, training, development, and extensive socialization, creating shared values and beliefs....Formal and informal clan controls require high levels of commitment from each individual to adhere to socially prescribed behaviors" (p. 109).

Harrington and Santiago (2006) hypothesized that telework would be adopted in less hierarchical organizational cultures, and that organizational culture would be weakened when employees were removed from the workplace. Their findings confirmed that teleworkers were from less hierarchical cultures and possibly even "subcultures." These subcultures, which are removed from the daily communication and informal interaction at the office, can experience an unpredictable change in the culture and so would resist managerial attempts to manage or change it.

Felstead, Jewson, and Walters (2003) also discuss organizational culture in the context of telework. Normative controls, they say, make "presence and participation a requirement" (p. 252). Their study encompassed 13 organizations, and they say

organizational culture was stressed as very important in all of them. Most of the organizations required new employees to work on-site for a specific period before beginning to telework, to become "inducted into the culture" (p. 255). Their findings were, however, that "working at home was perceived by a majority of the managers and workers we interviewed to represent a potential threat to the integration of teams and the reproduction of corporate cultures" (p. 253).

### *Self-regulation*

Jackson, Gharavi, and Klobas (2006) discuss the concept of "self-regulation" as a method of control for virtual workers or teleworkers. They repeat the claim, also reported by others (Adami, 1999; Dimitrova, 2003), that "knowledge workers are difficult to regulate and monitor using direct controls" (p. 228), and that any type of virtual work requires new systems for control and monitoring. Jackson et al's study approaches the self-discipline of teleworkers from the Foucauldian perspective of surveillance. Jackson et al characterize the "old" form of control as being similar to Bentham and Foucault's Panopticon, where employees were constantly under surveillance, or the potential for surveillance, by management. They posit that in new forms of organizations, employees perform this surveillance by regulating themselves. Jackson et al describe this as an "internalized panopticon of professionalism and high performance" (p. 232), which serves as a replacement for traditional methods of control. They call this "the systems of knowledge and power relations, which induce virtual knowledge workers to continue to deliver high performance in accordance with the interests of the firm" (p. 223). As well, the current proliferation of professional groups and societies which aim to maintain self-

imposed "quality control" over professional and knowledge workers serves as its own panopticon.

Jackson et al assert that organizational culture is a source of roles and identity, and consequently not only are virtual workers excluded from the organizational culture, which they call "a significant vacuum for virtual workers" (p. 227), these employees also "feel denied...the construction of their own identities within the firm" (p. 227). In conclusion, Jackson et al find that in their study, it is actually a complicated web of many different overlapping constraints (an "ensemble"), an external *and* internal panopticon, which achieves control.

In this literature review, I surveyed the general literature on telework, and looked at such varied issues as transportation and environmental impacts, boundaries and space, and gender. I also discussed the definitional and conceptual problems regarding telework, and the over-optimistic predictions of its success, countered with pessimism about its future. This begs the question: Why has telework not lived up to expectations about its success? To address this question, I then looked at various perspectives found in the literature that attempt to answer this. Findings about technology were contradictory. While several authors have identified the basic telephone as the most common communication technology for teleworkers (Handy & Mokhtarian, 1996; Scott & Timmerman, 1999), another study (Venkatesh & Johnson, 2002) proposed that current technology is too limiting for telework and suggests that employing a virtual-reality system would be more effective and lead to greater take-up of telework. Employees' fear of being socially and professionally isolated were also posited as reasons for slower

adoption of telework, and then several different scenarios that identified telework as "paradoxical" were also identified as being reasons for the slower implementation of telework.

The literature reviewed to this point, however, had not addressed the question of control and telework, which several authors (Handy, 1995; Nilles, 2007) have identified as being a significant issue. To begin investigating this literature, I first looked at control of knowledge workers, later narrowing my focus to control of teleworkers. Findings of literature on organizational culture, which is a popular "technique" of controlling knowledge workers, were conflicting. While manipulation of organizational culture in order to control employees is a popular concept, Ray (1986) says there is no real evidence that it can serve as control, and Ogbonna (1992) says that managers are unsure of themselves when it comes to trying to change or manage culture. Others, such as Martin and Siehl (1983) and Alvesson and Lindkvist (1993) doubt the feasibility of managing something such as culture. In addition to the manipulation of culture concept is the concept of identity regulation as organizational control. This can be seen as a further extension of normative control and can even be seen as a "colonization of the self," where the organization attempts to subsume the individual. However, the concept of identity regulation as control has not been investigated in regards to teleworkers specifically.

Next, to narrow my focus, I examined literature dealing with the managing and control of teleworkers. While managers play an important role in the implementation of telework, some literature finds that these managers are an obstacle to implementation, either because they feel it will make their jobs more difficult (Shin, Sheng, & Higa, 2000), or even because they feel threatened by telework (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, &

Garud, 1999). Some specific managerial strategies were discussed, such as "selecting" the appropriate employees and establishing guidelines (Manoochehri & Pinkerton, 2003; Omari & Standen, 2000), and setting clear performance measures (Manoochehri & Pinkerton, 2003); however, it has already been established that "performance measures" can be difficult to define when managing knowledge workers. Felstead, Jewson, and Walters (2003) discussed surveillance strategies for teleworkers, such as unannounced visits. Finally, Adami (1999) suggests that indirect controls, such as organizational culture, are more effective for teleworkers.

With regard to socio-ideological control, the dilemma is that these methods rely on the physical presence of employees in order to communicate values, beliefs, and norms to them. In the context of telework, there are conflicting views in the literature about the importance of physical presence to organizational culture (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2003), and about whether telework strengthens or weakens organizational culture (Gainey, Kelley, & Hill, 1999).

In terms of self-regulation or self-surveillance in the context of telework, Jackson, Gharavi and Klobas (2006), describe how employees regulate themselves, but approach their analysis from a Foucauldian viewpoint based on surveillance and discipline, calling this an "internalized panopticon." Identity construction is said to actually be denied to virtual workers because they are not physically present at the work site, and they say that "virtual knowledge workers clamour for a greater sense of belonging to the culture of the firm" (p. 228). While the corporation that Jackson et al studied has high professional standards, "modesty is a dominant value: people are passively discouraged from promoting themselves" (p. 228). Jackson et al thus leave open the question of identity

construction in the case of teleworkers and whether or not this could succeed as a method of organizational control.

### CHAPTER THREE: THEORY

In the previous chapter, the review of literature found that much of the telework literature focuses on individuals, and that there is a lack of literature that examines the organizational impacts of teleworking. Some literature brought the problem of trust and control to the fore as a possible reason for the slower than anticipated adoption of telework, and so literature that discussed socio-ideological types of control for knowledge workers was reviewed. Next I look to theory to explicate the question of telework and control. The theoretical framework used here is Giddens's theory of structuration. Structuration links the concepts of "structure" and "action" and thus overcomes the traditional separation between these two concepts. To Giddens, human action is not constrained by structure, rather, every action produces and reproduces the structure and maintains the system. Every human actor is knowledgeable about the society in which he or she acts, and people share stocks of "mutual knowledge" that guide them in their interactions. In an organization, agents themselves maintain the organization by producing and reproducing its structure with their actions. Giddens identifies what he calls rules and resources which are used in the maintenance of structure. Rules are also seen as unconscious routines by Giddens. What happens to teleworkers and their routines when they are removed from the usual physical site of the workplace, and also removed from the social interaction that accompanies these routines? Also, how might these rules and resources be used by teleworkers to accomplish certain goals when they are teleworking? Employing Giddens to study the issue of teleworkers and their

organizations is effective not only because it helps uncover answers to these questions, but also because in his later works, Giddens explores the concepts of modernity and identity, and the relationship between the two, which will be illuminating to this study. Giddens (1990) argues that in modernity, society is marked by discontinuities greater than any we have experienced previously. One of the more important of these discontinuities is what Giddens calls "time-space distanciation," a "lifting out" of people from time and space, which is achieved in modernity with instant communication, air travel, and other aspects of globalization. With the discontinuities of modernity, Giddens (1991) finds that we have had to become more reflexive, that our lives are subject to "chronic revision in the light of new information and knowledge" (p. 20). As part of this, Giddens says that self-identity is also reflexive, and has to be constantly created and sustained "in the reflexive activities of the individual" (p. 52). In the following I lay out the various elements of structuration theory, modernity, and identity that will be germane to my analysis.

### **Structuration theory**

In the preface to his major work on structuration, *The Constitution of Society*, Anthony Giddens (1984) writes that he developed the theory of structuration because, "For some while...I have been seeking to establish an approach to social science which departs in a substantial fashion from existing traditions of social thought" (preface). Traditional sociology looks at the world in terms of "dualisms": that of individual and society, subject and object, voluntarism and determinism. To Giddens, these concepts have conventionally been maintained as distinct and so "have failed to conceptualize

social action in a way that enhances our understanding of both structure and agency" (Baber, 1991, p. 220). Traditional sociology has also lacked a theory of action. According to Giddens (1979): "the stage is set, the scripts written, the roles established, but the performers are curiously absent from the scene" (p. 253). To overcome dualisms and to solve the question of action, Giddens combines structure and action in the theory of structuration. In combining structure and action, Giddens rejects the customary notions of dualisms. Instead, in structuration, there is a *duality*, which he calls the "duality of structure." The duality of structure transcends the structure/action dichotomy. Giddens defines the duality of 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" (1984, p. 374).

### *Duality of structure*

The duality of structure is one of the key elements of the theory of structuration. Banks and Riley (1993) view the duality of structure as a key piece of structuration theory when it is used in communications studies. Cohen (1989) argues that *praxis* is central to the understanding of structuration theory. This is because one arrives at the duality of structure through praxis. In other words, every social action or interaction both produces a practice, while at the same time it reproduces the system and its structure. As Cohen says: "To say that structure is reproduced in the duality of structure means that structure is *reconstituted* in each instance where a pervasive and enduring procedure is reproduced" (p. 46). In addition to praxis, the duality of structure relies on the knowledgeability of human actors—they must know about society in order to act in it.

Humans share "stocks of mutual knowledge" that they apply in their everyday interactions, and this knowledgeability is a key component of the duality of structure (Giddens, 1979).

Another important element to the duality of structure is that structure is both enabling and constraining. A social system is seen as enabling because it gives people the routines and knowledge they need to act. On the other hand, this is also constraining—it limits actors to acting in a prescribed way. In organizations, many day-to-day tasks are both enabling and constraining. For example, an organizational requirement to use email in communicating with others enables their communication, while at the same time constrains it due to the limitations of email as a communication medium. Agents in an organization often rely on their previous, sometimes unconscious, experiences with rules and resources to execute their work tasks. This then succeeds in reproducing the structure. Therefore routines are also an important element of structuration theory, and they help to maintain and reproduce structure. As Banks and Riley (1993) put it:

The duality of structure embraces the notion that action relies for its achievement on tacit knowledge of histories of social and cultural practices and agents' own personal biographies, and it simultaneously reproduces and further reinscribes into knowledge those histories and biographies as consequences and concomitants of its accomplishment. (p. 273)

*Structure and system: Rules and resources*

In structuration, structure and system are used to explain and interpret human interaction and activity. In thinking about structure, though, Giddens (1986) warns

against thinking about a visual reference, as most English-speaking social scientists do. "They see the structural properties of institutions as like the girders of a building or the anatomy of a body. Structure consists of the patterns of relationships observable in a diversity of social contents" (p. 532). Just as the concept of structure should not denote a physical structure, the concept of system does not refer to a physical system. Rather, system is defined as "reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25); while structure is defined as "rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems" (p. 377). The system is the social relations themselves, while rules and resources are used in the maintenance of those social relations. In the theory of structuration, rules cannot be conceived of separately from resources. Rules are routines which guide human actions, like an organization's weekly meeting every Monday morning, or using a specific medium (such as email) to communicate with co-workers. These are patterns or routines, rather than "rules" in the traditional sense, and as such, they comprise a large part of organizational life and communication. Rules, according to Giddens (1984), have two aspects: they "relate on the one hand to 'the constitution of *meaning*,' and on the other to the *sanctioning* of modes of social conduct" (p. 18). Often these rules can be automatic or habitual, things that people do without consciously thinking about them. Another way to look at rules is as "techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices" (p. 21). Organizationally, then, rules and resources make up the reproduction of the system and structure, and this contributes to the maintenance of the organization itself.

Resources, as the second element of structure, refer to anything people use in their actions, which can include not only material things, such as tools or money, but also the nonmaterial, such as knowledge or skills. Resources using material things are called allocative resources, while those using the nonmaterial are called authoritative resources. Another way to look at resources is to call them capabilities, or as Giddens (1984) says, they may be more accurately seen as "forms of transformative capacity" (p. 33). This transformative capacity is why resources are also bound up with the use of power. Giddens says, "Resources are media through which power is exercised" (p. 16), and so in organizations they can be utilized not only to accomplish work tasks, but also to accomplish political or personal goals. Cohen (1989) points out that the merging of rules and resources in institutional settings can result in individuals using them for strategic control: "agents apply knowledge regarding the manipulations of the resources to which they have access in order to reproduce their strategic autonomy over the actions of others" (pp. 44-45). Giddens claims that resources can also be used by the less powerful to influence their superiors, in what he calls the *dialectic of control*. The dialectic of control can also be seen as a "counterpower relationship" (Banks & Riley, 1993). Brocklehurst (2001) writes: "In the realm of institutions, a 'structure of domination' occurs because social systems are marked by an asymmetry of resources amongst actors....Actors in subordinate positions are never without some resources and will constantly seek to try and control the conditions under which such reproduction takes place" (p. 447). However, it should also be noted, as McPhee (2004) does, the limitation exists that not all agents will be able to effectively mobilize these resources.

An example of these concepts applied to organizations is aptly described by Poole and McPhee (1983):

Structuration refers to the production and reproduction of social systems via the application of generative rules and resources in interaction. For example, the status hierarchy in a work group is an observable system. The structure underlying this system consists of rules, such as norms about who takes problems to the boss, and resources such as a special friendship with the boss or seniority. (p. 210)

### *Agency*

Giddens's conception of agency differs from the conventional view, which regards it as associated with a person's intentions. Rather he conceives of agency in terms of the flow of people's actions. Since the theory of structuration aims to overcome the subjective/objective dichotomy, Giddens seeks to decenter the subject (actor) by using the concept of the acting subject. This "signifies Giddens's objective to link concepts relevant to the agent to the exercise of agency in social praxis" (Cohen, 1989, p. 47). In essence, agents and agency are integrated. As Giddens (1979) says, "The notion of action has reference to the activities of an agent, and cannot be examined apart from a broader theory of the acting self" (p. 55), and "human action occurs as a *durée*, a continuous flow of conduct" (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). At the same time, agency also works simultaneously with structure; they presuppose each other (Giddens, 1979, Sewell, 1992). It is also important to note that at any time, "the agent 'could have acted otherwise'" (Giddens, 1979, p. 56).

In Giddens's conception of power, the ability 'to act otherwise' means that an agent is able to intervene in the world (or not): "Action depends upon the capability of

the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (Giddens, 1984, p. 14), and in referring to *capability* rather than intention, agency thus implies power. As discussed earlier, power is exercised through an agent's use of resources, authoritative and allocative; therefore, agency also figures prominently in the dialectic of control, as less powerful agents can mobilize resources to influence more powerful agents or institutions.

Another essential aspect of agency in structuration theory is the assumption that human agents are knowledgeable and that agency is the expression of agents' knowledgeability. Giddens (1979) posits that stocks of mutual knowledge are shared by actors, and that this knowledge is not always necessarily explicit. Much of it occurs at the level of practical consciousness in the course of day-to-day activities. Thus, organizational members are knowledgeable about their organizational surroundings and routines (such as where the coffee room is and how they should communicate with others), and this informs their actions. Agency, according to Banks and Riley (1993), can be seen as an expression of agents' knowledgeability—"of 'how to go on' in any instance" (p. 171). Thus, agents in an organization draw on their shared history and knowledge to coordinate and maintain the day-to-day workings of the organization. "As social actors, all human beings are highly 'learned' in respect of knowledge which they possess, and apply, in the production and reproduction of day-to-day social encounters; the vast bulk of such knowledge is practical rather than theoretical in character" (Giddens, 1984, p. 22). While knowledgeability plays a key role in agency, it is nevertheless important to

recognize that it is bounded by both the unacknowledged conditions and the unintended consequences of action.

### *The stratification model*

Giddens (1984) was dissatisfied with Freud's divisions of the individual psyche into 'id', 'ego', and 'superego,' and so he identifies what he calls a stratification model made up of three levels of consciousness. The first level is discursive consciousness, which refers to things people can put into words. The second, practical consciousness, consists of routines that are tacit, or unspoken. Agents go about their automatic or habitual routines at the level of practical consciousness—that is, they do not consciously think about what they are doing all time. The third level, the unconscious, is just that, meaning those things of which we are not aware.

The stratification model also refers to three properties of action: reflexive monitoring of action, rationalization of action, and motivation of action. Agents are constantly involved in the reflexive monitoring of action, and this can be, and often is, on an unconscious level. Giddens (1984) defines the reflexive monitoring of action as: "The purposive, or intentional, character of human behavior, considered within the flow of activity of the agent; action is not a string of discrete acts, involving an aggregate of intentions, but a continuous process" (p. 376). This reflexive monitoring of action is not restricted to action per se. Giddens also says, "Actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move" (p. 5).

Rationalization of action is described by McPhee (2004) as: "(the) ongoing power to

render our actions accountable through linguistic explanation or routines and linkage to the mutual knowledge of others" (p. 366). Reflexive monitoring and rationalization of action are distinguished from motivation. Giddens (1984) notes that motivation refers to the "potential for action," (p. 6), rather than the mode of action; and while actors can easily articulate their intentions or reasons for action, "they cannot necessarily do so of their motives. Unconscious motivation is a significant feature of human conduct" (p. 6). These three properties of action connect back with the three levels of consciousness as: discursive consciousness—rationalization of action (actors can discursively relate their actions); reflexive monitoring of action—practical consciousness (actors and their habitual routines); and motivation of action, which remains unconscious.

### *Ontological security*

Giddens (1984) maintains that actors are always motivated by an unconscious need to maintain their "ontological security," which he defines as: "Confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity" (p. 375). Ontological security, according to Giddens, begins when we are infants, as a "basic security system" in response to the environmental and emotional anxiety experienced by all infants as they learn to deal with the world. Some remnants of existential anxiety, or ontological insecurity, stay with all of us even when we are adults: "Ontological security has to do with 'being' or, in the terms of phenomenology, 'being-in-the-world.' But it is an emotional, rather than a cognitive, phenomenon, and it is rooted in the unconscious" (Giddens, 1990, p. 92).

Habits and routines (which begin even when we are infants), ameliorate the anxiety of the dealing with the world (Giddens, 1991). Routines, as an essential element of structuration theory, are supported by unconscious sources of motivation, and are one way actors maintain their ontological security, according to Willmott (1986): "Giddens emphasizes how subjects immerse themselves in routines as a means of holding down anxieties that arise from their imperfect efforts to develop a 'basic security system' capable of maintaining the separation and solidity of self in relation to Other" (p. 106). Because of the reassuring nature of the familiar, ontological security is reinforced by the routine and reproduction of social life, and is grounded in the foundation of taken-for-granted interactions (Giddens, 1979).

### *Identity*

The concept of ontological security is closely tied to identity. To be ontologically secure, Giddens (1991) says, means that one has answers to fundamental existential questions, one of which is that of self-identity:

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual 'supplies' about herself. A person's identity is not to be found in behavior, not—important though this is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. (emphasis original, p. 54)

Giddens (1991) later defines a *narrative of the self* as "the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and by others" (p. 243). Reflexivity is one of the key aspects of Giddens's view of identity and can be defined as a person's routine monitoring of their own conduct. It is

also closely tied in with his thoughts on modernity: "The reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self. Put in another way, in the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a *reflexive project*" (emphasis original, p. 32). Banks and Riley (1993) point out that reflexivity is more than just self-consciousness: "it means being immersed in the continuous flow of action and deriving from experience a logic of action that enables agents to go on" (p. 172). Reflexivity is tied to narrative, as Giddens says that reflexive monitoring always has discursive features. Agents should be able to provide discursive interpretations or explanations for their actions, and more so, to keep a particular narrative going, as quoted above. The idea of narrative and identity is described further by Scott, Corman and Cheney (1998), which I discuss below.

The concept of the "self" has changed with the onset of modernity (Bendle, 2002). Whereas in its previous conception the self was seen as something one possessed, consisting of an immutable, unitary core, in modernity or postmodernity it is not only constructed, but changeable (Gergen, 1991). Gergen's view of identity is that, due to the inundation of the self by the multiplicity of communications technologies, media, and other elements of modernity, we have become "saturated." This gives rise to uncertainty. Gergen writes: "as the modernist confronts the challenge of social saturation, he or she is continuously ripped from the security of an essential or unified self" (p. 148). Routines can help ameliorate this insecurity and are important to identity: "Identity is...a continual process of habitual activities that confers a sense of structure and a sense of coherence on one's daily life" (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006, p. 1077). The importance of routines in the theory of structuration has already been discussed. Since routines are seen as vital to maintaining ontological security, Tietze and Musson (2002) ask how teleworkers react to

the ontological insecurity that presents itself when they are out of the routine time and place of the office. Do they repeat the routines of the workplace, or do they try to invent new routines? Tietze and Musson found that this dislocation made the participants in their study "actively connect with and keep a hold on identity work" (p. 327), which they did through the enactment of routines.

Brocklehurst (2001) notes that while Giddens's writing on identity is found in some of his later work (i.e., *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 1991) rather than in his writing on structuration, Giddens's conception of identity starts from one of the key premises of structuration theory, which is "the existence of knowledgeable human agents who are able to draw on and interpret structures in acting" (p. 448). Relevant to teleworkers, according to Brocklehurst, is Giddens's notion of time/space distancing: "the ways in which social practices and institutions have become 'stretched' over larger (and smaller) spans of space and time" (p. 449). Teleworkers have obviously become disembedded in space and time from their co-workers and places of employment, which has been realized by technology ("expert systems" in Giddens's terminology). Tietze (2005) notes that "identity formation is bound to context" (p. 50), thus she asserts that telework has "severely dented the spatial and temporal context of identity formation" (p. 50). In modernity, greater numbers of people, not just teleworkers, are living in circumstances of disembedded institutions (Giddens, 1990). This perspective on modern life leads Giddens to claim human existence is more and more subject to *fragmentation* (Brocklehurst, 2001; Giddens, 1991). The advent of teleworking signals the disappearance of Weber's "iron cage of bureaucracy," but, as Brocklehurst says, "this cage served to give meaning to workers in a number of ways. In temporal terms, it routinized the day-to-day use of a

workers' time....In spatial terms, it insisted on a strict demarcation between work and home, between public and private" (p. 450). With the loss of these dependable routines and the unpredictability of time/space distancing, Brocklehurst asks "is it inevitable that...personal identity becomes increasingly rootless and harder to sustain?" (p. 451). One of the crucial findings of Brocklehurst's study was how Giddens's time/space distancing was ameliorated by the teleworkers' attempts to "bind" time and space by recreating the workplace in their home offices by doing such things as dressing for the office while at home, and even putting up pictures of colleagues in the home office. Brocklehurst says his findings support Giddens's conception of identity as sustained through the repetition of day-to-day routines: "Having been 'freed' from the routines of daily time, these homeworkers tried to recreate the very same routines in the home" (p. 459).

Scott, Corman and Cheney (1998) say that "identity is shaped by and revealed through discourse" (p. 304), and they also note the importance of peoples' self-narratives: "the story we tell of ourselves in interaction....with others is the essence of identification" (p. 305). They further explain that identity can be viewed in terms of the duality of structure: "That is, each identity constitutes a set of rules and resources that may be drawn upon by an organizational member.....identity is constantly being produced, reproduced, and altered via external presentations of our identity" (pp. 303-304). This duality, according to Scott et al, also plays out in the recursive relationship between *identity* and *identification*. Identification is also produced and reproduced by interaction with other organizational members, and a person's identity as an individual organizational member also serves to reinforce his or her identification with the larger organization

itself. In other words, identification is "system" and identity is "structure."

Scott et al argue against the previous essentialist view of identity which was that of a fixed, unchangeable core of the self. Rather they would view identity as an "anchor" which will still allow individuals to change identities or to identify with multiple collectivities. Viewing identity as a set of rules and resources allows for multiple identities or identifications—which Scott et al call "regionalized," drawing upon Giddens's notion of regionalization. Scott et al say, "We argue that agents draw on a plurality of structural identity resources in making certain identifications" (p. 302).

Structuration theory is not without its problems or critics. As Banks and Riley (1993) point out, structuration theory is quite complex and not intuitive, and so could be seen as unwieldy for use in empirical research. There are some studies which claim to use structuration theory, but merely invoke the theory without thoroughly demonstrating its use in analysis. This is called the *en passant* problem by Banks and Riley. Banks and Riley also claim that some research mistakenly assumes structuration to be a metatheory, which can lead to "incompatible mixtures of concepts" (p. 180). Giddens (1989) himself wrote: "Structuration theory is not intended as a method of research, or even as a methodological approach" (p. 296). While theoretical work applying structuration to organization studies abounds, literature discussing the empirical application of structuration is sparse (Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005). In the Analysis chapter of this thesis, I will take the concepts I have laid out in this discussion of theory and apply them to the data generated by the interviews. In the next chapter, I outline the method I used for my research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

This thesis set out to explore issues surrounding telework and organizational control, such as the often-asked question of whether or not teleworkers are "really working" when they are at home, and the dilemma facing managers of how to exercise organizational control over teleworkers when they are out of the office.

### *Interviews as a method for gathering data*

Due to the nature of this area of inquiry, this study was designed to discover answers through the *meaning* of teleworkers' day-to-day experiences, so qualitative, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of gathering data for this research. Semi-structured or unstructured interviews, as opposed to structured or standardized interviews, allow both researcher and interviewee to explore areas in greater depth and perhaps discover unexpected topics that will help contribute to a richer set of data. Silverman (2001) identifies three approaches to interview data. The first, positivism, involves the use of random interview samples and standardized questions with multiple choice answers. This version attempts to discover positivistic facts that are "out there" in the world. Positivistic researchers use standardized interviews, Silverman says, because their aim is to "generate data which hold independently of both the research setting and the researcher or interviewer" (p. 88). The interviewer must not give any appearance of bias, or even surprise or disapproval of an answer. A standardized approach, which is quantitative rather than qualitative, looks to obtain specific information, answers to certain questions, etc., so that they can be compiled into a table of numbers. However, in

their use of these specific, narrow questions, and the same questions for each respondent, Weiss (1994) says that researchers as a consequence "do not obtain full reports. Instead, the information they obtain from any one person is fragmentary, made up of bits and pieces of attitudes and observations and appraisals" (p. 2). Another drawback to this approach is that in this form of interviewing "the existence of *typical* respondents is explicitly presupposed" (emphasis added, Silverman, 2001, p. 90).

In the second approach to interview data, emotionalism, the view is to uncover a respondent's authentic, lived experiences. Silverman (2001) calls this a "humanistic" approach. The researcher aims to create a rapport with the respondent. Rather than seeing respondents as "objects", as positivists would, one would see respondents as emotionally involved subjects, and in doing so, Silverman says, "one should try to obtain intersubjective depth between both sides so that a deep mutual understanding can be achieved" (p. 91). The best way to do this is through open-ended interviews, allowing the interview to be more of a conversation than a structured interview. "For the emotionalist, the open-ended interview apparently offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another" (p. 94).

Silverman points out that one drawback to the emotionalist approach is that there are assumptions made in preferring open-ended interviews: "it is somewhat naïve to assume that open-ended or non-directive interviewing is not in itself a form of social control that shapes what people say" (p. 92). Additionally, with the fact that an interview is temporary in nature, there could be problems of interviewees "self-presenting" themselves, and possibly fabricating or exaggerating their responses. The nature of an interview also casts interviewer and interviewee into pre-conceived roles, or perhaps pre-

conceived notions of what their role "should" be. However, Silverman points out that to look at these issues as distortions or biases is "to play the positivist's game" (p. 94). In contrast to this, interviews "can also be seen to possess basic properties of all social interaction" (p. 94).

In constructionism, which also uses unstructured interviews, the interviewer and interviewee are actively involved in constructing meaning. As Silverman says, "A particular focus is on how interviewees construct narratives of events and people...and the turn-by-turn construction of meaning" (p. 87). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) point out that all interviews are interactional events: "Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably *active*. Each is involved in meaning-making work" (p. 4). The researcher and interviewee are both actively involved in constructing meaning. Koro-Ljungberg (2008) calls constructionist interviews "dialogical performances, social meaning-making acts, and cofacilitated knowledge exchanges" (p. 430). In Silverman's (2001) three approaches to interview data, he places constructionism in between positivism and emotionalism: while positivists must follow a strict protocol for interaction between interviewer and participant, and emotionalists are encouraged to become emotionally involved with their subjects, "by contrast, constructionists are interested in documenting the way in which accounts 'are part of the world they describe'" (p. 95). Silverman goes on to say, "constructionists...focus on how people assemble sense in situations like interviews. This is seen in Holstein and Gubrium's constructionist account of the 'active interview'" (p. 97).

Holstein and Gubrium (2008) identify an analytics of interpretive practice approach, which they say is "centered on communicative action *in context*, (it is) an

analytic framework eminently suitable to understanding the practices of everyday life" (emphasis original, p. 376). As part of the interpretive practice approach, the interview, as method, involves the "construction of an active subject behind the respondent" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 14). Rather than just providing positivistic information about the world out there, the active subject "not only holds facts and details of experience but, in the very process of offering them up for response, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms the facts and details" (p. 8). The interaction between interviewer and interviewee also succeeds in constructing meaning. For example, the answers a certain participant gives can lead the interviewer to explore new concepts or travel down unexpected paths. Thus, interviewees can actually collaborate with the interviewer to construct reality (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) say that the active interview can cultivate meaning-making while at the same time "prospecting" for information.

With this type of phenomenological approach to interviews, Morse (1994) suggests limiting a sample size to about six participants. In addition, these types of qualitative, in-depth interviews, at an average of 45 minutes to an hour in length, generate a great deal of data. Thus this study does not produce any type of statistical generalizations or representative sample, but instead provides salient details regarding teleworkers' on the job experiences.

#### *Ethics approval and the recruitment process*

Ethics approval was applied for and granted by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) of the University of Calgary (see Appendix A). It was important

to guarantee anonymity to the interviewees so that they felt they could speak freely about their jobs; thus, the subjects were not interviewed at their place of employment. Five subjects were interviewed in their homes, and one was interviewed at a neutral location. As required by CFREB, each participant signed a consent form, which ensured their anonymity (see Appendix B). Interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed word for word. Participants chose their own pseudonyms, which were immediately assigned to them in the transcriptions. The CFREB specified that only indirect methods of obtaining subjects be used, and further that I could not directly contact any potential participants. Therefore, the Calgary organization WORKshift was contacted to help find research subjects. WORKshift, which is funded by Calgary Economic Development, Transport Canada and the Government of Alberta, is an organization that helps companies implement telework programs. WORKshift circulated my recruitment information (see Appendix C) via email to various companies involved in the program, and people interested in being interviewed in turn sent me emails. Some participants were found this way, and some were found later by being referred indirectly from the initial participants (i.e., indirect snowballing technique).

### *Research participants*

Participant criteria, as listed in the recruitment information, were that: (1) the participant works from home or a satellite office one or more days per week and uses mostly information and communication technologies to communicate with a primary office; (2) the participant is a regular employee of one organization (rather than a freelancer or contract worker); and (3) the participant has been teleworking at his or her

current job for at least six months. The first criterion was chosen as most telework fits this description, and I was interested in how ICTs would affect teleworkers' organizational communication. The second was chosen as I was interested in the bureaucratic nature of organizations and how telework interacted with this. A freelance or contract worker would have of necessity more control over their own work than an employee of a bureaucratic organization. The third criterion, that the participant have been teleworking for at least six months, was chosen so that participants would have had time to adjust to telework and would perhaps have some comparisons to offer between teleworking and working at the central office location.

Six participants were interviewed; one of the six interviews was not used in data analysis as the participant did not adequately meet the criteria set out in the research design. Four of the participants, Susan, Theresa J, Beatrix, and Tom S, worked for a large municipality I will call "Corp," and the fifth participant, Joe, worked for a large educational institution I will call "College." Susan was single, Theresa and Beatrix were married with no children, and Tom and Joe were each married with one young child and a wife who stayed home with the child. All of the participants were knowledge workers: Susan was a senior researcher, Theresa and Beatrix were transportation planners, and Tom was a planning technician. Joe was an engineer whose job description involved helping College improve their environmental policies. In terms of time spent teleworking, Susan was the only participant who teleworked full-time, although when necessary, she would go into the main office or to other locations for face-to-face meetings. Tom teleworked four days per week, and went to the office every Tuesday. Joe said he

teleworked one-two days per week, and Theresa and Beatrix regularly teleworked only one day per week.

### *The interview process and data analysis*

Interview questions (see Appendix D) centered around participants' daily activities and routines while working from home, the types of communication used with the main office and co-workers while away from the office, their relationships with their boss and co-workers, and reasons why or why not they liked their teleworking arrangement. As the interviews progressed, certain unforeseen topics arose and so interview questions were then adjusted to garner more information about these issues. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasize: "While actually interviewing or observing, *you will be adjusting your interviewing and observing* so as to decide immediately on the focus, on what to ask, and where to look" (emphasis original, p. 183). Interviews were tape recorded via computer, and then transcribed word-for-word.

The transcriptions of the interviews were then coded using the open coding technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Coding involves searching the data for emerging and common themes, categories, or concepts that may be relevant to the data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (p. 61). Seale (2004) says that a coding scheme should use both the *deductive* and *inductive* methods of identifying emerging codes from the data. In the deductive method, codes are identified from the initial concerns and questions that the researcher presented in the interviews, and in the

inductive method, the researcher looks for codes (i.e., themes or concepts), not thought of previously, that may emerge from the data itself.

After thoroughly getting to know the content of the interviews, I began the process of coding, deciding which categories would be used to identify interview excerpts. While I decided which codes applied to the interview excerpts, the software program HyperRESEARCH enabled the entering of codes into the computer program, so that quick retrieval of coded excerpts and comparison of the material in terms of overlapping codes was easily facilitated. However, the more detailed sorting and organizing of the coded material was done manually after coded quotations were printed out from the hyperRESEARCH program. This was the essence of the data analysis, which was becoming thoroughly familiar with the coded excerpts and determining which excerpts were related to each other and which, according to the use of theory, was going to help me to glean the most salient points for my analysis.

The following chapter will show what came out clearly from the interviews, which, when analyzed using structuration theory, helps to answer the research question surrounding organizational control of teleworkers.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

In the first part of this analysis chapter, I will show that while bureaucratic control mechanisms can be obvious and spelled out in things such as organizational policies, they can also influence employees to adopt the organization's values and ideology in sometimes subtle ways. Official policies in an organization maintain organizational structure, cohesion, and continuity—the bureaucracy. These policies give employees not only concrete guidelines as to what is officially sanctioned, but also serve to guide the routines of organizational life – how to "go on" in Giddens's words. Karreman, Sveningsson & Alvesson (2002) say that "bureaucracy provides a sense of closure, control, and predictability in organizations and work relations, and thus makes them more manageable" (p. 88). Official policies, as mechanisms of bureaucratic control, serve to give the employees this sense of predictability in their organizational routines and guide them as to what they can or can't do. In Giddens's terms, official policies can be seen as "rules." The enactment of official policies both maintains and reproduces the system of the bureaucracy. Other bureaucratic control mechanisms which I discuss in this chapter include the application process, managerial approval, ergonomic assessments, and surveillance.

In the second part of this chapter, I demonstrate that teleworkers are subject to a type of socio-ideological control in that they have extended and enhanced organizational control by taking on the organization's ideology and incorporating it into the self-constructions of their identities. I will show this through examples such as discursive

representations, in which the teleworkers represent themselves as "special" compared to other employees. These discursive representations can be seen in terms of structuration theory as serving to both produce and reproduce a teleworker's identity. The teleworkers then cultivate a "special" relationship with their bosses in order to demonstrate that they are worthy of the teleworking privilege, and so that they can continue teleworking.

Another example of how the teleworkers take on the organization's ideology in their discourse will be shown in how they adopt, and give a great deal of significance to, the organization's distinction between "officially" and "unofficially" teleworking. Taking on the organization's ideology is another good example of how teleworkers both maintain and reproduce the system according to the theory of structuration. Other elements contributing to identity self-construction that I will discuss include performing work, advocating for telework, and organizational commitment.

### **I. Mechanisms of bureaucratic control**

In this first section of the chapter, I show how bureaucratic mechanisms serve to actively control teleworkers in the organization. At Corp, bureaucratic control started immediately with the "pilot project" for telework. Three of the employees of Corp that I interviewed (Susan, Theresa, and Beatrix) started teleworking as part of the project that Corp ran to investigate the feasibility of telework for the organization. A fourth, Tom, was not allowed to participate in the pilot project because his department was not taking part. Instead, just prior to Corp's official telework implementation, Tom and a fellow employee in his department lobbied their managers to allow them to telework. Their managers overcame some initial reluctance but did, in time, allow Tom and his co-worker

to telework. Once the telework pilot project at Corp was finished, telework was eventually adopted organization-wide, which involved the development of a "corporate policy" for telework. Below I outline various mechanisms of bureaucratic control, which include the application process, managerial approval, ergonomic assessments, and surveillance.

### *Applying to telework*

At Corp, employees cannot telework until they have gone through a rather long application process. As the first bureaucratic hurdle the employees must deal with, the application process can be seen as an initial stimulus to control or influence the employees' thoughts around teleworking and to communicate the company's ideology. Part of the application process involves the employee making a "business case" for teleworking. In the following I will demonstrate that the language used on the application forms achieves control, perhaps even without the employee being aware of it. Theresa outlines what is involved:

Q      So what is involved in making a business case?

TJ      I think it's making sure that the person who wants to telework has thought about what it means and what the implications might be, right? So....they push you to go through the thought process....they'll ask questions. You know, "How do you think you teleworking will benefit Corp?".... they're trying to get the person to think about all the scenarios...And then you fill out the business case -- it's, like, four or five pages long.

Bureaucratic control is achieved here through using language that only invokes benefits or sees problems from the organization's point of view. Notice some of the controlling language that Theresa uses about Corp: "they *push* you to go through the thought process"; and "they're *trying to get the person to think* about all the scenarios." Another question from the forms Theresa cites is: "how do you think teleworking will benefit Corp?," instead of a question asking the employee how teleworking will benefit the employee, or even if it would improve the quality of his/her work or work-life balance. In terms of structuration this can be seen as enablement and constraint. The business case form enables the employee to telework, but the wording of the forms along with the "official" rules around telework constrains or controls employees' thinking about telework to match that of the organization. The rules and forms surrounding telework also maintain the system in Giddens's terms of structural properties being both the medium and the outcome of the practices they organize.

### *Managerial approval*

The most basic level of control over teleworkers lies in the fact that at both Corp and College, the decision to allow an employee to telework is up to that employee's manager, who ultimately has final approval over whether or not someone can telework. Each manager can decide who, if anyone, in the department will be allowed to telework, and each manager can cite any reason he or she wishes for the decision for or against. In this instance, managers achieve control by virtue of the hierarchy. For example, according to Susan, there was a cost issue in her department for her being able to

telework, whereas when I brought this up with other employees at Corp, they were unaware of any cost issues.

Most of the interviewees used language of control to describe whether or not someone can telework: "Their manager won't *allow* them to telework," and "I'm the only employee he has *let* telework," etc. For instance, Beatrix commented that fellow employees (who did not telework) would make jokes about her teleworking, that she was "not really working" and goofing off while at home. She speculated that one reason they joked was that "There's a little bit of truth behind every joke." But another reason she thought that they were doing it was:

B And also I think they're a little envious. Because I've had conversations with co-workers who have different managers than I do, and they've....[made] comments like, you're so lucky, you get to telework, my boss won't approve telework for anyone. She says that, for example, she doubts our productivity, or our ability to be productive if we're not in the office.

In contrast to this, Susan's ability to continue to telework after Corp's initial pilot project seemed to be more of a cost issue, and she had to aggressively persuade her boss to approve the extra cost.

S So, as part of the pilot the transportation planning [department] I guess paid for Citrix and the phone.....and at the end of the pilot....our department had to pick up the cost, and my boss almost said no, and I sent him a scathing note that said, "We have a real issue here, if my productivity and happiness in my job is not worth a hundred bucks to you,

a month, then we need to have a serious chat about my place in this organization," I mean, it was pretty blunt and so of course then he approved it, and once it was in the budget line like it's been a non-issue since.

Tom and a co-worker wanted to telework, but their department was not part of the pilot. Consequently, they had to lobby their managers to approve telework, who were initially resistant to approving it. When asked why, Tom said he was not sure of the reason:

TS     Well, I would be speculating, status quo.

Q     Didn't want change, maybe?

TS     Want to be observing workers as opposed to trusting workers to be working at home, the hassle of the administrative work?

These three scenarios illustrate the seemingly arbitrary control that managers have over allowing employees to telework. We see disparate reasons given by managers at Corp as to why they would not approve telework, and there does not seem to be a consistent organizational policy surrounding the final approval process. Recall that with Giddens, ontological security and organizational sense come from the everyday repetition of routines, which reproduces and maintains the system and gives the actors in the organization the knowledge of how to "go on." The uncertainty of this "yes or no" proposition regarding telework, without consistent criteria to back it up, is a good example of what can sometimes appear to be unpredictable bureaucratic control. This may lead in part to teleworkers using their agency to cultivate a special relationship with

their managers in order to protect their teleworking situation, which will be discussed later.

### *Ergonomic assessments*

Before an employee can begin teleworking at Corp, he or she is required to undergo an ergonomic assessment of his/her home workspace. This assessment gives Corp the opportunity to not only monitor their employees' health and well-being, it allows the company to visually scrutinize the home offices of teleworking employees, thus exerting a degree of control or surveillance. Recently there has been a renewed interest in management control of health (Caicedo & Martensson, 2010). Felstead, Jewson, and Walters (2003) cite a study where managers visited teleworking employees' homes for various purposes including health and safety assessments, and managers admitted that these visits "also facilitated a closer inspection of the demeanour, attitude and circumstances of the worker" (p. 249). While there are practical reasons for management to be concerned about employees' health, such as lost work days, insurance costs, etc., it remains that this is an area that companies are increasingly attempting to exert control over their employees.

At Corp, two employees, Beatrix and Tom, had to send in photos of their home workspace and go through a required online tutorial about setting up their workspace ergonomically. A third, Theresa, actually had an employee from Corp come to her home to assess her workspace. However, none of the employees saw this as a measure of control or surveillance. They actively cooperated with the bureaucracy and took on its ideology by talking about how important it was that management ensure the safety of

employees. When I remarked that I thought it unusual she had to send pictures of her home office to Corp, Beatrix said:

B I could see the concern on the employer's part, that the employee is working in a set up that is as ergonomic as possible, because if the employee suffers injuries while working at home, the employee should be aware that their situation may have caused it.

Theresa worried that Corp might even audit her home workspace arrangement, since during the initial assessment she had shown them an upstairs office where she was planning to work. Since she got wireless internet, however, she said she enjoyed being able to have her computer at different places in the house and being able to move around:

TJ I do always wonder if they are going to come and audit me about my ergonomics....Just because I, you know, I said that I work up there.

Q So what would happen if they did that?

TJ .....basically they have to give you notice, and then they'll come by and check it out sort of thing. But then I would just run up and – innovate....So I don't know if that's an issue for them or not. I mean, I think, all they're doing is trying to protect the employee, right....I think they are doing it for the right reasons. Right, they want you to be healthy and that type of thing.

Theresa has taken on the organization's belief that these rules are for her own health and safety; however, she worries because she has gone against the established "rules." The employees' cooperating with management's ergonomic assessments means they are working to produce and reproduce the system in Giddens's terms. Theresa's

concern about being audited demonstrates how important the rules and structure are to the employees, since this seems to be a persistent source of worry for her. Thus the management achieves control—not only at the beginning of the process, with pictures or home visits, but throughout, because the employees are aware that there is a possibility of their homes being scrutinized again at any time.

### *Surveillance*

Traditional methods of management control are based on employees' being visible to managers, which obviously is not possible in teleworking situations. As already discussed, this loss of visibility is often identified as one of the more troublesome aspects of teleworking (Dimitrova, 2003, Felstead, Jewson & Walters, 2003, Olson, 1987). Zuboff (1988) comments that: "When authority fails, or appears fragile, managers frequently look toward a second dimension of power: its material aspect, which I shall refer to under the general rubric of 'technique'... Techniques of control, are used for monitoring, surveillance, detection, or record keeping" (p. 313). Fairweather (1999) notes that even if technology in teleworking situations is not used for surveillance and monitoring, employers and employees sometimes fear the possibility of it being used in this way. Next, I will show how Corp accomplishes control of teleworkers through various monitoring and technological means.

In an evocation of Bentham and Foucault's Panopticon, Corp performs what they call "360° surveys" of teleworkers. This means they survey the workers themselves, their co-workers and their bosses in order to assess the efficacy of teleworking. Tom had the type of job that, before he started teleworking, required frequent face-to-face

communication with the employees one level above him. Tom recalled that as part of his 360° survey, one of these co-workers reported that he was unhappy with Tom's teleworking because Tom was not available at all times to speak to personally. It is not known what if any consequences arise from the 360° surveys, but all the employees are certainly aware of them. This is quite reminiscent of the Panopticon, where everyone is aware of "the gaze" but does not know exactly when they will be observed (Zuboff, 1988).

The management at Corp also keeps track of *where* their employees are working, whether at home or at the office, and they take notice when there are any anomalies. Susan reported that one of the teleworking managers called her because he had noticed she had been in the office much more than usual.

S      Cause I know they keep all kinds of records and in fact, he sent me a note, or called me....and he was just wondering what was going on and I said, Oh, well, I've been in a hiring process, so I've been down there every day, and so he said, Oh, just so we know, like it kind of stood out, so they must be looking at stats, right?

Q      Yeah....do you think they're checking up on you, or?

S      No, I think they're looking for outliers...I don't know.

Q      They're looking for potential problems, maybe?

S      Maybe.

Corp uses the Citrix system to enable employees to access their files from outside the office. When logging into the system, each employee has a fob with a unique random

number generator on it, and the numbers change every minute, thus giving them secure access. There is also an application available to Citrix users called *SmartAuditor* that can be used to closely monitor any user of the system. It is not known if Corp uses this application, but due to its availability, it would seem to be fairly easy for management to closely surveil what employees were doing if they so wished.

Corp actively encourages employees to use email as a preferred communication method, so there would be consistent records of all communication. All the Corp employees interviewed said that email was their principal method of communication, in fact they emphasized that this was how they "should" communicate. When asked about her primary communication method, Theresa said she much preferred talking with people but:

TJ     It's probably email. I'm learning now, it's better to have a record of conversations than it is to have -- so it's probably email.

Q     Okay. So do you feel that's different because you are at home, the emailing more?

TJ     .....that's something that I think I should be doing more of anyways, to make sure that we have a record of decisions and conversations that were made...I actually like talking to people, and that's the way that I prefer communicating and I find it quicker, but then you don't have a record of what was decided. So I'm trying to move to the email anyways.

This demonstrates active control of the employee. Theresa prefers talking to people—she even mentions later that she finds emails can be misconstrued, but she is "learning" from Corp that it is better to use email and so is cooperating by using email more to communicate.

In each of these cases, the employees are aware of the monitoring, which then achieves control in the mode of the Panopticon, which "induce(s) in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201).

## **II. Identity self-construction as organizational control**

In this section, I will explore how teleworkers extend and enhance organizational control, in essence "taking on" this control themselves, through this "re-working" and the active self-construction of their identities, in a type of socio-ideological control. It is important to note that in Giddens's conception of agency, the agent always "could have acted otherwise." Thus I demonstrate here that even though this is in part socio-ideological control by the organization, the teleworkers are still using identity self-construction as a form of power and control over their work situation. Deetz (1998) claims that in knowledge work, "The reduction of direct control leaves employees with a sense of liberation and capacity for negotiated self-identity and reality" (p. 156). Here I will show how the employees negotiate their self-identity, but do so *in favor of* assuming organizational control and values.

### *Discursive representations*

Much of the teleworkers' identity construction can be seen in how they represent themselves discursively. This often involves comparing themselves to co-workers who do not telework. Accordingly this comparison, when reported by the employee him- or herself, always presents them in a better light than fellow employees who "waste time" at the office, or who "aren't good enough" for the boss to let telework. These comparisons, and the discourse that displays the teleworkers' uniqueness, serve to reinforce the system already in place and in this way, the workers themselves are exerting or "taking on" control, while at the same time reproducing the system in Giddens's terms.

The teleworkers tended to view themselves as "special," in part because they were very productive, focused on their work, and were not "wasting time" socializing like others were in the office. For instance, Susan had no tolerance for gossip and socializing in the office and said that this was one reason she liked teleworking so much:

S        I just I saw no, I see no benefit for me to have a day at the office. A day at the office for me is a wasted workday. And the reason is, people wander around and socialize, and I'm an introvert, and I don't want to be bothered. But when someone else is avoiding doing whatever they should be doing and comes and plops in my office to talk to me about stuff that is not work-related, that I have no interest in their personal life; I just don't wanna go there, and um, they will do that, and go home at 4:30, and I'm staying till 8:00 at night to do the work I didn't get done because of interruptions.

Here Susan doubly enforces her uniqueness: not only does she not gossip like others in the office, but while they gossip, waste time, and go home at 4:30, she fulfills all her work obligations by staying late at night. Beatrix says essentially the same thing when asked about co-workers joking about her "not really working" when she's at home:

B      I don't take it personally. They're trying to be funny. And I think—well, two things: one, I feel secure in the value I contribute to my organization because even if I am teleworking and I start at 10 a.m., I'm working until 7 or 8, and they aren't. They'll put in their 8 to 4 or whatever and that's it. And also I think they're a little envious.

Beatrix also talked about how social interruptions got in the way of her work:

B      Because at my desk, I don't have many minutes without interruptions, because....someone will drop in and say, I'd like your input on my project, or someone will come by and want to tell me a personal story or something not even related to work and I don't want to talk to them, but they're there, and I can't kick them out, because it's a cubicle!

There appeared to be an important distinction at Corp between those who were "officially" teleworking and those who would occasionally work from home. Although this distinction is initially created by the company's rules and regulations around telework, the employees readily took on the organization's ideology and the significance of this distinction, and by doing so, worked towards maintaining the system. As Tom said:

TS      Also, the truth is, *none* of the people in Group B are currently teleworking. They're not allowed to by their management, maybe there's some resentment there, I'm not sure. Like, not officially. There's no official recognized telework schedule. But all of them seem to do—like they'll stay at home and work at home for a day. But it's not official. None of them have official, but they do—like a lot of them do have Citrix access, so they could see it....But officially they aren't scheduled as teleworkers.

Susan was the only person in her department who was allowed to telework, which to her was a big indication of her boss's trust and confidence. She seemed annoyed that another employee was "unofficially" allowed to telework, even though Susan's opinion was that this employee was not really doing Corp's work while at home:

Q      What about your co-workers that are not teleworking, but you are?

S      Some of them are incredibly resentful. The ones who I think would like to telework....As researchers, lots of people will say, Oh, I need peace and quiet to think, I'm working at home for two days. And that's allowed by our boss, without anything sort of formal....And there's one person who never works Fridays, she stays home and reads, well, do I believe that she's home reading all day? No, I don't, actually. I believe she's home all day, but I don't think she's reading work-related stuff all day. That's because she also teaches at university and I think she's reading for university....I think it's a stretch to say it's work-related, yeah, which job?

Q But she's still doing it?

S She's doing that, so he is letting her do that, but she's not officially teleworking, right?....If you telework, it becomes formalized. You need Citrix, you need the cell phone, right? So it's a whole other layer of administration, and he has not let *anyone* else telework.

The "official-unofficial" discourse in teleworkers' terms is valuable because they want to reinforce the system as it currently exists at Corp. By using this discourse they effectively produce and reproduce the system. All the teleworkers are happy with the way things are, they enjoy telework and don't want their opportunity to telework threatened in any way. If these "unofficial" teleworkers are allowed to telework officially and then they aren't as productive, or don't do Corp's work while at home, that could potentially threaten the opportunity of everyone to telework. Corp workers are essentially interested in maintaining the telework program, and their status in it, as being something exceptional and this is demonstrated in their discourse.

### *Performing work*

In using structuration theory to look at organizations, Poole and McPhee (1983) talk about organization members using "generative rules and resources in interaction" (p. 210). Teleworkers use these rules and resources to "perform work." Performing work means an employee tries to demonstrate he or she is working by making extra efforts to make their work visible (for example, by sending extra emails, sending the emails to more people than necessary, etc.) so that others are able to see how much they are

working. It is important for the teleworkers to "perform" work to allay potential concerns from bosses that they are not working to the fullest while at home, and also as a response to non-teleworking co-workers who may be making comments about the teleworker's productivity while at home. In the following I describe examples that demonstrate this concept and show how it is a method teleworkers use to maintain control over themselves and their work.

Some of the teleworkers interviewed seemed sensitive to the fact that others suggested or joked that they are not "really working" while at home. This led, in part, to them being vigilant and strict about keeping to their working hours, and to demonstrating this to others. Though all the participants interviewed claimed that one reason they liked teleworking was its "flexibility," they all strictly kept to the organizational rule of an eight-hour day when teleworking, thus reproducing organizational control. If they took time off in the middle of the day to do something non-work related, they made sure to make it up later. While Joe said he was quite strict about keeping to the eight-hour (i.e., 9 to 5) day when he first started teleworking, he now felt free to take a few hours off to do something with his daughter during the day, but he did make the time up later on. As he says, his co-workers or boss will be aware that he is working hard because:

J        And they'll see they are getting emails from me at 9 o'clock at night, depending on what has happened during the day and stuff like that....So I can be accessible if – even if I do something [else] in those work hours I always have my Blackberry with me so I'm still in contact.

Similarly, when Beatrix was asked about close colleagues wondering if she was "really" working, she said:

B .....they know that I am working, and they will also see, because these co-workers with which I'm working closer, will either receive an email from me or be copied on an email that I have sent, while working at home, and so, my boss, for example, I might copy him on something, or my co-worker, they'll see that I'm active, I'm producing something.

Several of the teleworkers showed how they were performing work when they communicated with others while out of the office. For example, Theresa said if she were to be spending the day reading a report, she would let her co-workers know that she was going to be off-line, so they didn't wonder where she was or what she was doing. She also expressed concern that a few times people had called her on the phone when she was in the washroom:

TJ I do wonder sometimes if somebody does call -- and this is very few and far between, like, I'm in the washroom, you know what I mean? The phone hasn't rung all morning and it has to be now! Like, there are some times that fleeting thought that goes through my mind, do they think that I'm not working.

As part of performing work, connectivity came up as an important issue for teleworkers. Teleworkers wanted it to be obvious how hard they were working while at home, thus it was important for them to be able to respond very quickly when contacted at home, as seen in this previous example of Theresa's. Susan was very proud of her accessibility:

S I get feedback from other employees too, because I know initially, especially after the pilot, various people said Oh, I'm happy to volunteer to be surveyed about you teleworking. Because they said, "I can't tell if you're in the office or not, because your responsiveness is exactly the same. If I phone you, I don't know if you're around the corner, down the hall, or if you're on your own phone, because you either pick up the phone, or you respond to an email and you're always very responsive."

Joe's quotation earlier showed that he always kept his Blackberry with him so that he would always be in contact with the office, and Beatrix also said that she responded quickly if she got messages from her boss or immediate co-workers:

B I do make a point, if I get an urgent email or a voice mail from my co-workers or my boss, I'll respond right away, I'll phone.

The teleworkers' vigilance about their working hours also showed up in some of their comments about how they scheduled their days. Beatrix, for example, stressed that she never watched TV or used the Internet for personal reasons. It is interesting that most of the teleworkers maintained control over their work by keeping a list of tasks which they prioritized, and then used as a type of schedule for their telework days. This was also a re-creation of the routine that they maintained in the office. Susan, however, went much farther than just a list of tasks. On her own initiative, she kept an extremely detailed time sheet of her work hours which included time spent on administrative chores, meetings attended—even mileage. She also kept what she called a "project status report" so that she could remember how much time spent, meetings attended, etc., on each project she

was working on. While Susan insisted that she kept the time sheet "just for myself," when asked if she was doing it to perhaps show to her boss, she said:

S        No, because I, I mean I've been doing that since I started with Corp. But...because I'm doing that project status report, I can tell you everything I've produced in a year, everything I've gone to, everything I've presented, everything I've contributed to, so, in a nutshell, it looks pretty impressive when it's all on paper....And making sure that that goes forward...for performance appraisal reasons, like, look at what I've produced this year, I think that's worth a big hefty salary increase, *don't you?* You know, when you've got it in black and white it's a leveraging tool for those kinds of discussions.

Later, Susan added:

S        But, the trust issue is a big one....If you're not confident in your own management ability and your staff when they're 14 feet away from you, then you won't be confident when they're completely out of sight. I've felt that way for a long time with my boss, which is why also producing my records really helped me demonstrate to him what I was doing because I think he was oblivious to what I was actually doing.

As seen here, even though Susan initially denied she kept her time sheet to show to her boss, it was obviously important for Susan to have that list and be able to demonstrate that she was working hard, even how she was dividing her time.

Teleworkers have been removed from their regular routine, which serves to maintain

their ontological security. Regularly keeping "lists" helps them recreate this routine and grounds them back into reality. Also, the performing of work helps the teleworkers demonstrate that they *are* working while out of the office, and so it follows that this is an important element to preserving the teleworking program and the opportunity for the employees to telework. In actively demonstrating that they are working, the teleworkers also show how they are producing and reproducing the system in terms of structuration theory.

*A "special" relationship with the boss*

Part of the teleworkers' identity construction involves cultivating a special relationship with their boss. This is a demonstration of Giddens's dialectic of control, where subordinates use resources in an effort to maintain control and influence those above them. Some teleworkers believe that they have been given the opportunity to telework by their bosses because they have already proven themselves as trustworthy, reliable, and productive workers, and consequently they are anxious to maintain this positive image of themselves with their bosses, so that they can continue to telework. We can see this when Susan says about her boss:

S        So, when they decided and got approval to run a pilot, I was actually invited to submit an application because I had been really enthusiastic about it, and my boss, who, I mean, there's lots of researchers in my division, and I think there's a real trust issue with my boss about the supervisory capacity. And so, he let me do it, and he denied other people the opportunity to participate, and he has said, not to me specifically, but

to other employees, Oh, there isn't a better person for this. But I think it's because he sees that I'm mature and responsible and I'm a high producer.

Later, when asked if her relationship with her boss had changed since she started teleworking, Susan initially said telework had not affected it. But then she said that after she had shown her boss her written record of her work:

S        I just quit treating him like my boss, I started treating him like we were complete equals....I would say telework is a factor that gives me leverage to treat him differently, because he sees that I work in a different way than he does, but I'm still productive....I'm much more forthright about my opinion about how I think he could be handling certain things than I ever would have been before and I think there is leverage in this but it's not because of this. I can milk it because I can say, Look, I'm – you never see me, but I still get my work done.

When Joe started teleworking, he said he had to convince his boss to let him do it, who was "open" to it, but had to change his thinking about it:

J        The interesting part — the only resistance he had was to his own paradigm that he has worked in schools his entire career, so everyone has always been at school to get work [done] and he has never had a — he's new into this position too, and never had the opportunity to actually work with professional engineers before in the technical field....basically he came flat out and told me it's his paradigm that he has to deal with and he's willing to work with me.

Consequently, Joe found himself cultivating the relationship with his boss so that his boss could get used to the "new paradigm" of supervision and working. Joe's opportunity to telework was not part of an official policy at College, rather, it was a more casual arrangement. Therefore, Joe wanted to be sure to convince his boss of the value of his teleworking. When asked about his relationship with his boss, Joe said:

J        Actually, I would say the relationship is stronger in the fact that we are just completely open, you know, wanting to share with me what his concerns are about telework, and I have kind of been the same with him about the way work is going...I think it's strengthening because he's seeing how it is working with me; I'm kind of a pilot because it is a new thing for him. And as far as that, I think he's getting confidence in the whole process and feeling comfortable with it, and the key to that is just open communication and, you know, making sure that the doorways are open and that too.

Part of Joe's cultivation of this relationship was making sure he was working to full potential. When asked about trust issues with his boss, Joe said:

J        I mean that's basically what my manager's primary concern was when we started, you know, I could see every teacher in my school so it's different for me. But I think it is more so from my perspective of trust, just it made me raise the bar essentially on my performance because I wanted to make sure that there was no question of trust because I'm kind of leading this initiative by College.

Beatrix also talked about the trust issue and says she thinks that is why she has been allowed to telework:

B        I perhaps see it as an indication of my boss's trust, or, maybe as a reward for having been trustworthy in the past. So, I've worked at my job for five years, had the same boss the whole time, over that time I've had more and more responsibility, and my boss is seeing that I'm able to deliver what he expects of me, and therefore....Maybe he thinks, well, I can trust her to handle these small projects, she delivered, bigger projects, she delivered, a day working at home, I think she will do what she says she's going to do.

These quotations demonstrate how the teleworkers maintain and strengthen their relationships with their bosses, including the maintenance of trust. While part of the cultivation of this relationship can be attributed to the dialectic of control as described above, the teleworkers also try to influence their bosses using identity constructions of themselves as "better" workers than some of their co-workers. Recall that identity construction occurs in talk and especially self-narrative (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). The teleworkers talk about themselves includes indications of how trustworthy and "special" their bosses perceive them to be.

### *Advocating for telework*

Taking this concept one step farther, we can see how employees "advocate" for telework. Garland (1997) coined the term the "responsibilized actor." The responsibilized actor "actively participates in his or her own life management" (Miller, 2008, p. 262). All

of the teleworkers interviewed were very enthusiastic about teleworking, both their own teleworking and teleworking in general. I found all them to be actively advocating for telework, which reinforces and strengthens telework as an established mode of working, and their own significance as teleworkers.

Since Joe's job description was essentially to help College "understand the magnitude of their environmental footprint," he was very much focused on environmental issues, which was a large part of his advocating for telework. College did not yet have a formal teleworking program, and so Joe was advocating that College adopt teleworking as an option for all employees. Joe's identity construction consisted in large part of positioning himself as a leader in terms of the teleworking program and College's environmental policies. This is shown in his choice of words here, (emphasis added):

J        And I am actually *leading the charge* with WORKshift to try and bring it as a organization-wide adopted initiative with College.

In addition, Joe pointed out how well he was doing with what he saw as important initiatives:

J        ....We are making significant impacts; we have won an Emerald Award, which is kind of the highest recognition in Alberta for environmental stewardship. We are kind of pushing the envelope and the vision that College has as being a model of local and global environmental stewardship, and that comes with changing paradigms and adapting to new ways of working, and especially new ways of either moving or not moving

people around the city instead of — and using electrons instead of people to move information around the city.

Joe also felt that the opportunity to telework was an attractive benefit that could be offered to potential new employees:

J        And I think one of the things that I'm pushing with the whole pilot program to get [telework] into College is just that if you want to retain workers that are of the highest calibre you want to give them the flexibility to be able to deliver from wherever the location is. And the old paradigm of having to deliver from an office, sitting beside my manager, is not what the best and brightest talent out there is looking for right now....And I think this is a big feather in their cap if they can put a program like this together and say, We can offer you this freedom to work in such a manner.

Susan discussed the fact that at previous jobs she had often worked from home or worked remotely. Consequently, when the possibility of telework was first being discussed at Corp, Susan said:

S        I've never seen it [working remotely] as a barrier to communicating and being effective, so, for me, you have to be organized and very explicit about what your expectations are with people....so I argued for that compellingly when I went to these early meetings at Corp and said this works brilliant if I ever had a chance to do it, I'd jump at it.

So, when they decided and got approval to run a pilot, I was actually invited to submit an application because I had been really enthusiastic about it.

With traditional performance and control measures being ineffective or inadequate to apply to knowledge workers, these workers must then take on this function for themselves. Because of this, some of the teleworkers emphasized that they took on special projects, or talked about how their work was benefiting the organization, as we just saw with Joe. Through creating benefit for the organization, the teleworkers have thoroughly accepted and incorporated the ideologies of their companies.

For instance, Tom stressed the importance of teleworking for environmental reasons, and was working on an environmental project. He said:

TS     Right now, a lot of the work that I'm doing actually is self-created, so administration is, they're getting a lot of benefit out of that, anyway.

Theresa used her teleworking day to attend meetings off-site, and she saw this as a benefit for Corp. If she attended meetings off-site on a regular workday it took extra time going back and forth, whereas on a teleworking day it saved her time:

TJ     Like, I think that there's a huge time savings for Corp if I have to commute in -- so that's my personal time, right? And then I have to grab a pool car, go down six levels into our parkade, grab the pool car, drive out, you know, meet them, come back and stuff. That's actually more time in a lot of cases than if I can just go from here [home] right to Mannheim, here, right to Central Park or something like that, it's way quicker.

All the teleworkers interviewed were very enthusiastic about teleworking and believed it was a benefit both to them personally and to the organizations they worked for. They were anxious for teleworking to become an established, accepted method of work, which would in turn protect their teleworking situations. All the teleworkers interviewed looked at telework as a "benefit," except Tom, who said it should be a "standard option" available to everyone. Also, Joe wanted to bring telework as an official work option to his entire organization. If this were to happen, it would be a significant career achievement for Joe, and would reinforce his importance to the organization.

#### *Organizational commitment*

There are conflicting views in the literature regarding organizational commitment and teleworkers: Golden, Veiga, and Dino (2008) report that due to professional isolation, teleworkers are more likely to leave their jobs; whereas, Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus, and Hambley (2008) found that telework increases organizational commitment.

In this study, I found that teleworking clearly increased loyalty and organizational commitment in employees. Most participants attributed their increased loyalty to the fact that they were more satisfied with their jobs and that they had an improved "work/life balance." As part of this, some of the teleworkers described making a "lifestyle choice" that included either a pay cut or turning down higher-paid jobs so that they could continue to be able to telework.

Most of the teleworkers said their loyalty had increased because they had more flexibility and were happier in their jobs. When asked about loyalty, Susan said:

S I would say it is for me in kind of a weird way, I feel much more loyal to Corp because I'm a teleworker. For me, it's one of those things that actually makes me want to stay working at Corp, I mean, I could work anywhere, and I have....There's lots of good benefits to working for Corp, but I was not nearly as committed to or happy in my work until I got to telework. I'm way happier and...I feel productive at the end of every day.

Joe gave up a higher-paying job so he could have the opportunity to telework at College, and so he felt more committed because of his conscious choice:

J Again, I would just stress the increased loyalty due to the fact that it's a lifestyle choice and they're meeting that, or helping me meet that. And the second thing is that the relationship with the employer is I'm helping them come to a new paradigm with it as well, so.

Q Do you feel like you are having an influence that way?

J For sure, yes.

Beatrix liked teleworking so much she described it as a "special situation":

Q You're really enjoying it, you see it as a benefit, how has this affected your feelings about working for Corp, has it increased your sense of identification with the organization, or has it increased your loyalty to Corp?

B It has increased my satisfaction, and I would say my loyalty, so if I were to consider working at another organization, I would look carefully

at the benefit side, or the flexible work option side, and I know that what I have is a special situation, most employers are not this flexible.

When asked about chances of advancement, Tom said:

TS     There are no chances of advancement at Corp in the position that I'm in, pretty typically....And to be honest, it would be a big issue of consideration if the advanced position didn't allow teleworking, I probably wouldn't want it, I've actually thought that through. There would be a *big* issue, actually.

Q     Right, so...you really want to stay in this job so that you can telework, and you would turn down another job, if you couldn't. Do you feel that way?

TS     I just did last summer. The first question was: Telework? No. But there were other reasons, too.

Q     So would you even give up, if you had an increase in salary, with another offer that didn't include telework?

TS     Yeah.

Despite having a lot of job satisfaction because she was teleworking, Susan felt she was being underutilized at Corp. She also felt that her absence in the office meant she would not be "promotable" or able to move up to a higher job position. But the fact that she was teleworking seemed to override these factors:

S     But for me, having been a manager elsewhere, I see myself as having more capability than what I'm doing, but I don't see that there's likely opportunity at Corp. On the other hand, for a job that I'm well paid

for and that my work is well respected, now that I'm teleworking, I have no burning desire to cast about for something else.

We see from these examples that employees feel that teleworking is worth it to make a sacrifice in terms of pay or even status, so that they can continue to telework. This again demonstrates their own representations of telework as being special and exceptional, and how they are willing to protect their opportunities to telework. While these teleworkers' increased loyalty to their organizations can be attributed to the reasons they give above, it can also be explained by structuration theory as producing and reproducing the system. The more loyal the employee is, the more that loyalty works to maintain and reproduce the system.

In this analysis chapter, I have highlighted both bureaucratic methods of control and teleworkers self-identity constructions as control. Bureaucratic control is achieved not only through official policies such as ergonomic assessments and 360° surveys, but also through the use of language that influences teleworkers to adopt the organization's ideology. Teleworkers take organizational control further by the active constructions of their identities in favor of organizational control. This identity construction consists of representations, discursive and otherwise, which then serve to reproduce and reinforce the structure and the system. The bureaucratic control and the workers' identity constructions thus work together to achieve a form of socio-ideological control for teleworkers removed from the office.

In the following chapter, I will give a more thorough summary of my findings and then I will discuss the contributions my findings have made and the implications that these findings have for the field of telework research.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### *Thesis Review*

This thesis began with the research question of how teleworkers can be controlled or managed. As a result of my research, I have discovered effective methods of organizational control of teleworkers, both through bureaucratic means, and further, through the identity constructions of the teleworkers themselves. Official policies put in place around telework serve to guide the organization and its members about what is or is not allowed, and thus give the employees a sense of security and predictability. These policies can also be seen in terms of Giddens's "rules," which also work to reproduce the system, and give organizational members guidance as to "how to go on." In the application process for telework, I demonstrated that the organization uses subtle language of control, which then shapes an employee's thinking about telework. More obvious control is achieved by departmental managers, who can arbitrarily allow certain employees to telework and refuse others, or even refuse to allow it at all within their departments. The unpredictability of a manager's approval challenges employees' ontological security, and contributes to influencing the employees' and their co-workers' view of teleworking as a "special opportunity." The ergonomic assessment process convinces employees that the employer has their best interests at heart while the organization gets to have a look inside employees' homes and even reserves the right to revisit employees' homes at any time by conducting an audit. Additional types of surveillance are conducted by the use of 360° surveys, reminiscent of Foucault's

Panopticon. Management also monitors where their employees are, either working at home or at the office, and their communication. Corp strongly encourages their employees to use email for communication, so there will be documentation of all their communications. Teleworkers cooperate with the request to use email and thus continually produce and reproduce the system.

I have shown how the teleworkers repeat and incorporate organizational control through their identity constructions. Teleworkers use discursive representations to show that they are special, which involves reporting that others are less productive than themselves due to wasting time on insignificant things such as gossiping and socializing. Using a distinctive label for "official" and "unofficial" teleworking is a way the organization continues to produce and reproduce the system, and the employees participate in this (and further reproduce the system) by picking up the phrase and giving the "official/unofficial" teleworking distinction a great deal of significance. Again this establishes and reinforces the employees' importance compared to those who do not telework, or those who unofficially telework. These representations also serve to reinforce the organization's control over telework, and the workers picking it up shows that they are taking on this control themselves. The employees use Giddens's rules and resources to "perform work" (keeping a time sheet, copying emails to a large number of people), and demonstrate to others that they are working hard while at home, in some cases working harder at home than they would at the office. As part of this, it is also important for them to respond quickly to calls or emails coming from co-workers who are at the office. This again performs work by showing people that they are at their computer at all times—"really working," as some people put it, in turn enforcing organizational

control for themselves. By working in this way, the employees also contribute to the maintenance of the system.

In a demonstration of Giddens's dialectic of control, where those with less power use resources to influence those in higher positions, teleworkers try to retain control by cultivating and maintaining that "special" relationship with the boss. This also serves to maintain the system in terms of structuration theory. Some of them feel the opportunity to telework is a reward for having been trustworthy in the past, and they want to maintain this impression with the boss, to ensure that their opportunity to telework is not jeopardized in any way. Their talk is representing themselves as better and more worthy to telework than co-workers who, in their opinions, are not. By attempting to influence their bosses in this way, the teleworkers are taking on control of telework—only the worthy are allowed to telework. Taking this concept farther, some of the teleworkers are actively advocating for telework. Joe puts a lot of effort into positioning himself as a telework leader who is going to bring telework as an official policy to his organization. Part of this is seen in his talk about the award the organization has won for environmental stewardship. Taking on special projects, such as Joe and Tom did, is benefiting their organizations while it enhances the importance of telework. Further to this, organizational commitment and loyalty are increased with the teleworkers, which works to produce and reproduce the system of their organizations. They feel their situations are so special that they are grateful to the organization for giving it to them—thus, even though several of them feel they will not be promoted, they are happy with their work/life balance and so are increasingly loyal to the organization and less likely to leave for a better-paying job.

### *Contributions*

My results make a contribution to the organizational studies field, and in particular to the literature on telework. I have shown that, contrary to much of the current literature, which claims organizational control is either difficult or impossible to achieve with teleworkers, that in fact the opposite is the case. I have demonstrated how teleworkers can be controlled through bureaucratic means, and that they then take this bureaucratic control on themselves using discursive representations and identity constructions, in a type of socio-ideological control. Additionally, though I was not investigating the question of organizational commitment, I found that this is increased with teleworkers, despite the fact that employees are not always on site and that some of them make financial and other sacrifices in order to telework.

My results contribute to the field of managerial studies. It was shown in the literature review that the subject of the management of teleworkers is under-researched, and studies that do exist show that managers are reluctant to allow teleworking due to "unknowns" and insecurities around how to manage teleworkers. My research shows that managers can be reassured about the ability of teleworkers to "really work" when they are at home. Traditional methods of management and relying on visual scrutiny of workers to achieve control are no longer necessary in the case of telework.

My research also makes a contribution to understanding organizational identity. The unique way in which the teleworkers constructed their identities gives a new perspective to this area of organizational communication studies.

*Limitations*

There are limitations to this research study. As a master's research project, there was a limit to how much research could reasonably be accomplished, and so a small sample size was used. This sample size cannot be seen as representative. My results also may or may not be generalizable; to discover this would require further investigation and a larger sample size. There are different types of jobs that can be done using telework; I limited myself to knowledge workers. Investigating other types of employment might yield different results. Due to the constraints of the university's ethics process, I only interviewed subjects who had volunteered to be interviewed. Therefore, these research subjects were self-selected and it is possible that this had an effect on my results.

Likewise, I interviewed only those people who were voluntarily teleworking. Those who would be teleworking as a requirement of their employment would probably have a different perspective than the workers I interviewed, who had freely chosen to telework.

While my research question asked how could teleworkers be managed, I only interviewed employees and not managers, again because of the small scale of my study, and because I was interested in the employee's perspective. It is most likely that including managers would have produced different results than this study.

As another limitation, my study was completely qualitative. This yielded a certain type of result. Adding a quantitative component or doing an exclusively quantitative study, again, may have yielded different results from those of my study.

*Implications: Areas for future research*

As my research showed, the teleworkers' identity constructions consisted in large part of their self-narratives and their discursive representations of themselves. Given the importance of language to Giddens and structuration theory, this type of study could be done using discourse analysis, which would add a richness to the study and perhaps come up with additional valuable results.

If these results could be replicated in a larger study, this could have implications for, perhaps, the greater adoption of telework. My literature review showed that in some respects the issue of control may be hampering the adoption of telework. As well, further investigation could be made into whether or not the fear of loss of control is in reality a factor in the slower growth of telework; and, if so, how much of a factor it is.

The issue of control in the telework situation can be seen as being tied to the issue of trust. If a manager trusts that his or her employee will "really work" while at home, he or she might not feel a strong need to control the employee. Some of my research subjects did talk about their managers' trust in them. It would be a fruitful area for future research to investigate how much of a role trust plays in the management and control of teleworkers.

Given what I have laid out in this thesis regarding organizational control and telework, it is hoped that further research building on what I have found could be done which would in turn help not only organizations wanting to implement telework, but also

employees who wish to telework, so that they can do so with the full confidence and support of their managers and their organizations.

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## APPENDIX A: CFREB APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

## MEMO

CONJOINT FACULTIES RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD  
c/o Research Services  
Main Floor, Energy Resources Research Building  
3512 - 33 Street N.W., Calgary, Alberta T2L 1Y7  
Telephone: (403) 220-3782  
Fax: (403) 289-0693  
Email: [csjahraus@ucalgary.ca](mailto:csjahraus@ucalgary.ca)  
Wednesday, March 17, 2010

To: Alana Gralen  
Communication & Culture, Faculty of

From: Dr. Kathleen Oberle, Chair  
Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)

Re: Certification of Institutional Ethics Review: Organizational "Boundaries" in Telework:  
Can Employees Participate in a Community of Practice from a Distance?

The above named research protocol has been granted ethical approval by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the University of Calgary.

Enclosed are the original, and one copy, of a signed Certification of Institutional Ethics Review. Please make note of the conditions stated on the Certification. A copy has been sent to your supervisor as well as to the Chair of your Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee. In the event the research is funded, you should notify the sponsor of the research and provide them with a copy for their records. The Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board will retain a copy of the clearance on your file.

Please note, an annual/progress/final report must be filed with the CFREB twelve months from the date on your ethics clearance. A form for this purpose has been created, and may be found on the "Ethics" website, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/compliance/ethics/renewal>

In closing let me take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your research endeavor.

Sincerely,

Cari Jahraus  
For:  
Kathleen Oberle, Ph.D., and  
Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

Enclosures(2)  
cc: Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
Supervisor: Barbara Schneider

## APPENDIX B: CFREB CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

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**Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

Alana Gralen, MA Candidate, Faculty of Communication and Culture, 403-242-8216, agralen@shaw.ca

**Supervisor:**

Barbara Schneider, PhD, Faculty of Communication and Culture, baschnei@ucalgary.ca

**Title of Project:**

"Organizational 'Boundaries' in Telework: Can Employees Participate in a Community of Practice from a Distance?"

---

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

**Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational effects of teleworking and, using academic theory, determine how effectively teleworkers can participate in the organization if they are not physically present.

**What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

You are being asked to take part in one interview only, lasting from one-two hours. This interview will be audiotaped. There will be no follow-up.

In this interview, you will be asked questions about your work and what it is like to work away from the office. Questions will be general questions about your day-to-day activities while teleworking, such as: "What is a typical work day like for you? Do you like your current teleworking situation and why or why not? What is your principal method of communication with your main office?" etc.

**Confidentiality**

All participants, and the companies they work for, will remain completely confidential.

When interviewed in their own homes, participants will remain confidential except for any case where the researcher becomes a witness or party to any information that is required to be reported by law.

**What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

No personal identifying information will be collected in this study, and all participants shall remain anonymous. You will be asked your gender, age, and family status, but you are free to refuse to disclose this information.

You will remain anonymous in any reports through the use of a pseudonym, which you may choose for yourself.

The organization you work for will not be identified, and any identifying characteristics of the organization will be changed, modified, or omitted.

Please provide the following:

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

The risks of participating in the study are no greater than that faced in everyday life.

**What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, up to and including the duration of the interview. If you do withdraw, the information you give prior to your withdrawal will be retained, and may be used in data analysis. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed access to all of the collected data. Tapes of the interview will be transcribed, and transcriptions will refer to you only by your pseudonym. Data, containing only your pseudonym, will be securely stored in password-protected computer files by the researcher for 10 years, at which time it will be destroyed. Data will be used only by the researcher in her academic thesis and other academic writing. The organization that you work for, and any coworkers or superiors that you mention in the interview, will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

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**Signatures (written consent)**

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Ms. Alana Gralen, MA candidate  
Faculty of Communication and Culture  
University of Calgary  
[agralen@shaw.ca](mailto:agralen@shaw.ca)  
403-242-8216

Supervisor:  
Dr. Barbara Schneider  
Faculty of Communication and Culture  
University of Calgary  
[baschnei@ucalgary.ca](mailto:baschnei@ucalgary.ca)  
403-220-5745

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

## APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

### **Recruitment Information—Teleworking Study**

I am an MA candidate in the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary. My thesis project involves researching the organizational and interpersonal effects of teleworking/telecommuting. With the rise of information technologies making communication easier and faster, teleworking has become more widespread, but it has still not reached its predicted potential. Most employees still work in offices located in a central business districts. Academic research on teleworking to this point has been focused mainly on the practical aspects of teleworking, with little research looking specifically at organizational impacts. Your participation in this study will make a valuable contribution to both the academic literature and to businesses wishing to implement effective teleworking programs.

In order to complete my research, I am looking for teleworkers who would like to volunteer to be interviewed. The time requirement will be minimal. Interviews will only last from one to two hours and will be audiotaped. There are no further follow-ups or requirements. Questions will be general questions about your day-to-day activities while teleworking, such as: "What is a typical work day like for you? Do you like your current teleworking situation and why or why not? What is your principal method of communication with your main office?" etc.

All participants, as well as the organizations they work for, will be completely anonymous and confidential. Any potentially identifying material will be omitted or changed to protect privacy.

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

#### **The volunteers should meet the following criteria:**

He/she works from home or a satellite office one or more days per week and uses mostly information and communication technologies to communicate with a primary office.

He/she is a regular employee of one organization (rather than a freelancer or contract worker).

He/she has been teleworking at his or her current job for at least six months.

Please contact me at [agralen@shaw.ca](mailto:agralen@shaw.ca) if you are interested in participating.

Alana Gralen, MA candidate

University of Calgary, Faculty of Communication and Culture

[agralen@shaw.ca](mailto:agralen@shaw.ca)

403-242-8216

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Note: this served as a guide only; not all questions were always asked, and conversely, sometimes an individual interview led to questions not listed here being asked)

- What is your age and family status?
- Can you start by explaining, for a lay person, what kind of work you do?
- How long have you worked for Company X?
- How long have you been teleworking?
- How many days a week do you telework?
- How did the opportunity for you to telework come about?
- Do you like your current teleworking situation?
  - What do you like or not like about it?
- What is a typical day of teleworking like for you? What do you spend your time doing?
- Do you feel that your coworkers see you differently because you are teleworking?
- Do you feel that your relationship with either your boss or your coworkers has changed because you are teleworking?
- Do you feel that teleworking has affected your changes of advancement or promotion within the organization?
- Do you feel trust is an issue at all in your teleworking situation?
- Do you feel that your identity has changed in any way because you are away from the office?

- Has your loyalty to or sense of identification with the organization changed since you started teleworking?
- Do you keep personal records of how your time is being spent while you are out of the office?
- What do you do when you have a question or a dilemma to solve and you need to consult with a boss or coworker about it?

Additional questions:

- Do you miss being in the office environment? Why or why not?
- What is your principal method of communication with the main office when you are teleworking?
  - Do you feel the quality of communication has changed, and if so, how?
  - What other changes have you noticed about communication with your coworkers?