

Laptops in the Living Room: Mobile Technologies and the Divide between Work and Private Time among Interactive Agency Workers

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Abstract: This article examines how mobile technology use affects the division between private and work time among workers in interactive advertising agencies. These workers are frequent users of both personal and company-issued mobile technology. This article investigates the strategies workers use to restrict workplace access during their private time. Relying on the social construction of technology as a point of departure, this article investigates the impact of mobile technologies, as well as the organizational context in which they are used. Using a mixed-method approach, this article demonstrates that the use of mobile technologies does indeed render the home/work division more permeable, but it is not their use alone that determines this effect. Rather, it is the underlying social relations of workplaces that affect how individuals negotiate the use of these technologies in non-work time and space.

Keywords: Mobile technology, Home/work division; Social relations

Résumé : Cet article examine l'effet des technologies mobiles sur la division entre temps de travail et temps personnel parmi ses utilisateurs dans des agences de publicité interactives. Ces travailleurs utilisent souvent les technologies mobiles autant pour leur travail que pour leurs besoins personnels. Cet article enquête sur les stratégies que ceux-ci emploient pour limiter leur accès au travail durant leur temps libre. Il se fonde sur la construction sociale des technologies pour évaluer l'impact des technologies mobiles et le contexte organisationnel dans lequel on les utilise. En recourant à diverses méthodes complémentaires, cet article démontre que l'utilisation de technologies mobiles a effectivement comme conséquence de brouiller la division maison/travail, mais ce n'est pas seulement leur utilisation qui produit cet effet. Ce sont plutôt les relations sociales sous-jacentes au travail qui influencent la manière dont les individus utilisent ces technologies en dehors de leur espace et temps de travail.

Mots clés : Technologie mobile; Division maison/travail; Relations sociales

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Mobile technologies present a confounding development in one of the defining debates in the study of work: the division between work time and private time. The use of immobile technologies, from factory machines to desktop computers, has contributed to the spatial centralization of work on the one hand (Marglin, 1974) and to firm divisions between work and home on the other (Zerubavel, 1979). But with the widespread adoption of cellular phones, laptop computers, wireless Internet, and mobile email devices, this spatial rigidity has broken down, complicating a central tenet implicit in most employment relationships: the right of workers to restrict workplace or management access during private time.

In most Western workplaces, “the individual has the right to claim control over his [*sic*] social accessibility during his private-time as a sort of possession” (Zerubavel, 1990, p. 122). The ability to possess and protect private time is indicative of workers’ autonomy in private life. It is autonomy over one’s work that differentiates a profession from a mere occupation, as is the ability to exercise exclusive control over a specific body of knowledge (Friedman, 2000; Greenwood, 1957; Larson, 1977).¹ Contradictorily, professionals with a great deal of work-time autonomy find their private-time autonomy compromised by expectations of continuous availability to work. Mobile technologies make it possible for the home/work division to be broken more easily. Indeed, this was first noticed with doctors’ use of pagers, which represented a much lower threshold of “invasion” than did a personal telephone call to a doctor’s home (Zerubavel, 1990).

In this article, I investigate how mobile technologies affect the division between work and home in a case-study industry of the so-called “new economy”: interactive agencies. Interactive agencies are a hybrid between advertising agencies and Internet media companies. They design and build websites and other “interactive” online content, whether for mobile phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs). Typical client projects would include a site redesign for a major cable company, a marketing-related “micro-site” for a specific advertising campaign, or the construction of a social-media “widget” for use on a Facebook page. This kind of work is the vanguard of innovation in that it is heavily reliant on technology use and also produces new technology itself. As such, these agencies embody knowledge-based service work, which Bell (1973) describes as emblematic of the “postindustrial” era.

The use of mobile technologies does indeed break down the home/work division, but their use alone does not necessarily result in this breakdown. Rather, it is the underlying social relations of workplaces that affect how individuals negotiate the use of these technologies in non-work time and space, with more senior workers having the power to manage the work of others in addition to having more autonomy than junior workers. The effects of mobile technologies, in this case, cannot be separated from the wider political economy of agency life, which affords autonomy and control only to the most senior of workers. Autonomy is defined as the ability to act according to one’s own deep-seated desires or, more simply, as self-determination (Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000). Mobile technologies complicate the ability of workers to act as autonomous selves in their private lives, impinging even on the most senior workers. These technologies have also facilitated the symbolic transformation of junior workers into “professionals,”

which confers a new norm of continuous availability. This is a false professionalization, however, as the professional norm of work-time autonomy is not conferred upon these junior workers.

The significant underlying problem here is not mobile technology per se, but the lack of clear workplace policies around the division between private and work time. This gap is only apparent once the disruptive time-space effects of mobile technology render it visible. Designers of mobile technology should consider access restriction as a primary user requirement, but this alone will not cement the division between private and work time. As such, organizations need to focus first on developing policies concerning the division between private and work time, before regulating the use of mobile technologies. Secondly, workers would be better served by collective actions that question this division, instead of individualized resistance strategies that focus on mobile technology use.

What is an interactive agency?

An interactive agency is essentially an advertising agency that specializes in the online medium. Forrester Research defines interactive agencies as those that produce commercial, marketing-focused websites with full-time staff dedicated to designing and building websites (Manning, 2005). Interactive agencies typically produce commercial and marketing websites, as well as online advertising campaigns. Interactive agencies usually bill clients for hours of work. Typically, workers are paid a salary, not an hourly wage. These agencies are distinct from advertising agencies, insofar as they typically specialize in building online advertising and do not create video or print advertising. These agencies trace their roots to companies that built the first commercial websites in the mid 1990s (Zeff & Aronson, 199). More recently, interactive agencies have been branching out into traditional advertising, such as billboard design, as well as into new product design (Morrisey, 2007).

Internet-based advertising is growing quickly. In the first six months of 2006, Internet-based advertising represented U.S.\$7.9 billion in revenues, up from U.S.\$5.87 million in the first six months of 2005, an increase of 36.7% (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2006). This enormous growth and diversification may make it possible for interactive agencies to gain the coveted position of "agency of record," in control of print, broadcast, and Internet advertising budgets for larger clients.

The interactive industry is a particularly interesting communication case study because the industry's norms are indicative of the emerging labour norms of millennial, postindustrial work. This is a young industry; "veteran" interactive agencies are not more than 10 years old. Norms about "appropriate" work-time activity in this industry are therefore emerging out of a context of significant changes in the political economy of communication labour (see, for example, McKercher & Mosco, 2007).

The interactive agency industry's relative youth makes quantitative estimates rather difficult. There is no established category for interactive agencies in the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS), so it is unclear how many of these agencies exist. Advertising industry publications have begun to catalogue the top interactive advertising agencies, indicating that they still

occupy a category distinct from advertising agencies. *Advertising Age* magazine's recent ranking of North American interactive agencies ranks Boston-based Digitas at the top of 50 interactive agencies in 2008, with total revenues of U.S.\$345 million. At the bottom of the list was California-based Efficient Frontier, with revenues of U.S.\$25,793 (*Advertising Age*, 2008).

Interactive agencies themselves are still developing an organizational culture around working time norms. Advertising in general and interactive advertising in particular are relatively underexamined in the scholarly literature on work. Academic studies of advertising have focused on ethical dilemmas of advertising executives (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991); patterns in compensation and billing habits of advertising managers (Spake, D'Souza, Crutchfield, & Morgan, 1999); and potential impact of globalization on the advertising business (Delener, 1996). But there is very little academic work that focuses on the contemporary working experience in advertising and none on the study of technology use in the industry. Mayer (1958) introduces us to the "golden age" of Madison Avenue in the 1950s and describes the American working landscape at that time. Tunstall (1964) provides a rich description of the advertising world in the 1960s, but avoids revealing the structures in place that shape the working experience of advertising workers. More recently, Alvesson (1998) provides a subtle, gendered analysis of the working experience of advertising workers in a Swedish advertising agency. But there are no studies that examine the world of *interactive* advertising, which has a much more technologically intensive manner of work than traditional advertising.

As Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1990) tells us, social scientists cannot, by definition, practice their craft from "outside" their experience. Studying social interactions begins fundamentally from *inside* the social structures. This study stemmed in part from my curiosity about my own working experience; I expanded my study to include the perspectives of my fellow interactive workers.

In my experience as an interactive agency worker between 2005 and 2007, I observed and experienced the practice of agency work. I became curious about the use of mobile technologies and their impact on my own divisions between work and home. Upon arrival at my job, I was equipped with a laptop computer. I was also asked for my Instant Messenger screen name by other workers on my project, which I shared readily. By the end of my first month at this job, I had over 50 contacts from work (I now have over 100 work-related contacts on my instant messenger list). I was not issued a mobile phone for my job, but I was asked for my personal mobile phone number, and I provided it to fellow workers. Before long, I was reachable at work, at home, and anywhere else I happened to carry my phone, including the university. I took phone calls during my teaching office hours, on walks with my husband, and especially while I was on business trips in New York, Washington, and Jacksonville. I avoided the arcane and inaccessible expense-reporting system by paying for all of these phone calls myself, including the additional roaming charges for using the phone in the United States. For my last business trip before leaving my job, I asked for and received one of the company's four mobile phones that workers could borrow during business trips. I used my "travel cell" to contact other workers who stayed behind in Toronto.

This study was informed by my status as an industry “insider.” But this project began after my employment in the industry ended; it is a product of qualitative interviews and an online survey. While Alasuutari (1995) argues that “insider” status does not necessarily result in “better” research, it certainly does require a deeper reflexive practice, particularly in the data analysis phase.

Theoretical framework: Technology as socially constructed

Technology scholars have characterized technology as essentially liberating (see, for example, Pool, 1983), responsible for widespread social change (White, 1978), and dehumanizing (Ellul & Illich, 1995). All of these scholars share a deterministic view of technology, conferring upon it the agency to change social structures somehow outside of its own social context. Others scholars reject this view and argue that that technology does not emerge exogenous from its social context. This school of thought—often referred to as the social construction of technology (SCOT) school of technology studies—attributes both technology’s design and its effects primarily to its social context. I take SCOT as my theoretical starting point, arguing that the use of mobile technologies in a workplace is necessarily reflective of the social relations within that organization.

The SCOT approach emphasizes the interplay between technology and organizations. The organization shapes the technology and the technology shapes the organization. This notion of a mutual constituted relationship highlights the mistaken belief that introducing technology into an organization is a neutral choice. Social assumptions are built into the kinds of technology that are chosen, and technologies, once introduced, have unintentional organizational consequences (Williams & Edge, 1996).

In a sense, the SCOT approach mirrors Marxian approaches to technology, which view technology as embedded within a given mode of production (see, for example, Noble, 1979). In this argument, technology itself is not inherently immoral or amoral; rather, it is subordinate to the political. In the capitalist mode of production, Marx argued that technology is used to facilitate the extraction of surplus for the bourgeoisie: “Machinery, when considered alone, shortens the hours of labor, but, when in the service of capital, lengthens them” (Marx & Engels, 1977, p. 568). The use of mobile technologies, therefore, may provide the *potential* to shorten the length of the working day, but this effect is mediated through the organizational context in which the technology is used.

The need for new scholarship on mobile technology and work

Indeed, it appears that mobile technology is lengthening the working day. Stories in the popular press abound about “CrackBerry” use, “work addiction,” and vacations not taken. While it is clear that there is an increased use of mobile technologies, there is very little scholarship that has examined its effects on the practice of work. Much work has been done on the transformation of public space, for example, through the use of mobile technologies (Pain, Grundy, Gill, Towner, Sparks, & Hughes, 2005). But little work has focused on the intersection of work and mobile technology. Scholars have focused either on the culture of extreme overwork *or* on mobile technologies, but there is little that connects overwork specifically with mobile technology use.

There is a deep need for such scholarship. Typical office technology is becoming essentially mobile technology. Where once immovable computers and landline phones were the norm, mobile versions of these technologies are becoming the default choice. Growth in laptop computer sales continues to outpace that of desktop computers. In 2005, 21.6% of all computers sold in the United States were portable, compared with 42.3% for desktops. Research company International Data Corporation (IDC) found that the share of portable computers grew to 26.1% in 2006, and predicts it will grow to 42.3% by 2009 (International Data Corporation, 2007a).

Mobile phones are also increasing in numbers. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association reports that 47% of all telephone connections in Canada are now mobile connections (Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, 2007).

Businesses are the primary consumers of email-capable devices such as the BlackBerry. According to IDC, companies around the world will purchase 82 million "smartphones," personal digital assistants, and BlackBerry devices by 2011 (International Data Corporation, 2007b).

This enormous shift toward mobile technologies has not yet been taken up in the literature on work and labour, but it is likely that it could exaggerate a trend toward a work culture of long working hours. In her comprehensive study of hours of work between 1967 and 1985, Schor (1991) found that the average American added an extra month of work each year. This holds true for both hours of paid work and total hours of work, including unpaid, domestic labour. There is some disagreement about Schor's quantitative findings. Robinson & Godbey (1997), for example, argue that workers have *more* leisure time, not less. Their argument is based largely on a differing quantitative method than Schor's, and they do recognize that Americans have been experiencing a *perceived* increase in working hours. In her examination of the qualitative experience of work at paid jobs and work at home, Hochschild (1997; Hochschild & Machung, 1989) has found significant qualitative evidence to support Schor's quantitative findings.

More up-to-date Canadian quantitative evidence also confirms Schor's argument. Turcotte (2007) reports that the average Canadian in 2005 spent 45 fewer minutes each day with family members than the average Canadian in 1986. This was true for both men and women. This reduction in family time is primarily due to increased hours of paid work.

Scholars of high-technology workplaces have taken up this focus on extremely long working hours. But these studies typically assume that "work" is spatially fixed to the physical office of the organization. In their examination of the quality of life in their own industry, the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) found widespread examples of overwork. Three in five developers said they work more than 46 hours in an average week. But come "crunch time," when games are nearing shipment to stores, one third of workers worked between 65 and 80 hours a week (International Game Developers Association, 2004). In their study of the video game industry, Kline, Dyer-Witheyford, & de Peuter (2003) note that these kinds of hours are considered *de rigeur* in the industry, but that the blurring between leisure time and work time

helps obscure the fact that workers are working exceedingly long hours. Work in the gaming industry is constructed as “fun,” where long hours are intermingled with episodes of play while in the office. Elsewhere, Dyer-Witford and de Peuter (2006) find that organizations have ample ability to avoid long hours of “crunch time” before a new game is shipped, but gaming companies consistently fail to plan properly. Workers spend upward of 100 hours per week *at work* during crunch time. It remains unknown how this work has been transformed (or not transformed) by the use of mobile technologies. It is clear that the practice of work affects these workers’ home lives, as many of them report significant difficulty balancing their home and working lives (International Game Developers Association, 2004). What is not clear, however, is how the spatial division between work and home is negotiated or complicated by mobile technologies.

Tapia (2006) finds a similar pattern of overwork in her examination of dot.com start-up technology companies. But again, it is unclear how mobile technologies would affect this type of work. She argues that the culture of long hours and “one-upmanship” among Web workers stems from a strongly masculinized competitive working culture. In the three dot-com organizations she studied, Tapia found that working all night was common, as was bragging about working all night. Workers regularly used company-issued couches to sleep at work, making it difficult for them to have significant home lives. The division between work and home tilted very much in favour of work, yet there was still a clear (spatial) division between the two.

The advent of Web-based communication technologies has allowed for “telework,” or work that is conducted outside the spatial boundary of work. Bailey & Kurland (2002) identify distinct types of teleworkers whose working experience is more reflective of their occupational category than their use of technologies. Autonomy was high among male professional teleworkers, but low among female clerical teleworkers, signalling that existing workplace stratification endures even outside the walls of the office. They caution, however, that “telework most correctly should be viewed as a practice that individuals occasionally employ, not as a full-time work arrangement” (Bailey & Kurland, 2002, p. 393). Telework should be recognized as an extension of office-based work.

Garrett and Danziger (2007) find that there is indeed a subset of occasional teleworkers they call “flexiworkers,” who differ from fixed-site teleworkers, who work in a single site that is not the corporate office. Flexiworkers work in the office, at home, and on the road. They make up about 5% of all teleworkers and have the highest level of influence over their jobs (more than 75% say they are very influential). Fixed-site teleworkers work longer hours than corporate office workers, but it is flexiworkers who have the most difficulty juggling time. They are highly committed to their jobs and also experience a high degree of pressure to succeed. But they are time-poor: 55% of flexiworkers report a low ability to keep up with their workload—higher than any other kind of teleworkers. This finding begs the question: under what conditions are flexiworkers able to restrict access during non-work hours? To what degree do flexiworkers demonstrate Zerubavel’s notion of professional availability?

Finding this kind of discussion in the literature is difficult. While there is a robust, emerging literature on the social effects of mobile technology use, very little of this research focuses on work specifically. Ling examines how mobile technologies affect the intimate relationships of married couples (Ling, 2006), while Aminuzzaman, Baldersheim, and Jamil (2003) have examined the effects of mobile technology use on gender relations and food market prices in rural Bangladesh. Other scholars have shown how mobile phones are transforming public spaces and online behaviour (de Souza e Silva, 2006; Horrigan, 2008). Few study mobile technology in the context of work specifically, however. Schlosser (2002), for example, applies a symbolic interactionist approach in her study of BlackBerry use among government professionals. She relates the use of these devices to the presentation of self and of the organization. Prestige was a large element in the presentation of self, as were “cutting-edge” relations. But her examination does not connect the wider issues of government cutbacks, shrinking public budgets, and increased private-sector “business logic” being foisted upon public-sector workers (Pierson, 2001a, 2001b; Pulkingham & Ternowetsky, 1999). In short, Schlosser’s examination tells us little about the power relations that underlie the use and restriction of these mobile technologies.

Middleton and Cukier touch on the “contradictory” interpretations of mobile technology use, but again do not explore how this relates to power relations in the workplace. In their study of work-related BlackBerry use, Middleton & Cukier (2006) find competing and contradictory interpretations of the device’s effects. Workers they interviewed claimed to experience a number of positive effects from using the BlackBerry, including increased productivity. But they also reported “dysfunctional” behaviour such as ignoring other people in the room, and even dangerous behaviour, including driving while texting. They also reported significant “infringements” on non-work experiences through the BlackBerry. Middleton & Cukier explain these competing interpretations by arguing that these workers’ organizational cultures stress the positive aspects of BlackBerry use while systematically ignoring the many negative attributes. There is little insight into what drives this contradiction or which workers benefit from it and which lose.

In this article, I draw upon the SCOT approach to ask simply: how do mobile technologies affect the division between work time and private time for interactive agency workers? In answering this open-ended question, I hope to also understand how workers’ autonomy (at home and at work) is affected.

Method and sample

For this study, I employed a mixed-method approach. The first phase of research was qualitative in-depth interviews, using a convenience sample. As a former interactive agency worker, I had extensive contacts in the industry. I used email, social networking sites, and face-to-face word of mouth to recruit 20 interactive agency workers, most of whom lived and worked in the Greater Toronto Area, but also including others who lived in other cities in Canada and the United States. These workers spanned several job categories, including creative (design), account management (client relations), project management, research and strategy, and technology.

Because this industry is relatively small, I was acutely aware of my ethical obligation to protect these workers' identities. In accordance with the established ethics criteria of York University, I ensured anonymity in the following ways. I provided my participants with an informed consent letter, which most of them signed with little hesitance. I did not discuss any person's involvement in my study with other workers, even if those other workers knew of their colleague's involvement in my work. I would not confirm or deny any participant's involvement. I also ensured anonymity of their identities. I created code names for each worker. I also anonymized their company names. In some quotes, I deliberately leave out any identifying information. I created a spreadsheet that details their real names and their code names, which is password protected on my personal, home computer. The text transcriptions of the interviews use only the code names of the participants. The original audio files are stored electronically on my computer, to which only I have access.

I was particularly interested in the division between home and work. Consequently, the symbolic representation of these workers' homes was germane to the study. I chose, therefore, to conduct ethnographic interviews, which are on-site interviews intended to gather symbolic data about the surroundings (Lecompte & Shensul, 1999). In-home interviews were particularly helpful, because they allowed me to observe the division of work versus home in the symbolic design of their personal surroundings. I drank cups of tea and munched cookies. I was served a full meal with a family. I sampled a new recipe of chicken and pears. I took a tour of a newly purchased house. I chatted with workers' partners and children. I played with pets. All the while, I observed where work and home intersected for these workers. Do these workers have symbols of work in their homes? Is there a company laptop on the kitchen table, for example? What is the nature of these symbols? What is their prominence in the home? Where might these symbols conflict with domestic symbols?

I conducted 14 ethnographic interviews at workers' homes, 4 ethnographic interviews at cafés and restaurants, and 3 telephone interviews. Each interview lasted about 1 hour. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded thematically. Each respondent was given a code name, which is used in this paper.

As a qualitative researcher, I am not concerned with describing the "typical" interactive agency worker; there is often no such thing as a "typical" qualitative case (Alasuutari, 1995). However, I do seek to investigate the culture of the industry, rather than just the culture of a few interactive agencies. The research participants came from 7 different agencies. In my efforts to ensure that this small number of companies did not bias my research, I serendipitously found that interactive agencies exhibit a classic property of Lam's (2000) "ad hockeries": a high degree interfirm turnover. This phenomenon made my sample of 20 interactive workers a robust sample insofar as these workers had worked in several agency jobs prior to the one they currently hold (see Table 1).

The most frequently reported number of agency jobs among these workers was 3 (including the current job), with an average of 6.5 years of interactive experience. It is not uncommon for a worker to know many other workers in competing agencies. The result is a tight social network that demonstrated a remarkable

consistency of organizational practice.² It appeared that organizational practices diffused throughout this community which was later confirmed in my interviews. Organizational practices are remarkably consistent from agency to agency. This suggests that my research does indeed describe the practices particular to the industry, and not the practice of work in my participants' agencies alone.

Table 1: Participants' gender, years of experience, and number of agency jobs held

Code Name	Gender	Years of Interactive Experience	Number of Agency Jobs (incl. Current Job)
1 George	M	3	2
2 Stephanie	F	7	3
3 David	M	5	3
4 Andrew	M	4	1
5 Jennifer	F	4	1
6 Jason	M	10	3
7 Eric	M	6	1
8 Angie	F	3	3
9 Tamara	F	7	3
10 Deirdra	F	4	3
11 Nicky	F	12	4
12 Jeremy	M	4	2
13 Julie	F	4	2
14 Reggie	M	7	1
15 Theresa	F	4	3
16 Curt	M	10	4
17 Derrick	M	7	4
18 Ian	M	10	3
19 Jessica	F	10	4
20 Catherine	F	10	6
Mean/Mode	Even Split	6.5	3

In addition to the in-depth interviews, I conducted an online survey using a non-probability sample of 59 participants. Because this survey was non-random and relatively small, I used it primarily in the way Marsh (1984) encourages social scientists: as the most efficient way to ask a large number of people the same questions. I was interested in learning whether the experiences described in the in-depth interviewees were consistent with those of other agency workers. The survey was not intended to determine "cause and effect," but rather as a means of asking people about their beliefs and attitudes. As such, I make no claims of generalizing these findings to the larger population, nor do I offer the statistical significance of any of the findings. Instead, I provide these quantitative data as illustrative of the original ethnographic observations, in keeping with established ethnographic approaches (Lecompte & Shensul, 1999).

Findings

Types of mobile technology use

The interactive agency workers in this study are active users of mobile technology, with most having been issued a laptop computer by their workplace (see Table 2).

Table 2: Which of the following mobile technologies do you have that are COMPANY-ISSUED?

	Positive Responses	Percent
Laptop computer	46	78.0%
Mobile phone	5	8.5%
BlackBerry or mobile email device	10	16.9%
Instant Messenger	24	40.7%
No company-issued mobile technology	8	13.6%

Interestingly, these workers also had a large number of personal mobile technologies, many of which they often used for work (see Table 3). Of particular interest is the number of these workers who use their personal mobile phones for work.

Table 3: Which of the following PERSONAL mobile technologies do you ever use for work purposes?

	Positive Responses	Percent
Laptop computer	46	78.0%
Mobile phone	43	72.9%
BlackBerry or mobile email device	14	23.7%
Instant Messenger	41	69.5%
I don't use any personal mobile technologies for work	3	5.1%

Motivations for taking technology home

Respondents had several reasons for taking mobile technologies home, some of which had little to do with actually completing work. Some respondents noted that they needed to take laptops or work-loaded USB flash drives home in order to complete work. They found working in the quiet of their homes or on the train or bus ride home offered valuable quiet time that was not available in their noisy offices.³ Mobile technology fulfilled this desire for uninterrupted work, but at the same time allowed for the work day to be lengthened. Respondents who travelled regularly also reported taking laptops and mobile phones home before business trips or on-site client meetings.

Respondents also reported reasons for taking mobile technologies home that were unrelated to work. The lack of a personal computer at home was one of the

major motivations for taking laptops home. Respondents often had “personal” work to do, such as checking personal email, staying in touch with friends, and general Web surfing. Many respondents “kept up” with current online trends through undirected Web surfing, something they had little time to do while at work. Those who did not have a computer at home would take home their company-issued laptop:

Researcher: Yeah. Why do you take it home with you every night?

Nicky: I check my email at night. Usually I’m not done everything I wanted to do. So, I will finish up here and I don’t have like . . . [my partner] has a computer, but I don’t have a computer here, so I use it as my . . . I check my personal email, I pay my bills, I . . .

Researcher: Go online.

Nicky: Yeah, at night.

Another non-work-related motivation for taking mobile technologies home was the demonstration of organizational status. Among these workers, the use of mobile technology confers status. It is common practice in interactive agencies for a promotion to a senior position to include the symbolic issuing of a piece of mobile technology. The most senior executive I interviewed had four laptop computers (three PCs and one Mac) and a total of four mobile phones, two of which were BlackBerry devices. Another respondent had been promoted to a director-level position and did not receive a BlackBerry; he argued—successfully—that a director needs one. One respondent notes she does not have a BlackBerry, even though she wants one, because it is beyond her title:

Researcher: No BlackBerry. Is that on purpose?

Julie: No. No. Only directors get BlackBerrys.

Researcher: Oh, so it’s a status thing?

Julie: Yes.

Another respondent reflected on the symbolism of the laptop he received when he was promoted:

David: I got my laptop after I got promoted to art director. That’s the company structure I guess.

Researcher: And if you’re a designer, you get a tower?

David: Yeah. In the other sense, the laptop becomes of a symbol of different people, different management, which I think is bad.

Researcher: Tell me about that.

David: ‘Cause you don’t get that until you get to a certain level, you know? Especially for people getting . . . especially for art directors.

Researcher: It’s a big deal then?

David: It’s like you’ve proven yourself and you get this from the com-

pany and you get the laptop as a symbol. For me it's symbolism.

Researcher: Why do you think it's bad, that symbol?

David: 'Cause I don't think the company should have that much hierarchy.

Because mobile technology signified status and one's relative place in the organizational hierarchy, there was an interesting motivation to conspicuously use mobile technology: impression management.

Goffman's (1959) notion of "presentation of self" suggests that actors dramatically perform a self they wish others to see. The impression that one "gives off" is key in projecting an "appropriate" self. In interactive agencies, mobile technology provides a way of projecting higher status. Some workers exploited the confluence of mobile technology and status by conspicuously taking technology out of the office. I sat in the kitchen of one respondent as he walked over to the laptop on the kitchen counter to "check" on a project that had been having problems that day. "Jason" checked his Web-based email and put on some iTunes music. I asked him why he took his laptop home, even though he had the identical laptop of his own at home. He was acutely aware of his newly conferred senior title and the expectations associated with it. Jason employed several tactics to demonstrate his organizational status, including arriving at work before his subordinates, eating lunch at his desk, and taking his laptop home each night. I asked him why:

Jason: It's possible I take the laptop home because I want people to notice I'm taking it.

Part of the family

One the effects of the existence of mobile technologies, and one of the motivations to take them home, was the unintended entrance of one's work into one's private sphere. The ease with which mobile technologies come home renders the division between work and non-work far more porous than before. Some respondents reserved a private office space for their work technologies, such as a home office or closable cabinet or armoire. This private space did provide some symbolic division between work and home, as respondents could literally "close the door" on work. Other respondents (some of whom had smaller residences such as apartments or condos) tended to bring laptops into communal family space. One worker brought his laptop home so frequently that it had a pre-eminent position reserved for it on the coffee table in the family room. Another respondent noted that the laptop was a frequent participant in family entertainment:

Researcher: Your laptop? Is it here?

Jennifer: Yes. It's in the family room.

Researcher: In the family room. Why is it in the family room?

Jennifer: Because I sat last night and watched hockey, watched hockey and worked.

The presence of a laptop in shared family space leads to home/work conflicts. Respondents had a variety of ways of working around family members, but there

were ambiguous boundaries of what constituted “work.” Some respondents noted their families accused them of “not being present” when the laptop was open, while others suggested it was the content of the laptop that mattered. As one respondent told me:

Jason: I’m on the computer a lot when I’m home. So my wife will be watching TV shows, and I’ll sit with her with my laptop open, reading the news or scanning [work] email. The moment I start writing in Microsoft Word or something, she looks at me and says, “Why are you always working?”

Bringing technology home is in part a strategy for dealing with an abundance of work. As one respondent told me:

Tamara: I’m glad to be home and if I have to work I can at least work at home with my family around me.

These pieces of mobile technology embody and signify work. They are brought into these workers’ homes, making work a tangible part of their families’ lives as well.

Ubiquitous availability

Zerubavel (1990) argues that professionals’ work-time identities extend into their private lives more than non-professionals. He uses the example of nurses and doctors. Nurses who are “not on shift” can even sit at the nurses’ station and legitimately claim they have no responsibility to respond to work demands. Doctors, on the other hand, are publicly admonished (even by nurses) when they do not respond to work demands while at home. Pagers and telephone calls reinforce this norm.

Table 4: Are you available for work outside working hours?
Check all that apply.

	Positive Responses	Percent
Yes, in the evenings	53	89.8%
Yes, on weekends	48	81.4%
Yes, in the morning before work	22	37.3%
Yes, commuting to and from work	19	32.2%
Yes, during holidays	20	33.9%
Yes, during the night	26	44.1%
No, I am not available for work outside regular working hours	3	5.1%

This is also the case with interactive agency workers. The pervasive use of mobile technology casts a veil of ambiguity on the division between work and non-work for all workers. Mobile technologies allow for ubiquitous availability, particularly for senior workers who deal directly with clients. They also facilitate the availability of junior workers, despite the fact that these workers rarely deal directly with urgent requests from clients. The norms within the industry mirror those more of Zerubavel’s “professional” expectations of doc-

tors' availability, rather than nurses'. In the online survey, which asked respondents "check all that apply," a significant number of interactive agency workers considered themselves "available" for work in off-hours. A large number of these workers even considered themselves available for work during their vacations (see Table 4).

Respondents to the online survey reported a number of methods of after-work communication, some of which are not considered "mobile," but are nonetheless not fixed to a given place of work (see Table 5). Workers reported Web-based email to be the most common method of after-work communication. Web-based email implies a geographically fixed location of the worker (e.g., in front of one's home computer) and also an Internet connection. Since many of these workers are "knowledge workers" who engage in significant after-hours online play and research, having after-hours access to the Internet is an unspoken but necessary condition of the job. However, Web-based email is most definitely not tied to one's place of work, making it a "mobile" communication device inasmuch as it reaches into a worker's private time through its accessibility from any Web-connected computer.

Table 5: How are you usually contacted by your work after hours?

	Positive Responses	Percent
Through Web-based email	51	96.2%
On my personal mobile phone	28	52.8%
On my work-provided mobile phone	3	5.7%
Through Instant Messenger	35	66.0%
On my work-provided BlackBerry	5	9.4%
On my personal BlackBerry	3	5.7%
Through my land-based telephone	13	24.5%

Respondents found that availability was disciplined through an expectation of immediate response. There is a subtle set of signals that junior workers learn as they move up the corporate ladder. One respondent told me how she learned to check her Web-based email from home regularly, even though she rarely brought her work laptop home with her:

Angie: I mean, obviously I transitioned from sort of a more junior to a more senior position and I think with that transition there's the expectation that you'll always be on call in a sense, that you'll always be reachable, even into the evenings and on weekends.

Researcher: How did you get that impression?

Angie: Just really checking your emails. You might come in in the morning and realize that people have been trying to reach you at night.

The practice of "checking in" becomes institutionalized. One respondent told me how she has come to be conditioned to home work:

Deirdra: Um, it's funny; I walk in the door and one of the first things I do is go to my computer and check my email that I know I just checked

before I left, my personal email, but I go right back to the computer again, turn on MSN just in case something happened in the 45 minutes I wasn't online.

Ubiquitous availability extended to homes, commuting time, and even vacations. One respondent described a work-related phone call while she was on vacation, where her boss needed to know the location of a file on the company server:

Deirdra: I was . . . I had already got my makeup done and I was writing my speech and my cellphone rang.

Researcher: Oh, you were in the bridal party?

Deirdra: Yeah. I mean the wedding wasn't in progress, but I was out of town though for it. It's strange because only certain people in the company have company cellphones yet they always want to know your cellphone number so they can call you all the time and then you can't . . . it's a grey area about whether or not you can expense that, because it's not a work phone but you're calling me in. If I'm in Florida and you're calling me, that's not a cheap phone call but it's not a company phone, so then how do I get approval to expense that?

The norm of ubiquitous availability is so strong that respondents routinely use their own personal technology to be available for work. In this sense, the burden of availability is borne only by the worker, and not the company. Often the need for availability is not formally recognized by company policy, as many of these workers do not receive company-issued mobile phones, even though they use their own mobile phones regularly for work-related purposes. Workers effectively subsidize their companies' operating expenses by either paying mobile phone bills themselves, or facing the burden of expensing them as work-related expenses.

Researcher: Do you have a cell phone?

Reggie: Yeah.

Researcher: Is that a company-issue cell phone?

Reggie: No. Like the handset belongs to me, but, um, all my or virtually all my mobile phone bills get paid by the client . . .

Researcher: Virtually all.

Reggie: Yeah, like I mean I might typically run a bill of a couple hundred bucks a month, and you know a small portion of that may be, some of them are actual calls that I make to my brother in Hong Kong or something like that, or friends in Europe, so I'll just usually try and rip those out.

Researcher: Hmm. How critical would you say your cell phone is to your work?

Reggie: Um, critical.

Workers employed a variety of resistance strategies to firm up the divisions between work and non-work, but these strategies were highly individualized and

informal. The struggle to act autonomously in private life was exceedingly difficult, given the pervasive use of mobile technologies. This struggle exaggerates the gendered division of domestic labour. One respondent with a young child told me mobile technologies made it difficult for him to be a caregiver to his son. The subtle gendered effects of mobile technology played out in this worker's family, as his female partner was called upon to support his paid work, even while he was ostensibly "not at work." He strove to "not to be the dad on the cellphone" at the park. But this struggle was individualized and imperfect, and often relied on his partner to perform a primary caregiving role:

Researcher: Have you found yourself being the dad on the phone?

Derrick: I have, and I really do try to put it away when I'm with him. If I'm kind of around with my wife and him and just walking then I'll sneak a few calls in or check my emails, but when I'm with him I really try to put it away.

One worker, who found her personal instant-messaging account was allowing work to invade her home on weekends, took an inconspicuous approach to limiting access by "blocking" people on her Instant Messenger list, which would be unknown to the other person:

Jessica: Sometimes I would block people for the weekend and then unblock them on Monday, you know.

Significantly, she never told her co-workers that she was blocking them. She preferred instead to employ a completely invisible technique to restrict access. Disguising her resistance suggests that there are potential sanctions for resisting normative practices around access in private time. Had restricting access been an acceptable practice, she would have had no need to obscure her actions.

Another worker unwittingly created a clear division between work and non-work by being "embarrassed" by his unprofessional Instant Messenger screen name and email address. The unintended consequence of his embarrassment was a clear division between his work and personal online personas. In a sense, he created two complete online avatars for himself, one private and one work-related:

Researcher: How is it that you set up these two competing systems? Did somebody tell you to do this?

Andrew: No, and I was actually really surprised that no one else was. All my colleagues just add like a group on their IM account or something like that. (Clears throat.) And then they just put everyone from [my company] under that group. But when I started out, no one told me anything so I started a whole new account. And then, people were kinda surprised at that. And it was partially because I'm . . . the IM account that I have for my personal is like, the actual email address, is like . . . it's gotta be 10 years old now. And so, it's just . . . it's kind of a joke. Like my @hotmail.com, which I was a little embarrassed to send it out. Like I don't think I could have sent that out.

This practice made it much easier for him to restrict access while at home. Instant Messenger accounts are usually, by default, programmed to sign in when

the user starts using the Internet. This respondent simply did not have his work-related IM persona on his home computer, thereby restricting access without resisting intentionally.

Each strategy of resistance was individualized or, in this last case, unintentional. With no official policy limiting the use of mobile technologies, it was ambiguous what constituted true urgency and when fellow workers were to respect another worker's private time. One worker, who took pains to restrict access at home, complained that building websites in no way warranted any sense of urgency. In the absence of official policies around access, normative roles took over.

The most senior respondent I interviewed described a much more intentional method for restricting access. He worked out of his home, rarely being seen in the office. He said that many times his subordinates did not know where he was. He was even able to control the technology's invasive character when he was working on a particularly thorny problem that required deep thought. He called these times "cave hours":

Researcher: Cave hours. Are you interrupted in your cave?

Ian: Well, yeah . . . but I usually just turn all the phones off for those hours.

Researcher: All four of them. (Laughing.)

Ian: Well, you see, the reason you call it "cave" is because you don't get reception in the cave.

Researcher: Oh, I see. That's why it's called a cave, because it's no-contact?

Ian: Exactly. Otherwise it's not a cave.

Notably, however, even this senior worker was not able to restrict access during non-work time. His physical location was rendered irrelevant, so he was "free" on the one hand and controlled on the other:

Ian: I'm always available to my team and to the client. So they can always reach me. Except they don't know where I am.

Discussion: Autonomy and professionalization

The workers in this study have a variety of motivations for adopting the use of mobile technology, including a desire to present a self of status and authority, as well as the normative practice of being always available for work-related activities. The use of mobile technologies tends to exaggerate the industry's norm of ubiquitous availability, thereby further complicating workers' ability to restrict access during private time.

This dynamic of ubiquitous availability is similar to that which Zerubavel (1990) describes for doctors. Both doctors and nurses display what Freidson (2001) argues is an essential hallmark of professionalism: the occupationally controlled division of labour. Doctors sit atop of this occupationally defined division of labour, while nurses sit above nursing assistants. In exchange for this privileged position, doctors are expected to allow access during their private time. But in the workplace, doctors are afforded various luxuries that nurses are not. They

are not required to begin work at a fixed time, for example, and they have considerable autonomy in managing their workflow and employing professional discretion. They control the work of nurses. Likewise, nurses exchange their relative lack of professional discretion for their right to restrict access in private time.

Like doctors, interactive agency workers regularly sacrifice their private time for work. The presence of mobile technology renders an end-of-shift ritual moot; work often goes home with these workers. Unlike doctors, however, interactive agency workers enjoy no formal recognition of this sacrifice of private time in the form of increased autonomy at work. These workers are expected to provide access in private time, but they do not receive in exchange the ability to control the division of labour within their workplaces. Moreover, they are not routinely paid for being “on call” or paid overtime if they respond to and perform work while being “on call.” The workers in this study reported an ambiguity around overtime pay; at times they received time off “in lieu” for working overtime, but this was not always afforded them.

The right to restrict access is not recognized as an inalienable right in the interactive agency industry. Indeed, this industry troubles the very notion of private time in that it contravenes Zerubavel’s contention that “one of the most common ways of denying a person that right is to buy it from him [*sic*]” (Zerubavel, 1990, p. 171).

Even the most senior workers find it difficult to restrict access in private time. Very senior workers are able to limit their availability, albeit within limits, but the expectation of ubiquitous availability is exchanged for autonomy in choosing where and when to work. It is mid-level workers who face the greatest challenge. On the one hand, they wish to project an image commensurate with seniority, which entails ubiquitous availability and liberal use of mobile technologies (whether they are company-issued or not). In their efforts to project the normative self of seniority, they compromise the division between work and private time.

Junior workers that resisted this pressure found themselves facing a possibility of being labelled “a problem.” One respondent told me she would bring home work on a USB flash drive, but drew the line at carrying home her heavy laptop. She also said she was “on the slow track” to make associate director, and not the “fast track.” Another worker who refused to bring any work home at all believed his lack of willingness to work at home symbolized a choice he had made. He refused to “be diplomatic” with clients, favouring instead being honest and telling clients bluntly that they “fucked up his code.” He also acknowledged that he was on neither the fast nor slow track to any senior position. One mid-level manager seemed resigned to having his private time compromised:

Researcher: You keep on using these terms: work-life balance. What does that mean to you?

Derrick: It means having, it means I’m going to be able to come home and see my kid before he goes to bed, but to be more specific, it’s just being able to enjoy your life outside of work sort of having the ability kind of . . . it never completely happens like this, especially in our line of work, but being able to leave your work at the office and not bring it home with you, not have it dominate your time that’s outside of your

office so that it's not going to be infringing, you don't have to be in on the weekends to have meetings with your team. You can kind of at least work from home.

Conclusion

Workers, organizations, and scholars are only just beginning to understand the impact of mobile technologies on the home/work divide. This study demonstrates that mobile technologies exacerbate an existing problem in interactive agency work: the expectation of hyper-responsivity to work. Worker autonomy is not necessarily compromised by mobile technology use (many workers enjoyed the freedom to work in environments they chose), but this did not serve to up-end the underlying social relations in advertising work.

Expectations of continuous availability are nothing new in the advertising industry. Writing in 1956, Mayer described the expectations of long hours:

Advertising men [*sic*], in fact, rarely get much time away from their jobs. They work in a windy atmosphere of shifting preferences where crisis is a normal state of affairs, and (as one advertising manager puts it) 'someone is always hitting the panic button,' (Mayer, 1958, p. 10).

The workers in this study would likely be expected to put in the same hours even without the use of mobile technologies. Their widespread adoption has arguably "freed" these workers from long hours at the office, but has had the unintentional effect of blurring the line between private- and work-time identities. The ability of workers to restrict access is therefore compromised greatly by the use of mobile technologies in the absence of official company policy concerning what warrants work-related contact during private time.

This study demonstrates the need for a reconceptualization of the SCOT approach as it pertains to the organizational effects of technological change. It is no longer sufficient to consider the company context alone when examining the effects of technology, because the mobile nature of many work technologies introduces an entirely different, but nonetheless relevant, context: the home. While many SCOT theorists argue that robust analyses of technological change always include a holistic analysis (that includes gender and race, for example), few have offered solutions for technologies that travel to different social contexts. The workers in this study occupy several different social positions, such as husband/father/worker, but mobile technologies allow for these roles to be experienced *simultaneously*. SCOT theory needs to build on existing research such as Starr and Griesemer's (1989) "boundary objects" approach. Mobile technologies themselves are "boundary objects" that cross from the social world of work to the social world of private life, thereby adding the home into the sphere of potential influence.

This study also demonstrates that few of these technologies support workers' strategies of resistance, because restricting access is not embedded within the technologies themselves. Designers of mobile technology should consider the concept of restriction of access when designing new technologies. Unobtrusive measures such as "blocking" contacts without their knowledge are likely to be employed by workers who wish to anonymously resist demands for private-time

access. Scholars of technology would do well to include the notion of restriction of access when studying technology's impact, particularly when the context being studied involves clear potential for compromised autonomy.

But no design of technology will bring clarity to the issue of private time versus work time.

Company-level policy changes are required if the division between home and work is to be firm. These policies must recognize that breaching the home/work divide causes significant disruptions in the domestic spheres. Some companies have attempted to grapple with this issue, but such policies often frame the spatial flexibility of work as a "benefit," not as a problem of restricting access during private time, and as such, they fail to address the disruptive nature of mobile technologies. Company policy around this "benefit" often mimics existing stratifications in workplace benefits. Companies tend to extend workplace benefits such as pensions and health benefits to full-time "core" workers, while leaving out "peripheral" or non-standard workers who have temporary or contract positions (Fudge & Vosko, 2001; Vosko, 2000). Emerging company policies regarding the spatial flexibility of work appear to reinforce stratification, but tend not to address the issue of access restriction.

Consumer electronics retailer Best Buy, for example, allows some workers at its Minnesota head office to work from various locations at whatever times they wish. They call this recently instituted policy a "results-only work environment," or ROWE, where workers are evaluated on their results and not on "face time" of putting in hours at the office. This workplace policy is currently only available to 4,000 workers at its Minneapolis headquarters, with workers at the company's 931 retail locations still not enjoying the flexibility of "remotely" selling consumers camcorders and computers (Conlin, 2006).

IBM has ceased to record or definitively grant vacation time for salaried workers, relying instead on workers' own "preferences" to take time off when they choose. But in the absence of specific language about restricting access in private time, workers appear to project a hyper-responsive work persona rather than exercise the ability to restrict access during private time. They also report extensive use of mobile technologies and performance of work in the home (Belson, 2007). Time-use scholars Robinson & Godbey (1997) call this kind of simultaneous activity "time deepening," which they blame for the pervasive American phenomenon of "feeling rushed." It is not clear whether all of IBM's 386,000 workers have flexibility in taking their vacations. It is not clear whether temporary workers, workers in countries with no vacation laws, and workers at IBM's extensive network of subcontractor manufacturing plants also have flexibility of where and when to work.

The existence of mobile technology also draws attention to the outmoded concepts underlying the state's overtime laws. Current laws are usually configured around a spatially fixed location of work. Overtime laws assume implicitly that "work" is fixed spatially to a "workplace," and they are inappropriate guidelines for stolen cellphone moments and covert BlackBerry messages. The Province of Ontario, for example, requires employers to provide 11 consecutive hours off of work to workers each day (Government of Ontario, 2008). Bringing

a laptop or BlackBerry home easily enables the checking of email between working hours, however. This begs the question: what does “off work” mean when workers can work from any location, in small slivers of time? New laws must take into account that “work” is completed in shorter periods, often in conjunction with other activities, and from multiple locations. Regulating overtime in this context should focus on worker autonomy *to restrict access* (through the use of mobile and other communication technology), instead of focusing on being “off work” for consecutive numbers of hours.

Workers in this study do not have specific workplace policies around mobile technology use and the home/work divide. As such, the workers employ various methods of restricting access that are, in the long run, unsuccessful, because they are individualized and not sanctioned by the organization. Only specific organizational policies that codify restriction of access vis-à-vis mobile technologies will protect private time in the context of pervasive mobile technology use. Collective worker resistance could also conceivably reinforce private time as a collective worker right.

Notes

1. While this paper is not about professionalization per se, it is important to note that professionalization also represents a fundamental debate in the study of work and labour. The study of professions traces back to functionalist sociology, but more recently has been theorized as a function of power. See Friedson (2001), Larson (1977), and MacDonald (1995) for more detail about this debate.
2. This is likely reinforced by the geographic concentration of my sample, with most of the workers living and working in Toronto, although workers who currently work or had previously worked in other cities confirmed a consistency with the Toronto-based workers' time practices.
3. Most of these companies have “open concept” offices with little privacy. An interesting question, which I did not investigate, is how open-concept offices affect workers' “voluntary” desire to work in their own homes.

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