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## THE MEANING OF WORK AND HOME

*In contemporary society, work and home represent the two most significant domains in the life of a working individual. Changes in family structures and technological changes (e.g. mobile phones and portable computers) that enable job tasks to be performed in a variety of locations have blurred the boundaries between work and home. This all suggests that the meaning that people may have attached to these domains has changed also. The present research uses in-depth qualitative interviews with 10 employees from an Information Technology company to explore the meaning of each persons work and home domain, and the ways in which they interact. Interviews were transcribed into text documents and analysed. Frequency of word use provided a socio-linguistic profile of the words that participants used when asked to talk about their work and home domains. Content analysis of the sentences relating to work and home provided a measure of how frequently respondents talked about their home-life when asked about work, and vice versa. In addition, each participant filled out an adapted version of the PANAS, which assessed affective state in both the work and home domains specifically. Results are discussed in relation to the generation of future hypotheses.*

**Keywords** work; home; linguistic analysis

*En la sociedad contemporánea, el trabajo y el hogar representan los aspectos más importantes de la vida de una persona que trabaja. Cambios en la estructura familiar y cambios tecnológicos (e.g. teléfonos móviles y ordenadores portátiles) que permiten que diversos trabajos sean realizados en diferentes lugares, han alterado los límites entre la casa y el trabajo. Esto supone que el significado que la gente tiene asociado con estos dominios puede haber cambiado también. La presente investigación utiliza entrevistas cualitativas 'en profundidad' con diez empleados de una compañía de Información Tecnológica para explorar el significado que cada persona atribuye a su trabajo y hogar, y la forma en que estos dominios interactúan. La entrevistas fueron transcritas en texto y analizadas. La frecuencia del uso de palabra proporcionó un perfil socio-lingüístico de las palabras que cada participante empleó cuando hablaba de su trabajo y de su hogar. Análisis de contenido de las frases relacionadas con el trabajo y el hogar proporcionaron una medida de la frecuencia con que los participantes hablaron acerca de su hogar cuando se les preguntó acerca de su trabajo, y viceversa. Además, cada participante rellenó una versión adaptada del PANAS, el cual evaluó el estado afectivo relacionado con el trabajo y el hogar respectivamente. Los resultados son discutidos en relación con la generación de hipótesis futuras.*

**Palabras clave** trabajo; casa; análisis lingüística

In modern society, work and home are most often physically and temporally separate, and consequently early researchers treated work and family systems as if they operated independently (for example, Parsons & Bales, 1955). However, by the 1970s, research on work and families reflected an open-systems approach (Katz & Kahn, 1978), where events at work were assumed to influence events at home and vice versa. However, the contemporary analysis of 'work and family' has emerged from both second wave feminism and from the social conditions that have generated this wave (Gerstel & Clawson, 2000). At the level of employment, the huge increase in women's — especially Euro-American middle-class married women's — participation in the labour force has transformed the gender bargain on which earlier forms of separation were based (Lewis & Cooper, 1999). In addition, psychological and physical boundaries between work and non-work have become more blurred as organizations become increasingly virtual and more people work at or from home for all or part of the week using information and communication technologies (Jackson, 2002; Sullivan, 2000).

The most up-to-date organizational view of work and home indicates that work and home are interdependent, and that this interdependence has a significant impact on individual behaviour in an organizational and private setting, and ultimately on organizational functioning itself (Greenhaus, 1988; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). However, organizational models of job stress have been slow to recognize the impact of the home domain on work. In addition, organizational research has also been slow to consider the increasing evidence that the negotiation of space in the home domain is a gendered phenomenon (Haddon & Silverstone, 1993; Sullivan, 2000; Wilstrom, Linden, & Michelson, 1997). Moreover, the reticence to recognize the potential impact of the home domain is inconsistent with the meaning that people attribute to this domain. The domain of the household acts to deliver individuals to the workplace in a condition fit for work, clothed, fed and rested. Over and above these physical contributions, the home domain also provides an important source of psychological support for those in work and exerts a major influence on the overall pattern of labour market participation (Noon & Blyton, 1997).

Despite the organizational consequences of work–home interdependence, employers have not been quick to recognize the severity of the situation or to respond in a constructive manner (Hall & Richter, 1988). At the most basic level, an organization needs to expand its conception of what a 'successful' employee is. In terms of understanding the intersection between work and home role, Greenhaus (1988) suggests that we need to examine relationships between the characteristics of a job and the permeability of the boundary between the job and an employee's non-work-life. In this regard, a good place to start such an endeavour is to try to identify how individuals construct the meaning of work and home-life. How do people construe their work and home domains? How do people describe what they actually do within their work and home domains? The present research will use text analysis to systematically investigate the different words that people use to describe work and home. Systematic text analysis allows us to uncover the meanings that people attribute to the ideas of work and home, by helping us to understand the language of work and home. The language that people use to describe a domain of their life is critical to the way in which they construct the meaning of it.

### *The domains of work and home*

The idea that work and home can best be conceptualized as interdependent domains with interdependent borders has been noted by researchers (Clark, 2000; Hall & Richter, 1988; Nippert-Eng, 1996). 'Home' and 'work' can be considered to be conceptual categories that are constructed by both mental and physical aspects of activities concerning self, people, activities and things. For example, Clark (2000) introduces the idea of work/family border theory, which suggests that individuals are daily border-crossers between the domains of work and home, managing and negotiating the work and non-work spheres and the borders between them to attain balance. Clark (2000) suggests that the more traditional theories of spillover and compensation are of limited usefulness because they do not adequately explain, predict and help solve problems that individuals face when balancing work and home responsibilities. Indeed, spillover and compensation can occur simultaneously, making it difficult to try to decide why individuals choose one strategy over another (see Lambert, 1990 for discussion). The development of border theory is particularly noteworthy in that Clark (2000) used multiple sources for data; her own experiences, qualitative interviews and a focus group that discussed problems on issues relating to balancing work and home responsibilities. In this respect, Clark (2000) points the way forward in the utilization of qualitative methods to explore the domains of work and home.

Additionally Nippert-Eng, (1996) has explored the way that people negotiate between their work and home boundaries, and suggests that people fall on a continuum between 'integration' and 'segregation' of work and home domains. An integration-style person is conceptualized as a person who makes little or no distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work, while a segregation-style person is someone who arranges their life so that home and work are two distinct domains. In the present research, work and home can be considered to be two different domains, places that people have associated with different rules, thought patterns and behaviours. Both the research of Nippert-Eng (1996) and Clark (2000) illuminates for us how the temporal, physical and psychological organization of our work and home domains can impact on the way that we negotiate between them.

### *Gender differences*

The increase in the number of families with working parents has made the old models of coordinating work and home-life inappropriate for the majority of the workforce (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). Although most men and women report that they value their family more than their work, different gender roles prescribe different emphasizes for men and women (Gutek, Nakamura, & Nieva, 1981). Consequently, it is plausible that gender roles will affect the way women and men perceive the domains of work and home. It is possible to speculate that demands in the same-sex role domain (i.e. work for men, home for women) may be felt more strongly, and that consequently demands in the opposite role domain will be felt as more of an imposition. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis by Davis, Matthews, and Twamley (1999), found that women reported significantly greater levels of stress in the workplace compared to men. However, the studies failed to control for important differences.

For example, men are frequently older, have been on the job longer, and make more money than women even when they occupy similar positions (MacDonald & Korabik, 1991; Murphy, Beaton, Cain, & Pike, 1994; Scott, 1992). The present study will explore the language used to describe the domains of work and home, and evaluate to what degree such accounts differ with regard to gender.

The remainder of the introduction will outline the three research questions that this study is going to address. It is important to point out for reasons of clarity that the first research question will be accompanied by a sub-set of five hypotheses. Answering the first research question involves the use of a text analysis program which allows for the generation of competing hypotheses.

### *Meaning*

An important aspect of understanding the language that people use to describe their work and non-work-lives is that it can help us to understand how people experience stress associated with both domains. A consistent finding in stress research is that individuals and groups can differ in their response to certain roles and types of stress (Simon, 1995). Although different explanations have been suggested for this phenomenon, an increasingly recognized one is the *meaning* that a role (or stressor) has for a person. Indeed, Simon (1995) found that the meanings individuals attached to role identities had implications for their mental health. The meaning that people ascribe to work and home can vary by gender. A good example is a study by Perry-Jenkins, Pierce, Haley, and Goldberg (1999) who found that in families of dual-earner couples where both parents ranked 'parent' as their most important role, there was a great variation in their definitions of what a parent actually did. Clark and Farmer (1998) found that individuals reported differences in desired means at home and work: 'responsible' and 'capable' were ranked the most important means to achieve ends at work, and 'loving' and 'giving' were ranked the most important means at home. Therefore, while the different domains of work and home are interdependent, they do have different cultures or rules.

*Research question one: Do people use different social-linguistic dimensions in order to describe their work and home-lives?*

In the present research the text of the interviews will be analysed by use of the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001). LIWC was developed to provide an efficient method for studying the various emotional, cognitive, structural and process components present in individuals' verbal and written speech samples. The program was designed to analyse written text on a word-by-word basis and to calculate the percentage of words in the text that matched over 70 language dimensions. Each language category of LIWC was rated independently by judges during the development of the program and was subsequently validated (Pennebaker & King, 1999). The program has previously been used to correlate word choice with the following variables: physical health, grade point average, adjustment to college, and adaptive bereavement (Pennebaker, 1997). The LIWC program provides a menu of 70 language dimensions. However, the

following dimensions, as judged by the authors to be of relevance and interest to the research, were chosen and five hypotheses were generated:

*Language composition.* The LIWC language category provides the opportunity to compare differences in the use of the first person singular (I) and first person plural (WE). Research has indicated that when individuals speak as a member of an organization or about an organization people tend to refer to themselves as We, rather than I (Maynard, 1984; Sacks, 1992; Silverman, 1987; West, 1990). In instances such as these, speakers use the self-referring We to invoke an institutional over a personal identity, thereby indicating that they are speaking as representatives, or on behalf of an organization. Given this, there is an expectation that We words will be more strongly associated with talk about the work domain.

*H1: 'We' words will be more strongly related to the work domain.*

*Emotional processes.* The affective or emotional process dimensions tap many of the traditional categories found in other psychologically based text analysis programs (e.g. Stone, Dunphy, Smith, & Ogilvy, 1966). Positive emotion words include the broadest level of positive feeling dimensions (e.g. happy and love) as well as positively valenced words (e.g. beautiful and nice). Words from the optimism, and positive feelings category, are also part of the positive emotion dimension. Note also that many of the categories in LIWC are hierarchically arranged. For example, the negative emotion dimension is made up of words from anxiety, anger and sadness subcategories, together with a substantial number of words with negative emotional connotations that may not fit into these subcategories (e.g. guilty and stupid).

The work environment of people is more strongly proscribed in terms of how one should behave. The idea that emotional processing is not appropriate in the work context is seen most clearly in the work of Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour in service organizations. This research elucidated the expectation that individuals will display certain appropriate organizationally desired emotions. Organizational prescriptions give rise to what has been described as (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987) display rules (emotions that are expected to be expressed) and feeling rules (what should be felt when confronted with different events). Being required to display 'appropriate' emotions and therefore perhaps being constrained from expressing an emotion actually felt may in itself generate psychological strain (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001) and lead to feelings of emotional dissonance (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Therefore, it seems likely that people may have a greater need to express frustrations concerning their work-life.

*H2: Negative words will be more strongly associated with the work domain.*

*Cognitive processes.* The cognitive processes dimension attempts to capture words that tap active thinking. Causal words, for example, connote attempts to explain causes and effects (e.g. because, reason and why). The insight, or self-reflection category, captures words suggestive of learning or understanding (e.g. know and realize). Together, causal and insight word usage has been found to be related to mental and physical health (Pennebaker, Mayne, & Francis, 1997). Words such as should, would and could are examples of the discrepancy category, which Higgins, Vookles, and

Tykocinski (1992) have linked to health. Inhibition (e.g. hold and restrain), tentative (e.g. maybe and perhaps) and certainty (e.g. absolute and always) are the remaining categories within the cognitive processes dimension. It is more probable that descriptions about our work will be characterized more by cognitive demands in comparison with our home-life, and therefore we will discuss work more in these terms. Following on from H2 and in a converse fashion, cognitive processing is expected to dominate within the work domain, in contrast to emotional processing. In an interesting study, Richards and Gross (1999) found that attempts to suppress the display of emotional states, a common requirement in many organizations, impaired memory for information encountered during the period of suppression. This all suggests that the cognitive (as opposed to the emotional) rumination will predominate in the work domain.

*H3: Cognitive words will be more strongly associated with the work domain.*

*Social processes.* Social process language includes references to other people through communication (e.g. talk, listen and share) and through pronoun use (all pronouns except first person singular), as well as references to friends, family and other humans (e.g. child and women/men). There is no reason to believe that work and home should differ in terms of our need for communication.

*H4: Communication and humans words will be evenly split between the work and home domains, while friends and family words will be more strongly associated with the home domain.*

*Current concerns.* The current concerns dimensions reflect many of the traditional categories seen in content analysis schemes. The categories are self-explanatory: occupation (school, work and achievement) and leisure (home, sports). Although, individuals can experience work-related activities as pleasurable and enjoyable (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989), there is an expectation that words associated with leisure pursuits will be used when people are prompted to think about their lives outside of work.

*H5: Leisure words will be more strongly associated with home domain.*

#### *Work–home interference and home–work interference*

Work and home constitute the dominant life roles for most employed adults in contemporary society. Changes in family structures, increasing participation by women in the workforce, and technological changes (e.g. mobile phones and portable computers) that enable job tasks to be performed in a variety of locations have blurred the boundaries between the job and home-life. For many workers, this has created the potential for interference or conflict to occur between their work and non-work-lives (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). Work–Home Interference (WHI) and Home–Work Interference (HWI) are experienced when pressures from the work and family roles are mutually incompatible, such that participation in one role makes it difficult to participate in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In the present research, the texts of interviews with employees will be analysed in an effort to

understand how individuals experience such interference or conflict. We can consider these texts as ‘stories’. According to Bruner (1990, p. 137) stories are ‘manifestations of culturally-shaped notions in terms of which people organize their views of themselves, of others, and of the world in which they live’. Bruner (1990) also suggests that stories can convey our ideas about causality and determinacy. The present research will use content analysis to explore these ‘stories’ in a more in-depth way and look at the way that people construct these two different domains.

*Research question two: In terms of work–home interference and home–work interference, do people talk about their work when they are asked to talk about their home and vice versa? How does this relate to working conditions such as shift work and gender?*

### *Affective state*

Negative affect (NA) and positive affect (PA) have emerged as two consistent dimensions in studies of affective structure (Watson, Clark, & Tellegan, 1988). PA reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active and alert. High PA is a state of high energy, full concentration and pleasurable engagement. In contrast, NA is a general dimension of subjective distress that subsumes a variety of aversive moods. Generally speaking, the findings from studies have suggested that the two mood factors relate to different classes of variables. NA (but not PA) is related to self-reported stress and poor coping (Clark & Watson, 1986; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981). PA (but not NA) is related to social activity and satisfaction (Clark & Watson, 1986; Watson, 1988). Little research exists comparing affect between the work and home domain, but Williams and Alliger (1994), in an experience sampling study of employed parents, found that unpleasant moods spilled over from family to work but pleasant moods had little spillover. In the present research, affective states were assessed in both the work and home domains to assess if there was a difference.

*Research question three: Do people report different negative and positive affective states between the work and home domain?*

## **Method**

### *Design*

The study was a semi-structured interview study collecting detailed socio-linguistic data from a small number of participants.

### *Sample*

Ten employees from an Irish Information Technology (IT) company were interviewed using an in-depth qualitative interview. The sample consisted of six females and four males, and the average of the employees was 33 years old (SD = 6.2, range = 25–42). Whilst a sample of this nature cannot be representative, it was considered

adequate for a detailed socio-linguistic analysis of their accounts. The IT company was involved in both the production and sales of personal computers. The employees were chosen on a non-random basis by the human resources department of the company. Although, the employees were chosen in a non-random manner, an effort was made to select participants who occupied different positions, reflecting a range of employees in the company. The interviewer was male and this may well have influenced male and female participants differently. Analysis of data was undertaken by a male and female researcher, increasing the likelihood of identity gendered aspects of the interviews.

### *Procedure*

Each participant was invited to take part in an informal one-to-one discussion of their work-life and non-work-life, by the principal researcher (first author). In order to put participants at their ease before beginning the interview, each participant was told the interview was an informal chat about their work and non-work-life, for the purpose of better understanding how people think about their work and non-work-lives. Interviews were carried out in a comfortable space provided by the company and in accordance with the guidelines and codes of conduct recommended by the British Psychological Society (British Psychological Society, 2000). Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview lasted on average 25–35 minutes. Initially, all participants were asked two standard questions, 'Please tell me about your work' and 'Please tell me about your life outside of work'. After this, participants were asked more specific questions related to certain aspects of their work. The following results are based on the responses to the first two questions. At the end of each interview participants were asked to fill out a paper version of the PANAS.

*Affective state.* To assess affect or mood of the individual, we used the PANAS scale developed by Watson et al. (1988). The PANAS is designed to measure both PA and NA. PA is measured by descriptions such as 'active, alert, enthusiastic, inspired and interested'. NA is assessed by descriptors such as 'afraid, hostile, irritable, jittery and upset'. Participants indicated the extent to which they experienced each mood state in general on a five-point scale ranging from 'very slightly or not at all' to 'extremely'. Extensive research has demonstrated the reliability and validity of the instrument across a wide range of subjects (Watson, 1988). An innovation in the present research was not to ask the participants to rate their mood in life in general (as is done traditionally), but to ask participants to rate their mood specifically within the domains of work and home. Participants were asked to what extent they felt this way in general within the two domains.

### **Analysis**

In order to answer the first research question, the information from the tape recorder was transcribed into a text file. The text of the interviews were scanned into text files and each text was then analysed by use of the LIWC program (Pennebaker



et al., 2001). In order to explore the second research question we analysed the text using the sentence as the unit of analysis, to investigate what percentage of time people talked about their home-lives when they were asked to talk about their work-lives and vice versa. Two raters (the principal and second authors) rated the text to ascertain agreement on the unit of analysis (the sentence) and inter-rater reliabilities were calculated (inter-rater reliability = 0.96). Some of the examples of participants discussing home-life when we asked about their work-life were as follows:

First thing in the morning, all my e-mails would be work related, but there would be non-work related e-mails throughout the day. (p. 3)

Last Friday, I had so much stuff to get through that I had to work at home, because of constant interruptions. (p. 11)

Normally, I work at home in the evenings, I get home at about 7, the kids go to bed, and I'm usually sitting at the computer at 8:30 and work till 9:30. (p. 18)

Some examples of participants discussing work-life when we asked about their home-life were as follows:

I have rarely ever get called at home, you might get one of the lads calling you. (p. 6)

I think that when I travel home. . . . I'm thinking part of the way, thinking about work. (p. 12)

My boyfriend works here on the same shifts, and every so often they review the shift and change it. (p. 23)

For the third research question, scores from the PANAS scales were calculated and entered into a data file.

## Results

### *Socio-linguistic dimensions of work and home*

The mean number of words spoken by participants when asked about work was 542 (SD = 116), and the mean number of words when participants were asked to speak about home was 375 (SD = 240). The average amount of words per sentence was 13.77 (SD = 1.35) for work and 12.97 (SD = 1.34) for home.

Percentages in table 1 represent the proportion of words used within each category across work and home. Therefore, the percentages represent a ratio of the word use between work and home. All rows add up to 100%. The figures in parentheses represent absolute mean levels of words spoken. For the present study,

**TABLE 1** LIWC analysis (absolute values are shown in parentheses)

	<i>work %</i>	<i>home %</i>
Language processes		
First person singular (I)	36 (6.33)	64 (10.27)
First person plural (WE)	54 (0.99)	46 (0.84)
Affective processes		
Positive emotions	38 (1.79)	62 (2.86)
Positive feelings	26 (0.55)	74 (1.57)
Optimism	49 (0.41)	51 (0.43)
Negative emotions	63 (0.62)	37 (0.36)
Anxiety	67 (0.14)	33 (0.07)
Anger	59 (0.21)	41 (0.15)
Sadness	80 (0.04)	20 (0.01)
Cognitive processes		
Cognition	54 (7.15)	46 (6.03)
Causality	53 (0.81)	47 (0.66)
Insight	50 (1.10)	50 (1.03)
Discrepancy	55 (3.46)	45 (3.25)
Inhibition	53 (0.41)	47 (0.36)
Tentativeness	52 (2.73)	48 (2.49)
Certainty	60 (1.43)	40 (0.96)
Social processes		
Social	56 (8.25)	44 (6.83)
Communication	65 (1.81)	35 (0.98)
Friends	12 (0.07)	88 (0.44)
Family	0 (0.00)	100 (0.36)
Humans	59 (1.54)	41 (1.09)
Current concerns		
Occupation	65 (5.06)	35 (2.76)
School	36 (0.34)	64 (0.59)
Job	68 (3.91)	32 (1.86)
Achievement	61 (2.06)	39 (1.32)
Leisure	22 (0.76)	78 (2.63)
Home	16 (0.37)	84 (1.91)
Sports	37 (0.23)	63 (0.40)

the ratio of words spoken between the work and home domains will be the focus of the analysis.

*Language processes.* People used a bigger percentage of the first person singular (64%) when talking about their home, and the reverse was true of the first person plural,

with the highest percentage associated with work (54%). The first hypothesis was supported.

*Affective processes.* The general category of positive emotions was more strongly associated with home (62%) and the general category of negative emotions was associated with work (63%). At a specific level, the categories of optimism and anger indicated a more balanced split between work and home. The category of sadness was of particular note with 80% of these words associated with work. These results suggest strong support for the second hypothesis.

*Cognitive processes.* Overall cognitive processes categories were evenly split between work and home. The exception is the category of certainty with 60% of words linked to work. Hypothesis three was not supported.

*Social processes.* Social words are split between work (56%) and home (44%), but communication words are more strongly linked with the work domain (65%). As expected the categories of friends (88%) and family (100%) are predominately found in the talk relating to the home domain. Overall, hypothesis four was supported.

*Current concerns.* As expected occupation (65%) and job (68%) words were predominately found in the category relating to work, and home (84%) and sports (63%) were predominately found in the category relating to home. Achievement (61%) words were predominately found in the category of work and leisure (78%) was more strongly associated with home. In general, hypothesis five was strongly supported. Of particular note was the fact that achievement words were associated with the work domain.

In summary, the answer to the first research question is that people do use different socio-linguistic dimensions to describe their work and home-lives. Negative emotions, the first person plural, sadness and achievement were associated with talk about work, and the first person singular, positive feelings and leisure were associated with talk about the home domain.

### *Work-home 'linguistic' interference*

Results of this text analysis are shown in table 2. On average 5.3% (SD = 5.75) of text was devoted to participants talking about their home-life when you asked them about their work-lives. Of the text 24.8% (SD = 21.7) was devoted to participants talking about their work-life when you asked them about their home-life. Only one participant didn't talk about work or home in the alternate domain. In terms of gender, females discussed their home-lives when asked about work more than males (7% vs. 2.8%), but males discussed their work-lives more when asked about their home-lives (34.5% vs. 18.33%). This pattern was also found for shift work employees and non-shift work employees.

Shift work employees tended to talk less about home when asked about work (2.6% compared with 9.3% for their non-shift work colleagues) and tended to talk more about home when asked about work (35.8% compared with 8.25% for their non-shift work colleagues). In terms of the second research question, evidence was found for the idea that people talk about work when asked about home (and vice versa).

**TABLE 2** Content analysis and PANAS scores

participant and type of work	sex and age	% of text spent talking of home when asked about work-life	% of text spent talking of work when asked about home-life	PANAS			
				PA work	PA home	NA work	NA home
1: Nine to five	Female: 29	0	0	38	46	37	29
2: Nine to five	Female: 28	14	0	43	44	10	10
3: Shift work	Male: 25	3	63	48	45	10	11
4: Shift work	Male: 37	0	53	41	37	21	18
5: Nine to five	Female: 34	15	33	42	42	15	15
6: Shift work	Female: 31	7	28	41	32	18	12
7: Shift work	Male: 42	0	22	44	30	20	15
8: Nine to five	Male: 42	8	0	44	43	22	21
9: Shift work	Female: 36	0	19	38	34	16	15
10: Shift work	Female: 26	6	30	30	29	22	21

Note: 'Nine to five' denotes workers who worked more the more typical non-shift work. Work, for these participants, often started before 9 a.m. and often finished after 5 p.m.

### PANAS scores

PANAS scores for both work and home are shown in table 2. Watson et al. (1988) provide the following scores for interpreting scores in adult populations: PA = 35 (SD = 6.4), NA = 18.1 (SD = 5.9). A significant difference was only found between the category of PA work and the norm scores,  $t(671) = 2.90$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . No gender differences were found between the four domains. Non-parametric rank order correlation indicated that NA work was significantly associated with NA home ( $r = 0.857$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), but no significant associations were found between PA work and PA home. Analysis of the difference between affect scores between domains (PA work minus PA home, NA work minus NA home) indicates that for seven of the participants there is little or no difference between affect scores within domains. Large differences were found for participants 1, 6 and 8.

For participant 1, a difference of eight was found between both PA and NA between the domains of work and home. Another case for concern is the fact that this participant reports a NA score greater than 26 ( $> 26$  is associated with psychiatric patients). Analysis of the text of this participant suggests that this score may reflect the reported problems that this participant had throughout the year.

I have had a rocky year and a half. I came back to Ireland two years ago. I was going out with somebody at the time and that didn't work out. I didn't deal with my work and personal life very well. For the first time in my career, I let my personal life infringe on my work. (p. 2)

This extract suggests that the high NA of this participant may have been related to a stressful life event, and it also indicates for us how such a life event can have a dramatic impact upon the work-life of the individual.

For participant 6, a difference of nine was found between PA work and PA home, and a difference of six was found between NA work and NA home. This participant was a female (aged 31) who worked a shift work schedule. Although this participant has worked for the company for four years, she still finds shift work has an impact upon her, and she finds it difficult to readjust to her non-work time (Thursday and Saturday):

I never plan to do anything on the Thursday when we do the three nights. I find the change over very hard on my system. On Saturday morning, I'm still in night-time mode. (p. 14)

Further on in her text, she talks about her health and how she had a need to visit a doctor.

I've had problems with my health recently, so I've gone to the doctor. (p. 14)

Participant 7 reported the greatest difference between work and home domains; the difference was 14 between PA work and PA home, and five between NA work and NA home. Participant 7 is male (aged 42 years) who has worked for the company for five years on a shift work schedule. He is married and has three children (ages 10, 11 and 15). He comments on how his work-life can influence his mood when he goes home.

The first hour that you are home, your kids are getting ready for bed. You have to devote some time to them also and you may not be in the best of moods. (p. 16)

Further on in the text, he comments on the fact that he hasn't had the opportunity to see his daughter play football.

My eldest daughter plays intercounty at the under 16 level. I haven't had the opportunity to go and see her play. (p. 17)

In summary, in terms of the third research question NA was found to be more stable across the work and home domains.

## Discussion

The present study was aimed at providing us with a profile of the way in which people use words to describe their work and home-life. Specifically, people use more positive emotional words to describe their home-life and more negative emotional words to describe their work-life. In general, people do not differentiate work and home in terms of rational thinking. As expected, they use more words referring to leisure activities and interaction with friends and relatives when referring to their home-life. Interestingly, they describe their work-life more in terms of achievement words. This probably reflects the central role that work plays in the life of most people.

Participants showed differentiation in terms of use of the first person singular (I), in that they used I more often when discussing home. In line with previous research, people used WE more often when talking about the work domain. This distinction did not seem to be related to the types of job people had. This is an interesting contrast to the result in terms of achievement words whereby the majority of achievement words were associated with the work domain. All of this suggests that the propensity of people to use I when talking about home, while at the same time looking to their work role to provide them with achievement, probably means that people look to their non-work roles to provide an alternate role or alternative source of self-esteem. Oatley and Brown (1985) theorize that the lack of alternative roles upon which people can base their self-worth is a vulnerability factor for people who have experienced an identity-threatening stressor. Indeed, the idea that the possession of multiple identities is psychologically protective underlies the role accumulation hypothesis of multiple role occupancy (Marks, 1977; Thoits, 1986).

In terms of our second research question, the majority of participants do talk about their work-life when asked to talk about their home-life, and vice versa. In terms of gender, females talked more about their home-lives when asked about work and less about their work-lives (relative to males). Such results are in line with the idea that home can be viewed as reflecting traditional ideas of the home being the domain of women, and women subordinating themselves to the needs of the family (Wilstrom et al., 1997) and may be evidence of the so-called 'second shift' as reported by Hochschild (1987). Netterstrom, Kristensen, Damsgaard, Olsen, and Sjol (1991) have argued that the stress in the lives of women is more intense and persistent than it is in the lives of men. Such a view cites the fact that because of gender role stereotypes, women are more likely to feel obliged to be available to meet the demands of the family and home, resulting in a higher workload and less time to attend to their needs compared to men.

In the present study, shift workers tended to talk more about home when asked about work (relative to their non-shift work colleagues). Such a result may indicate that shift workers are more prone to interference and is in agreement with studies that have found shift work to be negative and place workers at higher risks for physical and mental problems (Akerstedt, 1990; Akerstedt & Knutsson, 1995). Some research has suggested that work impacts upon home to a greater degree than home on work (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Swanson & Power, 1999). Such a fact is borne out by the fact that participants talked about their work-life when asked about their home-life to a greater degree than they talked about their home-life when asked about their work-life. This all suggests that both domains are indeed interdependent and that the boundaries between the two are negotiable. A good example of this can be found in the participant who had the highest percentage (53%) in terms of talking about work when asked to talk about home. This male shift worker (37 years old), who was married and had two young children (a girl 11 years old and a boy six years old), talked about how his shift can tire him and the conflict that this causes with his children.

Sometimes, kids can't understand that, I'm fairly tired after a day like that and the kids want to have fun and I have to say, no, I'm tired. (p. 8)

Interestingly, the effect that this has on children is noted later on in the text when the participant acknowledges that his children have awareness about how his work can affect him.

When I sleep during the day . . . I sometimes hear the kids bringing their friends in and saying, Shhhh, Daddy is asleep. (p. 9)

The fact that children are aware of how work can affect the mood and behaviour of their parents has been noted by Galinsky (1999).

Another good example of how participants were actively constructing boundaries between both domains comes from a female (34 years old, single) who talked about her social relationships. On the one hand she seemed to suggest that she didn't socialize with her work colleagues.

I don't hang out with colleagues outside of work. (p. 12)

However, there seemed to be a contradiction of this later on in the text.

. . . I'm quite friendly with people in work, so they would come to my house, but I wouldn't say it's part of my social circle. (p. 12)

This statement seems to indicate that for this participant physical location can be flexible in terms of what constitutes work and home. Her 'home' seems to fall within the domain of work depending on who she occupies it with, so for this participant work is not strictly connected to physical location and the idea of her house as part of her home-life is permeable. This is consistent with certain sociological viewpoints which suggest that the relationship that individuals have with their work is complex, and involves both structure and agency interacting in a dialectical fashion (Giddens, 1984). Taking both accounts together is also evidence of the potentially gendered experience of work, in that the male participant expected his children to be understanding of his work commitments, but the female participant allowed the physical location of home to be more permeable to work. The need of this individual to perceive work and home as being separate, while allowing work colleagues to visit her home is consistent with the idea that for women, generally, work and home are more closely related (Andrews & Bailyn, 1993). Such dissonance may be reflective of a need to keep the boundaries psychologically separate, even when they are not physically separate.

The second research question also concerns the way in which the structure of work and working conditions can impact upon the boundaries between work and home. Clark's (2000) idea of border work and permeability can be found in the text of the youngest male participant (25 years old, single), who had the distinction of spending most time talking about work when asked about home (63%). This participant was a shift worker and this high percentage probably represented the fact that he lived in temporary accommodation during the weekdays and travelled to his parents' house when he wasn't working (which was over 200 miles from his place of work). Apart from his parents' house, this participant had no sense of a home outside of work.

I would sleep for the days that I'm off. (p. 7)

Indeed, he also seemed to have carried out extra work when he wasn't working for the company.

I usually go down home (to his parents' house) and I have my own little jobs down home. (p. 6)

The centrality of the work role and the lack of any alternative roles seem to be a consequence of the structural and temporal arrangements of this participant. Any future threat to his work role would probably be appraised as a major loss and disrupt a valued aspect of the self, in accordance with predictions made by the identity-relevance hypothesis (Thoits, 1986). One of the predictions of border theory is that border-crossers who are central participants in *both* domains will have greater work-home balance (Clark, 2000), and consequently organizations can help to play a role in helping employees to keep borders strong in both domains. For this participant, more attention to his non-work role might be protective against future work-home interference.

Finally, and with regard to the second research question, the experiences of a female participant (26 years old) who lived with her partner and worked on shift work highlight how the arrangements surrounding work can have a deep impact on interference between the two domains. The interesting aspect to the life of this participant was that her partner also worked for the same company in the same job function and on the same shifts as her. The participant spent 30% of her text relating to her home-life talking about her work-life, but the interesting aspect of this interference from work to home and home to work is that it is fuelled by the fact that her partner also works in the company in a similar position.

... often they review the shift and change it. When they do that, I'm worried for a while that we're on the same shifts. (p. 23)

If they did put us on different shifts, I would have no problem saying it to the management. Some people pretend they care but they don't ... I would kick up if I had too. (p. 23)

I wouldn't work if they were different shifts. (p. 23)

The couple has one car and her partner can't drive, so she is constantly negotiating with the company to ensure that her and her partner always do the same shifts and this seems to be an ongoing stressor. The feeling that she has to constantly negotiate for this arrangement is highlighted by her own disclosure that she doesn't feel as though the management takes her seriously:

I said it once before and there was a joke made about it. I thought it was smart. The way I look at it we can't all afford two cars. (p. 23)



In order to answer the third research question, an adaptation of the PANAS scales to assess PA and NA within the work and home domains was made. As far as the authors know, this is the first time such a format has been used. For the majority of the participants (70%), there was little or no difference between affect scores between the domains (i.e. NA for work vs. NA for home, PA for work vs. PA for home). In contrast, there was a significant correlation between NA at work and NA at home (but not for PA), suggesting that NA is more stable across the two domains. This result is in agreement with work of Williams and Alliger (1994), who in an experience sampling study of employed parents, found that unpleasant moods spilled over from family to work but pleasant moods had little spillover. However, given the small sample size of the study, we must be cautious in our conclusions. Of the three participants who did report large differences in their scores, this seemed to be associated with reported ongoing conflict or interference was experienced between both domains. One participant had suffered from problems in their personal life involving a relationship break-up, another reported how her work-life was affecting her health and the third participant commented on how his work can influence his mood and the fact that he hasn't found time to attend a sports event of his child. In future more large-scale studies, it would be interesting to see how differences in reported NA and PA between domains correlated with measures of WHI and HWI.

### *Limitations*

The two most significant limitations to this study concern the structure of our research. Firstly, although care was taken to approach the interview in an open-ended way, we didn't observe individuals talking about their work and home-lives in a more naturalistic setting. It might have been beneficial to try to record how individuals *actually* talk about work and home between themselves. A good discussion of conversation analysis techniques can be found in the work of Drew and Heritage (1992). Secondly, we only had the opportunity to interview employees within the work setting. It is possible that interviews conducted outside of the work setting may have produced different stories in terms of thinking about work and home. This point is particularly pertinent to the measurement of PA and NA. Future research should measure affect within both settings.

In addition to the aforementioned, this research concerns an analysis of a group of individuals from one particular company within the IT industry and in this sense, we do not intend our conclusions to generalize to employees in other industries or other countries. However, while qualitative studies (typically) involve small samples, which reduces our ability to generalize, they do provide us with an insight into the psychological contract that the employee makes with an organization. In this way, we can view how employees construct an 'implicit contract' (Watson, 1995) between home and work. A contract, that we have seen, is gendered and linked to both family and work roles.

### *Conclusion*

Fundamentally, it must be acknowledged that the conclusions of qualitative research are tentative at best, and their real worth lies in the generation of new hypotheses.

From this perspective, our present study points us in the following research directions:

- 1 This study has presented us with clear evidence that people talk about concerns from one domain when discussing another. Future research should account for this interference by assessing both positive and negative aspects of WHI/HWI. In this regard, it would be useful to examine the mediational and/or moderational role that WHI/HWI plays between demands/resources and work (and non-work) related outcomes.
- 2 The LIWC analysis suggests that people talk about their work and home-lives in a multidimensional way (i.e. emotional, cognitive, demands, resources). Future study concerning the assessment of the antecedents of interference in the work and home domain should study this systematically from a multidimensional framework (e.g., Jonge & Dortmann, 2002).
- 3 An innovation in the present study involved the assessment of both NA/PA within the work and home domains. Future research should explore this in different, possibly bigger samples and in both domains. Such a development would help in our understanding of moods within the work and home domains. Such an approach is congruent with the need to study affect within the job stress paradigm using theoretical guidance to do so (Brief & Weiss, 2002).

Analysing how people talk about their work and home-lives provides us with both a socio-linguistic profile of work/home and an insight into the way that people construct their boundaries between work and home. This all suggests that work and home should be viewed as a dynamic interaction which looks like a spiders web; a tug that occurs at one section sends vibrations throughout it (Barnett & Rivers, 1996).

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