All Work and No Play - Does it make Jack a dull boy?

An analysis of the diminishing boundaries between work and non-work time and places through the use of BlackBerry®

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Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, September 2008, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Communication, Information and Society. Supervised by Prof. Robin Mansell.

All Work and No Play -

Introduction

Technology is a very fast developing field, transforming social life with a similar speed. Thus, academic research has difficulties catching up with the rapidly emerging new social issues. To date, research concerning the effects of technology on individuals' behaviours, social and family lives, and work experiences is limited to portable devices (i.e. cell phones), and the Internet, and their domestication. While these discussions continue, technology outdistanced academic research and promoted a device that combines cell phone and Internet access.

1. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

" t's all within your reach"

T T ommercial ogo

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concepts of blurry boundaries and boundary management have been investigated over the years by many scholars in the fields of sociology, management and information systems. Especially in combination with the effects of changing nature of work and social life, this issue is becoming more complicated and exhausting to cope with for modern employees. Therefore, the literature concerning the changing nature of work and workplace considerably overlaps with the literature on blurring boundaries. The remainder of this theoretical chapter is thus structured as follows: The first section will examine the changing work nature, along with different factors responsible for this change. The investigation of these factors will then lead to a discussion of a technology enabled flexibility paradox, which will constitute a strong basis for blurring boundaries between different individual roles, most specifically between work and non-work areas.

Changing Nature of Work and Workplace

Many factors ha

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The central effects of technological developments have been discussed by many authors. Spiegel (1995) anticipated that the development of new technologies will have a profound influence on the context of work. One of his predictions from thirteen years ago is now merely ordinary for us; "[a] group of people will be able to share the same experience and the same environment, even though they are miles apart" (p.109). Spiegel continues by asserting how this technology will establish new opportunities to acquire a "worldwide clientele" and to become "more efficient" (p.109). Through the introduction of new ICTs, the

and mainly covers the advancements in information technology that facilitated accessibility, hence provided flexibility and abated boundaries. Thus, in order to investigate flexibility, this section will simultaneously investigate technological effects on flexibility.

There are two ways of seeing flexibility. Flexibility in the workplace refers to employees' need to cope with fast changing consumer demands and production procedures (Perrons, 1999; Sennett, 1998); in the current service-centred industry, employees are facing rising demands on speed, quality, and performance (Doorne-Huiskes et al., 2005). Individual flexibility, on the other hand, refers to being able to multitask and fulfil different demands of different roles without time or place constraints (Doorne-

work outside of the office may sound like freedom but it has been argued that working at places which are traditionally known as leisure places can and will make the boundaries between work and non-work more blurry (Naswall et al., 2008). The most outstanding example to this blurring is homeworking. As very frequently addressed in the body of literature, controlling the boundaries between work and home was a very difficult task for homeworkers (Haddon, 2004), as they had one space for both and no transition time or place in between.

Felstead et al. (2005) also take part in this discussion by presenting both sides of being connected anytime, anywhere paradox. First, they present the mobile phone as an enabler, to avoid 'dead times' which are time slots such as travel time between work and home, between meetings, and to enable multitasking during times invested in realizing tasks that don't require total concentration. At this point, cell phones offer its user the opportunity to take use of these otherwise 'dead' time slots by accessing information, being available to others and following up their work matters. However, there is a more negative side of this matter, which has been the centre of discussions in this research area. According to Felstead et al. (2005) it becomes much more difficult to handle the workplace pressure, given that with mobile and wireless technology spatially and timely isolation from work is becoming more complicated. The diminishing of the 'dead time' from travels also destroys these few

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theorized in this study that the simultaneous use of this device for work and non-work organizations weaken boundaries between these two, resulting in a complete integration. The hypotheses that will be investigated for this purpose are thus as follows:

H1: BlackBerry use causes spillover between work and non-work roles.

H2: BlackBerry use reduces detachment from work .

H3: BlackBerry use will increase job stress.

H4: BlackBerry use makes users more efficient.

H5: BlackBerry use increases users' working hours.

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2002). For the scope of this research, 'internet interviewing' will correspond to real-time qualitative interviewing whereas e-mail interviewing will be regarded only as structured questions that are sent to and received from respondents via e-mail. In both types of interviews, computer mediated communication reduces the impracticalities that researchers would otherwise come across on a face-to

and helped to identify the target population. Although the questions were structured there was an amount of flexibility in terms of responses. All of the questions were open-ended, and thus let the interviewees share their views with their own words leading to a less quantitative character for the method used. Also, working with digital data that is digitally stored (Mann & Stewart, 2002) reduced the time spent on transcription and the chance of making transcription errors as Poland (2002) highlights as important. Similarly, transcription errors were avoided during real time internet interviews.

E-mail interviews, although have their advantages, cannot provide detailed information as would qualitative interviews. Therefore, additionally, four face-to-face qualitative interviews and six real-time internet interviews were conducted within a semi-structured form, with the former also allowing the researcher to see respondents' body language, facial expressions,

employee from a public relations company. Being one of the factors of the changing work nature, service industry workers were the most interesting for the scope of this study as they are required to be always available and reachable. This pilot study also revealed that managers from any sector experience more work with their use of BlackBerry. In order to limit the work fields of the sample, the interviewees of this research were thus selected in regards to their employment in service industry.

Sampling – Selection of Interviewees

Interviewees[3] were reached through a snowball process, starting from researcher's acquaintances. As Warren (2002) defines, snowball process is carried with one or two respondents reached by the researcher, who comply with the sample's requirements, referring others through their social or work networks. This practice increased the participants' willingness to help as well as the trustworthiness of the researcher. Internet interviewees are composed of the employees from a public relations firm located in Istanbul, Turkey. Four face-to-face interview respondents all reside in London and are acquaintances of the researcher. Both male and female respondents were interviewed but no specific gender comparisons have been made.

Conducting interviews with a control group (i.e. non BlackBerry users) has been considered in order to test the causal hypotheses. Yet, due to the limited scope of the research and time constraints this was not possible. However, respondents were asked to compare their present experiences with their 'before-BlackBerry' experiences, and this way it is attempted to have a 'self-reflective control group'.

Data Collection Procedure

To conduct the pilot study, the topic guide document was turned into open questions and was sent to respondents whom the researcher had contacted in advance. During face-to-face interviews and real-time internet interviews the topic guide was used to provide guidance yet

For the purposes of this study, face-to-face interviews with four people were conducted and lasted between thirty and forty five minutes. Two of those took place at coffee shops whereas the other two were realized at the respondents' residence. Two of the interviewees are partners, working in the same consultancy firm. Initially it was planned to interview them both separately. However, due to time constraints that the couple had, the interview could only be conducted simultaneously. This was more of an advantage than a disadvantage. It revealed many important insights, significant details and also a chance to observe a couple's interaction with each other and with their work, and how they set their own boundaries in their lives. This was especially interesting, given that the couple works together, lives together and both are owners of a BlackBerry.

All of the face-to-face interviews were recorded digitally then transcribed into a text file. To conduct the internet interviews, after the initial contact, an appointment that is appropriate for both the researcher and the respondent was agreed upon. These interviews were conducted via *S   essenger*

3.

The most problematic side of using a BlackBerry is the constant availability that it offers and the addiction that it causes. In social conversations, daily articles, even by its users the device is usually referred to as "Crackberry". Yet this is not the first ICT that caused an addiction to a certain degree. There is a vast body of literature discussing the addictive characteristic of the Internet and the cell phones. Given that BlackBerry to some extent conjoins a cell phone, an internet accessed computer, a calendar, and a diary, seeing how it triggers an addiction is beyond surprise; *" h you wouldn't even know where you were going if you'd lost your lack erry "*

> *letters   e said we need to be in contact like this in case something important comes up "*

This device also has a symbolic function. YM explains this aspect of having a BlackBerry as "being in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*"; meaning that some people want to show

floundered to specifically indicate how many hours a week they work in and outside the office.

> " guess it's about   to   hours a week in the office   ut it really depends   f we have some big report to deliver we work until midnight for seven days a week   ut that happens for a very short period of time   ther times it can be fairly relaxing Sometimes just work from home   t really varies "

> " h   really can't say   The official working hour in my company is from   am to   pm   ut that usually turns into nine to ten hours a day   nd out of office as soon as   get an e mail   check it on my   lack erry and do the necessary calls or orientations   n the weekends   work at least three hours to follow up news   n our sector even when you read your Sunday paper you see some news about a client make a call and all of a sudden you find yourself working "   k

These two examples present the lack of a concrete system of working hours in the service industry. Having worked in such conditions before starting to use a BlackBerry provokes our interviewees to talk more about its advantages compared to before. Responses differ

> *more   t is perfect for those who are perfectionist and obsessive about their work "*
> *T*

An answer that probably summarizes it all is that of YM who has used a BlackBerry for two years and has quit using it eight months ago:

> *" or the first couple of months you feel much more flexible   ut after a while you realize how much you get addicted and dependent on it and that you're never disconnected [   ] never disconnected from the system   used to feel like   was living in a matrix where   verything is in that matrix business leisure entertainment family   no longer had my personal space "*

These different views also symbolize the technological paradox that forms a vicious circle between the advantages of flexibility and constraints of always availability.

Furthermore, many respondents brought up that they are more organized with the date book function of the device reminding meetings and important notes.

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

One of the important indicators of the diminishing boundaries between work and non-work is being always reachable. When it is possible to get work calls on the weekends, in the evenings and on yearly absence leaves, it gets more and more difficult to detach from and not think about work outside of office hours. One interviewee explained her feelings remembering how she used to perceive working when she was in school: *" thought working was going to be so much better because once you're out of office you're done you don't have any homework or exams to study for at home   ow wrong was   "* (IT).

Nowadays, it is almost impossible to not be able to reach someone any time of any day, especially if the person is a BlackBerry user. Thus, owning a BlackBerry consequently increases the pressure of being available. Being a BlackBerry owner has thus dominant social codes and responsibilities as indicated by another client director from a PR company;

> *lack erry   can't pretend that   didn't check my e mails for couple of days and   feel like it's disrespectful if   don't answer So   always have this feeling that   must answer " Y*

This statement signifies the unwritten contract that employees sign with their work and social networks when they purchase a BlackBerry. Owning one of these devices has a social meaning that suggests "I am able to check my e-mails no matter where; you can easily reach me." This assertion is agreed upon by a manager interviewee's statement, which has a more positive sense;

> *" t's good to know for people for work or business that they can always reach me through e mail This is also a comforter for me   always send e mails to my acquaintances that have a   lack erry to guarantee reaching them "*

During the interviews, most of the above mentioned work-non-work linking mechanisms were encountered[7]. If these boundary management strategies are seen on an axis with integration and segmentation ends, it can be argued that segmentation is difficult to realize w

projects and networks. The device brings them all together creating a common space that represents individual responsibilities for different domains of one's life.

4. CONCLUSION

Today, BlackBerry signifies more than a mobile phone with Internet access. There are Hollywood parties for the launch of the newest model, while at the same time this device is perceived as more 'professional' than its closest competitor, iPhone. Although it is not yet widely diffused, the influence that this device has on its users and on their social interactions is hard to ignore. However, academic research has not yet focused on the complete availability and accessibility offered by this device and similar smartphones. As stated by Eriksen; "This era came about so fast that the best research still consists in trying to catch up with the present" (Eriksen, 2001: 5).

This research is an exploratory analysis of the boundary blurring effects of BlackBerry use. Throughout the study, BlackBerry is seen as a device that constantly connects users to their work due to the e-mail service provided. It is taken as a starting point that BlackBerry users have no excuse for being not available in the eyes of those who try to reach them. The cost of being more efficient, more accessible, connected to loved ones and informed of emergencies instantly is paid by being constantly connected to work and experiencing work spillover into non-work domains. This study aimed to test commonly perceived hypotheses of the cynical vie

gender, age and length of use is left to future analysis that will use quantitative and qualitative methods together, with a wider sample.

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APPENDIX I – Table of Interviewees

NAME	PROFESSION	AGE	LENGTH OF BLACKBERRY USE	PURCHASE REASON	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
Beth Ahlering (BA)	Management Consultant	34	2 years	Given by firm	Face-to-face semi-structured interview
Dom Gibbeson (DG)	Management Consultant	35	2 years	Given by firm	Face-to-face semi-structured interview

Berkan Ozcelik	Goldsmith	23	7 Months	Self-purchase	Structured e-mail interview
Yorgo Teoderidis	IT Consultant	31	2 Years	Given by firm	Structured e-mail interview
Melis Buyuksoy	Risk Consultant	25	9 Months	Given by firm	Structured e-mail interview

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