

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TELEWORKING:  
A CASE STUDY FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

By

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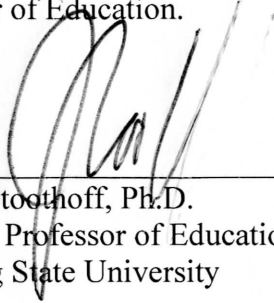
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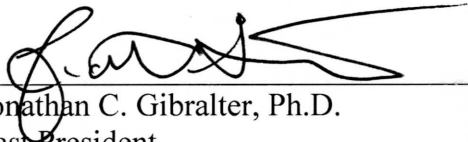
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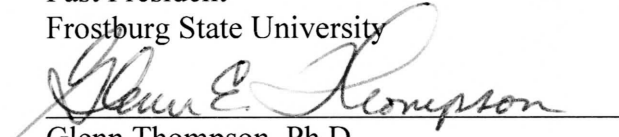
The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the College of Education, have examined and approved this dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

  
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## **Abstract**

### **THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TELEWORKING: A CASE STUDY FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT**

By

Kristin Albright Waters

Changes to society, the economy, and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have transformed the world of work as employees are expecting greater flexibility (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002; Matos & Galinsky, 2014; McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2010). Among all forms of flexibility, gaining in popularity is the concept known as teleworking (Nilles, 1998). Teleworking is on the rise (Lister, 2010; Matos & Galinsky, 2014; World at Work, 2007, 2009) however adequate literature is lacking on the teleworker experience. This case study was designed to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework and to determine if these employees experience fit, as outlined by the theoretical framework, *Concept of Fit* (Belanger & Collins, 1998).

The 11 participants in the sample included exempt employees who had a telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources at public, research university located in the state of Maryland. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and data analysis revealed that exempt employees did experience fit as outlined by the theoretical framework. While all participants had unique experiences with teleworking, there were similar themes among the entire participant group. Participants agreed that they would like to telework more. During their telework day, they are more focused and disciplined, leading to increased productivity. They understand, however, the need for face-to-face

communication and collaboration in the workplace. They plan specific tasks to complete while working from home and believe that they work with supportive supervisors and employees. It was recommended that additional research on the theoretical framework, as amended, be conducted to further support the framework. Additionally, it was recommended that research on supervisory support, the influence of gender on teleworking, and telework day in respect to experience, be explored.

*Keywords:* Teleworking, lived experience, exempt employees, Concept of Fit



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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The American workforce has had a number of major transitions throughout history when societal, economic, and technological trends transformed work, workers, and workplaces (Matos & Galinsky, 2010). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in society, the economy, and technology have transformed the world of work. Employees are expecting greater flexibility from their employers (McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2010). Flexibility is a broad term, encompassing a variety of ways in which employees can choose to work, influencing when or where employees do their job, such as flextime, working from home or telecommuting, and compressed workweeks (Matos & Galinsky, 2014). Among all forms of flexibility, gaining in popularity is the concept known as teleworking. Teleworking is broadly defined as work that is conducted away from the usual place of business, but mostly at home and that is often supported by telecommunications, Internet access, or a computer (Nilles, 1998).

Flexibility in the workplace is essential in meeting work and family demands of today's society. 'Traditional' gender roles have changed, resulting in both men and women having similar roles in work and home. The percentage of couples with both members employed outside the home, for example, has risen from 66% in 1977 to 80% in 2008 (Matos & Galinsky, 2010). The traditional family model of the male as the breadwinner and the female as the homemaker has rapidly become a remnant of society past (Gates Black, 2002) with women now representing 49% of the wage and salary workforce (Matos & Galinsky, 2010).

Even more compelling are the expectations of time at work, where in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the average workweek has exceeded 40 hours (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, &

Prottas, 2002; Matos, 2015). Although more couples have both members working out of the home and for longer hours, there is still the significant *third job* that has to be done at home including, but not limited to, child and elder care, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and home repair.

Past research shows that flexible scheduling, such as teleworking, increases perceptions of control over work and family matters, and in turn, lowers work-family conflict (McNall et al., 2010). In addition to greater perceived control of work and life demands, teleworkers also report decreased stress, decreased turnover, increased job satisfaction, increased health, and increased employee engagement (Bond et al., 2002; Matos & Galinsky, 2010; McNall et al., 2010; Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, & Besen, 2009). With these benefits from teleworking, employees are better able to address the third job. In short, by using flexible work arrangements, such as teleworking, employers are responding to changes in society.

Not only are employees responding to increasing demands between work and home, but are still recovering from the economic turmoil of the past decade when in 2008, the United States faced the most significant recession since the Great Depression (Matos & Galinsky, 2014). Employees currently deal with high unemployment rates and job insecurities, increased gas prices, and diminishing home and labor markets. The economy has put pressure on employees (Lister, 2010; Smith, 2010). This economic pressure is also eminent in the workplace as employers are tightening up financial belts by focusing on ways to better control costs and improve the bottom line (Raiborn & Butler, 2009).

Employers are using telework programs to reduce spending, often resulting in cost



savings relative to office rent and occupancy needs, real estate taxes, and property maintenance expenses (Mello, 2007). Teleworking is a tool used to reduce costs to both the employer and employee, all while reducing environmental resources. Employees also experience cost savings. In a comprehensive synthesis of potential benefits of teleworking, for example, Lister (2010) indicates that employees who travel 60 miles round trip for work could save up to \$5,800 a year with half-time teleworking. In reducing the number of employees driving to work, there is decreased congestion on the road, leading to a reduction in fossil fuel emissions, congestion on roads, and traffic accidents.

Advancements in technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have changed the world of work, in shifting how and where work is completed. Technology miniaturization, processing power maximization, and telecommunications integration have pushed the concept of teleworking; the ability to provide an anytime, anywhere opportunity to conduct business (Raiborn & Butler, 2009). With technology, employees are able to access files, perform work tasks, and communicate with others remotely. In fact, nearly two-thirds of wage and salary workers use computers for their jobs daily, with a majority using computers for personal reasons as well (Bond et al., 2002). With the wide spread use of computers to perform tasks, accessibility to technology with personal computers and smart technology, and high-speed internet, employees are no longer confined to the place of employment to complete work. Work can be performed remotely, leading to an increased interest in teleworking.

Teleworking is on the rise. In 2001 it was estimated that 7 million employees teleworked. This estimate has grown to 17.5 million by 2008 (Lister, 2010; World at

Work, 2009). Research supports the notion that advancements in technology have created the opportunity for more employees to telework. Specifically, increased usage of broadband internet has helped employees more productively work from a distance, especially in accessing corporate networks (World at Work, 2007). This ease of accessibility may lend support to the growth of teleworking. As discovered by Matos and Galinsky (2014), employers have continued to increase options that allow at least some employees to better manage the times and places in which they work, increasing flex place; options from 50% in 2008 to 67% in 2014.

With changes to society, the economy, and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a need for work-life flexibility. Research indicates that teleworking allows employers to address the needs of employees. Yet, emphasis on teleworking within the workplace is limited.

As teleworking has grown in popularity, it is of concern that there has been reduced emphasis in managing teleworkers regarding job performance. In their *2014 National Study on Employers*, Matos and Galinsky (2014) found that when making job performance appraisals of supervisors, only 48% of employers considered management of flexible workplace arrangements a contributing factor. Of even greater concern is the lack of training given to supervisors who manage teleworkers. In a survey of employers located throughout the United States, 79% (n = 455) indicated that training on how to successfully manage a teleworker is not provided (World at Work, 2011a). There appears to be a disconnect between popularity and management of teleworking. One can question how this disconnect impacts the place of employment and more specifically, those who telework.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, much of the research available on teleworking focuses on outcomes such as increased productivity and reduction in costs. Yet adequate literature is lacking on the individual outcomes, or rather, teleworker experience. As such, employers are limited in their knowledge base when creating and implementing telework policies and supervising teleworkers.

Teleworking will continue to grow in popularity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thus becoming available as an option to a greater number of employees. As such, it is imperative to understand how employees telework, or rather, how they experience teleworking. Teleworking was first introduced in the United States in the 1950s. Throughout the decades, it has continued to grow in popularity and with the changes to society, the economy, and advancements in technology within the last 20 years, teleworking is a form of flexibility in the workplace that is here to stay and the concept needs greater attention.

Higher education is one particular workforce that would benefit from additional research on teleworking. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it profound challenges to the nature, values, and control of higher education in the United States (Zusman, 2005). In the early 2000s, institutions of higher education experienced reductions of state allocations, decreased interest on endowments, and in some areas, a decrease in student enrollment. The notion of *do more with less* became prevalent, leading to increased class sizes, reduction in teaching staffs and instructional resources, frozen salaries, and minimal curricular offerings (Noble, 2003). In doing more with less, varieties of strategies new to higher education have been implemented including teleworking.

The approximately 4,000 plus institutions of higher education located throughout

the United States represent a substantial workforce (Nuter, 2011). Although representing a large portion of the workforce, literature available on teleworking within higher education is scarce. Of the literature that is available, as studies are from the late 1990s and early 2000s, findings are not reflective of the current workforce. Much has changed in higher education since this time. In addition, of the research that is available, much is from a quantitative perspective. Although valuable, quantitative literature lacks in the ability to offer conclusions from individual or singular experiences. As more individuals begin to telework, it is important to understand their unique experience with teleworking.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes to society, the economy, and technology have led to greater demand for flexibility in the workplace, specifically, teleworking. Despite the increase in popularity of teleworking throughout the United States, literature has not yet captured the experience of the teleworker. This is a concern for managers of teleworkers and human resource managers alike who are responsible for managing teleworkers and upholding teleworking policies. Moreover, literature within the field of higher education is lacking. As institutions of higher education represent a large sector of the workforce, it is important to understand teleworking from this particular sector of the work force within the United States.

To date, there is a gap in the literature in understanding the experiences of the teleworker. Failure to understand these experiences limits employers' ability to appropriately implement and uphold policies regarding teleworking. This study filled a void in the literature related to exempt employees and their lived experiences of teleworking.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. The study site was a medium sized public research university located in the state of Maryland, from this point on known as *State University*. Analysis of the teleworkers' experiences was through the lens of *Concept of Fit*, the theoretical framework of this study.

### **Significance of Study**

This study was significant for several reasons. Currently, there are multiple definitions of teleworking, as indicated in Chapter 2, the literature review. This study explored the lived experiences of those who telework and lends further support towards a definition of teleworking. Second, this study addressed the notion of *fit*, as outlined in the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit. This theoretical framework has not been widely used, and therefore results may further contribute to and lend support to this framework. As indicated in Chapter 2, there is a gap in the literature in understanding the experiences of those who telework. As this study provided findings, results, and recommendation for future research, it has filled a gap in the literature from a qualitative perspective.

Additionally, this study may help guide personnel policies. Policy makers, such as human resource managers, may find these results significant in either further enhancing or implementing telework programs or teleworking policies. Managers of employees may also find these results significant. Those who supervise teleworkers may use these results in their management of personnel and those who do not supervise teleworkers may use these results when creating telework initiatives. In addition, this study was significant to

the case site, as to date, assessment of the teleworking policy has not taken place. The results from this case study may inform State University in such a way as to enhance or modify the current teleworking policy.

This study was significant to the teleworker, as it provided additional context of the experiences of those who telework. Results from this study may provide information to a teleworker who is interested in better understanding his or her own experience, or may help provide evidence that supports his or her own experience. Lastly, this study was significant as it could educate non-teleworking employees about the experience of teleworking. This may assist in the decision making process of employees of whether or not to telework. Overall, this study further added to the knowledge base of teleworking, and therefore was significant.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Belanger's and Collins' (1998) Concept of Fit served as the theoretical framework for this research study. Advancements in information systems and communication technologies are instrumental in the development of distributed work arrangements; encompassing many alternatives to working in a traditional office. These remote work options include satellite work centers, neighborhood work centers, flexible work arrangements, generic offices (recently named hoteling), and telecommuting or telework (Belanger & Collins, 1998). However, as argued by the authors, assessments of outcomes of these work arrangements are minimal.

The authors completed a literature review on all areas of distributed work arrangements that were present as of 1996. In summary, the authors indicated that there is a lack of empirical research around distributed work arrangements, as well as limited

theory on this concept. Pulling from research in organizational science, psychology, communication, and information systems; based upon personal experiences of the authors and on conversations with telecommuters, a research framework known as Concept of Fit emerged.

The theoretical framework posed that organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics all influence outcomes of distributed work arrangements. It more specifically suggests that the phenomena, or interaction, between the characteristics determines if the distributed work arrangement fits. If fit exists, there are effects on outcomes (Belanger & Collins, 1998). The authors theorized that no single characteristic, comprised of several variables, is responsible for the outcome of the worker; rather, certain characteristics from all four areas must be present in order to lead to a successful work arrangement outcome. Organizational characteristics include the organizational culture and the organizational control mechanisms. Individual characteristics refer to individual objectives and individual skills. Work characteristics are tasks that are appropriate or possible to complete in the distributed work arrangement site. Lastly, technology characteristics include items such as computers, faxes, and printers, the setup of this technology, as well as security of this technology.

The authors speculated that elements of these four characteristics indicate if there is fit within the distributed work arrangement. Figure 1 illustrates the Concept of Fit theoretical framework, as it pertains to distributed work arrangements. Illustrated are the four characteristics that influence fit. If there is fit, there are three potential outcomes, which are societal, individual, and organizational. According to Belanger and Collins (1998), “the current framework does enable us to begin posing and testing research

questions on the different potential impacts of various profiles of fit and outcomes” (p. 149).

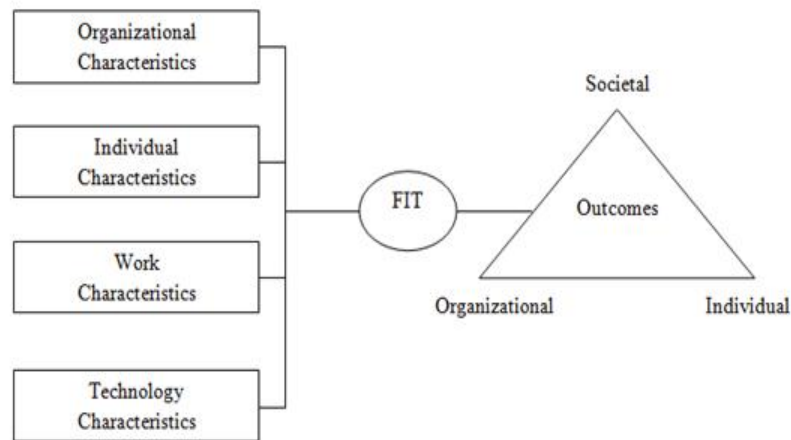


Figure 1. Adapted from “A Framework for Studying Distributed Work Arrangements,” by F. Belanger and R. W. Collins, 1998, *The Information Society*, 14, p. 139.

Also outlined by the authors is a summary of model variables, which provide examples for all four characteristics and outcomes. Table 1 outlines the Summary of Model Variables. This research study aimed to understand the lived experiences of exempt employees who currently telework, through the lens of the Concept of Fit theoretical framework. Therefore, it is important to understand the framework as well as the variables that comprise the four characteristics of the distributed work arrangements.

Table 1

*Summary of Model Variables*

Organizational Characteristics	Examples
Organizational objectives	Cost savings, increased productivity and employee demands/incentives
Organizational culture	Employee commitment and loyalty
Organizational control mechanisms	Outcome, behavioral, personal, and clan controls
Individual Characteristics	Examples (continued)



Individual objectives	Cost savings, control of work schedule
Individual skills	Technical and problem solving-skills, communication, reliability and self-sufficiency
Work Characteristics	Examples
Communication pattern	Base on task type: high or low information exchange requirements
Coordination requirements	Based on task type: standardized, scheduled, mutual agreement and team coordination
Technology Characteristics	Examples
Security requirement	Appropriate equipment and furniture, information ownership and control established
Physical setup	Quiet space, access to appropriate equipment and support
Outcomes	Examples
Societal	Reduced pollution, work provided in low employment areas
Organizational	Increased productivity, employee retention, reduced overhead
Individual	Increased satisfaction, control of work schedule, increased productivity, reduced commuting time and costs, stress from work-family conflicts

### Research Design Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. One institution of higher education in the state of Maryland that has a teleworking policy available for employees represented the study site, known as *State University*. As such, the researcher employed a case study, an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The bounded system of this research study was an institution of higher education that has a telework policy available for eligible employees.

The central tendency among all types of case study is that it tries to illuminate a

decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what results (Schramm, 1971). As this research study was designed to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework, a case study was the most appropriate research method. More specifically, the researcher employed an intrinsic case study, as the researcher was interested in the particular case; exempt employees. In an intrinsic case study, the purpose is not to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon, but rather is undertaken because of an intrinsic interest in, for example, a particular child, clinic, conference, or curriculum (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

As the researcher was interested in understanding the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework, an intrinsic case study, within the bounded system of one institution of higher education, was the most appropriate design. The researcher was most prepared in understanding the why and the how of the experiences of exempt employees who telework by using a case study. A call for volunteers was solicited via individual email. Participants who met the two criteria participated in an interview regarding their experiences of teleworking.

All interviews were digitally voice recorded. The researcher took notes during the interview. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher with use of a qualitative design software program. All participants were provided the opportunity to review their individual transcript and the final research report. Open and analytic coding was used to determine categories from the data. The two research questions and the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit, drove data analysis.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this research study:

- What are the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework?
- Do these employees experience fit as outlined by the Concept of Fit theoretical framework?

## **Assumptions**

This study made several assumptions. First, it was assumed that teleworking is a topic of interest and relevant to study. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 lends support that this topic is of interest and illustrates a gap in knowledge regarding teleworking. As illustrated throughout the literature review, teleworking provides benefits to both the employer and employee and is an initiative that can attract and retain employees. Yet literature is limited within the specific field of higher education. Therefore, teleworking is relevant to the field of higher education and a worthwhile topic to study.

It was also assumed that the participants would answer openly and honestly. All participants were provided with a consent form that defined the steps to protect confidentiality. In addition, all participants were made aware by the researcher that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher further offered confidentiality to the participants by using a participant-selected pseudonym in the results portion of the study.

It could also be assumed that the research method was designed to properly address the two research questions. First, a panel of experts reviewed and approved the research method before it was employed, including the interview protocol. Second, a pilot study was performed to ensure that the interview protocol supported to the research

method and two research questions.

Finally, it was assumed that the sample size would be representative of the population of State University. The researcher used individual emails to solicit volunteers. All exempt employees who met the criteria were solicited in an attempt to have at least 50% of the total population in the sample size. Lastly, the researcher collected data beyond saturation, where no new categories or themes emerged from the continuation of interviewing participants (Creswell, 2007). This ensured that data collection, and subsequent results, could be generalized to the population of State University.

### **Limitations**

As with any research project, this study had several limitations. The first limitation was that there was not one unified definition of teleworking. As indicated in Chapter 2, there are varying definitions of teleworking. Due to the variety of terms used, results from prior studies may not be generalizable. While this study defined telework as those who are on an official telework agreement, conducting work related tasks away from the main office, research indicates that a growing percentage of the workforce may telework on an ad hoc basis without having an official agreement. It is possible that if ad hoc teleworkers were included in the population, the current results of this study would vary.

Second, the time in which the data collection took place could have limited the results. Data collection took place in November and December of 2015. During that time, institutions of higher education are in the second half of the fall semester; a time of year that includes midterms, finals, and three breaks, encompassing major American holidays.

During that time of year, exempt employees could have altered their work schedule or their telework agreement, which may have adjusting their views on the topic. Even further, exempt employees may not have had ample time to participate in a study, limiting the sample size.

A third, and final, limitation was that of data collection procedures. Data collection took place through personal interviews. Although a digital recording device was used to voice record the interviews, it was possible that notes made by the researcher were not in the same fashion as intended by the participant. It was also possible that the researcher missed collecting all possible data from a participant. In other words, the data collection procedure was a limitation, as it did not guarantee that the researcher drew from the participants all possible information that may have been useful in data analysis and results.

### **Delimitations**

This study had several delimitations. As this was an intrinsic case study, there was only one site institution, State University. Institutions of higher education across the United States may have had differing policies on teleworking at the time of this study, lending to various types of experiences from those who telework. Therefore, there was a possibility that findings could not be generalized.

A second delimitation was the institution selected for this case study. During the research study, the institution was the current place of employment of the researcher. Therefore, participants may have known the researcher, and as a result, may not have been as candid or forthcoming with information out of comfort or assumed lack of anonymity, even though the researcher employed confidentiality.

Another delimitation was that the researcher only included exempt employees in the population. Institutions of higher education also employ faculty and nonexempt staff members. Therefore, with only exempt employees included, the results of this study were specific to this particular group of employees. Institutions of higher education may not be able to generalize the results to their entire faculty and staff population.

Although these delimitations existed, this was still a worthwhile study. There is a gap in the literature regarding teleworking, specifically within higher education, regarding the experiences of those who telework. This study examined the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. This study also determined if the exempt employees experienced fit, as defined by the theoretical framework known as Concept of Fit.

### **Definitions**

*Telework:* Work that is conducted away from the usual place of business but mostly at home and that is often supported by telecommunications, Internet access, or a computer (Nilles, 1998). Working at a location other than the employee's customary worksite (State University, 1999).

*Teleworker:* A person who is regularly scheduled, for at least one to two day(s) per pay period, to work at home, a satellite office, or a Telework Center to produce an agreed upon work product (State University, 1999).

*Telework Agreement:* A document that outlines the terms and conditions between employee and supervisor for the duration of the telework project which is approved by the Department Head, Division Head and Department of Human Resources prior to the start of the telework project. The agreement is voluntary and may be terminated by the

employee or the supervisor at any time. In addition, the telework agreement is limited to the current supervisor/employee reporting relationship and is not guaranteed to continue into a new supervisory or reporting relationship (State University, 1999).

*Exempt Employee:* An employee who is employed at will (if hired after January 1, 2000); not eligible for overtime pay; does not complete an hourly timesheet; and is not covered by the overtime pay provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (State University, 2007).

*Concept of Fit:* A theoretical framework that posits that organizational, individual, work and technology characteristics all influence outcomes of distributed work arrangements. It more specifically suggests that the fit between the variables affects societal, organizational, and individual outcomes (Belanger & Collins, 1998).

### **Organization of the Study**

This study was organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the topic of the study, the purpose statement, the research questions, and the significance of the research. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relevant to the topic. The third chapter reviewed the methodology, including the sample size, study site, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Reviewed in Chapter 4 and 5 were the results of the study, based upon the two research questions of the study. Chapter 6 offered implications of the findings and addressed how these findings may influence future research.

## **Chapter 2 – Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

Currently, there is not one working definition of telework. It is multi-dimensional and defining it has not been easy (Dimitrova, 2002). A lack of singularity around the term creates inconsistencies in the literature and problems with implications to practice.

Counting teleworkers is problematic as there has been little general agreement on what constitutes a teleworker or on how to measure teleworking – whether teleworkers are employed, self-employed, part-time or full-time, what sort of information and communication technologies equipment they use or where they are located (Denbigh, 2003). There is extensive literature on teleworking, yet outcomes vary based upon the definition used. As illustrated by Madsen (2011), “the conflicting findings may be, in part, because of the ambiguity in telework definitions, the difference in organizational policies and practices, the wide variety of variations in sample and data collection methods, and the differences between perceived and actual results” (p. 148).

For example, in assessing millennials’ attitudes towards autonomy, work-life balance, perceived computer competence, and its relationship to telework preference, Nicholas (2007) defined teleworking as a, “flexible form of work that enables an employer to work at home or at telecenters” (p. 12). For this particular study, teleworking was defined primarily by the use of telecommunications, where location of work is not relevant. As the author stated, “the use of some kind of telecommunications distinguishes teleworking from simply working at home” (Nicholas, 2007, p. 12). Regardless of the type of work performed away from the place of employment, unless the work involved telecommunications, it did not constitute teleworking for Nicholas’ particular study. Yet



in their publication of *Telework Explained*, a manual for adopting telework in the workplace, Gray, Hodson, and Gordon (1993) defined teleworking as:

a flexible way of working which covers a wide range of work activities, all of which entail working remotely from an employer, or from a traditional place of work, for a significant proportion of work time. Teleworking may be on either a full-time or a part-time basis. The work often involves electronic processing of information, and always involves using telecommunications to keep the remote employer and employee in contact with each other. (p. 2)

In this particular definition, telework was broadly defined as any type of work performed away from the place of employment.

In outlining a theoretical framework of telework, Verbeke, Schulz, Greidanus, and Hambley (2008) indicated that teleworking arrangements should encompass a typical work week but that “an employee’s telework arrangement may be formal (that is, the employer has a formal telework policy) or informal (that is, arranged on an informal or ad hoc basis with the employee’s supervisor)” (p 2). From this particular type of definition, one could argue that anyone who performs any type of work away from the office is a teleworker, on an informal basis, thus increasing the percentage of teleworkers significantly.

In a 2014 study of telework success, Torten (2014) defined teleworking as work that is interchangeable to any alternative working situation including working from home, satellite centers, neighborhood work centers, and mobile working during normal working hours; a definition coined by Kurland and Bailey (1999). In this quantitative study, Torten reviewed overall years worked, including years as a teleworker and days per week

teleworked, to determine employees' success as defined by job satisfaction, performance, and productivity. In this particular study, telework was broadly defined.

Yet this is not true of all research, as studies also utilized telework to define a particular population. In a 2002 qualitative case study of work practices of managerial and sales teleworkers of a telecommunications company, Dimitrova (2002) defined teleworkers as, "corporate employees who perform most of their work outside the traditional office with the help of computers and information technology...the operational definition becomes full-time home-based corporate telework" (p.13). This definition of telework was unique to this particular study. In the literature review of this study, the author noted the challenge of defining telework by stating that, "telework is multi-dimensional and defining it has not been easy....the complex nature of telework requires fine distinctions to set it apart from other related phenomena" (Dimitrova, 2002, p. 12).

Overall, teleworking is a broad term. Several variations are evident throughout the literature. With an unclear definition of what constitutes a teleworker, it is also challenging to assess outcomes.

Consistent throughout the literature, however, is the notion that teleworking takes place away from the traditional office environment. Several variations of telework exist, based upon how work is completed and by whom. One variation, for example, is telecommuting. As defined by Nilles (1998), telecommuting is periodic work that takes place outside of the main office, one or more days per week either at home, a client's site, or in a telework center. A telecommuter, then, spends the majority of the workweek away from the main office.

A second variation to telework is remote working. In remote working, all work

takes place outside of the main office. These centers were first conceived in the United States as facilities to provide conveniently located office space and related resources to would-be telecommuters who could not, were not allowed to, or would not work from home (Kugelmass, 1995). Remote workers may live in different states or countries and often complete work tasks from a remote work center. Similar to remote work centers are satellite offices and telecenters. Employees report to a center, usually shared by other employees, to work remotely from the main office.

Hoteling, yet another variation of telework, is a concept of multiple telecommuters utilizing one office space in the main office on offsetting days. In other words, multiple telecommuters share an office space, each with a designated day for that space. Telework that is completed completely away from the main office is referenced as home work. Home workers are individuals who move in and out of part or full-time work for intermittent or longer periods, as personal situations change, and never report to a main office (Pratt, 1984).

Among these variations of telework, consistent is the notion that some portion of work is completed away from the main office. The frequency and location, however, can vary greatly. Again, with such variety, it is difficult to define telework, and therefore, who teleworks. As such, results of studies on telework vary greatly based upon the definitions used. Overall, teleworkers have the ability to work remotely outside of the main office, on either a consistent or an ad hoc basis. As a result, telework s often referenced in the literature under the topics of flexibility in the work place, or work-life balance.

However, findings throughout the literature are inconsistent regarding the

enhancements telework has on work-life balance of employees. Gajendran and Harrison (2007), for example, constructed a meta-analysis of 46 studies, 27 published works and 19 dissertations, to determine the positive and negative outcomes of teleworking. Comprised of quantitative and qualitative studies, representing 12,883 employees, the authors concluded that telework reduces work-family conflicts, leading to greater work-life balance. The authors also conclude that teleworking leads to greater job satisfaction and performance.

Yet Noonan and Glass (2012) stated the opposite regarding telework and work-life balance. The researchers reviewed results from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, ranging in data from the 1990s through the mid-2000s. The researchers ascertained that, “the ability of employees to work at home may actually allow employers to raise expectations for work availability during evenings and weekends and foster longer workdays and workweeks” (Noonan & Glass, 2012, p. 45). These findings suggest reduced work-life balance of those who telework.

However, findings throughout the literature are consistent in that teleworking usually takes place during normal business hours; or pre-approved adjusted schedules (Gray et al., 1993; Kurland & Bailey, 1999; Torten, 2014; Verbeke et al., 2008). In other words, teleworking takes place within a 40-hour workweek as arranged by an employee and employer. Also consistent is the notion that teleworking requires information and communication technologies. Several researchers have indicated the need of technology for teleworking and have emphasized that telework is organizational work performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time, augmented by computer

and communication technology (Dimitrova, 2002; Koh, Allen, & Zafar, 2014; Kraut, 1989).

Within the realm of telework, there is telecommuting, remote working, hoteling, and homeworking. These are all common terms referenced throughout the literature. Of concern is the lack of standardization of the term *telework* as well as implementation of telework throughout the workforce. For the purposes of this study, telework was defined as “work that is conducted away from the usual place of business but mostly at home and that is often supported by telecommunications, Internet access, or a computer” (Nilles, 1998, p. 1).

### **The Rise and Growth of Telework**

In the pre-industrial era, large numbers of people worked mainly at or close to home, for example in craft workshops and on local land (Baruch, 2000; Olson & Primps, 1984). It was not until the industrial revolution that the United States experienced a shift and more work started to take place outside of the home. During this time, having a central location for work was essential. Simply stated, factories and assembly plants needed to be close to sources of raw material, and most importantly, a production workforce. Centralized work became essential to optimize efficiency (Nilles, 1998; Topi, 2004). The majority of the workforce reported to an office or factory each day. In recent decades, however, an information revolution compelled firms to unbind time and task from place (Harrison, Johns, & Martocchio, 2000 as cited by Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Digital technologies have enabled common, even synchronous activities to be distributed across employees at remote locations (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Herschel & Andrews, 1997; Topi, 2004).

**The formation of teleworking.** Shortly after innovations in communication and computer technologies during the 1950s, the idea of telecommunications originated, with the expectation that workers use technology to perform work away from the conventional office (Baruch, 2000). In the Federal Government, teleworking was available as early as 1957, where the Comptroller General approved payment of salaries on a case-by-case basis to federal employees to work from home (Joice, 2000). At the time, the term teleworking had not yet come into existence. Although there was growth in technology, the concept of using technology to enhance working remotely did not exist. The notion of using technology to enhance remote working first emerged in the 1970s when information and communication technologies entered mass production and exploded in a variety of applications (Dimitrova, 2002).

During the 1960s, Jack Nilles, U.S. academic and consultant, began teleworking from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. while working as a consulting rocket scientist to the US Air Force Space Program (Denbigh, 2003; Joice, 2000). Known as *the father of teleworking*, Jack Nilles indicated that teleworking would impact the world of work and change how and where employees worked (Gray et al., 1993; Hequet, 1994; Madsen, 2011). In 1973, he coined the terms *telecommuting* and *teleworking* in an effort to launch a Federal Government pilot program (Joice, 2000). At the time, teleworking arose in response to workers in the suburbs after rising oil and energy costs led to an increase in demand for work to be performed at a location away from the traditional office (Caillier, 2013).

Also during this time, Frank Schiff, Vice President and Chief Economist for the Committee for Economic Development with the Federal Government, challenged the

Federal Government to look at management practices, union rules, and Federal laws and regulations in an effort to facilitate working at home as a means of improving productivity, saving costs, and saving energy (Joice, 2000). Coining the term *flexiplace*, Schiff believed that working remotely could encompass an employee's home and other locations such as satellite work centers. As Nilles and Schiff were both government employees when they created and piloted these programs, one can argue that the formation of teleworking is a concept from the Federal Government. Government has played a significant role in the start, growth, and promotion of telework (Fenson & Hill, 2003). Throughout the 1970s, small pilot programs within the Federal Government took place with little momentum. For example, in 1974, after Nilles completed his testing for the National Science Foundation on teleworking, he was unable to convince any other government agency to pilot teleworking (Joice, 2000).

**The national growth.** The concept of teleworking started to gain momentum throughout the country in the 1980s in response to energy crises, transportation issues, and environmental concerns (Markarian, 2007). First, a law was passed that specifically targeted a reduction in commuting as a means of reducing pollution (and road congestion) (Gray et al., 1993). Employers responded to this law by implementing teleworking programs to keep vehicles off the road. Second, the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that there would be a drop in the number of highly qualified employees within the labor market during this time and investigated possible options to offset this predicted decline (Joice, 2000). As employers feared losing qualified employees which would lead to increased job vacancies, teleworking aided in the attraction and retention of qualified staff.

During this time, advancements to technology became available in the workplace, providing greater ease for work to be completed remotely. Estimates indicated that 50% to 66% of occupations were appropriate for telework (Baruch, 2000; Harkness, 1977 as cited by Olson & Primps, 1984). Employers were able to adapt to the concept of teleworking due to the technology available at that time.

Within the Federal Government, in 1980, the National Institute of Health and the Department of the Army piloted an 18-month work from home program, in response to work scheduling difficulties; and in 1989, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) employed a 6-month trial for 11 employees (Joice, 2000). During this year, in October, the Loma Prieta earthquake struck California, damaging the EPA office building and displacing 800 employees (Fenson & Hill, 2003). By March 1990, 60% of the displaced employees were back in a traditional workstation while 40% continued to flexiplace and telework. After the displacement period, the EPA conducted several studies of the employee experience, and based upon the results, decided to incorporate flexiplace as both a general workplace strategy and emergency response strategy.

Throughout the 1990s, teleworking occupied the national agenda. Businesses across the country began to use teleworking in response to the Federal Government's launch of the Clean Air Act of 1990 (Belanger & Collins, 1998; Gray et al., 1993; Hequet, 1994). Under the law, employers with more than 100 workers at a site were required to reduce employee trips to work in the most polluted cities (Hequet, 1994). In response, major cities provided opportunities for employees to telework in an effort to reduce pollution. President George H. W. Bush publicly endorsed teleworking, stating that, "telecommuting means saving energy, improving air quality and quality of life. Not



a bad deal” (Wheeler, 1990 as cited by Joice, 2000, p. 14).

President Bill Clinton, in 1993, began a series of actions designed to grow federal telework by emphasizing the need to create a family-friendly work environment and taking advantage of the new technology and internet services. This emphasis led to the 1996 National Teleworking Initiative, with a goal of increasing federal employee teleworkers to 60,000 in 1998 and 160,000 in 2002 (Joice, 2000). The number of American workers who telecommuted grew 30 percent from 1995 to 1997, to more than 11 million (Nilles, 1998). In 1993, the U.S. Department of Transportation projected that the number of teleworkers would increase from 2 million in 1992 to 6.2 million in 1997 to 15 million in 2002 (U.S. Department of Transportation, 1993).

In 1997, Vice President Al Gore put teleworking at the top of the Federal Government agenda. In sharing with all staff findings from a National Performance Review he stated that:

...as many of you already understand, we must intensify our efforts to make telecommuting more readily available to our workers, not just in times of personal or medical emergency, but as an important management strategy. The accessibility of more than two dozen federal telecommuting centers, the advances in information technology, and the proven effectiveness of work-at-home arrangements, should give us the confidence that we can meet the challenge of 60,000 federal telecommuters by the end of the fiscal year 1998...(Joice, 2000, p. 19)

In 1999, the Federal Government offered several states tax incentives and financial credits for establishing teleworking programs. These incentives and credits were

extended to institutions of higher education. During this decade, much of the employer's interest in promoting teleworking was motivated by pressure to reduce pollution, secure funding, or receive tax breaks. The notion of teleworking as a benefit of employment was not emphasized during this period.

Moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teleworking continued to be utilized in the workplace as technology continued to improve and become accessible to employees. Telework laws, initially enacted in 2000 by Public Law 106-346 §359, required federal executive agencies to establish telework policies and allow up to 25% of eligible employees to telework to the maximum extent practical without diminishing employee performance (Telework.gov, 2000). Computer and telecommunication advances in recent years, including computer networks and data systems, FAX machines, and electronic mail, have dramatically widened the choice of workplace for information workers and others so they can work wherever these tools are available, including the home (U.S. Department of Transportation, 1993). In 2000, for example, Gershuny stated that roughly one-third of Americans had computers at home. Later, in 2002, Bond et al. articulated that nearly two thirds of wage and salary workers use computers for their daily jobs.

Teleworking peaked in the United States in 2001, in response to the terrorist attacks to New York City, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. After September 11, millions of square feet of Lower Manhattan office space was destroyed or rendered unusable, leaving companies and workers to find alternative workplaces. Dozens of firms' offices, even including the U. S. Army's Pentagon location, or firms themselves were wiped out (Fenson & Hill, 2003). Since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, as well as the threats of anthrax, many workers have changed their way of thinking regarding

commuting to work (Nicholas, 2007).

In fact, due to the increase of teleworking within the workplace, World at Work, a nonprofit human resources association, started to survey and assess the teleworking phenomenon, starting in 2002. In surveying employees throughout the United States, based upon census data of employees over the age of 18, estimates indicated that in 2002, 7.7 million employees worked from home on a regular basis of at least one day per month. In 2005, this number grew to 9.9 million, with a spike to 12.4 million in 2006. In 2007, this number grew to 15 million and by the end of 2008, the number grew to 17.2 million (World at Work, 2007, 2009).

Telework has grown in popularity within the United States in the last several years. This growth correlates to changes in society, the economy, and advancements to technology. During this time, employers began to embrace concepts that created greater work-life balance (World at Work, 2007). This finding was consistent among other research. In 2007, Mello explored the prevalence of teleworking as well as the associated benefits and limitations. One key finding of this exploration was that:

the increase in the popularity of telework arrangements has paralleled several social and workplace trends, including the movement to a service and information-based economy, the demands by employees for both greater worker flexibility and employee participation in important work-related decisions and employee frustration with lengthening and increasingly costly commutes. (Mello, 2007, p. 248)

In 2005, for example, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, displacing people from their homes and places of employment (Lister & Harnish, 2011). In addition,

beginning in 2005, fuel prices steadily rose, with prices reaching as high as 4 dollars a gallon in 2008 (Lister & Harnish, 2011; World at Work, 2009). In an attempt to provide relief to employees, employers started to utilize telework to reduce fuel consumption and spending for employees. This time was also marked by the recession, which peaked in 2009. In a 2014 review of employee response to telework, Matos and Galinsky (2014) found that employers maintained or increased the flexibility they offered during the recession, perhaps to maintain employee engagement or perhaps to retain their key employees during times of economic upheaval. Lastly, the proliferation of high speed and broadband internet, along with other wireless access, provided greater access to the workplace from a remote location (World at Work, 2007).

Most recently, President Barack Obama signed the *2010 Telework Enhancement Act*, which requires federal agencies to create a teleworking strategy (Nuter, 2011; Snyder, 2012; Telework.gov, 2000), in an effort to reduce federal government spending and increase employee and employer benefits. Specifically, federal legislation dictated that federal telecommuters could only work from approved worksites, such as employee residences or a telework center, conveniently located closer to employee residences, and typically operated by the General Services Administration (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2011). The act also charged all government agencies to designate a senior manager to coordinate the agencies' telework program, determine eligibility of employees, and develop and implement telework training programs (Lister & Harnish, 2011).

The 2010 U.S. Census indicated that the proportion of all workers based from home at least one day per week increased from 7% to 9.5% between 1997 and 2010.

Additionally, the percentage of employees working from home exclusively increased from 4.8% to 6.6% (equal to an increase of 4.2 million people) (Goodman, 2013). A 2014 survey conducted by the recruiting firm Robert Half International on 1,777 Human Resource Directors in 13 countries estimated that 79% of companies allow staff to telecommute as part of their talent attraction and retention initiatives (Koh et al., 2014; Stone, 2013). It is undeniable that teleworking has grown since its inception in the 1970s.

Although the number of telecommuters appeared to be rising each year, the growth was not as fast as some enthusiasts predicted (Nilles, 1998). In a summary paper of interviews of managers and of telework employees in technical, managerial, and professional levels of organizations in Britain, in 1988, Bailyn stated that some futurists predicted that by the end of the 1990s one-third to one-half of all people would be working from home. Yet recent research on teleworking illustrated that this was not the case. Raiborn and Butler (2009) stated that in 2006 approximately 8% of American workers teleworked one day per month; by 2008, that figure was just over 11 percent, or approximately 33.7 million Americans (World at Work, 2009) indicating a 3% growth in two years. For the first time since assessing the telework phenomena in 2002, World at Work noted a decline in the total number of teleworkers from 2008 to 2010. As reported in the findings, “the total number of people who worked from home or remotely for an entire day at least once a month in 2010 was 26.2 million, down from 33.7 million in 2008” (World at Work, 2011a, p. 2).

Although teleworking has grown in popularity, it is not widely used in the workplace. There are several possible explanations for this. First, it is possible that workplace environments offer telework programs but are not able to accommodate

teleworking for all employees. One study estimated that no more than 16% of the work force is currently able to telecommute, given the constraints of management resistance, job unsuitability, technology, costs, and other factors (Nilles, 1998). A longitudinal study of flextime showed a steady increase in corporate and government programs, ranging in growth from 15% to 29% from 1977 to 1985. Yet employees actually participating in flextime programs have remained relatively constant at 12% between 1986 and 1990. In addition, in 1994 it was found that teleworkers with formal arrangements amounted to only 1.6% of U.S. workers (Hequet 1994; Kugelmass, 1995).

More recently, in 2010, Lister found that only 5% of companies reported offering flexible workplace benefits, which was only one percentage point in change from 2003. A year later, in their comprehensive review of teleworkers, Lister and Harnish (2011) indicated that, “fifty million U.S. employees who want to work from home hold jobs that are telework compatible, though only 2.9 million consider home their primary place of work (2.3% of the workforce)” (p.4). It is evident that jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are conducive to telework; yet large-scale teleworking initiatives are not widely used throughout places of employment.

A second explanation is that teleworking is mainstream as to transcend a formal agreement. With advancements in technology, employees do not require specialized equipment to access work remotely. High-speed internet and smart technology mean more employees have access to work and may easily complete tasks remotely. These employees may not identify as teleworkers. When reviewing teleworking in 1993, Gray et al. predicted that teleworking would increasingly be absorbed into mainstream working practices and that more flexible, location-independent working practices would begin to

emerge. It seems that this prediction holds true today.

Similarly, teleworking on an ad hoc basis, as opposed to a formal agreement has grown in popularity. In 2011, an assessment on employer telework was sent out to all members of World at Work. Of the 537 employers who responded, 83% offered telework to employees on an ad hoc basis (to meet a repairperson, care for a sick child, etc.), which indicated that employers were willing to grant an accommodation to work from home on an as-needed basis (World at Work, 2011a). With a larger percentage of employers offering ad hoc teleworking, it is possible that formalized programs are not as popular in the workplace as once theorized.

A third explanation is the most recent recession. It is possible that those who did telework became unemployed between 2008 and 2010, thus decreasing the overall total number of teleworkers (World at Work, 2011a). It is also possible that with high unemployment rates, teleworkers returned to the main office for fear of job loss and increased anxiety surrounding job security (World at Work, 2011a). Matos and Galinsky (2014) surmised that the forms of flexibility in the workplace correlated to the reduction of time employees spend working for an organization. “Considering that these changes have occurred primarily during the recession and for the three years following its official end in 2009, these reductions may be a result of employers focusing on maintaining smaller workforces” (Matos & Galinsky, 2014, p. 22).

From 1970 to present day, teleworking has continued to gain in popularity, but overall, remains underutilized in the workplace. The 1970s and 1980s represented a time of pilot programs and exploration, with teleworking gaining in popularity in response to environmental crises. In the 1990s, concerns regarding fossil fuel emissions, work-life

balance, and advancements in technology created the platform for teleworking to flourish as a tool within the workplace. Government initiatives, terrorist attacks, rising gas prices, and the introduction of high-speed internet led to a growth in teleworking in the early 2000s.

Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in society, the economy, and technology have created a greater demand for teleworking in the workplace. As such, teleworking is a form of flexibility that needs additional attention. “Teleworking is here to stay, in some form and to some extent, and the evidence we have indicates that it can play an important role in making work more productive...there has been evidence on the pros and cons, but little critical empirical investigation” (Bailyn, 1988, p. 144).

The growth of teleworking varies among each state. One state of particular interest is Maryland, as this state implemented a telework policy in the late 1990s. The next section will review telework growth in the state of Maryland.

**The state of Maryland.** In the 1970s and 1980s, the Federal Government teleworking pilot program, referenced earlier, was implemented in the state of Maryland. This implementation was earlier than other states across the country, due to its close proximity to the nation’s capital. Hagerstown, Maryland, for example, served as a pilot location for telework centers (Fenson & Hill, 2003). Led by Marsha Fuller in 1991, it was recognized as the first Federal telecenter, and provided a geographically convenient satellite office shared by several agencies or employers (Joice, 2000). Yet, it was not until the Clean Air Act of 1990 when the state of Maryland began to explore teleworking on a larger scale. As indicated by Fenson and Hill (2003), “teleworking within state and federal agencies, as well as in private firms in poor-air quality areas, was a direct result of



concerns for the loss of federal funding on critical area projects” (p. 63). Therefore, many states, including Maryland, began to establish telework policies in an effort to retain federal funds.

From 1994 to 1999, Delegate Joan Pitkin of Bowie, Maryland, worked diligently to respond to federal regulations and designed pilot teleworking programs in the state of Maryland. Pitkin helped shape state policy regarding travel on the information highway, specifically through legislation to create both a telecommuting advisory committee, and subsequently a state telecommuting pilot program for state employees (Fenson & Hill, 2003, p. 64). This work did not go without notice as in 1999, Pitkin was awarded the Special Legislative Award of the International Telework Association and on July 1, 1999, legislation on teleworking was passed in the state of Maryland (Fenson & Hill, 2003; Maryland.gov, 2015).

The law requires the state’s Department of Budget and Management to establish telework programs in every state agency. When the legislation passed in 1999, the goal was to have 10% of all agency eligible employees participate in telework. Estimates for this time indicated that for the state of Maryland, implementing telework would result in the elimination of eight million vehicle trips annually within four years (Fenson & Hill, 2003). In 2013, the original legislation was amended to require the Department of Budget and Management to establish a statewide telework program and adopt policy and guidelines. In addition, the goal of 10% of all eligible agency employees participate in telework was increased to 15% (Maryland.gov, 2015). Although all employees are required to sign an agreement, and supervisors are required to report teleworking each year, little information is currently available on outcomes of this initiative. In fact, in an

extensive review of the state of Maryland website and the Department of Budget and Management website, no reports or summaries regarding telework are available.

**The University System of Maryland.** It was during this time, while the legislation was being considered, the presidents of the state institutions within the University System of Maryland began to discuss the possibility of implementing a university system-wide teleworking policy. In 2003, the presidents of the universities came together to draft a telework policy. This policy was submitted to the Board of Regents in 2003, however, the policy was not approved (J. Goedert, personal communication, August 10, 2015). Since this time, there has not been conversation among university presidents to implement a system-wide telework policy.

Yet, it is interesting to note that there is a telework policy available for the staff that works for the University System of Maryland Office. In 2013, Chancellor Kirwan signed a telework policy for system staff employees (J. Goedert, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The purpose of this policy is to provide employees work location flexibility. As many system office employees travel to institutions on a regular basis, teleworking affords employees the ability to work remotely when completing institutional visits. They are not required to return to the system office in between meetings. Although a university system-wide telework policy does not exist, several institutions within the state system have implemented a unique telework policy for their individual institution. Specifically, five of the 12 system institutions have a teleworking policy available for employees.

The institution of higher education that served as the study site for this case study, State University, implemented a telework policy in 1999. Since 1999, exempt and

nonexempt employees have been able to telework. Since 1999, 67 exempt employees have submitted a telework agreement to the Department of Human Resources (Human Resources representative, personal communication, July 15, 2015). As of June 30, 2015, 26 exempt employees and as of August 13, 2015, 48 exempt employees had a telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources. As indicated by the Human Resources representative, “these figures reflect new agreements and not those that have been renewed or extended. If a total of renewed or extended agreements were included, we would be more in the range of 131” (Human Resources representative, personal communication, July 15, 2015).

The current telework policy, which is a personnel policy for State University, has remained the same since it was first implemented. To date, the institution has not completed any revisions or assessments of it. Requested revisions to the policy would need to be submitted to the Policy Committee for review. As noted by the Human Resources representative, “assessments of our agreement would be helpful for us to further inform the policy” (Human Resources representative, personal communication, July 15, 2015).

Over the last two decades, telework has grown in popularity as a mechanism for university employees and employers to adapt to these changes. Specifically at State University, teleworking continues to grow in popularity; yet to date, there has been no assessment on outcomes or modifications to the telework policy. As teleworking will continue to be utilized at State University, it is important to assess its possible outcomes. The following section will review current literature available on telework, as it pertains to the workplace.

## **Employer Perspective**

**Reduced costs.** Consistent throughout the literature, a primary benefit of introducing teleworking for employers is reduced costs. With less employees reporting to an office building, employers are able to reduce overhead expenditures. As employers are responding to changes in the economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a reduction of costs may provide employers the savings needed to remain operational, to reduce furloughs or layoffs, or to hire additional staff. The following section reviews the literature available on cost savings to employers.

In 1995, the Federal Railroad Administration implemented a voluntary telecommuting program. During this year, the administration saved \$80,000. As most recent as 2008, the administration indicated yearly savings of \$87,285 for utilizing telecommuting (Joice, 2000). To create these savings, however, the administration closed field offices and to date has not opened any new field office spaces. While the administration has significantly reduced expenditures, it is not evident if closing the field offices created positive or negative outcomes for the employees, who now work solely from home.

Other industries within the United States have implemented teleworking, and as a result, have reported a reduction in expenditures. In an overall review of industry savings, Verbeke et al. (2008) stated that in 1999, IBM reported savings of \$75 million, in 2003 AT&T reported savings of \$34 million and in 2004, Nortel reported savings of \$22 million, each from introducing teleworking (p. 48). These savings were attributed to a reduction in annual real estate costs of office spaces, as employees of these companies reduced their time working in these spaces. Part-time employees were able to share

workspace, for example, therefore, companies were able to consolidate or downsize office spaces.

In 2010, Lister completed a quantitative synthesis of literature available on potential benefits of teleworking. In summary, Lister indicated that the company with the greatest reduction in costs, due to teleworking, was Sun Microsystems, with a savings of \$68 million a year in real estate costs, \$3 million a year in reduced power consumption, and \$25 million a year in IT savings. Within this organization, there were 17,000 employees. The company implemented teleworking where 2,000 primarily worked at home, and 15,000 worked at home one or two days a week. The selection process of these employees as well as the implementation of teleworking was not known.

With fewer employees reporting to an office, employers are able to reduce office overhead expenses, such as electricity, water, paper waste, heating and cooling, and office space. Telecommuting programs can also save on parking lot leases, furniture, supplies, maintenance, security, janitorial, insurance, taxes, common area, and other related costs (Lister, 2010). As indicated previously, hoteling provides employers the opportunity to have several staff members share one office. Goodman (2013) stated that eliminating the need for an onsite office can reduce a company's overhead costs for items such as computers, phones, electricity, heating and air conditioning, and other costs associated with keeping an office operational.

For many employers, the past several decades have been a time of financial strain. Teleworking programs provide employers with an opportunity to respond to these economic constraints. For example, in 1996, the Department of Education implemented a telework program to deal with budgeting problems, which led to savings in facility costs

for regional field offices. The savings from this initiative enabled the department to save 24 jobs that otherwise would have been lost (Joice, 2000).

Other savings, not tied to overhead expenditures, are noted throughout the literature. First, employers with teleworking programs note a reduction in used sick leave. While employees may not be well enough to report to the main office, or may not want to get others sick, they still have the ability to work remotely. Baruch (2000) noted that, “many cases that would prevent an employee under conventional contracts from getting to work will not stop a teleworker from being engaged with the work” (p. 36). Thus, employers spend less time out of the office sick. As a result, employers experience savings in paid sick leave and stalled completion of tasks.

Additionally, places of employment may be eligible for tax credits from implementing teleworking. Addressing the financial and non-financial issues related to teleworking, Raiborn and Butler (2009) stated that, “many governmental entities have instituted tax incentives or regulations that promote companies to engage in “greener” behaviors, with states such as California, Georgia, Virginia, and Maryland experiencing tax savings for teleworkers” (p. 34). These tax credits, some states waved taxes on the purchase of technology equipment, others provided awards for the purchase of equipment and a tax saving to employees who teleworked.

**Staffing.** Telework programs have also influenced staffing. As employees are no longer required to report to the office location in order to work, employers are able to cast a wider net in the hiring process of employees and recruit for employees with scarce skills (Bailyn, 1988). Baruch (2000) indicated that, “with teleworking, more people can be hired, such as single parents, second earners (usually mothers) with young children, or

disabled people who previously would have been unavailable for employment” (p. 36). In this study, Baruch completed interviews of 62 teleworkers located within five UK organizations in an attempt to understand how employees perceive teleworking.

Although the results from this study noted that teleworking led to a better workforce, those interviewed stated that when teleworking, employees needed to be self-motivated. More specifically, when asked their personal opinion of which qualities would make a person a good fit for teleworking, the majority of the respondents indicated self-discipline, self-motivation, ability to work on one’s own, tenacity as the top four characteristics. Employers need to ensure that when hiring employees, or enabling employees to telework, there is a fit between the employee and the telework arrangement.

In response to the rise of telecenters within the field of engineering, Humble, Jacobs, and Van Sell (1995) completed a literature review of telework centers, including benefits to both the employer and employee. As noted by Humble et al. (1995), telecommuting has been used to advance the accomplishment of affirmative action goals, since it facilitates employment for disabled workers and can aid women in going back to work following maternity leave. In a comprehensive review of data available on teleworking, including the U.S. Census, The Bureau of Labor Statistics, and telework organizations, Lister and Harnish (2011) indicated as a key finding that using home as a *reasonable accommodation* per the American with Disabilities act enabled 316,000 employees to be able to work from home. Teleworking provides the opportunity for a greater number of employees to work for a company that he or she would otherwise not be able to join if working from a central office location were required.

In addition, teleworking provides the opportunity for employers to better retain

staff. As indicated earlier, teleworking is growing in popularity, providing employees the opportunity for greater work-life balance. With teleworking, staff members who are required to relocate for personal reasons may have the opportunity to remain employed with their current organization. Therefore, employers may notice a reduction in staff turnover. Employers who retain top talent also save in the recruitment and training of new employees. The cost of replacing an employee extends far beyond the recruiting process; it includes separation costs, temporary replacement costs, training costs, and lost productivity (Lister, 2010). In addition, teleworking eliminates the need for employees to relocate for a new position, which may save employers from paying high-wage salaries in areas where cost of living is high.

Although teleworking provides opportunities for the employer to search for potential employees from a larger range and retain staff, teleworking may not fit for all employees. As the frequency in which a teleworker reports to the main office varies, managers of teleworkers may not be able to communicate directly with a staff member on a daily basis. It is important that managers understand how to manage teleworkers. Therefore, the following section will focus on management of teleworkers.

**Management.** As noted previously, teleworking is not as prevalent in the workplace as had once been predicted. There are several explanations for this. One explanation that deserves additional review is management of employees. This section will review the literature on management of employees in detail.

Bailyn (1988) indicated that telework has the potential to benefit both individuals and organizations, but to do so, will require changes in managerial processes. Specifically, “it is our thesis that such changes are necessary in any case if organizations



are to be more adaptable: to accommodate new kinds of people in the work force, to deal with rapidly changing demands” (Bailyn, 1988, p. 144). In other words, managers need to modify how employees, specifically, telework employees are managed, as teleworkers have different needs than office workers. Yet, as indicated in the literature, there has been a lack in manager support for teleworking, and therefore, little change in employee management.

In 2010, an online survey on teleworking was sent to World at Work members, located throughout the globe. Of the 5,191 invitations sent, 537 employees completed the online survey. Results from the survey revealed that perceived as a barrier is that of top management, more so than middle management, in the employee’s ability to create a flexible work arrangement (World at Work, 2011b). In addition, respondents indicated that the lack of top management buy in is getting in the way of telework for many. “Nearly four in every 10 organizations say that resistance from top management and/or lack of jobs conducive to these arrangements are key obstacles to the offering of all types of telework programs” (World at Work, 2011b, p. 9).

Evidence reveals that there is a growing expressed interest from employees to telework. In addition, there are an increasing number of jobs in the American economy conducive to be performed at home, which would be beneficial to both the employer and employee, if employers are willing to allow employees to do so (Noonan & Glass, 2012). Yet lack of management understanding and support impacts the ability for teleworking to be widely used in places of employment (Noonan & Glass, 2012; Topi, 2004).

The decreased visibility of teleworking employees may be the cause of this management resistance. Managers are usually able to stop in or visit with employees who

are located in a main office. For teleworkers, the lack of the ability for managers to stop in can lead to a perception of not working. When surveying supervisors regarding teleworkers, Hequet (1994) found that many managers asked, “How can I manage someone I can’t see?” This perception was consistent throughout the literature, as several studies indicated that there is an attitude with coworkers and bosses that, “if they can’t see you, you aren’t working” (Abdel-Wahab, 2007; Dalhstrom, 2013; Raiborn & Butler, 2009; Topi, 2004; Zbar, 2002). Managers may also claim that if employees are not working in the same place, they are not working together; that teleworking stifles teambuilding and collaboration. Yet, the reality is that plenty of work teams are not co-located, but share common goals and objectives, and jointly contribute to results, such as sale organizations (Gray et al., 1993).

In addition, evidence suggests that employees who telework are held accountable. Utilizing results from the 2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Caillier (2013) found that, in general, teleworkers were just as likely to be held accountable for results as non-teleworkers. The survey was administered to 540,727 full time Federal Government employees, with 226,376 responses, for a return rate of 49.3%. Of the data available, Caillier focused on responses from the IRS and completed the research study as “little is known empirically about the relationship between teleworking and management for results and teleworking and constructive feedback” (p. 649). This was further supported by Shin (1997), who stated that, “academic research has not provided enough rich theoretical and empirical support for the planning and implementation of telework in organizations” (as cited by Madsen, 2011, p. 154). As telework implementation has not received much focus within the research, it is understandable that research on outcomes is

lacking as well.

However, research is available on how to address the supervisor resistance to telework. One of the most effective means of addressing supervisor resistance of telework is the development and implementation of a performance management system, focused on outcomes. “Employers who have already-established performance management and feedback systems that focus on goal-setting and objective-based performance have found that such a system greatly facilitates the introduction of a telework program” (Mello, 2007, p. 258). With the focus of performance shifting to output, the results of work, versus input, time put in or the way of working (Bailyn, 1988; Pancucci, 2010) managers can focus less on where and how the work is completed. In fact, in the assessment of managers of teleworkers, Bailyn (1988) found that, “while the concept of managing output is not new, what is new is that this type of managing seems to be easier to do if employees are not visible. In fact, it becomes a necessity” (p. 151) as output may be the only variable for managers to evaluate employee performance of teleworkers. Humble, et al. (1995) indicated similar findings as they surmised that telecommuting presupposes supervisors to manage employees by results, communicating expected outcomes early, and controlling products and quality rather than time spent on tasks.

A second effective mean for addressing supervisor resistance to telework is to provide supervisors with ample research regarding the teleworker. As much of the research indicated the lack of management support as the main deterrent to teleworking, as teleworking effects how employees are managed (Powers, 2014), it is important for managers to understand the effects of teleworking and how to best manage a teleworker.

In addition to focusing on outcomes, managers should design and implement telework programs that lead to telework success.

In a review of literature on teleworking, for the purposes of formulating implications for management theory and practice, Madsen (2011) articulated that telework programs can be successful and provide numerous benefits, so long as programs are designed, implemented, and managed effectively. More specifically, “for management professionals to effectively recommend, develop, enhance, redesign, assess, or evaluate this potential performance improving intervention, telework, they must first have a better understanding of telework (e.g., benefits, challenges, implications) for employees, teams, and the organization as a whole” (Madsen, 2011, p. 148-149). This was further supported by World at Work that stated that “whether telework is viewed as a right or a reward, it needs to be designed, implemented, and communicated properly in order to be successful” (World at Work, 2011a, p. 5). In fact, results from the 2010 data collection showed that three out of four respondents (75%) in the employer survey reported that flexibility programs have a positive to very positive impact on employee engagement, motivation and retention (World at Work, 2011a).

Although positive outcomes are noted, these same employers also noted that training within the workplace, for both employees and managers of employees, is lacking. Specifically, only 21% of employers train managers on how to implement and support flexible work arrangements and only 17% train workers on how to be successful as an employee with a flexible work arrangement. In 2014, Matos and Galinsky (2014) published a summary of employer behavior of data collected from 2008 to 2014. A key finding within the data was that fewer employers report that supervisors are encouraged

to assess employee performance by what they accomplish and not just by face time, with 71% in 2008 to just 65% in 2014. Even more compelling, only 11% of employers indicated that they were encouraged to support flexible work arrangements and only 24% indicated that employers made an intentional effort to inform employees of the availability of work-life programs (Matos & Galinsky, 2014).

Overall, results from the research implied that supervisors are not equipped to manage someone that is not physically present. Supervising out-of-sight employees requires managers to rely on measures other than physical observation to monitor performance. Managers should obtain the skill set needed to supervisor a virtual worker, to understand that while a staff member is not in the office, they are working. However, employers are focusing less on teleworking, with offering fewer training and support for telework programs. As a result, teleworking is not as widely used in today's workplace as desired. Research on the topic of telework can better inform managers and employers, thus leading to greater use of teleworking. Therefore, additional research on the topic of telework is essential to the workplace.

### **Employee Perspective**

**Reduced costs.** For employees, the ability to work remotely or work a modified work schedule reduces expenditures often association with reporting to work. Employees are still responding to the changes in the economy that have taken place within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a result, teleworking provides employees the opportunity to save funds while responding to economic changes.

For example, teleworking provides an opportunity for employees to save money typically spent commuting to work, as with teleworking, there is a reduction in commute

time. In 2007, by teleworking one day a week, the average commuter saved an estimated \$2,104 per year (Markarian, 2007). These savings are a combination of gasoline, car repair, tolls, and parking fees.

More recently, in 2010, Lister indicated that from review of over 500 case studies, research papers, and books on teleworking, on average, half-time telecommuters could save anywhere from \$2,000 to \$6,800 a year. The savings varied based upon the distance between work and home, the geographic location of the employee, and fluctuating gas prices throughout the nation.

As a side note, Lister (2010) indicated that these reductions in expenses to the employee are also beneficial to the environment. With fewer employees commuting to work, there is a reduction of gas consumption, fossil fuel emission, and wear on roadways. Telecommuting can lead to a reduction in the number of commuting vehicles and thus contribute to the attainment of cleaner air and congestion mitigation (U.S. Department of Transportation, 1993). These reductions further support the economy, as it provides savings that can be spent elsewhere, further supporting the economy (Lister, 2010). In fact, states across the country are offering places of employment tax incentives for telework programs (Lister & Harnish, 2011). Specifically in the state of Maryland, teleworkers experienced savings as early as 2000, “when Parris Glendening became the first governor of Maryland to sign into law state funding that employers were to pass on to employees who gave up a parking spot at work” (Fenson & Hill, 2003, p. 29). The state of Maryland also offers tax incentives to employers offering teleworking programs.

Employees may experience additional savings that include decreased food costs, dry-cleaning costs, clothing costs (Verbeke et al., 2008), and parking fees (Lister, 2010).

Known as the *virtual raise*, teleworkers save on funds usually spent on daily expenses for the work place (Raiborn & Butler, 2009). As employees are working from home, there is less opportunity to join staff out for meals or coffee breaks, leading to less daily costs (Hartley, 2001). Although employees are saving funds, consequently, employees are spending less time with other employees. As will be indicated below, in varying degrees, teleworkers experience social isolation when removed from the workplace. The removal of coworker meals or coffee breaks may lead to this isolation.

Not only do teleworkers report financial savings, but they also report savings of time. In a review of the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau information, Raiborn and Butler (2009) concluded that the average travel time to work in the United States was 25.5 minutes, with only 4.7% of workers using public transportation and 12.2% in car pools. By teleworking one day a week, on average an employee could save almost an hour of time. Lister (2010) estimated that with part-time telecommuting, employees save roughly two workweeks of time a year.

However, telework may create expenditures for employees as well. Expectations for teleworkers, in regards to work supplies, may vary throughout the workplace. For example, employers may expect employees to use personal computers and internet connections to access the workplace. As a result, employees may absorb the costs that employers report saving. From working at home, employees are utilizing their personal water, electricity, and heating and cooling systems.

As such, employees working from home may want to submit these charges as tax deductions. However, *home office* is narrowly defined, thus almost eliminating a teleworker's ability to declare a home office for tax purposes. In 1993, the U.S.

Department of Transportation published a report on the transportation implications of teleworking and noted that, “current tax laws and regulations are not conducive to teleworking and may need to be changed to encourage the widespread adoption of telecommuting” (p. 48). More specifically, income tax regulations discourage using the home as a workplace and teleworkers who commute across state lines are either further disadvantaged as, “a telecommuters’ work may subject an employer to state corporate franchise taxes” (U.S. Department of Transportation, 1993, p.48). Overall, while it appears that teleworking reduces costs to the employee, there is a need for additional research on detailed expenditures of teleworking.

**Productivity.** Productivity was cited throughout the literature as the primary benefit to employees who telework. According to current research, teleworkers are more productive when working remotely compared to employees working in the main office. While estimates on productivity varied, results from studies consistency indicated that teleworkers are more productive than non-teleworking peers.

Jack Nilles, a lead in the realm of teleworking, assessed the variation of productivity between teleworkers and non-teleworkers and stated that teleworkers are more productive than non-teleworkers are. In fact, Nilles stated that, “over a wide range of jobs and people, average productivity increases range from 5% to 20%. In some departments assessed, productivity was two to three times that” (Nilles, 1998, p. 201). In an article review of teleworking, Hequet (1994) stated that current productivity studies consistently find that teleworkers outperform their peers at the traditional office by about 16%. Even further, in an explorative review of telework benefits and limitations, Nilles (1999) stated that, “the Garner Group estimates that telecommuting improves employee



productivity by 10% to 40%” (p. 51). In a review of recent research on productivity, Goodman (2013) noted that Stanford University had recently conducted research on productivity. The researchers ran a 9 month controlled study dividing two groups of 255 workers with similar qualifications and the same team managers and workflows into home- and office-based workers. The research found that home workers increased productivity by 13%, staff attrition was half that of office-based workers and home working saved the company \$2,000 per employee (Goodman, 2013, p. 17).

Several explanations for this increase in productivity are available. First, employees who telework experience fewer distractions, and as a result, have an appropriate amount of time to perform work related tasks. In fact, Lister and Harnish (2011) found extensive evidence in the literature that work productivity is greater for teleworkers than office employees due to ‘fewer interruptions’, ‘more effective time management’, ‘flexible hours’, and ‘longer hours’ (p. 7). This is further supported by Denbigh (2003), who stated that teleworkers are more productive as they have reduced distractions, reduced commuting times and problems, and reduced environmental disruptions. Hartley (2001) surmised that teleworkers are more productive as their home office can be quieter than an office workspace, leading to increased efficiency.

Second, teleworkers have a reduced or eliminated commute, decreasing stress and increasing time for work related tasks (Hartley, 2001). In assessing the well-being of federal government teleworkers, Powers (2014) indicated a positive outcome for teleworking due to the reduction of the commute time. For this population, the commute time was roughly 90 minutes a day. By telecommuting two days a week, participants experienced an increase of up to two hours per day free to devote to work, family, and

personal time (Powers, 2014).

Third, the type of work completed when at home may lead to an increase in productivity. In assessing productivity of tasks for college students at Florida State University, Dutcher (2012) concluded that overall, subjects were 6-10% less productive outside of a work environment when focusing on a dull task, yet 11-20% more productive outside of a work environment when focusing on a creative task. However, Snyder (2012) indicated that in many cases, the autonomy and flexibility created by teleworking can promote innovation, and as a result, productivity. As a conclusion, Dutcher (2012) stated that, “there exists contradictory claims on the productivity of teleworkers and the academic literature to date does not offer satisfactory answers” (p. 362).

A final explanation for the increase in productivity is that teleworkers have autonomy as to when to complete job tasks. As a result, teleworkers can complete tasks at their individual peak time, leading to greater productivity. While some employees may excel at working in the morning, others may excel in the evening, and results indicate that teleworking provides an environment for the ideal work schedule. Results found by Topi (2004) support this notion in that overall, “telework arrangements lead to increased productivity and flexibility as it allows employees to achieve their personal goals for quality of work life by removing some of the constraints of strictly defined place and time of work” (p.79), such as a set schedule. In a pilot program of 100 employees in the State of Arizona telecommunications program, Humble et al. (1995) indicated that the increase of productivity was due to the fact that teleworkers completed tasks at the times of the day in which they were the most productive.

Yet, several studies indicated that the free time afforded to teleworkers, in

eliminating a commute, is spent completing work related tasks, thus reducing work-life balance (Powers, 2014; Raiborn & Butler, 2009). Although participants indicated having greater well-being on telework days, Powers (2014) found that half of all participants worked over 40 hours weekly, and another 32% regularly exceeded 50 hours weekly. Noonan and Glass (2012) concluded that telecommuters worked between five to seven hours more per week than non-commuters work, and were more likely to work overtime. Perhaps the most compelling study on telework productivity is that of Baruch's 2000 study of 62 UK employees. Baruch assessed employees before they began teleworking for the organization and after, once teleworking was completed. Baruch reported that compared to time spent on work before and after moving to teleworking, for 48% of the participants, working hours increased when teleworking began (Baruch, 2000).

Several factors identified in the literature explain why teleworkers tend to work more hours than their non-telework colleagues do. First, with telework, there are unclear boundaries between work and home. As explained by Hartley (2001), "there's no clear division between work time and non-work time. As a telecommuter, you soon realize that work and life become a soluble mixture; it's hard to separate one from the other" (p. 31). Teleworkers may feel pressure to remain connected to the main office, which may lead to increased work hours, and therefore, enhanced productivity. The flexibility may erase the boundary lines between work-life and home-life (Goodman, 2013; Raiborn & Butler, 2009).

The notion of blurred lines between home and work is not a recent finding. In 1988, a respondent from Bailyn's study stated that, "work has completely invaded the privacy of my home....the longer hours of work and close proximity of work requiring

my attention means that I am becoming unable to ‘switch off’ and relax” (participant response, as cited in Bailyn, 1988, p. 150). However, home-based workers have lower absentee rates as they are more likely to continue to work even when they are sick (Lister, 2010).

A second factor is that of coworker relations. When assessing employees who began a telework agreement, Baruch (2000) found that, the most common reaction from coworkers of teleworkers was that of suspicion, jealousy, or both. Therefore, teleworkers may increase the duration of work time to make up for being at home. In addition, teleworkers experience social isolation, with the lack of face-to-face social contact supports the feeling of being *out-of-the-loop* and not part of a core circle of employees (Raiborn & Butler, 2009; Topi, 2004). When your boss or coworkers see you less regularly at the office you may fall out of the social loop, missing opportunities to network and build relationships (Goodman, 2013). Humble et al. (1995) stated that the most frequently cited negative response to teleworking was a feeling among some employees of missing daily social and professional interaction.

**Job satisfaction.** Indicated throughout the literature is the notion that teleworkers have a higher sense of job satisfaction than non-teleworkers. Teleworkers note that decreased distractions, increased autonomy, and flexibility of scheduling lead to overall job satisfaction. The following section will review research available on job satisfaction in detail.

In a 2014 study on the effects of telework on the well-being of 516 part-time teleworkers employed in federal cabinet-level agencies, Powers concluded that the vast majority of participants reported high levels of satisfaction with life at home, with their

job, and with life as a whole. Even further, results indicated that these employees, who worked from home two days a week, experienced a higher positive affect overall when working from home compared to working in the main office. Powers (2014) concluded that typically, “employees generally spent more time engaged in a wider variety of personal and professional activities, such as fulfilling family obligations, on telework days as compared to office work days, as with office work days this discretionary time was not available” (p. 77), which attributes to job satisfaction. However, respondents also indicated that their jobs required too much work, both when teleworking or in the main office. It is possible these feelings of job satisfaction are inflated due to the demand and pressures of work.

In a 1992 study on working perceptions and manager prescriptions of teleworking, Hartman, Stoner, and Aurora (1992) concluded that since telecommuting seems less confining, it may be perceived as more satisfying, and the individual telecommuter’s overall life satisfaction may be increased. Findings from this study were representative of 11 different organizations from both the public and private sector. To gather information, the researchers sent questionnaires to 262 telecommuters, with 125 returned for a response rate of 47.7%. The researchers concluded that, “there are four main positive outcomes employees experienced from telecommuting, which are greater personal flexibility, reduced time spent commuting, increased productivity when working from home, and the ability to spend more time with family” (Hartman et al., 1992, p. 39).

In 2000, Baruch assessed 62 employees to understand the perception of teleworking by both managers and professionals. In the posttest of employees who telework, Baruch found that employees experienced greater effectiveness and overall

positive outcomes when teleworking. Employees indicated greater effectiveness and a perceived impact on health and stated that, “most employees felt better with no commuting and less stress” (Baruch, 2000, p. 43). Baruch concluded that greater satisfaction, perceived performance, and reduced stress were characteristic of a teleworker.

However, findings from this study suggested that not all employees responded positively to telework. In fact, Baruch (2000) articulated that when teleworking, there must be a fit between the employee, the organization, and the work. Baruch recommended employers characterize the type of employees that are ideal for telework. In an overview of teleworking within the UK, Pancucci (2010) indicated this need as well. Pancucci (2010) specifically stated that:

the selection of teleworkers is clearly crucial as not all people are suited to this way of work. Employees who are accustomed to working alone for long periods and experienced staff who work with minimal support are the most obvious candidates. (p. 2)

Therefore, job satisfaction may be representative of employees who are a fit for teleworking. For the right people, telecommuting works (Markarian, 2007). Therefore, in the design of telework programs, employers need to identify the right people for telework.

In summary, there is extensive literature available on the growth of teleworking within the United States (Fenson & Hill, 2003; Gray et al., 1993, Joice, 2000; Nilles, 1998; Telework.gov, 2000). Extensive literature is available on telework as a tool within the workplace and how it has been used to respond to changes in society, the economy,

and technology within the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bond, et al., 2002; Matos, 2015; Matos & Galinsky, 2010; Matos & Galinsky, 2014; Noonan & Glass, 2012). With greater expectations for work-life balance, telework is a form of flexibility that will remain within the workforce.

Yet emphasis on telework programs within the workplace is lacking (Lister, 2010; Lister & Harnish, 2011; World at Work, 2009, 2011a). In addition, of telework programs available, assessment on outcomes is lacking. Even further, of outcome assessments that are available, findings conflict. This may be due to the lack of singularity of the meaning of telework (Denbigh, 2003; Gray et al., 1993; Madsen, 2011; Nicholas, 2007; Nilles, 1998). As telework will continue to exist in places of employment, it is important to understand this work arrangement.

Institutions of higher education represent a substantial portion of the workforce (Nuter, 2011). It is imperative for employers within higher education to understand telework; more specifically, employers need to understand the experience of the teleworker, in an effort to better understand, implement, and manage telework programs. This study filled a gap in the literature by exploring and understanding the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework.

### **Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter describes the details of the design of the study. First, details on the sample selection are provided. Next, the instrumentation is described. Lastly, the data collection and data analysis procedures are explained.

#### **Research Design**

This qualitative case study was designed to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. The researcher was interested in a particular case, with the case being exempt employees who telework. As such, the case study was intrinsic, as the purpose was to understand a particular case; exempt employees (Stake, 1995).

The researcher sought to understand how exempt employees experienced teleworking, based upon having a telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources at State University. The researcher also sought to determine if the participants experienced fit as outlined in the theoretical framework. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the data through the lens of the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit. As illustrated in the framework, positive interaction among organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics determines fit of teleworking, influencing societal, organizational, and individual outcomes. Stated by Yin (2009), a case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events. Since the goal of this research study was to understand the lived experiences of exempt employee who telework, to understand the characteristics of a real life event of teleworking, a case study was the most appropriate research design for this research study.



## **Research Questions**

The two research questions guiding this study were:

- What are the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework?
- Do these employees experience fit as outlined by the Concept of Fit theoretical framework?

## **Site**

The study institution, State University, is a medium sized public research university located in the state of Maryland. As of fall 2014, the total student enrollment was 13,979 students with 2,600 graduate students and 11,379 undergraduate students. The majority of the students are full time, with 1,189 full time graduate students and 9,653 full time undergraduate students. To date, there are 1,248 staff members employed by this institution. Of these 1,248 staff members, 826 are exempt staff members. These 826 exempt staff members represent both regular and contingent staff. There are 97 administrative departments within three colleges and four schools. State University includes a main campus, two off campus sites, as well as a tech center and a training center, both located off campus. Exempt employees are located throughout all colleges, schools, and campus sites.

State University currently offers teleworking to all eligible exempt and nonexempt employees. The teleworking policy was implemented in 1999, at the same time the state of Maryland implemented a telework policy. At State University, the telework policy resides under personnel policies and is managed by the Department of Human Resources. Eligible and interested employees are responsible for initiating telework agreements with their direct supervisors. The direct supervisor is responsible for

approving or not approving a telework agreement. Telework agreements can be approved for up to one year. The agreement can also be written for smaller periods, such as three or six month periods. The agreement must be reviewed on a yearly basis. The telework agreement requires an official start and end date, teleworker work schedule, teleworker plan, and remote workplace self-certification checklist. Within the agreement, the employee must outline goals and objectives for the telework day(s). Also agreed upon by the employee and supervisor are the number of days within a two-week pay period the employee will telework as well as the level of flexibility of the agreement.

### **Sample Selection**

The main objective of qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). The first research question of this case study was designed to understand the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. Therefore, two sample selections were conducted to collect data for this study. The first was an institutional sample. The second was a participant sample. The researcher first identified an institution site, State University. The researcher then identified eligible participants of the site. Eligibility criteria are outlined below.

The study site, an institution of higher education, was selected for two reasons. First, the institution offered a telework policy to eligible employees. As the purpose of this study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of those who telework, it was important to select an institution that offered teleworking, as this could have increased the probability of eligible participants for the study. Second, the institution was selected out of convenience. During the time of this research study be conducted, the

institution served as the employer of the researcher, which made it feasible for the researcher to collaborate with the Department of Human Resources in gathering information on the telework policy of the institution. It also provided convenience to the researcher in scheduling and conducting interviews, as the researcher had the ability to reserve interview locations within convenient walking distances on the campus. Lastly, it provided convenience of understanding. The researcher was able to understand the context of the participant responses as the researcher understood the institutional culture. Although a matter of convenience, selecting this institution as the study site may have led to more in-depth or richer results, as the researcher was able to understand the perspective of the participants.

A purposeful sample was used for this case study to identify the study population. Merriam (2009) illustrates that purposeful sampling:

is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned...one must first determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people to be studied. (p. 77)

The purpose of this research study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. As such, participants needed to meet two criteria of (a) the participant was classified as an exempt employee and (b) the participant had a current telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources at State University. These two criteria aided the researcher in soliciting participants that would provide the most insight into the experience of teleworking.

As data collection took place in the fall 2015 semester, the researcher used August

1, 2015 as the official date in applying the criteria to the population, as this date represented the beginning of the fall semester. As of August 1, 2015, the total number of exempt employees with a current telework agreement on file with the Department Human Resources was 34. The researcher aimed to have a sample size of at least 50% of the population.

The population comprised men and women and included entry level, middle level, and upper level staff members. Exempt employees who served and who did not serve as managers of others were both included in the study. The population also included full time and part time exempt employees. The frequency of teleworking days per week varied from participant to participant. In addition, employees were able to submit agreements to the Department of Human Resources at any time throughout the year, therefore, the start date of the current telework agreement varied throughout the sample, with some participants having telework for several years and others being within their first year of teleworking.

### **Instrument**

The researcher developed an interview protocol for data collection (see Appendix F). The interview protocol contained 17 questions. Of these, 14 were semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. There were four demographic questions, with two questions listed at the beginning of the protocol and two at the end. These demographic questions were asked of all participants. This information was beneficial in further describing the sample and providing context of the individual working environment of each participant to the researcher. The first two demographic questions also aided in putting the participant at ease and provided the researcher the opportunity to learn more

about the participant's role at State University. The last two demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview, as they were more personal in nature. By asking these two questions at the end of the interview, the participant could have been more likely to answer the questions as they may have become more comfortable sharing information as the interview progressed. In addition, the last two demographic questions were used as a method to conclude the interview. The remaining 13 questions were asked to elicit responses related to the two research questions of this research study. Three of these questions included follow up prompt questions that were used, if needed.

Question 1 asked the participant to describe their current duties and responsibilities at State University. This question was designed to put the participant at ease and to provide the researcher context of the environment at State University in which the participant works. Question 1 also focused on the work characteristics as it related to the Concept of Fit theoretical framework. Question 2 was a demographic question that related to Question 1.

Questions 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, and 14 focused on the four characteristics of the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit. The characteristics within Concept of Fit are organizational, individual, work, and technology. Specifically, the researcher asked participants to describe how they telework, which possibly elicited responses that related to work, or tasks, completed, or to the technology used to telework. In another question, the researcher asked participants to share what they needed in order to telework. Again, these questions elicited responses that addressed the four characteristics that influence fit.

Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 13 were designed to gather information on the participants' lived experience of teleworking. For example, participants were asked to

share their favorite aspects of teleworking as well as what they would change about teleworking. These questions elicited responses of the individual experience of the participant.

Questions 16 and 17 were demographic and gathered additional information about the participants. Table 2 provides an overview of the interview questions, as the questions pertain to the lived experience and characteristics within the theoretical framework.

Table 2

*Protocol by Concept of Fit*

Protocol Question	Demographic Question	Experience	Organizational	Individual	Work	Technology
1					X	
2	X					
3			X			
4			X	X	X	X
5				X	X	
6		X				
7		X				
8		X				
9		X				
10		X				
11			X			
12			X		X	
13		X				
14			X	X	X	X
15		X				
16	X					
17	X					

### Data Collection Procedures

Prior to collecting data, the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at State University. This appears as Appendix A. Upon completion of data collection, the researcher received approval from IRB of the institution in which

the researcher was a student. This appears as Appendix B.

Once the researcher received IRB approval from State University, the researcher contacted the Department of Human Resources of State University to obtain the complete contact list of the population. Since employees are able to submit an agreement at any time throughout the year to the Department of Human Resources, the researcher determined a date to identify the population. The researcher asked that the list provided be reflective of the fall 2015 semester, as this was the semester of data collection. Specifically, the researcher selected the date of August 1, 2015, as the date an exempt employee must have had an agreement on file in order to be included in the study population. The researcher also requested the employees' name, position, contact information, and date of approval for the telework agreement. Requesting the date of approval ensured that those who had an agreement on file by August 1, 2015 were contacted to participate.

Once the participant list was provided to the researcher, a pilot study was conducted to ensure a solid research design. This was necessary as, "a pilot study helped the researcher refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed" (Yin, 2009, p. 92). Several employees at State University that were not eligible to participate in the study were called upon to participate in the pilot study. These employees met the two criteria of (a) were classified as an exempt employee and (b) had a telework agreement on file as of August 1, 2015 at State University. The participants were classmates or employees of the researcher and, at the time of the pilot study, had a close relationship with the researcher. As such, these individuals were aware of the research purpose and two research questions of this study.

Therefore, should they have remained an eligible participant in the study; they may not have been objective in their responses to questions. However, the researcher utilized these pilot interviews for additional practice of interviewing and solicited feedback on the interview protocol. In addition, as these employees were aware of the research design, they reviewed the research design, post pilot study, to ensure replication of the methods. The researcher utilized the interviews to further develop the interview protocol and gained additional experience in interviewing.

Upon completion of the pilot study, the researcher created an interview schedule for the months of November and December 2015 that included a variety of dates and times throughout the workweek for an interview. The researcher sent an individual email (see Appendix C) to all of the employees within the population asking for participation. In this email, the researcher provided a general purpose for the study, criteria for volunteering, and the incentive. The email stated that interviews would run 60-80 minutes and the incentive for participating was a \$5 gift card to either Starbucks or Au Bon Pain, as both of these establishments were located on the campus of State University. The email included a link to an online calendar, which was used to schedule an interview.

The researcher sent an email confirmation (see Appendix D) 72 hours before the selected interview time, confirming the date, time, and location of the interview. This email confirmation also included a copy of the consent form (see Appendix E) and instructions for completing the consent form. Participants were instructed to read the consent form before the interview and if there were no questions regarding the study or consent form, to bring a signed copy to the interview. Participants were instructed to not complete the form before the interview if there were questions about the study or consent



form.

As employees volunteered to participate, data collection took place. Data was collected through individual interviews. Individual interviews were held in November and December of 2015. The interviews took place at State University, in a confidential meeting space that was mutually convenient for the researcher and participant.

Before an interview began, the researcher asked the participant if they had any questions about their participation, the research method, and overall study. Those who had questions at the onset of the interview were given time to have all questions addressed and were then asked to sign the consent form, if still willing to participate. The completed consent form was then collected from the participant. The researcher reminded the participant that their participation was voluntary and could be stopped at any time. The researcher then reminded the participant that the interview would be voice recorded.

After all questions were answered and the consent form was collected, the researcher started to record the interview by way of a digital voice recorder. Before the researcher asked questions from the interview protocol, the researcher provided the participant with the incentive of their choosing and then asked the participant to select a pseudonym. After the pseudonym was selected, the researcher spent several minutes talking with the participant to learn more about them on an individual basis. The researcher then began to ask the questions from the interview protocol.

During each interview, the researcher took summary notes. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher typed the summary notes into a word document. These notes included body movements and non-verbal cues from the participant and basic observations from the researcher. These notes also included initial thoughts and reactions

of the overall interview. Once the interview was complete, the researcher spent several minutes typing into a word document an overall reflection of the interview. All notes included the date and time of the interview, the selected pseudonym of the participant, as well as an overall number. The numbering sequence began with *one* and continued through the last interview, in numerical order. Numbering the interviews allowed the researcher to match notes, recordings, and transcripts together, so that the researcher could refer to the interview notes later, if needed. In addition, the pseudonym that the participant selected was used so that descriptive responses could be utilized in the results portion of the study, protecting the confidentiality of the participant.

Taking and summarizing notes immediately after each interview aided the researcher in practicing reflexivity. Reflexivity is a process that researchers conduct to reflect on how their role in the study and their personal background, culture and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations (Creswell, 2014). In addition, this exercise aided the researcher in identifying basic categories and codes that were used as a foundation during the initial stage of data analysis. Perhaps the most important thing is to insist on ample time and space immediately following the interview to prepare the facsimile and interpretive commentary...capturing key ideas (Stake, 1995). The researcher blocked 30 minutes between each interview to have time for summarizing interview notes.

The researcher transcribed each interview within seven days of the interview to ensure that the key ideas of the interview were not lost during the transcription process. All digital recordings were transcribed by the researcher and included the date and time of the interview, the name of the participant, the pseudonym of the participant, and the

assigned number. This method of naming the transcript aligned with the naming of the summary notes taken by the researcher. An electronic software package was used to transcribe the interview recordings. This software aided the researcher in reducing the speed of the recording as well as use short hand keys, both aiding the researcher in transcribing the interviews in a more timely manner.

Once transcribed, the researcher made additional notes in a journal with initial thoughts, reactions, and reflections of the overall meaning of the interview. These journal entries provided additional opportunity for the researcher to practice reflexivity and aided in early identification of basic categories. The journal had an entry for each participant, which was named by pseudonym and date of interview.

The researcher used the first name listed on the transcript to match this to the corresponding email address of the participant that was included on the master participant list. Upon completion of the transcript, the participant was sent a notification email (see Appendix G) that included a copy of the final transcript for review. Participants had seven days to review the transcript and provide any edits, additions, or deletions. For any participant that provided edits, the transcript was modified to include these edits and resent to the participant for final approval. Providing the transcript to all participants for final review aided the researcher in obtaining accurate data, leading to more reliable data, which supported the overall findings.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The two research questions and the theoretical framework of this study drove data analysis. The goal was to provide analytic generalization in which “a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the

case study” (Yin, 2009, p. 38). The theoretical framework of this study was Concept of Fit, which was used as a lens in which to analyze the data, in an attempt to address the second research question of this study. The theory posits that organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics must all be present in order for an adjusted work arrangement, or rather telework, to fit, which affects societal, organizational, and individual outcomes. Therefore, a portion of the template of the data analysis was based on these four characteristics for fit and these three outcomes of fit.

Before analytic generalization began, the researcher first needed to understand the content of the data. To begin, the researcher read the interview notes and journal entries. The researcher read each of these twice, with the first reading focusing on understanding the content and the second reading focusing on coding. The researcher completed two iterations of coding. The first iteration of coding was open coding to identify any emerging themes. Open coding is what one does at the beginning of data analysis by tagging any unit of data that might be relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009). The second iteration of coding was analytical coding, which comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning (Merriam, 2009). For this iteration, codes were organized by the four characteristics and three outcomes within the Concept of Fit theoretical framework. The researcher performed this data analysis on the summaries first, and then on the journal entries.

The researcher then applied the same process to the transcripts, noting any emerging themes via open coding and analytic coding. The researcher read and coded one transcript at a time, by first reading the entire transcript, and then reading the transcript for a second time while noting any codes. The researcher utilized the codes of the note

summaries and journals to assist in creating codes within the transcripts. The researcher then scanned the interview notes, journal entries, and transcripts for similar codes, which were grouped into categories.

The researcher used a computer software program, Nvivo, which is designed specifically for qualitative data to note categories, themes, and codes. This software was used to organize the codes into categories. Initial categories were created to align with the four characteristics and three outcomes of the theoretical framework. Additional categories were created as codes and were further grouped together into categories. Throughout this process, the researcher made note of passages from the participants that supported a category. Upon completion, the researcher scanned the categories for findings as they pertained to the two research questions and the theoretical framework. Before drawing conclusions, the researcher reviewed codes, themes, and categories with the chair and the methodologist of the dissertation committee to discuss differences and similarities related to the initial coding and categorizing of data. Descriptive findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are descriptive. Table 3 provides an overview to the main categories. In this table, the overall categories are listed, as well as the number of participants, out of 11, that referenced an experience that related to the category. The table also illustrates the overall number of experiences referenced that directly relate to the category.

Table 3

*Category and References*

Category	Number of Participants	Total References
Individual characteristics	11	173
Organizational characteristics	11	220
Technology characteristics	11	263
Work characteristics	11	159
Social outcomes	10	49
Individual outcomes	11	45
Organizational outcomes	11	51
Fit	9	40
Supervisor	11	86
Commute	10	41
Flexibility	11	102

**Reliability**

A research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statements, and as such, one can judge the quality of any given design according to certain logical tests (Yin, 2009). In qualitative research, a case study must also follow logical tests. For this particular case study, three logical tests were used to ensure quality. These tests were (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, and (c) reliability. The following measures were used to ensure that this was a worthwhile and complete qualitative case study.

To establish construct validity, identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2009), the researcher had a panel of three faculty members review the research design and interview protocol to ensure that all questions asked would elicit data relevant to the two research questions and the theoretical framework. Next, the researcher established construct validity by conducting a pilot study with a small sample of exempt employees that telework but were not eligible to participate in

the study. The researcher then ensured construct validity by providing the participants the opportunity to review the case study report before it was finalized. All participants were sent an email (see Appendix H) with a link to review the final report. The participants were provided five days to review the final report. As stated by Yin (2009):

While the informants and participants may disagree with an investigators' conclusion and interpretations, these reviewers should not disagree over the facts of the case. If such disagreement emerges during the review process, an investigator knows that the case study report is not finished and that such disagreements must be settled through a search for further evidence. (p. 182)

These three steps were employed by the researcher to ensure construct validity.

Internal validity is a term used in qualitative studies to establish how research findings match reality; how congruent the findings are with reality (Merriam, 2009). The researcher established internal validity by using participant validation. All participants were sent a copy of the transcript from their interview and were asked to provide necessary edits, additions, or clarifications. In addition, the researcher collected data beyond the point of saturation, where the researcher began to see or hear the same themes repeatedly as more data was collected. Lastly, the researcher conducted reflexivity throughout the research process, reflecting on their role throughout the study. Awareness of these views allowed the researcher to be more objective. Specific biases of the researcher are listed in the following section. Such clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at a particular interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009).

Finally, the researcher ensured reliability by thoroughly outlining the research

design for possible replication. To mitigate the reliability problem, the researcher must make as many steps as operational as possible to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder (Yin, 2009). Three faculty members reviewed and approved the research design before data collection began. In addition, the researcher asked participants from the pilot study, once completed, to review the research design and summarize the study. This ensured that potential readers of this research study could understand the design, therefore leading to replication.

Trustworthiness is a term used in qualitative research to describe conformability, credibility, and validity (Creswell, 2003). As several measures were used by the researcher to ensure (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, and (c) reliability this is a trustworthy research study. The following two sections provide an overview of the role of the researcher and measures of ethical protection.

### **Role of Researcher**

For this research project, the primary role of the researcher was to ask probing questions in an effort to elicit data that addressed the two research questions. The researcher asked semi-structured, open-ended questions and provided participants the opportunity to answer the questions. The researcher observed participants' responses, took note, and asked additional questions if needed. It was the researcher's role to ensure that the participant felt relaxed and comfortable in the interview setting. By conducting a pilot study and practicing interviewing, the researcher was able to create a relaxed and comfortable setting for each participant.

The second role of the researcher for this research project was to serve as the data analyst. It was the researcher's responsibility to take the data collected, and with the data



analysis procedures listed above, code and theme the data in an effort to illustrate results. It was the researcher's responsibility to provide these findings in a summary of the research. The researcher transcribed all interviews, which enabled the researcher to become familiar with the interview responses. In addition, the researcher utilized qualitative coding software that assisted the researcher in creating codes, themes, and categories of the data.

The third role of the researcher was to minimize bias from data collection and data analysis procedures. To minimize this bias, the researcher utilized reflexivity throughout the research study. Specifically, the researcher took notes during the interviews and immediately following each interview's conclusion typed a summary of the interview. This ensured that initial thoughts of the interview were captured as the information was in the short-term memory of the researcher. This also ensured that events or information outside of the data collection did not influence the researcher. In addition, the researcher asked all participants to review their transcribed interview for accuracy, further eliminating bias.

In the initial phases of this research study, the researcher had bias in thinking that teleworking was beneficial to both the employee and employer. The researcher minimized this bias by conducting a solid literature review. In the extensive review of the literature, the researcher came to learn that not all employees are suitable for teleworking and that there can be problems created for both the employee and the employer.

In addition, the researcher was very passionate about the topic of teleworking on a professional level. As such, the researcher conducted presentations for staff members at State University during the fall 2015 semester. It could have been possible that exempt

employees attended a presentation on teleworking, prompting them to submit a telework agreement, making them a possible member of the population. To remove this ethical implication, the researcher selected a date of August 1, 2015 as the official date to determine the population. As this date was before these presentations took place, the researcher had a non-biased population.

### **Measures of Ethical Protection**

Several measures were taken to ensure protection of the participants. The first measure of protection was the design of the study. All participants selected pseudonyms that were used in the results portion of this research study. Specific names, places, and people that participants may have referenced in the interview were not directly stated in the results of this research study. In addition, only questions that pertained to the two research questions or were demographic questions were included in the interview protocol. Participants were only asked questions that directly related to the purpose of the research study. In addition, State University was not named in the study, providing additional protection to the participants. Lastly, all participants were provided a consent form to review and sign before participating in an interview.

A second measure used to ensure protection of the participants was that the research design was reviewed and approved by three faculty members. These faculty members were well versed in research study design and have each completed a doctoral dissertation of their own. They provided feedback on any necessary changes in order to ensure additional protection. These three faculty members reviewed and approved the research design before the researcher was able to move onto the data collection phase of the study.

Lastly, data collection only took place upon approval from IRB at State University. Any modifications or edits requested from State University's IRB were made before participate data was requested in which the pilot study then began. Upon completion of the pilot study, the researcher began data collection. Upon completion of the data collection, the researcher obtained IRB approval from the institution in which they were student. IRB approval from both institutions ensured ethical protection of participants.

In summary, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. A medium sized, public research university located in the state of Maryland served as a study site. Semi-structured interview questions were asked of those who volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher transcribed all 11 interviews and utilized the interviews and summary notes to form codes and themes. The following chapter will provide an overall of the results from data analysis.

## **Chapter 4 – Participant Findings**

The findings of this research study were substantial as each participant experienced teleworking in a different way. As such, the researcher elected to present the findings in two chapters. In this chapter, demographic data, profiles, and narratives of the participants are outlined. The main research question that guided this study looked at the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. The participant narrative provides an overview to the reader of the unique experience of each teleworker. The narrative summaries capture the true essence of how each participant experienced teleworking.

### **Participant Profiles**

The total population that met the two criteria of (a) being an exempt employee and (b) having a telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources as of August 1, 2015 was 34. Of these 34, four participants were eliminated from the study, as they were not eligible to participate in the study. One of the possible participants was the researcher. The three other possible participants included a colleague of the researcher and the other two included supervisees of the researcher. Given the personal relationship to the researcher, these three participants were ineligible and so participated in the pilot study. Therefore, the true population size was 30.

Of the remaining 30 eligible participants, 11 staff members volunteered and participated in interviews. This resulted in a 37% response rate of the study population. Of the 11 participants, three participants identified as male and eight identified as female. Six participants identified as Caucasian, three identified as African American, and one identified as South East Asian. In total, three African American females, one South East Asian female, four Caucasian females, and three Caucasian males represented the sample

size. The list of the participants, identifiable by pseudonym, is detailed in Table 4.

Participants self-identified their gender and ethnicity, which is outlined in Table 4. This table also provides the participant code, which was assigned by the researcher. Lastly, the telework day is listed, which was volunteered by the participant.

Table 4

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Participant Code	Telework Day
Bertha	F	AA	1	Monday
Laya	F	AA	2	Wednesday
Mindi	F	C	3	Wednesday
Paul	M	C	4	Tuesday
Oobleck	M	C	5	Monday
Terry	F	SEA	6	Wednesday
Lynn	F	C	7	Wednesday
Lucy	F	C	8	Friday
Jim Hatfield	M	C	9	N/A
Wendy	F	AA	10	Friday
Anne	F	C	11	N/A

*Note.* F = Female; M = Male; AA = African American; C = Caucasian; SEA = Southeast Asian.

Of the 11 participants, 10 were full time employees and one was a part time employee. All participants provided their current salary to the researcher. For the 10 full time employees, the average salary was \$73,370. The average salary was \$68,972 when the part time participant's salary was included. There were eight departments from State University represented in the sample. Three of the 11 participants were all from the same department. The day of the week that the participants telework varied with four that worked from home on Wednesday, two worked from home on Friday, two worked from home on Monday, and one worked from home on Tuesday. Two participants did not have

a standard teleworking day.

### **Participant Narratives**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. In interviewing each participant and talking about their experience, it became evident to the researcher that while all participants shared common themes, as will be addressed in Chapter 5, each participant had a unique experience with teleworking. Therefore, the following section will provide an overview, or short narrative, on the experience of teleworking for each participant. These findings are organized by participant name and participant code.

**Bertha.** Bertha has been working at State University since 2004. She has been teleworking since 2014 and teleworks on Mondays. Overall, Bertha's primary responsibility for the institution is to facilitate academic services and serves as a manager to other employees in her office. Bertha manages an employee who teleworks as well.

On her telework day, she works on projects that are time consuming and require a lot of concentration and time. She will work from her home office located in the attic on her telework day. On her telework day, which usually begins around 6:30am, she starts by making a cup to tea and checking work email. She then works on projects she has lined up for the day. Bertha uses email, text messaging, and phone calls to communicate with her supervisor and peers, if needed. She does not telework during high-peak times within her department.

For Bertha, teleworking allows her to accomplish more, as she does not encounter the interruptions or meetings during her telework day that she does in the main office. Depending on the particular task, Bertha will work until 4:30-5:00pm. She mentioned

many times that she is often so focused on her work that time would get away from her. For Bertha, there are many benefits to teleworking. Currently, her parents live with her and teleworking affords her the opportunity to “keep an eye on them” while completing work tasks. She also saves money from not eating out at work. She notes that her favorite aspect of teleworking is, “going to bed on Sunday night and not having to come to the office on Monday morning”.

**Laya.** Laya first learned about teleworking during her human resources orientation when she started to work for State University in 2015. Shortly after her orientation, Laya noticed others in her office, including her supervisor, teleworking and approached her supervisor about teleworking herself. Her agreement was approved, and after the peak time of year, she began to telework. On her telework day of Wednesday, she focuses on online applications, audits, and administrative work. She noted that roughly 20% of the time she comes into the office on her telework day as meetings could be scheduled on these days. For Laya, she does not want her telework day to interfere with being present in the office.

Laya feels trusted by her supervisor and believes that her primary focus on her telework day is to “get the job done”, even if that means working beyond her usual hours. She notes that teleworking provides her with flexibility, such as picking up her daughter from school, but that she will often work to “make up” this time. She also stated that she has teleworked in the past when bad weather or car trouble has kept her from coming into the office.

By 7:30am, Laya is logged into her computer, located in her office in the basement of her home, and starts her telework day by checking her email. She will leave

the TV on for background noise and will focus on her tasks that she needs to complete. Once a day she will call her voicemail for any messages and will usually end her day at 3:30pm. For her, discipline and focus are important for successful teleworking. She notes that the right person to telework is someone who is disciplined, not distracted by aspects of managing a home, and gets the job done. Laya's favorite thing about teleworking is to not make the commute into the office one day a week, which can be 45 minutes to one hour each way.

**Mindi.** Mindi has been working for State University for eight years, primarily focusing on cooperative agreements. About five years ago, State University began to focus on sustainability and members of her department calculated their carbon footprint. Mindi's supervisor, in an effort to reduce the carbon footprint, then approved teleworking of all employees who could perform tasks remotely. Mindi asked for this opportunity and selected Wednesday to help break up her workweek. The expectation for Mindi is that her work is completed on time and if meetings are scheduled on her telework day, she comes into the office on that day, but selects another day of the week to work from home instead. She will usually switch her day to Tuesday.

Focus and flexibility are what Mindi enjoys most about teleworking. Her alarm goes off at 5:00am, but instead of taking her dogs for a walk first thing, on her telework day, she makes her coffee, starts a load of laundry, and goes upstairs to her computer, checks emails that came in overnight and makes a plan for the day. She will also change her voicemail at work, notifying callers she is not in the office. By mid-morning, she breaks to change the laundry and walk her dogs. She will usually work until 4:30pm. Mindi will often do her grocery shopping or car maintenance appointments on telework



days and will modify her end time on these days. For Mindi, teleworking affords her uninterrupted time to focus on her work, to complete intricate projects, and still maintain balance between work and home.

Mindi stated she would like to telework more, but recognizes that collaborating and communicating face to face with other members of her office is an important aspect of her job. She often faces distractions in the office, however, and plans her workweek around her telework day. She feels very supported by her supervisor and believes that her supervisor is conducive to her professional growth. Mindi does not believe that all supervisors at State University are this conducive, and feels very fortunate to have the boss that she does, and works very hard to ensure that her work is done on time. She believes that self-control and pride in one's work are necessary for successful teleworking.

**Paul.** When starting his employment with State University, Paul was informed by his supervisor that after the probationary period of a year, he would be eligible to telework one day a week. His first telework agreement was submitted roughly five years ago, with Tuesday as his telework day. Responsible for the review of research proposals, Paul states that nearly 90% of his job is online and he only needs a computer and internet to perform his job tasks.

Paul treats his telework days as an in office day and will get up, shower, and dress as if he is going into the main office. Following this routine puts him in the right mindset for working at home. He works his normal office hours, 7:30am-4:30pm, and will start his day by checking his work email and keeps his email open all day, as email is a primary mean for communicating with his constituents. He will also call his office voicemail

throughout the day. Sometimes Paul will come into the office on his telework day for meetings but can also conference call into the office. The advantage of telework for him is that he has fewer interruptions and can complete work quickly and efficiently at home. He will often work past his usual business hours in part because it is time that would be spent commuting home anyway. Paul commutes roughly 45 minutes each way for work. He is surprised at how much teleworking has reduced his work stress. Not commuting one day a week is his favorite aspect of teleworking. For him, teleworking leads to greater satisfaction and work life balance and he sometimes will mow the lawn or complete house chores and make dinner for his wife on his telework days.

While he would like to telework more, roughly half of the time, he recognizes that interactions with others in his office is important. However, in his department, other employees respect their coworker's telework day; employees are encouraged to telework. They are issued a laptop and are assigned an in office back up for telework days. From his point of view, teleworking makes employees happier and creates a happy work environment. However, Paul recognizes that not all jobs are suitable for teleworking, and an employee needs to be free from distraction and have the proper equipment and job to work from home.

**Oobleck.** Oobleck manages the information technology needs for his department. While much of his job is support, he completes many tasks during his telework day of Monday. He started to telework in 2006 when he moved further away from State University to purchase a larger home for himself and his three children.

On Monday, Oobleck will sleep in and drive his children to school. Upon his return home, usually around 7:45am, he opens all of his systems on the computer in his

home office and will check his email and work requests. Throughout the week, Oobleck saves tasks that can be completed at home for his telework day and will have a student worker available on Mondays to complete support related tasks that come up at State University. Oobleck works in many spaces throughout his house, with his full computer and two monitors at his desk, located downstairs, or on a laptop.

While he typically works until 4:00pm, he usually works until 6:00pm on telework days to complete tasks, but notes that this balances out as he takes a longer lunch when working from home. For Oobleck, not having to drive to State University one day a week is his favorite aspect of teleworking. While he works for an office that supports teleworking and his supervisor teleworks, he is surprised that so few people choose to telework. Oobleck notes that he puts pressure on himself to be very productive on his telework days to show his colleagues and supervisor that he is working while at home, and does come into the office on his telework day if a meeting is scheduled or if he is needed for a work related task.

**Terry.** The majority of Terry's work can be completed independently as she primarily manages the software systems of her office. Terry has worked for State University for five years and finalized her agreement two and a half years ago. To implement her telework agreement, Terry met with her boss to explain why she wanted to telework. Together, they created expectations and goals for a telework day, and in reviewing the calendar of standing meetings, settled on Wednesday.

Terry teleworks to get her work tasks done and to meet the needs of her family. Teleworking on Wednesday provides her with a break from the workweek routine and saves her time, allowing her to make lunches and drive her two young children to school

in the morning. Many times on her telework day, Terry will utilize her lunch break to run errands or to visit her son at his school. Terry is flexible in her telework day and will move her telework day to a different day in the week, usually Friday, if she is needed in the office on Wednesday. When this occurs, Terry will notify her supervisor a week in advance and will update her out of office calendar.

Terry loves all aspects of teleworking, stating that it puts her in a relaxed mindset, as she does not have to get up and get ready for work and is not limited to the usual time constraints of a *normal* office day. On her telework days, she will make herself a cup of tea and turn on her computer and check her email, usually an hour or two before her work day, while her children are still in bed. Once her children are on the way to school, she will continue with her work tasks. In the afternoon, she will continue her work tasks while her children, now home from school, study. Each member of her family has their own desk in a study room. Terry mentions that working from home two days a week would be ideal and that during the summer, when her children are not in school, managing her work with their schedules can be stressful.

Terry feels supported by her supervisor and colleagues. Communication is key to Terry. She will leave a note on the dry erase board outside of her office when working from home and uses instant messaging, text, email, video conference, and phone calls to keep in communication with members of her office. For Terry, teleworking allows her to complete tasks and better manage work and family priorities. She would recommend teleworking to others who have tasks that can be completed remotely and independently.

**Lynn.** Lynn has been working for State University for roughly ten years and during this time has had several different roles within her office. Her current role, which

she has been doing for roughly six years, is primarily focused on data management and report writing. Four and a half years ago, Lynn moved from full time to part time work when she started a family. She now works four hours a week from home. Her telework day is Wednesday, but sometimes it varies due to work and family demands. Overall, the expectation from her supervisor is that her work is being done and she is putting her hours in. During her telework day, she will focus on tasks that she did not complete while in the office, run reports, and respond to email. Her priorities for her telework day fluctuate, as much of her work is based upon requests.

Lynn spends the day caring for her three children and works her hours at home at night, when they are asleep, usually after 9:00pm. For her, teleworking affords her the flexibility to care for her children, especially because she has a spouse who travels frequently for work. She can complete work tasks around her family, and feels that she can work on her terms. She only needs a computer and internet to telework and believes that with today's technology, more people can telework at any place. She can even run reports from her iPhone while sitting at her daughter's dance practice.

Lynn believes that teleworking is an asset for working parents and appreciates that with her agreement she can "keep my foot in the professional door" while meeting her goals of being a mother. She is surprised at how much she can accomplish when working from home, noting that when in her office, there are often distractions and many meetings. However, she values her time in the office for idea sharing and professional conversations. She believes her supervisor and colleagues are supportive of her and, since she works for a small department, they are in constant communication, which makes working from home easier. However, she also mentioned that others have commented on

the amount of time she is not in the office. Overall, Lynn believes that teleworking is beneficial and provides independence to work at her own pace.

**Lucy.** Lucy strives to be environmentally friendly. When she first starting working for State University, roughly 15 years ago, she used public transportation and spent 90 minutes commuting one way. Shortly thereafter, the bus route changed, making her commute more than two hours one-way. At that point, in time she approached her supervisor about working from home, as she had remembered learning of the policy a few years prior. She was approved to work from home two days a week.

Throughout the years, her telework days have fluctuated. A few years ago, upon returning to work from surgery, she teleworked three days a week. She now teleworks one day a week, on Friday. Because of her distance from campus, Lucy will schedule doctor appointments and other appointments on her telework day to keep from driving and to save time. She believes that her supervisor is extremely supportive and flexible and just recently has been able to incorporate phone meetings into her telework routine.

Lucy's primary responsibility is to review programs, which requires reading and writing, and plans to complete work that requires concentration on her telework day. She works an adjusted schedule, beginning at 9:00am. She keeps that start time on her telework day and begins the day by checking her email. She uses her lunchtime to walk her dog and do laundry. During the day she checks her work voicemail twice, and although has an office in the lower level of her house, recently started to work from the living room to have natural light and will often listen to music.

Flexibility is her favorite aspect of teleworking. Teleworking provides her the opportunity to plan her workweek, save gas, minimize driving, and dress comfortably.

Lucy feels it is also environmentally friendly, yet she feels that teleworking is not widely embraced at State University, leading to misperceptions. She hopes that more is done to promote teleworking. She understands that teleworking is not for everyone, that it is a benefit, and should be approved on a case-by-case basis.

**Jim Hatfield.** Jim has been employed by State University for 26 years, with 11 years in his current role. Managing financials for his division, Jim began to telework roughly six years ago. Starting with just one day a month, Jim now works from home six days a month, selecting the days based on his work and home schedule and then blocking the days on his office calendar roughly three weeks in advance. His supervisor trusts him to manage when he should be at State University for work.

Both Jim and his wife work from home and have separate offices. His office is in the library. Utilizing a computer, internet, printer, and scanner, Jim can perform the majority of his work from home. He works an adjusted schedule of 6:00am-3:00pm to avoid traffic; and so on his telework days will usually begin work at 5:00am by first starting his computer and checking his email. Jim spaces out his work throughout the day, usually working until 9:00pm, but completes any home-related tasks, such as mowing the lawn, meeting repairpersons, or having lunch with his wife during his telework day.

For Jim, successful teleworking is being able to do his job as if he was in the main office. He believes that employers save resources, especially meeting spaces, with teleworking. He commented that if more people from State University teleworked, vacant spaces could be converted into more classrooms. He loves the freedom teleworking affords him, believes that he is just as effective at home as he is in the main office, and saves gas and food money. He commented that without his flexible schedule and

teleworking, he would have most likely found employment closer to home, as he commutes 40 miles each way for work. For others interested in telework, Jim recommends putting files or needed documents on a computer so that they are accessible at home.

**Wendy.** Wendy's main responsibility is to manage the audit process for her office. In this role for five years, she has been teleworking on Fridays for roughly the last three years. She spends a large portion of her time on telework days writing documentation. Wendy begins her workday at 8:00am, and will do the same on her telework day, yet will usually sleep in and begin her day working in her pajamas. She needs to remind herself to take a break, and will end around 4:00pm, spending the majority of her day writing, and checking her email periodically throughout the day.

For Wendy, successful teleworking means completing all of her tasks when at home. She notes that in her office, she often has interruptions of others. She is more productive when working from home and can usually get done in one day what takes her a week in the office to complete. At home, she is very focused on her work and in the past worked with no noise. However, this has since changed; as she had teleworked the day Osama Bin Laden was killed and did not learn of this until late evening. Wendy learned that completely isolating herself from her surroundings was not good, and now works with the television on.

Recognizing that teleworking is a not a right but a privilege, Wendy says discipline and maturity are necessary of employees to be able to work from home. Although she works in an office that supports it, (teleworking is part of her office business continuity plan) she recognizes that not all employees are suitable for



teleworking or in jobs that can be completed off site. Her favorite aspect of teleworking is not having to commute and being able to work in her pajamas. If meetings are scheduled on her telework day, she will come in to the office. On her telework days she stays connected to her office primarily through email, but will call members of her office if needed.

**Anne.** Anne used to telework one day every other week. However, during the summer of 2015 stopped because a staff member went on maternity leave and she was needed in the office full-time. One of her goals for this year to start teleworking again but realizes that many times meeting schedules make it a challenge to block a day out of the office. Working for State University for 16 years, Anne oversees an entire office and would use her telework days for creative thinking and planning broad projects. She mentions that her best ideas come from her telework days, crediting this to her view of her garden and being in a comfortable space.

With a 45-minute commute each way, teleworking provides Anne the opportunity to break up her workweek and not commute to State University, preventing burn out. She mentions that over the years, the commute has gotten worse and it takes more time for her to travel to State University. With increased teleworking, she believes there would be a decrease in traffic, which is good for the environment. On telework days, she can simply get up, not have to worry about showering, dressing for work, or putting on makeup, and can log in and get right to work. She will sometimes do laundry and tends to work longer, usually the time that she would normally be commuting.

Anne is surprised at how much technology has changed over the years. With a computer and internet, she is able to access most of her work from home and conducts

most communication with her staff via email. She feels supported by her supervisor and believes that there is a culture of support for teleworking in her office, which took effect roughly five years ago after the H1N1 scare. However, she does not believe that teleworking is widely accepted at State University. She hopes that this changes, as teleworking provides benefits to employees, including reduced stress and flexibility to manage home and work; and for the employer, including saved sick time and increased productivity. When asked what she would change about teleworking, Anne said that she would like to have a bigger monitor to work from at home.

In summary, all but two of the participants had an assigned day in which they telework. One participant worked from home six days in a month and another participant worked from home on an ad-hoc basis. As illustrated in the 11 narratives, each participant had a unique experience related to teleworking. This chapter provided a narrative to each of the unique experiences. The next chapter, Chapter 5, will provide an overview of the findings as they pertain to the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit.

## **Chapter 5 – Concept of Fit**

In this chapter, findings related to the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit, are provided. As the second research question of this study aimed to answer whether or not participants experienced fit as outlined by the theoretical framework, it was appropriate to organize this chapter by the characteristics and outcomes of the framework. In doing so, the researcher was able to ascertain if, overall, the participants experienced fit. This chapter provides descriptive passages of the participants' experience as it relates to the theoretical framework. The outcome of fit, findings, and additional conclusions are addressed in Chapter 6.

The theoretical framework for this study, Concept of Fit, posits that organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics must be present in order for a distributed work arrangement to fit. Therefore, the findings presented in this chapter are organized in the order of the four characteristics. In addition, there are three possible outcomes of a distributed work arrangement. These are societal, organizational, and individual. Findings as they pertain to outcomes are presented in this order. Additional clarification of the characteristics and outcomes are described in the following sections.

### **Organizational Characteristics**

The organizational characteristics outlined in the theoretical framework are (a) organizational objectives, (b) culture, and (c) control mechanisms. Organizational objectives include variables used by an organization in establishing distributed work arrangements, with the most prominent being cost savings, increased productivity, employment incentives, and employee demands (Belanger & Collins, 1998). Overall, the participants indicated that teleworking afforded them the opportunity to be more

productive. Informal norms, procedures, structures, espoused values, stories, practices, and rituals represent Organization Culture (Belanger & Collins, 1998).

While the type of office culture varied among the participants, overall, the participants worked for an office where the office culture embraced teleworking. Participant opinions varied on the culture of support for teleworking at State University. Lastly, organizational characteristics are comprised of control mechanisms, which include (a) outcome controls, (b) behavioral controls, (c) social or clan controls, and (d) personal control (Belanger & Collins, 1998). Overall, all of the participants agreed that they had supervisors, colleagues, and peers that supported their telework efforts and had practices and procedures in place to ensure that teleworking was a positive aspect of the office environment. The following section will outline findings as they pertain to Organizational Characteristics.

**Objectives.** Several participants indicated that they were more productive on their telework days than when in the office. For Bertha, the opportunity to work from home and have limited interruptions aided in her productivity:

I think it works out well and my supervisor's very supportive of that. I think as a whole we're probably more productive when we do that [telework]...that I get a lot more accomplished at home than if I was in the office because...of the interruptions.

When commenting on his expectations for teleworking, Oobleck stated that he thought he would be more productive and explained why:

I figured I'd be more productive. I can just get up, sit at the computer...so that's what I said, the one day a week, I can get all the stuff that I would need to be sitting at a computer, all day, and getting done, done.

Lucy mentioned that she would schedule tasks that were well suited to be completed at home, “I think that those are the main things, it's the flexibility of it and the way that it allows me to, do work that day, that can be most productively done in that atmosphere.” When sharing what surprised her about teleworking, Lynn stated that her efficiency and amount of task accomplishment surprised her the most:

...how much you can get done in such little time...so much done at home in a two hour period, than I can in a two hour period [laughs] in the office, and it's, I think it's just the bigger ripples, I mean just the different interruptions that you get at your door, the different phone calls, the different emails that you're constantly checking up on, and then just I guess socializing at the same time too, you know going to the kitchen and then running into someone, "how are you?", you know, so I just, I really was surprised with how much I work...a little bit more efficiently, I think, when I work at home [laughs] when it's just in the comfort of my own home, you know, no distractions.

Wendy experienced this as well, noting that limited interruptions afforded her greater productivity, “I can get more work done in a telework day than I can sometimes in the entire week that I'm at work because I don't have the interruptions, I don't have somebody popping in”. In summarizing her experience with teleworking, Terry stated that overall; she was more productive when working from home, “it helps with balancing your life, life and work you know you can get more done, in both sites and it just saves you time and it saves you...I think you, you're just more productive”.

In addition to productivity, the participants identified several positive outcomes for State University. Overall, participants indicated that teleworking increased morale, as

employees had greater flexibility, addressed space issues on campus, and saved resources. Laya mentioned that teleworking created a relaxing atmosphere, which aided in staff morale:

...and I think that [teleworking] does a lot, you know, for the morale. Because even if you don't telework, if, if you're in some kind of bind, you know, your car's not working, and the weather, if it's snowing or something like that, I know that you know, I can call and say, "there's no way I can get in but I can certainly work from home." and...you know, she [supervisor] would be okay with that so it's, you know...it's...it's, it's just a relaxed atmosphere as far as that's concerned.

The opportunity to work from home when outside circumstances prevented an employee from reporting to State University is an aspect of teleworking that Laya appreciated. Anne mentioned this as well, noting that the flexibility created loyalty to the organization, "it's not like pay or, holidays or that kind of thing, it's a benefit you can offer to employees that I would think would increase their loyalty to the organization itself". For Paul, teleworking had been used by his office to address space needs. Noting that moving staff into cubicles and shared offices to accommodate new staff would most likely reduce morale, his office incorporated teleworking so that each staff member had a private office space on days they were in the office:

It's a common problem on campus is there's always issues with space and we actually got to the point where shortly we will have two more people than we did offices available... we're faced with a decision of, "do we ask people who have been used to having a private office to share offices on a full time basis?"...which probably for morale sake would not have been the best options, and the other option

that we came up with was a plan by which we would offer the ability to telework half time, kind of alternating weeks.

Jim shared that he believed teleworking would allow State University to convert unused office spaces into classrooms:

I mean we if let people work from home and we converted half of the offices here into classrooms, cause we need classrooms, we have classroom shortages, I think that would be a good way to go and I think maybe they'll do that eventually.

He also shared that reduced office space would lead to cost savings, "...image companies that don't have to spend money on office space for all of their employees. It seems like where we're going in the future". Wendy indicated that teleworking allowed her and members of her office to remain operational during campus closures. For Wendy, this was especially important because she worked for a student service office:

...I mean where some schools were closed for extended periods of time. We still have students, we still have things that need to get done, so could we function, could we provide some of those services for students, for staff, in the event of an emergency, extended period of time, could we still operate as best as we could, business as normal, and so we developed a plan.

Anne recognized that for staff members with children, teleworking allowed an employee to complete tasks, even if they were not able to come into the main office:

If you know you can work from home and it's no big deal to say, "hey, I'm going to be at home today, my kid doesn't feel well, but you know, they're in bed so I'm going to be working" then that same person wouldn't call in sick, they'd work from home. So, I think there are benefits to the campus or in any organization that would

embrace it.

Paul recognized that teleworking could contribute to greater satisfaction of employees, therefore, creating a more positive work environment:

...in years like we've had a lot of where there's no raises and that kind of thing, it [teleworking] certainly never replaces money [laughs], but I think it can make you a lot more satisfied with your job, particularly on those times when maybe morale's a little tough because of financial situations with the state...if it makes your employees happier, and the people you're managing happier with their work environment, then it's going to be positive for the work environment when they're in the office too. I really think it's a win-win, I really do.

As stated by Anne, “it [teleworking] becomes a plus to the organization”.

**Culture.** Overall, the participants worked in departments where the office culture was supportive of teleworking. The participants were not the only staff members within the department that telework. Anne mentioned that everyone in her office had the same mindset when it came to working from home:

I suppose that you could say that we're all in that similar mindset from an organizational standpoint, where again when the division, you know there was a division effort to make sure everybody was equipped to be able to work from home.

Paul sensed that telework days were *protected* by his office colleagues, and that full staff meetings were scheduled on a day when all staff members were in the office:

I mean, there was a lot of, kind of protection around work from home days. The anticipation was certainly that you would do your work from home day, you know, staff meetings in our office basically nobody had a work from home day on Friday,



and so staff meetings were held on Fridays.

Lynn believed that her other staff members were supportive, and that if all members wanted to work from home, the office would work together to make it happen:

...there are certain times of the year, where students are stopping by for help, there's four of us so I feel like if all four of us wanted to request a day at home from, a week, a day at home a week to work from home, it could totally happen. We all are very very close knit, we all, every , all communications we all see, we know exactly what's going on, we can all help that student...we can point them in the right direction.

When Laya began her position and was informed that teleworking was available as a benefit, she waited until she learned that the office culture was supportive of teleworking, before she asked her supervisor if she would be able to work from home:

And that is the teleworking agreement was mentioned as one of the benefits as long as your supervisor was okay with it and your job lends itself to being able to do that, so, I waited and...discover the culture, and see if this [teleworking] is something that this particular department advocates, you know for and pretty early on it appeared to me that quite a few individuals had this telework agreement and so...to some extent I almost...I don't want to say encouraged, but it certainly wasn't something that you were discouraged from pursuing.

Wendy and Lucy mentioned that teleworking fit into the culture of their office by way of business continuity planning; a plan to continue operations in the event of an emergency. Specifically for Wendy, her office would run *drills* to make sure employees were equipped to work from home:

...and then also as part of testing our business continuity plan, some people are being randomly selected to work from home, to, like you know, "you will work from home today" without giving them much advanced notice so they can figure out if they can do everything they need to do, should, you know, that occasion arise where they need to work from home on short notice.

Lucy commented that:

...but also in the context of them saying, "but I learned that that was wrong when we had snow-magedon and we needed to have all of this work that needed to be done and nobody could even get here and people got it done, and I learned oh my gosh, you know, business continuity, it's a business continuity plan, teleworking is a business continuity [laughs] plan".

Bertha experienced an office environment conducive to teleworking, during a summer trial period:

There are a lot of folks on our floor who telework and I think part of it was that we started in the summers, we kind of do more flexible hours in the summer and for my staff we had decided that we would do a four day workweek, and have a day off and each of us chose of course, a different day, because everybody couldn't be gone at the same time. And I think all of us really like the fact that we had one day when we would not be coming in so that helps because all of my, the people that I supervise...only one of them does not telework.

The majority of the participants worked in offices where many other staff members also teleworked. Terry stated that, "...at least five or six that I know of. Actually our division head, she teleworks on Fridays". Jim commented that about half now telework:

I just think it's more accepted and more people are doing it. Even my employees didn't do it right at the beginning but I think they saw that I was doing it and now a couple of them are doing it. Three I think, yea, three out of six, yea.

Laya commented on the schedule that each teleworker had, “our particular team there's four of us and one person does on Monday, and one person does it on Friday, and because I'm the newbie I took Wednesday, which is fine”.

Within Oobleck's office:

I know of two or three people that do it regularly and I know, at least two of them are in the same boat as me...he works from home one day a week just to avoid that drive. I know the Dean was doing it.

Participants varied on their view of State University and the culture of support for teleworking. Some participants were not able to express any views on the university culture, as they did not feel informed enough to do so, yet some participants indicated that the culture of State University was one of support. Overall, however, participants indicated that more should have been done to create a culture of support for State University. Bertha agreed that teleworking was supported by the administration, “...it is supported by the administration. I think that as long as you are organized and efficient in your work, that there are advantages to it”.

Laya's impression was that everyone at State University was able to take advantage of teleworking, “it seems like everybody does it...it exists or every, every department seems to take advantage of it. They have staff members. So I don't get the impression that there's a department that I'm aware of, that would discourage it”. For Oobleck, his positive experience with teleworking in his office was representative of State University, “I mean

it's been a good experience and the campus has been very supportive of my, uh, department's been very supportive about it". For Lucy, Wendy, Anne, Mindi, and Lynn, however, more effort should have been made to create a culture of support. Lucy commented that pride for teleworking was lacking:

...but it's like, we, as a culture, we tolerate...that's what we do, we tolerate telecommuting. We don't really, we're not really, we're not particularly proud of it or don't promote it, we don't as an institution participate in educating the community itself about it, it's kind of weird to me, it's kind of a weird culture. I'm thinking it's something we should be proud of.

Wendy commented that State University should embrace it more:

I think that some people were kind of resistant to it happening, which was a little bit surprising, I would think because it's not something that's a new concept, a lot of employers do it all over everywhere but it seems like it's taking us a little while to embrace it here so I think that was probably more surprising, I guess than anything else.

Anne noted that more support was necessary, "...as leaders on the campus we should be doing more to support it. I'm quite honestly surprised that there aren't more efforts to push it out to more employees".

Mindi alluded that manager control impacted the amount of teleworking:

So, I think at this institution, in general, that the managers have a hard time giving up the control and so the teleworking doesn't that...there's some animosity there. If they allow it, then there's some animosity where "are they really getting stuff done?" and then the employee is either over compensating and so feels anxious that

you know, "oh I gotta...constantly have my cell phone with me because my boss might text me!" you know, you know or email me and "I need to answer this right away" you know, delete where it says, "sent from my I phone", "oh she doesn't know that I did it remotely, she thinks I'm on my computer." I know people who do that and I'm like, "oh that's awful! I'm so sorry for you" [laughs] because that's not how mine...experience is.

Lynn hoped that others would be provided with the opportunity:

I just, I hope that this university goes more in that direction [for more teleworking] and I hope that they give that opportunity for more employees on campus to have that option, especially for, you know, new moms who do want to continue on in the field.

Although many of the participants indicated that they have an office culture of support towards teleworking, several experienced negativity from others, noting a perception that their telework day was just *a day off*. When discussing her experience, Lynn mentioned that on two separate occasions she heard negative comments regarding her working from home. When asked if her colleagues or peers could better support her, she said no and further explained:

No, no, I mean other than the fact that I just feel like I have to constantly reiterate you know, or feel like I have to explain my situation..."I'm putting time in from home"...and that's the other thing, it's funny cause another colleague works from home, and just this morning I mentioned that so and so was working from home today, and you know, you get that, "oh, yea right..." you know, and that's unfortunate, I don't know where that comes from because you really can do a lot of

work from home!

She surmised that perhaps these comments were from others who were not in a position to be able to work from home:

...but that's kind of like the small comments that are made like you know, "oh, yea, right" and again, in some, in some units in our division, that might not be possible, I mean, I do look at our payroll preparers you know, I don't know how that would work for someone...I think that there are probably ways if you really think about it and explore and get creative, basically, that's the bottom line you just kind of have to be creative, but I think it can be done.

When describing his idea of productivity, Oobleck commented that he puts pressure on himself to complete many tasks when he worked from home, to keep the perceptions of not working at bay:

I'm working from home I don't want people to think, "oh, you're just sitting around" so...I have a uh, you know, I can say, "well, I did all of this today" I don't worry so much about that on say a Thursday [laughs], you know, and I might chat with somebody in the hall for twenty minutes ...but again, when I'm working from home I'm like, "I don't want them to think that I sat around all day" so, I, I try to make sure that my productivity is obvious.

When asked to comment on where these perceptions came from, Oobleck shared that there had been jokes made about teleworking, especially since it was not a common work arrangement when he first started teleworking:

Honestly I think part of it is just you know, I think part of it is probably jokes people make, like "oh, you work from home" like that kind of thing, especially

years ago when I started, I think it's becoming more common now, it's just that, but I think a lot of it is just in my head you know it's like "well I don't want people to just think I'm twiddling my thumbs here all day, so I can have a day of just not being in the office" you know, so I think a lot of it is probably in my head.

Lucy said that in her experience, adjusting to working at home attributed to the negative comments she heard. But later, as she had been doing it for so long, there was no question about her schedule:

It's interesting, initially when I first had the telework agreement, I would get kind of, "what do you mean you're not here that day?" you know, or if, so or, "well you're not going to be here that day" or they'd be wanting to schedule something when my presence was really needed and they'd want to put it on a day when my presence wasn't going to exist here, so, initially people had to get adjusted to it.

She stated that the adjustment period took almost a year:

I think, it, it's a long time ago now, probably six to eight months, probably was about how long it took before I wasn't hearing anything anymore. It was the newness that was resulting in that people, you know, making sort of an issue of it, or you know, not getting with the program very quickly, but even, later, once they're used to it, even when it was up to three days a week, they were like, "yea, okay, sure...whatever" you know, everybody was, I didn't hear anything, so I think it's the newness that gets people.

**Control mechanisms.** The majority of the participants experienced managerial control, where the participants believed that they were supported by their supervisor in their teleworking efforts. The participants had little comment on how their supervisor

could better support them. In Paul's opinion, an employee who worked from home was no from an employee in the main office, so managers should not resist teleworking:

It's really no different than when they are in the office, because when they are in the office it's not like you're standing over their shoulder watching them eight hours a day, you know, to make sure what they're doing, they either get everything done or they don't...any new managers are on probation for one year, by the design of our plan and agreement, they can't start it [teleworking] until they're off probation, so you know if by the end of the year you don't have faith in somebody to act as a professional and do their job, I think you have bigger issues than teleworking [laughs].

Wendy expressed a similar viewpoint, noting that employers should have known what employees were able to achieve:

Employers know their employees and what they're capable of doing and how they interact with you know the employer as well as how they interact with their coworkers, so you can judge how that person responds to a task like that and ask them if this is something they would like.

When asked what made their supervisor supportive in their telework efforts, the majority of the participants indicated that trust and autonomy were the reasons for the support. Anne stated that, "...it was just he supported me by giving me the autonomy to do that when I needed to and I realize that may not be a typical situation but his support was, I suppose you could say, in just the autonomy and the trust." Laya also mentioned trust when she shared, "Well, she...trusts me, I mean she supports me by allowing me to do it, she...she knows that I'm getting work done I mean she's not...hovering." Terry



shared a similar sentiment:

Her trust and her ability to be able to reach me whenever she needs. She's never had a problem at all, like "oh my gosh, Terry's working from home but I don't know where she is!" [laughs] "I can't find her, I can't talk to her, I really need her for this thing."

For Paul, who also supervised employees, he believed trust was very important:

Every position is unique you have to look at every position, you know, it does require that you have trust in, in the people that are doing the teleworking you know. My theory in life in general I trust people to the point they show me a reason not to trust them and if that happens you deal with it, you know, and that might mean stopping their telework agreement, but it really for us, it really hasn't been an issue.

For Lynn, it was a matter of getting the job done, "I believe she trusts me and knows that I get the job done no matter what so..." When asked why she believed her supervisor was so supportive, Wendy surmised that her supervisor recognized the productivity of employees who teleworked:

...possibly because she knows the benefit of having a staff person out of the office working uninterrupted for a day, basically uninterrupted for a day, that it's not only beneficial to that employee because they feel that sense of satisfaction with getting something done, but it's beneficial to the office as well because that's a whole lot of work that got done in that particular day that possibly might not have happened that might have taken two or three days.

Paul commented that there had been no concerns with employees teleworking, largely

because the supervisor had put procedures in place for teleworkers:

One of the rules we have is you've got to be responsive when you're on your telework day. So if I send an email, or I need to call you, you know, you better be there [laughs] and we haven't had any issue with that and so from a supervisor point of view, you know, the difference between that and me walking down the hall and sticking my head in your office is pretty minimal to me.

For Wendy and Terry, they were expected to communicate their work from home day to the staff. Wendy mentioned the use of an office calendar and shared that, “pretty much everybody in the office knows when someone is, is teleworking because it's part of our out of office calendar.” Terry used a more creative way to communicate with other office members:

One of the ways that I communicate the days that I'm teleworking, first of all it is announced, everybody knows, I put it on my door as well I have white board and it says "Terry's teleworking that day". Never, haven't had any issues so far where you know, it became a problem.

### **Individual Characteristics**

Individual objectives that make distributed work arrangements attractive to employees include cost savings and control of work schedule (Belanger & Collins, 1998). Several participants experienced a saving in costs associated with teleworking and participants experienced control of their workday. Specific individual skills, such as basic computer knowledge, self-sufficiency, reliability, and communication skills may be required to work in a distributed arrangement (Belanger & Collins, 1998). The majority of the participants referenced a need for *focus* and *discipline* when describing their ability to

work from home. The following section outlines the experiences of the participants based upon individual objectives and individual skill.

**Individual objectives.** Several of the participants experienced a reduction in costs on their telework days. For Bertha, while her favorite aspect of teleworking was not coming into the office one day a week, she also mentioned that she liked the savings from teleworking, "...I don't have to fight with traffic on those days, getting up, coming in, going home, saves me some gas money, food money because the food's there [at home] so...".

Jim also experienced a reduction in cost when addressing the impact teleworking had, "there's a cost savings for us because I'm not going to, I'm not paying for gas to get here [State University], I'm not buying lunch, you know I'm not doing a lot of things so it's definitely an improvement". For Paul, the cost savings were based upon his reduced commute, which he noted was 45 minutes each way:

The interaction with that and telecommuting, certainly helps the job satisfaction when you can work from home some. Both, you know, you don't have to do the commute, which is you know, an hour and a half out of your day, and you know, until recently, with the price of gas, being able to save one fifth [of gas] was substantial.

Lynn experienced a cost savings with childcare, as working from home one day a week afforded her the opportunity to keep her children from needing additional daycare:

So this [teleworking] was kind of part of the request [when moving to part time], just having that flexibility, so we wouldn't have to pay for childcare, and I could still put in you know, my time at home, since right now that's priority for me in my

life, this stage.

However, Lucy's experience did not include cost savings, as she needed to use her own supplies:

My vision isn't that great for reading things on screen so if I need to read a long document I usually need to print it, so I do, I don't, there's no way, I mean my printer uses completely different kinds of cartridges than are used here [State University], so I don't recoup that. But I do take paper home from the office and use paper from here and it's always really [laughs], it's a dilemma of the teleworker, you know, you are walking out of the building one day with a ream of paper and you feel like you have to explain it to someone, "I'm not really stealing a ream of paper, I work at home", this is what I'm supposed to do, it's, you know, it's awkward.

Yet Lucy mentioned saving in other ways when she answered what she enjoyed about teleworking:

I like the flexibility, I like the gas savings, I like the environmental friendliness of it, and I like being able to organize my tasks in a week so that I can put things on Friday that are going to be best done on Friday.

Lucy also mentioned that she was able to organize her tasks from the week for her telework day:

...and I organize my work, a lot of times, if I have something big I have to read...and I have something I need to edit, I'll plan those as my Friday work, that I can do at home cause I can do it without any interruptions and more quickly.

Several other participants also experienced similar control over the workweek.

They created a plan for the week, or would *save* specific tasks or projects to work on

during their telework day. For Oobleck, saving work for his telework day afforded him the opportunity to complete tasks that did not require him to be at State University to complete:

I can just get up, sit at the computer, and I try to save a lot of things for Mondays that I don't need to be in the office for like, uh, coding...or any website maintenance, things like that...research that I have to do...and I can sit and be uninterrupted.

When commenting on the flexibility teleworking afforded her, Mindi discussed her methods for planning the workweek:

I do tend to plan my workweek around what day of the week is going to be my telework day and what jobs are on my desk that I need to do, “well these are the things that I can focus to do that day” and so it does fluctuate. It depends on what is going on in my...what I have due, whether its proposals, or reporting, or whatever, as well as what's going on in my personal life so it's...it flows, I guess would be a better word.

In determining what projects to work on, Wendy only completed tasks that were accessible through the security network:

...because you never know what happens even though I'm at home and it's just my family there I still don't want to run the risk of taking something that's sensitive out of the office that might have something identifiable or anything else that I'm working on. So I try to only work on things that I can access through the website or anything like that. I try not to bring any documents with me out of the office.

For Anne, she experienced greater creativity at home, and so would save her big thinking

projects for her telework day:

...but again I think a more typical situation for me is trying to identify some broader projects that need addressed...sometimes my best new ideas come from when I'm working at home because I just find that my mind isn't distracted by, you know the everyday, it allows me to think a little bit more clearly and long term and creative juices, plus I have a better view, [laughs] which you know, and it's funny when I think about it...being able to look out my window and see green and see nice weather, my flowers and what not, it makes me a better thinker. I know that sounds crazy but it's true...if I had to say typical [tasks for telework day] I would say I try and identify the projects that take a little bit more time and thought and maybe planning so that I can get some things down on paper that I can then take back to my staff.

The participants also experienced control in how they structured their telework day. For some, the day would begin at the same time they would normally come into their office. Others, however, would work a modified schedule on their telework day. Several participants expanded upon their usual business hours to complete tasks. Wendy noted that she could easily get up and start her work tasks:

It's really neat because I actually get to sleep in a little bit longer than I usually do when I have to get up and come to work, I try to log in and get started at the same time I would when I come into the office so it's somewhere between 7:30am-8:00am. I'm online already and I get to roll out and just, of course you know, I don't have to do the essentials, don't have to change out of your pajamas, you get up and just start working which is really kind of cool...

Paul worked additional time during his telework day:

For myself, I would usually pretty well work my usual hours, and I would, you know, actually get up, kind of get dressed just as if I was going to work and that kind of thing...end the day, around 4:30pm-5:00pm, my usual hours are 7:30am-4:30pm. I generally keep that while I work at home, but I also, if I want to work at home, I tend to, kind of keep working a little bit later than I would if I were in the office.

Lynn enjoyed the flexibility of working when she was able:

From nine to eleven at night I get so much done, and it, I just like that flexibility where I can just pick up my computer and sit down, it might not be at my desk in my office environment in my home, it might be in my recliner, on my couch, but I'm in my pajamas, I'm comfortable, and I'm just, knocking stuff out and it's just really, I like that, I like the flexibility of that, so.

Bertha noted that not having to commute provided her more time to work, “for me, [the day] starts earlier than my normal day because I'm at home and I don't [laughs] have to come out to the campus.” Anne recognized the flexibility in completing home and work tasks:

I would say that the length of the day increases, time wise, but I also in all fairness realize you know, if I run down and put a load of clothes in the washing machine, I'm going to run down and throw them in the dryer and then you know, so there's those little things that happen in the day as well, which you know, I think I can manage those as well, but what I do then is I just make sure that I do work longer to make up that time.

Jim spaced out his work time throughout the day:

I will work probably from five the morning until nine at night, but I won't do it straight, you know, I'll do something here and then I'll go have lunch or mow the lawn or whatever and then come back and get to it...I can space it out to where I am doing some things that are work related and some things that are personal, see them at home there, so I can take care of things that can be done then.

The ability to manage work and life demands was important. Participants commented that the ability to telework aided them in caring for children and managing family demands. Sometimes on her telework days, Laya found herself picking up her daughter and stated that, "if it means I'm gonna be working until 8 o'clock at night because I've had to run to go and pick up my daughter or something then that's what I'm prepared to do." Lynn coordinated her work time in between family time:

I don't put in my hours in the morning, that's when I worry about my kiddos. In the afternoon, my little ones go to sleep, they take a nap, and that's whenever I kind of get on and start doing whatever I have to do for a couple of hours...and then that night, I...9 o'clock, my kids are in bed and so I get out my computer and I continue on for a couple more hours...Wednesday is my day, however, sometimes it can be dispersed throughout the week, depending on what I am working on depending on schedules, my work schedule for that week.

Paul shared that he was able to do more for his family during his telework days:

...because I didn't have the commute, I could have dinner on the table for her [wife], and that frees up other time in your life for kind of ...work life balance...the very fact that you know, maybe you are a little more relaxed and less



stressed at the end of the day, once a week or so, you know, probably helps marital harmony and relationship harmony [laughs], so I think there is, is that broader impact on family too, that is a positive thing.

For Terry, teleworking provided her a break from the usual routine:

...it works for me too, as a, as a mom, you know, it gives me a break in the middle of the week, that I don't have to come to work and I can do the same things from home.

While the majority of the participants had a designated telework day, several of them were able to modify their telework day, if needed. In addition, several participants were able to create a telework schedule on an ad-hoc or as needed basis. For Jim, who teleworked six days a month, he planned his days in advance:

I look at my schedule and pick days that are, that it's good for me, if I don't have a meeting you know, scheduled or I just look for days that are pretty much open that I don't think I need to be on campus that day...generally I block off my days on my calendar that I'm going to work from home.

For Lynn, given that her husband traveled for work, she built her schedule a month in advance:

Typically at the beginning of a month I try to give her [supervisor] at least the beginning of a month and look ahead at my husband and my's schedules and try to lay out my weeks....if it needs to change [the telework day], I give her plenty of notice.

Terry teleworks on Wednesday, however, could adjust her telework day to Friday if needed. In the past, she changed her telework day to accommodate meetings scheduled on

her telework day. In answering how she communicated this change to her supervisor, Terry stated that, "I let her [supervisor] know a week in advance....I'll switch with the Monday or a Friday". Although Mindi teleworked on Wednesday, she had the ability to modify her telework day, if needed in the office, or if personal matters needed attention. For Mindi, teleworking provided her with flexibility to manage both work and home:

So there are times when my, again, my teleworking is typically on Wednesday, but next week it's on Tuesday again because I'm a little bit behind on the recalls on my car...so I'll take the car in on Monday night and let it sit...well, I can telework on all day Tuesday and kind of be stuck at home and that's perfectly fine...sometimes it [telework day] changes, like day of the week changes because of an internal work meeting, something that I need to do, and sometimes it changes between I can do, I can do those things that it is hard to do during a business day without taking time off.

**Individual skills.** The majority of the participants scheduled specific tasks to complete on their telework day that were independent. However, they recognized the importance of staying connected with the office. Therefore, the majority of the participants acquired a communication plan for staying connected if they needed to be consulted for work related matters. For Terri, she recognized the importance of being accessible to her supervisor, and so would consult with her supervisor on times that were convenient for her:

...we're always in touch, we're always in communication, even if somebody needs to talk to me when I'm not at the office, we talk via email and we schedule a time okay, you know "I'll give you a call at 3 o'clock, here are all of my numbers and we can talk" even if we need to, on the phone, and we can't do video conferencing

yet, it would be nice to do that, but yea, we can talk, whether it's a meeting that I need to listen in to or it's a one to one conversation, one to one phone call, yea.

When describing the details of his telework agreement, Oobleck stated that he used video chat to stay connected to his supervisor:

I do a video chat, which isn't in the telework agreement, but my supervisor and I started doing it just to kind of, you know, basically say "what's going on today?" I'd say twice a month we do a Google Hangout, for like half an hour and just kind of say you know "what's going on today? Is everything there okay?"

To ensure that constituents could reach her, Mindi updated her voicemail:

So I usually call this [voicemail] in first thing in the morning and I call my voicemail and I change it to my second voicemail, which is, "I am working today, I'm working away from my office. If you need to get a hold of me, please send me an email or feel free to contact my boss, if you need to talk to someone directly." And then typically my faculty members will send me an email and it's actually...I would say 98% percent of my job is done over email anyway; I rarely get phone calls. If I get a phone call it's typically someone here at the university. But if they send me an email then I will call them back from my cell, but I try not to...it's not a work cell so I try not to give that number out per se.

Lucy utilized her telework day to be available to constituents she worked with and scheduled conference calls to go over the work she had completed with them:

...sometimes I have a phone conference, every once in a while I do a lot of consulting with faculty who are developing new program proposals, sometimes the best day for them to meet is a Friday and it's no problem at all for me to have

a meeting on Friday, so every once in a while, I'll have a phone conference that was either planned and scheduled, or sometimes I'll have a phone meeting that wasn't planned and scheduled but it will come up. I'll have questions, once I set down and read the document, I realize I'll have questions and it's going to be easier to talk to someone than to do just a lot of emailing about it, and so sometimes I do have phone conferences that are either planned or unplanned about the work.

Email remained a primary mean of communication for the majority of the participants. For many of them the first work task they completed in the morning was to log in and check their email. For Mindi, checking her email was part of her morning routine:

So the first thing I will do is I will get up and I make coffee...cause that's what I do. And once...as the coffee is brewing, I'm usually throwing the laundry in, cause I do laundry on my teleworking day...I put the laundry in, and then I go upstairs and I open up my computer and I look and see what kind of emails might have come in overnight.

This was also the case for Paul, who checked his email for messages from the prior evening:

...log onto the computer, log into the school systems, if I had a proposal to review you know first thing I would do is to check all of my emails, respond to my emails, as I needed to that had come in overnight.

Terry used time in the morning to check her email before her kids woke:

...so I get up in the morning and I usually wake up before my kids do so I come down and I'll make a cup of tea and I turn on my computer, which is normally, an

hour to two hours before my normal work day... and I can filter through the emails. For Oobleck, email was one of the several systems he opened in the morning to begin his tasks:

...and then generally the first thing I do is I open up all our systems, the ticket tracking system, calendaring system, email, things like that. Uh, and catch up on email, go through all our tickets, make sure there's nothing outstanding, if things seem to be done, I will either comment, or ask our student worker to follow up on things if I can't...because I'm not physically there.

Email for Anne was used to determine what could be of priority for the day:

Well of course as you know, email sort of runs our life...some of the time as least, initially when I'm sort of first getting going is just looking at email in figuring out what I need to immediately respond to what I need to just set aside for a little bit and come back to.

Wendy kept her email open and checked it several times throughout her telework day:

I'm usually in and out of email, you know I'll pop in every so often if I see my little icon of if I have any email, I'll look in there "okay what's going on with email?" do I have to respond to this right away, no? Well if I have to respond to something then I go in and respond to it and I get back into whatever it is that I'm doing for the day.

A common theme from the participants was that focus and self-discipline were needed to work from home. The majority of the participants recognized that self-sufficiency and being free of distractions were important for successful teleworking. For Laya, focus was very important for her success with teleworking. She mentioned the need

for both focus and discipline several times. She commented that, “you have to have a lot of discipline...I have to really force myself to be focused.” When asked specifically what employees needed to know before teleworking, she again stated focus was necessary:

...they have to be very realistic on whether or not they have, that they will have the focus, so I don't want to say that well, some population can do it and others can't, I'm not prepared to say that, but it does takes a lot, it does take a lot of discipline, and if a person is easily distracted...then this wouldn't work for them because ultimately the quality of their work, or their productivity would suffer... you just...if teleworking...only works if you do not need to be supervised or highly managed.

Anne also commented on the need for focus, and that for some employees, focus might not have been possible, “I can go in my office and do what I need to do and not get easily distracted or...I can stay focused and some people, for whatever reason, may not be able to do that”.

Mindi shared that she enjoyed teleworking as she was able to focus more. She believed that in order for employees to be able to telework, they needed to have the right mindset, “...teleworking is nice because I can be alone and I can really focus on the work....my favorite thing about teleworking is that...I have that time to focus on like, one intricate project and really get that done”. She again mentioned mindset, when asked what others needed to know before teleworking, “...it's not suitable for everybody. It's not just the job but not every mindset can physically turn off and switch into work things when you are sitting in your slippers in front of your TV or whatever, so...”. For Wendy, discipline was necessary for successful teleworking, “...and like I said before, discipline is key to this process, if you don't have that discipline to know that you are still at work

even though you're not physically in the office it's not going to work". Oobleck also mentioned the need for focus and understood that not all employees had the focus to work from home:

....you just kind of need to sit down and barrel through it...you know, mentioning back to why other people aren't doing it, we have a newish hire, and we were talking to her, I was talking to her recently about it and she said that she couldn't see herself working from home because she would be just too distracted, and that is another reason that people give, that you know, they would end up watching TV or something like that because they had a lull or something like that or you know, "I've been meaning to do this all week" and they might do that but you just need to, you know, as I said, I sit down at the desk and it's like, it's my work space...but I'm at home, you kind of have to force yourself to sit there and not be distracted.

Several participants indicated that in the past, they had faced distractions for working from home. The participants had the skills needed to resolve these distractions in an attempt to complete a telework day. For Wendy, she needed to clarify her telework days with her spouse and shared:

If you have people in your house that you know, they realize that just because you're not out of the house you are still working, so, it took my husband a little while to wrap his head around that, he'd say, "well you're off on Fridays" and I'm like, "no, I'm not off on Friday, I work from home on Friday", so you know, it took him a little while to wrap his head around the fact.

Oobleck also experienced needing to clarify his telework days with a family member:

I don't know how many times, but a few times where I've had to go and say you know, one of my kids got sick and I had to go pick them up from the nurse's office and bring them home and I'm like "okay, well, I'm working from home today! Sit on the couch and watch TV" or something like that and it's generally okay because they're older now.

Mindi commented on two occasions where she had assisted a family member, but had been able to resolve them. The first was with her mother in law:

I think it was eleven o'clock in the morning and my mother in law called and she needed a new cell phone...well, I did calculate in that it would take an hour to get a physically new phone but I didn't calculate in the time that it would take to teach her to use the new phone so, it was probably close to three o'clock in the afternoon before I got back to my desk and I told my boss, "you're going to be confused when you get my time sheet because I'm taking Tuesday as a vacation instead of my teleworking day, because...I didn't get a whole lot done".

The second experience was with her significant other:

So my significant other is a school teacher and so in the summer, there are changes that I have to make in my teleworking, personally, just to make sure that, "well, you know...is something fun going on down there?" you know I don't want to miss out on anything fun, so you know, typically, I shut her out and so, "okay, here's a list of things to do", or "you may need a summer job, why don't you go do...intern somewhere" you know, so that they're not there, that makes it easier.

Overall, the participants were resourceful when working from home and had unique ways of ensuring access to work related tasks while at home. Jim stated that he had



experienced not having all of his documents with him in the past so he created a solution:

And there's times like yesterday, I worked from home yesterday, and I needed to get into the foundation account and I didn't have my packet that tells me how to get in there so, what I'll do now is I'll realize, I realize that I need that when I'm at home and I didn't have it, I'll scan and fax you know, create a file for those things so to have them on my computer so that I don't have to look at the hard copy anymore. So, I've done that now with a number of things, whenever I find something that I need at home, even if I only need it once a year or whatever, if I have it on file on my computer, then it, it's there for me, so.

For Lucy, she ensured she had proper documents with her the night before her telework day, “I would have brought papers and files home the night before, so I would go to my briefcase and I would pull out what I brought home to work on”.

Terry met with her supervisor to identify work to be completed independently, “I started identifying things that I can do independently and that do not require me to be at campus, and can be done from a remote location”. Anne indicated that she set up her filing system to ensure she could access her documents from home:

...and so with the laptop and security access I can get to, of course my email, I can get to any files that we have, and we've set up kind of a workflow to make sure that everything for our office is on that drive and so therefore, I'm not limited in what I can access from home, I have it.

### **Work Characteristics**

Depending on the type of interdependence, a task that is potentially appropriate for a distributed work arrangement will have differing communication and job

coordination requirements (Belanger & Collins, 1998). As indicated previously, the majority of the participants planned or saved work to complete during their telework day that either could be done independently or required focus and attention. As such, many of them did not need to be in communication with members of their office on their telework day. However, the participants varied in their means of staying connected to members of State University, such as email, phone calls, video conferencing, or texting. They recognized that teleworking afforded them the opportunity to work independently, but also recognized the need for interaction with others in order to be successful at their job. The following section will further outline the experience of the participants based upon communication pattern and coordination requirements.

**Communication pattern.** Email was the primary source of communication for the participants on their telework day. Several others used phone calls, video conferencing, or text messaging. While staying in communication with the main office during their telework day was not an expectation, the participants liked to be connected and be accessible to their supervisors and colleagues. For Bertha, staying in communication kept her abreast of any issues within the office, “we are...we communicate with each other via email or cell phone on the days that we're teleworking so if there is an issue or a problem, we're all abreast of what's going on so. Just good communication”. In addition to email, Bertha stayed connected with text messaging, “...on the days that I'm teleworking, we'll email each other or send text messages [laughs] or call”. Paul's primary source of communication was email whether he was in the office or not. In the creation of expectations for teleworking, he went on to share that:

Most of our communication is via email with departments and with people on

campus and even when we are negotiating with sponsors, most of that is with email, documents, and that kind of thing and phone calls. So that part is pretty easy to fulfill for my position because so much of our work is done online. So you know, that part was easy, as far as duties that we'd be doing it basically was those duties, the same duties that we perform when we're in the office in person.

Terry used several means to stay connected to the main office. When asked to describe what methods of communication she used, she states that she used everything:

Everything! We email, we can IM chat, Google chat, I can text her, a phone conversation, everything. Yea, we...it's not a challenge to, to contact or communicate or get a hold of each other, it's very very easy. We will find each one or the other way [laughs].

Lynn primarily used email but often called colleagues, if it would have led to a swifter resolution:

...email from home, a phone call if it's really, whatever the request is entails a phone call, typically it's not that urgent, but if I just can't get my questions out, or what my thoughts out on an email I will definitely pick up the phone and call.

For Oobleck, his staff members knew he was accessible when at home, “everybody knows Mondays I'm working from home, I'm completely accessible”.

The participants were in positions that required little interaction with other constituents. For those that interacted with others, face-to-face communication was not always needed. In fact, the participants stay connected with their staff using email or phone calls. Oobleck, for example, used technology to connect with his staff on his telework day, “...sometimes I'll do you know if it's staff, we'll do a Google Hangout, or we have Adobe

Connect to do video conferencing...”. Several participants stayed connected to the main office, in the event assistance was needed. Wendy’s position required little interaction with others, “I have a job that doesn't really require that I interact with people other than my coworkers, so I don't have any, there's no public contact for my position”. Yet she went on to say that if she did need information from others, it was easy for her to retrieve it during her telework day:

If there are things that I need, I can always email somebody or call somebody and, “Hey look, I don't have this at home, you know, could you look this up for me or could you do this for me?” and staff is more than willing to do that or assist.

Lucy stated that to schedule meetings with a large group was a challenge, but could usually participate if she called in during her telework day:

...if it's like a big group meeting, my preference is to be here in person for that, so she [administrative assistant] tries to get the meeting scheduled Monday through Thursday, but she also knows that if she can't, she can schedule it on a Friday and I'll be present, you know, by phone, so we have a working understanding kind of, of how this should be prioritized, and what we do if we can't meet my ideal we have a fallback position, so that's all working smoothly.

Oobleck coordinated with his student worker to make sure that office needs were covered during his telework day:

Well, he usually, you know, I usually, when he sets his schedule, I'm like, "can you at least put in three hours on a Monday?" just so that, you know, again if they need toner in the lab, he can go and change the toner, like that kind of thing.

While the participants were able to complete tasks that required little

communication with others, they did understand that communicating and collaborating with colleagues was necessary for success in their work. When asked what he would change about teleworking, Paul initially stated he would telework more but commented on the need for staff interaction:

...more of it...? I guess, you know, like I say, the nature of the work we do is so much driven online these days that the...necessity and to actually being physically in the office in ways is minimal. I wouldn't want to do it all the time, because I think the interaction with your coworkers is very important, I actually have a relative, who by the nature of their work telecommutes all the time, and you know, the one thing he talks about is he really misses the personal interaction with his coworkers and the team aspect and so I don't think that would be something I wouldn't want to do.

Mindi recognized that interacting with her other colleagues provided her the opportunity to be productive, as she could bounce ideas off others:

Just like in one of my other sentences where I said that teleworking is nice because I can be alone and I can really focus on the work I'm doing, there are times when I am also the other person banging on someone else's door saying, "hey, let me roll this off of you" so, in our situation its really nice to have people that, to be able to just walk down the hall and say "hey...give me your thoughts on this...you know, issue that I'm having" or "what would you do in this situation."

For Lucy, the caliber of work would not have been the same if she worked solely from home, especially as she managed another employee:

I mean, you know, there's just a camaraderie in the office, there's the ease of being

able to talk to each other, just walk across the hall and talk about what you need to talk about, so that part of my job I could not do, to my standards, at home, although it could be done, it just wouldn't be the way I'd like to do it because I think being there is really valuable when supervising people but really the rest of it I could do.

**Coordination requirements.** The majority of participants completed work during their telework day that was independent and required little assistance from others. When setting up their telework arrangement, several were able to create their own expectations for working at home. The majority of the work tasks required little coordination with others. Anne's position at State University required little supervision, so where she completed her work was of no concern:

I'm sort of I guess at a level in my position where the expectation is I know what needs to be done and I don't really have a supervisor who's saying "well now you need to do this, and now you need to do that" so I have sort of the freedom to...to run my own position, or run my own workflow, or I know what I need to do.

When discussing her tasks for teleworking, Terry commented that the majority of her work could be done independently:

Actually, most of my work is, can be done independently....most of my job I would say about 75-80% is independent and then you know if I do need to meet someone, I can always schedule a meeting and talk to those people or even if I can call from home.

For Lucy, the ability to schedule her work from home as needed allowed her to focus on specific tasks that needed attention:

...my boss is not big on, nor am I, like spelling out, "on this day you're gonna do this and on that day or gonna do that". So even though the agreements says you're supposed to spell out what your specific projects are going to be, we just kind of fill that out as you know, this kind of project does appropriate writing, reading, editing, but really I do whatever I need to do at home.

Mindi also was in control of her work while at home, so long as she completed what was needed:

I never know what that priority could be [when referring to daily tasks]. So it's there...I have ones, I rack and stack, but things can get pushed out and moved. So ultimately as long as my boss doesn't get calls from my faculty members saying, "hey, she's MIA...I asked her to do this three weeks ago, and she's not..." really, I can do whatever I need to at home.

Overall, the participants scheduled work to complete during their telework day that was best to complete with limited interruptions. Participants indicated that some of their work was challenging to complete in the office due to constant interruptions from others. Completing the tasks while working at home afforded them the opportunity to concentrate. This was true for Mindi, who will worked on tasks that required her to focus, "when I'm at home, specifically, like, typically I try to do some of my reporting or unless there's reporting that I have to do because I can really focus". Bertha indicated the same, as she worked on tasks that required concentration, "I usually work on those projects that are very time consuming and need very little, that require a lot of concentration and time and little interruption". Nearly every participant noted that there were often interruptions at work and that teleworking reduced distractions and allowed them to concentrate on projects

and tasks. Lucy utilized her telework days for document review:

...I thought it would be helpful in my work, cause I do a lot of writing and reviewing of documents, it's harder to do that in a day when you are chalked up with meetings and noises in the hall and all of that.

Bertha commented that, "...because we...we don't have the distractions of being in the office. Depending on what the project is that we are working on, or what normal paperwork things that we have to do. It just helps not to be distracted". Anne utilized her telework days for planning purposes, "I expect that I won't have the level of interruption that I get in the office and so my goal is to utilize that time effectively for more long term projects and planning, that's how I see it". Laya mentioned that with working at home, she was not visible to her colleagues, and had limited interruptions:

...but it also allows you to get a lot done because you're not on site and being constantly interrupted, you know, just by mere virtue of the fact that you're there, if someone, if someone were to pass my office and see me and just that in itself would make them think, "ok, let me go in and talk to her" about something they probably wouldn't have thought of but that they saw me. You know what I mean? It's nothing really critical. So, it [teleworking] certainly minimizes, or eliminates all together the disruptions that you would get just by physically being in, at, on site.

While Wendy understood the need for face-to-face interaction, she commented that the limited interruptions at home provided her the opportunity to complete tasks in less time than in the office:

...it's not that it's a bad thing you know when people come and ask you something but when people come and ask you something, you know, multiple times a day you



get distracted, you have to think like, "okay, what was I doing before that person popped in for that question?" so you know, without the distractions, I can sometimes, you know, do like, "oh my god, I got more work done today than I got like done in the past week" so it's, that to me, is rewarding. So, to me that's a huge benefit of getting that done for the teleworking.

Paul mentioned a similar experience:

...in a typical office setting we have our doors open, people walk by, they have a question, they just stop in to say hello, whatever, or you are bouncing back and forth like that it tends to take longer to actually accomplish a detailed task.

Oobleck enjoyed the uninterrupted time to complete his work tasks, "so, uh, you know, that stuff eats up a lot of time [laughs] those constant interruptions and on Monday I can sit...and work and uh, it's nice". Lynn commented that she worked more efficiently at home:

I say that I work a bit more efficiently when I'm at home. I don't know why that is, again, I, I always say it's because of the distractions and the everyday, you know meetings that you might have to prepare for, well, you have a meeting at 1, you really start kind of looking, you know, okay 12:45, that's 15 minutes there, go to the bathroom, go to the meeting, discussions after the meeting, get back...okay...now, what am I working on, I mean that one hour meeting ends up being about probably two hours of your time.

The participants understood that not all jobs available at State University were conducive for teleworking, as the nature of certain positions may have required interaction with others that was necessary for job completion. Wendy recognized that the nature of the

job may determine the ability to telework:

Like I said before, the nature of your work. Not everybody can telework, if you work at the front office you can't telework because you know, you can't see people and if that's the nature of your job so you need to understand that it's not something for everyone.

Anne also recognized this regarding front desk personnel:

...if somebody has a uh, front desk job where they need to be ready to greet students, obviously there's a limitation there because you know, you've got to be there, cause you know, the students have got to come to you, so I imagine that would rule out some of the jobs and types of jobs that would be even appropriate for telecommuting.

For Jim, his job was suitable for teleworking as he did not have many face-to-face meetings:

Now obviously you aren't going to be able to do face to face meetings, but certain jobs there's not a lot of that. I mean, I'm a finance guy I'm basically an accountant so whenever there's a meeting I just make sure I'm on campus but if there's no meeting I think I am able to do my job just like I would as if I was in the office.

Laya believed that some positions were not possible to complete online:

If their job would allow it, you know, they don't need to be present for whatever reason cause that's just the type like if you're, if you're, if you are a technical person, to me, that would be a little difficult to telework in the sense that, I mean, unless you could suggest how to get things online, you sometimes have to go to someone's computer, and you know, so a job like that might be a little difficult.

## **Technology Characteristics**

“The final element to take into consideration is the distributed work arrangement itself...issues to be considered include the office set up and security concerns” (Belanger & Collins, 1998, p.146). Participants varied in their use of equipment and in the support needed for teleworking. For the majority of the participants, a computer and strong internet connection were the only tools needed for successful teleworking. Other participants needed additional equipment based on their specific tasks. Many had a designated workspace at home, but several indicated that they work in areas throughout their home and sometimes outside of the home. The following section further outlines the experiences of the participants based upon security requirements and physical setup.

**Security requirements.** Overall, all participants indicated the need for a computer and internet connection in order to successfully telework. For many participants, the majority of their work was available online, and with proper internet connection, they could work anywhere. Anne mentioned how much technology had changed over the years, making it easier to work remotely:

....if you think back even 15 years ago, we didn't have the same technology capability that we do now and so you know the fact that I can literally get every file that I need that would be here at work that I can get that from home and get it quickly and easily and fast I mean, there was a time when the internet was much slower and you didn't have that ability to access the files like we do now and I guess what is amazing to me is how fast that technology has changed.

Laya also commented on the ability to access her files remotely. When reviewing her expectations for her telework day, she stated that she can perform the same work duties

from the main office at home:

Because things are online, reports are online, I can access all of those programs at home so I'm you know pretty much able to do, as long as I don't have...need any hard files, which very seldom do I need that.

When responding to what she would change about teleworking, Bertha shared that the use of technology aided in her ability to telework:

I think it works well for me and with technology being the way it is, I have access to my files so I don't think I would change [laughs] anything. Before I started teleworking and before we had the student information system and scanning system and all of that, I don't think I would have ever tried to do it [teleworking] because in the liability of taking files out of the office and, things like...you couldn't do that, but now we have access to just about everything.

For Jim, the ability to use technology to telework provided him the opportunity to work anywhere. He shared this unique experience:

....and I love all of the computers and I mean, even my phone is a hot spot, I can get on my computer, and I've done...I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I've done work in a traffic jam on the highway because we were just sitting there and my phone is a hot spot, I can get on my computer and use my phone as an internet connection and get on and I can get into the student information system and do whatever I want, so, I just think all the technology is great, it's a good use of it, let people work from home, and then like I said I think eventually these companies will come to the conclusion that it's much more cost effective to do that.

Like Jim, Lynn also experienced the ability to work anywhere. For Lynn, the ability to

utilize technology allowed her to continue to meet work demands, even when she was not able to be at her desk:

...in regards to technology, and what's available these days, I can be, I was out yesterday, with my daughters and my daughter's in gymnastics, and I'm sitting in the waiting room, and I'm checking my work email, and I'm responding to work emails, and it's just, it's amazing and again that wasn't necessarily on the clock, but, you know, I was able to just sit in the waiting room and someone needed something and I'm not in the office and I can remember back in the day when someone was out of the office and you needed an answer to something, it was like, "oh, man, you know...gotta wait two more days" and this way, I mean I can just [snaps fingers], you know have it right away.

Participants varied in their need of equipment in order to work from home. However, most indicated a need for proper access to documents. Some participants accessed documents through a shared drive that required logging into a virtual private network (VPN). Oobleck shared that, "internally we have an inventorying system, we have a contracting system, I just need to log into the VPN and then I can connect to any of that stuff as well". Lucy utilized the VPN as well, "there might be some documents that I saved on a thumb drive although usually I just go on the VPN to get things". Other participants accessed documents through other means. For Paul, he relied primarily on the internet:

Really the only thing we needed was access to the computer, cause as I would say, 90% of what we do is online. All of our proposal review is done online, proposal submission to almost all of our agencies is actually done through internet

sites.

This was true for Terry as well, “you can access your documents, your procedures, your work can be done anywhere where there’s internet”. Anne shared that she used Google Apps for work, “...now you know, there's Google Docs so if you're both working or multiple people working on something again, it doesn't matter where I'm sitting I can still do that”. Overall, the participants indicated that technology was necessary for the ability to telework. Wendy pointed this out by sharing, “...work can get done a lot of places, you know people have their laptops and their...you know, smart phone and they're just like” [mimics typing].

**Physical setup.** The majority of the participants had a designated office space in their home that is used for telework. The setup of the workspace varied between the participants and was conducive to the work they needed to accomplish. On her telework day, Laya worked from the basement, “...a little office in the basement so, when I'm working I can completely take myself into that office and stare at the computer...and I will say the TV will be on when I'm doing my work downstairs”. Jim worked from his library. Noting that his wife also worked from home, they each had a designated office space:

One of our bedrooms is her office, so she has her own office and closes the door and my office is in the library, so we're separate and yea we have a generator, if the power goes out we still have power.

Lucy sometimes moved around the house and worked in different areas:

...I listen to music because I find that enjoyable, usually, lately I'm working on a laptop in my living room or dining room cause I'm just enjoying that more, sometimes I go to my office, which is on the lower level of my house and work on

my desktop but there's less light down there and I really love natural light so I work in the living room most of the time.

Oobleck noted that while he had a designated office space, he worked throughout the house to break up the day and mentioned the need for quiet:

...I have a fairly nice sized desk and a full computer. If I'm not sitting there, I'm on the laptop downstairs just to break up the day a little bit, but I like sitting at my station with my two screens...I got an iPad 2, I'll carry it around and read things on it but I don't like typing on it, I don't like responding on it so I'll always just end up back at the desk...the house does need to be quiet...

When asked to share what was important to note about her experience, Anne indicated that working from home allowed her to be more creative:

I told you about my nice view, cause again I think that that idea of having you know something that's a little different than what I see out of my office window in terms of how people are able to better think based on their environment.

## **Outcomes**

Within the theoretical framework there are three possible outcomes (a) societal, (b) organizational, and (c) individual. For example, distributed work arrangements can benefit society by reducing pollution from car exhaust, benefit organizations by reducing office space costs, and benefit individuals by reducing their commuting time and money costs (Belanger & Collins, 1998). Outcomes as experienced by the participants are detailed in the following sections.

**Societal.** The majority of the participants indicated that one of their favorite aspects of teleworking was not commuting. While the reduction of commute time was an

individual outcome, there were societal benefits from decreased commuting. Several participants noted this and spoke of societal benefits, such as a decreased carbon footprint and reduced traffic. For Anne, teleworking reduced traffic, which was beneficial to the environment, “if everybody on that beltway was commuting once every other week, it wouldn't be as crowded on the beltway, and so I think it is, it's good for the environment, it's good for traffic”. Anne went on to further share her experience and thoughts on teleworking when the Pope visited the area earlier in the year:

When the pope was coming to DC, I was listening to the traffic reports in the morning, and there was hardly any traffic and the irony was people stayed home and they worked from home and you know, I thought at the time it's like darn, it's a shame that there aren't more organized efforts in large corporations and businesses to say "we need to be doing this", because if we all did it, it really would make a difference in the traffic and that traffic business is just brutal, so you know, energy savings, traffic, I think there's a lot of good reasons for it, that, that extend beyond just the individual and their situation.

When asked to share her overall thoughts on teleworking, Lucy mentioned that teleworking could decrease one's carbon footprint:

...with the planet you know, you know deteriorating every day from the uh, from the carbon emissions, I think this very easy approach to reducing some of the carbon footprint can't be dismissed because people just have a prejudice against it.

For Lucy, environmental awareness was a main motivator for why she teleworked and shared her thoughts on this topic several times when sharing her experience. She also shared that she would like to telework more in order to decrease her use of gas, “you



know maybe a couple more days a week, so that I don't have to go through that because that's a lot of gas, that's a lot of uh, impact on the environment". For Mindi, reducing the office's total carbon footprint was the reason why teleworking began in her office in the first place:

When I first signed it, the university was really starting to kind of focus on sustainability...so we thought that as a department, "why don't we calculate our carbon footprint?" and then as we were calculating our carbon footprint, my boss was like, "you know, it...for the people in the office that can leave", which are the ones that aren't, specifically service type related....but my job I can do, I can manage it.

**Organizational.** Increased productivity, along with employee retention, and reduced overhead were all outcomes for the organization when employees were able to telework. The majority of the participants shared that they felt more productive when they were able to work from home, as they were able to focus on tasks and worked with limited interruptions. For Lynn, she was able to complete more tasks at home than in the office:

It did surprise me at how much you can get done in such little time, I think it's so much done at home in a two hour period, than I can in a two hour period [laughs] in the office.

Paul was able to complete tasks more efficiently when working at home versus the office, which increased his productivity:

I think was a real advantage, when you work from home as when you have tasks like that, you tend to have a lot less interruptions, you tend to actually be able to

get through them quickly, more quickly and more efficiently, then working in the office.

Anne commented that she sometimes used the time normally reserved for commuting to work additional time. She saw the additional time as a benefit because she was not commuting and was able to continue to work:

Just the time involved you know as far as like leaving in the morning, driving into work, leaving at night, coming home, if I take that commute off either end you know I can still get started in the morning, have the day, even if I'm extending it beyond when I would typically leave here, it all works out, so...benefits.

For Mindi, the flexibility of teleworking made her want to work harder for her supervisor and department, as she was grateful for the opportunity to telework. From a management point of view, providing an employee the opportunity to telework could increase productivity:

So if you understand that as a boss, it's not so bad when you think, "okay, well they did...you know they went and got a dentist appointment or they went and did whatever" because all of that works out. It's the same. It's just more conducive to your employee who's now happier because they didn't, they're not doing their laundry on the weekend, and they got it done, and so that's a happier person. Well when a person's happier, they're more apt to take more pride and joy in their work, or say, "you know what? I owe it" cause humans are that way too, "I owe it to my boss...they did this nice thing for me...I was able to get my laundry done, and so I owe it to them to really focus on getting a little bit more work" so you either then now, "I'm working a little bit outside of my normal work hours, or whatever, but

I'm getting it done."

Several participants recalled that their departments initiated teleworking in response to environmental health scares or environmental impacts. As a result, in the event of a campus closure, staff members were equipped to work from home, ensuring that tasks were still completed on time. In Oobleck's office, a policy emerged after the swine flu:

Actually, we put that policy in place, I don't remember how many years ago it was, but my gut would say 7 or 8 years ago when the uh, the swine flu fears came my boss at the time basically said, "we need to make sure, if there's some kind of pandemic that business can continue" and the IT department, our solution at the time was, "well, if we give everybody a laptop, and they can take it home every night" [laughs] so if there's some kind of emergency, they'll have their laptop with them and then they can work from home.

The H1N1 scare led to the purchase of laptops for Anne's department:

...that we were really good about in our division was the idea of being equipped to work from home, you may remember a few years ago there was the what, H1N1 scare and all of that, and so as our computer technology changed and we were getting new computers. We bought laptops that had docking stations and my supervisor was pretty good about sort of realizing that if we had the laptops, then we could take those home.

Wendy recalled when business continuity planning began in her office:

Business continuity started in our division probably about 5 or 6 years ago, so it's just a matter of all of the departments being able to operate as close to normal as

possible in the event of an emergency, university's closed, or system's down, or you know, loss of staff, so we've been working on that as a division, that project, for several years now.

Several participants indicated that teleworking had retained them as a staff member. For Jim, had it not been for teleworking, he would have found a job closer to his home:

I was done with the commute and I think he [supervisor] realizes I probably wouldn't be there anymore if I still had to do what I was doing...I would have left in '92, like I said I was done with the commute, and if they hadn't given me some flexible schedule I would have left then 'cause I had a job offer that was 9 miles away from my house and I told my boss that and that's when he said, "well, if you came in early and left early so you don't have to fight the traffic, would that be okay?" so I said "okay", and I've been doing it ever since.

Anne commented that teleworking kept her energized and helped her avoid burn out, which would negatively impact her work at State University:

...to me that idea of being able to telecommute and maybe break up a week here and there, with a day home, really allows me to sort of reenergize, especially after being here for so many years, you know, I mean I need to do that cause I don't want to get burnt out and I don't want it to be at the point where it's like, "uggg I hate coming to work", I never want that to happen and I think part of my ability to keep my energy level up and keep up my, you know, my enjoyment of my job comes in part of knowing that I have that flexibility and that there's trust kind of granted to me.

Wendy mentioned that teleworking was beneficial as the risk of employee injury or loss was reduced:

It's beneficial to the employer as well because you don't have to worry about that employee possibly, you know, being injured on the job, because that employee is not at the job, or that employee you know, that employee's not late you know to work that day, that employee's already at work, that employee's not injured on the way in to work, you know in an accident or something else, God forbid, you know on the way in, that employee's home, that employee's working, so I think it's, it's rewarding all the way around.

**Individual.** Increased satisfaction, control of work schedule, increased productivity, reduced commuting time and costs, and stress from work-family conflicts were all examples of individual outcomes. All of the participants experienced individual outcomes. The majority referenced the reduced commute time, increased productivity, and work-family conflicts as their favorite aspects of teleworking. When asked what she would share with others who were interested in teleworking, Lynn said:

I think you benefit professionally, you benefit personally, you're mentally, you benefit, I mean, just you think about those days where for those that are fighting that commute and coming in, and how your day is already starting off on a stressful, you know, having that day, one day a week just kind of gives you a break and my colleague who I just had this discussion with, she has a really awful commute and she chose her day smack dab in the middle of the week and she said it's the most amazing this ever because it just kind of breaks up that redundant, you know, every day routine and it's, you know, working out great for her, so...

Jim mentioned that he loved the freedom of teleworking, and that he was able to have flexibility in his day:

When you have to come to campus, you got to get up at a certain time, you gotta get dressed, get ready, you have to wear nice clothes and you know, then you get to drive 40 miles...it's just so freeing to be able to get up and, go to, your computer in your sweats or whatever and do your job.

Lucy shared a similar experience with Jim, as for her, teleworking provided her flexibility and comfort:

There were years when I was telecommuting when it was nice to have a day when I didn't have to put a suit on, so I think that kind of just flexibility and it, I just think it lowers stress.

Other participants also noticed that teleworking reduced stress. As mentioned by Paul, “I think in a way the the...the surprising thing a little bit is it really does help reduce work stress.” He mentioned later that, “...the very fact that you know, maybe you are a little more relaxed and less stressed at the end of the day, once week or so, you know, probably helps marital harmony and relationship harmony”. Laya felt rejuvenated from teleworking, “I think it [teleworking] just does something for you; it makes your days...not having to physically be on campus, it's almost rejuvenating, you know”. Terry enjoyed the balance that teleworking provided:

You know, one of the...it's a great benefit, it helps a lot, it helps bring the balance and it helps maintain sanity [laughs] with your schedules and with all that. I like, and I think it's very helpful, in you know when you're trying to do multiple things.

Decreased commute time was mentioned by the majority of the participants as a favorite

aspect of teleworking. While some participants lived within five miles of State University, the majority of the participants lived more than 30 miles away from State University. For Lucy, driving to work had not been a positive experience, as she had been in several car accidents:

It's a lot of time spent in traffic, because I've been hit by a car, my car's been hit a couple of times...I'm very aware of the, and people are driving crazier and crazier, I'm very aware that every day I get on the road, I'm at some risk, you know, of getting hit and maybe harmed.

Laya enjoyed not having to commute to State University one day a week and recognized that she did not need to be on the campus in order to complete work:

It [teleworking] gives you flexibility to not have to physically, if it's not, if you're not, if it's unnecessary to physically be on site to do your job on any given day then it is a huge benefit to not have to, I mean, it's just the...again, I'm coming from the perspective of the commute, for someone else it could be something else, you know, it could be a different issue but for me, that commute can be brutal. So, and truth be told, I don't know that if it wasn't for the teleworking, because it does...really break up that five days of straight going home, I don't know if I could necessarily last much longer, you know, with this type of commute. If it wasn't for teleworking.

The majority of the participants indicated that teleworking provided them with greater flexibility. The participants used flexibility of teleworking in several different ways.

Mindi commented that she was able to complete both work and home tasks:

...my second thing is that I have the flexibility to kind of like...I'm doing my

laundry so I am not doing it on the weekend but I am still getting my work done.

So I guess I'm getting both my home and non-home work done and I'm more accomplished.

Oobleck mentioned that teleworking afforded him the ability to meet work and family demands:

It's been a nice benefit, honestly, just to my position, I like being able to get up, get my kids to school, go back to the house, you know, not put on a pair of slacks [laughs] and just get some work done, you know, and I'll admit I'll through a load of laundry in, you know, and I can actually make myself a hot lunch, that kind of stuff, it's nice.

Jim appreciated the convenience of time, "...we're able to do it [work on telework days] at times when it's most convenient for us". Wendy commented that being comfortable put her in a different mindset for the day:

Like me and you know, the pajamas, like yes, you know but I think that's one of my...I love that part, I think that's one of the best parts is being in my pajamas and like feeling relaxed, comfortable, and you know, you don't have to worry about, you know, my gosh, fixing your clothes and tidying up, or you know somebody walking past like "ah man, she's in her pajamas" and I think that that helps considerably to get like getting more in that mindset of like, okay getting some stuff done.

This was the case for Terry as well, "I think it [teleworking] just puts you in a, in a relaxed mindset, that you don't have to get up and get ready and do things, and under, under a time constraint". Lynn alluded to mindset as well, "mentally just starting your



day off on a completely different foot, whether you have a commute or not”. The flexibility of the job kept Anne motivated, “I think part of my ability to keep my energy level up and keep up my, you know, my enjoyment of my job comes in part of knowing that I have that flexibility”. However, for Lucy, the positive outcomes of teleworking decreased over the years. As her workload grew, she felt less of a sense of accomplishment at the end of a telework day:

I experience what I think a lot, maybe, even most all employees at the university experience, which is that our workload is just constantly growing, there's just more added all of the time and nothing gets taken away, which I think is an unsustainable situation over the long haul, so the benefit of teleworking for me, I think has, reduced some over the years not because there's anything that has changed about the teleworking but because the workload just keeps growing. I experience, perhaps, somewhat less kind of relief from the one day at home working.

In summary, the participant experience of teleworking was reflective in the characteristics and outcomes of the theoretical framework. While there were similarities among the participants in regards to teleworking, they all had unique experiences. These unique experiences were captured in the narratives of each participant and were also organized by the characteristics and outcomes of the Concept of Fit theoretical framework. The next and final chapter presents findings as they pertain to the two research questions of the study.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Implications**

This chapter outlines research findings. The primary research question for this study asked what were the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. Overall findings of the experiences are detailed in the following section. The secondary research question of this study asked whether exempt employees experienced fit as outlined by the theoretical framework. Findings as they pertain to the second research question are also addressed below. In addition, findings as they compare to prior research are highlighted in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the implications of the findings and addresses how the findings may influence future research.

### **Overall Findings of Experiences**

The first research question of this study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. As referenced previously, each participant had a unique experience with teleworking. However, similar themes on employee experience emerged that were representative to the entire participant group. This section reviews the overall findings of the experiences of the participants.

The majority of the participants, on their telework day, first turned on their computer and checked their email. For some participants, email was a tool used to gather their tasks for their telework day. For others, email was a tool used to communicate with the main office. This was an interesting finding as the majority of the participants indicated that they enjoyed teleworking as it provided the freedom and flexibility to complete independent tasks at home. Yet even with saving tasks that were independent to complete from home, the participants immediately began their day by checking email. It might have been that for these participants, logging into email when working from home

was the same as coming into the office and connecting with other members of the team. It was also interesting to note that the main form of communication of the participants to the main office during their telework day was that of email. In addition, several participants indicated that they began their telework day when they first woke, usually several hours before the start of a typical workday. It may have been that for these participants they worked with or had tasks that were completed by others outside usual business hours, and therefore, as soon as they checked their email, could begin work tasks. Some staff members, for example, worked with faculty members, which was a group of employees that did not typically keep to a normal business schedule. The participants remained logged into their email, and checked it consistently throughout their telework day.

A second finding consistent among the participants was the mention of fit when discussing their experience. During the interview process, the participants were not made aware of the theoretical framework of the research study. Yet the majority of the participants referenced the need for fit in regards to successful teleworking. The theoretical framework posed that variables within organizational, work, individual, and technology characteristics must be present and interact in a positive manner in order for teleworking to fit. The participants referenced aspects of all four characteristics of the framework.

For example, participants referenced mindset and the need for focus and discipline. Several participants indicated that while some employees may be in a job conducive for teleworking, they would not be a good teleworker, as they did not have the discipline in order to work autonomously. Focus and discipline were examples that

represented individual characteristics of the framework.

Participants also mentioned the need for technology, such as computers, internet, and access to electronic documents. The participants indicated that their departments provided them with the technology needed to be able to work from home. This was representative of the technology characteristics of the framework.

Further, participants referenced the need for specific tasks or jobs, noting that someone needed to be in the *right job* for teleworking, which was representative of work characteristics. The majority of the participants also commented on their positive relationship with their supervisor and emphasized the need for communication and support from their supervisor in their teleworking efforts. They indicated that their office culture was one of support for teleworking. These experiences aligned with the organizational characteristics within the framework.

Again, the theoretical framework was not shared with the participants, yet in discussing their experience, the participants shared experiences that aligned with the four characteristics of the theoretical framework. The participants understood that not all employees or jobs were suitable for telework. For fit to be present, there needed to be the right job and right people with the necessary technology and office support.

The majority of the participants indicated a desire to telework more. They noted that when they did telework, they were able to be more productive and contributed this experience to the limited interruptions of not being in the main office. They shared that they were removed from the distractions of work colleagues. Therefore, the participants tended to work on tasks that required high levels of attention and focus. The participants noted that telework provided greater flexibility; they felt more relaxed on their telework

day and were able to manage work and home tasks at the same time.

However, they also recognized that teleworking more than one day a week would decrease their face-to-face communication time with other members of the office. For several participants, face-to-face communication was necessary for them to complete work tasks. The majority of the participants were not able to complete all of their tasks without the input and collaboration of other staff members. For other participants, face-to-face interaction was needed in their management of the employees they supervised. Overall, the participants indicated that teleworking more than one day a week would be ideal. Several participants indicated that they would like to telework two days a week. Several others indicated that teleworking half of the workweek would be ideal.

All of the participants indicated that they enjoyed teleworking as it decreased their commute to State University on a weekly basis. This was true for the participants that did not have a long commute to State University. Of the 11 participants, three indicated that they commuted fewer than 10 miles to State University. The remaining eight participants commuted more than 20 miles to State University. Regardless of the distance, the participants all appreciated the break of the daily commute that teleworking provided. State University was located in a population dense, high traffic area of Maryland. The participants expressed that their commute involved traffic, regardless of the distance to State University. All of the participants indicated that they enjoyed the time they saved by not commuting to work.

Finally, in understanding the experiences of exempt employees who telework, the researcher discovered that supervisor trust was important for successful teleworking. Supervisor support and trust were two themes consistent among all of the participants.

All 11 participants felt supported by their supervisor. When asked how their supervisor could better support them, the participants did not have any suggestions for improvement. In fact, the participants continued to share examples of how they felt supported by their supervisor.

The majority of the participants indicated that they felt trusted by their supervisor. Their supervisors knew that they were hard workers and completed their tasks when away from the main office. Several participants indicated that their supervisor initiated teleworking, noting overall support of the initiative. As a result, many of the participants indicated they worked very diligently, and especially so on their telework day. Some participants claimed to work additional hours on their telework day, intentionally putting in additional hours to finish all assigned work tasks for that day. They indicated that the reason for the additional work time was to prove to their supervisor that they were able to work autonomously and independently while at home, and therefore, kept their supervisor engaged in allowing them to continue to telework. In fact, the participants noted that the expectation from their supervisor was that so long as the work was completed, they could continue to telework. This suggests that the supervisors of the participants had cultivated a results orientated work structure. In this work structure, the expectation is supervisors are not concerned with work location or time of work, but rather are concerned that tasks are completed by the assigned deadlines.

The purpose of the second research question of this study was to determine if exempt employees experienced fit as outlined in the theoretical framework. Concept of Fit, the theoretical framework of this study, posed that organizational, individual, work, and technology characteristics all impact the outcomes of distributed work arrangements

and that the relationship between the characteristics influenced fit, which affects outcomes. Distributed work arrangements encompass many different alternatives to working in a traditional office, with teleworking as one type of alternative. For the purposes of this study, fit was defined as two or more phenomena interacting in a variety of ways, and that the nature of that interaction is more or less *good* or *appropriate* (Belanger & Collins, 1998). For this study, the phenomena were represented as the four characteristics. Therefore, if the characteristics interacted in such a way that was good, there was fit for teleworking.

It was the opinion of the researcher that the participants experienced fit. All 11 participants alluded to experiences that were representative of all four characteristics of the framework. These experiences, overall, were good or appropriate. Further, the participants mentioned positive outcomes that aligned with the societal, organizational, and individual outcomes as outlined in the framework.

From an organizational standpoint, for example, all of the participants shared that they perceived their office culture to be supportive of telework. They provided examples of situations in which colleagues and supervisors modified work tasks or communication mechanisms in order to support their teleworking efforts. As such, the participants experienced greater productivity on their telework days. Participants also shared that they were able to work independently and created specific tasks to complete when working at home. They were able to remain disciplined and could focus on specific tasks when working at home. The participants shared that they enjoyed outcomes of teleworking such as greater work-life balance, flexibility, and limited interruptions to focus on their work. They were able to communicate with others in the office if needed, and all used

email and phone calls to stay connected to the main office. For them, access to the internet and a computer were the two main pieces of technology needed for successful teleworking.

The relationship between these characteristics led to positive outcomes. Teleworking reduced traffic and reduced pollution in the environment. It contributed to increased productivity and a reduction in the use of sick leave. It also eliminated the commute, reducing the number of vehicles on the road during commute times. Teleworking increased the sense of relaxation and a sense of focus for the individual. Elements of the four characteristics were evident in the participants' experience. The interaction among these experiences was positive and therefore, the participants experienced fit. The participants also experienced positive outcomes from teleworking.

Results from this study suggested that the theoretical framework is more dynamic than previously illustrated. Belanger and Collins (1998) theorized that the interaction between the four characteristics impact fit, leading to societal, organizational, or individual outcomes. The results of this research study supported this notion. However, the results of this research study suggested that the outcomes also influenced the characteristics. The researcher recommended a redesign to the framework to illustrate the interaction between outcomes and characteristics. As characteristics affected outcomes, and outcomes further influenced characteristics, the theoretical framework was dynamic.

For example, the majority of the participants shared that one aspect of telework they enjoyed was the reduction in the number of days they commuted each week to State University. This reduction generated a savings to employees, as they decreased their spending on gas and car repair in commuting to work. The participants noted that not



having to commute one day a week was a benefit of teleworking. On their telework day, the majority of the participants worked the time that was usually reserved for their daily commute. The reduced commute represented an individual objective or rather, individual characteristic of teleworking. The reduction of commute time also reduced the carbon footprint of the participants, which reduced pollution. Reduced pollution represented a societal outcome. In addition, the reduced commute also provided the participants with saved time, and many participants used that extra time to complete work, which led to increased productivity, or rather, an organizational objective. Therefore, a reduction in the commute represented an individual objective, which created a societal outcome. The outcome also influenced an organizational characteristic, and therefore, reflected a dynamic relationship between a characteristic and an outcome to another characteristic.

A second example of the dynamic relationship among characteristics and outcomes was that of reduced work-family conflict. Participants shared that teleworking afforded them the ability to better manage parental priorities, spend additional time with a spouse, and exercise greater flexibility in completing household tasks. The participants valued flexibility and control of the work from home day, which represented an individual objective. As such, the participants expressed that they were more likely to work additional time in order get their work tasks completed, which led to the organizational outcome of increased productivity and reduced overhead. A reduction in overhead costs provided an employer with cost savings, which represented an organizational objective for telework. Again, a characteristic of teleworking influenced an outcome. The outcome then influenced a different characteristic within the framework.

A third example was that of technology characteristics. The participants expressed

that a computer and strong internet were all that they needed to work from home, noting that with today's technology, work could be completed almost anywhere. Therefore, the technology led to an organizational outcome. Employees could complete work related tasks when needed, which increased productivity. In addition, working remotely reduced overhead costs as employees did not need much equipment and could access their work remotely. This outcome influenced work characteristics as employees could use technology to stay connected to the office and could access work remotely, which required minimal coordination. Again, the characteristics of technology positively influenced organizational outcomes. In this example, the organizational outcome further influenced work characteristics.

These examples from this research study illustrated that the theoretical framework, Concept of Fit, is dynamic. Characteristics influenced outcomes, and outcomes further influenced other characteristics. Based upon the findings outlined previously, the researcher recommended that the current framework be amended to illustrate it as dynamic and cyclical. The theoretical framework indicated that the interaction among the characteristics determined fit. If there was fit, there were outcomes, which were societal, organizational, and individual. The findings of this research study supported this notion. These findings, as illustrated in the examples above, also supported the notion that outcomes further influenced characteristics.

Further, the recommendation to modify the framework also illustrated that outcomes and characteristics do not need to be of a direct match. In other words, individual outcomes may further influence individual characteristics, and individual outcomes may further influence organizational characteristics. As a second example, a

societal outcome may influence an organizational characteristic. The outcomes could influence one or more characteristic; the influence is not one to one. The characteristic-outcome-characteristic relationship may vary as objectives, goals, and tasks of employers and employees differ. The findings of this research study illustrate that there was fluidity in the relationship of the characteristics and outcomes.

Outlined in Figure 2 is the recommended modification to the theoretical framework. This figure illustrates the original theoretical framework as posed by Belanger and Collins (1998). It also includes the recommended modification to the framework. The dashed line illustrates the recommended modification, where outcomes further influence characteristics, leading to a cyclical and dynamic framework. Additional research would be beneficial to support this recommended modification.

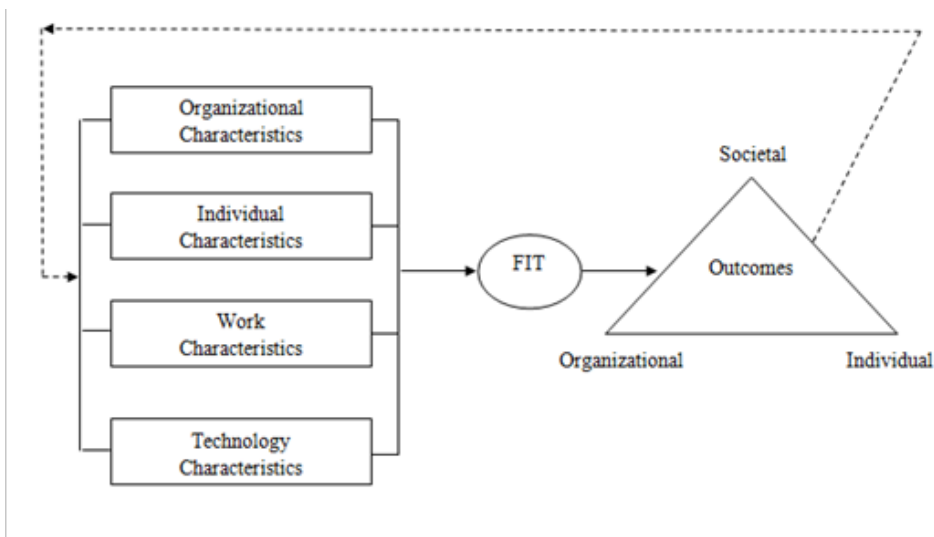


Figure 2. A recommended framework for studying distributed work arrangements. The dashed line is the recommended addition posed by the researcher. Adapted from “A Framework for Studying Distributed Work Arrangements,” by F. Belanger and R. W. Collins, 1998, *The Information Society*, 14, p. 139.

### Implications for Future Research

Based upon the findings of this research study, there are several implications for

the future research. Further investigation of the four characteristics as well as the associated variables of the characteristics would be beneficial in today's place of employment, especially within the field of higher education. Even though variables of all four characteristics were identified in the results of this study, several variables not referenced in the framework, such as creativity, focus, and business continuity planning, emerged in the findings of this research study. Therefore, further research on the theoretical framework may elicit additional variables within the characteristics.

In addition, additional research is necessary as it pertains to the recommended modification to the Concept of Fit theoretical framework proposed in this research study. Further research may lend support to the proposed modifications to the framework, therefore, suggesting a more dynamic approach of telework. Overall, additional research on the Concept of Fit theoretical framework, as originally theorized by Belanger and Collins (1998), would strengthen the framework. Doing so would positively influence professionals as they utilize the framework to implement telework in the workplace.

Another implication for future research is the role gender may play in the experience of exempt employees who telework. It could be possible that based upon gender and roles associated with gender, the participants had different experiences in their home and work environment. Gender was not a demographic characteristic necessary in addressing the two research questions of this study. However, future research on this topic may be of benefit to employers. Further research on the differences in experience may assist employers in their policy implementation of telework. More specifically, additional research on this topic may further assist in the management of employees who telework.

Further research on supervisory style is needed. In this study, all participants indicated having a supportive supervisor. However, it was not clear as to whether the supervisor was supportive of telework at the outset, or if the supervisor became supportive once the employee demonstrated autonomy. Future research on supervisors of teleworkers would be beneficial to all places of employment that have telework policies. Further assessment of the experiences of employees who telework and assessment of the supervisory relationship may determine correlation between teleworking and supervisory style.

Future research on task completion while working from home would also be of benefit. As mentioned in the findings, the participants indicated saving tasks for their telework day. Several noted that they planned to complete specific tasks while at home, usually ones that required focus and discipline. Several others noted that they completed tasks at home that could be completed independently. Future research on the task completion of teleworkers, compared to the notion of a Results Only Work Environment (ROWE) (Johnson, 2014) would be of interest. Future research could determine if there is a correlation between teleworking and ROWE and determine similarities or differences between these two work arrangements.

Lastly, additional research on the experiences of exempt employees who telework, based upon the day of the week spent teleworking may be a viable study. For example, the four participants who teleworked on Wednesday indicated that they enjoyed that telework *broke up* the workweek. Others indicated that they selected their day for family matters, or as a day with the least amount of meetings. Those who had a Friday telework day had to dispel thoughts from others that they had a longer weekend. It would

be interesting to find, through future research, if employee experience differs based upon telework day, in detail than what was found in this study.

### **Summary**

This study contributed to the body of knowledge on the topic of telework. The study provided valuable insight into the experiences of those who telework. These findings supported the Concept of Fit theoretical framework, in that based on the interaction between the four characteristics; one can determine if an employee is a good candidate for teleworking, if there is fit for teleworking. In this study, there was fit in that the participants had positive interactions within the four characteristics and overall, there were positive outcomes.

It appeared that the framework is dynamic in that in addition to the interaction of the characteristics positively or negatively influencing the three outcomes, all three outcomes further influenced the four characteristics in unique ways. The framework was cyclical. Future research may further support this notion. Additional research on the theoretical framework, as well as supervisory style for teleworkers, the day of the week an employee teleworks, and type of tasks employees complete at home may further the field of higher education. Findings from this study may be of interest to several groups. Overall, this study provided additional knowledge on the subject of telework, specifically within the field of higher education. In analyzing and drawing conclusions of the study, two findings surprised the researcher. These findings, along with closing remarks are below.

First, it was interesting to note the creativity that some of the participants used in communicating with other members of the office during their telework day. Two

participants, for example, commented that they had a white board posted outside of their office door. The white board was used to leave a note of how to reach the employee on their telework day. In addition, one participant commented that she would change her main office voicemail to indicate to callers that she was working from home and would provide her phone number where she could be reached. Another participant shared that she used a Google calendar to make note for her office colleagues of her location for the day. Overall, the participants kept open lines of communication with others regarding where they were and how they could be reached.

Second, it was also surprising that the majority of the participants either worked through lunch while working at home or worked longer hours to make up for taking a longer lunch break. As the majority of the participants indicated the ability to create their own work schedule and have the flexibility on their tasks when working at home was a benefit to telework, it was interesting to find that the participants did not break for lunch. Rather, they tended to continue to work through lunch. It cannot be determined in this study, if this pattern was an aspect of the work culture that permeated to the home environment, or if this was a trend of working from home. Nonetheless, it was interesting to draw this theme from the responses of the participants.

The researcher illustrated a gap in the literature regarding the experience of the teleworker, in that there is limited understanding in the teleworker experience. Therefore, to close a gap in the literature, the purpose of this study was to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who telework. This qualitative case study presented findings that further provided knowledge to the field on telework. Teleworking is likely to continue to gain in popularity, and therefore, additional knowledge on the

topic is imperative for the workplace. This study provided additional knowledge available on the topic and summarized the experience of exempt employees who telework.



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## Appendix A – IRB Approval – State University

UMBC

AN HONORS UNIVERSITY IN MARYLAND

Office for Research Protections and  
Compliance  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County  
1000 Hilltop Circle  
Baltimore, MD 21250

PHONE: 410-455-2737  
FAX: 410-455-3868  
EMAIL: [compliance@umbc.edu](mailto:compliance@umbc.edu)

Date: November 3, 2015

To: Kristin Waters, John Stoothoff

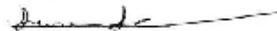
Re: Exemption Approval  
Protocol #: Y16KW26085

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol entitled **Teleworking within a State University in Maryland: A Case Study** and has approved the application for certification as it met the criteria under **category [(§46.101(b)(2) ]** for exemption from further IRB review. The date of approval is **November 2, 2015** and applies, if applicable, to the following sponsored project titles and numbers:

- 
- 
- 

Annual review is not required for this protocol since it was determined to be exempt. However, any changes to the research design or procedures that could introduce new or increased risks to human subjects must be submitted *in writing* for review by the IRB before the changes are incorporated to insure they do not change the exempt status of the protocol. All correspondence and materials used in this protocol must reference the above IRB number.

Exempt review approved by



Susan S. Korman, PhD  
IRB Chair

Exemption approval letter 12052011

## Appendix B – IRB Approval – Home Institution



*One University. A World of Experiences.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
PORT LIBRARY  
131 BAYWOOD ROAD  
FROSTBURG, MD 21532-7303  
T 301.687.7097  
F 301.687.7058  
E-KAL: [irb@frostburg.edu](mailto:irb@frostburg.edu)

To: Kristin Waters  
From: Beth Scarloss, IRB Chair  
Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2016  
Subject: Notice of Protocol Review

---

We have received your human research protocol application and reviewed it. Thank you for submitting this proposal in compliance with FSU and USM policy.

**Title:** Teleworking within a State University in Maryland: A Case Study

**Number Assigned:** H2016-024  
**Received on:** 1/6/2016

The Institutional Review Board has determined that the research you describe in your application qualifies as research that is exempt from the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) under §46.101(b). As long as you follow the protocol described in your submission, no further action on your part is necessary at this time. You will be reminded annually to submit a statement confirming that this research a) is ongoing or b) has been terminated.

If you make substantial changes to this project or begin another research project involving human participants, the IRB will be required to review that project, as well.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation with the IRB. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at [IRB@Frostburg.edu](mailto:IRB@Frostburg.edu).

Reviewer Comments:  
(None)

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## **Appendix C – Call for Participants Email**

[date]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this email finds you well! I am contacting you today asking that you volunteer for my research study by discussing your experience of teleworking at State University. You have been identified as a potential participant as you are an exempt staff member that currently has a telework agreement on file with HR.

Interviews will run approximately 60-80 minutes and will take place throughout the remainder of the 2015 year.

You will be provided with a \$5.00 gift card to either Starbucks or Au Bon Pain for participating.

To participate, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be an exempt employee
- Have a current telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources

If you are interested in participating, please [click here](#) to sign up for an interview time. You will need to be signed into your UMBC Google Account to select an interview time. If you would like to participate but none of the interview times work for your schedule, please email me and we will find a time that works for your schedule. Once an interview time has been selected, I will email you final details regarding the interview 72 hours before the scheduled interview start time.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Thank you,  
Kristin

Kristin A. Waters  
kawaters0@frostburg.edu  
301-332-1203

## **Appendix D – Interview Final Details Email**

[date]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research study regarding teleworking. This is to confirm that your interview will take place from TIME to TIME on DATE in ROOM LOCATION. I look forward to speaking with you then.

Before the interview time, please review the attached consent form. I ask that you bring a signed copy of the form to the interview. If you are not able to print or sign a copy before the interview, I will have a blank copy for you to sign before we begin. If you have any questions or concerns about the consent form or study we can review these before the interview begins.

Thank you very much and I'll see you soon,

Kristin

Kristin A. Waters  
kawaters0@frostburg.edu  
301-332-1203

## Appendix E – Informed Consent

### Whom to Contact about this study:

Principal Investigator: Kristin Waters

Department: Undergraduate Admissions & Orientation

Telephone number: 301-332-1203 (cell); 410-455-2096 (work)

### **INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

Interview Protocol – Teleworking within a State University in Maryland: A Case Study

#### **I. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:**

I am being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand and explore the lived experiences of exempt employees who are on a telework agreement. I am being asked to volunteer because I meet the two criterion of the study: 1) I am an exempt employee of the study institution and 2) I currently have a telework agreement on file with the Department of Human Resources at the study institution. My involvement in this study will begin when I agree to participate and will continue until I have reviewed my transcript, which will be provided to me within three calendar days of my interview. I will have seven calendar days to review my transcript. I will also have the opportunity to review the final report of the study before it is submitted to the researcher's committee for approval. The final report will be available in January or February of 2016, and if I agree to review the final report, I will have five calendar days to review it and provide any feedback. About forty persons will be invited to participate.

#### **II. PROCEDURES:**

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to select an interview date and time that works with my schedule. Once I select a date and time, I will be asked to review a consent form and bring the form and any questions to the interview. I will then review the consent form with the researcher and will then participate in a 60-80 minute interview with the researcher. I will be asked to come to either the Annapolis Room or the Maryland Room located within the Office of Undergraduate Admissions & Orientation for the interview. My participation in this study will last for one 60-80 minute interview. The interview will be audio recorded and the researcher will take summary notes during the interview. Before the interview begins, I will select a pseudonym of my own choosing that will be used by the researcher throughout the researcher report. Specific names, places, people, or events that may identify me or the study institution may be noted but will not be listed in the study report. Upon completion of my interview, I will receive a copy of the transcript. This will be sent to me via email within three days of my interview. I will be provided seven calendar days to make any corrections, edits, additions, or deletions to the transcript. I will be asked to respond to the researcher with any corrections within the seven calendar days. Once the study report has been completed, the researcher will ask participants to review the final report. If I elect to do so, I will be asked to review the report and will be provided with five calendar days to do so. The study report will be available in January or February of 2016.

#### **III. RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

My participation in this study does not involve any significant risks and I have been informed that my participation in this research will not benefit me personally, but there are minimal risks involved. Given that the study institution is my place of employment, as well as the place of employment of the researcher, it is possible that my responses will not be fully anonymous, as the researcher may know of whom or what I am discussing, if this were to

take place. It is also possible that the readers of the study may assume to know the study institution. The researcher will attempt to provide anonymity by providing me the opportunity to select a pseudonym that will be used in the study report. The researcher will also avoid naming specific people, events, or places that may identify the study institution or me. If used in the study report, the researcher will name these instances in a generalizable manner. I have also been informed that my participation in this research will not benefit me personally, but I may gain in insight in my experience as a teleworker and may learn more about the teleworking policy at the study institution. The findings of this research study will provide information to other researchers, Human Resource Professionals, and managers about the experiences of exempt employees who telework. This information may provide additional information to these groups to either create or modify teleworking policies

## **I. CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Any information learned and collected from this study in which I might be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed ONLY if I give permission. The investigator (s) will attempt to keep my personal information confidential. To help protect my confidentiality, I will be identified by a pseudonym that I select. My identity will not be divulged to anyone. If in my interview I list specific staff members, offices, or events from the study university, these will be generalized in the results, should they be included. All forms, printed transcripts, data files, and interview notes will be locked in a file cabinet in the personal home office of the researcher. Consent forms, interview notes, and summary notes will be labeled with the pseudonym that I select and will also be date stamped. An identification key of a number, will be used to link my survey information to my identity. All digital recordings and data files will be downloaded and stored in a password protected folder, that will be on the researcher's personal home computer, which will be locked in the researcher's personal home office. Digital recordings will be labeled with my pseudonym, date stamp, and the identification key of a number, which will assist the researcher in being able to link my survey data to my identity. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. Per the policy of the student handbook of Frostburg State University, the institution of study for the researcher, the data will be destroyed three years after this study is completed.

Only the investigator and members of the research team will have access to these records. If information learned from this study is published, I will not be identified by name. By signing this form, however, I allow the research study investigator to make my records available to the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) and regulatory agencies as required to do so by law.

Consenting to participate in this research also indicates my agreement that all information collected from me individually may be used by current and future researchers in such a fashion that my personal identity will be protected. Such use will include sharing anonymous information with other researchers for checking the accuracy of study findings and for future approved research that has the potential for improving human knowledge.

☐ I give permission to record my voice or image use in scientific publications or presentations.

☐ I do not give permission to record use my voice or image and use in scientific publications or presentations.

Although my confidentiality in this study is protected, confidentiality may not be absolute or perfect. There are some circumstances where research staff might be required by law to share

information I have provided. For example, if an interviewer has reason to believe a child or elderly person is being abused (or has been abused), the interviewer is required by Maryland state law to file a report with UMBC police department and the UMBC President's Designee for the USM Policy on the Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (see - [http://umbc.edu/ogc/hr/faq\\_usm.html](http://umbc.edu/ogc/hr/faq_usm.html)). Similarly, if I report that I have been abused in the past, the interviewer may also have to file a report. In addition, if I am threatening serious harm to myself or another person, it may be necessary for the interviewer to warn an intended victim, notify the police or take the steps to seek hospital based treatment for me.

**I. SPONSOR OF THE RESEARCH:**

Dr. Yvette Mozie-Ross, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management is partially funding this research study. Dr. Mozie-Ross is providing funding of the digital recorder that will be used during the interview, the paper and pens used to take notes, the transcript software and the coding software that the researcher will be using for collecting and analyzing the data.

**II. COMPENSATION/COSTS:**

My participation in this study will involve no cost to me. I will be a \$5.00 gift card to Starbucks or Au Bon Pain of your choosing. The gift card will be available to you at the time of the interview.

**III. CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:**

The principal investigator(s), Kristin A. Waters and Dr. John L. Stoothoff, Faculty Advisor, has offered to and has answered any and all questions regarding my participation in this research study. If I have any further questions, I can contact Kristin A. Waters at 301-332-1203 (cell), 410-455-2096 (office), [kawaters0@frostburg.edu](mailto:kawaters0@frostburg.edu).

If I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research study, contact the Office for Research Protections and Compliance at (410) 455-2737 or [compliance@umbc.edu](mailto:compliance@umbc.edu).

**IV. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

I have been informed that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any time. I have been informed that data collected for this study will be retained by the investigator and analyzed even if I choose to withdraw from the research. If I do choose to withdraw, the investigator and I have discussed my withdrawal and the investigator may use my information up to the time I decide to withdraw.

*I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.*

**V. SIGNATURE FOR CONSENT**

The above-named investigator has answered my questions and I agree to be a research participant in this study.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(consent form template) – 10/12/2015  
[compliance@umbc.edu](mailto:compliance@umbc.edu)



## Appendix F – Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Division: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Script:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to discuss your experience with me. As I indicated in my email, the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of exempt employees who currently have a telework agreement on file with Study University. This study is part of my degree requirements for the Doctor of Leadership Program offered through Frostburg State University.

Before we begin, I would like to collect the consent form that was sent to you via email. If you haven't yet completed the consent form, please take a few minutes to review it and sign. Here is a copy for you. If you have any questions regarding the consent form, we can review them now. You consent to this meeting being recorded, as well as my taking of notes.

1. Tell me what you do here at "State University".
2. How long have you been working at "State University" in this current capacity?
3. How did you learn about the telework policy?
  - How did you go about getting your agreement finalized?
4. Can you tell me about the details of your telework agreement?
5. Can you walk me through a typical telework day for you.
6. What were your expectations when you started teleworking?
7. What has been surprising about teleworking?
8. What does successful teleworking mean for you?
9. What is your favorite aspect of teleworking?
10. What would you change about teleworking if you could?
11. How does your supervisor support you?
  - How could your supervisor better support you?
12. How do your colleagues/peers support you in your teleworking efforts?
  - How could they better support you?
13. Now that you have been teleworking for some time, how have your teleworking expectations changed?
14. What would you share with someone who is thinking about teleworking at "State University"?
15. What haven't I asked you about that you think is important to help me better understand your experience with teleworking?
16. Can you identify your gender and ethnicity?
17. Would you mind sharing with me your current salary?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to share your experiences on teleworking. As mentioned when we reviewed the consent form, I will send you a copy of the transcribed interview, as soon as it is completed, for your review. I ask that you

review it and send me any changes to it via email. Again, thank you for your time.

## **Appendix G – Participant Transcription Email**

[date]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your recent participation in the interview related to your experiences of teleworking. Attached for your review is your transcribed interview. Please read the transcript to make sure that it accurately reflects your thoughts and experiences on teleworking. If you have any additions, clarifications, or deletions, please make those on the attached transcript and send it to me within the next seven days.

If I do not hear from you by then, I will assume that you have no edits to make and that the transcript accurately reflects your experiences.

If you have any additional questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your participation with my study.

Kristin

Kristin A. Waters  
kawaters0@frostburg.edu  
301-332-1203

## **Appendix H – Participant Case Study Report Email**

[date]

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

I am emailing you today as you had indicated earlier this year that you would like to review a copy of the case study report before it is sent to my committee for final approval.

You have been provided with temporary view access of the final case study report. It can be accessed [LINK HERE](#). Please read the report. If you have any concerns with the overall report, please email those to me within the next five days. If I do not hear from you by then, I will assume that you have no concerns with the overall report. You will only have access to the report for the next five days.

As a reminder, reviewing the report is an additional task that you volunteered for beyond the initial interview. There is no incentive for participating in the review of the final report. You are free to not review a copy of the case study report before it is sent to my committee for final approval.

If you have any additional questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your participation with my study.

Kristin

Kristin A. Waters  
kawaters0@frostburg.edu  
301-332-1203