

Mobile Communication

Dimensions of Social Policy

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editor



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Can You Take It with You? Mobility, ICTs and Work-Life Balance

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Work Becomes More Mobile and Goes Home

A host of forces in North America have been making work more mobile. Accelerating the trend is the corporate shift in developed countries from making, growing, mining and transporting things—atom-work—to selling, describing, and analyzing things via words and pictures—bit-work—ideas expressed in words, pictures or videos. To be sure, people have worked at home forever: remember Silas Marner weaving at home in the early nineteenth century, shopkeepers living above stores, or farmers living next to their barns. But the dominant organizational paradigm for the past 200 years has been of people commuting from home to work at offices or factories.

The advent of the Internet has made it easy for white-collar workers—bit users—to move around with their work. Depending on their work structure, they can take their laptops on the road to clients and to coffee shops. Our focus is on another form of work mobility—working at home: over-time, part-time and full-time. It is part of the reconfiguration of work from being bound up in closely supervised, physically compact groups to being networked—where people are individually responsible for their own production. The logic of networked work leads directly to mobile work. If people are working in multiple teams, there often is no reason for them to sit side by side. Much work involves writing, drawing, or data analyzing. With the availability of mobile computing and broadband Internet at home, it is possible to work anywhere at anytime.

And what better place for most than their homes—as long as they can get it done without tensions with their domestic lives.

In such situations, the workplace often moves to the home. People finish off tasks that they could not finish at the office, or part of our employment involves working from the home office. Either way, work life often creeps into home life—a quick email or text message to work colleagues between a load of laundry or cutting the lawn.

But what kind of home-based work is actually going on? Is it the full-time “telework” that has fascinated pundits and management gurus since the mid 1990s? There has been more exhortation than research. Some gurus saw telework as the basis of a new form of networked work, in which the constraints of distance would disappear. For example, *Economist* commentator Frances Cairncross heralded *The Death of Distance* in 1997, arguing that:

New communications technologies are rapidly obliterating distance as a relevant factor in how we conduct our business and personal lives.... The story today is not only the diminishing importance of distance, but also the mobility and ubiquity of technology (back cover).

Companies such as Bell Canada have seen telework as the answer to reduced real estate costs and reduced travel costs (Dimitrova, 2003; Gordon, Gordon & Kelly, 1986; Gordon, 1987). While there has been a substantial movement of work from offices to home, much of it has not been the kind of telework that the gurus foretold. In 2000, approximately 1.4 million people in Canada—just over 10 percent of the population—reported doing some or all of their paid work at home; a 4 percent increase since 1990 and a 1 percent increase from 1995 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Many of today’s workers can choose where (and when) they work, primarily because of the affordances that information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide—mobility. In 2005, Canadians worked at home occasionally or brought work home from the workplace a mean of 17 hours per week, yet 71 percent spent less than ten hours per week working from home (Statistics Canada, 2007). The amount of time people spend working at home varies, and as such we might expect that home and work experiences will also vary.

Mobile Communication

What Kind of ICTs Do Home Workers Use to Connect with Family and Peers?

Communication is also mobile. With the prevalence of mobile phones spanning socio-economic statuses, people are more connected

with not only their social networks and family members, but also their workplace and organizational peers. ICTs like email have helped facilitate communication between employees and employers for those people who work at home, and have also helped self-employed individuals connect with their clients (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1998;). Mobile phones can provide easy and quick instrumental communication, or be used to maintain continuing connections with family and friends (Wajcman, Bittman & Brown, 2008; Ito, 2001; Wajcman, 2008).

People use many different ICTs to communicate and stay in touch; landlines, email, instant messaging, and mobile phones create a communication ensemble (Haythornthwaite, 2000; Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1998) where people can choose what communication tool suits them depending on the situation and context (Hogan, 2008). Although some have argued that communication via email, text messages or mobile phone is too ephemeral, and too far removed from “the realities of shared space and time” (Menzies, 2005), ICTs, particularly mobile phones, can be used to sustain intimate relationships with family members and to stimulate these bonds during the workday (Baym et al., 2004; Wei & Lo, 2006; Christensen, 2009). ICTs do not replace or compensate for time spent with family members but they can supplement and help individuals adapt to the current family and household realities (Licoppe, 2004). Mobile phones can provide easy and quick instrumental interactions that help people maintain a work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance & Social Policy

With the prevalence of mobile communication and increasing number of people working at home in some capacity, the boundaries between work and home can become blurry, even if paid work at home offers people more versatility and flexibility (Schieman & Glavin, 2008; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Depending on how many hours they work at home, organizing the workday can be problematic for home workers, as there are also constraints of domestic life to deal with. Some workers, particularly those who spend most of their time working at home or who are self-employed, work during times that are traditionally spent with family, which can mean less time spent with them (Baines & Gelder, 2003). On the other hand, those who spend more time working at home may spend more time with their family members and experience less family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

What Is the Relationship between the Percentage of Time People Work at Home and How They Integrate Paid Work, Domestic Work, and Family Life? How Do ICTs Facilitate Work-Life Balance and Home-Work Connectivity?

Because working at home is so flexible and diverse, conceptualizing policies that help balance work and home can be challenging. The nature of work at home has become increasingly relevant to policymakers, and the blurring of home-work boundaries continues to pose issues, but now under the rubric of “work-life balance.” Canadian health and labor ministries show a growing interest in both working at home, and in how work at home impacts employee stress and people’s ability to manage their work and family lives. A 2001 study by Health Canada found that three times as many Canadians experienced high stress than they did in 1991, with two-thirds of Canadians experiencing “role overload” in their attempt to negotiate work and family responsibilities, and this has had a negative impact on Canadian families; overloaded workers are less satisfied with their family life, and they often sacrifice their personal needs as a coping strategy (Health Canada, 2009). Canadian society has also been impacted by overloaded employees: fewer children, increased strain on the health care system with more visits to family physicians and hospital emergency, and more physician prescribed medication—also a strain for insurance companies (Health Canada, 2009).

Yet despite these “red flags” and significant implications to individuals and social institutions, few work-home policies exist and even fewer are actually successful. This suggests that it is vital to consider not only more flexible work arrangements, but we need to understand what that flexibility means or looks like in the context of the home; flexibility reflects the diversity of circumstances and experiences that take place when work and home overlap.

What Can We Learn from These Blurred Home-Work Spaces to Inform the Creation of Labor Policies That Benefit Workers and Their Families?

In light of the heightened awareness of work and family challenges and the prospects of conducting paid work in the home, we use our case study to examine home workers by comparing the percentage of time people spend working at home from minimal to full-time. Our study analyzes the interplay of households, family and relationships in order to

investigate the activities and practices of home workers and to understand how they use the ICTs to mediate their home and work life.

The Connected Lives Project

Data collected for our *Connected Lives* project come from East York, a Toronto residential area located 30–45 minutes from the downtown, with a population of 112,054 people in 48,057 households (Statistics Canada, 2006a). In 2005, we employed a 32-page survey to 350 adults, which included information about how people in East York conduct paid work in the home, the amount of time spent on paid work at home and how they carry out their work tasks using ICTs (Wellman, Hogan, et al. 2006). In total, 92 survey respondents said they conducted some type of work at home. We also conducted 87 in-home interviews that included information about daily work, leisure, household relations, social networks, social routines, and ICT use. From the 92 survey respondents, 35 of the interview sample spend some percentage of their workday working at home.

Characteristics of Paid Home Workers

Who works at home and what percentage of their workday is spent working at home?

Just over half (51 percent) of the survey respondents who work at home are women, with a mean age of 42. Over two-thirds (69 percent) of the survey respondents are married or stably partnered; 64 percent of the respondents have children. Work at home survey respondents are better educated than those who do not work at home. The mean annual household income for is just over \$78,000, compared to non-work at home survey participants who report a mean annual household income of \$66,000. One-third (32 percent) of are employed in business, finance, and administration occupations. Just over one-quarter (27 percent) are in the social sciences, education, government service, and religion occupations, and 18 percent are in sales and service occupations (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

In today’s busy world, there are many instances when people continue their workday outside the office, typically at home. However, the hours they choose to spend at home varies based on the types of tasks to be performed and other work related factors, such as peak business times for financial advisors or examination times for teachers. Other individuals who work at home may spend considerable more time working at home

because of the demands of their job, or they may work primarily from home. The amount of time people spend working at home—whether a few hours a week or a full work week—will have different effects on not only their work life, but also their home lives. They are all home workers, but quite different kinds of home workers.

Categorizing the percentage of a person's work week spent at home based on typical work per week helps to differentiate the experiences of people who work at home in various capacities. We categorize three different percentages of work at home: *Full-timers* do a majority of their work at home; on average 29 hours of paid work at home per week; *Part-timers* spend 16 percent to 50 percent of their work week at home and work an average 11 hours of paid work at home per week; *Over-timers* spend 1 percent to 15 percent of their work week at home and work an average of 5 hours of paid work at home per week.

Despite the telework gurus' fascination with full-time working at home, such people comprise only one-quarter of our sample (27 percent), with the highest percentage of the respondents (47 percent) only working over-time at home (Table 12.1). Despite the stereotypical depiction of full-timers being women with children, in fact only 28 percent are women. They are also less likely to be partnered (including married) than part-timers.

Table 12.1 Profile of Home Workers

Demographics:	Over-timers	Part-timers	Full-timers	Total
% in Category	47%	26%	27%	100%
n	43	24	25	92
% of Women	41%	30%	28%	51%
n	19	14	13	46
Mean Age	41	42	45	43
n	43	23	25	91
Mean # of yrs online	7.9	8.4	8.4	8.2
n	43	22	23	88
% Partnered	65%	83%	63%	69%
n	28	20	15	63
% with Children	56%	71%	72%	64%
n	24	17	18	59

Table 12.1 (continued)

	Over-timers	Part-timers	Full-timers	Total
Mean Personal Income (CAD)	65,278	49,079	43,929	55,328
n	36	19	21	76
Mean Household Income (CAD)	81,293	91,964	70,132	78,025
n	29	14	19	62
Occupations (n = 78):				
Health	14%	21%	5%	13%
n	5	4	1	10
Social Sciences, Education, Government Service & Religion	27%	21%	27%	26%
n	10	4	6	20
Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport	0	5%	5%	3%
n	0	1	1	2
Natural & Applied Sciences & Related	8%	11%	9%	9%
n	3	2	2	7
Business, Finance & Administration	32%	32%	32%	32%
n	12	6	7	25
Sales & Service	19%	11%	23%	18%
n	7	2	5	14

Integrating Paid Work, Domestic Work and Family Life

What is the relationship between the percentage of time people work at home and how they integrate paid work, domestic work, and family life?

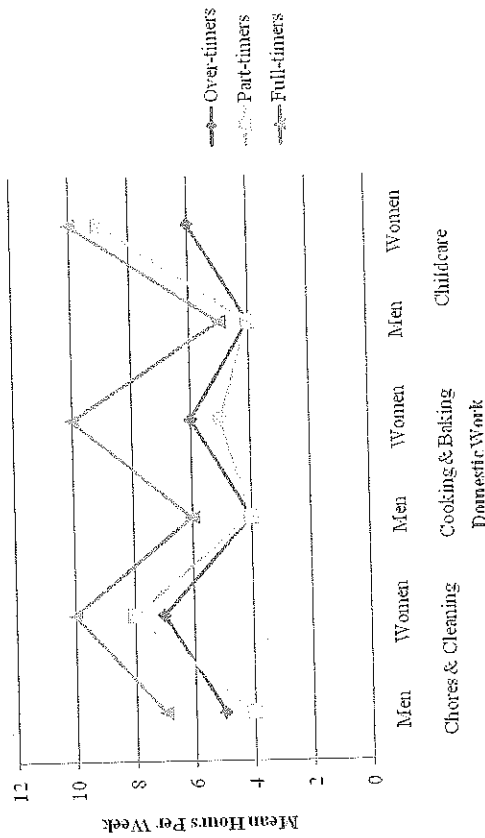
Domestic Work: The more time people spend working at home, the more they schedule and integrate their paid and unpaid work tasks in the home. Full-timers have a structured routine to handle the domestic responsibilities that come up during the day, and to integrate these household tasks into their workday at home. Because part-timers also do a substantial amount of work at home, it is an important part of their lives, and they must schedule around their workplace and home. By contrast, over-time workers do not tend to schedule work or have a routine for work at home tasks.

Full-timers and part-timers negotiate routines or develop coping strategies to avoid being overburdened by their work. As home becomes their workplace, many interview participants struggle with accommodating personal and family time in their hectic work schedules, realizing that they would need to erect clear boundaries between their home and work day. For part-timer Gerry, the solution is to create a temporal boundary between her workday and personal time; she takes her dog for an hour walk everyday at five o'clock, which she treats as "commuting time." When Gerry, a behavior therapist, first decided to participate in a pilot project that involved working from home, she was warned by her managers of the challenges that home workers face in balancing their home and work life. She did not expect this to be an issue for her, and has been surprised to find that it has become one. Her work is often interrupted by her daughters when they come home from school and demand her attention. Moreover, she is often kept awake at night by the thought of mistakes in her work and feels compelled to go down to her workspace and fix them.

Over-time respondents do not report the same challenges of scheduling or separating home and work as do part-timers and full-timers. They do a few specific tasks outside of formal work hours to reduce the hours they spend at work. For example, teachers find it more convenient to grade assignments and complete course preparation at home. Yet, even for over-timers, working at home presents the potential to do too much work, leading to a problematic convergence of home and work space. Several over-time workers who were interviewed cut down on the amount of work they did at home to maintain work and personal boundaries; Ruth, an over-timer who drastically reduced her home work hours, notes: "it got to the point, where I was doing too much, so I think I'm in a bit of rebellion."

Doing paid work at home does not cut into the time that people have available to do domestic work. To the contrary: the more time people spend doing paid work at home, the more domestic work they do. Being at home can mean that more household chores are done throughout the day, as chores, cleaning, cooking and baking can be integrated into the home worker's day. Full-timers do the most domestic work (Figure 12.1), and many integrate household chores or childcare responsibilities into their daily home work routine. Part-timers are similar: Yvonne, a psychotherapist in the part-timer group, reports that it is preferable to blend home and work responsibilities during the workday because then "it all feels like one life." By contrast, over-timers tend to do chores in the evening or on the weekend, and they talk about their domestic responsibilities as separate from their work responsibilities.

Figure 12.1 Mean Number of Hours Spent on Domestic Work Per Week



Abundant research has shown that in the gendered division of labor in the home, women do more unpaid domestic work than men (Hochschild, 1989; Luxton, 1980; Robinson & Godbey, 1997). The home lives of survey respondents also reflect this gendered division of labor. While both men and women do unpaid domestic work such as chores, cooking and cleaning, women (in all groups) still do more domestic work and integrate household chores into their work at home slightly more so than men do. Some of these couples negotiate the division of domestic and family responsibilities, notably over-timers. For example, Frances has arranged a schedule for driving her sons to school that revolves around her work at home hours: her husband takes them twice a week and she drives them the remaining days. She is responsible for picking the boys up from school all but one day a week, when she stays at work late to do paperwork and her husband picks them up.

The more time people spend working at home, the more domestic work they do. Thus, full-time women and men do more domestic work than part-time and over-time home workers. However, the relationship between the hours spent in doing paid work and domestic work is especially strong for full-time women: they spend the greatest number of hours on all household tasks.

Despite the fact that men do domestic work (and full-time men do the most), traditional gendered divisions of labor still exist. For all categories, women do more domestic work than men. Women often remain responsible for domestic work and childcare after they begin working at home

(Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Sullivan & Smithson, 2007), which can create higher levels of work-family conflict for women than men (Ahuja, 2002). Gendered divisions of labor and a lack of understanding of home-work by other household members reinforce women's domestic responsibilities. Olivia notes that once she started working full-time at home, her family reduced the help they gave her with household chores, assuming that she could do them because she was at home—not legitimating the work she does. For some, existing routines are ones that function well for the household: full-timer Theresa thinks it makes sense that she does more cooking than her husband since she is home during the day. Full-timer Wanda considers dinner planning and household chores to be part of her morning work-home routine. Some exceptions, such as Frances' driving arrangements with her husband, emerged in the interviews, as more egalitarian divisions of household labor are becoming more common place and are more actively negotiated between partnered couples (Sullivan & Smithson, 2007).

Some respondents enjoy the convenience of integrating household tasks into their workday. Full-timer Beth puts in a load of laundry or empties the dishwasher while she prints documents or downloads files for work. On the other hand, Olivia feels that she has to avoid getting preoccupied with domestic chores and focus on her work tasks. Part-time behavior therapist Gerry says that she does a disproportionate amount of the household chores, but is balanced with her being more involved in the day to day activities of her daughters when she is working at home than her husband.

Childcare: In addition to household chores, the more time people spend working at home, the more childcare they do. Full-time parents spend the most time on childcare, but the most drastic difference between women and men is in the amount of childcare they do. While both women and men who do paid work from home do childcare, it remains primarily women's responsibility. Women spend twice as many hours doing childcare than men, with full-time women spending the most time taking care of children.

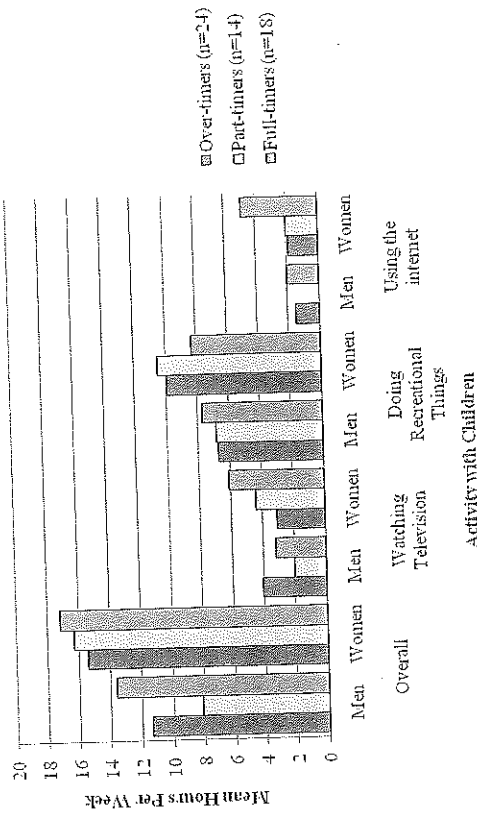
Some full-time women try to balance childcare responsibilities and household chores. Theresa, a policy analyst in the full-time group, has done free-lance work from home since the birth of her third child. Her children's schedule influences the scheduling of paid and unpaid work: her three and a half year old twin daughters go to preschool three days a week while she cares for her infant son. Family schedules strongly influence how full-timers arrange their workday. Some home workers deliberately organize work hours around their children's school schedule or their spouse's work schedule. For example, Sean, a full-time guitar maker helps prepare his son for school and his wife and work on weekday mornings. He picks up their

son from school in the afternoon and gets dinner ready. He does much of his paid work on the weekends when his wife can watch their son.

By contrast, James, a self-employed Web designer and single father of a seven-year-old boy, notes that it is important to him that his work at home does not interfere with spending time with his son. He works 50 to 60 hours a week at home during the week, and he devotes his weekends to his son. He also helps him with homework in the evening, so most of his work gets done on weekdays before three in the afternoon and after his son has gone to bed. Beverly, a full-timer who runs a home daycare, feels that it is comforting to her son and live-at-home elderly father that she is easily accessible throughout the day.

The more time people spend working at home, the more time they spend with their children (in addition to giving them care). Full-timers spend the most time with their children, including watching television (Figure 12.2). Full-timers also spend almost twice as many hours per week using the Internet with their children than part-timers and over-timers. This is perhaps partially due to their mostly being in white-collar occupations. These differences remain when we look only at women. Women in all groups spend more time overall with their children than men.

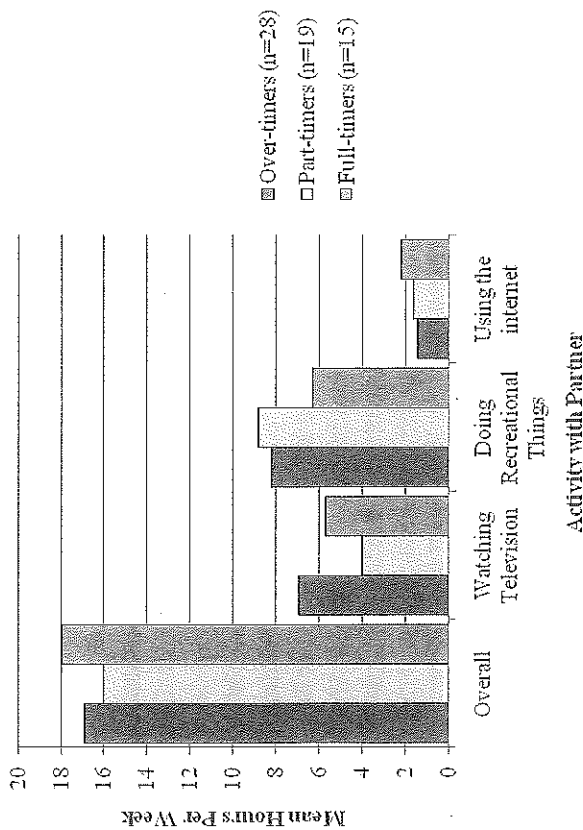
Figure 12.2 Mean Hours Per Week Spent with Children



Time with Partners: The more time people spend working at home, the more time they spend with their partners: full-timers spend the most time overall (not including time spent sleeping) with their partners, slightly more than part-timers and over-timers (Figure 12.3). Full-timers

also watch more television with partners than part-timers do, but less than over-timers. Full-timers spend the least number of hours doing recreational things with their spouse compared to part-timers and over-timers. By contrast to television watching, full-timers spend slightly more time on the Internet with their partners, a pattern similar to time spent online with children.

Figure 12.3 Mean Hours Per Week Spent with Partner



Using ICTs to Stay Connected

How do ICTs facilitate work-life balance and home-work connectivity?

ICTs at Home and at the Workplace: Employed East York respondents who use the Internet at work spend an average of 13 hours per week using the Internet, and they spend on average eight hours of this time specifically on work related tasks. Clearly, workers are incorporating non-work related tasks throughout the day, including communicating with their partners, children, friends and relatives.

Although ICTs are not needed to carry out every type of work at home, the salience of the Internet in the typical twenty-first century worker's day is evident in all three types of home workers: no matter how many hours people spend working at home, most of them use the Internet in some capacity for work.

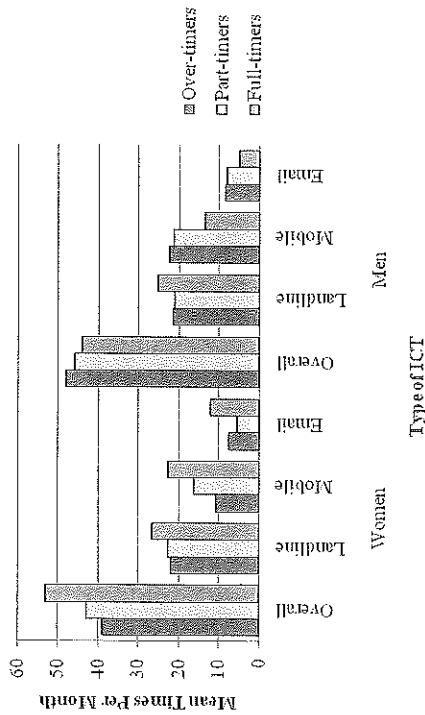
Despite the increasing prominence of Internet-based communication, the traditional landline telephone is the most widely used communication device for people who work at home. As might be expected, full-time workers use their landline more often than part-timers or over-timers.

Emailing has become so integrated into contemporary office life, that all types of workers—full, part, and over-timers—use it extensively. Wherever people do most of their work—whether home or at the workplace—is the place where they do most of their emailing. Primary work location determines where emails are sent from most often. If one works more at home, more emails are sent from home and if one works more at the workplace, the more emails are sent from the workplace.

As emails can be sent from any location and can be sent at any hour of the day, they might seem to be the ideal task to be relocated to the home by the over-time worker. This is not the case. Over-time workers prefer to conduct email conversations from their main workplace. The interview data suggest that many of the over-time workers in our sample made a conscious decision to not be reachable by email at home, recognizing the potentially invasive nature of email and mobile devices.

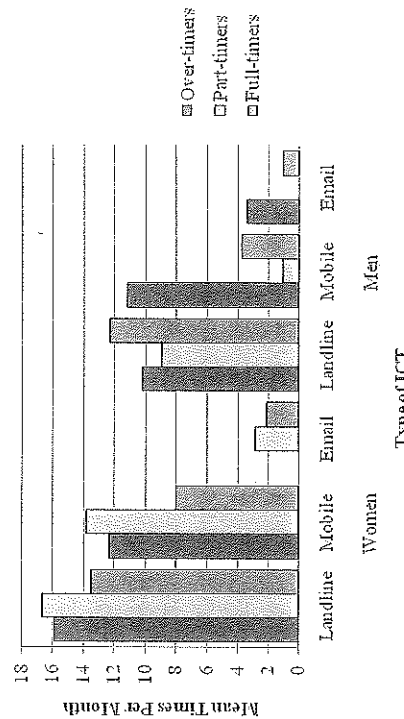
Communication with Partners: Despite the challenges of finding face-to-face time with their families, home workers do stay connected with their spouses and children using ICTs such as landlines, mobile phones and email. The more time people spend working at home, the more contact they have with their partners via ICTs throughout the day—no matter where they are or what they are doing (almost all partnered home workers have employed spouses). Full-timers connect with their partners via ICTs slightly more often than part-timers and over-timers (Figure 12.4). Yet each work group has a communication device they tend to prefer, with the type of device reflecting their daily mobility. Because full-timers are most often at home, they often use stationary landline phones to connect with their partners. By contrast, part-timers tend to use mobile phones, perhaps because communication can be from anywhere throughout the day, an important affordance for those who are always on the go. Over-timers, away from home more than the others, send more emails to their spouses than do the other groups. There are also gender differences in how ICTs are used to connect with spouses: men communicate slightly more often with their spouses than women across all types of communication media.

Figure 12.4 ICT Communication with Partner



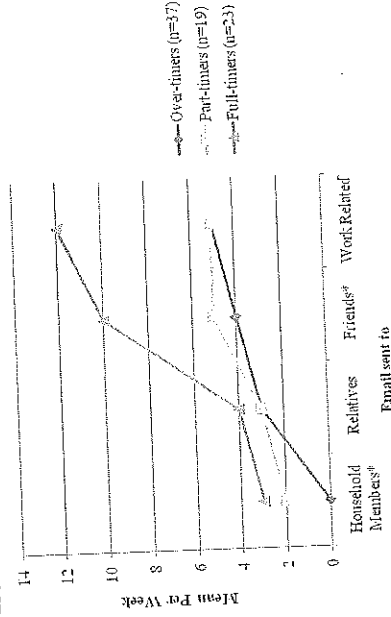
Communication with Children: The more time people spend working at home, the less they use email and mobile phones to contact their children throughout the day (Figure 12.5). However, the use of landlines to contact children is similar across all home worker groups. Because full-timers spend the most number of hours at home, and the most time with their children face-to-face, it is not surprising that they communicate less with them by email or mobile phone than part-timers and over-timers. Moreover, given that women in all home worker groups spend more time with children (leisure and childcare) than men, it makes sense that women use ICTs more often than men to connect with their children.

Figure 12.5 ICT Communication with Children



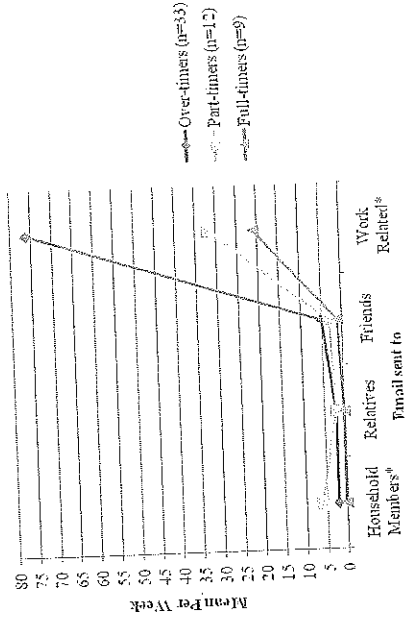
Communication with Friends and Relatives: Full-timers spend more time at home than other home-workers, and use their home Internet to send more email messages (Figure 12.6). Not surprisingly full-timers send more work-related emails than part-timers and over-timers who more often go physically into their offices. Full-timers are also somewhat more likely to send emails to their household members, friends and relatives. Women email only slightly more than men do across all work groups. By contrast, workers who spend more time at work outside of the home, especially over-timers, do most of their emailing from the workplace (Figure 12.7).

Figure 12.6 Mean Number of Emails Sent From Home Per Week



*p < .05

Figure 12.7 Mean Number of Emails Sent from Workplace Per Week



*p < .05

Conclusions

Gurus, managers and ordinary people have recognized the potential of ICTs to facilitate working at home and their family life. The mobility and ubiquity of ICTs facilitate, complement and enhance communication between home workers and family members throughout the day. The pervasiveness of the ICTs in people's lives is unquestionable; it is integrated into social and leisure activities, educational pursuits and work lives. The affordance of convenience and ease, increasing mobility, portability and accessibility to ICTs continues to complement how people carry out their days. At the same time, major stresses at home emerge from the interplay between household chores, raising children and doing paid work.

In part, this is because home workers vary so much. While the eyes of gurus is on those working full-time at home, in practice, most work at home part-time and over-time. There are important variations in how people in these different categories handle their paid work, domestic work and familial relations.

Full-timers understandably have the most structured and the most scheduled arrangements. They also spend the most time doing domestic chores and raising their children. To some extent, this is understandable because they are at home the most. But our findings also show that the double load is greatest for them of doing domestic work and paid work. And the load is greater for women. Full-time, part-time and over-time they consistently do the most domestic work. In short, the double load is greatest for women and working full-time at home.

The variation in how people manage home-work situations becomes clearer when we look substantively at full, part and over-timers. Full-timers have blurrier boundaries between work and domestic life than part-timers and over-timers. Full-timers establish routines for their paid and unpaid work, yet their tasks overlap more than other home workers. While some full-timers carefully segregate work time from domestic and family time, most disperse their tasks throughout the day. This contrasts with over-timers who have much more separation between work and home. Likewise, while full-timers do more cooking, cleaning and childcare than part-timers and over-timers, they also spend more time with their children and spouses. Full-timers connect with their partners via landlines and ICTs most often throughout the day, but least often with their children who they see before and after school. While all home workers use ICTs

to stay in touch with household members, their mode of contact varies: full-timers use landlines, part-timers use mobile phones, and over-timers use email.

Policy Implications for Working at Home

What can we learn from these blurred home-work spaces to inform the creation of labor policies that benefit workers and their families?

The varied experiences between different types of home-workers and the different ways of utilizing ICTs show the need for flexible labor policies. Full-timers, part-timers and over-timers have different ways of integrating paid work, domestic work and family life, and negotiating the work-life balance. The differences between them are more than their hours of work: they have qualitatively different home-work routines. The more time people spend working at home, the more integrated, embedded, and blurred their work and family life becomes. Most importantly, the more time they work at home, the more time they spend with family members—for better or worse. Consequently, we encourage organizations and governments to support home-work arrangements in varying capacities, and to consult individuals about their own needs and the needs of their household members.

Significant issues become less visible in the home and need to be considered, such as employee health, overtime regulation, insurance, ergonomic furniture, and technical support. There is a need to ensure that unionized workers are covered by their collective agreements while working outside the workplace, that health and safety standards continue to be adhered to, and that workers are not isolated from union representation or from training and promotion opportunities. In Canada, only a few collective agreements with crown corporations and public sector offices extend to work at home arrangements. The few North American regulatory labor policies that exist focus on manual piecework (e.g., Johnson 1982), and do not address the era of mobile and networked work. The number of people who continue their work day after hours has increased in recent decades, yet there are no clear policies for white-collar workers let alone work at home policies that can help people deal effectively with role overload (Health Canada, 2009).

Workplace policies stem from workplace cultures, and work culture is an important impetus of role overload; when organizations are supportive of work-life balance, role overload is greatly reduced

(Health Canada, 2009). Our analysis shows that flexibility is a key to labor policy initiatives and reform, and as such we call for:

1. Flexible work locations: policies to help people deal with role overload and physical, mental or emotional fatigue often associated with employee absenteeism;
2. Flexible work schedules: encourage organizations and governments to support work at home arrangements in varying capacities;
3. Flexible work provisions: consult workers about their own needs and the needs of their family members.

Policies need to be fluid. Because life circumstances change, ongoing interaction between employer and employee about family needs is needed. Organizations must realize that flexible work-life policies will benefit them: employees will be more committed to the organization, they will have less work stress, and they will be more satisfied with their jobs and well-being (Health Canada 2009).

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13

M-enabled Learning: The Mobile Phone's Contribution to Education

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As education adapts and copes with modern technologies, students and professors go "high-tech," using the computer and the Internet in obtaining knowledge and information. There is, however, a dearth of evidence on how the emergent mobile phone itself actually contributes to learning. Thus, developing learning activities that capitalize on the mobile phone's unique features of size, portability and widespread availability is a great challenge for professors and academic institutions alike.

The mobile phone is a modern ICT phenomenon inflicting all facets of life in society, including the educational system. As ICTs are integrated and harnessed to improve quality of education, evidence on the mobile phone's contribution to education is hereby problematized.

Reminiscent of Katz's (2005) study on mobile phones in educational settings, some professors prohibit the use of the mobile phone, categorically stating, for instance, in their syllabi: "to turn off mobile phones or put them on silent mode during class." A penalty of sorts is imposed on violators, e.g., submit a think paper, treat the class to a scoop of ice cream, or serve snacks, etc.

This prohibition implies a contentious regard for the mobile phone as a distraction, and one that is completely disconnected to classroom learning. Professors would feel insulted, or taken for granted, whenever students step out of the room to answer a phone call or text message, or whenever students withdraw from class discussions in order to do so. Campbell's (2002) study reinforces the problems and interruptions that the mobile phone's ringing causes in the classroom and it supports